



# **Maximizing B2B & Supply Chain Management**

Best Practices for Optimizing Integration Architecture

***Version 1.0***

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# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Executive Summary</b> .....                           | 3  |
| <b>The Issues:</b> .....                                 | 4  |
| • Evolving Business Requirements                         |    |
| • Trading Partner Capabilities                           |    |
| • IT Infrastructure Reality                              |    |
| <b>The Strategy:</b> .....                               | 7  |
| • Document Exchange & Integration                        |    |
| • Data Transformation & Validation                       |    |
| • Business Process Management                            |    |
| • Visibility & Collaboration                             |    |
| <b>The Solution:</b> .....                               | 10 |
| • SEEBURGER BIS: Gateway                                 |    |
| • Beyond EDI & XML: Small Trading Partner Solutions..... | 14 |
| ▪ Paper2ERP  |    |
| ▪ XMLMail  |    |
| ▪ Supplier/Customer Portal (WebEDI)                      |    |
| ▪ Hub & Spoke: Data Distribution                         |    |
| <b>Conclusion</b> .....                                  | 18 |
| <b>Global Offices</b> .....                              | 19 |

## Executive Summary

Over the last decade those companies which have managed their core business operations the most efficiently and effectively have gained competitive advantage and garnered a higher percentage of market share. As market leading companies have managed their business processes from a fundamental standpoint, they have also realized that the underlying technology is a key driver of their success—having information flow freely through design, development, and distribution needs a flexible and simplified technology infrastructure.

Companies invest hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars in core infrastructure technologies to control and support operations: ERP supports the heart beat of a company—fundamental operational processes such as financials, human resources, and purchasing. However, these applications need information from outside the firewall to generate the highest levels of return on investment.

Business to Business (B2B) Integration technology is needed to provide this information from customers and back through the extended supply chain. As companies expand into global marketplaces, as products become more complex, as consumers demand quality products in a shorter time frame, the ability for an organization to manage the flow of information becomes extremely important. For example, automotive OEM's have found that they can no longer pass on expenses to a frugal and knowledgeable consumer. They must reorganize and squeeze efficiency out of their Supply Chain which is constantly adjusting to market demands as can be seen by the number of new models which are launched each year at auto shows around the globe.

In order to generate efficiency, a company must be able to manage the scheduling, development, and the distribution of its products. Companies which are able to provide time critical data in an automated fashion will see the following results:

- Shorter lead times with its suppliers equals shorter order fulfillment to consumers
- Faster time to market because of data exchanges effect on design to production
- Less inventory on hand equals more cash on hand
- Tighter control over the Order-Invoice process means better cash flow management

The Supply Chain is a vast spider web of organizations which can range from highly sophisticated suppliers to smaller organizations that specialize in specific parts which an end product may need to be successful. Technology is only effective if organizations utilize it. For years, many organizations in a number of industries have taken advantage of Business to Business Integration in the form of EDI. Now with the addition of XML, Hub & Spoke data distribution, Web-based portals, Fax integration, and newer Internet communication protocols, the cost barrier which inhibited much of the extended supply chain to become involved in electronic collaboration has been eliminated. Extending the reach of electronic collaboration and automating the entire demand and supply chain is achievable today. The question now is: Where to start?

## The Issues

As companies review their internal architectures and external processes, it is important to keep in mind the following issues when selecting a vendor. In today's competitive economy, solutions need to keep up with evolving business requirements, handle all trading partner capabilities, and simplify current IT infrastructures.

### Evolving Business Requirements

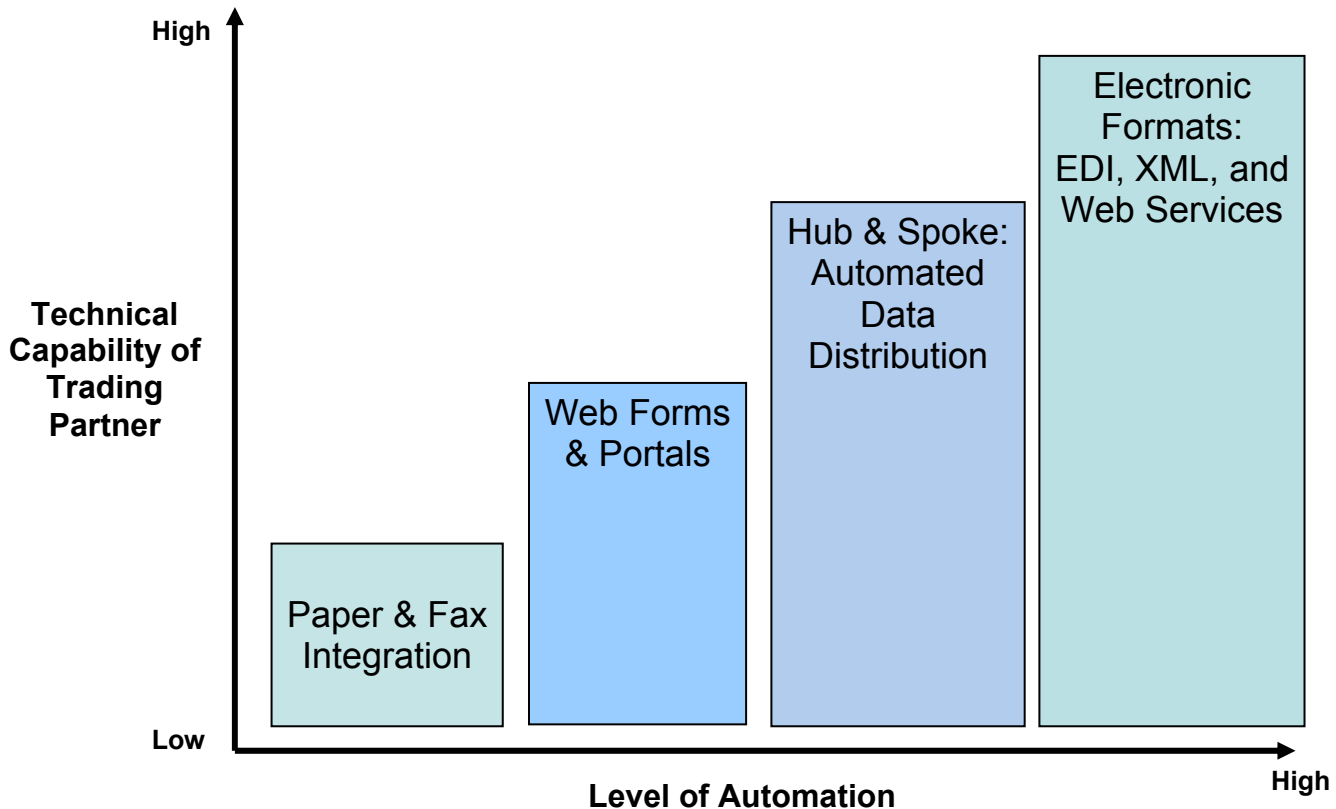
- **Global Markets** – Today, more than ever, organizations are expanding their operational and sales capabilities to all parts of the world. This expansion has generated hundreds of new customers and suppliers. The technical issue is that every geography and culture has different business processes, data formats, and communication protocols.
- **Supply Chain Complexity & Increased Business Process Outsourcing** – The complexity of the supply chain has increased as organizations focus on their core business. Many organizations are outsourcing specific business processes that were once handled in-house. These functions can range from manufacturing and warehousing to distribution and transportation. All trading partners must be integrated as if they were in the four walls of the company.
- **Time To Market** – In a competitive market with so many more competitors, it is more critical than ever to get products to market in a timely fashion. This will only increase as companies expand into new markets.
- **Reductions in Inventory Levels** – Both the Automotive industry and the Retail industry have taken leading positions on the reduction of inventory throughout their supply chain. It is about real-time production. Why you ask? Inventory is money. When an organization doesn't have their cash flow tied up in Inventory On Hand, that money is free for expansion and growth.
- **Removal of Manual & Paper Intensive Processes** – Even after the introduction of the Internet, the majority of business transactions are still done via paper, fax, and manual processes. Organizations that want to continue their competitive advantage must implement solutions which can automate these current processes and remove error-prone manual data entry.

### Trading Partner Capabilities

Organizations have always been challenged when trying to integrate 100% of their trading partners. Smaller organizations faced technical and economic barriers to enter this collaborative environment in the past; however, newer technology solutions are now available to the market. Unfortunately, many larger organizations have not implemented these offerings for their smaller trading partners, so inefficiency and manual process gaps still exist through much of the extended supply chain. To close these gaps, a lasting integration solution should go far beyond traditional EDI and XML and provide flexibility.

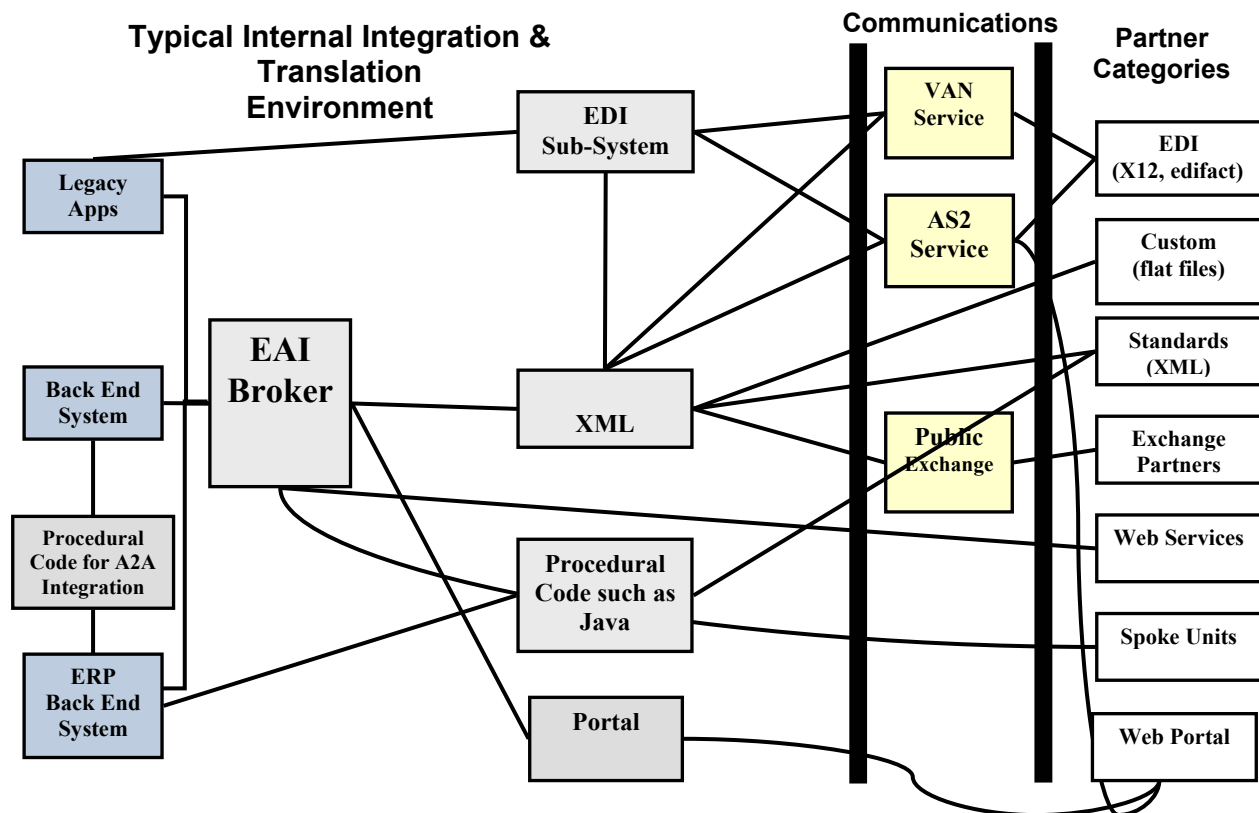
A lasting solution must provide the capability to handle data from or distribute data via:

- Electronic formats such as EDI, XML, and Web Services
- Hub and Spoke architectures for those partners that desire but can't afford end-to-end integration via electronic formats
- Web Forms and Portals for those that don't have the IT staff to support a technology infrastructure but want to move away from paper processes
- And, advanced Artificial Intelligence to handle Paper or Faxes as the overwhelming majority of transactions are done via paper. It is critical that solutions provide more than just simple Optical Character Recognition (OCR). To truly make a difference, this type of solution must be able to read data from an image, capture data, and translate data into a usable application format.



## IT Infrastructure Reality

You often hear the term Integration “Spaghetti” to describe an organization’s IT infrastructure. The truth is that most organizations implement a multitude of solutions instead of one to meet customer and business demands. A typical integration infrastructure consists of the following:



Why do most organizations have this environment?

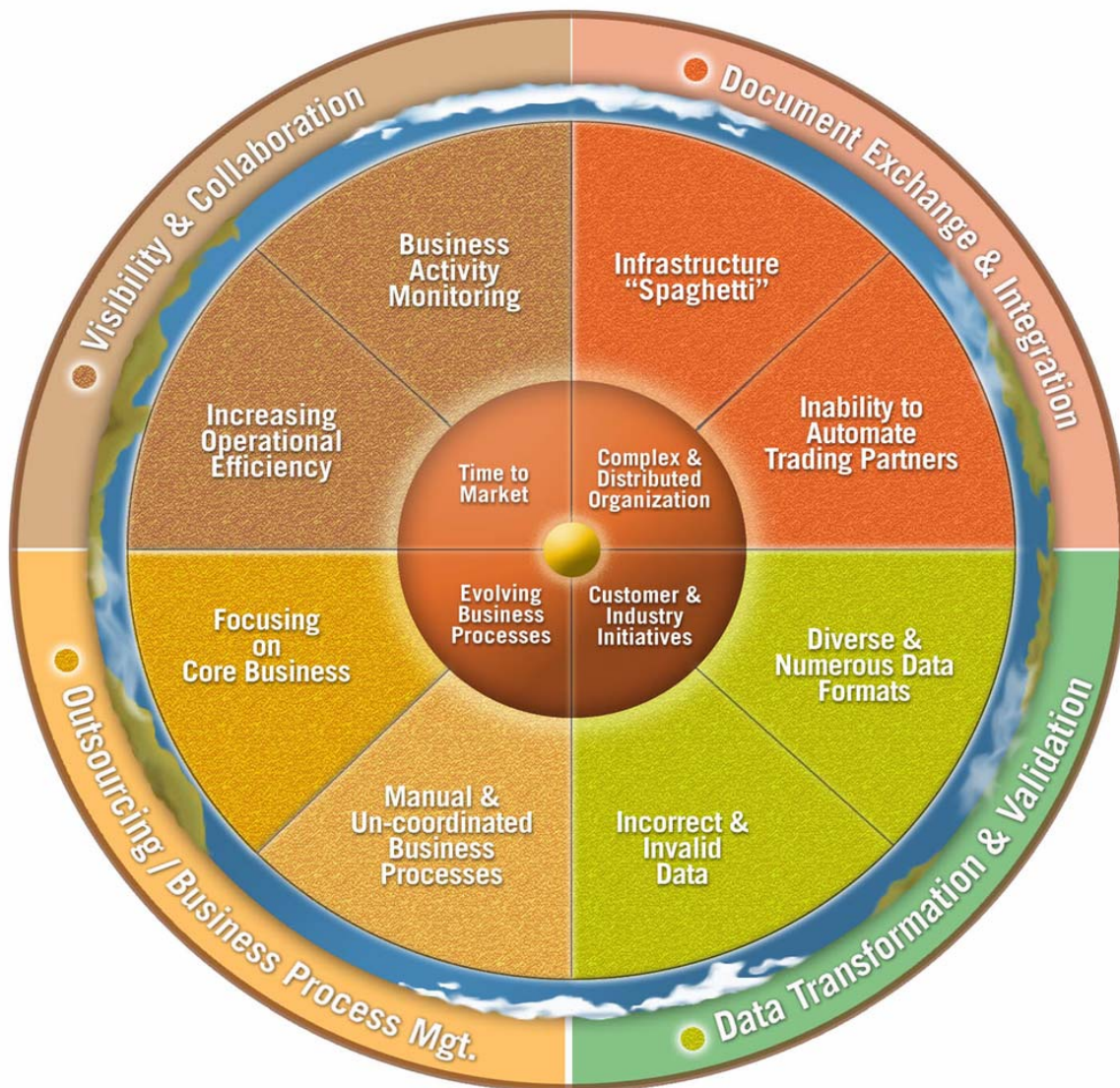
- First, many of the point to point connections were created prior to the decision of investing in an integration broker.
- Second, most organizations had multiple requirements that were not covered by one solution at the time of purchase.
- Third, when a company goes through a Merger or Acquisition, the existing IT infrastructure must be merged. They are typically patched together rather than transitioned.
- And finally, in many organizations the decision to purchase these solutions was not done centrally—each division or business unit brought in a different tool.

The reality of this environment is that it is extremely costly to maintain. Costs associated with maintaining this environment arise from multiple annual maintenance fees as well as internal support costs every time there is an error and every time there is a new upgrade in any of the systems.

## The Strategy

In this section of the paper, we will take a deeper look into each of the segments and challenges listed below. Business Integration issues fall into very specific patterns which continually build upon each other. For an organization to remain competitive in a real-time economy, it is necessary to take a look at each pattern and understand what issues need to be addressed.

Today, even with all of the packaged applications and integration technologies on the market, the overwhelming majority of companies still need to resolve their current integration infrastructure and trading partner enablement programs. Although, any section can be examined first, and any section will provide tangible business benefits, a long-term strategy should start with the bottlenecks caused by the inability to efficiently and flexibly deliver information to our employees, suppliers, partners and most importantly customers.



## Pattern 1: Document Exchange & Integration

Even with the advent of Service Oriented Architectures and the hype of fully-integrated packaged applications, the need for integration inside and beyond the firewall is still a mandatory requirement. Don't be misled by the marketing; the overwhelming majority of companies will continue to have a heterogeneous application environment for years to come. The reality is that IT executives will have to continue to support existing legacy or best of breed components. This may not be forever, but remember that replacing these applications is a long and expensive process. Even if they are replaced, integration technology will be necessary to bridge this transition. Today, the ability for an organization to extend their core processes (housed in internal applications) out to their functional business units, divisions, suppliers and customers (trading partners) becomes extremely important. As discussed in previous sections of this strategy paper, organizations must evaluate the plausibility of their current IT infrastructure to support their business requirements in the future.

## Pattern 2: Data Transformation & Validation

Once an organization has data moving back and forth between applications and trading partners, they should look into the quality of data. Of course we have to be able to take data format A and turn into data format B; however, there are additional issues that need to be understood and analyzed if an organization truly wants to efficiently manage their business. First, as we expand our business into different geographies and potentially into different industries, our IT systems will have to handle multiple data formats. Unfortunately, the e-business community has not created a one stop fits all data standard. And, XML has shown that it is not the end all resolution to these issues. In fact, there are now multiple versions of XML standards (i.e. RosettaNet, CIDX, STAR). Simple reason is that different businesses need different information. So in short, we must ensure that our organizations can handle all document types including any format used by internal applications and e-business standards (EDI or XML). The key is to have one solution which is capable of this, not two or three. We don't want to add to the integration "spaghetti" we are trying to solve.

Additionally, we must look at data validation. There are multiple areas to look at beyond the transformation of the data.

- Data Structure---this can be as simple as a standard Functional Acknowledgement within EDI that tells our organization that the file we sent was accepted or rejected.
- Data Matching---for example if we have an inbound invoice, we must be able to ensure that the products ordered via a PO are the ones for which we are being invoiced.
- Data Cleansing---the retail industry was one of the first to promote the use of a global data synchronization association. Organizations often have their own classification for products and services in their own system. The invalid data was costing the retail industry billions of dollars a year. The registry is designed to ensure organizations are able to operate despite these differences. This type of validation will also play an extensive role in the success of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification).
- Data Discrepancy/Invalid Data---once we analyze the information, we need to be able to automate how we handle issues and discrepancies and proactively send notifications.

## Pattern 3: Business Process Management

An enterprise's business processes provide the most important point of competitive differentiation. The definition and flawless execution of processes enable an organization to provide more competitive products or services, reduce costs, improve customer service, and react quickly to changing market conditions. These internal business processes must be continually scrutinized for bottlenecks and manual inefficiencies.

Business Process Management tools of today allow an organization to completely map out processes, such as Orders To Cash, from a business analyst view, a technical design view, as well as an administrative view. Remember that it is not just about routing the documents through your internal system landscape. Solutions need to affect the business flow, not just the technical logic. A complete solution should:

- Exploit process efficiency by giving end users the ability to directly design, manage, monitor, and analyze business processes
- Handle errors through automatic routing and trigger human interaction
- Work seamlessly with internal application components as well as external partner scenarios

## Pattern 4: Visibility & Collaboration

This is actually the most important pattern for any business, since it directly affects the way in which we operate our business and make decisions. We must always remember that when we consolidate the data moving between our applications, onboard more of our trading partners, and automate our business processes, organizations will have a new stream of data to monitor and base decisions upon. It is also critical to mention that in order for a company to truly experience the full benefits of Visibility & Collaboration the first three patterns must be addressed and refined. It becomes difficult to extend our capabilities if the information is not automated, if it contains errors, or has too many bottlenecks.

There are four layers of visibility and collaboration that must be examined when looking at a long-term business integration strategy.

1. **IT Infrastructure Visibility** – Solutions must be able to offer the technical users the ability to monitor the ongoing integration and processes. More importantly this system should run by exception not by research. This means that if an error occurs anywhere, that the monitoring has the capability to notify the administrator of the exact issue and provide access to adjust and continue the process. This removes the need for a user to have to proactively monitor thousands of transactions.
2. **Document Exchange Visibility**- Solutions must be able to provide the parties involved with the exchange of business information (i.e. Orders, Invoices, Shipping Notices) a portal for visibility and research. This portal can be shared with employees, customers and suppliers. This allows each party to see if their exchange was executed flawlessly or if there were errors that need to be adjusted. Additionally, this information can be used for analytical purposes. For example, a person in the supply chain could research how many transactions were delayed or in error from a specific trading partner. This type of information is invaluable to senior decision makers.

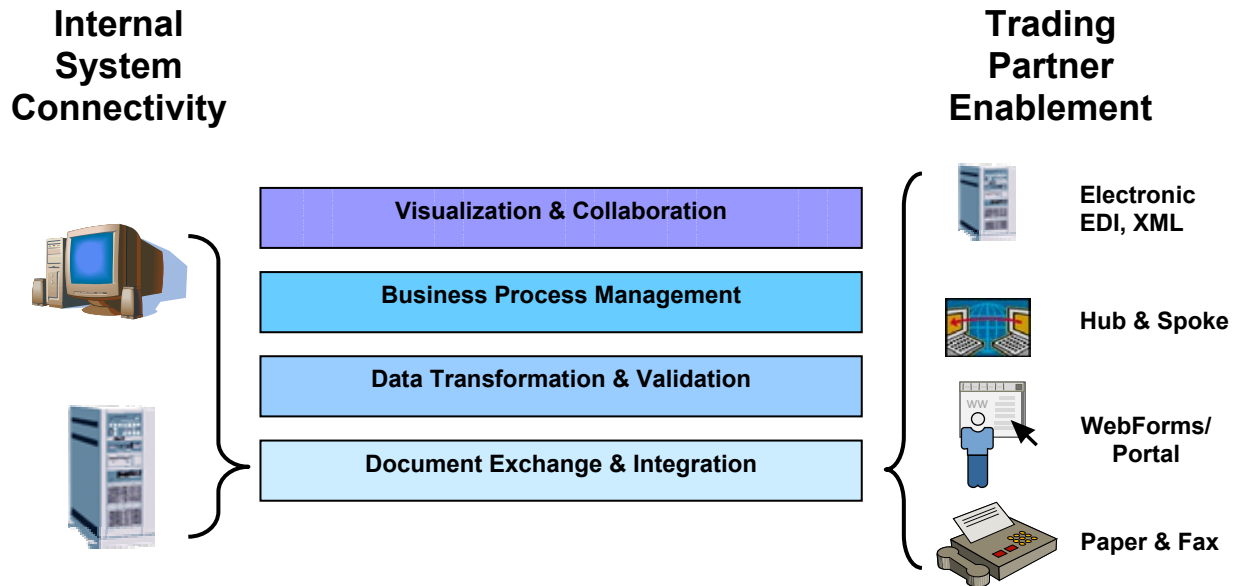
3. **Business Process Collaboration** – By sharing our business process and inviting our partners into our operational model, we move from just allowing access to our information to coordinating actions. One of the common issues that often occurs with the exchange of Orders is invalid information. Solutions are now able to recognize those data errors, alert our partners, and provide them with a portal to correct the information.
4. **Collaborative Applications** – This is by far the most extensive goal that generates the most business benefit. But again, this layer is not possible if the exchange of information is disorganized and error-prone. Once the information is moving correctly, we have the capability to apply logic and rules that can lead to greater business benefits. Some applications in use today include:
  - a. Vendor Managed Inventory
  - b. Collaborative, Planning, Forecasting & Replenishment
  - c. Supplier Enablement & Rating Portals
  - d. RFID- (Radio Frequency Identification) Applications
    - i. Event Management
    - ii. Track & Trace

## The Solution: Enter the B2B Gateway

A B2B Gateway is an essential component of an organization's corporate integration strategy and must be evaluated by all organizations that are facing: customer requirements, regulatory compliance, or desire to enable more efficient business processes by reducing cycle times and infrastructure complexity. Organizations that don't actively pursue a consolidated B2B Gateway strategy will without a doubt accidentally build multiple gateway strategies as they continue to adjust their operations to changing business requirements. In order to avoid the continuation of multiple integration technologies and to take advantage of the immediate strategic benefits, companies should pursue solutions which are provided on a single platform and have the capability to connect, coordinate, and communicate to any internal or external application or business partner.

SEEBURGER's B2B Gateway is the most comprehensive and cost-effective business integration platform in the industry. Designed to cut administrative costs and accelerate business processes by automating trading relationships throughout the supply chain, it is the only middleware solution capable of integrating 100% of an organization's applications and trading partners --- including smaller customers and suppliers that still do business on paper. The SEEBURGER B2B Gateway is a scalable platform based upon the newest technologies for seamless integration of internal systems, business processes, and trading partners.

## SEEBURGER B2B Gateway Technical Description



### Adapters & Connectors

Adapters integrate application systems such as SAP, Peoplesoft, SSA, BAAN, QAD, Oracle, JD Edwards or other eBusiness solutions such as marketplaces or portals. Connectors work with files, databases or API-interfaces. Additional support of Web Services and standards such as JMS and JCA ensure flexibility.

#### Key Points:

- Provide interfaces and connections to export and import data to various systems
- Provide administration and observation (runtime) of the above task

### Secure Communication

The communication components establish the connection to internal systems and external business partners. Access over 60+ supported transport methodologies including Value Added Networks (VANs), ISDN, the Internet, analog point-to-point-connections, http/s, s/ftp, ebMS, company-internal Intranets, Internet connectivity such as AS1/AS2, and branch-specific Extranets like ANX/ENX (Extranet of the automotive industry).

#### Key Points:

- Provide the transport required by different EDI and B2B standards as well as internal data routing
- Provide administration and observation (runtime of the chosen transports)

## Trading Partner Management

This functionality of the SEEBURGER B2B Gateway allows an organization to develop partner profiles and partner specific business rules such as: Profile Definitions, which includes communication channels, data formats, and security protocols.

### Key Points:

- Provides configuration and administration of trading partner relationships
- Provides portal to manage large trading partner enablement projects

## Transformation

The Conversion Engine is a powerful, extensible, multi-threaded, platform independent, component of the SEEBURGER B2B Gateway. Connect to any local or remote Engine using the GUI Mapping Designer front-end. It provides uniform and clear presentation of all message structures in an easy-to-understand tree structure, regardless of message syntax. It allows you to map relationships between inbound and multiple outbound messages with drag and drop ease. From inside a map, read and write to multiple external tables and databases, add your own Java code or communicate with the Workflow and Business Process Engine. An integrated test environment allows mappings to be tested independent of the runtime environment.

### Translation components would include:

- *Design Studio* which provides a set of tools to graphically design your business processes, mappings, application interfaces, communications as well as all other relevant configuration components.
- *Repository* which contains the entire process knowledge of a variety of SEEBURGER projects. It contains the mapping rules of industry-specific business processes and their conversion into target formats of applications such as SAP, Peoplesoft, Baan, or SSA.

### Key Points:

- Executes “mappings” to transform syntax and semantics to different message standards used in EDI, B2B, and EAI processes
- Provide tools for defining and deploying new processes and “mappings” fast and in an interactive way for all supported standards
- Administer transformation rules, mappings and Message/Interface definitions via repository access
- Provide a repository of pre-defined industry, geographic and trading partner specific maps

## Validation

Data Validation is a mission critical concept that every organization needs to analyze further. This could be as simple as syntax checking to ensure that our documents which we are exchanging are in the correct format, to more complex validation, which would include validating product codes and product information. SEEBURGER includes a series of modules that allow for data validation including:

- *Syntax Verification* which would include standard functional acknowledgements to ensure B2B standards are valid (i.e. Ansi X.12 and XML formatting issues)
- *Validation & Cross-Checking Modules* which allows the system to verify certain information is correct in an inbound or outbound data file prior to processing. Or, functionality to include the matching of documents such as an inbound invoice to a pre-existing order.
- *Pre-defined Validation Workflows* can be used for coordinating human intervention for exchanges which need approval as well as triggering real-time data checks in multiple internal applications

#### Key Points:

- Provide validation of data formats for inbound and outbound message formats and standards
- Provide cross-checking of information to reduce the manual interpretation of data and/or related documents
- Coordinating data checks within necessary applications such as look ups in inventory levels prior to acknowledging orders and deliveries or generating credit checks prior to approving order acceptance

### **Business Process Management**

A graphical Business Process Designer enables local or remote definition of internal and/or external business integration processes. With drag and drop ease, link a variety of systems provided components, multi-function components or, through encapsulation, incorporate your own proprietary or legacy components. All designed processes are available to the Business Process Engine for execution. Additionally, utilize BPEL processes designed by pre-existing tool sets. Lastly, numerous pre-configured EAI, EDI, and B2B workflows are provided for standard business processes. Object oriented design allows linking, embedding, and re-use of all designed processes.

#### Key Points:

- Provide capability for defining or modifying EAI, EDI, and B2B processes
- Provide capability to define rules for the processes and orchestrate web services
- Provide capability to act on certain external triggers and events
- Provide Human Intervention or Queuing within an automated process aiding in the removal of manual bottlenecks
- Provide administration and observation of all related tasks and information

### **Visibility & Collaboration**

SEEBURGER realizes that one of the critical elements to any integration effort is providing end users the ability to monitor and visualize their current business processes. These tools allow organizations to manage their system based on exception management. In the end, it is the errors that cost money to fix, not the processes which execute flawlessly.

SEEBURGER provides the following components:

- **Inspector**, an advanced local or remote monitoring component, provides an overview of all running or completed internal and/or external business integration processes as well as the allocation of system resources. Drilling deeper with Inspector gives a detailed view of each current or archived business process in the system. The Inspector also allows for proactive notification when administration is needed. Robust search capabilities apply any desired criteria, such as date or time, delivering precise information about any process, any time you need it.
- **Message Tracking** builds on top of the robust functionality of the SEEBURGER internal monitoring. The solution allows internal staff and even external business partners to conduct research on specific messages exchanged such as Purchase Orders, and Advanced Shipping Notifications. Message Tracking is completely configurable to meet the specific needs of any end user and can monitor the entire process of a document including receipt status of an internal system such as an ERP system.
- **Data Distribution** takes into account the visualization of either the external supply chain or even internal business units. Often an organization with a complex supply chain has multiple nodes that inventory will pass through on its way to the end customer. Data Distribution allows an organization to define the path as well as the information exchange between these nodes.
- **RFID Workbench** is a visualization and simulation tool that allows organizations to manage data generated from an RFID implementation. SEEBURGER understands that as the supply chain becomes more advanced that the coordination of both physical product movement and data movement must be tightly integrated for companies to achieve tangible benefits. The Workbench allows an organization to:
  - Configure & communicate with RFID infrastructures including internal applications, tags, and readers
  - Visualize and manage the movement of tagged items
  - Trigger document exchanges to business partners aligned with the RFID process

Key Points:

- Provide advanced monitoring of all internal and/or external business integration processes currently registered with the system
- Provide notification if user interaction is needed
- Provide end to end visibility into all document exchanges both by internal staff and external partners
- Enable the visualization of the combination of physical goods movement utilizing RFID and the associated business documents

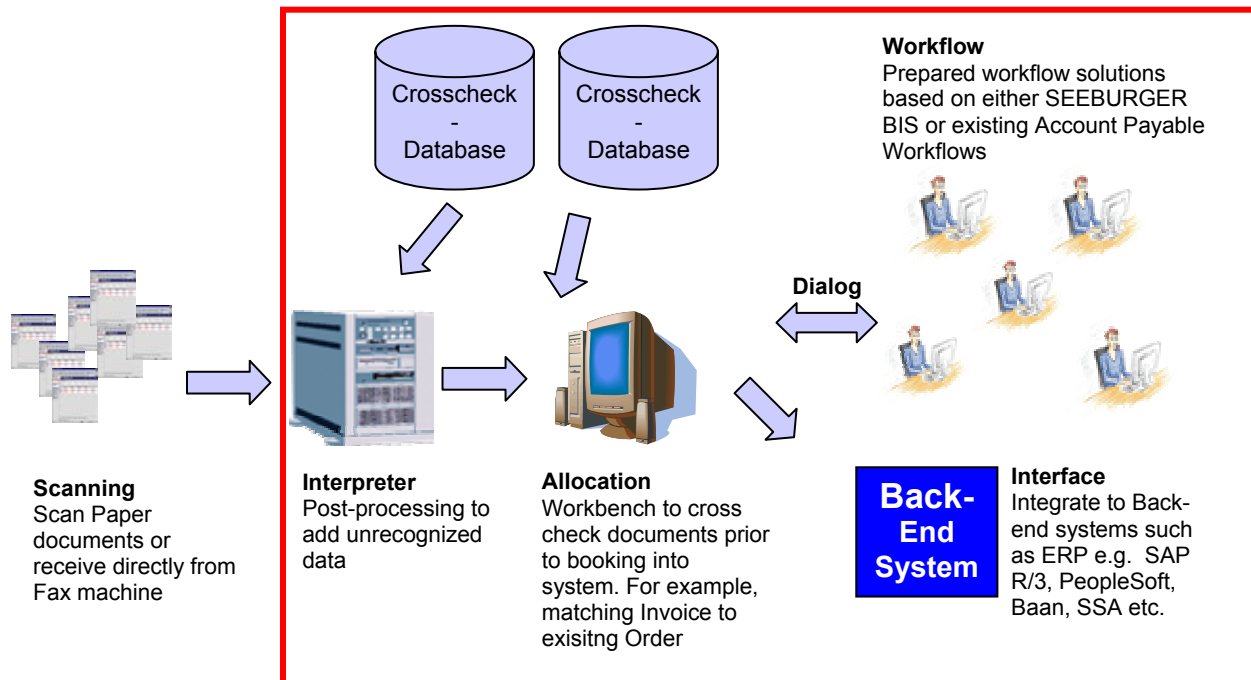
## Beyond EDI & XML: Small Trading Partner Solutions

Organizations have always been challenged when trying to integrate the extended supply chain. Smaller organizations faced technical and economic barriers to enter this collaborative environment in the past; however, newer technology solutions are now available to the market. In an environment where efficiency can mean immediate savings and competitive advantage, it is important to continue to investigate and utilize technology. SEEBURGER is the only business integration solution which provides all of the following solutions under ONE PLATFORM, so there are not multiple areas to develop or monitor.

These trading partner enablement solutions include:

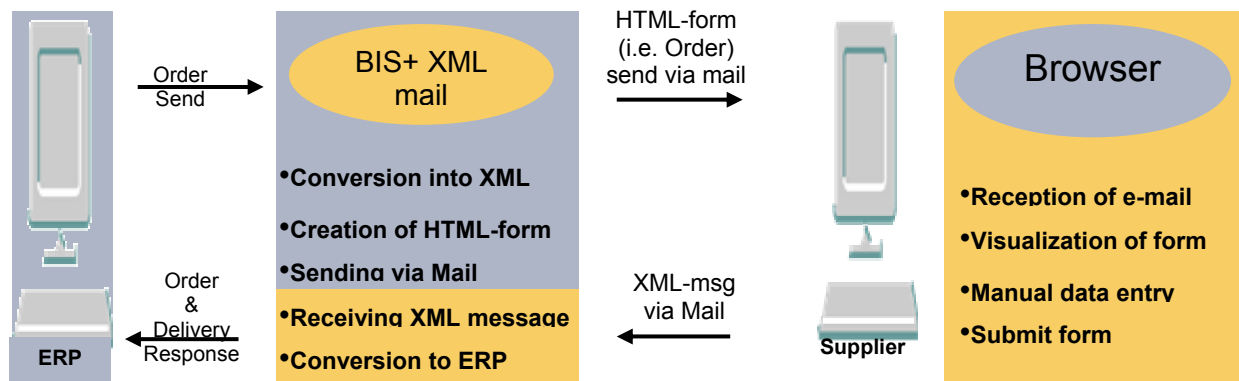
### Paper2ERP-

More than half of partner transactions especially Invoices are still done via paper or fax. This solution transforms both structured and unstructured data into application specific formats, reducing the need for both manual data entry and, in the case of Invoices, the reconciliation of an Invoice with a system generated Purchase Order.



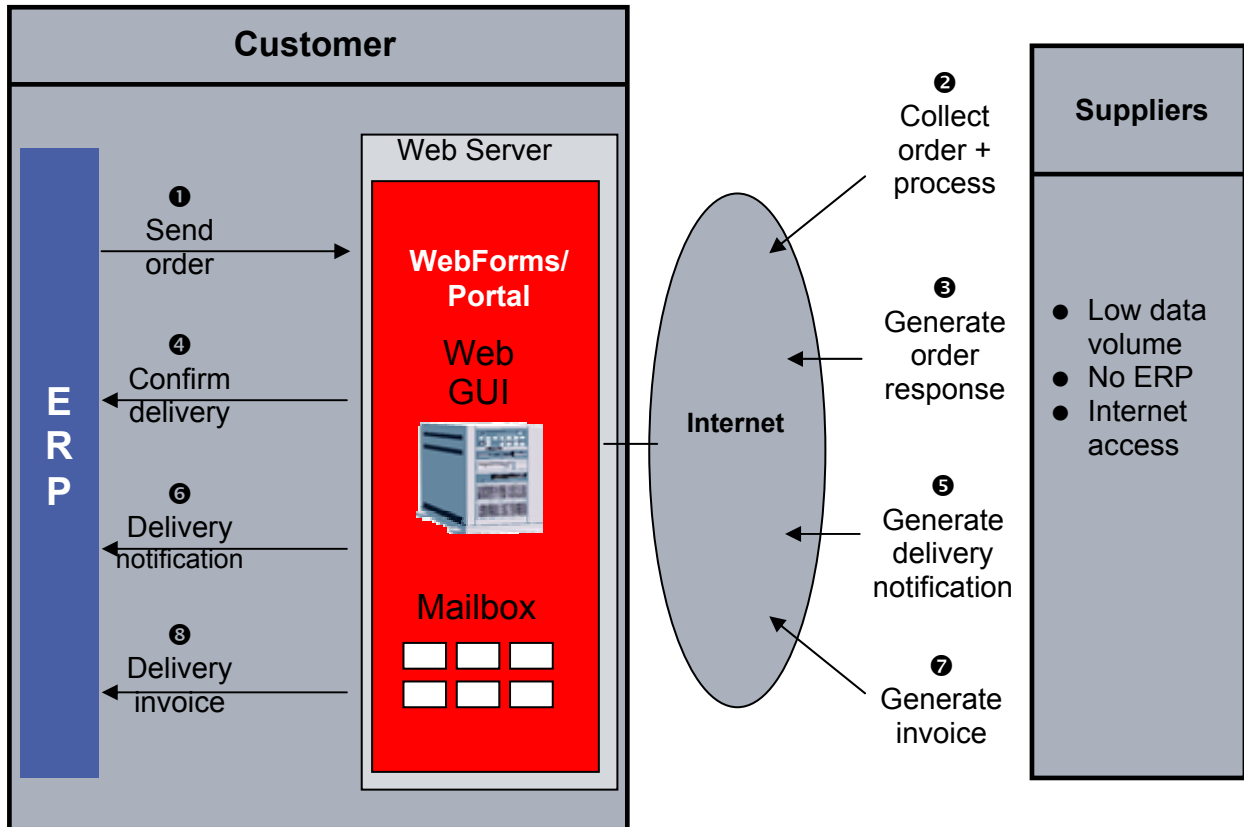
### XMLMail-

Two-way interactive email integration is the most basic means of electronic support for small partners – and also the easiest for them to use. These forms are easily populated and transformed into compatible back end data.



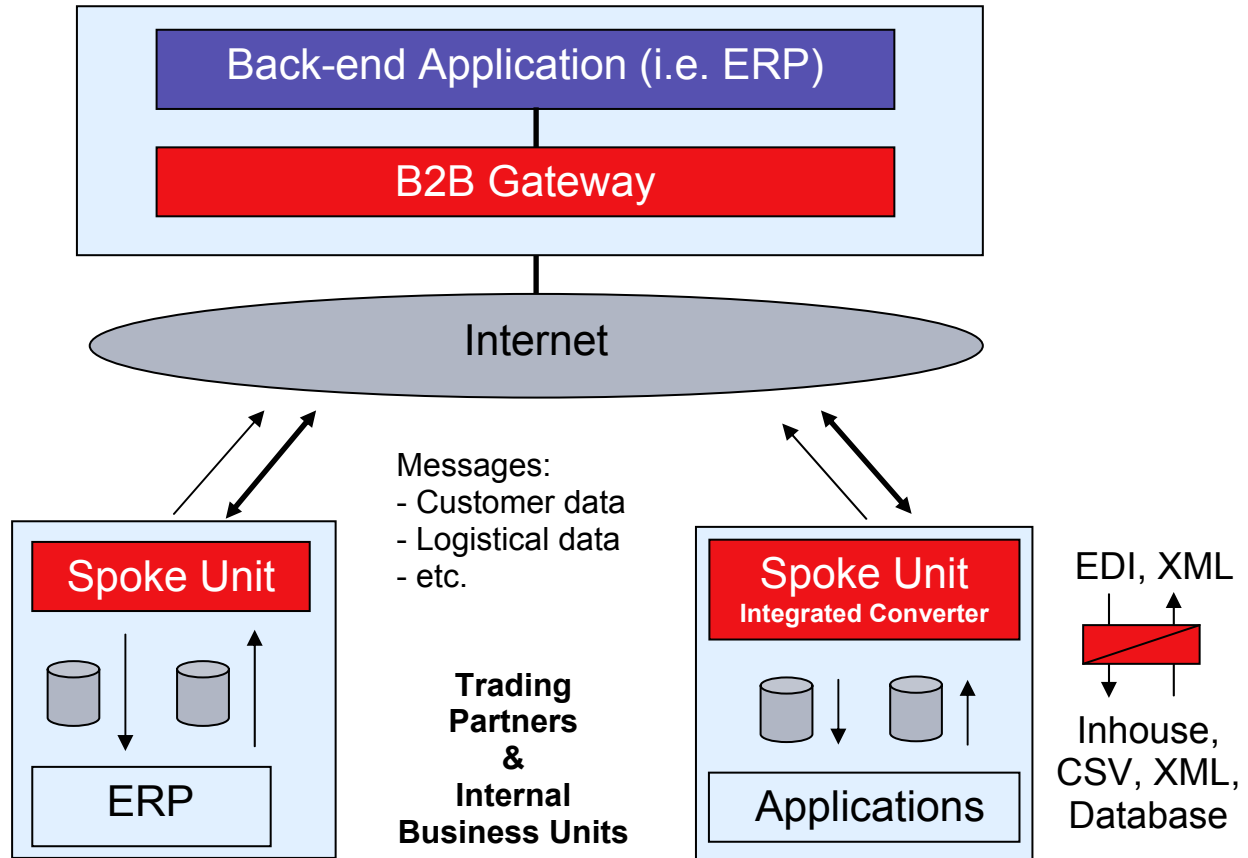
## WebForms/Portal-

For lower volume partners, this provides a convenient portal for electronic interchange of information using a web browser. It is important to note, that SEEBURGER provides a solution that goes well beyond just data entry and incorporates necessary business processes, such as the generation of Advanced Shipping Notices and bar codes.



## Hub & Spoke-

This is a centrally managed add-on component which enterprises can distribute to smaller partners. Whether rolling out new communications such as AS2, or providing an efficient, cost-effective means to completely automate trading relationships, this option has the greatest potential for collaboration since it can integrate with supplier's back-end applications.



At a high level, there are two key components. The Hub solution which is fully integrated with the SEEBURGER B2B Gateway allows the larger organization to define a series of documents (EDI or XML) which they would like to be utilized for electronic trading. These documents are made available to the smaller partners via the “Spoke” component. The “Spoke” is a small down-loadable Java application that allows the smaller partner to do translation, communication, and integration.

Additional functionality includes:

- Hub and Spoke communicates via the Internet, so there are no VAN charges
- Time or event-driven automatic transmission and reception of electronic messages
- JAVA Web Start based setup/usage guarantees automated and central version and update control
- No instant-on internet connection necessary, automated data exchange possible through mailboxes

## Conclusion

In an environment where information is critical to success, those organizations which are able to communicate and collaborate with their customers and suppliers the most efficiently will gain competitive advantage. Although business needs drive the changing requirements, technology is the fundamental foundation for generating success. A complete B2B Integration solution should provide:

- Broad functionality to accommodate evolving business requirements
- Flexibility to accommodate the different technical capabilities of trading partners
- One Platform to consolidate the expensive integration “spaghetti”

Around the globe, more than 6,000 organizations are using SEEBURGER technologies to integrate their applications, trade information with their business partners, and reduce operating costs. SEEBURGER’s B2B Gateway solution simplifies the integration of business processes regardless of the existing infrastructure, global and industry requirements, or trading partner technical capabilities.

The SEEBURGER B2B Gateway provides ONE PLATFORM which delivers:

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <b>Document Exchange &amp; Integration</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first level is electronic document exchange</li> <li>• The issue is that the MAJORITY of business transactions are still Paper</li> <li>• SEEBURGER delivers ONE PLATFORM for all EAI, B2B, EDI and Small Trading Partner Integration</li> </ul>  |
|  | <b>Data Transformation &amp; Validation</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The second level is data validation to ensure the information is correct</li> <li>• Many documents have the wrong information or are incomplete resulting in manual intervention</li> <li>• SEEBURGER delivers solutions to verify data and cross reference documents</li> </ul>  |
|  | <b>Business Process Management</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The third level is the complete coordination of a business process</li> <li>• Today, it is about coordinating the entire business process and being able to define the end to end exchange</li> <li>• SEEBURGER delivers comprehensive Business Process and Workflow execution as well as the ability to include Human Interaction</li> </ul> |
|  | <b>Visualization &amp; Collaboration</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fourth and final level is the ability to visualize data</li> <li>• This would include business intelligence, vendor managed inventory, message tracking, and RFID visualization</li> <li>• SEEBURGER delivers a comprehensive set of solutions to visualize and react to ongoing business processes</li> </ul>                            |

If your organization is looking to gain competitive advantage or desires a more flexible and comprehensive solution for meeting the evolving business requirements, SEEBURGER provides ONE PLATFORM that connects, coordinates, and communicates information with your customers and extended supply chain. Contact us today.

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