

# EDI. Simplified.

Case Study: Protex International, Corp, Bohemia, NY

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## Protex International

Protex line of loss-prevention products allow retailers to have open merchandise displays that encourage customer interaction and product testing. From soft goods -- clothing, accessories and handbags -- to hard goods -- flat panel screens, computers and laptops -- to consumer electronics -- digital cameras, GPS units, MP3 players and portable DVD players.

## Key Points

The company chief financial officer had spent valuable time coping with daily transactional issues versus more strategic activities.

EDI Options introduced new automation that enabled the company to avoid time-consuming, hands-on data key-in and reduce processing costs by 50% or more.

Before EDI's involvement with Protex, typical billing cycles could slow down due to complex procedures among various trading partners, and reconciliations could take days or weeks.

## EDI Options Brings Protex Up Stat & On Track.

*Protex International Corp. provides asset merchandise to retailers. The company originated as a security products distributor in 1983 and has since become an industry leader with a wide range of loss-prevention products and technical solutions.*

*Today, Protex products are used worldwide in many retail stores. Sears, Home Depot, Office Depot and The Gap are among the clients Protex supports in the U.S.A. Internationally, Protex is experiencing great success in Europe, Latin America and Asia/Pacifica.*

*Although the Protex growth track has been positive, barriers to productivity and growth have surfaced along the way, particularly in the area of transactional data management.*

*In 2002, EDI Options, Inc. instituted an e-commerce program that would eliminate those barriers for Protex. According to Protex CFO Bill Ciccarelli, the gains have set him free to put his energies in expanding the company's business rather than dealing with countless minor transactional glitches.*



## A Productive, Easier Way to Handle Key Data

"Six years ago, we processed customers' data like everyone else," Ciccarelli says. "This was labor intensive, time consuming, and fraught with technical errors that impeded timely payments. Nothing was verifiable and nothing was easy. In short, this was a key-punch fiasco."

In 2000, typical billing cycles at Protex could drag on due to complex procedures from all involved parties, incorrect input, and bureaucratic delays. Most important, slow communications caused reconciliation delays that could go on for days or weeks. The situation seemed insurmountable.

Bill continues, "Our IT group controlled the process and reported to accounting, but we were all at the mercy of the cumbersome process of manual input from a PC into the billing inbox to initiate the process. This inefficiency put a real ceiling on business growth, not to mention ever-increasing overhead that cut into our bottom line."

On average, hundreds of transactions per month were input manually at Protex. That consumed roughly 80 hours of personnel time each week. Most companies in the industry accepted this as standard procedure or looked to increase efficiency with only partial solutions.

The need to reign in lost efficiency was apparent, yet a workable solution never seemed to be practical enough, despite the army of market consultants and software products available.

"Most companies I know wrestle with

that issue," Ciccarelli says. "It can generate a constant stream of consultants, software gurus and eSolutions companies to sort through. I and most other people I know, don't have time to wade through this.

In 2000, Bill Ciccarelli invited four of the top contenders to present solutions to his manually-driven system. *EDI Options* was among them.

Greg Wasserman, Technical Director at EDI was invited to review Protex existing procedures and specific client needs. Wasserman assured him that a solution could be implemented that was simple, time saving and not disruptive to their current system or ongoing operations.

*EDI Options* handled Protex' situation much like it has done for many other clients. Wasserman and EDI co-founder Neil Abbruzzese ran a full data diagnostic that covered all of the accounting dynamics at Protex. After analyzing the total sum of their needs, the EDI staff made a recommendation that made so much sense to Ciccarelli, he immediately decided to go with the company.

The services and integration of EDI technology evolved to become such a complete and successful solution, that Ciccarelli perceives EDI the company as partner more than an outside consultant or vendor.

EDI took over every detail of transaction acquisition, billing transfer and resolution, actually becoming Protex' "desktop."



EDI set up communications for each client (as they do with new ones that come in) and completely automated all the processes for the client including accounting and reporting. Protex is now paid by each transaction received, which is processed immediately through new system, with no human input required and no communications or operational snafus to slow down payment.

"Everything is now automated," Ciccarelli says. "I am down to a personnel roster of one, who handles everything simply and quickly. This leaves me time to focus on the really important things, meaning new business acquisition, customer relations, and planning the financial optimization of all aspects of Protex."

From a dollar savings viewpoint, EDI has cut processing costs at least by half, some years even more. Equally remarkable is how painless the transition has been.

"When Greg Wasserman contacted me originally, he and his partner Neil Abbruzzese assured me they could simplify my e-commerce data operations to allow me time for the big issues and at the same time eliminate wait time and mistakes. Even better, they said it would happen seamlessly in our operations, and that they would completely handle everything. They did. In fact, things are so smooth that I never hear of any problems and I rarely need to contact Greg, so well do they handle everything."

A surprise benefit emerged after all of this. "I actually use our efficiencies from EDI as a selling point when pitching new business," Ciccarelli adds. "I can promise prospects, and even show them, how PROTEX is so far ahead of competitors that they would be doing a disservice to themselves not to use us and our e-commerce capabilities."

### EDI Options. 20 Years of Industry Know-How

For 20 years, EDI Options has led the way in making EDI technology an easier way to transact business. During much of that time, the company specialized in customer-tailored EDI solutions tackling tough EDI problems. Moving into the future EDI Options continues to produce innovative, economical ways to manage an ever-increasing volume of EDI transactional data.

To learn more about this exciting new product, contact us today to arrange a free demonstration. We'll show you how easy it can be to step up to the next level.



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