

Hewitt opens door to HR clients through Epicentric portal and IBM solution.

Overview

■ **Challenge**

Provide corporate benefit managers with easier access to analysis tools, content and community

■ **Solution**

Plan Sponsor Sight, a portal based on Epicentric Foundation Server, supported by an IBM e-business infrastructure

■ **Why IBM**

Previous success with WebSphere® and DB2® software from IBM; integration of Epicentric and IBM technologies; offerings based on J2EE standards

■ **Key Business Benefits**

Significant reduction in client support costs; greater visibility into plan data; 50% reduction in development cycles

■ **Business Partner**

Epicentric, Inc.



With corporate headquarters in Lincolnshire, Illinois, Hewitt Associates handles more than 53 million HR-related customer interactions a year from more than 12 million participants in 37 countries.

Even with a growing pool of talent in the marketplace, companies have to work hard to retain their top employees. So hard, in fact, that many large organizations outsource the administration of their employee benefit programs. One of the major players in the HR outsourcing market is Hewitt Associates (Hewitt), a \$1.5 billion global management outsourcing and consulting firm specializing in human resources solutions.

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– John Hansen, Enterprise Architect, Hewitt Associates

e-business—redefining the image of business leadership

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere Application Server, Advanced Edition, Version 3.5
- Lotus® Domino™
- IBM DB2 Universal Database™ for Sun Solaris
- Lotus Sametime®
- Lotus QuickPlace™
- IBM VisualAge® for Java™
- IBM Informix®
- Epicentric Foundation Server

Servers

- IBM @server zSeries™
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Hewitt works with corporate plan sponsors—human resources professionals who oversee their companies' sponsorship of various benefit packages. To ensure optimal utilization and cost-effectiveness of their benefit programs, plan sponsors need a reliable and easily accessible stream of information from Hewitt, including plan cost and utilization, among other factors.

Until recently, Hewitt had been compiling this information from multiple sources, providing plan sponsors with both routine and ad hoc reports. "Report generation is a time-consuming process for us, and we wanted to offer our clients more immediate, in-depth visibility of their plan data as well," explains John Hansen, a Hewitt enterprise architect.

Already providing a Web-based solution for plan participants, called Your Benefits Resources™, Hewitt naturally looked to the Web to find an efficient way to support its plan sponsors. "By enabling clients to serve themselves through our Web portal we improved our responsiveness to clients without large increases in ongoing support costs," Hansen says.

Comprehensive requirements lead to IBM solution

As Hansen and his team began talking to clients about the proposed portal, however, they realized that plan sponsors wanted more than just effective reporting and analysis tools. Content and community would be equally important. Clients wanted to be able to communicate easily with each other about best practices and collaborate more effectively and securely with Hewitt on their benefit plans.

This combination of requirements led Hewitt to Epicentric, an IBM Business Partner based in San Francisco. Integrating its flagship product, Epicentric Foundation Server, with IBM Informix databases, Epicentric delivered a portal that provides plan sponsors with easy access to content residing on Hewitt's servers. And by connecting the portal to Lotus Domino, Lotus Sametime and Lotus QuickPlace, Epicentric facilitated efficient content delivery, collaboration and information sharing between Hewitt and its clients and among the Hewitt client community.

“Epicentric proposed a J2EE technology-based architecture driven by IBM WebSphere Application Server and IBM DB2 Universal Database. We had seen the performance and scalability of these two products in action in our Your Benefits Resources application. Now we could leverage the same performance for our plan sponsors.”

—John Hansen

Another element of the Epicentric solution that attracted Hewitt was the infrastructure on which it was based. "Epicentric proposed a J2EE [Java 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition] technology-based architecture driven by IBM WebSphere Application Server and IBM DB2 Universal Database," Hansen recalls. "We had seen the performance and scalability of these two products in action in our Your Benefits Resources application, which is a huge success with our plan participants. Now we could leverage the same performance for our plan sponsors."

Hewitt's new portal—called Plan Sponsor Sight—now provides Hewitt client companies worldwide with significantly greater insights into their plan-related data. "Plan Sponsor Sight is a powerful client relationship tool that demonstrates the advantage of partnering with the market leader in human resources outsourcing," Hansen says. "It will also enable us to provide unique new services to our client contacts while improving our responsiveness and efficiency, which makes for a potent return on our investment."

Portal extends clients reach into Hewitt

Epicentric Foundation Server provides comprehensive portal functionality that companies like Hewitt can use right out of the box. To customize the portal front end for Hewitt, Hansen and his team used IBM VisualAge for Java and its built-in pre-deployment testing environment.

When Hewitt plan sponsors log on to the portal, one of their main objectives is to analyze the activity within their benefit centers. "They need to know such things as how many employees are calling the HR help desk, how long they wait, where employee plan contributions are going, which funds are the most volatile and so on," Hansen explains. To enable this type of analysis, Epicentric Foundation Server leverages business intelligence products that draw data from Hewitt's IBM zSeries servers and its IBM Informix data warehouse.

"There is a great synergy between our portal software and these IBM e-business solutions. Together, they deliver highly scalable portals that integrate with our clients' enterprise information services to maximize productivity, enhance decision making and build overall customer satisfaction."

—Ed Anuff, Co-founder, Chairman and Executive Vice President of Products and Services, Epicentric, Inc.



Epicentric Foundation Server generates personalized views on the fly, based on user permissions and roles.

In addition to the general industry content delivered through the Epicentric Foundation Server modules, plan sponsors can take advantage of Hewitt's editorial content and commentary about current benefits news and trends, which the company manages through Lotus Domino.

Hewitt implemented all of the analysis and content request functionality using IBM VisualAge for Java. The business logic runs in WebSphere Application Server, Advanced Edition, which serves not only Plan Sponsor Sight but also myriad other applications at Hewitt. "We already had WebSphere Application Server installed on our server—we've been using it for two years," Hansen explains. "When it came time to deploy Plan Sponsor Sight, we just created a new Web application within that instance of the application server. Since WebSphere Application Server and the Epicentric application are both built on top of J2EE platform standards, we didn't have to create a lot of new infrastructure."

Lotus software brings community to the portal

When plan sponsors want to communicate with the Hewitt client community about such topics as 401(k) investments and health benefits, they can visit Plan Sponsor Sight's Peer Talk area, driven by Lotus QuickPlace—a software tool for creating secure online meeting places. Another area supported by QuickPlace is Team Work, which enables Hewitt to collaborate with its clients on plan-related issues.

From time to time, Hewitt hosts special online events to provide guidance and encourage discussion on breaking benefits-related developments. Plan Sponsor Sight helps facilitate the events, using Lotus QuickPlace to schedule and solicit client participation, with Sametime realtime collaboration software providing the online venue.

"There is a great synergy between our portal software and these IBM e-business solutions," observes Ed Anuff, co-founder, chairman and executive vice president of products and services, Epicentric, Inc. "Together, they deliver highly scalable portals that integrate with our clients' enterprise information services to maximize productivity, enhance decision making and build overall customer satisfaction."

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