



Sigma-Aldrich has found the right chemistry: Retarus managed services for EDI and SAP®.

To compete successfully in a globally competitive market, a company must focus on its core competencies. Everything that others can perform more efficiently and at a lower cost, must be outsourced. Sigma-Aldrich, one of the three largest worldwide chemical manufacturing companies with an annual turnover of over two billion dollars, rely on Retarus for electronic data interchange (EDI) and fax communication from SAP.

With offices in over 40 countries and 8,000 employees worldwide, Sigma-Aldrich depends on smooth communication processes and close customer relationships. This includes the company wide data exchange. Sigma-Aldrich has outsourced two key parts of its communication with international customers and partners to the messaging experts Retarus GmbH, fax communication from SAP and the EDI. Although the first impression is that these two processes have little in common, both are mission critical for the worldwide business activities of this global player.

Sigma-Aldrich and Retarus implemented the first EDI projects in 2002. Recently the two companies developed together an EDI solution for the rapidly gro-

wing Chinese market. This flexible custom solution allows Sigma-Aldrich to quickly and efficiently integrate their Chinese customers into their business processes. Today 100 companies in 13 countries are integrated into Sigma-Aldrich's EDI network.

Based on this mutual success, it was only logical for Sigma-Aldrich to turn to Retarus for fax communication from SAP R/3. Right from the beginning thousands of faxes per month were transmitted transaction safe directly out of the SAP system to Sigma-Aldrich's business partners by Retarus' Faxolution for SAP.

“Retarus not only delivered UNICODE support from the very beginning, but Sigma-Aldrich benefits from the complete cost transparency and the significant increase in the transaction safety of their fax communication.”

Oliver Pannenbäcker, Vice President Managed Services, retarus GmbH

Integration of 100 customers in 13 countries

The cooperation between Sigma-Aldrich and Retarus began with EDI. Sigma-Aldrich was looking for a partner that could seamlessly replace the existing solution, and could deliver a stable EDI service. All within only 14 working days!

Sigma-Aldrich's ERP system was first connected to Retarus' data centers through FTP over VPN, before additional communication channels - SMTP and X.400 - were established to its EDI partners. In parallel, the interfaces for the EDIFACT and CSV data formats were setup, and the corresponding mappings were configured according to the defined rules. Once the communication channels and data formats were thoroughly tested, and a complete documentation finished, the service went live within the established two week timeframe.

Since then, Sigma-Aldrich's EDI system has been continuously expanded and extended. New business partners, some with individual mappings, have been integrated. Existing partner interfaces were extended with additional message types. Retarus setup connections using the HTTP/S communication protocol combined with the formats cXBL and cXML. New connections are increasingly being established using XML-based message types.

Retarus linked Sigma-Aldrich's business partners in Scandinavia and Great Britain in the context of e-invoicing strategy. In 2007, the incorporation of the Asian market into the EDI system was started with the integration of the largest customer in China, WuXi Pharmatech. The challenge was on the one hand that WuXi maintained the contracts exclusively as MS Excel files and on the other hand that Chinese characters had to be transmitted to SAP. Retarus was able to implement the conversion MS Excel files to SAP IDoc without the loss of data contained in Chinese characters. Furthermore, Retarus developed a workflow for turnaround documents outputted as MS Excel documents, again including Chinese characters.

Worldwide Unicode compatible faxing from SAP R/3

After the partnership with Retarus in EDI services had proven itself over several years, it was only logical for Sigma-Aldrich to choose Retarus when it came to faxing from SAP R/3. Several thousand faxes are sent from Sigma-Aldrich's SAP system each month to destinations all over the world, so the support for UNICODE and all character sets is essential. The previous custom fax solution had deficits in this area. Therefore Sigma-Aldrich chose Retarus' SAP certified Faxolution for SAP.

With Retarus Faxolution for SAP, users can send fax documents from SAP - systems, without requiring in-house fax server hardware, software or telecommunications capacity. Processing and transmission of the faxes is carried out in Retarus data centers. Therefore no fix costs are incurred for the installation, maintenance, upgrades or licensing. Retarus NeverBusy technology prevents transmission bottlenecks when transmitting batch processes, delivering unmatched transmission rates of up to 99.9%, with complete transaction safety.

As the SAP systems from Sigma-Aldrich are connected directly to Retarus' data centers, business critical transactions such as purchase orders, delivery schedules, invoices, delivery or transportation requests can be processed and transmitted more quickly. The transmission notifications are reported directly back to the SAP systems. Therefore delays can be immediately identified and escalation steps can be avoided in advance.

FastFacts

- **Transparent costs and detailed reporting**
- **High flexibility and scalability**
- **Transaction safe**
- **SAP certified Integration / Certified for SAP NetWeaver**
- **SAP certified "Unicode ready"**
- **Support of compliancy requirements**

For Sigma-Aldrich, the decision for Faxolution paid off from the first day of operation. "Retarus not only delivered UNICODE support from the very beginning, but Sigma-Aldrich benefits from the complete cost transparency and the significant increase in the transaction safety of their fax communication", says Oliver Pannenbäcker, Vice President of Managed Services at Retarus.