Cleo®

Limitless Integration
and Automation

How Cleo data transformation improved
Dot Foods' $7 billion redistribution business

Slotted at No. 63 on Forbes' 2017 list of America's largest private companies, Dot Foods has made quite a name for itself. Founded in 1960, Dot grew into the largest food redistribution company in the United States by pioneering efficient less-than-truckload (LTL) service. This addresses many of the inventory and freight problems that consistently challenge the food industry. Most distributors are not large enough to regularly order products from manufacturers by the full truckload (FTL), or they cannot store product for very long, both of which create tremendous demand for LTL-type services.

The family-owned and -operated Dot Foods, based in west-central Illinois, buys full truckloads from 930 manufacturers and consolidates their products in 11 distribution centers across the country. The company then resells these products in more manageable LTL quantities to distributors on a weekly basis. Dot currently offers 127,000 products and delivers them to distributors in all 50 states and more than 25 countries. But with Dot essentially acting as buyer, seller, warehouser, redistributor, and shipper, the company must navigate complex data demands from vendors and customers.

DOT®

COMPANY
Dot Foods

FOUNDED
1960

HEADQUARTERS
Mount Sterling, Illinois

EMPLOYEES
5,300

INDUSTRIES
Food logistics, distribution

REVENUE
$7 billion

BUSINESS NEEDS
Integrate EDI and non-EDI formats, reduce manual order entry

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IT Challenge

Dot uses FTP and SFTP to send and receive electronic data interchange (EDI) and non-EDI transactions — purchase orders, advance ship notices, item and pricing files, confirmations — 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But the food redistribution giant uses different applications to manage separate components of the business, which requires a lot of custom code and manual data entry to facilitate these tens of thousands of critical data communications every month. Dot's IT teams knew there was a better way.

"We sought a solution to automate orders from our customers who couldn't or wouldn't transmit EDI documents," said Sean Ketcham, senior e-commerce analyst for Dot's customer integration team. "We needed support for flat files, spreadsheets, and XML to continue with our goal of automating every manual process that we could."

That goal — internally set to automate 80 percent of its purchase orders — required a common integration tool that could share information across platforms and applications while enabling customers and suppliers without EDI to communicate electronically. It also had to be a solution the Dot IT team could easily adopt.

After an on-site visit and solution demo from the global leader in integration technologies, Dot found its data transformation and business integration solution.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Move data between platforms without relying on custom code
- Automate tens of thousands of EDI and non-EDI purchase orders
- Create FTP processes to facilitate faster trading partner configuration

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The Solution

Dot Foods has been an automation machine since employing a data transformation solution from Cleo Integration Cloud, an ecosystem integration platform delivering a portfolio of modern solutions that can be deployed on-premise or in the cloud. Dot Foods can accommodate its customers' growing data requests and accept non-EDI formats, and with Cleo's auto-mapping tools, the company can integrate that data into its existing automated processes and enterprise systems.

"The main scenario that Cleo has improved," Ketcham says, "is the phasing out of much of our manual order entry. This is a big push for us, as we realize the benefits of not wasting time doing busywork or keying [in data] when it doesn't need to be done. With Cleo, everything is automated and drag and drop."

Dot also paired Cleo's data transformation engine with OCR scanning software to take the manual processing out of its fax orders, leveraging Cleo's robust mapping functionality to make further strides toward its automation goal.

"I love the versatility in Cleo's mapping that allows us to get past nearly any integration hurdle," Ketcham added. "We have a different software for our EDI that we have been using, and it has some limitations with what we can and can't do. Our Cleo software is our go-to solution for anything tricky."

Armed with a modern data transformation and business integration solution, Dot's customers get to exchange data in the format they prefer; the company's IT teams get a single system to address multiple data, application, process, and partner integration requirements; and Dot's line-of-business managers get an automated order process to better serve their customers.

"Cleo support has been second to none. I am still able to log a ticket and have support call back within minutes. I have always been a vocal supporter of the excellent service that has always been provided by Cleo."

SEAN KETCHAM
Senior e-commerce analyst, customer integration, Dot Foods