



Case Study

OpalisRobot and OpalisRendezVous

Automating E-Commerce and Customer Service

Single Source Inc.

R. Newhart, Director of Technical Service

The Challenge

Single Source Inc. is a nationwide food distributor specializing in providing mostly frozen food to county, state and federal correctional facilities. The company's five U.S. warehouses currently distribute to customers in 38 states and are adding services to additional U.S. states continually.

Just as many businesses are doing today, Single Source Inc. offers customers a way to order food online. When the company launched its online ordering system, efficient communications with the warehouses and consistent and accurate document management became even more critical. Because Single Source uses a separate online ordering company to manage the ordering process, Single Source needed a solution that could import orders, confirm FTP transfers, order guides and send invoice instructions back to the online ordering company—all without user intervention.

The Situation

When Single Source fulfills an online order, many different locations nationwide, from warehouses to customer service offices, are involved in the process. Orders need to be transferred between these locations, sometimes in different formats, for fulfillment and storage.

Single Source chose Access 2000 to create the company's purchase order and inventory system. It also uses ApplicationXtender for document management. Therefore, any file management or automation solution Single Source chose needed to be able to work with these two applications.

The Solution

Single Source chose OpalisRobot and OpalisRendezVous to incorporate a full-scale job scheduling and file management solution. Although the company also considered Liquid Time 1.22, it determined OpalisRobot and OpalisRendezVous were more user-friendly and easier and faster to implement.

Now when a customer places an order online, the order is sent via FTP to Single Source. Working together, OpalisRobot and OpalisRendezVous take it from there. Files are renamed and transferred to Single Source's database. Once files are exported, they are sent back to the online ordering company. These order files are also sent back and forth between the four nationwide warehouses during the order fulfillment process. Further more, all documents are stored on optical using ApplicationXtender and text files are generated and imported to update document indexes.

“In a matter of one minute and 30 seconds, an order is imported, renamed, sent via FTP back to the online ordering company and the appropriate customer service representative is notified of a new order,” said Robert Newhart, director of technical service for Single Source Inc. “Better yet, it’s all done without user intervention. Sometimes employees’ lives are simplified at the expense of the IT department. In this case, the IT department is reaping many benefits along with the rest of the company.”

Once Microsoft Access creates the new file from a new order, OpalisRobot renames the file and triggers OpalisRendezVous to transfer it to the online ordering company for processing. OpalisRobot continues to monitor directories for new orders. It also monitors directories for new files to be transferred to and from warehouses. The OpalisRobot/OpalisRendezVous combination also sends order guides, customer lists, price updates and invoices to the online ordering company as needed

The Benefits

“Using OpalisRobot/OpalisRendezVous in tandem has assisted us in achieving our daily mission immensely,” said Newhart. “Customer service no longer needs to enter orders manually and doesn’t need to complete any other steps to process the order.”

Because Single Source also strives to be paperless, Opalis Robot and OpalisRendezVous help meet this separate goal by providing the latest reports and detailed information for employees on the server. Employees need not take any time out of their workday to run reports, the information is automatically generated.

Software: OpalisRobot and Opalis RendezVous running on Windows NT 4.0
Access 2000
ApplicationXtender
MS Exchange
Citrix
ODBC Database
Intel processor

Hardware: Dell servers
Dialogic boards