



The IDUG Solutions Journal: Face Off *Fall 99 - Volume 6, Number 3*

The editors of IDUG Solutions Journal have invited two DB2 experts to duel peacefully on key issues facing DB2 today. In this column, [Willie Favero](#) of BMC Software, Inc. and [Richard Yevich](#) of RYC, Inc. will face off on the issue of e-business.

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Can Your Dog Fetch a Mouse?

By Willie Favero

I know this is a strange title for an IT article on e-business. Perhaps I should ask: "Can you teach an old dog new tricks?" In today's fast moving electronic world, new internet companies appear every day and existing companies move at an incredible rate to become web enabled. If established businesses are unable to learn how to take advantage of the Net, they may not be around in a few years. Customer access is essential - otherwise, you will not gain new customers, and you may even lose current ones. Moreover, if your competitors get there first, it will be almost impossible for you to break in.

It's a whole new world out there. Competition occurs in places you could not have imagined. Banking, home loans, new and used cars, car parts, drugs (the prescription kind, of course), toys, wine, muffins, steaks, chocolates, groceries, clothing, computer software and hardware, plus who knows what else -- all can be purchased with a few clicks of a mouse. With good delivery service and a large mailbox, a person might never need to leave the house again.

Is e-business just the latest craze? Probably not, although it's not really a new idea.

It is just that the IT industry has finally gotten around to giving it a name. Some companies have been conducting business and communicating with their customers electronically since the early 1980s. The question is: what has changed? How have we

gone from a society that would not let banks take our passbooks away to a society that now expects all banks to allow us to transact all of our business over the Internet? In the last five years, a small web-enabled, visionary segment of the IT industry has raised consumers' expectations to a new level. Advertising has now jumped on the web bandwagon, encouraging consumers to believe everything should be available over the Internet. Faster than any other technological breakthrough, doing business on the Internet has become the standard. Not doing business electronically has become the exception. IT has even begun measuring design and implementation in net years (three month time periods).

E-business has brought with it a whole new set of development tools, programming languages, design methodologies, and database interfaces. For DB2, one of the coolest advances may well be Java and SQLJ. Businesses using the OS/390 platform who seek a quick in to the Internet now realize how valuable their OS/390 resources could be. Security, scalability, and a wealth of expertise are just waiting to become part of the next web application. There is nothing like something new to jump-start the mental processes. Despite all the new technology to learn, a company cannot lose sight of business fundamentals. Availability, supply chain management, backup and recovery, and performance are still keys to staying ahead of the competition, and they are still critical to a successful e-business endeavor. Just as in the past, if you mess up the basics, you will not survive the new Internet game.

The Internet may be the first true 25x8 application unleashed on the world. As with today's OLTP environments, no one wants to wait for something to be displayed. Actually, the age-old problems posed by any OLTP system are still there; they have just been intensified. Of course, the worries about losing a disk drive or having an application start doing its own thing to your data haven't gone away. Somehow, you still must be able to get your data back.

Systems must be connected that may never have been connected in a real time environment before. Consider a company wishing to sell a product over the Internet. They jump into the game too quickly and their back office systems are not completely connected to the Internet servers. Using old school thinking, they believe the problem can be easily remedied through some kind of batch update process. Given the following scenarios, which site would you choose for your next web purchase? Site 1: You order an anniversary gift for your spouse over the Net. You think there is more than enough time for it to arrive. You receive your confirmation and wait and wait. Four days later you get an e-mail informing you that the item you ordered is out of stock and will not be available for at least three months. Now you're in a jam -- no gift and no time to find one. Site 2: You order an item over the Net, but this time you get an immediate online confirmation that the item you have chosen is not currently available. You have the option, and time, to choose a different item or go to a different Internet site to find the gift. Will I return to Site 1 very soon? Even though Site 2 didn't have the item I wanted, I'm not upset, because they let me know promptly, which gives me the chance to search elsewhere. What is the difference between the two web sites? The first is a stand alone order entry system with no connection to the company's inventory control system. The

second site has everything connected.

There is far more to an Internet presence than simply having a site to sell something. A web site should also be a source of information. The Internet offers a speedy vehicle for making your customers aware of the products and services you offer. Providing technical information to customers to make their jobs easier helps build stronger customer ties. Businesses can provide details about new products and fixes or updates for old products to more people in less time over the Internet. A successful web site makes your customers aware of what you can do, who you are, and why they should care.

On the other hand, your competition is there, or is trying to get there, so you are compelled to be there. But that presents another problem. How much information do you actually want to make available to the world to see? When designing an information web site, one walks a thin line between how much you want your customers to know versus how much do you want your competitors to know. Remember that you face off against more than only your traditional competitors.

We have all heard about Rapid Application Development (RAD). RAD is one of the reasons why Object Oriented programming has had such a tremendous rise to popularity. However, the Internet brings another kind of programming to the forefront. It is Rapid Application Maintenance (RAM?), or the ability to quickly change your web site in response to changes in your business. The Internet allows you to look bad in front of millions of prospective customers in just a matter of seconds. A web page with just one bad piece of information can completely eliminate you from the e-business game. How do you develop a maintenance strategy that allows you to take a web site down for maintenance? Somehow, you must be able to dynamically reload application segments, making maintenance seem transparent to the customer. Perhaps Java, with its applets and serverlets, will be the technology that will solve this problem. Tools available today take maintenance of a web application out of the programmer's hands and put it in control of the end user. You need to ensure that the dreaded "Server not available" or "404 - Page not found" messages are avoided. If a customer cannot get to your site, they cannot buy your product.

It is no longer enough to have the ideally designed table with the optimally configured network. Now aesthetic visual design is important. How you market your product over the web is as important as the software that tracks it. Today's successful web sites are very much like the print ads for luxury cars and expensive perfume in the '70s -- glamorous. An application does more than just build a report. A web-based business needs to instantly capture the consumers' attention. It has to be attractive, and yet immediately convey its purpose. Navigation must be quick and straightforward. There is no time to train the end user on a web application. If the web customer cannot figure out what to do in just a few key strokes or clicks on a mouse, you have lost the potential customer forever. Pizzazz is another potential killer. I was at an auto manufacturer's web site recently. What they were trying to accomplish should have been really cool. However, the time spent downloading stuff made accessing the site extremely frustrating. A company needs to walk a thin line between being eye catching and

bringing someone's PC to a complete standstill.

When people want to purchase a product, obtain product details, compare product prices, find a business' address or telephone number, lookup e-mail information, get directions business hours today, the first place they look is the Internet. Conclusion: your company must be there. So if e-business now has your interest or is part of your next major development product, I strongly suggest you grab any magazine and start reading. It doesn't matter what industry segment the magazine addresses, it doesn't even have to be an IT specific magazine-- it will have something about e-business. Everyone is talking about it; don't be left behind.

When you give the world access to the internet, it brings people to that site who would never have considered trading stocks before. Suddenly that backend service needs to move from 200 transactions/second to 1400 transactions/second. ... Richard Yevich

Willie Favaro has been a database professional for more than 20 years, the last 14 years primarily with DB2. He has been a software consultant for BMC Software, Inc. and a senior DB2 instructor for IBM. Favaro is the author of numerous articles, a contributor to several IBM Redbooks, and a regular speaker at regional, national, and international conferences. He can be reached via email at willie_favero@compuserve.com.

e-Business: More Than You Can Imagine

By Richard Yevich

I am still not sure what to call it, but the industry finds a new name for it every web month. It was online anything, then e-commerce; now it is e-business. It certainly is not new. Online banking has been around for a very long time; and buying things online through a service provider dates back to the 1980s, as do CompuServe and other service providers. But something has happened recently. It is happening more each day, and it will continue to grow at an incredibly fast pace, so it does not matter what we call it. E-business is a way for companies to get us to spend more of our discretionary money. We can spend it more easily and more rapidly without thinking much about it - we just point and click while sitting in our pjs, sipping something nice, with one eye on the latest play-off game in another little box in the corner of the screen.

Make no mistake: e-business is big; it is real, it is the future, and it is changing everything about our business.

DB2 is at the center of e-business (yes, the other vendor ads you may see have fine print that most of us don't read). There is more e-business on DB2 than any other

database. There is more e-business on IBM platforms than on any other platforms, and a large portion of this is on OS/390. The largest e-business is a complex blend of OS/390 with DB2 UDB in a parallel data-sharing sysplex mixed with DB2 UDB UNO (DB2 Universal Database for Unix, NT, OS/2) taking from the net and front-ending the sysplex complex. Much of the programming is moving into Java, and server applets are becoming the area "where I want to program." Okay, but this is just the front end. What about the back end? It's not getting very much attention, but a lot is happening there as well.

Most of us have visited one of the web-based booksellers; really, however, a book order with a credit card is not all that different in processing front-end or back-end. Online banking is also not that startling, except that today so many new services are rolled into it. Now visit one of the brokerage sites, play around with its features, then consider the processing that goes on here. If you were to call a broker in the old days (meaning less than a year ago), someone at a terminal would enter one transaction to bring up your account status, a second transaction to move funds from your money fund to your stock trading account, and a couple more transactions to enter a trade. You would receive your confirmation in the mail a few days later.

Now let's move that process to the web, and give access to the masses. Bring up a screen that shows your balances and positions, then simply enter a couple of boxes with an order, hit enter, and trigger even more processing than occurred in the old days. With a single click, you'll receive a confirmation almost immediately, first with notification on broker's web site and later in email. A single web browser click just caused many "old days" transactions to occur in the background. When you give the world access to the internet, it brings people to that site who would never have considered trading stocks before. Suddenly that backend service needs to move from 200 transactions/second to 1400 transactions/second. New processes are needed at every node, middleware, server and client - all this requires more programming, faster and cleaner, applets/serverlets, HTML/XML, and so on.

This e-business is like nothing we have seen before - yet we are only at its very beginnings. We ain't seen nothing yet, and the impacts on all our professions will be both enormous and profound. Perhaps we don't have to learn Java, CORBA, SQLJ, JDBC, C++, HTML, XML, bean passing strategies, and others. But we had better know what they are and how they are going to affect us, our jobs, and our futures.

Richard Yevich is a principal with RYC Inc., and an internationally recognized consultant, lecturer, and teacher. He is a member of IBM's S/390 and DB2 Gold Consultant programs. He can be reached via email at richard_yevich@ryci.com.

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International DB2 Users Group
401 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 644-6610