



## **B2B Connex: Automating the End-to-End Purchasing Process**

When we introduced you to [B2B Connex](#) last December, we told you about their [e-Document Management Solution for Small & Mid-Size Manufacturers](#) that is a great fit for all types of small and mid-size manufacturing organizations that need simple e-Sourcing and e-Procurement functionality at a low price tag (which starts as low as \$30,000 / year, plus 20% annual maintenance for a small operation, and isn't much more than \$100,000 a year for a mid-sized operation).

Designed to fill the niche in the small and smaller mid-sized market left by the big end-to-end e-Sourcing and e-Procurement suite vendors whose big footprint solutions come with an equally big price tag, the [B2B Connex](#) solution allows for easy management of a slew of e-Documents — including RFQs, purchase orders, kanban orders, advance shipment notices (ASNs), payment inquiries, invoices, and sales orders, which enables an organization to efficiently conduct its transactional back-office procurement operations (especially since it integrates with a dozen ERP/MRP systems with minimal or no configuration).

Since our introduction to B2B Connex last year, they have been quite busy upgrading their platform and adding new functionality. They've improved their integrated scorecard capability, added more customer branding capability (which allows a customer to define their own logos, colours, fonts, etc), streamlined Excel integration for data import and export, and launched a new customer portal that not only streamlines the transmission of purchase orders, outbound RFQs, ASNs, and inbound shipment inquiries, but also contains a new shopping cart application that runs on a catalog that is customized for the customer.

The new portal application allows the manufacturer to tailor a catalog for each customer. For each customer, the manufacturer can specify what items are visible, what the price is for that customer (based on markups, contracts, or discounts), and any restrictions on purchase (minimums or maximums, manufacturing plants & shipping locations, etc.). Since the customer catalog is implemented as a view on the manufacturer's full catalog, only customer specific

information has to be defined for each product. It also contains embedded search functionality which makes it easy for the buyer to find what they are looking for and the manufacturer to find what products they want to make visible to the customer.

The cart works like your standard one-click e-Commerce cart, but instead of asking for payment information on submission of an order, it generates a purchase order that is automatically incorporated into the manufacturers back-office system and forwarded to the appropriate warehouse(s). Billing and shipping address, billing and shipping contact, invoice and ASN recipient, and (default) shipment method are all automatically filled in based on the customer representative's profile, but can be manually overridden as required. Once the order is manually reviewed and accepted, a purchase order acknowledgement is automatically sent to the buyer. Once it is ready to ship, the buyer receives an ASN, which the warehouse personnel can generate in a single click (as it is automatically generated from the PO data and the shipping clerk's profile). Once the order ships, an AR rep. can automatically generate and send the invoice (which also flows through the customer portal) in a single click (as all of the information can be pulled from the ASN and the WMS [Warehouse Management System]). The entire system has been designed to streamline the tactical parts of the purchasing process and eliminate duplicate data entry [which is the most common cause of errors and lost time in the tactical purchasing process].

The platform is multi-lingual and currently supports five languages: English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. It's also compliant with EDI standards and allows the customers to define their own menus, which can be used to include information about their own specific processes, requirements, and specifications. And the next major release, expected sometime this fall, is going to have scorecard (based) correction action reporting (SCAR) capability, which will be available through the portal and integrated with the scorecard capabilities.

At this point, with respect to the basic process they are trying to automate, about the only noticeable weakness is the lack of a bid analysis capability to complement their RFQ module, which would round out their e-Negotiation capabilities and enable them to provide a solid sourcing offering in addition to their solid purchasing offering for small and mid-sized manufacturers who don't need sophisticated e-Sourcing platforms. But it looks like they won't have this weakness much longer, as they indicated that as soon as SCAR is in general release, bid analysis is the next project in the queue and they plan to have a first release in the first half of next year. All-in-all, [B2B Connex](#) offers a very good solution for the price tag.