## Microsoft Corporation
Reinventing fax delivery with Esker on Demand

When Microsoft went live with an upgrade to the most recent SAP release from SAP R/3 version 4.5b, they encountered unexpected faxing problems. Custom connections no longer worked between the SAP implementation and the third-party fax server software that Microsoft was using for worldwide faxing of purchase orders and invoices from corporate headquarters in Redmond, Washington. Seeking a more open, standard fax platform that would minimize development time and telephone charges for fax communication, Microsoft found the fax solution they were looking for in Esker on Demand.

### Configuration
- **Windows Server**
- **SQL Server**
- **SAP R/3 Enterprise**

### Challenge: Find a Better Way to Fax

Microsoft's existing fax server software was a proprietary "black box" with its own (closed) operating system, hardware, and management interface. "When a new security update came out or we wanted to install anti-virus software, it was very difficult. And after we went live with the SAP upgrade, we had a lot of pain getting faxes out."

Following the upgrade, the custom fax commands embedded into Microsoft's R/3-generated invoice and purchase order documents were now PostScript-encoded, and the fax server software was no longer able to process the commands to determine fax delivery actions. Instead of being recognized and parsed out, the commands were not only included in the fax image, but were not acted upon. And Microsoft departments could not get the email notifications they needed when a fax got delivered to a specific customer or vendor.

In addition, says Earls, "All of our worldwide faxing from SAP — often long distance calls, often international calls — originated from the fax server in Redmond. That was a huge expense for us. When we started to look at ways to reduce that cost, we explored least-cost routing options and that's where Esker came in."

Beyond cost savings, and the core requirement that the chosen solution would be fully integrated and SAP-certified, the key driver for Microsoft was to find a completely open, standard platform for faxing. They wanted a solution that would run on the latest Microsoft server operating systems,

and would eliminate the need to host telephony (T1 lines and associated hardware). "We did not want to have to build out an infrastructure to do faxing," says Earls. "We found with Esker on Demand that we could leverage Esker's fax infrastructure resources, be able to use our existing fax commands, and get the cost advantages that we wanted."

### Solution: Esker on Demand

Esker on Demand, an Esker DeliveryWare service for automated delivery of business documents directly from enterprise information systems, addressed Microsoft's needs by integrating with Microsoft's SAP system. With an SAP-certified fax connection to the system and the ability to handle fax commands natively with intelligent, content-based rules technology, Esker DeliveryWare offered the capability to automatically process Microsoft's invoices and purchase orders directly from the SAP application with no changes in functionality. The Esker on Demand solution also offered significant savings by optimizing fax transmission efficiency in Microsoft's geographically dispersed enterprise to reduce per-page telephony costs for faxing.

According to Earls, "Esker did a very good job of looking at the way we were doing fax, and using their DeliveryWare Rules Engine to match that functionality without changing the special commands already embedded into our fax documents. And it wasn't a hack; interpreting the commands was a standard, supported capability of the Esker solution. Without that flexibility, we would have had to analyze and modify
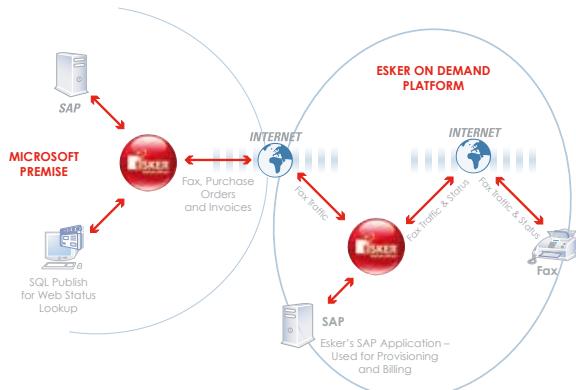
> Esker on Demand enabled us to make very few changes on our SAP side, and basically just do a technical switch to get faxes delivered at a lower cost.
>
> Terry Earls ▪ Group Program Manager ▪ Microsoft Corporation

> We're looking at initial ROI in one year or less, and a net win every month after that.

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about 200 SAPscript development items to make all of our different worldwide varieties of purchase orders and invoices work properly under 4.7."

It was important to Microsoft to make the change from its fax software virtually invisible to end-users — simply a technical switch that would not require altering current business procedures. "Esker on Demand was a change that we could make ourselves," says Earls, "behind the scenes, with no development on our side."

In Microsoft's Esker on Demand architecture, a local Esker DeliveryWare server resides in the Microsoft datacenter in Redmond, and Esker hosts the faxing services. This server hosts the SAP BC-CON interfaces and supports the DeliveryWare Rules Engine that processes faxes according to the commands defined in Microsoft's SAP application-generated documents. Business rules "delegate" faxing from Microsoft's local Esker DeliveryWare to the hosted Esker on Demand server, where the actual delivery takes place.

As Earls describes the solution, "Our local Esker DeliveryWare server receives the fax data from SAP and uses custom rules to parse out special commands we've embedded into the SAPScript. The fax data is then sent over SSL on the Internet to the hosted Esker on Demand server. We never have to worry about the mechanics of the fax delivery. When the fax delivery is complete, our local Esker DeliveryWare server receives back a status message. We have some DeliveryWare rules that allow us to intelligently act on the status code returned. Based on the status code, Esker DeliveryWare updates the messaging status inside SAP and automatically emails failure notices to business groups; it also updates a local SQL Server database that we use to allow business groups to query fax status from a Web page based on fax number, PO or invoice number, and so on."

## Benefits

"Of all the things about the Esker solution that were appealing to us, number one on the list was that it runs on a standard Windows box with no proprietary hardware needed," says Earls. "It's completely open; we understand it. The local Esker DeliveryWare server in our datacenter has such low overhead that it's not even on a dedicated box — it's on a shared box with some other third-party SAP applications."

Earls adds, "We didn't only make faxing work again. We took advantage of the painful situation after the SAP upgrade to ask ourselves if we were designing fax delivery again, would we do it the same way? In our case we said 'no.' From a day-to-day operations perspective, we recognized the cost savings potential of Esker on Demand."

For Microsoft, Esker on Demand provides enhanced faxing capabilities with less expense than faxing directly from Redmond or building their own solution, reducing the cost of getting faxes delivered. "We're looking at initial ROI in a year or less, and a net win every month after that," says Earls. Esker projects annual savings of $30,000 for Microsoft. Earls also offers some advice to other organizations planning an enterprise ERP upgrade. "Take a serious look at how you're doing document delivery in your production operations, and include it in your upgrade plans. Use the opportunity of the upgrade project itself to re-evaluate your document delivery solution."

### About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential. As a member of the Microsoft Developer Network and a Microsoft Gold Certified Solution Provider (MCSP), Esker offers customers the security of knowing that Esker solutions are developed on Microsoft platforms with Microsoft compatibility requirements in mind. Esker staff includes Microsoft Certified Professionals with proven expertise in developing, implementing, and supporting Microsoft-based solutions.

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