IBM

Napa Valley Wine Warehouse savors success of IBM e-business solution.

It's the crack of dawn in California, and, while Silicon Valley has yet to wake up and smell its first cup of java, 100 miles to the north the Napa Valley Wine Warehouse (NVWW) is abuzz with activity. Warehouse staff are working a grueling schedule, stacking, packing and shipping thousands of cases of wine every day. And that's not the half of it. In the back-office, administrative staff scurry to keep track of inventory and shipments, creating reports for the wineries that use their warehouse facilities for aging and distribution.

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With 53 Napa Valley wineries using the 95,000 square foot warehouse to store as many as 750,000 cases at a time, there's rarely a moment to spare. During peak periods, more than 30,000 cases are shipped worldwide daily. With just four full-time employees, there's obviously a premium on time—no one wants to be bogged down with tedious administrative tasks. That's why the million-dollar company sought out IBM Business Partner Bottle-Soft, LLC, experts in information technology solutions for the wine and spirits industry.

Application	Extranet for winery management
Business Benefits	90% reduction in administrative work; 10-fold increase in business operations; enhanced customer service
Software	IBM DB2® for AS/400® IBM Net.Data® IBM HTTP Server
Hardware	IBM AS/400e™ Server
Business Partner	Bottle-Soft, LLC

A new business-to-business winery extranet ensures Napa Valley Wine Warehouse employees aren't bogged down by administrative work.

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Bottle-Soft delivered a business-to-business extranet that enables wineries to relay orders to NVWW online, track inventory and shipments in realtime and access performance reports on demand.

Powered by IBM Net.Data, IBM DB2 and IBM HTTP Server running on an IBM AS/400e Server, the solution has boosted administrative efficiency. Says Karen Ames, NVWW General Manager, "We use the Web-based system in all facets of our business, from inventory control to performance reporting. It has reduced clerical work by almost 90 percent and expanded our activity level 10 times without adding staff to handle additional orders." Though it's too early to calculate precise figures, Ames expects order processing and other administrative costs to decline significantly.

Extranet improves revenue turnaround

The true value of the system, however, is the convenience it offers customers. "Increasingly, the most important asset for a business is customer satisfaction," notes Ames. "To bring customers online using cutting-edge technology not only satisfies their needs, but also shows them that we're investing in our future together."

The wineries, too, recognize the benefits they're deriving from this Internet solution. "Easy access to business information can yield financial rewards for the wineries as well," Ames explains. Since wineries bill their customers only after shipment, they must wait for shipment confirmation before creating invoices. Previously, this confirmation was faxed to the wineries at end of day. However, with the extranet, confirmation can be transmitted instantly, improving revenue turnaround for the wineries.

Reliable solution for valued customers

The winery management system developed by Bottle-Soft—and widely used in the wine industry—is designed for the AS/400e platform with DB2 for AS/400 serving as the data repository. "The IBM e-business solution with DB2 on the AS/400e has the highest reliability and the shortest time-to-market of any system I've seen," notes Steve Davis, president of Bottle-Soft. And reliability is key, according to Ames. "We can't ask customers to wait while we reboot our system," she says. "My mind was set on IBM technology because its stability and performance are proven."

Net.Data provides dynamic connectivity to the database, presenting the wineries with up-to-date information. Because clients can access the extranet and view their accounts through standard Web browsers, NVWW doesn't have to worry about distributing special, front-end software to the 53 wineries it works with. The use of passwords to log onto the extranet protects NVWW's business data from unauthorized access. Likewise, IBM HTTP Server, which supports industry-standard, 128-bit Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption, safeguards the privacy of information transmitted over the Internet.

NVWW is also participating in the IBM e-business Mark program to demonstrate the reliability of its solution to customers. For small and medium businesses, the e-business Mark program's free quarterly Web Security Scan is particularly useful, notes Davis. "With IBM providing these value-added services, even small and medium businesses can maintain a high level of security," Davis says. "In the long term, this will differentiate the successful e-businesses."

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