



DISTRIBUTION



UNITED STATES



ESKER Fax™

Esker Fax powers e-delivery of invoices for Bryan Equipment Sales



For over 50 years, Bryan Equipment Sales, Inc. has distributed outdoor power equipment tools. Today, they are the number-one distributor of Stihl power tools in the United States. Prompt invoicing and acknowledgement of orders are essential to maintaining customer satisfaction. Bryan Equipment Sales chose Esker Fax for electronic delivery of these time-critical communications.

CHALLENGE

Bryan Equipment Sales, a wholesale distributor of Stihl outdoor power equipment, has shipped over two million power tools since 1967. From their 80,000 square foot warehouse and office facility near Cincinnati, Ohio, they serve approximately 1,300 full-servicing retailers across a six-state region consisting of Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, middle and western Tennessee, and West Virginia. Their sales force is located primarily in the field, enabling closer relationships with customers but adding complexity to communications between field staff and the home office.

Most Bryan Equipment Sales retailers follow just-in-time inventory practices, placing orders as they receive them from their customers – sometimes daily. They prefer that the invoice be included with the shipment, and that an acknowledgement be sent when the goods are shipped. Managing the volume of phoned-in orders, shipping acknowledgements, and paper flow between staff and customers was a manual, paper-intensive process that became increasingly time-consuming and inefficient. The invoicing process alone involved several people, taking six to eight hours at the end of each week to print invoices, stuff envelopes, and send through U.S. mail.

Initially, Bryan Equipment Sales implemented a partial solution whereby salespersons would send individual or broadcast faxes from their laptops. “This eliminated some of the phone calls, but proved to be highly inefficient for the sales force,” says Tom Mattei, Vice President of Operations at Bryan Equipment Sales.

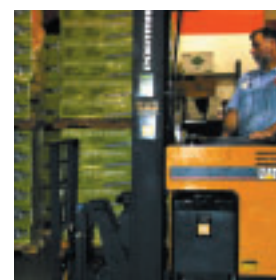
“A salesperson’s laptop might be tied up for several hours trying and re-trying to send faxes to all the customers in their region.” Mattei then turned to the web to research alternative solutions, and determined that Esker Fax would best meet Bryan Equipment’s needs.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Bryan Equipment Sales needed to transition from a people-intensive, once-a-week invoicing process to a once-nightly automated system. They wanted to be able to pull customer profiles and billing information from their HP e3000 business system. Intelligent inbound routing of faxes and the ability to deliver either fax or email according to the users preference was essential. The system needed to be able to handle in excess of 600 automated faxes per night, with capacity to expand. They wanted an NT-based system that could be installed and managed by in-house Bryan Equipment Sales technicians, and the chosen solution would have to be compatible with their Merlin Legend digital phone system.

SOLUTION

Bryan Equipment Sales purchased Esker Fax to deliver invoices electronically to its customers, rather than by mail. Invoices are now processed nightly, with email or fax communications generated according to the customer’s stated preference. The automated process results in customers receiving notice prior to actually receiving the goods – a practice enthusiastically welcomed by customers. Bryan Equipment Sales are now able to send order acknowledgements as soon as orders enter the system. An order that comes in by fax, voice-mail, or email now has an acknowledgement sent to the customer at the time the order is entered. Invoices are faxed to customers so that they have the invoice when they receive the shipment.



"It used to take two or three days to get an order out during the busy season. Today, an order in by 4 p.m. is out the same day."

— Tom Mattei, V.P. Of Operations AT Bryan Equipment Sales



Bryan Equipment's field sales personnel are no longer burdened with lengthy fax sessions. They transmit customer orders to the home office, using Microsoft Outlook, through the Esker Fax Exchange Connector. The automated system picks up the file attachments and manages all faxes to the customer. About 600 documents per day, 60 percent of which are invoices, are delivered electronically through Esker Fax from Bryan Equipment Sales' HP e3000 host. The rest are order acknowledgements, end-of-month statements, and back-order reports.

BENEFITS

While Bryan Equipment Sales considers the primary benefit of their Esker Fax system to be the improved customer service, they've realized measurable economic benefits as well. It previously cost \$.63 on average to print, handle, and mail an invoice. Using Esker Fax, it costs only \$.06 for Bryan Equipment to fax invoices and order acknowledgements to its customers – and even less for email since there is no long-distance cost. Mattei originally estimated a three-year payback period on his investment in Esker Fax, but the payback came much faster than anticipated – after just one year.

FUTURE

"The systems we have in place now help us do a better job of processing the orders, tracking inventory, providing sales information to sales reps covering various territories, and providing information to dealers on a more timely basis," says Mattei. "Flexibility to grow in the future was a key aspect of our choosing Esker Fax." Bryan Equipment Sales will be expanding to six ports soon (from their current four port system). Before the end of 2001, they expect to have integrated Esker Fax with the direct inward dial (DID) capability of their digital phone system, enabling them to route communications directly to individual desktops.

CONFIGURATION

- ◆ **SERVERS:** Hewlett Packard e3000 host running MPEIX OS; NT servers for Esker Fax; 4 ports currently installed for production fax, with plans to implement 2 more ports before the end of 2001
- ◆ **CLIENTS:** Desktop and remote laptop computers running Microsoft Windows 3.x and Windows 95
- ◆ **APPLICATION:** MCBA (mini-computer business application)

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