



WORKING TOWARDS THE PERFECT ORDER

Teresa Marnane, Cook Medical's director of customer operations and distribution partner management EMEA (pictured above), looks at how the 'perfect order' is the perfect solution for healthcare.

My role with Cook Medical is to innovate the customer experience and business services to support the changing business environment. The European Shared Service Centre (ESSC) is part of Cook's global shared service organisation and has sister operations servicing the Americas and Asia-Pacific.

Our team of 120 service professionals, based out of Limerick, Ireland, support 69 markets across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA). Every day, we process over 400 orders from the UK and a further 1,600 (or more) from the rest of the EMEA region.

I came from an engineering background within the high-tech sector where e-commerce and self-serve tools were the norm. The transition into healthcare was a change for me given the manual processes still relied on in healthcare supply chains. Creating a more efficient procurement process is increasingly being identified as a key strategy for healthcare providers to reduce costs.

E-commerce drives efficiency, removes cost, helps customers and suppliers manage their inventory, and helps improve patient safety. E-commerce is already happening where service providers are linked to hospital systems and supplier systems. Over the last 10 years, the ordering and invoicing landscape has moved towards e-commerce solutions. However, the conversion to e-commerce or e-procurement is slow to become standard practice in Europe.

E-commerce transition a work in progress

We still receive a significant volume of

orders by phone and fax. The transition to e-commerce is still very much a work in progress and is moving in the right direction, towards a perfect order. A perfect purchase order is processed electronically from order to payment without human intervention. It is delivered to the correct location, on time, undamaged, at the correct price, in the desired quantity, and on the first attempt.

Today, orders and invoices arrive in a variety of methods. For instance, 51% of our orders in the middle of the first quarter of 2016 from the UK came via email compared to only 2% from Germany, where the preferred method is still fax. There is an opportunity for e-commerce to offer real solutions to healthcare providers and customers and, ultimately, to improve patient outcomes.

As a supplier, we are always looking for efficient solutions and ways to do things better. Our colleagues in the US have won numerous awards for their commitment and their work with customers on touchless and paperless ordering. They have recently been inducted into the GHX Millennial Club for their one millionth touchless transaction.

Our goal would be to replicate this in Europe and beyond, but unlike in the US, we face more unique challenges. We see more regional and national directives mandating electronic transactions, but markets and regions are proposing their own solutions, which leads to fragmentation. The proliferation of multiple data pools to support e-commerce initiatives, each with varying requirements, adds inefficiencies into the system. By adopting a global standard such as GS1, the healthcare industry can move towards aligning ordering systems across Europe, therefore helping customers

and patients more quickly and efficiently.

How and why should suppliers and their customers work towards perfect orders? Using the perfect order as a collaborative tool can significantly improve the effectiveness of a business relationship, bringing value and improved efficiencies to both trading partners.

The perfect order starts with good catalogue data. The data from the supplier and procurement systems must match; the order is then transferred electronically from the procurement system to the supplier system and proceeds as a touchless transaction until the product needs to be physically shipped from a warehouse.

The service benefits from the perfect order are significant; from a quality perspective, the order is right the first time, as it only gets keyed by the person placing the order. Therefore, the person placing the order can be confident that the order is right because the data on their system will match the data on the supplier's system. If the supplier has the product available, then the order simply passes to the warehouse for fulfilment; there is no delay in this case – the order is immediately in the supplier's system. Driving healthcare efficiencies by minimising touch points and by improving transparency and reporting is key in today's environment of compliance, trackability, and transparency.

Having good data is key for strategic planning and for the healthcare industry as a whole.

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