

# Kingfisher plc Screwfix Direct division selects Esker to automate its order and supply management processes and deliver up-to-the-minute sales information



Screwfix Direct Ltd is the UK's largest direct and online supplier of tools and fixings to the building trade. Screwfix Direct, with annual sales of £220.6m and over 9,000 stock lines, is part of Kingfisher plc, the world's third-largest home improvement business. Whether you want to buy screws or conservatories, you'll find them in Screwfix's 644-page catalogue. Each item in the catalogue can be ordered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year either online through an award-winning Web site or by freephone. Screwfix Direct dispatches, on average, more than 80,000 parcels a week and ensures it meets its promise of next day delivery UKwide to tradesmen and corporate customers throughout the UK.

[www.kingfisher.com](http://www.kingfisher.com)

Retail

Screwfix Direct sought solutions to automate its order and supply management processes and provide its Directors with up-to-the-minute sales information through SMS text messaging. Screwfix Direct turned to Esker Software for the right solution.

## Automated Order and Supply Management

Delivering 80,000 parcels a weeks requires a high degree of automation in the company's order and supply management processes. Larger items, such as conservatories and staircases, are not generally held in stock at Screwfix Direct's warehouses, but are dispatched to order direct from the manufacturers.

The company therefore wanted to implement an integrated despatch process for managing the direct supply of goods from manufacturers to customers. Screwfix Direct selected Esker DeliveryWare as the best solution for its integrated despatch process. Part of the solution included an automated fax delivery option to enable the faxing of direct dispatch orders to suppliers. Here's how it works. When a customer places an order for a non-stock item, such as a conservatory, a file is created by Screwfix Direct's Order Management System which contains information that needs to be passed to the supplier in order to process the order. This file is output to Esker DeliveryWare and is automatically rendered into a fax which is transmitted automatically to the supplier.

Esker DeliveryWare has also become an essential component of Screwfix Direct's stock management processes. Screwfix Direct's Purchase Order Management system helps manage the stock levels in its warehouses by automating the ordering of new stock. This involves sending orders to suppliers and scheduling the delivery of goods to the warehouses when stocks run low. Esker DeliveryWare is used to send these orders automatically to suppliers.

*"The purchase orders, in the form of PDF files, are stored on our Purchase Order Management host server, which automatically sends an XML data file to Esker DeliveryWare containing instructions on where to find the PDF file, and how, where and when it should be sent," said Alderman. "Esker DeliveryWare automatically retrieves the appropriate data and delivers the purchase order in the right format to the recipient through fax or email, thereby speeding our purchasing processes, ensuring that stock levels are maintained and enabling us to deliver on our customer service commitments."*

Alderman added: *"Esker DeliveryWare allows us to be instantaneous with our order and supply management communications. It provides flexibility in terms of converting information from one output format to another, and one that is acceptable and applicable to the recipients."*

Effectively, no-one at Screwfix Direct has to manually prepare and print the order in a fax format, walk to the fax machine and send it to the supplier - it's all done completely automatically, saving us time, labour, cost. And most importantly, the customer's order is sent to the manufacturer immediately.

David Alderman ■ IT Technical Support Analyst ■ Screwfix Direct

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### Monitoring the 'Pulse' of the Business

Of course, like any fast-moving online business, having up-to-the-minute sales information is absolutely vital in order for the company's senior executives and other staff to react to market conditions and trends. Esker is enabling this to happen by delivering text messages containing daily sales figures direct to the mobile phones of Screwfix Direct executives.

Screwfix Direct's management information system (MIS), based on Microsoft SQL Server, automatically extracts financial information from the company's Order Management System and prepares an email, the body of which contains key sales data from the day's trading. This message is sent to Esker's DeliveryWare Solution, which recognises it from the subject header and automatically extracts the data from the body of the email, inserts it into an SMS text message and sends it to the company's executives through mobile Internet message routing. The list of recipients is maintained in an Excel Spreadsheet which Esker DeliveryWare reads automatically.

Alderman explained: "We run a process overnight to calculate the business net income, and it reaches our executives' cell phones in the early hours, so they know how well the business has performed before they even leave their homes in the morning."

The message contains the net income for the day plus a running total for the week. The company obviously has targets to hit each week, so receiving this timely information enables the executives to keep a finger on the 'pulse' of the business, react immediately to what's happening and take the appropriate actions. "We've been providing this information by text messaging for a while now, and the directors love it," added Alderman.

Following the success of this application, Screwfix Direct is beginning to find other uses for sending message alerts from business applications. For example, in the event of power cut - which can be potentially devastating in a 24-hour online retail operation - the company's UPS cuts in and an email is sent to Esker DeliveryWare which automatically sends out a text message alerting maintenance personnel that the power has gone down. The problem can be fixed in minutes, avoiding serious and costly downtime.

In terms of the future, Screwfix Direct is considering using text message delivery to update customers on the progress of the orders they have placed on the Web site.

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