Digitizing Supply Chain Links

Digitizing the Links in a Supply chain improves efficiency and supply chain metrics for all participants in the Supply Chain including: Manufactures, Shippers, Suppliers, Carriers, Distribution Centers, 3PL's, Sea Ports and Terminal Operators. Integration and the attendant automation minimizes errors, reduces costs, shortens lead times, promotes better relationships and provides better tracking and performance metrics. Maximizing these benefits requires Enterprises to electronically interchange AND inter-process business data. The interchange must be secure, automatic, in real-time and assured. There are many participants in every Supply Chain. Each participant must exchange data with one or more other participants in the supply chain. The data exchange between any two participants forms a link in the Supply Chain. These links must be digitized, i.e. automated to exchange data electronically. Each link that is digitized improves the overall efficiency of the supply chain. Non-digitized links create weak links in the chain. Maximum efficiency requires every link in the chain to be digitized.

The Internet provides the universal connectivity that is required for digitizing the links; however, there is no standard, secure and easy way to exchange data over the Internet. The File Transfer Protocol (FTP), its variants, (sFTP, FTPS), and AS2 have been pressed into service in an attempt to fulfill this need. FTP is universally available and, being free, apparently inexpensive.

But FTP, sFTP, FTPS and AS2 have major flaws.

FTP is not secure. Data is sent in the clear over the Internet and it is subject to interception. In addition, FTP servers are subject to hacking, putting in danger not only the data being transmitted but putting in danger the entire server and the internal networks they serve. sFTP, FTPS and AS2 represent attempts to protect both the data in transit and the involved servers.

These protocols improve Security but at the expense of an increase in complexity and the attendant human resources it takes to implement and maintain them. Furthermore, the improvement in security is only marginal in that they rely on the Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) for Security. Keys used for encryption can be broken using the computer power available today.

The above protocols lack the ability to track and assure delivery. They are also known as 'chatty' protocols increasing the computer and communications resources and required to exchange data.

There is an alternative to these protocols. One that offers Secure and Easy implementation, Assured Delivery, near Real-time Data Interchange and Web based tracking. Contact Corvedia to learn more.

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