



# *VoicePlanet.com creates global virtual office space with IBM WebSphere family.*

<b>Application</b>	Portal, combining messaging, file storage and application hosting services
<b>Business Benefits</b>	Membership projected to grow to 50,000 users in two months, one million by 2000; two to three month reduction in development time; customers save average of \$100 per month; IT infrastructure able to accommodate global expansion
<b>Software</b>	IBM WebSphere™ Application Server, Standard Edition IBM WebSphere Performance Pack IBM SecureWay® Network Dispatcher IBM SecureWay Directory
<b>Hardware</b>	IBM RS/6000® H50 servers

Cheap computers and fast Internet access have turned homes into digital workplaces. Now, application service providers (ASPs)—who manage and deliver server-based software applications that businesses or individuals can access remotely—are turning them into high-powered virtual home offices. In this communication age, millions of people telecommuting or doing e-business from home have created a vast technology marketplace for the small office home office (SOHO) segment.

*“[Our] confidence stems from knowing we have a technology partner with a global presence. With IBM, we have one vendor that can fulfill all our needs, no matter how quickly or where we expand.”*

*—Andrea Zurek, Business Development Manager, VoicePlanet.com*



*Small offices and home offices can store messages, files and applications—all accessible at one location—using the VoicePlanet.com Web portal.*

*It's about business, not just technology.*



*VoicePlanet.com makes communication easier by delivering integrated, realtime voice-mail, e-mail and fax services.*

*“Its multiplatform availability and ability to support large scale e-business applications make [the] WebSphere [family] the ideal choice for VoicePlanet.com.”*

*—Vinh Dao, CEO and President,  
VoicePlanet.com*

According to one industry report, business households—one of the fastest-growing segments of technology users—will spend more than \$30 billion on computing and telecommunications products in 2003.<sup>1</sup>

As technology and service providers ramp their strategies to reach these valuable customers, ASPs like VoicePlanet.com are rapidly gaining a foothold among small and medium businesses. Combining its patent-pending, unified global messaging system with leading-edge Internet technologies, VoicePlanet.com has delivered a Web portal, [www.voiceplanet.com](http://www.voiceplanet.com), designed for the mobile professional and SOHO market.

Powered by IBM WebSphere Application Server, Standard Edition, VoicePlanet.com provides a virtual, customizable office environment where users can store messages, files and applications—all at one secure location—and access them anytime, anywhere over the Web. No more floppies or hardcopy files, and no need to continuously upgrade desktop or laptop memory—VoicePlanet.com offers 15 megabytes of free storage. “We estimate each customer can save a minimum of \$100 per month by using our services,” says Vinh Dao, CEO and President of VoicePlanet.com. The online service also delivers integrated, realtime voicemail, e-mail and fax capabilities—accessible through the Internet or a toll-free number.

“VoicePlanet.com is a true information-exchange center, integrating our unified messaging system with leading-edge e-business technology from IBM,” says Dao, himself a holder of worldwide patents in digital voice processing technologies. “We’re leveraging the next phase in realtime, multimedia voice-over, IP-based networks as well as the growing interest in Web-hosted applications and file-sharing.”

#### **Pursuing a vast marketplace**

In its first month of operation, VoicePlanet.com attracted 400 registered members, and that number is projected to grow exponentially—up to 50,000 in a span of two months, and as much as one million by 2000. “Our market research shows that the user base could grow in multiples of thousands every month,” says Dao.

The market potential is indeed enormous. “There are 25 million home offices used for telecommuting and home businesses, and nearly 4 million small businesses with up to 50 employees,” notes Andrea Zurek, VoicePlanet.com’s business development manager. “Outsourced application and data services mean these small businesses don’t need to invest in deploying and maintaining information technology (IT) systems—we can do it for them far more cost effectively. If we capture even two percent of this market, that’s a lot of users.” Nor is the market restricted to smaller businesses. As large corporations recognize the savings enabled by outsourcing complex data and application services, including enterprise resource planning (ERP), ASPs are expected to generate as much as \$2 billion by 2003.<sup>2</sup>

Standard user services at VoicePlanet.com are free of charge. With password-protected access, customers log on to their pages at Planet Communications for free messaging services; Planet Files for secure storage of data files; Planet Tools for office suite applications; and Planet Portal for a personalized Web portal. "This is just the beginning," says Dao. "We plan to offer more complex application hosting services, tailored for vertical industries. As we develop specialization, we can grow horizontally among individual users as well as within vertical industry segments." That, Dao predicts, will catapult VoicePlanet.com into the forefront of ASPs.

### **Leading-edge technology for a global vision**

VoicePlanet.com is hosted on a cluster of ten IBM RS/6000 H50 servers, with HACMP software to ensure maximum availability and fault tolerance. The system is designed for scalability—additional servers can be added as needed to support increasing traffic volumes. The application runs as a series of Java™ servlets created in WebSphere Application Server. IBM SecureWay Network Dispatcher—a component of IBM WebSphere Performance Pack—balances transaction loads across the servers, ensuring high performance. Says Dao, "With all of the technology components so well integrated, we were able to reduce our development cycle by at least two to three months."

Customer account information, such as names, user IDs, passwords and access features are stored in IBM SecureWay Directory, which supports the Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP). "The LDAP provides a simple, standard interface," Dao explains. "Through this interface, various servers (Web, voice, and e-mail servers) can interact with the SecureWay Directory server very efficiently."

Dao has big plans for his company and envisions VoicePlanet.com as an ASP with a global presence. The company is forming partnerships with domestic and international ISPs, professional service organizations and other vertical portals to launch its services worldwide. "To grow in international markets, we need to take into account the availability of hardware and software in different countries," explains Dao. "Each country might have a different set of requirements and infrastructure. With the WebSphere family of products, that will not be a constraint. Its multiplatform availability and ability to support large scale e-business applications make WebSphere the ideal choice for VoicePlanet.com." Agreeing, Zurek adds, "The Application Framework for e-business provides us with a scalable, integrated growth path. All the components are easy to integrate and based on open standards, so we can reduce all the time and resources one usually spends in making sure disparate systems communicate with each other."

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*—Andrea Zurek*



*VoicePlanet.com provides mobile professionals with a fully equipped virtual office accessible around the world.*

Following an aggressive expansion plan also means that VoicePlanet.com must chart out its technology growth curve. "We must be able to deploy additional servers and storage capacity on demand," Dao explains. "So, our architecture must be flexible enough to accommodate new servers and users without interrupting the service. With SecureWay Network Dispatcher, we can be sure that this will not become a bottleneck; it provides us with very strong, multiserver load-balancing capabilities."

Since a unique selling proposition for application outsourcing is around-the-clock availability, VoicePlanet.com is designed for 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week operations. Says Dao, "This is a mission-critical service environment. We cannot tell our users that servers are down for even a moment. The WebSphere family has fully proven its reliability at events like the Olympic Games, absorbing high traffic quickly and efficiently. That's why we're confident it will support whatever traffic volumes our growth imposes."

### **A matter of trust**

As the company presses on with a targeted marketing campaign, Zurek is confident of success. "Part of that confidence stems from knowing we have a technology partner with a global presence. With IBM, we have one vendor that can fulfill all our needs no matter how quickly or where we expand."

And, VoicePlanet.com proudly displays the symbol of this partnership on its Web site with the IBM e-business Mark. "On the Internet, customer loyalty and trust are at a premium," notes Zurek. "So, any measures you can take to make users feel comfortable using your service will help grow traffic. The e-business Mark reinforces the perception of safety. For an ASP, nothing can be more important than assuring customers of that."

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01-00  
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<sup>1</sup> Forrester Research, *Unlocking Home Business*, Eric Schmitt, December 1998.

<sup>2</sup> International Data Corporation, *Worldwide Application Service Provider Forecast, 1998-2003*.

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G325-6642-00