



Inovis Rolls Out Its Multienterprise Expert Services Hub

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In today's high-velocity, information-hungry supply chains, electronic communication of data between companies is fast becoming a requirement, not an option, to maintain and increase performance levels. Logistics and inventory management are the top-two B2B e-commerce priorities, according to more than half of respondents in a recent AMR Research survey.

Once limited to electronic data interchange (EDI) with a few select trading partners, the communication choices available today are a dizzying array of technology options that differ by industry mandates, trading-partner preferences, and markets served. Companies are finding that building and maintaining communication networks is a complex task, one for which they are ill prepared to succeed.

As such, outsourcing network management is drawing the interest of many, particularly as technology vendors introduce new infrastructure and services to the market.

Inovis customers standardize on the MESH platform

Inovis' introduction of its Multienterprise Expert Services Hub (MESH) platform is a good example of how value-added network (VAN) providers are evolving. Instead of doing what appeared to be the straightforward task of providing the safe-and-secure transmission of EDI transactions, it's now starting to build communication channels that allow the outsourcing of content exchange throughout a company's trading community, regardless of transaction format or means of data integration and presentation.

The MESH platform represents a significant and necessary step for Inovis to move from being just a VAN service to one that offers full B2B connectivity, with the ability to bring to market new value-added services. It unifies on a single base the disparate technologies the company had accumulated through its acquisitions of **Harbinger** and **IP Net Solutions**.

Construction of the MESH platform also allowed the company to build a supporting infrastructure that provides a fail-safe network that scales to meet the demands of more than 20,000 customers that represent 315,000 trading relationships and generate a billion-plus transactions a year.

Network operations are now housed in a TIA-492 Tier 4 data center in Atlanta, with a separate data center serving as a disaster recovery site. The MESH platform is designed to be 100% available, and the underlying data center is designed to operate at 99.995% availability. As of this writing, all of Inovis' current customers have migrated to the new platform.

Network services companies will need more than high availability to compete

Near-perfect, almost Six-Sigma-level network performance will soon be a requirement to get into the network services game. The real sizzle and market distinction comes when thinking about how hundreds if not thousands of business partners will use a single transaction backbone to share data, applications, and business processes.

Fortunately for Inovis, it is no stranger to community management. When the company purchased **QRS** in 2004, it acquired the expertise and customer base of what can arguably be called the first technology company that brought buyers and sellers together in an exchange-like format.

Essential to successful community management is giving partners the ability to communicate electronically, regardless of the difference in protocols and technological competence. To provide this, Inovis will be rolling out its Business Community Management (BCM) suite in September, designed to make companies 100% compliant with their trading partners' data requirements.

Network services must also be available and supported on a global scale. Inovis' recent acquisition of UK-based **Freeway Commerce** not only adds another 2,000 companies to its customer list, but gives the company a ready launching pad for expanding its presence in Europe and beyond.

Shared networks are the future of supply chain

The introduction of MESH and BCM validates the fact that shared networks will become the fundamental supply chain technology platform for the future.

Along with former VANs and data hubs like **Axway**, **E2open**, **GCommerce**, **GXS**, **SPS Commerce**, and

Sterling Commerce, Inovis is putting its extensive network management experience to use by providing fail-safe network infrastructure and translation and message-brokering services, offered as a managed service to prospective users. These represent the foundation of a secure and integrated supply chain, and will aid the introduction of services and capabilities unattainable with the islands of information and applications that exist today in virtually all trading communities.

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