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Telecommunications company uses secure e-business to improve communications with customers worldwide

Alcatel Australia's initial foray into e-business not only signals closer partnerships with its customers, but also sets a new standard for business in Australia.

A leading supplier of telecommunications equipment, Alcatel established an Order Status Inquiry system that allows customers to quickly and easily investigate order information over the Internet. Because the system is securely linked with applications on Alcatel's IBM S/390 enterprise server, the foundation is in place for future enhancements that will help reduce customer inventory requirements and lead to "open-book" relationships.

"The e-business solution from IBM has absolutely delighted our customers, strengthened our relationships and set a new standard for service. And it's only the beginning of what's possible."

—Roland Persson
Strategic Systems Manager for
Alcatel Australia Limited

"The system has delighted our customers and strengthened our relationships with them," says Roland Persson, strategic systems manager for Alcatel. "As far as we can tell, this is the first of its type in Australia."

A strong foundation

For more than a century, Alcatel has played a leading role in Australia's telecommunications industry. Today, it is the largest manufacturer of communications equipment in Australia. Key offerings range from telephones and PBX systems to undersea cable networks, digital mobile infrastructure and data communications equipment.

"We started this e-business solution because we wanted to add value to our customers' businesses, so they'll choose Alcatel first. We saw the IBM solution as a way to provide easy access to the information without complicated file transfers," says Persson. "It was an opportunity to make it easier to do business with us."

Application	Customer service Internet site to securely investigate status of orders, contact appropriate personnel and research catalog information
Business Benefits	Over 90 percent improvement in customer responsiveness; 24x7 availability of information; improved customer service
Software	Lotus® Domino Go Webserver™ IBM® CICS® Transaction Server IBM OS/390®
Hardware	IBM S/390®

e-business

Alcatel Australia uses e-business to improve customer communications while setting new business standards.

Alcatel's secure e-business implementation allows customers to determine the status of orders, contact appropriate personnel and research catalog information via the Internet. By offering this "self-service" capability, Alcatel eliminates the back-and-forth faxing and telephone calls that used to be required to answer customer inquiries. Alcatel has seen a 90 percent improvement in response time, going from hours to minutes, and the sales, marketing and other departments have been freed up to focus on more value-added activities. Both Alcatel and its customers benefit from a consistent view of the same data. And the around-the-clock availability of the e-business solution benefits customers outside Australia who cannot always call during Sydney's office hours.

The building blocks

Alcatel's Order Status Inquiry system combines the convenience of Web technology with the proven business computing attributes of S/390 servers. The core of the system is an existing business application that runs under the CICS Transaction Server on OS/390. Alcatel took advantage of its investments by reusing existing application logic, a process known as Application Mining™. An IBM CICS connector allows access to the CICS application from the Web server, maintaining the transaction management and logging required for the application. Data transfer, protocol conversion and other Web issues are handled by the Web server. The ability to use Alcatel's existing mainframe server enabled implementation of the system to be completed from concept to rollout in just 12 weeks.

Another key element of the implementation — Lotus Domino Go Webserver running on the S/390 server — provides the requested information in standard Web format. This presentation is so intuitive that training on the new system consists of a 15-minute presentation. In addition to the advantages of connecting directly to the application, Domino Go Webserver takes advantage of S/390 facilities such as security management, large memory and automated disk management. "The

Domino Go Webserver has done everything we wanted it to do," says Persson.

Additionally, the eyes-only security offered by the S/390 platform ensures that only authorized users get in. A diskette containing a personal digital certificate is issued, while the user ID and password are sent in separate mailings. After passing a simple but strong authentication process, authorized users are allowed to see only data that relates to them. From one administrative interface, Alcatel security personnel can ensure that users have access only to the transactions, data and Web pages they are entitled to. Data that flows between the S/390 server and the end user is also encrypted to protect it from unauthorized users. The ability of OS/390 to tie a digital certificate to an OS/390 Security Server (RACF) identity helped facilitate the development effort, while maintaining the stringent security of the business applications.

A bright future

Another important reason for selecting the S/390 platform, according to Persson, was because "IBM focused on the business issues — not the technology — and came up with a solution that would deliver business value."

The Order Status Inquiry system serves as a strong foundation for future e-business solutions. For example, the next phase involves inventory forecasting. Both Alcatel and its customers will work together to synchronize future requirements with production capabilities. This capability will allow Alcatel to better plan production while minimizing inventories. "The IBM response has served as a catalyst for new ways to serve our customers. Other areas of our business are looking to incorporate this e-business solution into their operations," says Persson. "We've got a page full of project summaries we'll be implementing soon.

"The e-business solution from IBM has absolutely delighted our customers, strengthened our relationships and set a new standard for service," concludes Persson. "And it's only the beginning of what's possible."

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