



CondoPronto.com helps travelers with online rental service.

Application	B2C online property-rental service
Business Benefits	100% ROI expected in 6 months; \$1.4 million projected 12-month revenue from initial \$30,000 investment; up to 10% savings in finders fees for customers
Software	IBM Net.Commerce IBM Net.Data® IBM VisualAge® for Java™ IBM DB2® Universal Database™ IBM HotMedia®
Servers	IBM RS/6000®
Business Partner	Aureus Solutions, Inc.

Who would have thought that the simple purchase of a piece of rental property would motivate a pair of cousins to charge into the multi-billion dollar travel industry? But combine a great idea, easily accessible cutting-edge technology and the hottest economy in American history, and you have the means of realizing dreams. With the goal of bringing together rental property owners and travelers looking for temporary housing, cousins Randy Zats and Susan Cohen launched CondoPronto.com.

“The small initial investment for IBM Net.Commerce makes it a sensational product for people starting off with a hot idea and limited resources.”

– Randy Zats, President, CondoPronto.com



From coast to beautiful coast, CondoPronto.com is matching up condo owners with travelers looking for a more luxurious place to stay.

e-business — accelerating the pace of business and the pace of change



Using products like HotMedia and Net.Commerce, property owners can present their condo in very creative ways.

“The IBM Application Framework for e-business, along with products like Net.Commerce and DB2 Universal Database, offers the flexibility and reliability to give young companies the support to pursue growth in their industries.”

– Carol Parks, President, Aureus Solutions, Inc.

In 1997, Zats’ family purchased a rental condo in Florida and began advertising its availability online on a Web site created with IBM Homepage Creator. Zats quickly realized the burden of corresponding with prospective customers through e-mails and phone calls. Cohen, as well as being part owner of the condo, was a constant traveler and was familiar with the problems of finding temporary housing online. “There were some disparate places on the Web where you could find rentals, but no central marketplace for travelers. We both thought that this was a hot idea,” explains Cohen.

Zats, now president of CondoPronto.com, and Cohen, vice president, had a great idea and a lot of energy, but what the two didn’t have was the technical expertise needed to develop an online rental service. Zats was introduced to IBM Net.Commerce (now part of the IBM WebSphere® Commerce Suite family of products) from reading trade magazines and speaking with people at e-business conventions. IBM was the natural choice for Zats. “I had been working with IBM products for years, and I have always been extremely happy with them. I knew that the scalability and flexibility of Net.Commerce and IBM DB2 Universal Database would be perfect for building our Web site.”

Zats searched the IBM Web site for Business Partners who could lend e-business development experience to their venture. Aureus Solutions, Inc., based in Maryland, stood out from the rest because of its expertise in implementing scalable Net.Commerce solutions. “We didn’t want somebody who only worked with Fortune 500 companies, or someone who was a one-person show,” explains Zats. “Nobody was more qualified than Aureus Solutions, to deliver a Net.Commerce and DB2 Universal Database solution to a company as small and young as ours.”

CondoPronto.com proceeded with a trial period — testing out the Web interface and the stability of the infrastructure. Three months after going live, without any advertising or marketing, CondoPronto.com signed accounts all across the country. “We have brought together condo owners and travelers looking for housing in nine different states — from Pennsylvania to California,” says Zats. “People are definitely not afraid to buy this service online.” The young company expects a 100 percent return on its original \$30,000 investment within 6 months by generating \$1.4 million in projected revenue in the next year.

Property owners get technical

Owners can get their properties listed in 10 to 15 minutes after registering on CondoPronto.com. A wizard, written by Aureus Solutions using IBM Net.Data macros, walks owners through the listing process, asking all of the relevant questions regarding price points, number of bedrooms and location. The wizard allows customers to list their own properties and enter in their credit card information. "The great thing about the wizard is that we don't need to key any information in—the owners do it all themselves," says Zats. All of the information is then stored in DB2 Universal Database, which Aureus Solutions hosts on an IBM RS/6000 server.

Additional macros and Java servlets, written by Aureus Solutions with Net.Data and IBM VisualAge for Java, customize the property information in DB2. "Each property can have as many as 52 different prices depending on the week," explains Zats. "The Net.Data macros and Java servlets bring all of these different bits of information right to the customer's browser." Aureus Solutions also uses IBM HotMedia—a graphics tool which embeds rich media into Web applications. HotMedia allows owners to create some intriguing multimedia avenues for displaying their properties, such as 3-D panoramic shots and virtual walk-throughs.

IBM and Aureus Solutions—a natural choice

CondoPronto.com faced the same challenges encountered by most young companies—limited resources for getting started. The company needed a product that fit its budget, but also provided all of the necessary functions to launch its e-business. "The small initial investment for IBM Net.Commerce makes it a sensational product for people starting off with a hot idea and limited resources," explains Zats.

Zats found additional reassurance when querying employees of other high tech companies. "We know of a lot of other companies using different types of products. None of these products offered the level of flexibility and scalability found in our IBM e-business solution," explains Zats.

"I've been thrilled with the superior capabilities of IBM's products. All of my customers know that IBM means quality."

—Randy Zats



Working with IBM, CondoPronto.com saves property owners a considerable amount of time and money when renting to travelers.

Aureus Solutions knew that CondoPronto.com's primary challenge was in the actual production of the online rental service. "We really needed help moving the site up from storyboards into a fully operational site," explains Zats. CondoPronto.com had the vision, and Aureus Solutions had the tools to make that vision a reality. Following the guidelines of the IBM Application Framework for e-business, Aureus Solutions was able to develop the virtual marketplace for the young company. According to Carol Parks, president of Aureus Solutions, "The IBM Application Framework for e-business, along with products like Net.Commerce and DB2 Universal Database, offers the flexibility and reliability needed to give young companies the support to pursue growth in their industries."

CondoPronto.com travels quickly into the future

CondoPronto.com's virtual marketplace empowers its customers and saves them time and money. Using the Web site instead of going through a realtor, a condo owner can save up to 10 percent in finders fees. CondoPronto.com also does all of the legwork for its property owners. "Trying to rent a condo year-round can be a very cumbersome task," Zats explains. "On average, an owner will spend four hours a week trying to rent a condo. Add that up for the whole year, and that's a huge chunk of one's life. We take care of all that."

The site's scalability has given CondoPronto.com the confidence to plan on future growth. "We plan to grow exponentially—all across the world—and our IBM e-business infrastructure will have no problem growing with us," explains Zats. "If we get big enough to bring in an IT staff and begin hosting ourselves, we'll be able to smoothly migrate everything—it's a very portable solution."

To generate additional revenue, the company will begin charging property owners for more advanced listing options, such as including panoramic photos or the virtual walkthroughs created with HotMedia. Also, as CondoPronto.com reaches a wider audience, the potential for advertising revenue dramatically increases. "Since we plan to have a global scale, there will be incredible opportunity for local advertising from restaurants, attractions and realtors on our site—this is just the beginning," explains Zats.

For CondoPronto.com, the business environment couldn't be better for substantial growth. "We haven't even scratched the surface of this yet—this is going to be big," says Zats. "The travel industry is an extremely ripe market—even if we only capture a fraction of it, we will have fulfilled our goals."

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