IBM

Optical Cable sells online, boosts business-to-business bandwidth.

Application	Business-to-business Internet purchasing system for cable products
Business Benefits	Average $350,000 per month in online orders; up to 90% reduction in order-processing time expected; 33% increase in employee productivity, more time for customer relationship management and sales lead development
Software	IBM Net.Commerce IBM DB2® Universal Database™ for Windows NT® IBM HTTP Server
Hardware	IBM Netfinity®
Business Partner	Shared Vision Group

As we chat on the telephone or surf the Internet, terabytes of audio, video and other data race along millions of miles of underground cable to deliver the information we need. At the foundation of this modern communications infrastructure are fiber optic cables. Over the past decade, demand for these products has burgeoned and Optical Cable—with $55 million in annual sales worldwide—has emerged as an industry leader. But, even for a frontrunner, driving revenues and keeping customers happy remain key business challenges.

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—Robert Kopstein, President and Chief Executive Officer, Optical Cable

Wanting its employees to spend more time interacting with customers and developing sales leads—rather than processing routine orders at the office—the Roanoke, Virginia, company turned to the very medium that its technology has helped expand—the Internet.

Today, an Internet purchasing system, created with IBM e-business solutions, is providing Optical Cable's customers 24-hour access to a reliable, secure business-to-business sales channel.

Businesses worldwide can order fiber optic cables at anytime using Optical Cable's Internet purchasing system.

Working with IBM Premier Business Partner Shared Vision Group—which specializes in e-commerce consulting—Optical Cable created the online ordering channel for its off-the-shelf products. Delivered by IBM Net.Commerce START, the Web service also employs IBM DB2 Universal Database for Windows NT and IBM HTTP Server software running on an IBM Netfinity 5000 server.

"The combination of IBM e-business solutions and Shared Vision's expertise provided us an easy-to-use, business-to-business system that lets our customers submit orders at their convenience," says Robert Kopstein, president and chief executive officer of Optical Cable.

More time for customers

Using the Internet purchasing system, customers can create purchase orders and buy products from a password-protected page at *www.occfiber.com*. "With Net.Commerce, we've created an online catalog that contains product images and technical specifications," notes Kopstein. "It certainly overcomes the limitations of phone and fax orders."

DB2 stores the expanding online catalog and customer information, while IBM HTTP Server provides security through its support of industry-standard, 128-bit Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption. Optical Cable can also track customer purchasing habits using the tracking reports generated by Net.Commerce.

Says Michael von Bodungen, e-business principal at Shared Vision Group, "The appeal of Net.Commerce and DB2 lies in their scalability and multiplatform support. Reliability was another deciding factor—going with an established player like IBM gave us confidence that our investment wouldn't disappear in the future."

Already, Optical Cable is averaging $350,000 in monthly online orders. What's more, says Kopstein, the time employees spend processing routine orders has been reduced by one third. He notes, "We pride ourselves on our service-oriented approach. Now our employees have more time to manage customer relationships and generate sales leads."

Made-to-order products online

Optical Cable will soon take its made-to-order business to the Web, bringing online product availability up to 90 percent of the company's catalog. "We work in about 70 countries, most of which require custom-made cable," says Kopstein. "Soon, our international customers will be able to handle ordering during *their* business hours."

Kopstein projects that once made-to-order purchases go online, order-processing time will be reduced by up to 90 percent. "With the variety of state-of-the-art products we offer, our sales people need time not only to understand and explain the technology to customers but also to work with end users on product development," says Kopstein.

The final phase of the project involves the creation of a virtual cable-products warehouse. This will provide the communications industry with a one-stop source for consulting services and related materials from an array of distributors. Says Kopstein, "Versatile e-business solutions from IBM are helping us simplify the purchasing of communications equipment, enabling us to deliver on our philosophy of providing strong customer support."

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

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For information about Optical Cable, visit:
www.occfiber.com

For information about Shared Vision Group, visit:
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