A Guide to NetSuite EDI Integration

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INTRODUCTION

If your company operates on NetSuite, you want to utilize it to process as much data as possible. It's a powerful ERP platform — centralizing all business-critical information will optimize efficiency and deliver a greater return on your investment.

Integrating NetSuite with EDI order management can help make your supply chain seamless. When more components of your operation run through a single system, efficiencies are gained, mistakes are dramatically reduced, and you enjoy a solid return on your investment. A true integration partner will not only build a robust solution, they will continue working with you to optimize performance.

How will you make it happen without problems? When is the best time to do it? What kind of solution will work for your company? Do you really want to introduce another system in addition to NetSuite? (Good news: with the right integration, you can work exclusively in NetSuite or with software that is connected to NetSuite. It's up to you.)

If you have questions, you're not alone. The good news? Answers are right here.

Drop shipping, custom packing slips, direct-to-consumer orders — the standards of major trading partners grow more demanding as the retail landscape evolves. Brands are required to use EDI to increase speed and efficiency throughout the supply chain — a tailored NetSuite integration will reduce complexity and improve workflow.

Efficient, fast EDI is a true business advantage. When order data is merged seamlessly into the NetSuite system that powers your business, the edge it provides is even greater.

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WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT FROM AN EDI INTEGRATION?

Let's start with the basics. Your integration should, at an absolute minimum, merge the most important EDI and eCommerce documents into NetSuite. Those documents are:

1. Invoice (EDI 810)
2. Payment (EDI 820)
3. Inventory Sync (EDI 846)
4. Sales Order (EDI 850)
5. Order Acknowledgement (EDI 855)
6. Item Fulfillment (EDI 856)
7. Order Change (EDI 860)
8. Functional Acknowledgment (EDI 997)

It may seem obvious that if you're bringing all your orders into NetSuite, it needs to include these documents. But not every integration will— some are bare bones. You'll end up with some EDI capability within NetSuite but the scope will be limited and you will find yourself working outside of NetSuite or manually entering data more often than you expected.

Take concrete steps to avoid this. Early in the process, make sure there is clear communications about the breadth and depth of the integration. Ask which EDI documents can be merged, if others can be added easily in the future, and if your orders from other sales channels that don't require EDI can also be automatically synced into NetSuite. The integration process is a complicated one and the results will be far better if you and your integration team create clarity from the outset. Think of it like building a house — ask for the blueprints and pore over them first.

If the proposed integration includes only a few of the basic EDI documents, this should set off an alarm. Unless you have a business with very straightforward transactions, an integration with only the basic documents indicates that the company working on the integration is not fully versed in the process. Be wary — you may end up going through the integration and ending up with something that isn't satisfactory.

> An important benefit of NetSuite is its flexibility. A thoughtful, custom integration lets you get the most out of your system and the substantial investment you have made in it.

> NetSuite has powerful tools for analytics. You won't get the most value from them if your EDI and order management is not fully integrated.

WILL ORDERS FROM ONLINE MARKETPLACES AND ECOMMERCE STORES BE MERGED SEAMLESSLY?

It's an omnichannel world out there. It's the rare brand that doesn't sell products online and for many, sales to Internet buyers drives growth. Are these transactions automatically merged into NetSuite post-integration?

The rewards of being an omnichannel seller are obvious — more outlets usually translate into more sales. It is also not without challenges. Are your orders from other channels that don't require EDI automatically synced in NetSuite? Is shipping being handled in the most efficient way possible? Are you able to see the history of an order easily?

When you're bringing in data from different channels, it's critical that it flows into your NetSuite system in the same format as other information. If you are working with a true integration partner, they will be well-versed in your unique integration requirements and, as a result, additional sales channels can be added easily. It's just a matter of plugging them in with the connections that make the data work with everything else you're already doing.

WORK THE WAY YOU WANT TO WORK

No two organizations are exactly alike. After all, companies sell different products, manage inventory differently, invoice differently, and ship differently. And that's just the start of it. Factor in legacy processes, different workforces, and company location — to name just a few — and it's obvious that a cookie-cutter integration won't work. An approach that may have worked for someone else won't produce optimal results for you.

When any company begins a NetSuite integration, a thorough investigation of work flow needs to occur. You and your team should not have to force an integration into NetSuite and adjust the way you work — the right integration is designed around the needs of your company.

YOUR EDI REQUIREMENTS ARE UNIQUE. HANDLE THEM IN THE MOST COST EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT WAY.

If you use NetSuite, you know that it's a powerful platform with extraordinary flexibility.

Since both you and trading partners have very specific EDI requirements, you may need to add new documents, records, and fields in your NetSuite system, and an integration can certainly make that happen. The challenge? It becomes expensive to develop and maintain. What's more, requirements will change or new customers will be added, making it complex and time-consuming to stay current.

An experienced integration partner, following initial research of your company and its processes, will offer solutions that are tailored but also cost-effective. Remember — human hours aren't free. While many companies do want to work entirely in NetSuite, others will choose an integration that allows them to work within their system while seamlessly handling some very specific EDI requirements outside of it.

The bottom line is simple: an expert integration partner will make sure you can Work the Way You Want to Work. Here are a few examples of NetSuite integrations that were built to provide seamless workflow with minimal disruption.

It's obvious that a NetSuite integration has the potential to provide real benefits — more efficiency, fewer errors, hours of time saved. What's important is making sure you are getting the integration that is best for your company and your work flow. To make that happen, make sure you avoid these common pitfalls.

SEVEN COMMON NETSUITE INTEGRATION ISSUES

1 **IT'S NOT TRULY CUSTOM**

Some out-of-the-box solutions may be advertised as custom or tailored to your needs. Make sure that's a legitimate claim. Ask about the Discovery Phase and how the integration team researches your current work flow. Your integration should let you work the way you want to work.

2 **IT'S BARE BONES WITH NO ROOM TO GROW.**

There's no meat on it. It handles EDI, but only the most basic documents. And it doesn't merge orders from other channels. As you grow and begin working with new trading partners, this becomes even more problematic.

3 **IT'S A BLACK BOX.**

Integration shouldn't mean you give up control. Was there a mistake on the ASN? Did that invoice go? For sure? Make sure your integration lets you see everything.

4 **THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE SUPPORT. BUT IT'S NOT EXACTLY SUPPORTIVE.**

Not every EDI provider has the kind of support your business demands. Make sure the company handling your integration can also handle the questions you'll have.

5 **THE INTEGRATION WAS OUTSOURCED. ALONG WITH THE ACCOUNTABILITY.**

When a third-party vendor is the developer, you don't know who to hold responsible. Make sure the company you'll be working with is the company that builds it. After all, if your integration winds up running about as smoothly as a '73 Gremlin, you want to know who is going to fix it.

6 **YOUR PEOPLE ARE STILL DOING A LOT OF MANUAL DATA ENTRY.**

Maybe you don't think you're doing much of it. But just a few entries per day are costly. Add them up — every business day over the entire year — and the drain on time is extraordinary.

7 **OPEN MINDS AREN'T PART OF THE PROCESS.**

Your NetSuite integration partner should utilize best practice solutions but also bring fresh thinking to your project. A true partner will help you find ways to make the integration

COMPANY A

Complex Company with Multiple Sales Channels Needs to Run Everything Through NetSuite
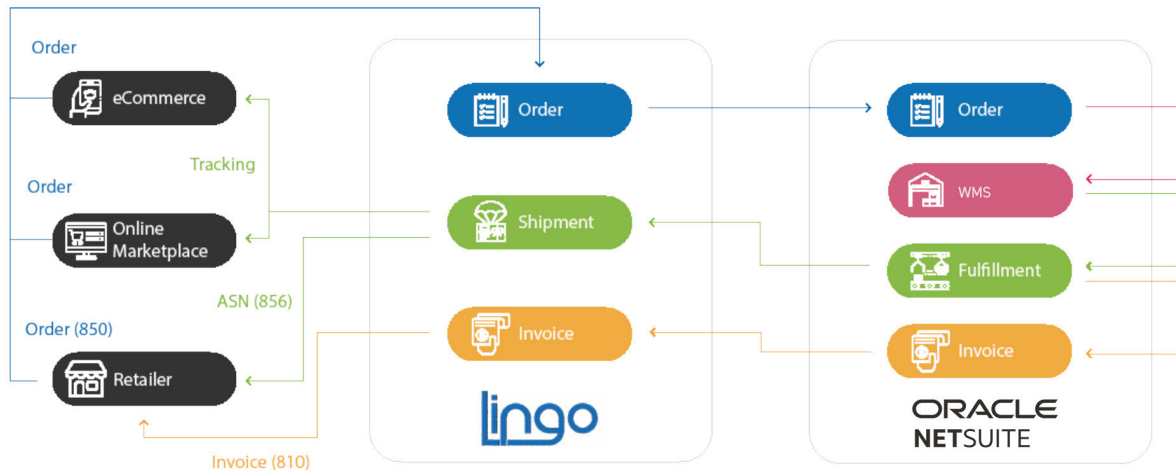
Company A wanted to merge all EDI and digital commerce data into the NetSuite system it was operating. Everything else in their business was running in NetSuite — it only made sense for EDI and orders from online channels to run through it as well.

Their business was complex and they were busy — they did not want to introduce a new application that could slow things down or force staff to learn a different way of operating. For them, the goal was clear: maximum NetSuite, zero anything else.

The Discovery Team studied their workflow, asking questions and determining preferences. They learned that Company A was also using NetSuite as its WMS, which meant it needed warehouse personnel to be able to log into NetSuite and retrieve documents.

Armed with the necessary information, the integration went like this.

Order is received (EDI 850 or an online order) in NetSuite. The warehouse is notified, packages the order, and ships it – all within NetSuite. The inventory is automatically synced.

At the same time, Lingo automatically pulls the ASN (EDI 856) or, if it's an online order, the tracking number. But that happens behind the scenes — nobody at Company A needs to log into Lingo or leave NetSuite to do it.

If it's an EDI transaction, an invoice is created in NetSuite, automatically and seamlessly pulled into Lingo, and then sent to the retailer. Again, nobody at Company A has been forced to work outside of NetSuite.

Lingo is hard at work the whole time, running validation checks and sending notifications if a document is not sent. But the people at Company A never have to leave NetSuite or log into Lingo.
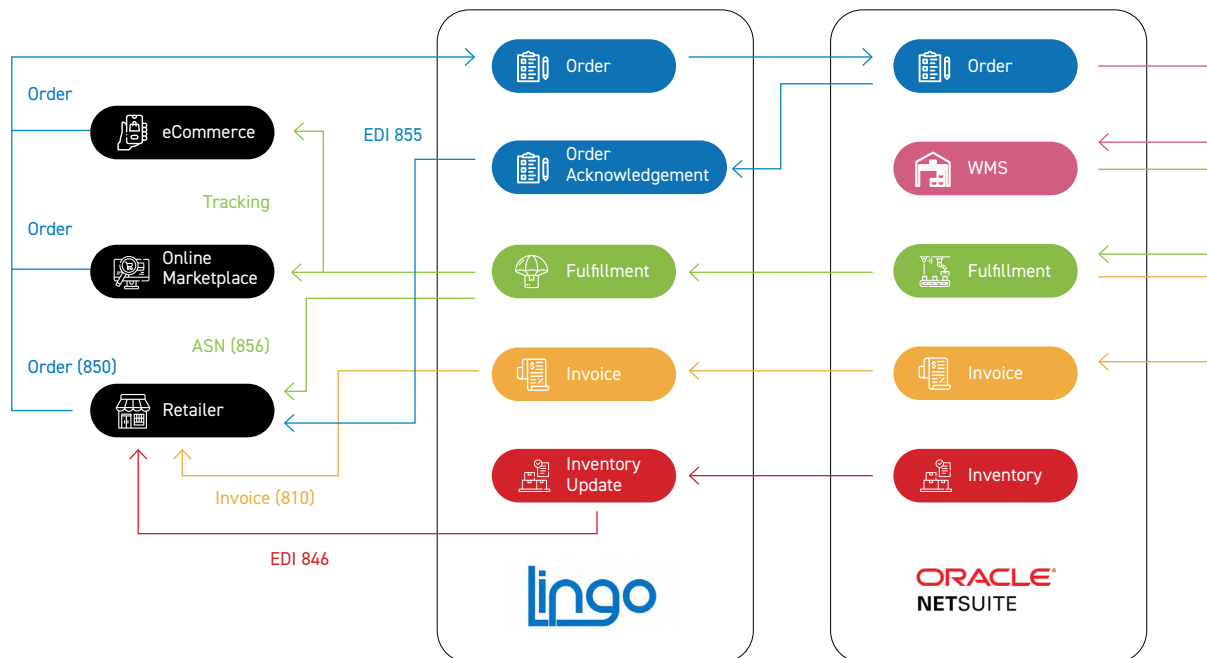
Incorporating the EDI 855 Order Acknowledgment into the Workflow

In addition to the streamlined process already in place, our integration provides the capability to handle workflow variations such as the incorporation of the EDI 855 for order acknowledgments. The following example illustrates how seamless it is for brands to manage additional transaction types within the same system framework.

Workflow Variation Example

ORDER RECEIPT. When an order (EDI 850 or an online order) is received, Lingo processes and moves the details into NetSuite.

REVIEW AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT. Once the order details are reviewed in NetSuite, the order acknowledgment (EDI 855) is prepared. This acknowledgment confirms the acceptance or modification of the order details based on inventory and resource availability.

SENDING THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT. The prepared EDI 855 is then sent back from NetSuite to Lingo. Lingo, in turn, transmits the EDI 855 back to the retailer, confirming the order status.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT PRIORITIZATION. After the EDI 855 is processed and sent, the rest of the order fulfillment process proceeds. This ensures that inventory management, packaging and shipping activities are accurately aligned with the confirmed order details directly from NetSuite.

# Integrating the EDI 846 for Dynamic Inventory Management

Direct to consumer (D2C) brands require up-to-date inventory information to manage their stock levels effectively. This involves sending the EDI 846 Inventory Inquiry/Advice document at least once a day. In response, the integration synchronizes inventory data from NetSuite, updating stock numbers within Lingo. After the inventory is synchronized, EDI 846 automation is handled within Lingo's settings, where users can configure the system to automatically generate and send the EDI 846 based on predefined criteria and schedules. This ensures that retailers receive accurate and timely inventory updates in accordance with their specific needs.

Non-EDI Inventory Management Support

In addition to the EDI-based inventory updates, Lingo also offers a non-EDI feature that supports inventory management across various online marketplaces. This functionality ensures that inventory updates are sent to all connected sales channels whenever item inventory numbers change, maintaining consistency and accuracy across all platforms.

COMPANY B

All Data Merged into NetSuite with the Control Panel Used for Speed and Efficiency
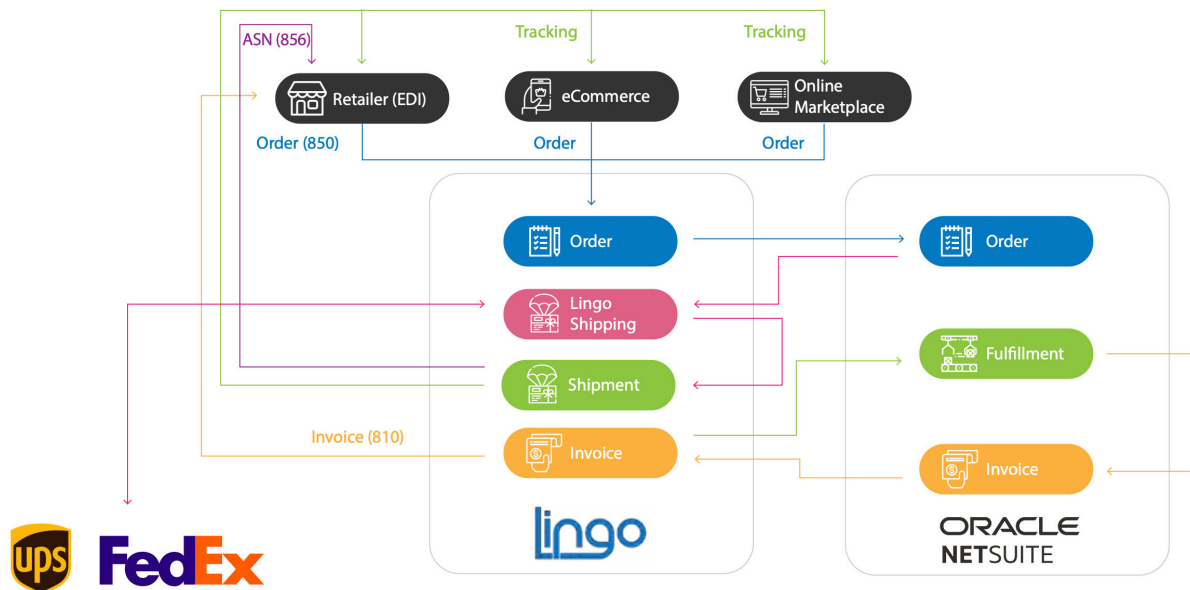
Company B was NetSuite-centric but wanted to take advantage of the Shipping Connector that Lingo offers. It ships a lot of orders and being able to connect directly to FedEx and UPS would make that process far more efficient.

NetSuite remains at the heart of their system, and is the critical reporting tool — keeping track of inventory, receiving and verifying orders, confirming fulfillment. But the actual fulfillment is handled through the Lingo Control Panel. That adds speed — hundreds of documents can be processed at once and tracking numbers can be automatically updated. For Company B, this integration is the most efficient way to manage both EDI transactions and online orders. The people at Company B can still rely almost entirely on NetSuite, and only need to log into Lingo to create shipping labels.

There is another important advantage this integration provides. When the order is ready to ship, the warehouse logs into Lingo to fulfill it. Since they are in Lingo and not NetSuite, they don't have access to all your vital business information that resides in NetSuite. This means they can see everything they need — and nothing they don't. For many, especially when working with a 3PL, it's a measure of added security.

If it's an online order, Lingo pushes the tracking number to NetSuite. If it's an EDI transaction, the ASN (856) will be merged into NetSuite. The Lingo validation checks will catch errors — any mistakes can be viewed and easily corrected within Lingo. Invoices are created in NetSuite — a process that can be automated with the ASN — before being pushed back into Lingo and sent to the retailer or the online buyer.

COMPANY C

Order Information Connected to a 3PL with Data from the WMS Flowing Back into NetSuite
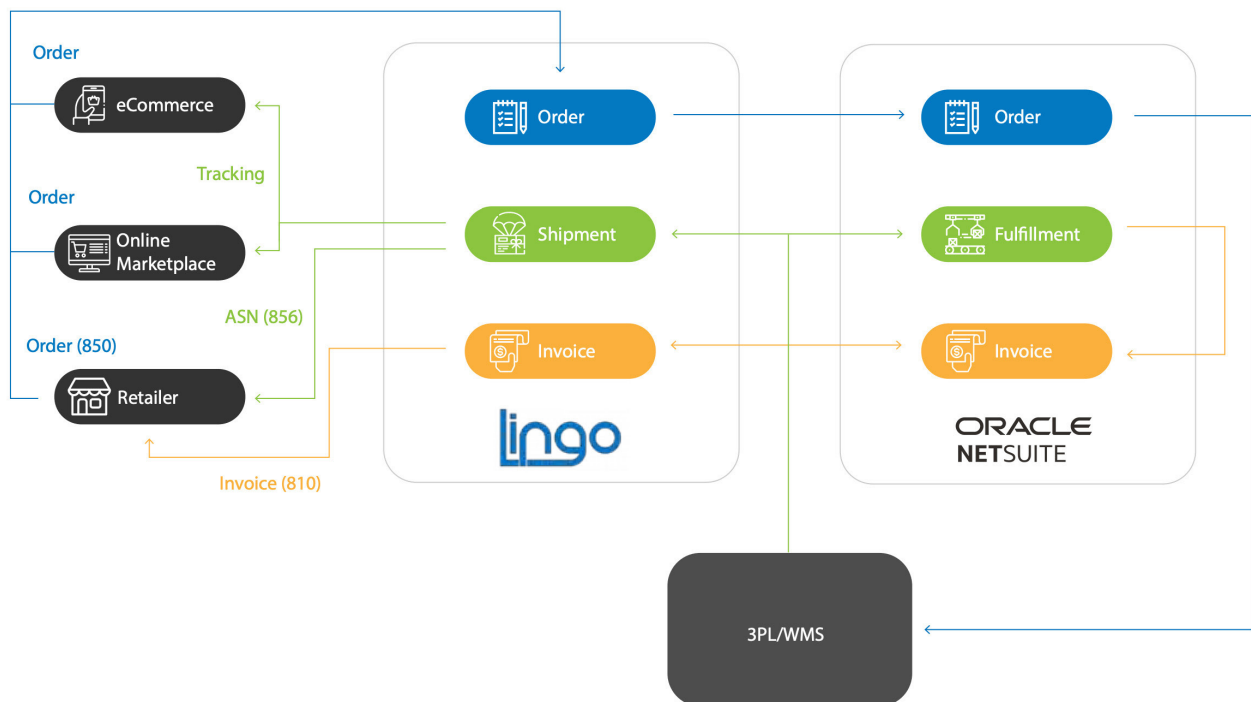
Like Company A, Company C wanted to work entirely in NetSuite. What's different is they have a 3PL with its own WMS.

After the workflow was examined, the integration was developed to match it.

Orders — EDI or online — are received in NetSuite. Once verified, the order is pushed to the WMS through an API. When the warehouse is ready to fulfill the order, the WMS pushes fulfillment data back into NetSuite via the API, and simultaneously sends an EDI 945 document with a tracking number back to Lingo.

Lingo sends the ASN to the retailer or tracking info to the online platform. Meanwhile, in NetSuite, the invoice can be created, merged back into Lingo, and sent to the retailer or internet shopper.

CONCLUSION

A NetSuite integration, done well, can provide tremendous ROI. The supply chain becomes more efficient, errors are virtually eliminated, and costs are significantly reduced.

Before you undertake an integration, make sure you ask the right questions of the provider. Does it let you work the way you want to work? Will development be outsourced to a third-party or done in-house? Can it merge information from EDI transactions and orders that arrive through online channels?

Your company is unique — any integration should be a custom fit. Make sure the team you work with takes the time to understand your processes and builds exactly what your company needs.

To learn more, reach out to one of our NetSuite integration specialists. Call 877-765-3564 or send an email to sales@ezcomsoftware.com and tell us about your needs.