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– Chief Information Officer John Conte, WESCO International, Inc.

Business need:
WESCO International distributes electrical, industrial, and data communications products to large organizations and public utility markets. The company ran its customer portal using an outsourced application-hosting model, but became dissatisfied with lagging performance and rising costs. In 2003 WESCO decided to bring its e-commerce portal platform in-house, and sought an experienced technology partner.

Solution overview:
WESCO chose HP as its solution partner to design and deploy a new e-commerce portal based on HP ProLiant Servers and Microsoft® Solutions for Internet Business (MSIB) technology. HP Microsoft .NET experts provided the customer portal architecture and design; consulting and integration; implementation, training, and mentoring for WESCO employees; and project-management services.

HP experts transform WESCO e-commerce portal to the way customers buy

HP-Microsoft e-commerce portal solution easily adapts to customer needs
A company focused on the effective distribution of more than 1 million products from 24,000 suppliers to 100,000 customers worldwide needs a responsive infrastructure solution just to stay in business. As a procurement specialist, WESCO International helps customers lower supply-chain costs and raise the efficiency of their entire operations through a combination of advanced, innovative distribution capabilities and premier customer service. However, WESCO found itself coming up short in fulfilling customer requests for custom interfaces to its online buying site. "Our customers demanded more functionality, more customization, better integration, more speed, and fewer clicks," explains WESCO’s Chief Information Officer John Conte.

WESCO relied on an outsourced portal solution well into 2003, but the growing number of customer requests prompted the company to create their own e-commerce portal site. "We needed to build an integrated environment to improve our customer-facing capabilities and services," continues Conte. "Our hosting service provider couldn’t make changes quickly enough, and offered only minimal customization. We had to find better support for these customers." WESCO decided to try a new concept by bringing in a local integrator with a background in Microsoft .NET tools to build a bare-bones online purchasing site for one large customer with very specific needs. "In a few weeks we had a customized, user-friendly web site, which enabled us to win business," says Conte. "We began to think about building a robust, large-scale customer site."
After stringent research and testing, WESCO decided in July 2003 to implement a new customer portal based on MSIB technology by summer 2004. As Conte explains, “The Microsoft Solution for Internet Business technology on an HP ProLiant server platform was less complex, easier to use, and more economical. In addition, our developers could learn the solution three times faster than other options.”

**HP Services delivers on aggressive timeline**

Based on research results, WESCO believed it could implement on an aggressive schedule to meet demands – ever mindful that failure would mean a loss of business from its major enterprise customers. After a series of internal design specification meetings, the WESCO team realized that project costs were accelerating and the timeline was in jeopardy.

To enlist a more comprehensive understanding of Microsoft .NET and expertise, and to stay on schedule, WESCO turned to HP Services consultants. HP conducted a thorough business and technical analysis to enhance the value and effectiveness of the architecture and design implementation.

“HP brought extensive experience to the design plan, which we fleshed out and finished in three weeks,” explains Conte. “Our HP project manager helped us put a realistic project schedule in place and forecast all the steps for the next six to seven months.” By October, the team switched from design to development, and began writing code, which continued into March 2004. “We brought in two HP developers, and they became our primary software architects on the project, aided by five in-house staff,” continues Conte. “We quickly finished, and, amazingly, hit almost all the dates on schedule. Also helpful was the Microsoft Windows® Server System training that HP provided for Visual C#, Microsoft Commerce Server, and Microsoft BizTalk Server, which enabled our WESCO developers to become proficient in weeks – not months.”

One of Conte’s early concerns was that XML integration utilizing Microsoft BizTalk Server in WESCO’s diverse customer environments, including SAP, PeopleSoft, Ariba, and CommerceOne, would pose a major challenge. “The largest portion of our revenue stream comes through those direct customer channels, and the integration appeared to be complex and difficult,” says Conte. “However, the BizTalk XML integration tools worked very well and it was surprising how fast we completed the integrations.” Conte also relishes enhanced e-commerce portal performance, adding, “Thanks to industry-leading HP ProLiant servers, the performance of our web site – including page transition and search engine speed – is head and shoulders above what we had before.”
Changing the site to match customer purchase patterns
The ability to customize WESCO’s customer portal was critical. "Our customers seek efficient purchasing, and they tell us, 'We need you to change your site to match the way we purchase,' says Conte. "We can now easily make changes with our HP-Microsoft MSIB solution, using the many built-in customizable components through the .NET environment. If there's a process change or requirements for additional information tagged to a transaction, we can adapt quickly." 

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Previously, WESCO maintained different tools and groups of developers for mixed customer environments, but now with a seamless solution, the company is a one-stop shop. "It's a huge benefit not to have different camps of skills," explains Conte. "Instead, we leverage a small group of developers for multiple areas. In addition, the .NET tools are quite powerful and so economical that we've reduced our maintenance costs in one year by 60 to 70 percent. We'll also gain ongoing savings from those reductions."

Expanded opportunities in a growing e-commerce space
Teaming with Microsoft, HP Services led the implementation of the e-commerce portal solution, which reduces costs, increases customer responsiveness, and positions WESCO for expanding opportunities in a changing market. "Because of our increased flexibility and speed, we can now support large Netscape or Microsoft Internet Explorer-based organizations in the government or education areas, which we couldn't before," says Conte. "We can also accommodate customers requiring specific solutions, because the Microsoft BizTalk tools let us handle any type of integration and works equally well in any browser environment."

Over the past year, WESCO has seen additional large organizations automate their processes. Conte believes that the link to WESCO will continue to grow through a greater number of integrated interactions. "With the expert Microsoft .NET skills and project management savvy that HP Services and Microsoft provide, WESCO has more than met customer requirements. We are positioned responsively for growth," Conte concludes.

About WESCO International
Pittsburgh-based WESCO International (www.wescodist.com) distributes more than 1 million electrical, industrial, and data communications products from 24,000 suppliers to large organizations and major public utility markets. A procurement specialist, the company has more than 6,000 employees and 130,000 customers worldwide, and is number 285 on the Fortune 500 list. It serves customers through 340 branch locations, five distribution centers, its e-commerce portal web site, and inventories housed at customer facilities.
**Challenge**

- Provide and host a reliable, secure, highly available web site, to serve thousands of concurrent users.
- Customize interfaces to accommodate diverse purchasing systems, provide order history and account customization.
- Respond quickly and effectively to customer requests for business-process changes.

**Solution**

**Hardware**

- HP ProLiant DL360 and DL380 servers

**Software**

- Microsoft Visual Studio .NET 2003
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003

**HP Services**

- Consulting and integration
- Architecture and design
- Enterprise application integration
- Project management services
- Training for WESCO staff

**Results**

- Responsive, new e-commerce portal solution designed and implemented in a very aggressive timeframe
- Greater ability to respond to customer-specific purchasing requirements reduced customer need to change their processes
- Online business site maintenance costs reduced 60 to 70 percent
- Significantly enhanced customer service levels retain long term customers and attract new business opportunities
- Powerful new capabilities to adapt rapidly to changing customer and business requirements
- Increased revenues through personalized customer portal
- Enhanced web-site performance – including faster page transition and search engine speeds – provided by HP ProLiant servers

For more information on how working with HP can benefit you, contact your local HP representative, or visit us at [www.hp.com](http://www.hp.com).