

Echo-Archway partnership goes well beyond logistics, fosters solid growth for both companies



For Archway, a leading provider of marketing fulfillment services, growth was not without its challenges. Since its inception in 1952, the company has steadily expanded, winning several household-name clients over the decades such as General Motors, American Eagle and Ford. In recent years, however, rapid growth and the increasing prevalence of supply-chain technology has spurred Archway to seek more efficient ways to meet the increasingly complex logistics needs of its clients.

“We were expanding very quickly, and foresaw continued growth in the future,” says Jerry Johnson, vice president, administration at Archway. “At the time, we had a small staff dedicated to the logistics function, and knew we had to make adjustments to keep up with the growth.”

Archway lacked the resources and time needed to properly assess and improve its transportation function — particularly regarding reporting, carrier audits, technology, carrier efficiency and client invoicing. The company did, however, identify specific areas for improvement — namely data visibility, timeliness and efficiency related to logistics management.

To identify more efficient solutions for the shipping of its clients’ marketing and promotional materials, Archway partnered with Echo Global Logistics, a premier provider of technology-enabled logistics services, in 2005. Echo’s strategy involved organization of Archway’s logistics program, including identifying carriers; ensuring on-time shipments; running in-depth analytics on transportation efficiency; and shortening time-to-invoice.

Technology for a smoother ride

First, Echo employed its proprietary software solutions to help Archway implement structures and procedures that allowed the company to tighten its logistics operations.

Echo’s proprietary ETM™ technology platform allows Archway to analyze its clients’ transportation requirements, providing services that fit their unique needs. This technology gives complete visibility to the company’s transportation data and expenditure information through an easy-to-use, Web-enabled portal.

The technology also helps Archway drill down into transportation data on a client-by-client basis. Through its customized portal, Archway has permissions-based, on-demand access to multiple

// We have a very open dialogue on everything with Echo, and the company has **helped us gain customers**. When we do win new clients, Echo is right there with us to help get them up and running with our services. //

reports, enabling shipping personnel and executive managers to run the reports of their choice at any time, from any Internet-connected computer.

Echo's technologies also helped Archway create new billing processes that are integrated into the ETM system, significantly reducing time-to-invoice.

"We went from taking about six to nine months to invoice clients to a couple weeks," says Johnson. "This has amounted to a large improvement in terms of cash-flow, which is very important in our line of business."

Finding carriers that go the distance

Echo's strong carrier relationships also improved Archway's supply chain. Echo is very selective about the carriers it chooses for Archway. Because many of Archway's clients are big-box retailers that need promotional materials delivered to stores across the country on the exact same day for a given sale or event, accurate, on-time delivery is crucial. To ensure its carriers can live up to the challenge, Echo works closely with them to ensure that Archway's unique requirements are met. In some cases, Echo has even positioned company representatives at loading docks to monitor the shipment process.

Echo also holds Archway's carriers accountable for their services. Before partnering with Echo, carrier audits weren't an option for Archway, due to a sheer lack of resources and time; like many organizations, this function was not part of the company's core business. Echo's service-level-agreement carrier audits now ensure the most on-time, quality shipping services available, and enforce refunds or credits if carriers don't meet pre-set standards.

True partnership helps with bumps in the road

When Archway became interested in acquiring the supply-chain-management division of Canadian company Resolve Business Outsourcing Income Fund, Echo provided high-level data analyses of Resolve's transportation operations, highlighting areas to leverage and providing efficiencies during the due diligence phase. When the deal closed, Echo devoted a team to make the integration of the acquired company as quick and seamless as possible.

The Resolve acquisition isn't the only example of how the Archway-Echo partnership surpasses the typical vendor-client relationship. Echo has also become an asset to Archway in its sales efforts, becoming directly involved in sales calls to help tout Archway's now-best-in-class logistics services. Echo helps Archway prepare for potential new client meetings with sales materials such as freight studies, which showcase Echo's freight analysis capabilities and provide information on the types of channels and carriers that may be best for Archway's clients.

"We have a very open dialogue with Echo, and the company has helped us gain customers," says Johnson. "When we do win new clients, Echo is right there with us to help get them up and running with our services."

He adds, "The Echo team is great. I know I can level with them on things because they have a good understanding of our business and its needs."

All in all, Johnson says **Archway relies on Echo as a true strategic partner**, one that has helped the company improve efficiencies and significantly reduce transportation costs. 