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Fuel Your Enterprise Procurement System with Real-Time, End-to-End Supply Chain Information

As today's business relationships become more complex, organizations are increasingly turning to third-party spend management systems to extend core ERP procurement capabilities and control escalating costs. While spend management solutions such as SAP Ariba and Coupa provide buyers with a wealth of powerful capabilities, including sourcing, contract management, and procure-to-pay automation, they have made little progress in supporting real-time data exchange with suppliers—a critical requirement for direct materials procurement. Communication with direct materials suppliers is often limited to emailed PDFs, portals, or outdated EDI.

Why is **real-time data exchange via direct integration with suppliers** so important? As manufacturers look to improve the agility and resilience of their supply chains, real-time data exchange with suppliers delivers the visibility needed to more effectively collaborate with partners and more rapidly mitigate potential disruptions. Spend management solutions fail to provide this much-needed visibility and collaboration on several fronts:

- The scope of potential transaction exchange is generally limited only to the four procure-to-pay transactions, including purchase orders, PO

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acknowledgments, invoices, and advance ship notices (ASNs).

- EDI requires expensive mapping efforts for both the buyer and supplier that limits its use to a few suppliers and does not support interactive collaboration. If those EDI maps change on either side, both parties' integrations break.

- Purchase orders emailed as PDFs or delivered through spend management provider portals are difficult to track and subject to slow responses and error-prone re-entry. Acquiring systematic acknowledgments is virtually non-existent.

- Suppliers must self-onboard, cover EDI expenses, address unique customization requirements, and in most instances pay fees to a third-party spend management provider. This does not create a scalable or cost-effective path for supplier partners to be successful with all of their customers.

Let’s review each of these limitations more closely and see how integration and collaboration through **TraceLink Multienterprise Information Network Tower (MINT)** can fuel your procurement system (as well as direct materials procurement managed directly from your ERP system) with real-time supply chain data.

- **Integration beyond procure-to-pay:** In addition to supporting the four procure-to-pay transactions, MINT enables the digital exchange of forecasts, forecast confirmations, and inventory balances. These transactions are required to improve ERP planning and generate more accurate purchase orders that ensure CDMOs and suppliers have the capacity and materials to deliver the quantities on the requested dates.

- **Replace or augment expensive EDI:** The TraceLink Integrate Once, Interoperate with Everyone™ model eliminates the need for custom EDI and

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enables buyers and suppliers to integrate only a single link per transaction type. After that, only a simple configuration with any other partner exchanging that same transaction type on TraceLink is required, which produces massive savings and scalability. With integration for buyers and suppliers handled by the TraceLink Network Services team and flexible modes of integration (EDI [ANSI X12, EDIFACT], IDocs, EPCIS, XML, CSV, API, or UI) available, suppliers at all levels of digital maturity can participate in real-time data exchange and collaboration. With TraceLink MINT, you can achieve real-time data exchange with 100% of your suppliers in three easy steps:

1. Use any existing EDI extracts to extend the current EDI exchange of procurement data to all suppliers.

2. Use the MINT User Interface for suppliers who are incapable of—or simply not ready for—direct system-to-system transaction exchange. These suppliers can confirm and collaborate on purchase orders directly within the MINT solution.

3. Migrate EDI connections to MINT APIs to eliminate the EDI expense. Your suppliers will have the same option with MINT to replace EDI with the appropriate Link Action integration connector for their ERP through the TraceLink OPUS platform self-service capability.

- **Replace emailed purchase orders and passive spend management portals:** For suppliers with no existing EDI exchange, MINT leverages our Integrate Once, Interoperate with Everyone™ network capability to enable the exchange of the four procure-to-pay transactions. This means your suppliers can reuse these integrations with their other customers, increasing the value of participating in your supply chain digitalization program. Moreover, the days of suppliers being forced to remember and maintain logins for scores of customer portals are over.

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- **Proactive supplier onboarding:** All suppliers are onboarded by TraceLink at no cost and with no annual fees, including verification and integration to ensure the companies at the other end of the exchange are the right companies. Equally important is the capability to configure data exchange and collaboration to the unique requirements of the business relationship with each supplier. The TraceLink OPUS Solution Environment enables no-code configurations to update the business transaction exchange process, including user interface, workflow, and reporting updates. OPUS Reports and Dashboards delivers shared reports and dashboards in a no-code environment to ensure that you and your suppliers are not only looking at the same data, status, and KPIs, but that you can easily tailor it to the unique needs of the relationship.

It has never been more important to have real-time information from suppliers to ensure ERP and planning systems have accurate data as well as an adequate flow of data to fuel current and future AI projects. MINT cost-effectively delivers the data needed to drive any number of supply chain digitalization and AI projects, including inventory optimization, supplier OTIF improvement, manufacturing cost reduction, and more.

Contact TraceLink to learn more about MINT because it's the fastest, easiest, and most cost-effective way to engage your suppliers in your supply chain digitalization project.

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Thank you for contacting us! We'll be in touch shortly.

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