



Mikasa's new online store is integrated with its inventory and fulfillment systems, and customers are satisfied with the company's service as well as its products.

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*—Dave Pulver, President and CEO,
Web Emporium*

Providing a product to satisfy every shopper's sense of elegance isn't easy, but Mikasa has done it, producing over 20,000 different items within a wide variety of patterns. A bigger challenge for Mikasa has been to help customers benefit from this vast range of products. No brick-and-mortar store could come close to giving consumers the choice that the company has been able to provide in its product lines. And Mikasa's original Web storefront—lacking an automated mechanism for tracking inventory—carried only 400 products, hardly a representative selection.

Finding the right piece of china is one of the pleasures of collecting a pattern, and knowing what is available is essential. But without an easily searchable, consolidated source of product information, customers didn't know what their options were. Also, Mikasa's Web site was not integrated with its homegrown, proprietary fulfillment systems, which meant that employees had to re-input orders to get the warehouse to ship. Clearly, Mikasa was not maximizing the efficiencies of its e-commerce solution.

Aware that it was missing out on opportunities, Mikasa began searching for a vendor that could put its entire catalog on the Web and assist in redeveloping the Web site as a fully-integrated e-business solution. By developing on today's best-of-breed e-business infrastructure and integrating its e-commerce application with backend inventory and fulfillment systems, Mikasa would have the foundation to serve its customers better and present its world-class brand in all its luster.

The search ended with another world-class brand—IBM—and the IBM WebSphere software platform for e-business. Mikasa chose WebSphere because it provides scalability, quick response times and reliable transaction processing, as well as a robust development environment for creating customized applications quickly. “We were seeking industrial-strength technology with a worldwide reputation for quality, and that's what we got with IBM and WebSphere,” says Erik Redmond, Internet project manager at Mikasa.

The next step was to find an IBM Business Partner with in-depth experience in implementing and customizing Web sites for large direct merchandisers. Prompted by a recommendation from IBM, Mikasa selected Phoenix, Arizona-based Web Emporium, a leading Web integrator with proven expertise and a teamwork approach that complemented Mikasa's IT style.

Leveraging the out-of-the-box functionality of IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite, which enables developers to quickly tailor solutions to fit specific business needs, Web Emporium built Mikasa's new online storefront at www.mikasa.com in just 12 weeks. Web Emporium now hosts the site and processes orders and payments as well. Because Web Emporium integrated the site with Mikasa's inventory and fulfillment systems, customers can't inadvertently order out-of-stock items, and fulfillment costs are kept low. "Before, very few of our customers even knew that we carried 20,000 products," says Seth Rubin, director of e-commerce marketing at Mikasa. "Now, thanks to IBM and Web Emporium, our customers can navigate that entire range online, and order in seconds. We can process the orders automatically, and we're well on track to achieve our projected return on investment."

Complete, integrated e-business solution

By leveraging Mikasa's backend systems, Web Emporium was able to move to the Web quickly with an integrated solution, saving the cost of reworking existing fulfillment applications. In addition to hosting the site, Web Emporium automatically routes orders to Mikasa's legacy ERP system on an IBM AS/400 server, setting the fulfillment process in motion at the warehouse. When the order is shipped, the warehouse notifies Web Emporium to process the payment.

Creating unique shopping experiences

Mikasa stocked its new Web site with unique features as well as thousands of products. With an online gift registry, future brides and grooms can create personal wish lists, select their favorite patterns and even add the e-mail addresses of guests they've invited to the wedding. E-mails are then sent automatically, giving instructions for accessing the gift registry online and purchasing presents.

"With our IBM e-commerce solution, customers will come back to us again and again because we're providing them outstanding service as well as outstanding china."

—Erik Redmond, Internet Project Manager, Mikasa, Inc.



Mikasa pioneered the casual style in American dinnerware; IBM and Web Emporium created an elegant and easy-to-use setting for Mikasa's world-class china.

IBM DB2 Universal Database contains all the product and customer information for Mikasa's stores and its Web site, including the gift registry information. Since Mikasa replicates this data to its Web site and its point-of-sale systems, the gift registries on the site and in the stores are always in sync. Comments Redmond, "Our online shopping solutions are integrated across both our retail channels. We need a robust, scalable database to manage data for both. That's what we get with DB2."

And by using the "MyMikasa" member registry, customers can register their own patterns, enabling Mikasa to send e-mail promotions based on customer preferences and shopping behavior. Also, members can review past orders and store various addresses for convenience at gift-giving times.

Searching with DB2 Text Extender

To enable Mikasa's customers to find products quickly even without the correct product name, Web Emporium used IBM DB2 Text Extender to create a search engine. With DB2 Text Extender's sophisticated data mining technology, customers can find products even if they misspell the items or describe them inaccurately.

Says Dave Pulver, president and CEO of Web Emporium, "DB2 Text Extender allowed us to create a lenient and responsive search engine that works with the customer and helps produce the desired search result quickly."

Solution provides robust infrastructure

All the data for the Web site is managed by DB2 Universal Database running on an IBM RS/6000 server. WebSphere Commerce Suite, Pro Edition and IBM WebSphere Application Server, Enterprise Edition run on an IBM Netfinity server. WebSphere Application Server manages transactions with the database, delivers Web pages to users through IBM HTTP Server and runs the Java code that powers some of the site's features. To develop this code, Web Emporium used IBM VisualAge for Java. The firm developed catalog pages with IBM WebSphere Commerce Studio.

Building good relationships with its customers is of primary importance to Mikasa, because customers keep their tableware for years, replacing and adding pieces regularly. "With our IBM e-commerce solution, customers will come back to us again and again," says Redmond, "because we're providing them outstanding service as well as outstanding china."

For more information

Please contact your IBM marketing representative or IBM Business Partner.

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For more information about Mikasa and Web Emporium, visit:

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