



# L.L. Bean leverages Net.Commerce to launch the great outdoors in cyberspace

After more than 85 years as a retailer of outdoor gear and apparel, L.L. Bean knows its customers well. The company used this knowledge to create a commercial Web site designed to maintain the loyalty of long-time customers while attracting new, younger outdoor enthusiasts. As a leader in its market, L.L. Bean wanted its Web site to be more than just *another* online catalog. Its goal: to bring the L.L. Bean experience to the Web by combining pleasurable shopping with a wealth of useful information on outdoor recreation and travel. By combining IBM Net.Commerce with the resources of the IBM e-commerce experts, L.L. Bean was able to achieve that goal, and in doing so, has extended its reach to an even broader audience.

*“We chose Net.Commerce because it enabled us to adapt the Web site to L.L. Bean’s business rules.”*

—Steve Roberts, Manager of New Media, L.L. Bean, Inc.

## Rising to the e-commerce challenge

It didn't take long for the planners at L.L. Bean to realize that keeping the proposed Web site alive would mean maintaining an up-to-date online display of thousands of items and tens of

thousands of SKUs. It would also require the retailer to ensure secure transactions over the Internet, accommodate a constantly expanding customer base, and enable the site to draw information from the company's existing business systems.

“We knew our customers had reservations about ordering online,” says Steve Roberts, manager of new media at L.L. Bean, “so we needed a trusted partner to work with—someone with a strong technology base and a good understanding of the Internet, whose brand we could use to help build customer confidence.” L.L. Bean turned to IBM, not only for the merits of its electronic commerce solution, IBM Net.Commerce, but also for its ability to combine all the hardware and software components into a functional, reliable

<b>Application</b>	Online catalog and informational Web site
<b>Business Benefits</b>	Increased market penetration at lower cost; improved customer service
<b>Software</b>	IBM® Net.Commerce IBM DB2,® IBMAIX® IBM Net.Data™ IBM Firewall
<b>Hardware</b>	IBM RS/6000™ IBM OS/390™
<b>Services</b>	IBM Global Services IBM S/390®



IBM's e-commerce solution fits L.L. Bean's retail style like a Bean Boot.

solution. "The IBM team was a tremendous resource and very instrumental in bringing this whole project together," Roberts says.

### **Extending business and strengthening brand awareness**

At L.L. Bean, modernizing doesn't mean walking away from tradition. So, when the company began researching ways to use the Internet to extend and build its business and strengthen the L.L. Bean brand, the existing catalog/phone system, perfected over a number of years, was used as a model.

IBM Net.Commerce will enable L.L. Bean's Web-based shopping service to match the quality and ease-of-use of its phone ordering system, giving users quick access to product information, availability, pricing, and shipping information, with prompt order confirmation through e-mail. Customers create a shopping list, which displays the chosen items, provides hot links to the product pages on which the items appear, and provides the most current stock status.

An added benefit of Net.Commerce is the address book feature, which allows customers to store multiple shipping addresses, with nicknames, in a personal address book. After choosing the right gift for a birthday or special occasion, customers simply place the product on their shopping list and designate the recipient—there's no need to retype the address information each time.

Hundreds of products are now available on the Web site. Customers can either select items from the online catalog, or use a new online option called *QuickShop*, to order items selected from any L.L. Bean print catalog.

Brian Lemieux, Webmaster for the L.L. Bean site, says that Net.Commerce is an easily customizable solution, especially when compared to other merchant servers, which limit Web designers to using preset page templates. "We wanted a distinct page for each item type," Lemieux says. "Net.Commerce allows us to develop customized pages and provides dynamically linked libraries that we use to implement functions that are unique to L.L. Bean's business processes." Steve Roberts concludes, "We chose Net.Commerce because it enabled us to adapt the Web site to L.L. Bean's business rules."

### **Up-to-the-minute information central to e-business success**

When products change, print catalogs must be reprinted and mailed. Static HTML must be recoded. By using IBM's Net.Data for Web/database connectivity, L.L. Bean can create HTML pages on-the-fly, using information retrieved from the IBM DB2 database to ensure that online customers always have access to the latest information.

As soon as product offerings are updated in the database, online customers know about it. And as more customers come to appreciate the efficiency of the Web catalog, they may even prefer it, which means L.L. Bean will be able to gradually reduce the huge expense of producing and distributing printed catalogs.

### **Integrating with existing systems and vendors**

Early in the project, L.L. Bean found that designing a Web site for electronic commerce is fundamentally different than designing a static informational Web site because of the sophisticated logic needed to perform the transactions. Drawing from its experience in designing electronic commerce sites, IBM Global Services worked closely with L.L. Bean's Web design team to create a site that was both graphically appealing and easy to use. Intuitive navigation through the site and graceful error handling were key to ensuring the success of this new Internet ordering system.

Before an order is completed, Net.Commerce checks the inventory and, if an item is not in stock, offers customers the option to cancel, exchange, or back-order the item. Inventory information for the Web site is retrieved hourly from the mainframe and loaded in DB2 databases on L.L. Bean's commerce servers. This capability is vital to the merit of the Web site, which must offer information that is at least as current and reliable as what customers would receive if they were placing an order by telephone.

L.L. Bean protects the data on its legacy systems from unauthorized access by using IBM Firewall software on an IBM RS/6000 server placed between the company's IBM S/390 mainframe and the commerce server.

Careful planning, capable software and servers, and expert Web design have ensured that underneath the beauty of L.L. Bean's Web site there is brawn—the ability to perform reliably under enormous amounts of Internet traffic.

**For more information please contact your IBM Marketing Representative or IBM Business Partner.**

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Route 100  
Somers, New York 10589

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