Case Study – Purchase Order Management System (POMS)

Domain	Business to Business (b2b) Processing
Technology	PHP/MySQL, PGP security, Smarty templates
Period of Project	July 2006 to October 2006
Project Status	Live
Total Effort	6 person months

This project was developed for a large online US retail website to automate and mange the back-end order processing and tracking. The online website handles over 3500 product SKUs and 100 categories and sub-categories. An existing system using Outlook macros was replaced with a more sophisticated system to automate many of the tasks.

All orders received are placed on to vendors. Order processing, including decryption of order data using PGP decryption, is handled automatically through a cron job which runs every 10 minutes. Orders are processed and automatically placed to vendors unless there are exceptions. All exception orders are notified to an admin who can then do necessary action to place the orders or call the customers to check on the orders. Vendor orders are placed by email and/or fax.

The customer is notified of the expected delivery date once the order is placed, leveraging the integration to UPS's time-in-transit tool. Once the vendor ships the product, the shipping advice is automatically processed, status updated and the customer notified. Once the vendor sends an invoice, this is updated into Quickbooks and the Quickbooks invoice data can be automatically processed in POMS.

Return processing, audit trail, notes for tracking the order, a fax log and several other nice-to-have features have been implemented to make the system easy to use. Customer feedback has indicated that there is a significant reduction in effort required to track and process orders, and the new system is helping save money by reporting data errors while processing of information.

Challenges in the project were to understand and deliver a system better than an existing order management system, to deliver a high-quality system and to rollout the new system.