

Case Study

Realizing Growth & The 'New Normal'

How Transportation Service
& Logistics Providers (TSLs)
can scale and flourish while
increasing visibility and control
in the 'New Normal'



Supply chains are a complex orchestration of people, places, and things. Globalization, pressure from competitors, and increasing customer expectations have all combined to push organizations towards expanded and diverse partner networks, and for Transportation Services and Logistics providers (TSLs) the landscape is even more complex.

Transportation service and logistics providers (TSLs) include services such as freight, land, ocean, and air, truckload, and LTL operators. TSLs can be involved in motor freight transportation, warehousing, water transportation, transportation by air, and even railroads; well beyond ordinary services can include inter-modal, third-party logistics (3PL), and even fourth-party logistics (4PL). Far from aligned, each rely on disparate data formats, numerous communication standards, and a wide array of integration methodologies, all leading to a supply chain with a complex mesh of transactions, parties, networks, and integrations.

When differences lead to an inconsistent flow of information among partners, it makes collaboration a challenge, and when difficulties in collaboration are hard to overcome, it is time for change. Poor visibility into an otherwise transparent partner chain leads to vulnerabilities – vulnerabilities amplified by disruption. Disruption like the one resulting from COVID-19 can swiftly bring to an end a success story that took a lifetime to build. In order to be ready for all possible challenges, modern TSLs need a frictionless digital connectivity platform that provides visibility across their entire partner ecosystem.



The Client

For the last 50 years, the Client has been operating a diverse portfolio of transportation and logistics services, including dedicated, one-way truckload, intermodal, cross-border, and temperature-controlled freight, as well as customized logistics solutions. This renowned and recognized leader in the sector enjoyed consistent horizontal and vertical growth year-over-year, and boasts an alliance network of more than 35,000 carriers, ocean, air, and rail providers.

The Challenge

Business Growth Leading to Reduced Visibility and Control

The Client had invested in technology over decades and when discovering a path to increase efficiencies, took it. But recently, a lack of control leading to a limited ability to address unforeseen disruptions threatened an otherwise successful operation, an operation which for the past half century saw nothing but success, and much like all of us, it found out what real disruption was in 2020.

The Pandemic Effect

The Client's challenges erupted to the surface during the COVID-19 disruption. Demand was fluctuating wildly, changing month to month, as and new regulations were coming to bear. The "as-is" model was no longer addressing the needs of the business and the "new normal" was beginning to emerge. This TSL giant quickly needed to develop new routes and new processes to accommodate deliveries at new locations. It also needed the ability to connect to a completely new set of partners, partners who could act as connectors across geographies that were once out of reach.

Legacy Technology Not Equipped for End-to-End Integration

The Client's technology stack was mainly running on a mainframe. Such a system, despite updates and add-ons, the client was no longer equipped to handle the company's growing transaction volumes – estimated internally around 3 million transactions per month. Moreover, its ERP platforms were siloed with disparate systems for LTL, Truckload, and Rail Service operations, leading to issues in processing plus issues in transaction consolidation.

The company had long ago realized an integrated connectivity solution was in order and had contracted a global vendor to migrate to a new platform; yet, after three long years, the process was only partially complete. The Client desperately needed to find a new partner that could execute their vision and actually get the work done. The Client selected the PartnerLinQ integration platform and services.

The Solution

The PartnerLinQ team deployed its Azure-native, distributed connectivity engine to unify the Client's partner network— it was the perfect choice for internal and external end points, digital channel capabilities, and even included AS2, FTP, and SFTP solutions.

The PartnerLinQ onboarding team carried out extensive testing with the Client's internal EDI team, obtaining samples, specifications, and maps in order to transform volumes of transactional data into the new EDI system— the process required seamless customer contact and a smooth transition.

While the PartnerLinQ team reviewed and converted existing maps, new routes were planned and built based on the footprint the samples provided. PartnerLinQ's built-in configuration templates handily recreated new EDI connections across carriers, customers, trading partners, and systemic end points, connecting them in record time.

The PartnerLinQ team maintained focused touchpoints across both technology and functional teams to minimize the impact of the migration – a business-critical effort, which required a “white glove” touch. The Client was able to move more than 450 of its 600-odd customers to the new cloud-based platform within 10 weeks and 1075 within 12 weeks.

The new foundation, built for infinite scaling, can accommodate all its future capacity without challenge, while providing end-to-end visibility with one integrated solution. With PartnerLinQ, it is in complete control of its business enterprise and EDI infrastructure, has increased flexibility, and managed to deepen its integration across its entire TSL network.



The Results



Integration at the speed of business

PartnerLinQ simplified the partner onboarding process through its Common Processing Workflow. Complemented by the Business Rule Manager, the entire migration process, involving more than 1,000 partners and customers, was completed in 12 weeks.



Scale in transaction volume

The PartnerLinQ team helped the Client recalibrate its view to include visibility of more than 15 million transactions the Client was actually processing every month. PartnerLinQ's Azure-based hybrid cloud architecture ensured that the company's system can handle the nearly 800,000 inbound and outbound transactions per day – twice its required capacity to keep up with its expanding carrier network.



Simplified IT infrastructure

PartnerLinQ integrated seamlessly with the Client's legacy systems, and a new TMS, and with no additional licensing. The Client is now better-positioned to drive greater efficiencies using cooperative technologies that provide real-time updates and actionable insight.



Enhanced visibility to address pain points

Real-time insight is key – the Client uses insight to deliver consistent customer value at every touchpoint. PartnerLinQ helped the company turn around previously falling service ratings with some of its biggest clients by providing greater visibility into the operations of its carrier partners. Today, the Client is on course to consistently deliver on its own service-level commitments.

The Future

Scalable and Resilient Digital Connectivity to Fuel Continuous Innovation

Powered by PartnerLinQ, the Client has a set of tools that facilitates expansion into alternative business processes and carrier partnerships. It can also onboard 20-30 new partners each month, each integrated without complication and with capabilities that unify connectivity across its network. The company is well-positioned to sustainably deliver innovations that optimize its business operations, improve the bottom line, and exceed customer expectations.

The topmost common and contract freight carriers operating in the US, Canada, and Mexico were taken completely unaware by the COVID-19 pandemic after years of pursuing largely uninterrupted business models. These TLS titans are now actively looking at their processes, partnerships, and technologies to chart out a journey into the future – and it's time to take a look for yourself.

Several months after the completion of the project, one of the principals involved in the project commented, "We learned recently a competitor went with an alternate platform... our competitor is [only] 20% deployed after one year. Thank you, PartnerLinQ."

About PartnerLinQ: Enterprise Connectivity at the Speed of Business

PartnerLinQ is an innovative, process-centric, easy-to-use integration platform that enables API-led, cloud-native integrations. It easily handles both standard and proprietary file-based formats, including custom integrations. The solution is well suited for retail, e-commerce, wholesale, transportation, 3PL, as well as distribution, digital, and analog partner ecosystems and helps your team achieve operational efficiency and gain real-time visibility.



Tools & Technologies



Providing industry-focused leadership in technology and consulting

PartnerLinQ was designed by a team with more than 25 years of deep integration experience, providing industry-focused leadership in technology and consulting and in the development of innovative solutions that drive global supply chain transformation from the factory floor to the consumer doorstep. It integrates natively with Microsoft Dynamics 365, while also providing robust support for more than 73 ERP systems and ecommerce platforms.

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