



PartnerLinQ

Connect Possibilities.

Keeping It Simple

Easy PartnerOnboarding
for an Integrated
Supply Chain



www.partnerlinq.com

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About
PartnerLinQ

Easy Partner Onboarding for an Integrated Supply Chain

Disruption has been the buzzword dominating technology discussions for decades. Yet, most companies have been slow to react to the need for digitalization in their supply chains. According to McKinsey's pre-pandemic survey, only 2% of companies reported having a focus on their supply chains as part of their digital strategy and 2020 certainly changed all that.



While the pandemic raged, chaos was unleashed across the world economies, on the supply chains. The impact was felt by every business on both the supply and demand sides. Factory output slowed or ceased entirely, warehouses and transportation companies continued to operate albeit at below capacity, and demand fluctuated wildly mirroring changes in consumer behavior, customer needs, and spending patterns.

Disrupted supply, fluctuating demand, and changing consumer behavior pushed companies to reassess their entire business processes – first, to keep up with the fluctuations and now, as a measure to shore up their business and return to some semblance of normalcy. Ecommerce was a boon to many and continues to gain momentum, with smaller more agile competitors presenting many new challenges to much bigger players.

Technological innovations related to ecommerce have grown at an unprecedented rate as digital tools now hold the key to connecting and enabling the disconnected. 2021 has become an extraordinary time for innovation, with the EDI innovators driving much of the enablement. We've all heard the fictional foretelling of the end of EDI. After 2020, we can be certain that the tale remains a fiction – and a fiction that has moved farther and farther from reality as the events of 2020 unfolded and EDI continued to drive digital transformation and, more importantly, growth.

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Mitigating risk, minimizing cost, and optimizing value requires a supply chain strategy that is strongly aligned with the needs of business. Failure to identify and then address gaps can lead to disaster, particularly when events like those observed in 2020 appear from nowhere.

The New Normal

The new normal is characterized by a fast-evolving business landscape that requires today's organizations to continuously improve, revamp their business models, and continue to add new suppliers, intermediaries, and sales channels to their B2B value chains. EDI solutions and, in particular, the solution innovators are key. EDI innovators provide secure digital channels that support shared processes, transactions, document types, and communication methods, all while meeting stringent service levels and customer demands. One survey recently indicated that 40% of businesses need almost a month to onboard a new partner; when extrapolated to potentially hundreds of trading partners, it becomes very clear why a 1:1 EDI mapping solution is no longer adequate. So it becomes imperative for today's organizations to engage an EDI innovator and adopt the right tool with a consolidated partner onboarding approach to decrease complexity and onboard vendors and suppliers at the speed of business.



Is Your Legacy EDI Solution Up to the Task?

As organizations set out to modernize their EDI solutions, they first need to identify the processes that lead to avoidable inefficiencies and higher costs. This process often leads to identification of a new digital solution or partner with which to proceed. Often, deploying a new digital solution can be costly and time-consuming and carries with it the risk of disrupting business. So mitigating risks and avoiding a specific activity that may impact productivity or revenue generation is critical to the process. This initiates the question – do we really need a new digital solution, a new partner, or both? Fortunately, finding the answer is a matter of looking out for clues:



Automated Workflows

Simply put, does your solution run largely on manual processes? Are there automated workflows or a lack of automation? If you have to do something like run a batch job on a regular basis the answer is maybe 'YES'. We can and should take a simple view of the basics. Commerce today is truly, which makes EDI and ecommerce a 24/7/365 operation. While your business hours need not be 24/7, your system should respond to orders, tender loads, and manage exceptions automatically. If your EDI and ecommerce solution requires uploads and downloads and involves your people, then adding new partners and channels will most certainly add to your complexities, inefficiencies, and costs. EDI solutions should automate tasks like retrieving purchase orders, creating shipping documents, and sending invoices. If your people are printing orders, hand keying invoices, or running batch processes, it is definitely a good time for a change.



Inability to Scale

While standard EDI transactions will vary across industries and partners, outdated legacy EDI solutions are designed to perform specific tasks in a particular way and cannot easily adapt to change. The scaling required to support new or updated requirements necessary to participate in a growing business ecosystem is simply not available. Similarly, outdated legacy EDI solutions can neither natively integrate with an ERP or CRM for end-to-end processing nor handle multiple end-point systems without additional licensing. The result is a supply chain organization with more constraints, more chargebacks, and more resources simply to try and get the job done. All of this is time-consuming, inefficient, and wholly unscalable. If this sounds like your EDI solution today, it is definitely a time for a change.



Consuming Complexities

Your EDI and ecommerce solution should be able to induct invoices into your ERP, process orders, and send confirmations automatically, without manual intervention or complexity. If your team is continually coping with complex, manual processes, they might as well be stuffing envelopes, making phone calls, and sending out emails. If this is the case in your business, it is definitely a time for a change.



Escalating Costs

Escalating costs is yet another key indicator of an inefficient 'solution' processes and complex mapping add time, resources, and costs. Also, as businesses grow and the number of transactions increase, legacy EDI solution increase, while services and support decline. What these legacy solutions provide in lieu of upgrades are additional changes and monthly fee increases. If this sounds like your EDI solution, it is definitely a time for a change.

A Strategy for Easy Partner Onboarding

Companies need to speed up time-to-market for new products and services to avoid falling behind the competition. B2B and EDI integration can quickly become complex when a large number of trading partners wait in queue for mapping updates or integration. Shortcomings become challenges without the right technology.

Better integration with better tools allows for new connections to be set up faster. Modern EDI systems can be more easily adapted to new integration requirements and scale to meet changing market demands, which drives revenue and opens up new sales channels.



Identify your Trading Partners

Identify the partners you currently trade with using EDI as well as those you would consider onboarding. Instead of taking the age old 'top-tier' approach, consider a 'first-in-first-out' approach to capture the full benefit and speed up onboarding. A 'first-in-first-out' approach considers all of our trading partners, with the largest partners likely to lead the way in your process. If you supply products to a specific retailer, analysing the requirements of similar trading partners in the same channel helps you build your EDI practice.



Analyse your EDI Transactions

Identify the ongoing transactions with your trading partners and list out potential transactions that your trading partners may require in future. Since you have already identified the prospective trading partners and the transactions they would require, you already have a pretty good idea of what is needed. So at this stage, you can start discussions with your new solution provider as well as new trading and retail partners. Since you understand which EDI transactions are in play, the discussion will be smoother and more favourable than it might have been had you skipped this stage. Analysing and understanding transactions and trading partners gives you a strategic advantage that many companies overlook.



Define a Repeatable Process

Understanding how you work with your trading partners helps you identify your integration path. For example, if you process purchase orders, you know that they are all processed in mostly the same way. The same holds true for the likes of shipments and invoices. Grouping similar transactions together helps you identify repeatable processes within your organization – processes that would benefit from automation, with exceptions managed through business rules. Your transaction processing and business rules then become repeatable processes, which can be applied to similar scenarios in your EDI practice.



Deploy the Right Solution

Now, with a defined, repeatable process in place, the stage is set to adopt tools complementary to your business. A unified EDI solution can manage the process and handle the transactions, partners, rules, exceptions, and notifications, which gets you to the business of tending to the trading partners that you wish to onboard. This approach stands in stark contrast to others that adopt a partner portal first, and then build a business process around that portal.

A Case in Point

This approach is validated everyday by way of successful implementations across industry sectors – specifically, by the deployment of the PartnerLinQ solution to help a leading transportation service provider (TSP) overcome its business challenges. As the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the company had to develop completely new routes for ‘on-the-go’ purveyors to deliver freight at designated locations. The TSP also needed the ability to connect to a completely new set of partners – who could act as connectors across geographies where its own carriers could not reach. Despite updates and add-ons, the transporter’s legacy system was no longer equipped to handle its growing transaction volumes or its need to rapidly onboard new partners in a period of unprecedented crisis.

PartnerLinQ’s Azure-native, distributed connectivity engine was the perfect choice to connect internal and external end points, integrate digital channel capabilities, and even include an AS2 solution.

The deployment team carried out extensive testing with the transporter’s internal EDI team, obtaining maps and samples to transform volumes of transactional data into the new EDI system. While the PartnerLinQ team reviewed and converted existing maps, new routes were being built based on the footprint the samples provided. PartnerLinQ’s built-in configuration templates helped readily re-create all new EDI connections across carrier and customer trading partners. Within 10 weeks, the company had established connections with almost all its network partners; it now enjoyed a foundation built for infinite scaling and can accommodate all its future capacity without challenge, with one integrated solution providing end-to-end visibility.



Harnessing Modern EDI and for a Best-in-Class Approach

PartnerLinQ was completely unbounded by legacy EDI products or the need to sell a VAN subscription when it was developed. The design starts with a Centralized B2B Communication System, similar to most EDI tools, with a Transformation Engine and Message Processing capability. What makes the solution stand apart from its peers is the Common Processing Workflow. This workflow manages the process into and out of the enterprise, while the Centralized B2B Communication System handles the transactions, partners, rules, exceptions, and notifications, which frees you up to tend to your business.

The Common Processing Workflow allows user to set up one-to-many trading relationships themselves, removing the need for additional support or maintenance subscriptions. It is complemented by our Business Rule Manager, which streamlines partner relationships by overcoming the subtle differences across trading partners, transactions, data, standards, and versions. The Alerts and Alert Management layer immediately notifies the user when a business rule is encountered, while the Business Rules Engine is entirely capable of correcting transaction errors automatically.

Make it easy...
Keep it simple...
and put everything
in one place.

PartnerLinQ's simple, easy-to-use configuration makes onboarding new trading partners as easy as it could get. It removes friction by allowing multiple formats and connections to use a single path, boasts an AS2 and an API layer for commerce channel connections, and can easily integrate with commerce platforms, marketplaces, B2B portals, social channels, credit cards, and shipping solutions – making it the perfect digital partner for agility, expertise, and attention to detail.

PartnerLinQ includes a flexible ERP Integration Framework that leverages Micro Services to support the internal Cache & Cross Reference Engine. Its 'No Code' approach supports multiple file formats, including X12 EDI, XML, CSV, IDocs, and custom formats. The platform makes adding a new partner fast and flexible with a built-in AS2 solution and SFTP, which dramatically reduce dependencies on VAN services. Unlike legacy EDI solutions, PartnerLinQ includes all the tools that you will ever need. There is nothing more to build or buy.

A Unified Solution for Agility and Scale

Efficient EDI onboarding means accelerated time-to-market and time-to-revenue – it reinforces a company's brand, increases customer retention, and propels growth. And all of this requires the right EDI solution. A unified centralized EDI software platform like PartnerLinQ makes it easy for a company to achieve, excel, and grow a successful EDI practice.



About PartnerLinQ:

Enterprise Connectivity at the Speed of Business

PartnerLinQ is an innovative, process-centric, easy-to-use EDI solution that enables API-led, cloud native integrations. With a simplified B2B communication engine that includes EDI, AS2, SFTP and real-time APIs, PartnerLinQ is a fully integrated platform and 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.

With more than 25 years of experience in providing industry-focused leadership in technology and consulting.

PartnerLinQ is designed by a team with more than 25 years of experience in 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's doorstep. Hosted on Microsoft Azure, the PartnerLinQ platform integrates natively with Microsoft Dynamics 365, while also providing robust integration and support for more than 48 other ERP systems and e-commerce platforms.

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