E-commerce solutions

IBM

Fast. Flexible. Fearless.
B-to-B e-commerce solutions that
deliver value beyond the transaction.

e
business

For long-term success in today's global marketplace, you need to meet customer demands and exceed expectations. How? Offer your customers — whether they are buyers, suppliers, distributors or dealers — reliability, ease of use and a worthwhile experience that goes beyond a Web site.

By improving relationships with customers, you can increase profits and improve efficiencies. Create long-lasting customer loyalty with the ability to deepen and secure trading relationships. And attain the flexibility needed to create and respond to new opportunities for revenue growth — fast. Offer your customers more than a Web site — give them an experience that provides value beyond the transaction.

Realizing the potential of B-to-B e-commerce

It's not surprising news that B-to-B e-commerce is significantly impacting the Internet economy. Industry analysts agree that B-to-B e-commerce will continue to be a major growth area in the next four years. These analysts differ only in how much growth they expect: forecasts for online B-to-B trade in 2004 begin at $2 trillion and reach as high as $7 trillion.

Several fundamental forces are driving the explosive growth of B-to-B e-commerce: pressures for global free trade, accompanied by the movement to market-driven economies and the elimination of price differentiation from one geography to another. In this global economy, while price and functionality remain critical, customer service and value-added relationships have become the new commerce drivers and competitive differentiators.
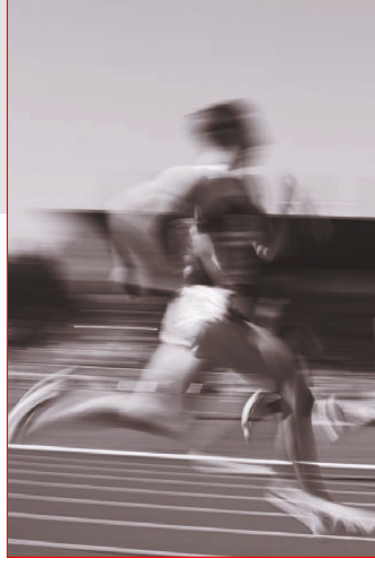
Capitalizing on the opportunity

In today's integrated e-business environment, where change is fast and unpredictable, what matters most is acquiring and building long-term, worthwhile relationships with your customers at all encounters. Getting to market faster and staying there — ahead of the competition. By accessing industry-leading technologies and processes to do so, you increase your ability to compete and to grow customer loyalty.

Today, you must market and sell intelligently, if not intuitively, to various participants in your value chains, each with complex purchasing preferences. In the B-to-B world, to have a successful e-commerce site you'll need to use data-gathering, personalization and content management techniques to enhance marketing efforts. With these tools, your buyers can easily access and purchase the products they need most, returning to requisition lists that reflect the unique contracts, terms and conditions of your agreed-to relationships.

A good place to begin is by using the goldmine of customer data that you currently possess. To convert this customer information into competitive assets, having the right marketing intelligence means having definitive answers to key considerations such as:

- Identifying your most profitable customers and how to best expand relationships with them

- Pinpointing which of your customers provide minimal profit, or even cost you money

- Determining the products and services you can cross-sell and up-sell most effectively — and to whom

- Verifying which marketing campaigns have been most successful

- Responding through sales channels that are most effective for appropriate products

- Improving the quality of your customers' overall experiences based on qualitative data

Once you are able to completely and accurately respond to these considerations, you can establish strong, lasting relationships with the right customers — providing the right products in targeted marketing campaigns that help to improve customer relationships.

Whirlpool B-to-B trading portal significantly slices per-order costs

The global major home appliance business is an incredibly competitive, $70 billion industry. As the world's largest manufacturer and marketer of home appliances, Whirlpool's $10.5 billion business demands highly efficient operations and the ability to deliver superior customer service to its resellers — resellers who account for 25 percent of Whirlpool's total trading partner base and 10 percent of its revenue. But doing business with its thousands of middle-tier resellers had become cumbersome, time-consuming and costly.

IBM WebSphere software platform for e-business: simplifying business integration

Collaborating with IBM, Whirlpool created a B-to-B trading partner portal that allows resellers to abandon phone and fax orders and place and track those orders on the Web. Building the portal meant integrating with Whirlpool's existing SAP R/3 inventory system and Tivoli system management tools. With IBM WebSphere® software platform technologies working in concert, Whirlpool developed a fast, easy-to-use Web self-service ordering process that cut per-order costs by 80 percent. And in a three-month period, the portal helped Whirlpool generate $100 million in revenue.

Value for the long-term

Now Whirlpool has a solid, extendible foundation on which to rapidly develop and deploy future e-business applications. "Like anything in this Internet space, our applications will probably evolve every six months or so," says Jim Haney, Whirlpool vice president of architecture and planning. "With the environment we have in place, we'll first look to IBM and its suite of e-business tools to provide the scalability, high availability and capacity needed to support the evolution of our Web applications."

The three Cs: content, content, content

Delivering correct, consistent, timely product information — or content — to your employees, customers and suppliers can make the difference between making a sale and losing it to a competitor. Content can range from documents to catalogs (text, graphics and other media types) to any Web-shared business information (contracts, invoices and transaction records).

But managing huge amounts of content can consume huge time commitments and efforts from your staff. Do it well and you can better target, acquire and retain customers, fostering customer loyalty through presentation of valuable, dynamic content.

Using interfaces and tools customized for each contributor's role, you can further speed time to market and increase productivity by enabling both technical and business users to create, enter, update and manage catalog data. Your staff can spend less time proofreading and editing unwieldy catalog content and more time marketing and promoting your products. Content management solutions that support packages (orderable units that cannot be broken up), bundles (groups of products that are combined for merchandising or convenience), and cross-sells and up-sells will help increase sales opportunities.

Execute fast and flawlessly

By involving all the players in your value chain, regardless of size or business function, you can be first to take advantage of opportunities others can't respond to as quickly. To execute your business model rapidly with precision and agility, you need a flexible infrastructure that integrates applications and business processes. An infrastructure built upon open and industry-accepted standards (like 100% Pure Java™ and XML technologies) means you can work in tandem with trading partners to capture each new opportunity. And you can serve customers by providing comprehensive solutions and exceptional support that leaves your competition in the dust.

By employing a Java technology-based solution, you aren't confined to a single, vendor-proprietary offering. With Java technology, you can reach your customers and trading partners easily at any time. And grow these applications to meet changing needs and increasing demand. With the freedom and flexibility to integrate with third-party systems, you are free to establish collaborative, inter-company connections to serve your customers—transparently. Serving your customers effortlessly and intuitively is, after all, the name of the game.

With a Java-based solution, your IT team can deliver your core business applications to the Web, maximizing a scalable, robust solution that supports your existing internal infrastructure. One that's fast and fearless, giving you confidence, knowing that your solution fits your current business model and will grow with your future business needs. With an ocean of Java programmers entering the work pool daily, you can take advantage of available skills. And exploit faster development capabilities to get you to market first.

Empower those in the know

Traditionally, it's been necessary for IT staff to respond to business managers' last-minute requests for special offers and promotional campaigns. With great ideas and insights about responding to trends and buyer behavior patterns, your line-of-business (LOB) managers best understand how applications *should* work, but not necessarily how to *make* them work. They instead rely on programmers and developers with technical skills for application design, development and maintenance.

Relying on a solution that offers tools designed specifically for business users, your marketing personnel can focus on branding and promotions. LOB personnel can concentrate on business process workflow. And accounting personnel can focus on billing and payment aspects. Give your IT staff more time to focus on integrating your existing systems and extending your back-end for consistent, high-performance e-business efficiency that drives long-term competitive advantage. The payoff? Increased productivity, reduced cost and accelerated time to market.

Suppleye.com focuses on B-to-B procurement efficiencies

In the United States, 2.5 million cataract surgeries are performed annually—exceeding any other surgical procedure. And the supplies exhausted during these procedures require immediate replacement.

Until the launch of Suppleye.com—a trailblazer in ophthalmic B-to-B procurement—the daily ophthalmic ordering process was unwieldy. Logging on to Suppleye.com reduces the standard, two-hour ordering process to just minutes.

Streamlining the supply chain

Working with IBM Business Partner Neoteric Solutions, Suppleye.com developed a just-in-time inventory system to create efficiencies for eyecare surgery centers and manufacturers. IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite, Pro Edition provides the flexible, scalable foundation needed to build and customize the Suppleye.com Web site.

At no cost to eyecare surgery centers, Suppleye.com enables their buyers to quickly create multivendor purchase orders—and place repeat orders with a single click. The centers can further increase efficiencies by using PDAs to scan product barcodes and upload them into the system. For a small transaction fee, manufacturers can participate in the Suppleye.com procurement hub, receiving product information through electronic data interchange.

Better than 20/20 vision

While Suppleye.com identifies itself as a small business, it's on the fast track to success. "With our revolutionary venture, we expect gross sales to grow tremendously—from approximately $12 million in 2000, to $108 million in 2001 and $303 million in 2002," says John Meek, president and co-founder of Suppleye.com. The net? Suppleye.com will realize 100 percent return on its Web site investment in 6 to 12 months. With the WebSphere Commerce Suite solution, every member of the Suppleye.com supply chain recognizes significant benefits.
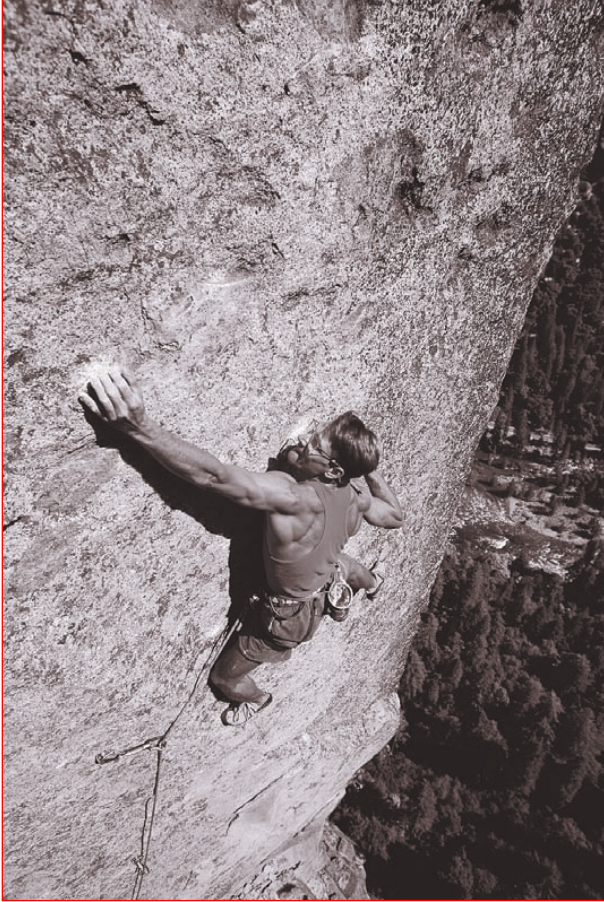
Wild about wireless

Creating valuable, worthwhile relationships with your partners and customers means conducting business with them when, where and how they want to. Today, that means through wireless e-commerce or mobile commerce (m-commerce). By extending your company's e-business applications to include wireless users — whether they're accessing your e-commerce infrastructure using cellular phones, PDAs or other handheld devices — you're poised to take advantage of what many industry experts say is the next killer app.

Industry analysts predict that the wireless Web will be 10 times bigger than today's Internet, with wireless Internet subscribers in 2004 reaching 29 million in the U.S. and 47 million in Europe.[*]

While m-commerce provides an ideal opportunity to offer value around the transaction, it's important to recognize that customers may interact with you differently, depending on their access medium. Some customers may access your systems using handheld devices or over the Internet using traditional Web browsers. Others may interact through telephony systems, support lines or cell phones. Regardless of the access mechanism, your company's infrastructure should embrace whatever device or communication channel they choose — meeting your key requirement of providing your buyers with multiple opportunities to conduct business with you.

Consider the value of alerting your buyer or distributor (after business hours, as your order database updates), that you just received their order of 100 boxes of perishable goods — however unexpected or ahead of schedule. Taking advantage of wireless notification capabilities, you can inform the buyer and arrange next-morning delivery. This type of customer attentiveness could mean the difference between a productive day and a lost one, or keeping a customer and losing one. Begin by implementing a solution that easily integrates e-commerce as part of your overall business strategy. Then, you can begin to meet your customers' needs as well as the challenges of today's Internet economy, while you grow your e-business.

Dive into the global melting pot

B-to-B e-commerce gives you a platform to genuinely conduct and expand business on a global scale. By 2004, analysts project that upwards of 80 percent of companies are expected to expand their Internet presence to other countries. However, along with the opportunities global e-commerce affords, challenges specific to handling interactions among trading partners in different geographies exist.

Participating in an e-marketplace, a supplier located in Michigan lands a large order with a new account in Asia. Excited, the supplier is eager to fill the order and establish a long-term, valuable trading relationship with this new buyer. But he also knows to expect certain differences: language, currency and culture. He must anticipate the need for translation, varying content presentation layouts, constantly changing tax and tariff laws, export and import regulations and different payment structures and shipping options. And while the order will provide a much welcomed boost to his company's bottom line, the supplier also knows that it will be in vain if the product does not arrive when promised.

Regardless of your customers' locations, you need to present your inventory and transaction information based on their cultural preferences. Businesses that conduct transactions in local currency and present personalized product information in the customers' preferred language will be more successful than those who offer only one-way interaction. These preferences may range from seemingly simple information (date and currency format), to more complex (page design and presentment) and dissimilar content (language, taxation and shipping rules). At the same time, you don't want to create the same information over and over. Your global implementation software should provide multicultural support so your buyers can select their own cultural preferences. Relying on a solution that leverages the same core infrastructure and catalog, you can offer unique application interfaces and services based on information and applications developed and designed once.

Fast, flexible and fearless solutions

You know the enormous advantages that conducting business on the Internet affords: increased accessibility, improved service, lasting customer relationships and global reach to all members of your value chain. And thanks to the Internet, smaller companies can connect and compete with larger companies.

IBM solutions for e-business address the needs of organizations of all sizes. IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite, a flexible, integrated, comprehensive set of award-winning, e-business software, allows large, mid-size and small companies to conduct business with each other seamlessly. Whether you are building your business on the Web, or expanding your business *to* the Web, a WebSphere Commerce Suite solution allows you to adapt on the fly as markets shift and business goals evolve.

WebSphere Commerce Suite delivers a total solution for e-commerce. Based on open, industry standards, WebSphere Commerce Suite is designed for rapid development and deployment of B-to-B solutions, including conquering the complexities of linking enterprises in an integrated environment. Using business intelligence and content management tools, LOB managers and marketing personnel can easily build and adapt applications, reacting to customer preferences and market shifts quickly while strengthening customer relationships and driving profitability.

With IBM commerce integration software, you can simplify and accelerate the process of fusing your business-critical applications with the Web — facilitating sales, supporting supply-chain linkages, building stronger relationships with your trading partners and significantly improving e-business efficiency. You can also connect your sell-side site to e-marketplaces, tapping into the fastest growing segment of B-to-B e-commerce.

With IBM WebSphere Catalog Manager, business users can automatically manage and exchange rich, multicultural catalog data. Catalog Manager offers a collaborative approach that allows multiple users from different product divisions to access and update the product information repository using workstations customized according to their individual roles. Improve time to market with a flexible tool set that reduces the overall time and cost of catalog data aggregation and promotes content-rich product catalogs. Readily share product information with trading partners using a standards-based XML format, facilitating content collaboration across your supply and demand chains.
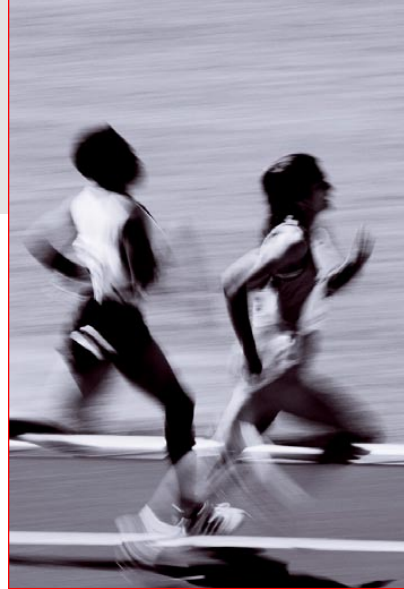
Whether you are just starting out or are a promising start-up, no matter where you are in the e-business cycle, you can rely on WebSphere Commerce Suite to meet customer requirements — and your own. IBM offers best-of-breed solutions for global e-commerce and m-commerce. All integrated with an industrial-strength application development environment. WebSphere Commerce Suite and its related products provide the functionality, integration and scalability you need to transform your existing technology and information assets into a leading global Internet solution for e-business.

For more information

Over 2,400 IBM Business Partners and Solution Providers
have received WebSphere Commerce Suite training.
They're ready to help you design and implement your
e-business solution. IBM also has relationships with more
than 100 Independent Software Developers, who add
leading-edge functionality and innovation to our
WebSphere Commerce Suite software products. And
through the experienced team at IBM Global Services,
you can quickly build and deploy dynamic e-commerce
solutions. We are committed to e-commerce — and to
your e-commerce success.

To learn more about IBM e-commerce solutions, contact
your IBM marketing representative, IBM Global Services,
IBM Business Partner or visit:

ibm.com/software/websphere/commerce

IBM.®