



Creating the 'Perfect System' with Epicor

Challenges and Opportunities

- The largest paper distributor in Europe
- Want to create 'the perfect system':
 - Avoid double work
 - Automate the decision making process
 - Avoid manual data entry
 - Secure access to data and functionality
 - Supervised control

Epicor Solution and Services

- Epicor iScala and Epicor Service Connect

Why Epicor?

- Low implementation costs
- Big range of capabilities
- Fast roll out for new companies, even in 'difficult' countries

Why Epicor Service Connect?

- System interconnection
- Workflow optimization
- Flexible
- Transparent

Benefits

- The platform to create the perfect system
- The purchasing process is now done from start to finish in only 4 mouse clicks
- Avoids double and manual work
- Generates remarkable time savings

Company Facts

- Location: Eastern Europe (Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, Moscow, Kiev)
- Industry: Distribution
- Number of Locations: 12
- Web site: www.antalis.com



“We feel that we have created the perfect supply chain process. In Latvia we now only have four mouse clicks between purchase and goods received!”

Alexander Dargelis, Information Systems Manager, Baltics & CIS

With an annual turnover of well over 3 billion Euros, operations in 53 countries and 7,900 employees servicing over 230,000 customers worldwide, [Antalis](http://www.antalis.com) is the largest paper distributor in Europe and one of the largest in the world.

The company provides the broadest range of communication materials and paper products available on the market, delivering 3 million metric tons of paper every year and dispatching 30,000 orders daily in Europe alone. Antalis is an entirely B2B focused organization, working daily on delivering the best products and services to customers, on time and with the best quality possible.

Antalis is a pure distribution company, distributing a wide variety of paper products to countries worldwide. Their products include graphical paper, office paper, visual communication products, packaging, publication papers, and tissues.

The 'Perfect System'

To cope with the demands of distributing such high quantities of products Antalis runs Epicor iScala as their core enterprise resource planning (ERP) system in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine. Responsible for making sure that the IT infrastructure runs smoothly, the information system department's main goal is to try and create “the perfect system.”

About Epicor

Epicor is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, hospitality and services industries. Founded in 1984, Epicor serves 20,000 customers in more than 150 countries, providing solutions in over 30 languages.



“We define the perfect system as one that avoids all double work, automates the decision making process, avoids manual data entry, ensures secure access to data, and gives us supervised control,” says Alexander Dargelis, information systems manager for Antalis Baltics & CIS. “Our goal here in the IS department is to create and maintain such a system. However, because of new business demands and changing technologies, the target is almost always moving and we have to work hard to keep up.”

Looking for Interconnection

Antalis has been using Epicor iScala since the early 1990s in the Baltics and Russia, and the company chose Epicor iScala because of the good experiences they already had of the system in Sweden. The system is used across the region for all workflows and business areas.

“Epicor iScala is a strategic system for us,” says Dargelis. “But we also run a number of other applications alongside so being able to integrate these applications with the ERP system, is absolutely vital to us. We had been looking for a system that could help us with these interconnections in order to optimize our workflows and avoid double work, when we came across Epicor Service Connect.”

[Epicor Service Connect](#) is perhaps one of the most powerful business tools available to Epicor’s customers today to help them with their business needs. It provides a real time and event driven business document connectivity between distributed applications, operations and enterprises. Epicor Service Connect helps Epicor’s customers in three key areas: internal integration, external connectivity, and in-application process orchestration.

Dargelis explains: “We realized early that using Service Connect will enable us to do most of the things we need in order to realize the perfect system by allowing us to connect our various business applications directly with the Epicor iScala system. To test Service Connect we set up a simple pilot project to interconnect our central warehouse with two sister companies in the Baltics.”

Antalis runs three warehouses in the Baltics; a central warehouse in Riga, Latvia, that stocks slow moving products and two smaller warehouses in Estonia and Lithuania.

The goal for the test project was to interconnect these sister warehouses with the central warehouse to automate the sales cycle.

Prior to implementing Service Connect, Antalis staff had to enter the same order twice; once in the local system and then again in the Latvian system. This was a manual process that created double work. With Service Connect Antalis integrated the process so that sales staff now enters orders only once in their local system and the orders are automatically transferred to the Latvian system using pre-defined rules.

“This saves us a lot of time and the team loves it!” says Dargelis. “After only two weeks they said that they had already forgotten all about the old manual process because the new system was so easy to use. And we had had no problems with the implementation of the new processes so this test project convinced us that Service Connect was a mature product and we started planning for what else we could realize with it.”

Warehouse Integration

The next challenge for Service Connect became the integration with the new warehouse management system (WMS) that Antalis has implemented. After selecting a specialized WMS system for their Latvian operations, they decided to use Service Connect to integrate the WMS system with their Epicor iScala ERP system. The result was a deep integration, not just at product level, but also at batch level. The integration covers sales, purchasing, and inventory, and not just ordering but also deliveries.

Dargelis comments: “In addition we have also joined two Epicor iScala entities with one WMS entity so that everything is transparent with very clear logic. It works very well and the result is a great solution for us. We went live without problems and we have had no further issues. From time to time we have to do some modifications because we face new warehouse challenges, or new business demands arise, but we are able to easily make these modifications and the solution remains reliable, powerful, and flexible.”

Although most of the benefits that Antalis has received after implementing this connection are related to the WMS system, they can, for example, now better plan their staffing resources in the central warehouse according to work load.

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Dargelis explains: “Rather than relying on variables we now have a linear dependency where x amount of staff can always pick y amount of order lines, so we know exactly how much staff we need to fulfill orders and we can therefore scale up or down as the business requires. Service Connect provides the connection to help us plan all of this.”

EDI connections – Suppliers and Customers

Last year Antalis embarked on a new Service Connect project. This time it was to set up EDI connections with suppliers, customers and the transport company. Dargelis explains: “We first implemented the connection with our major suppliers, where outgoing purchase orders, incoming confirmations, and incoming purchase invoices are all automatically sent and received. We then implemented the same connection with our customers so that they send their orders directly to the Epicor iScala system, which automatically sends an invoice back.”

The EDI connection with suppliers has drastically reduced the time it takes between purchase and goods received. “We purchase supplies daily and create between 10 and 50 purchase orders every day. With the EDI connection this workload has reduced remarkably,” says Dargelis.

As soon as a purchase order is manually entered into the Epicor iScala system, it’s automatically transferred to the relevant supplier’s ERP system in XML format. The order is transferred and completed in just one minute. When they have confirmed the order in their system, Epicor iScala automatically receives the confirmation and books the order.

When the supplier then delivers the goods it triggers an action in their ERP system which automatically sends an invoice and Epicor iScala receives it as an un-authorized invoice. When the goods arrive, the goods received note is matched to the invoice, which is authorized for payment, and the cycle is closed.

All of this happens within just four mouse clicks (excluding GRN and invoice mapping) and there is no need to enter the invoice manually.

Dargelis notes: “As a result we now have a fully automated procurement chain. We avoid manual double work and spelling errors, and it helps us save a lot of time but without losing control over the process.

Every step remains under control and relevant managers are notified via email when orders and invoices come in.”

EDI Connection – Transport Company

The other EDI connection was with the transport company that Antalis use to deliver their products. Deliveries are outsourced to a transport company that delivers by truck across Latvia and the organizing of the deliveries used to take quite a bit of time.

Now Epicor iScala automatically tells the transport company exactly how much pallet space and weight that is needed for each delivery so that they can plan better – saving time on both sides.

This is how it works. An event in Epicor iScala triggers the system to produce the right information about pallet quantities and weight. This is automatically sent over, via XML, to the transport company that can then print a picking list and plan for the delivery in every detail. Although nothing technically difficult this has provided Antalis, and the transport company, with remarkable time savings.

“We were the pilot case for them and they have told us that this integration means that they can meet their customers’ demands much better,” explains Dargelis.

“They feel that this is the way to go in the future and because all details are directly fed into their system they estimate that they save in the region of 40-50 minutes every day.”



Endless Opportunities

“After these successful projects we are now planning to use Service Connect as the de-facto way of creating integrations for specific demands,” says Dargelis. “For example, we are currently looking at integrating our master data in Latvia with our other sister companies. And in the next two to three years we are looking at implementing eShop and use Service Connect as the integration tool. We are also planning to consolidate the general ledgers and CRM processes across the Group using Service Connect.”

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He says: “Service Connect has been so successful that we can now see endless opportunities for using it around the business!”

Benefits from Using Service Connect

Dargelis says that Antalis has realized great overall benefits since starting to use Service Connect. “It gives us the ability to pick the best application from each area of the business and connect them with the core Epicor iScala system, giving us the opportunity to create the perfect system.”

He continues: “Service Connect also helps us avoid double and manual work. It gives us pure time savings and although we don’t measure these at the moment I guess that we are probably saving up to 80% in time for just the EDI connections to customers because our internal sales team only need to check and accept the order when it arrives.”

Because it is based on XML rather than proprietary software, Service Connect is flexible and transparent. This means that it’s an easy tool for IT departments to work with. Its openness also means that IT staff can easily view what’s going on so that they are in full control over the internal processes.

“Over time we will continue to aim for creating the perfect system,” says Dargelis.

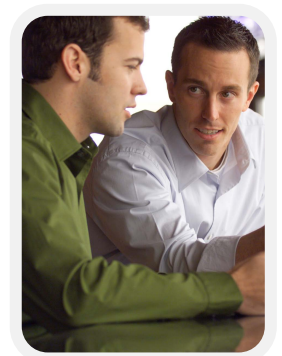
“We’re not completely there yet but we feel that we have created the perfect supply chain process. In Latvia we now only have four mouse clicks between purchase and goods received. Once eShop has been fully implemented and connected to Epicor iScala we aim to perfect the sales chain process. We believe that we will be able to reduce this process down to just two mouse clicks between order and delivery. Obviously these examples are for standard, non-problematic orders, but even so, it’s quite remarkable!”

Benefits of Epicor iScala

After running Epicor iScala for many years Antalis has realized great general benefits. Dargelis cites low implementation costs, big range of capabilities, and a fast roll out for new companies, even in more ‘difficult’ countries, as major advantages. He comments: “Due to the very fast roll out it’s possible for us to set up the system in new subsidiaries within days rather than weeks or months.”

Dargelis is confident that Epicor will continue to deliver the technologies needed to cope with growing business demands. “For example, I remember a business trip back in 2002 to the UK when I saw how popular EDI connections were. Today, the same topic is hot here in the Baltics and Epicor has made it possible for us to implement it.”

He concludes: “Because Epicor tries to be on the cutting edge of modern technology we are confident that the system we implement now will meet our needs for the next few years. But with technology changing so rapidly who knows what the systems will look like in the distant future!”



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