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### Integration Software Providers Enable Self-Service On-Boarding

by [Jeff Moad](#) • [Sign up to receive ME Daily News Alerts](#) • Posted on Sunday, May 17, 2009

Two leading business-to-business integration software and services vendors recently enhanced their products to make it easier for users to link suppliers and other trading partners into their transaction networks.

Competitors Sterling Commerce and Seeburger Inc. both have launched products aimed at automating the on-boarding of trading partners in B2B networks such as those managed by Seeburger's Business Integration Server and Sterling's Sterling Integrator.

Experts say it can take two weeks or more and cost several thousand dollars for a manufacturer to enable a trading partner on its B2B network manually. The process involves collecting detailed information from the trading partner and testing transactions, usually EDI messages that use protocols such as AS2 and OFTP. The new tools from Seeburger and Sterling attempt to reduce on-boarding time and cost by turning it into a self-service process performed by trading partners.

Sterling's Community Manager on-boarding tool, introduced at the company's recent Customer Connect conference, is the key addition to the new 5.0 release of Sterling Integrator. The tool is available in two flavors: a basic version of the tool that comes with Sterling Integrator 5.0 and provides pre-defined multi-partner processes that allow manufacturers to easily launch on-boarding campaigns; and an Enterprise Version that requires an additional charge and enables partner self-provisioning and mass on-boarding, said Chris Johnson, Sterling's vice president for product management.

Besides adding the Community Manager feature to Sterling Integrator, the company announced that the 5.0 version supports newer communications protocols, such as IPv6, AS3, and OFTPv2.0.

For its part, Seeburger recently unveiled the RollOut Portal, an online tool that supports partner self-service on-boarding and certification and works with B2B gateway products from Seeburger or other vendors. The RollOut Portal, which can be deployed behind the firewall or

used as a Web-based service, automates B2B partner on-boarding and automatically tests message data structures.

Manufacturers, particularly those with large, global trading partner networks, say they believe such on-boarding automation tools can cut significant cost and time from their B2B integration efforts. Electronics manufacturing services vendor Jabil, for example, has 6,000 trading partners around the world, 85% of which are suppliers.

“We see a great deal of value in allowing trading partners to on-board themselves,” said Jabil Manager Lowell Gilvin at the Sterling Customer Connect event. Jabil, already a user of Sterling Integrator, plans to implement the Community Manager tool in the third quarter of this year, Gilvin said.