



MCBA heats up the Web with HVAC industry e-marketplace.

Application	E-marketplace for the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning industry
Business Benefits	More than 1 million visitors in the two months following Web site launch; 281 registered members representing a wide range of HVAC businesses
Software	IBM WebSphere® Commerce Suite, Pro Edition IBM DB2® Universal Database™ for AIX® IBM HTTP Server powered by Apache IBM Net.Data®
Servers	IBM RS/6000® IBM Netfinity®
Premier Business Partner	MCBA

Two heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) professionals work on a rooftop, attempting to fix a damaged fan in the hot midday sun. Frustrated that the part they need must be back-ordered, the professionals struggle to temporarily fix the unit to accommodate the elderly residents suffering the unbearable heat inside.

The difficulty in getting the right parts for the job at the right time is typical of the HVAC industry, which is comprised of disparate residential and industrial installation and repair shops, manufacturers and distributors.

“When people come together, growth and progress escalate exponentially. IBM and its Premier Business Partners have helped us make this possible for the HVAC industry, and we look forward to a long, productive relationship.”

– David Wiggins, President, eForay



eForay had a clear vision of its HVAC industry hub, but it took IBM Premier Business Partner MCBA to turn it into reality.

Software Business Partners e-business Solutions



The expertise to make e-business dreams come alive begins with the dedicated, creative, technical and consulting staff at MCBA. Seated (left to right): Sudha Alapati, James Munday, Greg Engle, Alan Moss, Wade Crawford and Geoff Hamilton. Standing (left to right): Andrew Hays, Kenneth Matthews, Benny Brocato, Keith Davis and Rhett Daniel.

“IBM sets high standards for its Premier Business Partners and equips them with training, service and product resources, so that companies like ours are provided with solutions in keeping with the IBM reputation for quality and service.”

–David Wiggins

One of the industry’s greatest challenges has always been stock—either having too much or not enough. This—joined with the fragmented nature of the industry—has contributed to breaks in supply chains and information sharing as well as an overall disconnect between HVAC professionals in different geographical regions.

But now there’s Hvacindustry.com, a Web-based HVAC industry hub. From this e-marketplace, HVAC technicians throughout the U.S. can find and order the part from a shop across the country—far outside of their company’s normal supply network. And they can also hook up with a community of like-minded professionals to expand their knowledge and business opportunities.

Hvacindustry.com is the brainchild of eForay, a Virginia-based company founded by a seasoned group of HVAC and IT professionals who wanted to capitalize on the old adage—one man’s garbage is another man’s treasure. Says David Wiggins, president of eForay, “Some shops would actually give away parts and units to employees because the material eventually became a cost burden to keep in stock. I know of one manufacturer who conducted inventory and found a \$2.5 million surplus. Meanwhile, a few states away, folks were scrambling to find many of these same items.”

When planning Hvacindustry.com, eForay envisioned an e-marketplace that would bring together HVAC professionals, manufacturers and distributors over the Internet. “What we needed were the applications and expertise to make this dream come alive,” says Wiggins. “That’s what we got from MCBA.”

An IBM Premier Business Partner, MCBA is a member of the IBM Certified for e-business Business Partner Program as well as the Web Integrator program. Its developers and implementors are also certified in IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite, Lotus® Domino™, IBM DB2 Universal Database and IBM RS/6000. “All of these are powerful credentials and were highly influential in eForay’s selection of MCBA for its e-marketplace application,” notes MCBA vendor relationship manager Dick Gammill.

Using IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite, Pro Edition, version 4.1 in conjunction with IBM DB2 Universal Database, IBM Net.Data and other IBM software and hardware, MCBA delivered Hvacindustry.com in six months. And it seems the industry is warming to the idea of the new e-marketplace. The site received more than one million hits in its first two months alone, and representatives from 281 companies of every size have signed on as members.

Says Wiggins, “With Hvacindustry.com, this industry will finally have a rallying point with global potential. When people come together, growth and progress escalate exponentially. IBM and MCBA have helped us make this possible, and we look forward to a long, productive relationship.”

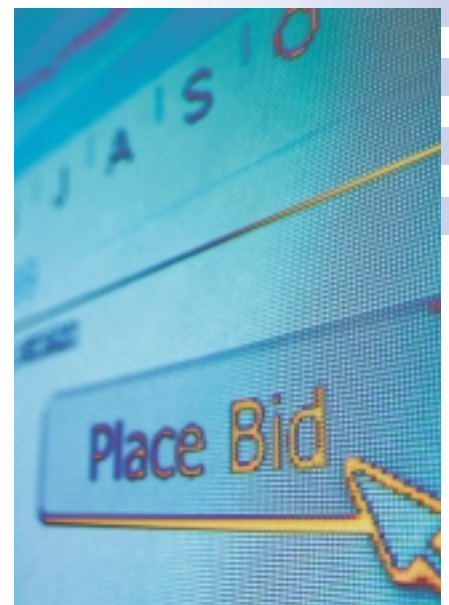
A market and a meeting place

As an HVAC community, Hvacindustry.com offers many service functions to HVAC professionals. Job Central allows members to search for jobs and place job listings; Rep Central connects HVAC manufacturers with dealers who want to represent their products; Bid Teaming enables several companies to team up to present more attractive bids to customers; and Service Network helps HVAC service companies locate service expertise that they may not have in-house. The community pages also offer a message forum, links to member sites, contract purchasing for urgent needs, news updates and articles by industry leaders.

The two commerce areas of the site are HVAC Mart, where members can post products and parts for sale at a specific price and HVAC Auction, where products and parts can be put up for auction. To further increase the frequency and duration of member visits, eForay added a stock ticker and custom stock quotes, top national and world news, sports, local weather and discussion forums.

“We showed them that we could use WebSphere Commerce Suite. . . . and easily set up full-function Dutch, open cry and sealed-bid auctions. It would have taken us a lot of time to develop all these capabilities from scratch.”

– Greg Engle, Senior Consultant, MCBA



MCBA is pioneering the use of WebSphere Commerce Suite for online auctions.

MCBA delivers complete solution on WebSphere platform

MCBA designed the software architecture for Hvacindustry.com and implemented all of the site's features. Nearly all of the functionality is driven by IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite, with DB2 Universal Database storing the product, member and transaction information.

"WebSphere Commerce Suite was the obvious product to use as the merchant server for the e-commerce portions of the site, but we also used it for the service pages," explains MCBA senior consultant Greg Engle. "Since those pages needed to tie back to the same user and demographic data used in the commerce areas of the site, it made sense to leverage the WebSphere Commerce Suite infrastructure. WebSphere Commerce Suite was flexible enough to allow us to use it in this non-traditional manner." To do this, MCBA simply took the DB2 catalog schema and the Net.Data macros that come with WebSphere Commerce Suite and customized them to suit eForay's needs.

In HVAC Auction, MCBA piloted and made extensive use of the auction features in WebSphere Commerce Suite. "This was one of the capabilities that really impressed eForay," Engle says. "We showed them that we could use the same WebSphere Commerce Suite infrastructure proposed for HVAC Mart and easily set up full-function Dutch, open cry and sealed-bid auctions. It would have taken us a lot of time to develop all these capabilities from scratch."

The site is hosted on an RS/6000 server, which MCBA installed at an ISP facility in Huntsville, Alabama and configured with the help of a consultant from IBM. IBM HTTP Server powered by Apache connects the site to the Internet. MCBA also installed two dedicated IBM Netfinity firewall servers—one at the ISP and the other on eForay's premises connected over a virtual private network—to allow eForay to perform secure, remote administration of its site.

Trust in IBM extends to its partners

MCBA has been an IBM Business Partner for eight years, and according to Gammill, it consistently reaps the rewards of that relationship when talking to prospective clients. "For eForay, the IBM name was a strong attraction, and selecting MCBA was like getting a piece of IBM," says Gammill.

Wiggins concurs, adding, "IBM sets high standards for its Premier Business Partners and equips them with training, service and product resources, so that companies like ours are provided with solutions in keeping with the IBM reputation for quality and service. MCBA proved to us that this was not only true in theory, but practice as well."

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12-00
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G325-1827-00