



Seals innovates data exchange for businesses of all sizes.

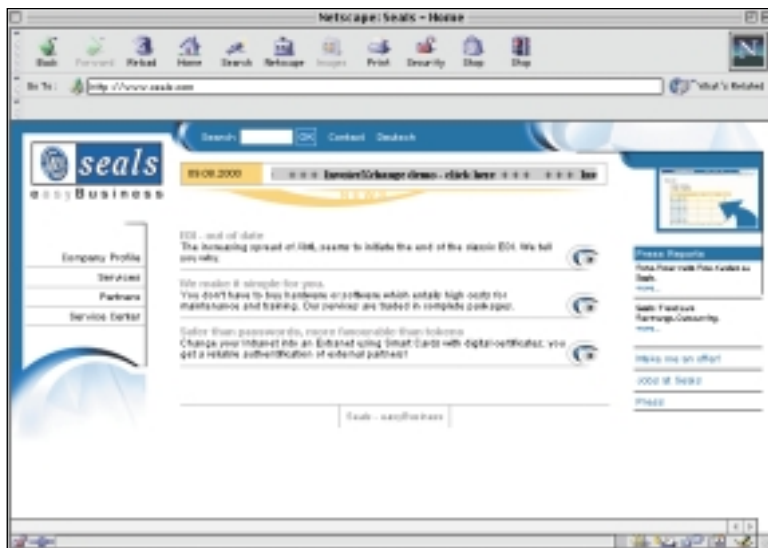
Application	B2B digital document exchange
Business Benefits	For Seals: More than \$17 million (20 million Euro) increase in revenues expected by 2002; 400 new large accounts expected; ability to serve both large and small companies For Seals' customers: 70% reduction in document processing costs
Software	IBM WebSphere® Application Server, Standard Edition IBM XML Parser for Java™
Business Partner	Apcon

The digital revolution has dramatically increased our abilities to communicate with one another—especially in business. Since the 1970s, major corporations perceptively enough to recognize the power of electronic communication have used large, independent EDI-based data networks to exchange documents and sensitive information with other corporations. This provided a very convenient method of communicating with customers and partners. To do this, however, both parties were required to have their systems configured to read the format agreed upon. And with the myriad, proprietary formats that these businesses used to define their documents, exchanging data with a large customer base became very difficult.

Also, the enormous cost of purchasing, implementing and supporting these large data-network systems made it impossible for small and midsize businesses to afford them.

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– Frank Ladner, IT Director, Seals



With IBM by its side, Seals is revolutionizing the way businesses exchange documents.

e-business — redefining the competitive edge in your favor



Seals eliminates the paperwork headache by leveraging the Java support of WebSphere Application Server.

Enter Seals, a 40-employee company located in Frankfurt, Germany that manages secure, inexpensive and flexible Web-based electronic data exchange between European companies. By eliminating the massive investments needed for EDI systems, Web-based data exchange offers a low-cost alternative by requiring only an Internet connection and a Web browser.

Seals envisioned providing a service that would enable businesses to exchange digital data in any format by translating documents from their proprietary definitions to XML—the emerging standard format for data exchange. Also, using a Java-based application server would enable Seals to handle requests from Web browsers running on any client platform. The company made good on its goals using e-business software from IBM.

While still attending the University of Frankfurt, the company's technical experts had gained experience with IBM software. "At the university, we created a prototype of our data exchange application using an early version of IBM WebSphere Application Server, and we were very pleased with its ability to handle Java components," explains Frank Ladner, IT director, Seals.

Seals confirmed its findings by testing WebSphere Application Server against BEA WebLogic. "At the time our systems were implemented, WebSphere Application Server provided far better Java support than BEA WebLogic. It was also easier to maintain and less expensive," explains Ladner. "We knew IBM was the obvious choice."

Seals contacted IBM Frankfurt for assistance in migrating the existing application from Microsoft® Windows NT® to a more robust and stable platform. IBM, with help from IBM Business Partner Apcon, an e-business solutions vendor based in Germany, recommended implementing WebSphere Application Server on Sun® Solaris™ Operating Environment. "We had incredible support from IBM," says Ladner. "Whenever we needed any assistance, which was rare with WebSphere Application Server, they provided consultation from the first contact to the final launch — which only took six months."

"With IBM, we have been able to provide small businesses with quicker and more flexible invoicing services than their larger competitors."

—Frank Ladner

Seals currently handles the invoice traffic for numerous small businesses and 30 large companies, such as Lufthansa AirPlus and Sony, and expects to be handling 10 million invoice postings and receipts annually by 2002, increasing its revenues by more than \$17 million (20 million Euro). Seals expects to sign 400 new, key accounts and thousands of small and medium-size customers. "All of our current customers are happy," Ladner adds. "We've had considerable positive feedback from both our smaller customers and our larger corporations."

Their enthusiasm is well founded—if Seals' customers shift only half of their paper-based invoice processes to electronic processing, they can save as much as 70 percent in operational costs.

WebSphere Application Server makes data exchange easy

The first of Seals' services, InvoiceXchange, enables businesses to post and receive invoices over the Internet. To use this service, the sender transmits invoice data to Seals over a secure Internet connection. At Seals, the invoice data is converted into XML and stored in an Oracle database. Recipients can access their invoices through a Web site whose backend consists of Java components powered by WebSphere Application Server. Using the IBM XML Parser, the invoice data is processed and made available for the recipients. Notes Ladner, "The IBM XML Parser is one of the core components of our application framework."

To log on to the Web site where they can view a list of their invoices awaiting payment, customers use a smart card with a digital certificate received from Seals. From the site they can either print the invoices or import them directly into their enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Either of these requests invokes a Java servlet through WebSphere Application Server to retrieve the documents from the database and present them in any format customers may need.

"Companies are no longer limited by data format or available resources to give their customers the convenience and efficiency of e-business practices."

—Frank Ladner



Seals gives small and medium-size enterprises the tools to compete with their larger competitors.

Customers cut costs with InvoiceXchange

By leveraging today's most cutting-edge e-business technology, Seals empowers businesses to communicate freely with their customers while cutting overhead. As early as last year, Lufthansa AirPlus had been transmitting invoices to its customers using a large EDI-based system. The problem was that only 30 clients out of 13,000 were equipped with the necessary systems to receive the data in this manner. To communicate with other customers, Lufthansa AirPlus was then required to send out 50,000 printed invoices a month — generating enormous paper, postage and personnel expenses.

Lufthansa AirPlus decided to test InvoiceXchange and switched part of its invoice processing to the Web-based service. By turning to InvoiceXchange, Lufthansa AirPlus has enabled all customers with access to a Web browser to check their invoices and integrate the data into their internal systems — reducing the need for paper, labor and postage while cutting Lufthansa AirPlus' operating costs by up to 70 percent. "This is really a win-win situation," notes Ladner. "Companies are no longer limited by data format or available resources to give their customers the convenience and efficiency of e-business practices."

Seals builds on its successful architecture

WebSphere Application Server is poised to support Seals' future e-business ventures. Ladner notes, "We have many other services coming, such as order management, payment services and data warehousing. We are planning to migrate to WebSphere Application Server 3.5 because of its support for Enterprise JavaBeans™ — this will really cut down on our development time."

Experiencing first hand the struggles of being a small, growing company with exciting ideas, Seals is determined not to lose sight of its dedication to organizations of all sizes. Ladner explains, "With IBM, we have been able to provide small businesses with quicker and more flexible invoicing services than their larger competitors."

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