



Heartland Logistics Case Study

Heartland Logistics Group Reduces Onboarding Time from 6 Months to 5 Days with Orderful

Business Challenge

Heartland Logistics Group fills an unmet need in the marketplace by providing bulk transportation and bulk shipping services to agricultural companies. But because EDI requirements varied dramatically from one client to the next, Heartland was spending far too much time creating integrations—and a long onboarding process delayed the company’s ability to earn revenue from new clients.

Solution

Heartland chose Orderful as its modern EDI platform. After evaluating a leading TMS platform that offered EDI capabilities, Heartland realized Orderful offered a much more cost-effective, modern and flexible way to streamline its EDI processes and future proof them against changes to any of their core systems as they continue to grow.

Results

- 🕒 Reduced customer onboarding from 6 months to 5 days.
- 👥 Doubled client base by being able to meet the EDI trading requirements of a new class of customers.
- 👤+ Obtained ability to onboard new customers with no added headcount to manage EDI.
- 🕒 Gained visibility and control of all EDI transactions in real-time.
- 📄 Fit powerful EDI capabilities into the budget of a growing business.

Heartland Logistics Group is a full-service third-party logistics company specializing in agriculture transportation. Founded in 2020, the company aims to provide an end-to-end supply chain solution to its clients. As of late 2022, Heartland had already grown to 42 employees and \$55 million in sales.

Heartland launched during the COVID pandemic in response to an unmet need in the marketplace. Whereas many agriculture transportation companies operate on the distribution side of the supply chain by hauling packaged freight, Heartland engages customers on the supply side, providing the bulk transportation and bulk shipping services they need. In a typical engagement with one of its 240 clients, Heartland might send trucks to meet a barge at a port on the Mississippi River, load up grain, and deliver it to a major beer manufacturer. But no two clients are exactly alike.

“Every company we work with has its own nuances,” explains John Kuhlmann, president, Heartland Logistics Group. “They have their own providers, geographical challenges, and environmental challenges. So from one company to the next, the EDI requirements can be drastically different, especially since we work with many of them in a 4PL environment. As we grew, we realized we needed a way to aggregate data from many different languages and digest it so that we can provide seamless service to all our customers.”

Flexible Cloud EDI Solution to Work with Any Business Platform

Heartland considered the fact that as a startup, it would most likely add and change business platforms multiple times in the future. After evaluating other potential solutions, the company decided Orderful offered the most flexible architecture for working with a variety of systems.



“We didn’t want to choose an EDI provider that was only designed to work with specific technology because we use a wide variety of solutions across our company,” explains Adam Lang, director of IT, Heartland Logistics Group. “Orderful was the only solution where we knew if we implemented a new system tomorrow, we could immediately start funneling transactions to it. There would never be a need to reach out to all our partners and ask them to reconnect with us. Since our customers are connected to Orderful, they’ll automatically be connected to any new solution we choose.”

Heartland integrates with Orderful through Workato, a low-code/no-code platform that enables companies to build integrations at five times the speed of typical integration platforms.

Faster Onboarding Speeds Up Time to Revenue

Heartland's many Fortune 500 customers use EDI and expect the company to send loads electronically. With Orderful, Heartland consumes loads instantly and brings them into its TMS. The company then gets the loads picked, back-shipped, delivered, and moved to the destination. Each step generates EDI transactions that Orderful handles seamlessly.

We have to send updates every time a truck comes into a plant, checks out of a plant, or shows up at a delivery facility," explains Lang. "We also send updates whenever an appointment gets changed. Those all require EDI transactions— and they all need to be in a specific format for each customer. That's why we run them all through Orderful. Orderful helps us consolidate all these EDI requirements so we don't have to build a custom connection for each customer.

Before Heartland implemented Orderful, the company took as long as six months to onboard a new partner. With Orderful, that time is down to as little as five days, which helps the company's bottom line.



"We have certain customers who have told us they won't start giving us business until we have their EDI integration set up," says Kuhlmann. "In the past, that could mean months of zero revenue from that relationship as we worked to get the connection live. With Orderful, we're up and running—and generating revenue—within a week."

As Heartland continues to add new customers, Orderful takes their load tenders in different formats and translates them into JSON format. From there, Heartland can apply business logic to this data to create loads in its TMS. There's no need for Heartland's IT staff to deal with X12 files or 204 documents.



“If we didn’t have Orderful, we would probably have half the number of clients we have today,” says Kuhlmann. “For one thing, onboarding would be a slow and painful process. Also, there are certain customers who probably wouldn’t even engage us in conversation after realizing that we didn’t have sophisticated enough EDI technology to meet their needs.”

Affordability Meets the Needs of a Startup

As Heartland’s business continues to grow, the company appreciates being able to add trading partners cost-effectively. Rather than paying a hefty fee for each integration it adds, Heartland pays a yearly subscription with Orderful as well as a flat fee per trading partner.

“When we launched in 2020, the TMS we evaluated required a \$60,000 licensing fee, and then we would have had to pay \$5,000 to \$10,000 for each EDI integration we wanted to build,” says Kuhlmann. “Orderful is far more affordable and predictable. We paid a flat subscription fee for our first set of trading partners, and a per trading partner fee as we have scaled up with our business. As a startup, it was a huge benefit to know we wouldn’t have to sink a huge investment into technology before the revenue started coming in.”

Real-Time Notifications Help Staff Address EDI Issues Immediately

For Heartland, even the process of addressing EDI problems has gotten much easier using Orderful’s modern EDI platform. Whenever an issue arises, Heartland’s IT team receives a real-time notification that clearly explains the problem, which expedites the remediation process. Orderful also checks transactions against partners’ guidelines before sending them to minimize the number of rejected transactions.

“In the past, we had no visibility into why transactions failed,” recalls Kuhlmann. “A customer might send 10 shipments but they wouldn’t go through because one transaction got rejected, and then we’d have to get on the phone and figure things out. With Orderful, we know exactly which one failed and why so that we can get things set right immediately. Between the value we’re getting for the price and the outstanding service we’ve received, we’re confident we’ve made the right choice in cloud EDI partners.”



Orderful is the Modern EDI Platform that gives logistics providers, retailers, manufacturers, and technology companies full control to onboard, manage, and resolve all of their trading partner relationships and transactions in real-time. With its unique ability to digitize trading guidelines, Orderful customers build a single API integration against consolidated requirements for all partners. Orderful automatically transforms data to EDI without complex mapping and validates transactions against actual trading guidelines in real-time. Orderful proactively identifies errors before transactions are sent and provides business analysts with a point and click business rules engine to correct errors instantly to keep your supply chain operating smoothly. Orderful is EDI Done Right!



Heartland Logistics Group is a full-service third-party logistics company specializing in transportation of agriculture, feed ingredients, chemicals, food and beverage, pet food, manufacturing/industrial products, as well as plastics and paper products. Heartland offers a suite of inbound bulk (dry and liquid), as well as typical outbound solutions (truckload, temp controlled, flatbed and LTL). Founded in 2020, the company aims to provide an end-to-end supply chain solution to its clients.



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