

Interfacing Your Ecometry Data with Skymall™ Services—Benefit Analysis and Technical Overview

White Paper



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Executive Summary

This white paper provides basic information about the business benefits of using the SkyMall™ Interface for Ecometry™ from Marketing Concepts. The interface allows the smooth transfer of order and payment data between SkyMall's order-processing systems and your existing Ecometry customer management and order entry system.

A brief overview of the interface process is followed by a quick discussion of the advantages provided by the SkyMall program. Automating your company's transactions with SkyMall customers provides business benefits beyond those of the SkyMall program alone. These additional motivations for using the SkyMall Interface are reviewed to assist you in your cost benefit analysis of SkyMall and of the SkyMall Interface.

The paper concludes with a process flow chart and description of how the SkyMall Interface functions. Information about the technical requirements for using the system are also included, so you and your IT department can begin assessment of the implementation steps required to use the interface.

Overview of SkyMall™ Interface for Ecometry™

Marketing Concepts has worked with SkyMall and their clients over the past several years to develop a streamlined interface to SkyMall for those Ecometry users who participate in their catalog program.

The Marketing Concepts SkyMall Interface performs the following functions:

- Allows Ecometry users to receive, process and fulfill orders from SkyMall automatically.
- Once a SkyMall order has been shipped, the SkyMall Interface will automatically trigger payment from SkyMall to your Ecometry system.
- This program also includes the ability to process returns against a SkyMall order while updating all the financial records appropriately.

What is SkyMall?

SkyMall Program Basics

Select merchants order space with SkyMall for a minimum of three months. SkyMall then drops over five million catalogs quarterly and updates the SkyMall Internet website with current products. Over one and a half million airline passengers—a captive audience of influential buyers—are exposed to SkyMall *every day*.

Passengers are able to order products toll-free onboard via an air phone, or from the ground. They may also order via the Internet. Phone orders are taken at SkyMall's call center, verified for credit, and passed on to merchants. The merchants fulfill the orders and SkyMall bills the customers' credit cards; merchants are then paid when sales are fulfilled.

Benefits of Using SkyMall Services

SkyMall maintains a 75% vendor retention rate—those 75% choose to stay with SkyMall for a year or longer. Why? SkyMall circulates approximately 22 million catalogs per year, across over twenty-five U.S. airlines. This wide distribution offers vast exposure for your unique products and your company name at an extremely low cost per exposure.

Orders generated through the SkyMall catalog also add valuable names to your customer list. The SkyMall customer profile is of a more affluent, slightly younger consumer than a typical catalog customer. This is a positive indicator for future purchasing potential, as well as for building long-term brand loyalty.

Like a "real" mall, each store in SkyMall maintains its own brand identity. You will build awareness and create authority for your brand through sales, of course, but the "walk-by" effect of allowing customers to "window shop" your brand will have a positive impact upon your brand identity as well—letting SkyMall customers know who you are and what you can offer them.

Where to Find Out More About SkyMall

You can find out more about the SkyMall program by visiting www.skymall.com and clicking the “Become a Customer” link at the bottom of the page. Downloadable merchant information packets are available, as well as a list of hundreds of current SkyMall clients and contact information for the SkyMall sales team.

Benefits of Automating Data Entry for SkyMall Orders into Ecometry

Easy Compliance With SkyMall Customer Service Policies

SkyMall catalogs advertise speedy order processing—regular orders are to be fulfilled within seven to ten days. And as we all know, brand-new customers are paying close attention to see if your company meets their expectations! Automating your SkyMall order fulfillment along with your other orders helps you avoid difficulties meeting this timeline, particularly during peak sales season.

SkyMall also has a standard 60-day return policy, so even if your new customer needs to return a product, you can maintain a good business relationship with that customer by handling the return quickly and efficiently. The easiest way to accomplish this is to ensure that returns are well-integrated with your regular Ecometry processes.

And because SkyMall guarantees that their prices will not be higher than their merchants’ “regular” prices, it is critical that you manage product numbers and correlated pricing data within the same system as your own catalog or web product orders. Integration helps you ensure that you won’t make a pricing mistake.

Maximize Return on Your SkyMall Services Investment

According to SkyMall sales literature, most SkyMall clients are pleased with a “break-even” cost per order, as a fair exchange for the exposure, brand recognition and new customer lists generated by their SkyMall orders. Although future sales and business growth are adequate benefits, reducing the processing cost per order will help you maximize ROI for your SkyMall advertising campaign. If you don’t have a smoothly integrated way to handle SkyMall orders, returns and payments, you risk overspending on costly manual procedures for inputting and processing these transactions. Integration will help you keep your processing cost per order at a rate closer to your own catalog and web sales.

Make Efficient Use of Generated Sales Leads

What about all those new, valuable names? Who’s going to make sure those names get on your regular promotion lists? Integrating your SkyMall sales with your existing Ecometry system ensures that those new names are in your system right away, with no additional labor costs incurred, such as you would have if you added the names manually. If you automate your mailing lists and email promotion lists through your Ecometry database, you’ll have those great new names added instantly at the same time the orders are processed.

How Does the SkyMall Interface for Ecometry Work?

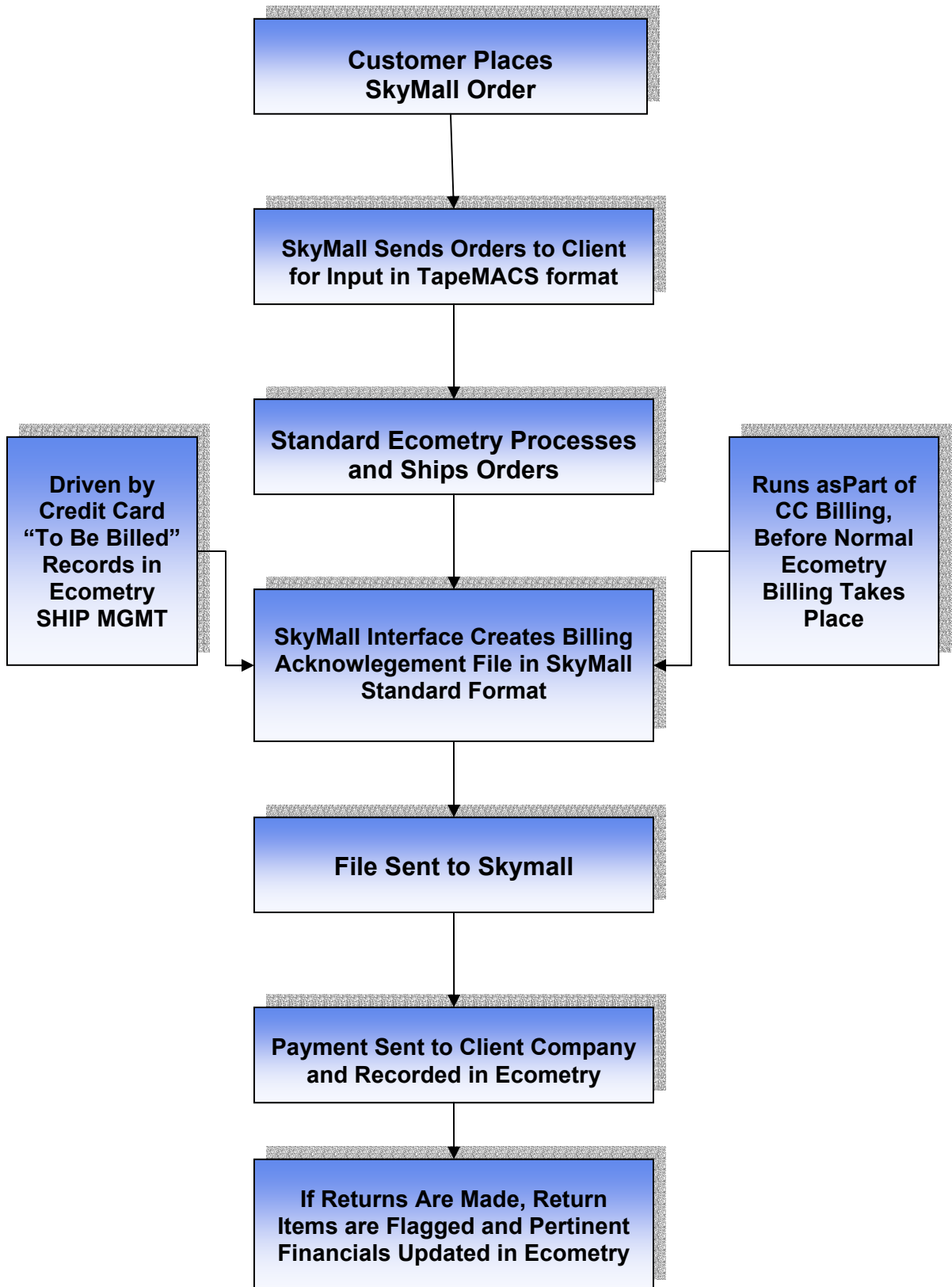
Process Flow Description

SkyMall orders are entered in Ecometry in TapeMACS format. Orders are then processed and shipped through standard Ecometry. The SkyMall interface program then creates a billing acknowledgment file in standard SkyMall format, **fully compliant with SkyMall format specifications**. This billing acknowledgement file is driven by Credit Card “To Be Billed” records, created by the SHIPMGMT program in Ecometry. The program runs as part of CC-Billing, before normal Ecometry billing takes place.

The SkyMall billing acknowledgment file contains information such as order line number, item number, quantity, ship date, ship method, tracking number, backorder information, and customer information. This record is then file transferred to SkyMall. Once SkyMall receives this record, a payment is made to the Ecometry user.

If a return is made of a SkyMall order, then returned items are flagged and a separate file is created. All pertinent financial records are updated. If any errors occur during the SkyMall record creation, a recovery process is available.

Process Flow Chart



Ecometry Technical Requirements Overview

- Creates program and job streams to create Ship Confirm acknowledgment file to Skymall. File must be in Skymall's format (file layout supplied after signed quote).
- Process will be driven from **Credit Card** "To Be Billed" records, created by the SHIPMGMT program in Ecometry.
- Program must run as part of CC-Billing to intercept before Normal Ecometry Billing takes place. Recovery Process is part of design.
- File Transfer method (TBD – between client and SkyMall).
- Extracts returns/credits in the same format as shipped items, flag Returned items with "R" code, create separate file for returns.

References

This text is based on information obtained from SkyMall Services and upon Marketing Concepts' first-hand experience with:

- Developing and implementing interface products used in conjunction with Ecometry at multi-channel retailer sites.
- Managed direct-commerce application service.

About the Author Company

Marketing Concepts, a leading provider of direct commerce software and services, is a Microsoft Certified Solution Developer and Reseller of the Microsoft Business Solutions product suite.

Marketing Concepts has become a leader in the direct commerce industry by using the knowledge that comes from a 20-year history in direct marketing. We offer our customers a range of experience in technology, marketing, operations, e-commerce and software solutions that is unmatched in the industry.

The flexibility and range of services provided by Marketing Concepts allows our customers to select from traditional direct marketing services, such as catalog production and circulation strategy, to e-business solutions, like Managed Application Services (MAS) using Ecometry, Ability-Software™ and custom programming services that allow you to interface with almost any software.

Our philosophy is simple; we apply the knowledge and experience of our professional team, and partners like the Ecometry Corporation, to provide our customers with the services they need for maximum success and profitability. Let us develop a solution to help your business grow in today's challenging global marketplace.