



# Western Star Trucks finds the road to e-business success down under.

Western Star Trucks Australia Pty Ltd, a leading Australian distributor of class 8 trucks and parts, knows the difference between an e-business superhighway and thousands of miles of plain road. And now it's using that knowledge to transform the way it does business, improving customer satisfaction and offering more efficient service to its dealers through an extranet co-developed by IBM Business Partner Sundata of Brisbane. Its new e-business solution replaces a time-consuming, paper-based process by which all inquiries were handled by mail, phone or fax.

*"I know with IBM I have a top-notch, state-of-the-art e-business system that is fully serviceable from Australia and expandable when we make further links to improve our service and customer operations."*

—Al Hogan  
Director – After-Market Support Services

"We needed a two-fold communications link with our dealers," says Al Hogan, director – after-market support services at Western Star Trucks. "First, we needed to allow our dealers online access to our systems so that when they received a query from one of their customers they could instantly find our pricing and availability. And secondly, we wanted to be able to facilitate a direct flow of information from us to the dealers to keep them informed of any new developments."

Western Star Trucks, Australia, a subsidiary of Western Star Truck Holdings Ltd., serves a large "niche" clientele in Australia, New Zealand and Papua, New Guinea – truck buyers who know what they want on their vehicles. While Western Star trucks come in

<b>Application</b>	Nationwide after-market dealer extranet, providing parts availability and shipment tracking
<b>Business Benefits</b>	Estimated substantial annual savings; 40% sales growth increase; 400% after-market business growth; improved customer satisfaction; enhanced operations
<b>Software</b>	IBM® DB2®
<b>Hardware</b>	IBM AS/400®e series



Western Star Trucks is using e-business to improve customer service and reduce costs through its after-market dealer extranet.

25 configurations, what makes them truly unique is that each configuration offers 8,000 options — more than a Detroit automaker could dream of. Once the trucks are built to customer specifications, they are shipped to one of 40 dealers for final sale or delivery.

### **Braking for customer satisfaction**

It's Murphy's law that if something's going to go wrong with your vehicle, it's going to happen in the most remote place possible. As a result, service for Hogan's operations is paramount, especially since Australian truck dealers generally offer a spectrum of product lines. To help make sure its dealers have constant access to parts, Western Star turned to Sundata. "The greatest challenge in finding the right e-business communications solution was that our dealers used a variety of systems. Some used networked PCs and some used only non-programmable terminals, so we needed to find a solution that would work for everybody," says Hogan.

Working together, Western Star and Sundata developed, in just three months, an e-business solution called Dealer Live! that allows dealers to see exactly what's in inventory and how long it will take to ship.

The core of the e-business solution is an IBM DB2/400 database, which resides on an AS/400e Server. "IBM DB2 and the AS/400e provide the best platform for Western Star, and we saw the advantage because of its expandability for the future and because it meets or exceeds all near-term requirements," says Andrew Kerridge, IT manager, Western Star Trucks Australia.

"As I see it, IBM provides products and services along the same lines as our trucks," says Hogan. "I know with IBM I'm going to get a product that won't self-destruct a day or two after the warranty runs out. I know with IBM I have a top-notch, state-of-the-art e-business system that is fully serviceable from Australia and expandable when we make further links to improve our service and customer operations."

The immediate effect of Dealer Live! enables Western Star to handle parts orders and service inquiries for virtually any Australian

trucker who needs help. Hogan observes that parts specialists are particularly open to a more efficient and customer-friendly way of doing business. "Our dealers or retailers know that if they don't have the part, I do. They know they can check for the price and create their own order through the network. The system tells them our dispatch schedule, how it's going to be shipped and even gives them the waybill number," Hogan says. The end result is satisfied dealers with satisfied customers — and those customers are increasingly apt to buy a Western Star truck if they aren't already driving one.

### **On the road to success**

The IBM e-business solution has trimmed expenses and enabled increases in productivity and profitability. After several months of experience with the Dealer Live! network, sales growth is estimated in the neighborhood of 40 percent. "Since we modernized in 1995, our after-market business — sales and service — has quadrupled, and the IBM e-business solution helped contribute to that growth," Hogan says.

Dealer Live! has opened Western Star's communications network and operations to enable hefty growth in sales, vastly improved consumer relations and significantly enhanced in-house operations. Hogan estimates the annual dollar savings from the IBM solution will be quite substantial. And while he takes great pride in the return on investment, he's thrilled in the improvement in customer satisfaction.

### **Adding up the miles**

Hogan is sure the immediate availability of information and parts he is able to offer will keep dealers coming back again and again.

What's more, Hogan sees the e-business solution as a plus for the entire Western Star operation — not just the after-market operation he commands. "We chose IBM because we wanted to ensure *our* future," concludes Hogan. "We now have a system that is almost continent-wide, envelopes a second country and soon will include others. It is only a matter of time before our dealers will order an entire truck with options through the network — instead of just parts. We've come a long way."

**For more information, please contact your IBM marketing representative or IBM Business Partner.**

Visit us at:  
[www.ibm.com/e-business](http://www.ibm.com/e-business)

For more information on Western Star Trucks, visit:  
[www.westernstarholdings.com](http://www.westernstarholdings.com)

For more information on Sundata, visit:  
[www.sundata.com.au](http://www.sundata.com.au)



©International Business Machines Corporation 1999

IBM Corporation  
Internet Division  
Route 100  
Somers, New York 10589

1-99  
All Rights Reserved

AS/400, DB2, the e-business logo and IBM are trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.

Other company, product and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others.

This case study illustrates how one customer uses IBM products. Many factors have contributed to the results and benefits described. IBM does not guarantee comparable results. All information contained herein was provided by the featured customer and IBM Business Partners. IBM does not attest to its accuracy.

References in this publication to IBM products or services do not imply that IBM intends to make them available in all countries in which IBM operates.



Printed in the United States on recycled paper containing 10% recovered post-consumer fiber.



G325-4060-00