

CASE STUDY: ADVANTECH

Data Distribution

Scalability Achieved through Automation



Advantech is a global leader in the manufacturing of high-quality, high-performance computing platforms. The multinational company selected Orbweaver to automate its data distribution processes for more accurate, efficient delivery of information to key partners.

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A company of Advantech's scope—generating more than one billion in sales revenue annually—works with numerous channel partners that vary in size, breadth, and data preferences. The company says it was difficult to find a “one-size-fits-all” solution to populate product information for disparate channel partners' systems. Product attributes are innumerable for Advantech's range of products—cellular routers, WiFi devices, fiber media converters, USB isolators, serial interfaces, industrial PCs, and displays, among others.

Component details for its distributors including MSRP, their cost, the minimum advertised price, weights, measurements, codes, and images, to name a few, vary widely while requiring a format that's acceptable for each distributor channel. Most desired a very detailed scope of attributes, which—in the quest for accurate, quality data—required burdensome manual processes on the part of Advantech. These frustrated employees and drained numerous resources. Their business simply could not progress forward without a strategy shift to a more efficient distribution process.

The data decision

Advantech was not only interested in establishing a more efficient and organized data distribution system, it wanted to ensure data upkeep was manageable in the long term. Additions, corrections, and end-of-life products necessitate frequent updates across channels. Decision makers at the company first considered trying to remedy its challenges with an in-house solution, but soon confronted the complexities spanning so many disparate systems that housed so much data. They also looked into a different vendor, but determined the product to be cost prohibitive. When considering solutions, Advantech channel partners were generally resistant to the idea of an outside company dialing into their system to make updates on the fly. These solutions seemed to provide information access but not in the desired format. When Advantech suggested a particular method with a “take it or leave it” approach, many channel partners chose to “leave it.”

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“It's like the consumer market with Amazon. Your customers want to see what you have, if it meets their needs, and how quickly they can get it at a reasonable price. The future is now in terms of automation for business to business.”

Tim Fredricks
Channel Account Manager
Advantech



Advantech met with Orbweaver industry experts at trade shows, and were soon eager to learn more about how the company could simplify their procurement cycle and help them better integrate data according to required specifications. Orbweaver's technology could provide product data and export it exactly how the users want it—whether they ask for an Excel file, EDI, CSV, FTP site, API or other/multiple formats. The capability of distributing client-specific data in this way was unheard of—and an easy sell for Advantech, who deeply values its synergy with channel partners.

Furthermore, some of these channel partners using Advantech's data were already customers of Orbweaver, which really helped "seal the deal." With other manufacturers and channel partners already having so much success with Orbweaver's solution, it was a smart and sensible fit for Advantech's future-focused initiative on improved data distribution.



Anticipated benefits

From a data perspective, Advantech looks forward to eliminating many manual components of the process, which will enable them to deliver more accurate information—with correct classification and categorization on all partners' Web sites. The company also anticipates launching new products in a more streamlined, immediate way for a competitive advantage in the market. Having one system to spread all data will help them keep product information reliable and up to date over time.

Advantech is delivering value to its direct customers and distribution partners, not just data. In addition to providing the information in the format and structure required, Advantech is also able to put front and center the detail their customers are looking for in better decision making. For instance, when a product goes end of life, Advantech can highlight that status to their customer, while

simultaneously providing all other relevant and critical information. In providing real-time stock levels, purchasers can see when items are running low and better anticipate lead times when orders are placed. As ordering is improved, Advantech anticipates improved manufacturing internally to cut down on these lead times. By understanding what parts are getting greater hits, the company can do anticipatory builds and execute better forecasting.

Likewise, Advantech will be able to garner insights like "people who bought this product are also interested in these types of products," helping to increase associated sales. Furthermore, having the parts data accurate in real-time for distribution partners will also better inform Advantech's e-commerce business, supporting their efforts to keep the information current for direct buyers.

The value of industry expertise

Orbweaver's suite of products, which focuses on automation and integration, is built to meet Advantech's key goals. Most critically, Orbweaver understands what distribution channel partners want and knows how to meet those desires for more efficient data utilization. Accurate information and ease of use are paramount, Advantech says, noting that Orbweaver has been forthright, communicative and knowledgeable on these fronts as the partners mutually establish realistic timelines and plans to achieve set goals.

If you want to learn more about how Orbweaver can improve your data distribution process, **reach out today**.

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