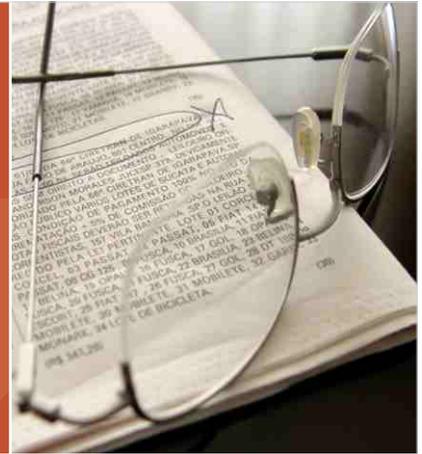


Case Study

Professional Services - Enterprise Product Integration using Biztalk



➤ THE CUSTOMER

An “e-distributor” of chemical products and services especially, fine, specialty, and semi-commodity chemicals. Their focus is on offering a personalized e-distribution service to the Fine and Specialty chemical market. Using proven Internet-enabled technologies, they are able to provide a faster, easier and more personalized service than traditional distributors.

➤ THEIR NEED

The customer’s IT initiatives were directed towards acquiring best-of-breed products for different functional areas, like Onyx for CRM, Great Plains for ERP and Yantra for BPM. They wanted these products to be integrated to support and facilitate their business processes. Some of the challenges that were identified were the synchronizing of data between different systems, reducing redundancy and overheads due to continuously changing business needs.

➤ OUR DEED

Aspire worked with the customer towards evolving a long-term strategic roadmap while keeping existing products up-to-date with respect to technology and business scenarios. A phased approach was evolved towards coming up with a single, unified system based on Microsoft technologies and removal of the redundant products.

Simultaneously, Aspire worked towards keeping the current integration between various products functional without really modifying the customer’s existing business processes. Aspire also adopted a plug-n-play and de-coupled approach towards the integration to prevent over-dependence on any one product and for better security.

➤ TOOLS USED

Technology: COM, COM+, .NET, SQL server, Biztalk 2004

Products integrated: MS Great Plains, Interworld, ONYX, Yantra

ENTERPRISE PRODUCT INTEGRATION

Business Challenges:

Integration of different products towards supporting and facilitating the customer’s business processes posed challenges in the form of:

- Disparate systems caused redundant data and inefficiency in operation. Synchronizing data between different systems became a significant challenge

From being a mere vendor, Aspire has become an integrated partner – working along with the customer to define their roadmap, enabling them to meet their IT goals and hence deliver better and quicker results to their customers.



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- Implementing any changes to the system due to continuously changing business needs contributed to high overheads.

Strategic Roadmap

Aspire worked with the customer in setting up a phased approach for solving these challenges:

Long-term: From the existing multi-product approach, a decision was made to move to a single, unified system based on Microsoft Technologies for managing customer relationships, ERP, warehouses and supplier relationships. A road map was defined to replace the disparate systems with MS suite of products - BizTalk Server, MS Great Plains and MS CRM for seamless integration and scalability. All the short-term goals were defined to revolve around the long-term roadmap.

Short-term: One of the major short-term requirements was to keep the current integration between the various products functional without any disturbance to the existing business processes. Continuous customization was required to keep up-to-date on immediate business needs. For example, the development of new features or modification of existing features in the ERP software in order to improve the current process. Another example: the integration of their ERP system with a recently acquired warehouse system.

Along with maintaining the existing system, gradual removal of redundant systems and replacement of the other products with MS suite of products was also done in a phased manner. e.g. A custom-developed application for Inventory management was gradually replaced by MS Great Plains.

Technology Solution

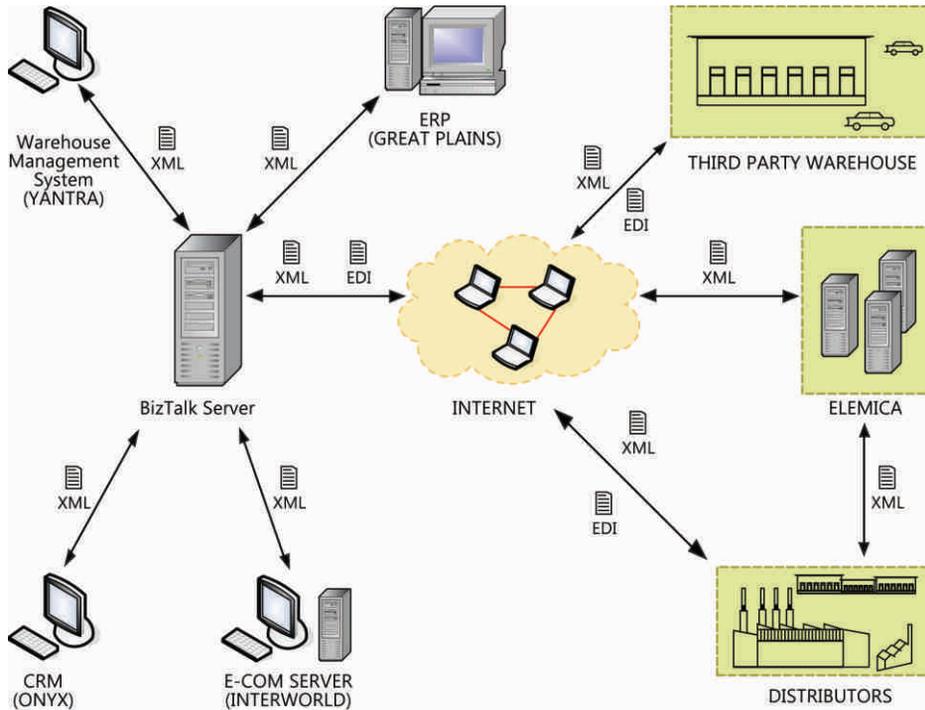
Aspire Systems worked along with the customer to deploy Microsoft's BizTalk Server, which helps in unifying the various products (in different locations) and streamlining information delivery among them. Biztalk also manages transactions and communications between external systems.

For seamless product integration, Aspire decided to employ an XML based solution using Microsoft BizTalk Server 2004 to facilitate communication between internal systems. Both the order management and customer service products provided an XML-enabled COM API. BizTalk Server 2004 was used to manage and route the messages between them. This made it very easy to integrate them. It also enabled to decouple them, preventing any one application from depending too much on the other or learning too much about the other (security and independence of each product being the benefits of this approach).

For *seamless* product integration, Aspire decided to employ an XML based solution using Microsoft BizTalk Server 2004 to facilitate communication between internal systems.



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The Aspire team is the **customer's true extended team**, with a small onsite presence and the rest offshore, giving them a real and substantial cost advantage.

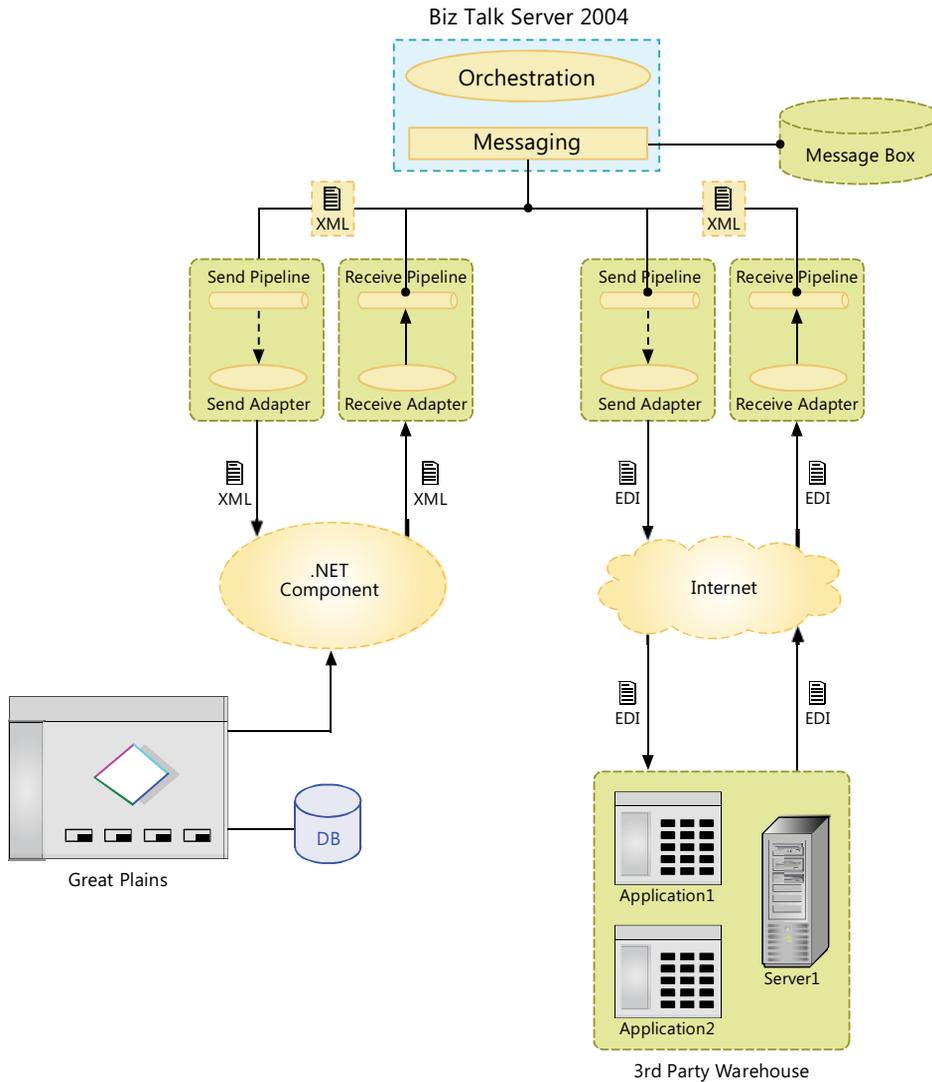
BizTalk Server 2004 was also used to simplify and manage communications between the order management product and the systems at supplier organizations.

BizTalk Server made it easy to integrate with the company's trading partners using XML. For those companies that still used EDI, BizTalk Server was able to take care of the XML-to-EDI conversion necessary to integrate with their trading partners' legacy systems.

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Warehouse Integration:



Key Benefits to the customer

Aspire has been working with the customer for more than three years to help them achieve their strategic IT objectives. From being a mere vendor, Aspire has become an integrated partner – working along with the customer to define their roadmap, enabling them to meet their IT goals and hence deliver better and quicker results to their customers.

The Aspire team is the customer's true extended team, with a small onsite presence and the rest offshore, giving them a real and substantial cost advantage. The team is organized into Centers of Excellence (COE), and each COE focuses on one core technology area e.g., SQL Server, Great Plains, BizTalk Server etc. Resources are pooled from the COEs for any backward or forward integration efforts of the



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Each COE continuously works on the latest technology adoption that will support the business process in an efficient way. This ensures that the customer has up-to-date technical know-how to advance their business plans.

For all the integration efforts, Aspire adopted the Plug-n-play and de-coupled approach to ensure that any changes made to the system in the future could be easily handled. These approaches also ensure independence of each product involved in the integration and makes for better security.

ABOUT ASPIRE SYSTEMS

Aspire Systems is an Outsourced Product Development firm committed to helping our customers build software products better and faster. We work with some of the world's most innovative Independent Software Vendors and software-enabled businesses, ranging from start-ups to established industry leaders, transforming the way software is built.

Aspire provides complete product lifecycle services, ranging from new product development and product advancement to product migration, re-engineering, sustenance and support. Our product development teams are spread between our Global Innovation Center in Chennai, India and offices in the United States.

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