

Century Furniture LLC : Crafting responsiveness, accuracy and visibility in Customer service with automated sales order entry

CENTURY FURNITURE

Founded in 1947, Century Furniture is one of the world's largest privately owned manufacturers of upper-end residential furniture. The company's broad product line of wood and upholstered and outdoor furniture consists of bedroom, dining and occasional collections in traditional, transitional and contemporary styling. Century furniture is recognised in the industry as a leader in design, expertise in finishing and the details of craftsmanship. Its pieces grace fine homes throughout America, including the White House.

www.centuryfurniture.com

Manufacturing Industry

Configuration

- ERP: SAP
-

Challenge: eliminate the baskets

Like most manufacturing companies, Century Furniture is challenged in its industry to drive cost out of processes and products. The industry has recognised the overwhelming burden of trying to support a printer for each user. Years ago Century Furniture went to a centralised strategy of leasing copier/fax/printer devices to cut equipment costs. In its continuing efforts to lower costs, the company started looking at what all the paper is really costing.

In Century Furniture's previous process for orders received via fax, email or hardcopy, a person would check the fax machine periodically and sort the orders by placing them in the appropriate wire basket. Changes to existing orders followed the same process. All order-related documentation would be filed in file cabinets and when needed were requested via the "file" person.

The company formed a "paperless committee" that included accounting people, help desk people and network people to understand cost per page, lease costs, and yearly paper purchase costs which exceeded \$300,000 annually. The goal was to reduce that number and address the labor associated with paper. Any delays in order processing could result in Century Furniture customers (dealers) going to a competitor.

"Our focus was to effectively remove the baskets," said Stacy Duncan, Technical Services Manager at Century Furniture. "We looked at the process to find the negatives. Obviously the cost and labor associated with paper. But also, access to the data was all manual. So if customer service got a call with a question, they would have to call back with an answer after they found the documentation. Previously we would get a request to see the original order for confirmation or to reconcile a complaint. This required pulling the file, copying, faxing or printing the pages - and sometimes all three. So it really delayed our process if there was a question. We looked at how much labor was involved in the sales order process, and the affect on accuracy when you consider the loss of paper, which happened more often than we thought."

Solution: Esker DeliveryWare

After researching options from several different vendors, Duncan and his colleagues at Century Furniture met with Esker at Sapphire conference and came away convinced that Esker DeliveryWare was the right solution for the sales order entry automation project. According to Duncan, key factors in selecting Esker DeliveryWare were SAP integration and the simplicity of the solution. Duncan and his team used Esker's ROI calculator to asses costs with the current process and the new process, then presented the project to the company's business leaders and engaged Esker to execute the project.

Our managers and customer service staff have really embraced the idea of quitting paper with Esker DeliveryWare.

Stacy Duncan ▪ Technical Services Manager ▪ Century Furniture

“We went into an environment that knew nothing about, and Esker support stepped us through the whole process in one of the quickest timeframes that we’ve ever had for implementing something new.”

Stacy Duncan ■ Technical Services Manager
■ Century Furniture

Benefits

Improving customer service

Sales order processing and customer service were positively affected by reducing the time spent handling paper orders and improving response time. If there is a question about an order, the need for a return call is eliminated because customer service staffs don't have to look up the customer and order details and then go to the filing cabinet to retrieve the information. Original order data is also accessible from remote locations for confirmation or to reconcile a complaint.

According to Duncan, new efficiencies with Esker DeliveryWare have created the potential to take hours per order out of the order entry process, depending on the specifics of the order. These imaging and workflow results were achieved without the expense of investing in OCR technology.

Key results included:

Esker DeliveryWare also aligned with Century Furniture's existing green business initiative. And they saw an unexpected benefit of reduced paper handling with Esker DeliveryWare: a lower incidence of common illnesses like colds being passed around among employees!

"There was a realisation of what we didn't know," said Duncan. *"Many original ROI estimates were under-quantified. We estimated that a new order entry consumed 16 printed pages on average. The reality is that it is often double and triple these figures."*

Gaining Insight and efficiency

Visibility and control were key advantages that Century furniture sought to gain from its Esker DeliveryWare solution, particularly within the customer service group and credit department. Customer service management gained visibility into daily workflow as well as the ability to balance and distribute workload in real time. "The manager of our customer service group had no real-time insight into the daily workflow in order to move work around accordingly," said Duncan. *"Now if managers see that workload is too heavy in one area of the customer service group, they can take half of those orders and have another area address them. And they can do it wherever they are. The ability to balance out and distribute workload makes the whole department more efficient."*

"All of the internal groups affected by this solution are now more self-service oriented," adds Duncan. The credit department now has direct access to data concerning orders received and billed. Customers benefit from faster resolution of any order issues and increased efficiency in order processing. And Duncan notes that, *"from an IT standpoint, our production environment has benefitted greatly from having access to data that used to take phone calls and waiting to get."*

Future plans

Next phases for Century Furniture with Esker DeliveryWare include automation of quotes, proof of delivery and Accounts Payable processing, which would leverage the solution's OCR, workflow, and invoice reconciliation capabilities. Also potentially in the works is automation of return authorisations.

“Esker DeliveryWare is doing what we needed it do and has delivered the expected ROI.”

Stacy Duncan ■ Technical Services Manager
■ Century Furniture

©2011 Esker S.A. All rights reserved. Esker and the Esker logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Esker S.A in the U.S. and other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.