

LANSA Case Study

Barrus implements web services on dealer site

E.P. Barrus Ltd, located in the UK, designs and manufactures engines and distributes a diverse range of products including MTD lawn and garden machinery, moto-roma scooters and motorcycles, Mercury, Mariner and Yanmar marine and industrial engines. Barrus uses LANSA Integrator to exchange EDI messages with its trading partners including B&Q, the largest do-it-yourself chain in Europe and the third largest in the world. Barrus has also more recently implemented a dealer Web site built with LANSA's customer self service solution, LANSA Commerce Edition. The site also uses LANSA Integrator to exploit Web services offered by Epitomy, a company who specializes in exploded diagrams.



The site allows dealers to order parts, check stock availability, track order status and view order history. One special feature of the site is that it allows dealers to search for parts without having to know the part number. Barrus does this by using LANSA Web services to link to and pass parameters to Epitomy's Web site. Dealers can select the diagram of the engine and dissect it till they arrive at the part they need. Once the part is selected, a SOAP message is relayed back to Barrus' Web site, where the dealer can continue with the order. The graphic search of part numbers is a handy feature, as Barrus offers over 400 000 items on their site.

Behind the scenes, Epitomy uses Web services to request validation of the dealer number in Barrus dealer system. The dealer typically creates a parts list in the Epitomy site, using Web services to obtain current stock and price information from Barrus. Once the part list is complete, Web services are used to pass this list back into Barrus' dealer site, where the parts are added to the Quick Order page. The dealer then continues with the order as normal. Dealers can switch between the two sites at any time. As both sites have the same look and feel, the transition is smooth to the dealer.

Barrus implements flexible EDI solution

E.P. Barrus Ltd, located in the UK, designs and manufactures engines and distributes a diverse range of products including MTD lawn and garden machinery, moto-roma scooters and motorcycles, Mercury, Mariner and Yanmar marine and industrial engines. Barrus uses LANSA Integrator



The E.P. Barrus B&Q Account Team (from left to right) Melinda Barrett and Elaine Pontefract - Account Co-ordinators; Nick Hills - Lawn & Garden Division Sales Manager; Elizabeth Watt - Technical Analyst; Dave Hansford - Information Systems Manager; Robert Muir - Finance Director; Tara Glen - Director and Sharron Troft - Key Account Manager.

"Our market share has increased and our dealers have more service customers."

to exchange EDI messages with partners including B&Q, the largest DIY chain in Europe and third largest in the world.

Dave Hansford, IT Manager at Barrus, says, "With LANSA we have the flexibility to accept and send business transactions in a variety of formats, using many different communication methods. LANSA is easy to use and complements our existing skill set. We want to run this IT department with our own staff. LANSA hides the complexities of EDI and XML and allows us to implement new technologies rapidly."

A Great Potential Partnership

B&Q approached Barrus to carry several of Barrus' ride-on lawnmowers and associated accessories. B&Q has stores in virtually every town or city in the UK and Barrus has a wide network of dealers for warranty and after sales support. A deal between the two companies would be very exciting from a business point of view.

B&Q would only conduct business via EDI. Barrus had a dial-up connection infrastructure in place for dealer orders, but hadn't implemented EDI.

Hansford says, "I only had three months to get a new EDI system working. The agreement with B&Q started just before winter, a slow season for lawnmowers. We had to be EDI ready by spring, when the number of orders surge."

EDI was the most urgent concern, but not the only one. Barrus' customers include dealers, small shops, large retail chains, manufacturers and the Ministry of Defense. Barrus needed a single flexible solution to handle a wide range of options for exchanging business transactions in XML, EDI, CSV and other formats.

Barrus has an IT department of five staff and wanted a single solution to truly integrate with its ERP GEAC System21 core iSeries solution, without needing specialized Java skills.

"The margins in our industry are very tight. We need to work harder for less and efficiency is becoming even more important," says Hansford

"Technology plays an important role in achieving efficiency, but we don't have time to do technology for technology's sake. There has to be a business reason to implement new technology and a return on investment." data transfers via Windows-based systems and handles a wide variety of transaction formats."

A Highly Configurable Solution

LANSA's UK Professional Services Group developed a highly configurable EDI framework solution for Barrus. Based on LANSA Integrator it is fully database driven and allows for multiple messaging standards, such as Tradacom, EDIFACT, X12 and CSV, and multiple transport mechanisms, including EDI-INT using AS2, email and Value Added Networks (VANs) such as Tradanet. Exchange types and trading relationships can be quickly and easily added.

For the B&Q implementation, the EDI messages are exchanged using the Tradacom v8 messaging standard, a U.K. standard designed for domestic trade. Barrus configured the system to dial up the Tradanet VAN every hour to transfer any incoming messages awaiting retrieval to Barrus' iSeries, then validate, translate and store the data. On completion of a successful retrieval, the original message on the VAN is deleted.

All tractors ordered by B&Q are supplied directly to the end consumer on a *personalized home installation* basis via Barrus' extensive dealer network. Barrus dealers also provide after sales support and warranty services.

Each incoming EDI order is examined and the nearest dealer is informed, then the order is processed in GEAC System 21, using a customized EDI interface.

Pending implementation of B&Q's SAP system, LANSA Integrator sends order confirmations in Excel format via email.

After the dealer delivers the mower to the consumer, demonstrates how it works and fills out the warranty papers, they confirm delivery details to Barrus. The LANSA Integrator-based EDI solution extracts the invoice and delivery data from the System21 invoice interface tables, validates it and sends a Tradacom v8 invoice message to the Tradanet VAN for retrieval by B&Q.

Hansford says, "This was our first EDI project and it went very well. With LANSA, we delivered and implemented the solution on time and on budget. LANSA Integrator provided a flexible solution and a single interface to our existing system."

The Future Proof Integration

Tara Glen, company director and great-grand-daughter of the founder of Barrus, says, "The accurate and timely flow of information between B&Q and Barrus allows for a very beneficial business scheme. Market share has increased and involving our dealer network has increased their service customers."

"B&Q does not keep any stock and Barrus takes on the entire administrative function. All warranty work is handled through

the dealer, and since the dealer has made direct contact with the consumer, they will normally contact the dealer with problems or questions. The consumer receives a quality product with quality personal service."

"We have the flexibility to accept and send business transactions in a variety of formats."

"EDI speeds the cycle of ordering, delivery and invoicing and saves time and labor," adds Hansford. "We want to cover trading relationships with more customers, dealers and suppliers. Shortly we will use EDI with the Ministry of Defense, this time EDIFACT D99B will be the messaging standard."

"We may use LANSA Integrator to exchange XML transactions with our 1,500 dealers. The number of orders they generate, especially in accessories and spare parts, is substantial. So the savings would be as well."

"With LANSA Integrator there is no need to copy data, with its associated conversion and synchronization problems. The iSeries is so solid and reliable that you almost forget it is there. We have no plans to move away from the iSeries, but it is good to know that LANSA is multi-platform and future-proof and doesn't lock us in."

"LANSA is easy to use and complements our existing skill set. Hiring a Java programmer does not make sense. Without business knowledge, this person could not design and integrate business solutions. We want to run this IT department with our own staff. LANSA hides the complexities of EDI and XML and lets us implement new technologies rapidly," says Hansford.

Wider Trading Relationships

"This contract repositions us as the UK's leading supplier of garden tractors, therefore the ability to trade using EDI was crucial," concludes Glen.

"In business today, we have to process more orders, more efficiently, just to stand still. I look forward to reaping further benefits from our EDI capability to trade with suppliers and other significant customers, such as the Ministry of Defense."

"With LANSA Integrator we can handle big customers who prefer traditional EDI, and also smaller customers who prefer to send orders in XML, CSV or even in Excel spreadsheet format," adds Hansford. "We have the flexibility to accept and send business transactions in a variety of formats, using different communication methods. We have hardly scratched the surface."

Company and System Information

- Founded in 1917, E.P. Barrus Ltd is a family owned business specializing in the manufacture, distribution and after-sales support of high quality, high performance equipment for defense, industrial, commercial and consumer use. Based in Bicester, Oxfordshire in the UK, it employs over 170 staff. For more information visit: www.barrus.co.uk
- E.P. Barrus uses an iSeries model 620 with 90 office users on PCs and NCs and 30 sales staff with laptops. The EDI solution is between E.P. Barrus' System21 software from GEAC, and B&Q's SAP system.
- B&Q plc is the number one DIY retailer in Europe and the third largest in the world, with more than 65 stores opened internationally, including B&Q Yangpu, in Shanghai, China, which is now the largest B&Q store in the world. For more Information visit: www.diy.com



The Americas:
Headquarters – Chicago, USA
Tel: +1 630 874 7000
Email: info@lansa.com

Europe:
Headquarters – London, UK
Tel: +44 1727 790300
Email: info@lansa.co.uk

Asia Pacific:
Headquarters – Sydney, Australia
Tel: +61 2 8907 0200
Email: info@lansa.com.au

www.lansa.com

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