

# WHIRLPOOL ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN VISIBILITY



*“We have to be really flexible nowadays, because we’re working on smaller-scale, faster-paced initiatives that immediately add value for the business.”*

Visibility is one of the biggest supply chain challenges faced by organizations, especially when they are working with numerous external suppliers in a wildly fluctuating market like consumer electronics. One such manufacturer is Whirlpool, which turned to vendor TESISQUARE for help with tackling this problem in terms of both technology and business processes. “We’ve been flying blind until now; we didn’t know what would happen, except for when a supplier said ‘Sorry, we can’t deliver,’” says Agnieszka Morawska, Whirlpool’s IT Senior Manager for EMEA Logistics.

Home appliance manufacturer Whirlpool was founded over a century ago and currently employs 78,000 people worldwide. It designs its products based on the very latest technologies and innovations, from flexible refrigerator storage and induction technology to ‘smart’ washer-dryers that use connected technologies to offer pre-programmed cycles to suit all kinds of clothing. Whirlpool works closely with TESISQUARE, which is specialized in building digital supply chain ecosystems.

“Our primary strategic challenge was to achieve supply chain visibility,” says Agnieszka Morawska, IT Senior Manager for EMEA Logistics of Whirlpool. “That’s extremely important for us nowadays. Our partnerships with suppliers are crucial, as we increasingly request information from them. A supplier collaboration platform will enable us to gain insight into their status and into the progress in terms of executing our plans. So that’s what we’re working on with TESISQUARE – on initiatives to improve visibility and gather more information from suppliers.”

## **Board of directors**

It all started with a request from the board of directors. Morawska: “Their goal was to gain insight into where we stand, because we rely heavily on the supply of electronics. We already have tools that give a good indication of any imminent short-term problems, but we needed to improve visibility in order to monitor the reliability of medium-term supply. We have sufficient time to react, but we can only do that if we know where we stand.”

Initially, information was received from suppliers by email and processed by planners manually. “As you can imagine, that wasn’t very efficient, so we wanted to structure the information we received from suppliers into a workable solution. We’re currently in the process of integrating that activity into a portal for all of our suppliers. The biggest challenge right now is to get full market coverage. It’s all very well having an idea and implementing a technical solution, but we also have to convince our suppliers to actually use it.”

# WHIRLPOOL EMEA

## EDI Project

2.500.000 exchanged doc/year  
30 type of messages  
400 customers/business partners  
21 countries



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Fabio Ciarlantini, EDI EMEA Manager at Whirlpool: "The integration we currently have with TESISQUARE gives us a single interface – inbound and outbound – for connectivity with our customers."



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### Suppliers

One way Whirlpool is doing that is by setting up a pilot group of suppliers with whom the company has a strong relationship. "They provide useful feedback, so it's a really important phase in the project. We're listening closely to that feedback in order to understand which improvements we need to make, what we could add to the technical solution to make it more workable and how we can simplify the onboarding of all suppliers."

"When you ask suppliers to do something on a regular basis, and they keep having to do the same thing over and over again, it's hard to sustain the same level of attention and accuracy. That's why it's important to use the suppliers' input. We have to convince them that it would be beneficial for them as well."

### Partner

TESISQUARE is Whirlpool's technology partner in this project. "We have a very good relationship and it goes beyond just technology; we also discuss business processes. We got some useful input from TESISQUARE because they have experience of supplier integration for other partners besides Whirlpool. So we gained valuable insights about that process and how suppliers can communicate with each other."

"This is actually a business project," she emphasizes. "The idea is to leverage the right technology to achieve new advantages for the whole company, based on a value proposition that will benefit our supply chain. While the new platform is a technological solution, all the processes

we're working on together are business processes."

### Decision-making

According to Morawska, the main business advantage will be the ability to make well-informed decisions. "That's very important for us because of the shortages in the electronics sector. Increased visibility – not only into the supply of electronics, but also into the feasibility of the planning in general – will enable us to adjust the schedule if necessary. If we know that there's an impending shortage of components, we can take action: we can negotiate with our existing suppliers or look for alternative suppliers. Until now we've been 'flying blind' – we didn't know what would happen, except for when a supplier said 'Sorry, we can't deliver'. Visibility creates a better medium-term decision-making process for the company."

When asked about the collaboration with TESISQUARE, she says: "We have a good relationship; it's a partnership rather than a standard customer-supplier relationship in which I'd just ask TESISQUARE to deliver something. In terms of project execution, we've noticed a shift away from big projects. That's a sign of the times. We have to be really flexible nowadays, because we're working on smaller-scale, faster-paced initiatives that immediately add value for the business – and a large, four-year project won't do that. Now, it tends to be more of a sprint. We work on continuous improvement, because that's what the market demands."

### Customers

The platform also offers Whirlpool a number of benefits in its customer contact, according to Fabio Ciarlantini, EDI EMEA Manager at Whirlpool: "I can monitor the messages flows that we are managing together with our customers. The integration we currently have with TESISQUARE gives us a single interface – inbound and outbound – for connectivity with our customers. All customers can manage their own solution in their own dataset record format."

This is becoming increasingly important because of the rapid rise of e-commerce. "The situation can change overnight," he continues. "During the pandemic, for example, we had to quickly set up a drop-shipping model because of the huge growth in online sales in the B2C channels. Until then, online shopping was pretty uncommon in our industry; consumers who wanted to buy a washing machine would usually go to a store to see, touch and measure up the options. This seems to be a lasting behavioural change."

"In turn, as more consumers place their orders online, more system integration is needed. Instead of shipping a product from the warehouse to the store, we now send it directly to the consumer's home. This affects both the business processes and the technological ones, so we've had to make changes to manage these process flows effectively. The TESISQUARE integration helps us to cope with this complexity."