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Processing Multichannel Orders Faster With AI-Driven Automation

Accord Healthcare created an organised and collaborative work environment by automating its order management processes with Esker.



At a glance

Accord Healthcare



Pharmaceutical company



Fully owned subsidiary of Intas Pharmaceuticals Ltd.



4% average annual growth



6,500 orders received monthly



SAP® ERP



Challenges

Increasing order management efficiency to support growth

Accord Healthcare is a leading multinational pharmaceutical company that develops, manufactures, and distributes generic and biosimilar medicines.

In 2016, its Spanish subsidiary was in search of a faster, centralised and more user-friendly way to manage its growing volume of orders, as its current process was antiquated and unsustainable. More growth meant more orders, additional manual tasks and more Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) to manage the workload.

The 6,500 monthly orders — sent by hospitals, pharmacies and wholesalers — arrive by fax, email or EDI. Before implementing automation, four members of Accord Healthcare's Customer Service department were tasked with dividing the orders by geographical zones, ensuring they got to the correct CSR for processing. The 5,000 fax and email orders were manually entered into the company's ERP system and the remaining 1,500 EDI orders were printed out which often delayed fulfilment due to the myriad of steps involved.

Accord Healthcare was looking for a solution provider that checked all the necessary boxes: robust capabilities, ERP system integration and the ability to address the unique challenges posed by EDI orders.

Objectives



Manage growing order volumes



Increase efficiency



Automate EDI orders



Streamline fax & email order processing



Improve customer satisfaction with automated order responses

Solution

AI features put the order back in order management

In 2016, Accord Healthcare implemented Esker Order Management to automate the processing of **fax and email orders**. Received orders are automatically split by product type, routed and assigned to the right CSR according to geographical zone. The solution also manages spreadsheet files with multiple line items — common in the pharma industry — and generate one order per line. Orders are now automatically processed or, if there are errors, the flagged information is transmitted to a CSR for validation. Files with PO data are automatically created in the ERP and are electronically indexed and archived. Customers receive notifications of the order confirmation or unavailability by fax or email, depending on which channel the order was received on.

By early 2017, with the first stage of its order management project well underway, Accord Healthcare moved forward with the second phase: archiving EDI orders as PDF files to achieve global visibility. The success of this step convinced Accord Healthcare to fully automate the processing of **EDI orders**. The ultimate goal was to pull EDI order processing out of the technical weeds and elevate it to the business level, thereby achieving maximum speed, efficiency and transparency. CSRs can now validate orders from one single interface, without worrying about the inbound channel. This enables them to maintain complete visibility over the management and analytics of all orders, regardless of format.

EDI order automation not only enables CSRs to view and/or correct an incoming EDI order, but also automatically splits the orders by product type. In Accord Healthcare's case, this was extremely practical as its cold and room-temperature products require two distinct delivery methods. By deducing the internal product code from the EDI European Article Number (EAN), two different shipping processes and invoices are automatically generated in the ERP, saving Accord Healthcare's CSRs an invaluable amount of time and energy. Furthermore, if a customer uses different units of measure than the ones in Accord Healthcare's ERP, the solution automatically adapts product quantities. This functionality was common in both fax and email orders but is now also available for EDI orders.

Fast forward to early 2019 and Accord Healthcare once again bet on innovation. Esker Synergy AI identifies unusual quantities in incoming orders, including EDI, by analysing historical order data while taking different units of measure into account, and alerts CSRs to potential errors. Esker's **anomaly detection** feature has helped Accord Healthcare not only prevent incorrectly fulfilled orders, but also extra delivery and return costs. These configurations have had a positive impact on both the customer experience and internal costs.



“Automation represents a customer service guarantee from a responsiveness standpoint: Even if a CSR is temporarily unavailable or on vacation, order processing is not delayed. The complete visibility we have over our order process and the reduced time it takes to process each order, including EDI, has greatly improved our efficiency KPIs.”

María Carmen Cano,
Head of Customer Service & Commercial Admin,
Accord Healthcare Spain

Results

Increasing order processing accuracy accommodates both business activity & product volume growth

Not long after implementing Esker Order Management, Accord Healthcare was able to record a number of benefits, such as:

Reduced time for processing EDI orders, down from three minutes to 33 seconds per order.

Freed up 190 hours per month, enabling CSRs to spend more time on higher-value tasks focusing on customers.

Improved customer response time with instant access to error-free information, enhanced by automatic data capture and anomaly detection.

Increased control and visibility over 100% of orders, including EDI. Dashboards featuring all incoming orders enable CSRs to easily manage/approve pending and urgent orders, and monitor relevant KPIs.

High degree of automation resulting in 68% of orders not requiring any changes and 28% requiring only one change.

Orders automatically split by product type (e.g., cold, ambient temperature) and reception format (e.g., fax, email, EDI).

Improved order confirmation process as customers receive automatic confirmations through their preferred channel as well as a recap of the order and status updates in real time, including transport and delivery time information.

Increased customer satisfaction with the ability to customise messages sent to customers.

Centralised archiving of all orders while retaining access to original documents through a link to the ERP.

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“Customer satisfaction has increased thanks to the automatic issuance of order status information. And as an added bonus, our Customer Service team is happier because there are fewer calls requesting information.”

María Carmen Cano,
Head of Customer Service & Commercial Admin,
Accord Healthcare Spain



“We now resolve claims faster and can even anticipate them before they happen by alerting the customer and sales reps. We are also able to customise order confirmations for each customer, and all this is possible because our CSRs no longer spend time on low-value tasks. They have time to spend on doing what they do best, which is delivering excellent customer service.”

María Carmen Cano,
Head of Customer Service & Commercial Admin,
Accord Healthcare Spain

Want to automate your order management process like Accord Healthcare?

Get in touch with Esker

About Esker

Esker is a global cloud platform built to unlock strategic value for Finance, Procurement and Customer Service professionals, and strengthen collaboration between companies by automating the cash conversion cycle. Founded in 1985, Esker operates in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific with global headquarters in Lyon, France, and U.S. headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin. Our customers use our cloud solutions to increase the efficiency, productivity and visibility of their source-to-pay (S2P) and order-to-cash (O2C) processes.



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