



IBM Customer Reference

Casas Bahia

Synopsis:

Retailer deploys IBM WebSphere Portal Enable for Multiplatforms V5.0 and IBM Lotus Workplace Web Content Management V1.5 to enable an enterprisewide sales information portal, dramatically improving productivity and information access while eliminating millions of printed pages annually

Location:

São Paulo, Brazil

Industry:

Retail

Focus Area:

e-business infrastructure

URL:

<http://www.casasbahia.com.br>

Customer Background:

Casas Bahia is one of the largest retailers in Brazil, selling US\$1.6 billion in furniture, household goods and appliances in 2002. Casas Bahia is the largest mobile phone seller in Brazil, with more than eight thousand phones sold every day. Its customers are mostly citizens in the lower income brackets who have difficulty getting credit. As a result, approximately 90 percent of sales are made on credit financed by Casas Bahia's capital. By requiring customers to return to the store each month to pay, Casas Bahia entices two-thirds of them to make further purchases. The retailer has more than 320 stores and 16 thousand employees.

Business Need:

Casas Bahia was suffering from internal communication problems. Its infrastructure could not support reliable distribution of information to employees within the timeframes required to support sales. The company was losing business because salespersons could not provide detailed product information to customers. The lack of details, such as energy consumption and noise levels for appliances, raw materials for furniture and technical specifications for cell phones, were causing lost sales.

Additionally, the process for communicating new product lines and weekend offer information was highly inefficient. E-mails were sent from regional managers to store managers who then had to print and distribute them to each salesperson. With more than nine thousand salespeople in more than three hundred stores, this was a logistical disaster. To compound the issue, there was no central repository for the information. The only person in the company with access to everything was the Lotus Domino administrator - via administrative access to the mail system.

Casas Bahia needed to improve its communications systems to provide seamless information delivery from headquarters to the sales floor. The company wanted to provide immediate, accurate information to each salesperson in order to answer any and all product questions a customer might have.

Solution:

Casas Bahia chose a portal solution comprised of IBM WebSphere Portal Enable for Multiplatforms V5.0 and IBM Lotus Workplace Web Content Management V1.5 running on Linux. These tools have enabled the company to deploy an intranet product and sales information portal across the enterprise. With Lotus Workplace Content Management, information is easily managed and updated from backend systems at the company's headquarters and accessed via Linux desktops and thin clients in each store.

The Web site provides updated content regarding every pertinent aspect of sales. With 10 to 20 terminals in each retail location, every salesperson now has convenient access to product details and information on sales and promotions. More than nine thousand users regularly access this data via a Mozilla browser. The system has eliminated unnecessary steps in the process of delivering information. The store manager is no longer charged with informing every employee, and there's no more useless printing. Data sheets are printed now only as a customer courtesy.

Benefits of the Solution:

The new system represents a fundamental change for Casas Bahia, reducing unnecessary workload and improving productivity across the company. All salespeople now have complete and immediate access to the information needed to do the job. Though quantifiable information is not yet available, the solution is expected to significantly impact overall sales.

In addition to companywide gains in productivity, Casas Bahia will benefit from a massive reduction in printing costs. The solution has eliminated approximately 180 thousand printouts per weekend and over 10 million printouts annually.

The Lotus and WebSphere system also helps Casas Bahia keep up with the competition. Now, when a competitor launches a promotion in a store area, the company can immediately respond to it with a competitive initiative and provide the right information to the affected employees.