Industry leader in steel processing strengthens global brand with 'proven' EDI communications solution

Steel Technologies

Company: Steel Technologies
Founded: 1971
Headquarters:
Louisville, Kentucky
Employees: 1,800+
Industries: Manufacturing, supply chain
Annual sales: $2 billion+

Business Need

Louisville, Kentucky-based Steel Technologies processes the steel that "makes life go." The company produces flat-rolled steel to specific requirements for customers in a variety of industries, including automotive, appliance, lawn and garden, office equipment, agricultural, machinery, and construction. The organization operates 24 facilities throughout the United States, Mexico, and Canada, processing more than 3.1 million tons of steel for more than 1,000 customers.

Steel Technologies supports an extensive base of industry segments throughout North America and plays a critical role in the manufacturing supply chain. With much of its business growth dependent on building long-lasting relationships with its customers, being easy to do business with Steel Technologies is critical to the company's success. It's burdensome B2B communications technology, however, was disrupting that objective.

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IT Challenge

Steel Technologies exchanges nearly 2,000 EDI documents a day with customers, suppliers, and vendors over FTP and SFTP. These included invoices, inventory inquiries, advance ship notices, and order status reports, but the communications layer on its PC-based EDI system, which Steel had been using for more than four years, wasn't very user-friendly. The system lacked adequate monitoring and error handling capabilities, and when transfers failed (which happened about 20 percent of the time), resending those files triggered a host of manual processes.

In fact, Steel Technologies' Senior Software Engineer Mike Hoben said the data communications piece, which also required substantial customization for any upgrade, was "driving him crazy."

"Every time we wanted to implement a new FTP connection, we had to modify the program to get it working," Hoben said. "It was taking two months to onboard a new trading partner because there was so much code to change. It was extremely difficult to manage, and we had no visibility into dropped communications."

Hoben, who had worked with Cleo technology previously, engaged Cleo about a more advanced communications solution for Steel Technologies.

"I used Cleo in the early 1990s when I first entered into the EDI arena, so I knew the product was proven," he said. "Cleo was the first communications software I searched for when I needed a new solution."

The Solution

Steel Technologies deployed the Cleo VLTrader solution and upgraded its critical EDI communications. With Cleo technology, the company gained improved:

- Ease of use and trading partner setup
- Error handling when communications drop
- Email alerts and notifications
- Document tracking and reporting

Steel Technologies now leverages a secure, stable platform that can scale as needed, allowing the steel processing giant to meet customer SLAs and order to cash.

> "Steel Technologies gained the EDI solution we've been wanting for a long time. It's a secure, end-to-end solution that provides automation, data orchestration, and file movement on a single platform. We're no longer in the dark on reporting and audit trail capabilities, and proactive alerts and notifications will help us better serve our customers."
>
> **– Mike Hoben,** senior software engineer, Steel Technologies

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