Thought Leadership

White Paper

PathFinder

Why PathFinder?

Why organisations are investing in supplier automation, integration and secure data exchange now

A thought leadership paper from Intec Systems

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Executive summary

Many organisations have invested heavily in core systems such as ERP, finance, CRM and analytics platforms. Yet the processes that connect those systems to suppliers, customers and trading partners often remain manual, fragile or insecure.

PathFinder is designed to address this gap. It provides a practical way to automate supplier connectivity, invoice processing and secure data exchange without requiring a large transformation programme or open-ended consultancy engagement.

The commercial case is straightforward: reduce manual effort, remove errors, improve visibility, strengthen supplier relationships and create a platform for scalable growth.

1 The challenge has moved outside the four walls of the business

For many organisations, digital transformation has focused on internal systems. ERP platforms have been upgraded, finance systems improved, CRM tools deployed and reporting environments modernised. Yet the operational processes that connect the organisation to the outside world often remain inconsistent and manually intensive.

Supplier invoices still arrive as PDFs. New trading partners still require manual setup. Important files still move by email attachment, shared folder or unmanaged FTP. Staff still rekey data between systems that should already be talking to each other.

The result is a growing disconnect: internally, the business may appear digitally mature, but externally, core trading processes still depend on people compensating for poor integration.

2 The problem is not always the core system

When processes are slow, costly or error-prone, the first instinct is often to blame the ERP, finance system or operational platform. In many cases, however, the real problem is not the system itself. It is the lack of clean, reliable connectivity between systems, partners and data sources.

Data gets trapped between organisations. Documents arrive in inconsistent formats. Exceptions are handled manually. People create spreadsheets, forwarding rules and workarounds because the integration layer is missing, incomplete or too rigid to scale.

This creates hidden operational cost. It also reduces visibility, weakens governance and makes growth harder because every new supplier or trading partner becomes another manual burden.

3 Why this matters now

Three pressures are making supplier automation and secure data exchange more urgent than before.

First, organisations are under pressure to improve productivity without continually adding administrative headcount. Manual invoice processing, manual onboarding and manual data handling are increasingly difficult to justify.

Second, security and governance expectations are rising. Email attachments, unmanaged transfers and ad hoc processes are no longer acceptable ways to exchange sensitive or business-critical information at scale.

Third, supply chains are becoming more demanding. Customers and suppliers expect information to move quickly, accurately and electronically. Delays, errors and disputes damage relationships as well as efficiency.

4 Common symptoms of disconnected trading processes

Organisations rarely describe the problem as an "integration issue" at first. They describe operational symptoms:

- Trading partner onboarding takes longer than it should.
- Finance teams spend too much time processing invoices.
- Supplier documents arrive by email or PDF.
- Data is rekeyed into ERP or finance systems.
- Teams rely on spreadsheets to monitor exceptions.
- IT has limited visibility of external data flows.
- Sensitive information moves through uncontrolled channels.
- Growth requires more administration instead of more automation.

These symptoms point to the same underlying problem: the business is relying on manual effort to bridge gaps between systems and trading partners.

5 Why traditional integration projects often fail to start

Many organisations understand the problem but still delay action because integration projects are perceived as expensive, slow and difficult to control. There is a fear of scope creep, heavy consultancy costs and disruption to existing systems.

That perception is not unreasonable. Traditional EDI and integration programmes often focused on large-scale transformation, complex specifications and long implementation cycles. For many mid-market organisations, that created a barrier to action.

PathFinder is deliberately positioned differently. It allows organisations to start with a specific business problem, deliver a fixed-scope outcome, prove value quickly and then expand incrementally.

6 The PathFinder approach

PathFinder provides practical, outcome-led automation for common trading and data exchange problems. It is not positioned as a large transformation programme. It is a way to solve defined problems quickly and create a foundation for future integration maturity.

The initial PathFinder service family focuses on three high-value areas: Trading Partner Onboarding, Supplier Invoice Automation and Secure Data Exchange. Each addresses a recognisable business problem and provides a clear path to measurable improvement.

This modular approach gives organisations a low-risk entry point. They can start where the pain is clearest, avoid unnecessary complexity and expand only when there is a proven business case.

7 Business outcomes PathFinder is designed to deliver

PathFinder is built around outcomes rather than technology features. The intended benefits are practical and measurable:

- **Greater efficiency:** reducing manual effort and freeing staff from repetitive administrative tasks.
- **Lower cost:** reducing the cost of processing invoices, documents and transactions.
- **Improved accuracy:** reducing rekeying errors, mismatches, disputes and reconciliation delays.
- **Faster cycles:** accelerating onboarding, approvals, fulfilment, purchase-to-pay and order-to-cash processes.
- **Better supplier relationships:** making it easier and faster for suppliers to trade with the organisation.
- **Reduced risk:** replacing unmanaged file exchange with controlled, auditable and secure processes.
- **Scalable growth:** allowing volumes and trading relationships to increase without administration increasing at the same rate.

8 The commercial case

Manual document processing is expensive. When labour, validation, exception handling and reconciliation are considered, manual handling can typically cost many times more than automated processing. For invoices and trading documents, the difference can be substantial when multiplied across hundreds or thousands of transactions.

The commercial case is not limited to labour saving. Faster onboarding can accelerate trading relationships. Faster invoice processing can improve supplier relationships and create opportunities for better terms. Secure exchange reduces the risk of incidents, delays and reputational damage.

The strongest business case is therefore a combination of cost reduction, risk reduction, operational improvement and improved commercial relationships.

9 Where organisations should start

The right starting point depends on the customer's pain.

If supplier or customer onboarding is slowing growth, Trading Partner Onboarding is the natural entry point. If finance is burdened by PDF invoices and manual processing, Supplier Invoice Automation is likely to deliver the clearest ROI. If documents are moving by email, FTP or shared folders, Secure Data Exchange provides a risk-led starting point.

The key is not to start with technology. The key is to identify the most visible business friction and solve that first.

10 Why Intec

Intec brings together long-standing integration experience, practical delivery capability and a commercial understanding of how mid-market organisations actually buy and implement technology.

Our approach is deliberately pragmatic. We focus on defined outcomes, clear scope, predictable pricing and solutions that can grow with the customer over time.

PathFinder is therefore not simply a software proposition. It is a way for organisations to remove friction from the way they trade, exchange information and connect with the world outside their own systems.

PathFinder service family at a glance

Service	Typical customer problem	Primary outcome	Commercial value
Trading Partner Onboarding	Connecting suppliers or customers is slow and manual	Faster, repeatable partner connectivity	Growth, scalability and reduced onboarding effort
Supplier Invoice Automation	Invoices arrive by email or PDF and are rekeyed manually	Automated capture, validation and routing	Lower processing cost, fewer errors and stronger supplier relationships
Secure Data Exchange	Sensitive documents move through email, FTP or shared folders	Controlled, auditable and secure data exchange	Reduced risk, improved governance and operational control

Conclusion

The next wave of operational improvement will not come only from replacing core systems. It will come from improving the connections between organisations, suppliers, customers, partners and platforms.

PathFinder gives organisations a practical way to begin that journey: solve a clear problem, prove value quickly and expand intelligently over time.