



Internet Solutions Provider Helps Shoe Distributor Get E-Commerce on its Feet

For Trifecta Technologies, e-business opportunity has sprung up as fast as the Internet itself. The Allentown, Pennsylvania-based IBM Business Partner and BESTeam member, which started out offering IBM RS/6000 systems, back-end integration, and migration from legacy systems, has now added a full range of Internet services to its portfolio. These services include Web site design, hosting, domain name registration, online commerce and firewall installation—all based on IBM e-business solutions.

“Net.Commerce is a richer and more robust application that goes beyond anything we could have developed on our own.”

—Doug Pelletier, President, Trifecta Technologies

Using IBM's Net.Commerce and IBM Firewall software, Trifecta Technologies has already delivered a full-fledged electronic commerce solution to Lehigh Valley Safety Supply Co. Inc., a distributor of safety shoes. Lehigh Valley is using its new online storefront and catalog to expand to overseas markets, improve service to existing customers, and provide more timely sales information to its financial officers.

Gaining a foothold overseas

Lehigh Valley Safety Supply is a \$6.5 million distributor for the Lehigh Safety Shoe division of Endicott-Johnson Corporation. The company's products include specially treated

boots and the steel-tipped shoes required by OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration) for industrial workers. With a small staff of 20, Lehigh Valley serves Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, parts of New York and the Delmarva peninsula.

Seeking to expand its customer base beyond its U.S. sales territory, Lehigh Valley has leveraged the global reach of the Internet to do business in other countries. According to Lehigh Valley Controller Jim Codrea, the company's Internet storefront has sparked growing interest and orders from marketplaces worldwide, which the distributor had never been able to reach before. Codrea notes that adding a large customer could significantly increase sales: “We sold 85,000 pairs of shoes last year. A single new business relationship could result in our selling several thousand more pairs of shoes per year.”

Application	Storefront with catalog supporting global business-to-business sales of safety shoes
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Software	IBM Net.Commerce IBM Firewall IBM DB2 IBM AIX
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Hardware	IBM RS/6000
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Improving customer service

A 20-year veteran of the safety shoe business, Codrea is well-versed in business-to-business selling. He's dealt with pharmaceutical, aluminum, steel companies—you name it. But whereas he used to deliver his sales pitch to corporate purchasing agents and managers, he



Although its buyers will always be able to try on real shoes, Lehigh Valley expects its Internet storefront to capture an increasing portion of sales.

now must cater to the needs of individual employees, who are having a bigger say in what safety shoes their companies buy. For some time, Lehigh Valley had fielded requests for an online safety shoe catalog and Internet shopping site. And, thanks to Trifecta Technologies, partnering with IBM, Lehigh Valley can now deliver a comprehensive e-commerce solution that provides a real competitive advantage.

Lehigh Valley initially selected 50 of its most popular styles for the Internet catalog. Customers visiting the Lehigh Valley storefront at www.safetyshoes.com can browse, view the various styles, and place their selections into an electronic shopping cart. When they're ready to check out, they confirm their order and specify shipping information.

A very useful feature of the Internet storefront is its support for procurement cards. Lehigh Valley uses the IBM DB2 database to store each customer's credit limits, so it can provide instant credit approval. In addition, the application journals all the transactions and purchases, providing data that is available for key reports for Lehigh Valley's financial officers.

Net.Commerce—a step above

As Lehigh Valley's systems integrator for more than ten years, Trifecta initially developed a home-grown e-commerce solution. But with the introduction of IBM Net.Commerce, Trifecta quickly switched. "Net.Commerce is a richer and more robust application that goes beyond anything we could have developed on our own," says Trifecta president Doug Pelletier. For example, Trifecta built a shopping cart function using CGI and PERL, but it didn't include provisions for varying sales tax rates, multiple pricing structures and contract pricing, all of which are available in Net.Commerce.

Net.Commerce works with relational databases and comes packaged with IBM's DB2 database server. Lehigh Valley will take advantage of Net.Commerce's customer profiling capability to analyze the data it collects on its customers. It can apply data mining tools to find out more about its customers and their buying habits.

ODBC interfaces built into Net.Commerce enable it to work with any ODBC-compliant database, but according to Pelletier, a major cost advantage with Net.Commerce is getting a full-featured version of DB2—one of the most robust RDBMSs on the market—as part of the product.

Another benefit of Net.Commerce, Pelletier says, is its rich administration functionality, which makes site management easy. Merchants can manage their own Internet storefronts without any knowledge of HTML or CGI scripting. Net.Commerce's Store Manager provides a graphical interface that makes it easy for merchants to change prices, update product descriptions and photographs, etc. In addition, the system allows corporate buyers to create their own passwords and enter their company information. Name and address changes and order administration are all automated. An additional order tracking facility gives customers more control over the ordering process.

Trifecta is currently hosting Lehigh Valley's online store, which runs on a dedicated IBM RS/6000 server. Another RS/6000 will be installed to run IBM's Firewall software, and will be connected to the Net.Commerce server via a TCP/IP link. The site will be moved to Lehigh Valley's premises, and will be connected to the Internet.

Revenues come running

Pelletier is enthusiastic about the potential of Net.Commerce to provide a distinct marketing advantage for Trifecta as an e-commerce solutions provider. "Net.Commerce is a strategic product for us, and we are paying a great deal of attention to it," he says.

In addition, by participating in IBM's Internet Specialty Certification Program, Trifecta learns of additional business opportunities. "IBM is doing a great job in promoting its products, and we are gratefully receiving the leads they are turning over to certified business partners," Pelletier says. "It gives us one more arrow in our quiver."

As for Lehigh Valley, it has counted tens of thousands of hits to its site since the storefront went live. Already, requests and orders have come in from countries as far as Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines and Saudi Arabia.

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