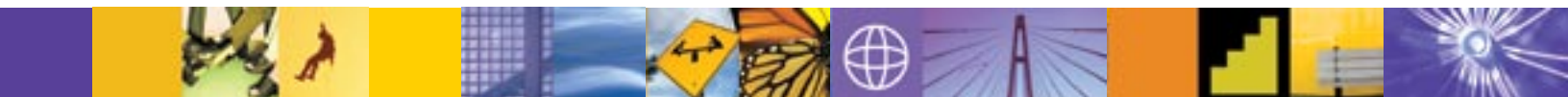




## **Responding to user demands for better access to information and applications.**



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**Executive summary**

The Web has rewritten the rules for technology flexibility and ease of use. Popular sites such as Google, Wikipedia, LinkedIn and YouTube have raised the bar for simplicity and functionality. Now many businesses want to mirror the success of these sites in their own IT environments and streamline the way employees access and use information.

This “user revolution” goes beyond simply keeping employees happy. Users are the critical link in the processes that connect your business with your customers, your partners and your vendors. It’s a simple equation: by improving internal and external user access to applications and information, you free employees to collaborate with partners and customers. Users can find innovative solutions to problems and react flexibly to changing business conditions.

Unfortunately, technology can sometimes stand in the way of users, instead of making their lives easier. The one-size-fits-all design of traditional applications doesn’t fit the rapidly changing needs of most users. To find the information they need to do their jobs successfully, users rely on a wide variety of applications, each with its own interface, navigation and sign-on. By consolidating these applications into one consistent, focused and user-friendly environment, you can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of employees. You also make IT more effective in deploying and maintaining your IT infrastructure.

IBM is a leader in helping businesses transform their existing IT environments into user-friendly business portals that integrate multiple applications and data sources in a single, consistent interface. In addition to helping users find information more quickly, these streamlined user environments can help you improve IT performance in key areas, including:

- *Accelerating application deployment and simplifying maintenance.*
- *Improving security.*
- *Increasing the return from existing applications and IT resources.*

*“Prior to our adoption of IBM WebSphere Portal Extend [software], we had to put multiple shortcuts on employees’ desktops so they could link out to the applications. Now we just present everything through the StarPort portal.”*

—Paul Shapin, assistant vice president for decision support systems, MedStar Health

This executive brief profiles how several businesses have teamed with IBM to make users more efficient and flexible by making user environments more consistent and intuitive. It also highlights how improving the user experience can transform IT’s approach to some of its classic challenges—including application deployment, maintenance and security.

**Improving access to information and applications for more efficient processes and lower IT costs**

Employees thrive on accurate, consistent information. The more quickly your users can find the information and tools they need, the more effective they can be.

IBM can help you channel information and applications from a complex, heterogeneous IT environment into a single, consistent user portal. A portal combines your various applications into one interface that simplifies your employees’ access to the information, people and applications they need to make better decisions in a timely fashion.

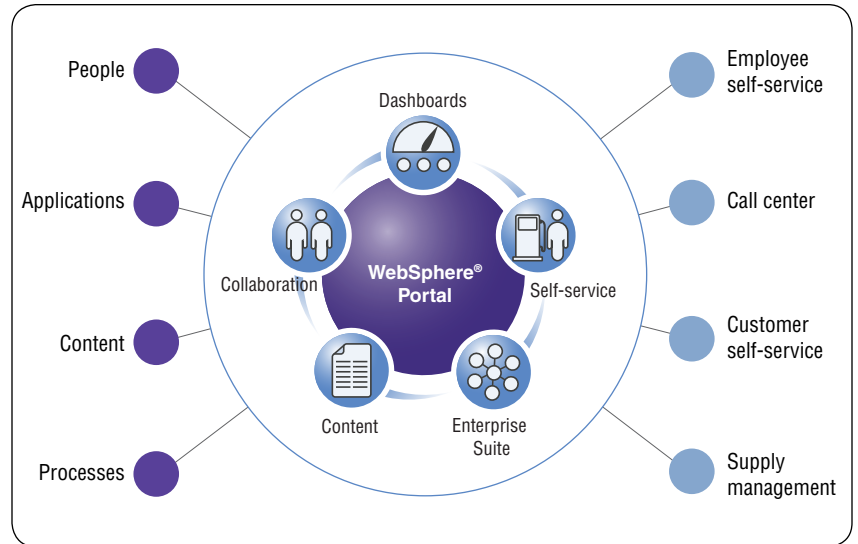
MedStar Health, a nonprofit healthcare organization with 22,000 employees and 4,600 affiliated physicians, called on IBM for help integrating disparate IT systems at its seven hospitals. A series of mergers and acquisitions left the company with a complex mix of systems. However, MedStar Health had a goal to make employees more productive by providing easier access to the systems and the information they needed to do their jobs.

The company’s StarPort portal now consolidates those applications into a single environment. “When people view information through StarPort, they can’t tell if they are accessing an internal system or an external system, because everything is delivered on the same screen,” says Paul Shapin, MedStar Health’s assistant vice president for decision support systems. “With StarPort, employees can go to one place to access all of the information they need.”

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Shapin adds, “Prior to our adoption of IBM WebSphere Portal Extend [software], we had to put multiple shortcuts on employees’ desktops so they could link out to the applications. Now we just present everything through the StarPort portal.”



*Portals consolidate and centralize collaboration tools, applications, content and processes, combining them into a role-based context that can make your users more efficient, proactive and responsive.*

**Accelerating application deployment and extending access to customers, partners and vendors for better service and smoother collaboration**

The concept of a typical user has changed. In today’s environment, the people who use your applications aren’t always employees. They can include customers, partners and vendors—anyone who interacts with your company. These external users play a pivotal role in the ultimate success of your business, and your challenge is to deploy the needed applications and information to users, without adding to your IT support burden or compromising security.

*“As a development manager, my biggest challenge is to deliver applications that meet business needs. With WebSphere Portal and [WebSphere] Portlet Factory [software], not only am I able to do that, but I can do it in an efficient and cost-effective manner.”*

—Bilal Khokhar, development manager for field applications, UNICCO

With IBM, you can offer external users the same ease of use and flexibility you offer your employees. IBM WebSphere® Portal solutions allow you to extend security-enhanced and user-friendly access to your applications and information, without an overhaul to your existing IT infrastructure.

With approximately 18,000 of its 20,000 employees working at client sites, facility services company UNICCO needed a way to keep employees and customers on the same page. That meant getting the information housed centrally in various applications in the hands of a distributed workforce and its customers. UNICCO teamed with IBM to deploy a portal featuring performance dashboards that allow employees and customers to spotlight emerging problems in key areas. The company’s corporate performance reporting dashboard provides quick access to figures on profitability for each location. “If we have a location that isn’t meeting the numbers, we can drill down into the dashboard to figure out why. For example, if a general manager wants to monitor the profitability of each account, all they have to do is click on the location and essentially ask, ‘Why are we not meeting our goals here?’” says Bill Jenkins, senior IT director at UNICCO.

A customer key performance indicator (KPI) dashboard is currently in development, with the goal of allowing customers and UNICCO management to review metrics such as work order completion time, customer satisfaction, compliance rates and more. “By getting the KPI dashboard in place at all customer locations, UNICCO can implement performance standards across the entire organization—the efficiencies that can lead to will help us better serve our customers,” says Jenkins.

IT also reaps the benefits of quicker application development and deployment. “Now when we go to build a new application, we already know how we’re going to handle things like security and delivery to the desktop, because it’s going to be part of the portal,” explains Jenkins. “We just jump right into identifying the business needs, and then we go to work developing the functionality.”

*“We evaluated a lot of solutions, including Microsoft® .Net, but the IBM WebSphere solution gave us an open, integrated environment to build e-government solutions across a variety of hardware and software platforms.”*

—Nadine Culberson, information systems manager, Washington County, Virginia

### **Reducing IT maintenance burden and increasing the return on existing technology investments**

Beyond complicating the user experience, disparate IT environments add to your support burdens and increase your costs. By consolidating applications into a single user portal with IBM, you not only improve the productivity of employees, you also improve access to your existing legacy applications for internal and external users. This lowers your IT support costs and simplifies application maintenance and deployment, without compromising security.

When citizens of Washington County, Virginia, began asking for easier ways to find county information and submit requests, the county looked to IBM for help implementing an e-government solution that provides easier, Web-based access to information housed in various servers. The county had a limited public budget, so minimizing the changes to its existing infrastructure was a high priority.

With technologies such as WebSphere Portal and IBM WebSphere Host Access Transformation Services software, Washington County was able to simplify citizens' access to existing systems and information by adding a modern, intuitive interface to older applications. According to County Administrator Mark Reeter, “Users can now go into the county's wealth of content, whether it's 10 years of minutes and agendas or county codes, and easily find what they are looking for.”

Information Systems Manager Nadine Culberson highlights how the transformation also benefited the county's IT operations: “... the IBM WebSphere solution gave us an open, integrated environment to build e-government solutions across a variety of hardware and software platforms. ... [WebSphere] Host Access Transformation [Services software] enabled us to easily Web enable our host applications without modifying the source code or requiring Web developer skills. Today our legacy 'green screen' applications have a new Web look and feel.”

*“WebSphere technologies provide all the back-end integration technologies we need to provide a single login and user experience. When we introduce new software, training costs are lower, and the IT team is able to respond faster to new application requirements.”*

—Alan Wong, portal architect on the TransAlta portal

### **Tailoring the user’s view of information and functionality to boost productivity and lower IT costs**

In the course of serving customers, collaborating with colleagues and solving problems, your users often have to switch between applications to search out the information and capabilities they need. They also have to filter the vast amount of information available to them to find what’s relevant. The better you can tailor information access based on the employee’s role and needs, the more effective the employee will be—and the less custom programming IT needs to do.

The case of Canada-based power generation and wholesale marketing company, TransAlta, illustrates how a single access point for all business applications can make users more productive. TransAlta combined IBM WebSphere Portal and SAP Enterprise Portal software in a dual-portal strategy for a consistent user interface across all applications. Before TransAlta implemented WebSphere Portal software, users had to navigate multiple applications to find data, send faxes and make calls. Now, all of the capabilities employees need are available from a single interface. Users also have a single sign-on spanning WebSphere Portal and all SAP applications, which grants access to relevant application areas. A consistent interface for multiple applications keeps training costs low and improves usability—which increases productivity. With the ability to navigate among underlying applications without leaving the portal, users can find and act on the information they need in a more timely fashion.

### **Equipping employees for better decisions and increased responsiveness**

Helping employees understand how their individual performance fits into the larger picture enables them to concentrate on tasks with the most strategic impact. A well-designed portal environment can provide the focus your users need to align their individual efforts with the organization’s goals.



Leading insurance provider Nationwide wanted a more customer-centric IT strategy to complement its customer-centric culture. "Our goal was to gain a '360-degree' view of the customer, which we saw as the foundation for a better customer experience and for us to be more proactive in meeting customer needs," says Todd Okuley, IT applications director. Nationwide teamed with IBM to transform its product-centric IT strategy to a customer-centric approach that better equipped agents to deliver high-quality service.

Together, Nationwide and IBM designed a user environment built with WebSphere technologies to deliver a consistent and comprehensive view of customer information. Previously, employees had to navigate multiple product-specific systems. Now, call center agents can instantly see whether an auto policyholder also has an annuity or a life policy. They can also provide more accurate pricing discounts to multiline customers. The new 360-degree view of the customer also makes it easier to spot new opportunities. Agents can better identify gaps in coverage to determine which customers are good candidates for cross-selling initiatives.

### **Reinventing the user experience for better IT performance**

IBM can help you design and deploy environments that use your existing enterprise applications and IT infrastructure to create dynamic interfaces that better support your users, while helping the IT department be more effective and efficient. Users can have easier access to the capabilities and information they need, while the IT department streamlines application deployment, simplifies application maintenance and improves security. The combination of IBM software, systems, partnerships, services and financing gives you a one-stop shop to transform your existing mix of applications into an integrated solution.

### **For more information**

To learn more about the advantages of streamlining the user experience, visit:

[ibm.com/itsolutions/portal](http://ibm.com/itsolutions/portal)

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04-07  
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