



# IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN THE FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

HOW AUTOMATING SALES ORDERS SHARPENS  
YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHY ORDER PROCESSING MATTERS

Processing orders is a critical component of doing business. But for the Food & Beverage (F&B) industry, what happens in the time between an order being received and when it's delivered has far greater implications. **Below are the biggest reasons why:**

### TIME SENSITIVITY

Speed and accuracy in the supply chain is more important in the F&B industry. Why? Because companies manufacture and distribute perishable items. Delays or errors in delivery or production are not only wasteful, they can have a significant downstream effect on a company's cash ... and its reputation.



### SAFETY & PROCESS VISIBILITY

The F&B industry is also unique in that it faces a wide range of regulations and safety requirements. From an order processing perspective, it's essential for staff to be able to easily prioritise urgent orders and for managers to have instant visibility into order data to ensure compliance at any given time.



### INDUSTRY GROWTH

Despite fluctuating commodity costs, F&B is one of the few consistent industries in terms of growth. The challenge for today's companies is how to handle increasing order volumes without adding new staff. It's no wonder then, why today's F&B executives view technology as the greatest driver of growth.<sup>1</sup>



On average, there are approximately **1.2 errors per every 100 line items** ordered in the food distribution industry<sup>2</sup> – a major contributor to fewer sales and slimmer margins.

<sup>1</sup> 2013 Food and Beverage Industry Outlook Survey. (2013). Retrieved from <https://www.kpmg.com/US/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/food-beverage-outlook-survey-2013.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> CC4F News – Cost Control for Food Distributors and Processors. (2007, September 11). Retrieved from [http://www.foodconnex.com/cc4fnews/Newsletter\(129\).html](http://www.foodconnex.com/cc4fnews/Newsletter(129).html)

# SUCCESS STORY

## AGUA MINERAL SAN BENEDETTO

Since its creation over 25 years ago, Spanish-based Agua Mineral San Benedetto has become a leading manufacturer and distributor of bottled water and non-alcoholic beverages.

### KEY DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Wanting to achieve a 100% paperless business environment, Agua Mineral San Benedetto utilised automation with the goal of:

- Automating the 16,000 documents that were being manually processed per year
- Eliminating the bottlenecks, delays, errors and risk of lost documents associated with its process
- Offering customers a choice to continue receiving paper invoices or have them sent electronically
- Simplifying its multi-step AP invoicing process
- Accelerating overall processing speeds and improving document visibility for management

### RESULTS AFTER AUTOMATION

#### Order Processing

- Automated entire order entry process
- Less time spent managing sales cycle and greater process visibility
- Eliminated fax machines, printers and 46 physical sales order files
- Improved customer service with archived files for quick retrieval

#### Accounts Receivable (AR)

- Enhanced company image as efficient and cutting-edge
- Eliminated printing/mailling costs using an on-demand mail service
- Significantly reduced DSO
- Improved customer satisfaction rates



**AUTOMATING BUSINESS PROCESSES  
HAS IMPROVED OUR PROFITABILITY AND  
DELIVERED A CLEAR BUSINESS ADVANTAGE.  
IN THREE YEARS, WE ELIMINATED ALL PAPER  
USE FOR ORDERS AND INVOICES.**

CIO | AGUA MINERAL SAN BENEDETTO

# THE ROOT PROBLEM:

## TRADITIONAL PROCESSING METHODS

Ideally, all sales orders and other inbound documents would arrive in the same format and feed directly into the ERP/business application via EDI. But in reality, orders typically arrive in **one of three ways**:

### FAX

Usually, fax orders require a separate processing environment to capture and distribute them among Customer Service Reps (CSRs) who then have to enter in the data by hand.

### EMAIL

Many companies send POs to suppliers by email. While this eliminates paper on the customer side, CSRs have to key it in just as with a fax order.

### EDI

Incorrect item details in the EDI file can lead to an array of complex steps before the order is entered in the system. It's not uncommon for "touchless" EDI orders to be as low as 65 percent.

**OUCH!** Manual touch points are commonplace when processing orders in these traditional ways — and their effects hit F&B companies where it hurts most:

- Delays in fulfillment
- Higher rate of order entry errors
- Additional shipping costs, waste and repetition
- Increased restocking and write-off costs
- Inability to prioritise and monitor documents
- Limited access, visibility and control
- Poor responsiveness to customers
- Increased risk of non-compliance with regulations
- Any order-related problem affects the company down the line in the order-to-cash cycle (O2C) with AR processes including invoice delivery, cash collection and cash allocation



# A MODERN ALTERNATIVE:

## ORDER MANAGEMENT AUTOMATION

By automating order management, F&B companies can electronically process, manage and archive any order regardless of how it arrives, streamlining the entire cycle **for everyone involved**.



### IMPROVED CSR EXPERIENCE

An order automation solution captures, routes and archives orders as they arrive, freeing up CSRs from error-prone data entry and time-intensive order retrieval tasks that can cause so much grief for companies in the F&B industry.



### GREATER MANAGERIAL OVERSIGHT

With all workflow being electronic, managers are no longer in the dark about important order details (e.g., who got what from a serial number in the event of a recall, what caused the delay on the PO acknowledgement, etc.).



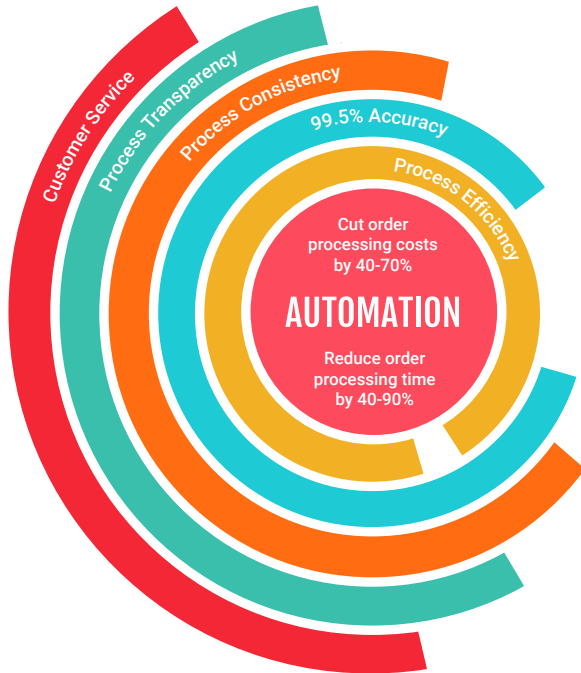
### ENHANCED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Every order is treated as electronic, allowing customers the freedom to send orders as they choose — fax, email or EDI. Plus, features like auto-confirmations and collaboration improve customer confidence and communication.



# BENEFITS OF AUTOMATION

For companies in the F&B industry, the proven benefits of going 100% paperless when processing orders and other inbound documents are **nothing short of transformative.**



## NO PAIN, ALL GAIN:

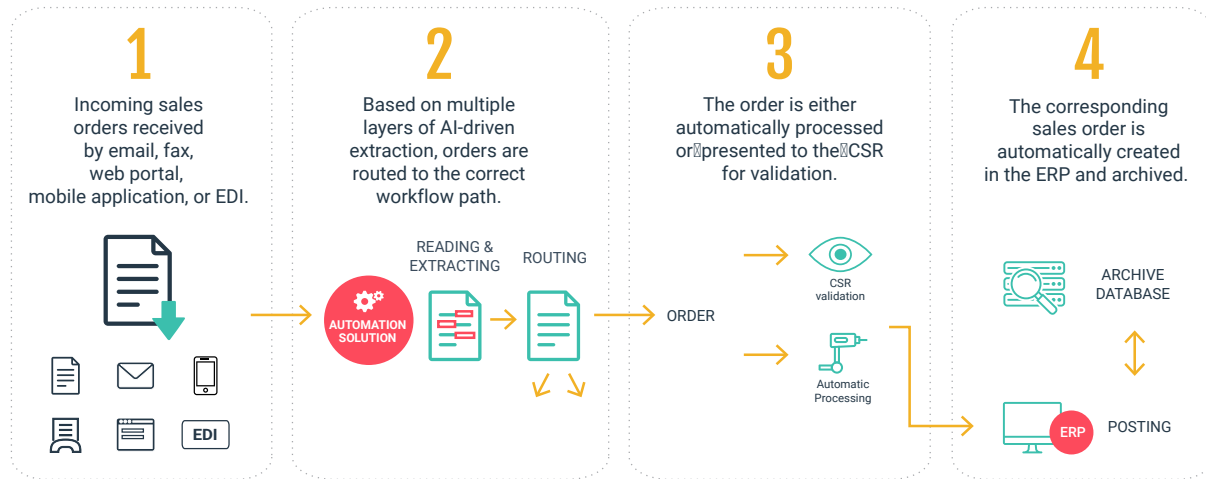
- Boost supply chain efficiency and order processing speeds by up to 90%
- Reduce operational costs and order processing expenses by up to 70%
- Increase data entry accuracy up to 99.5%
- Bring 100% visibility to every order processed using dashboards for enhanced tracking and analytics
- Free up staff time up to 65%, allowing CSRs to focus on more value-added activities
- Support regulatory compliances in a cost-effective way
- Process increasing order volumes without adding staff
- Prioritise any inbound document automatically

Note: The statistics featured on this page are based on results from Esker customers.

# HOW AUTOMATION WORKS:

## SNAPSHOT OF A SOLUTION

Data from electronic or scanned semi-structured documents is automatically captured and routed to the right CSR, where it is validated, archived and linked into the ERP/business application. The entire process is accomplished without any manual data entry and full transparency.





# SOLUTION TOOLS:

## WHERE AUTOMATION ADDS VALUES

With all the necessary tools for automated order processing easily accessible from a single platform, companies have much more to work with in terms of optimising their unique operation.



### DASHBOARDS

Packaged dashboards included in automation solutions provide every user with readily available data needed to complete their daily tasks, monitor performances, measure KPIs and spot problems as soon as they arise.



### EDI ORDER PROCESSING

F&B might be an EDI-heavy industry, but human intervention is still a part of the equation. With automation, all EDI orders can be easily processed through one channel without altering a company's existing EDI or ERP application setup and users can easily maintain full visibility over all orders, including EDI orders.



### ISSUE MANAGEMENT

Managing orders is only half the battle. Most automation solutions include the capability to electronically track and analyse customer claims after an order's been posted — making life easier for both the customer and CSRs.



### LEVELS OF AUTOMATION

Instead of taking a “one size fits all” approach, most leading solution providers offer various levels of order processing automation to choose from, ranging from basic paper reduction to full-blown OCR and ERP/ business application integration.

# CONCLUSION

Despite its growth as an industry, F&B companies face increasing pressures to maximise capital while minimising risk. Automating sales orders is an ideal solution to this unique challenge. **Not only does it bolster supply chain efficiency and accuracy, it empowers companies with the necessary data and analytics to improve decision-making related to customers and business operations.**

## ABOUT ESKER

Esker is a worldwide leader in AI-driven process automation solutions. Over 6,000 companies around the world use Esker solutions to automate business processes, including purchasing, accounts payable, order management, accounts receivable and more.

Founded in 1985, Esker operates in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific with global headquarters in Lyon, France, and U.S. headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin. In 2019, Esker generated 104 million euros in total sales revenue.





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