



AN EDI EMERGENCY FOR A NATIONAL PRODUCT ROLLOUT

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I was invited to accompany a scale salesperson to visit a perspective client because the scale salesperson thought that they may need my help. In the meeting the company thought that they might need my EDI services, and asked me to do a 2-day overview and write-up of their current EDI state and provide my opinions. I completed the project the following week and all was very well received.

Two weeks later I received a panic call from this company: how soon could I visit? When I arrived a day or two later for our meeting, I was informed that over \$50,000 of merchandise for a national product rollout was sitting on the company's shipping dock, unable to move, because they could not receive the EDI Purchase Orders from the national retailer, and likewise could not send EDI Advance Ship Notices or Invoices, nor could the UCC-128 carton barcode labels be produced. The current EDI process in place could not support this retailer's requirements. I was not made aware during my review of the pending business with this retailer.

The company was investigating purchasing EDI software to replace the service bureau they were using, but knew nothing about what they were about to do. The CEO was in the meeting and kept asking if the EDI software company took credit cards, his wallet in hand. This was an emergency situation as the product advertising had already been put together and scheduled; the retailer would face some serious embarrassment (as would the company) if customers came into the store to purchase new items that were not there.

I first saved the company – now my client - \$5,000 on the EDI software purchase by questioning the software vendor and revealing that a module the EDI software vendor was trying to sell my client was not necessary.

I got right to work over the next 2.5 weeks, setting up the VAN account, testing communications, mapping and testing with the retailer. Along the way I discovered – and pointed out – two flaws in the retailer's automated EDI testing process; the retailer was using software to review the EDI we were sending, and I was validating to the retailer's EDI documentation. However, the retailer's validation software was not updated to the latest documentation specifications.

As the retailer grew more nervous about my client missing the in-store deadlines, I kept the senior buyer updated almost daily on my progress and problems with the retailer's EDI department and review process. I wanted to let the senior buyer know that the delays were not my client's fault but in fact the retailer's flawed EDI review process; the retailer's delays and testing problems cost us approximately one week of time. This allowed the senior buyer to help us push through the delays caused by the retailer's EDI department and testing processes.

In the end, after 2.5 weeks, my client successfully received the EDI Purchase Orders and shipped the merchandise to the stores targeted for the initial national rollout. Over the next several weeks more shipments went out the door to the rest of the nationwide stores, and all deadlines were successfully met. All EDI and vendor compliance specifications were met, and no chargebacks were assessed. After several months, my client was put on "Assume Received Status" by the retailer; this meant that the retailer trusted my client more than the receiving process and people at their stores, and if we said we shipped something the retailer would accept that and pay the invoice, eventually without the need for any proof of delivery.

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