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Complex science, meet simplified procurement: how B2B enablement is helping a pharma company maximize time savings and discovery

> "We wanted to make it simple for our researchers by having the shopping and ordering experience as automated as possible."
>
> – Andrew Poplawski
> Sourcing Specialist
> Novo Nordisk

The challenge

Put yourself in Andrew Poplawski's place: you, your manager, and another colleague are the entire North American team responsible for managing the product orders of hundreds of stakeholders for Novo Nordisk, a global pharma company dedicated to advancing diabetes research that is also diversifying into other areas in health care. Headquartered in Denmark, with 80 offices around the world, the company's North American operations alone employ 6,000 people located in seven states, with groups and teams of scientists across the different sites placing numerous orders for products throughout the year. How would you run your procurement process to effectively manage such a large and dispersed operation in a way that makes ordering products as simple and practical as possible for your researchers?

At Novo Nordisk, research teams and individuals had to rely primarily on a manual purchasing function to place their orders—one that differed completely from the manual processes used by other teams globally. Andrew's team would create annual contracts in the Excel™ program and upload these static hosted catalogs into the system, which provided the annual prices for the researchers, who then had to search for products on Novo Nordisk's website. If the item was in the catalog, they could order it at that annually fixed price. If it wasn't available, Andrew's team would have to take the additional step of reaching out to Thermo Fisher Scientific to get a quote.

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> "Everything up to the order stage has been a lot smoother for us ... since everything is connected, and every purchase order is now automated."

In some cases, researchers were placing orders directly at thermofisher.com, which resulted in issues for the sourcing team due to inconsistencies between the two purchasing processes.

For Andrew's team, managing and uploading the static hosted catalogs took a lot of time. If something was missing or there were any errors in the Excel files, or if they needed to add items, they would have to take down the catalog and re-upload it. During that process, there would inevitably be downtime where teams would not be able to place orders. At other times, there were issues with the catalog that his team had to work with colleagues in their global corporate office in Denmark to resolve.

Because of that laborious process, research teams were sometimes spending too much time trying to figure out how to order items rather than focusing on their important research. Other teams globally faced similar challenges with their own manual procurement processes.

For these reasons, Novo Nordisk reached out to Thermo Fisher to learn more about e-procurement options.

"We wanted to see what additional features were available for our teams," Andrew explained.

The solution

The Thermo Fisher e-procurement solution offers a secure connection that allows users to shop an online catalog, return a shopping cart back to their system for approval, and then submit an electronic purchase order for electronic invoicing. Users have easy access to their customized catalog, a fast-order cash cycle to "procure and pay," increased researcher productivity, and improved spend management/visibility.

The main appeal of this solution for Novo Nordisk was its ability to integrate seamlessly with their order management processes globally and, in particular, its punchout feature: a user simply logs into their procurement dashboard and chooses Thermo Fisher as the vendor they want to purchase from. The system then "punches out" to thermofisher.com where the customer builds their cart with the institution's real-time pricing and availability. Once the cart is completed, the customer simply "punches back" to the procurement system on their end to complete the transaction.

Novo Nordisk's intention in choosing the solution was "to have the scientists focused on their research," Andrew explained. "We wanted to make it simple for our researchers by having the shopping and ordering experience as automated as possible."

The solution also offered a simplified process for Andrew's sourcing team; the ability to remove static hosted catalogs and have the researchers shopping through the punchout meant that his team could have access to all of the features on the Thermo Fisher website, including access to an overview of product availability, real-time pricing, and research tools. At the same time, the solution enabled alignment with the procurement processes of corporate headquarters in Denmark as well as other offices around the world.

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The results

When we spoke with Andrew, the e-procurement solution had only been in place for a few weeks, and he was already enthusiastic about the benefits.

"I would say the number one improvement is time saved for both our research teams and sourcing teams around the world," he said.

For the researchers, the solution has saved time by removing the need to wait for price quotes because the entire Thermo Fisher product portfolio is available to them.

"We save time because we don't have any access blocked, so anything that was beyond what we had managed in our Excel document is available immediately to our research teams, and the whole ordering process has been simplified and automated," Andrew explained.

He also identifies "openness" as a major benefit of the solution for researchers. The ability via the punchout to see all Thermo Fisher products available has opened new opportunities to use additional products. In some cases, researchers have switched from a different supplier to Thermo Fisher for more of their products based on trust built from experience with Thermo Fisher brands.

For Andrew's sourcing team, the benefit of not having to manage the static hosted catalogs has saved a lot of time. He points to his team's end-of-year responsibilities as an example.

"You don't want to be focused on managing those catalogs because you're trying to spend the budget, get all the orders placed, and figure out if products are being delivered, and everything else on the finance side. So not having to manage the static hosted catalogs is a huge relief on our end."

His team has also benefited from the solution's electronic purchase order shipping notification.

"Everything up to the order stage has been a lot smoother for us," he said, "since everything is connected, and every purchase order is now automated."

This is a test run of the solution for the company, but it's making procurement easier and more efficient, as well as uniting the processes of teams globally. Andrew says he's now interested in other components the system offers that can be added to enhance the overall process.

"All the feedback I'm getting from my team and the research teams has been good, so I'm hoping next year we can continue to build upon it," he explained. "The more visibility that researchers have with their orders and shipping of their orders, and additional features this integration offers, like electronic invoicing, the better. I think that for teams across the company, this solution will reduce questions and email traffic, so that everyone has the ability to focus on other things."

Find out more at **thermofisher.com/eprocurement**

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