



IBM Case Study

Sur La Table

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500-999 Employees/Students

IBM in partnership with MarCole Enterprises

Gift Giving and Getting Gets Easier

ISV Case Study - MarCole Pioneers in Online Gift Registries

"It'll be more convenient for a registrant to create and update their registry. They'll be able just to touch a screen and get an immediate printout of any changes made."

–Michelle Haycox, In-Store Operations, Sur La Table

"We develop our solutions on Linux, WebSphere, DB2® and Java, and we run on all servers of the IBM family. Each of our products is e-business enabled."

–David Pava, Vice President for Sales, MarCole Enterprises

Gift giving can be gut wrenching. So can gift receiving — as in "Which one of your relatives gave us the ugly cuckoo clock?" That's why many people prefer to buy from gift registries set up by recipients listing specific items they'd like to get.

Actually, gift registries have been around for years and years. But MarCole Enterprises, Inc., pioneered in putting them online so that both setting up a registry and purchasing from it can be done with keystrokes on a PC or by using a touch screen at a store kiosk.

MarCole was the first to incorporate high quality digital product images with gift registry applications — making it easy to register and purchase special order items. The registry system offers on demand access from wherever the gift buyer may be.

Why On Demand

Sur La Table, a retailer of top quality cookware and kitchen accessories, was eager to make it easier for people to create gift registry wish lists from which their family and friends could purchase items.

Solution

MarCole Enterprises delivered its Gift RegistryWorks™ so that Sur La Table customers can readily create a wish list that's accessible via a Web site or instore kiosks using IBM PCs powered by WebSphere® Application Server - Express.

Key Benefits

Sur La Table records a growing number of online sales and expands its reach to potential new customers by exposing them to the extraordinarily broad range of its products and services.

Doing Business with IBM from the Start

But we're getting ahead of the story.

Thirteen years ago, when MarCole Enterprises went into business as an Independent Software Vendor (ISV), it made three strategic decisions. The company set out to:

- Create a niche market by providing turnkey gift registries for retail operations

- Develop all its solutions on open architectures
- Become an IBM Business Partner

All three decisions proved to be wise because today MarCole is the undisputed leader in providing software packages to launch and maintain in-store and online gift registries. Over the years its worldwide customer base has spanned from A (Apex Department Stores) to Z (Z Gallerie).

The truth is, retailers don't just depend on MarCole's gift registry applications. The company also provides interactive, multimedia solutions that seamlessly integrate all kinds of retail activity — not least of which are branding, electronic cataloging, credit card authorization and customer service.

Value of Scalable Systems in the SMB Market

"Customer size doesn't matter to us," says David Pava, MarCole Vice President for sales, "because we deliver scalable solutions that are suitable for a single store or a worldwide chain." "Sure, we're proud to do business with the likes of Linens 'N Things, Neiman Marcus and Sur La Table, but we also sell to mom-and-pop retailers."

When asked how MarCole works with IBM, Pava's quick response is: "Any way we can."

He goes on to explain, "We resell IBM hardware and middleware. We develop our solutions on Linux, WebSphere, DB2 and Java, and we run on all servers of the IBM ^ family. Each of our products is e-business enabled, and we're proud to feature the IBM Business Partner logo on our product literature."

Pava says MarCole "chose IBM over Microsoft for our solutions because our client retailers' environments are diverse, and we strongly believe in open systems."

MarCole is a member of IBM's ISV Advantage Initiative, a program that provides ISV's with technical and marketing support to help meet the needs of small and medium business (SMB) companies. The SMB market is growing faster than the overall IT market.

Sur La Table Increases Sales Outside Its Stores

Case in point, consider one of MarCole's customers, Sur La Table. It's a Seattle-based retailer of top quality cookware and hard-to-find kitchen tools that caters to novice cooks and professional chefs alike. Sur La Table started small in the 1970s but in recent years has grown into a national chain. At the end of 2003, Sur La Table owned 38 stores and plans to open as many as 15 more by yearend 2004.

One facet of Sur La Table's success is selling outside its retail stores. In 1988, the company issued its first black-and-white catalog and in 1999 launched its online Web site. In 2001, the retailer added an on-line gift registry based on MarCole's software package called Gift RegistryWorks.

Gift RegistryWorks lets a person create and update a wish list that's simple for friends or relatives to access. They can use it to shop online, by catalog or at Sur La Table stores in 16 states and the District of Columbia. If they visit one of the stores, they can make selections from a touch screen on a kiosk using IBM PCs powered by WebSphere Application Server - Express.

And "wish list" is the right term to describe what Sur La Table sells. At last count, the chain offers more than 12,000 items from 1,600-plus suppliers around the globe.

Making It Easier for Customers to Choose

As Michelle Haycox of Sur La Table's In-Store Operations puts it, "Our competitors often try to slim down their inventories and, in effect, make many negative choices for the customer by not stocking a lot of useful merchandise. Sur La Table offers a much wider selection of inventory, providing our customers with the ability to choose the best products to fit their individual lifestyles."

Sur La Table presently is upgrading its system with the latest MarCole software so the gift registry will be easier for customers and store associates to navigate. Haycox points out, "It'll be more convenient for a registrant to create and update their registry. They'll be able just to touch a screen and get an immediate printout of any changes made."

Everyone comes out ahead. People giving gifts can order them, choose the wrapping and have them shipped without ever leaving home; recipients get what they really want. In short, the gift registry takes the guesswork—and the gut wrench — out of gift giving and getting.

About Sur La Table

There's an old saying: "We may live without friends, we may live without books, but civilized man cannot live without cooks."

That may be a small part of Sur La Table's success. But the major component of its global reputation is an unparalleled inventory of top quality cookware and hard-to-find kitchen tools.

Sur La Table opened its first store in 1972 in Seattle's historic Pike Place Farmers' Market. Three decades later, the company has a growing number of stores in 16 states and the District of Columbia as well as a burgeoning Web-based sales operation.

The privately held company sells cookware, bakeware, bar supplies, cookbooks, cook's tools, glassware, cutlery, small kitchen appliances, linen and specialty foods. It might be easier to list what Sur La Table *doesn't* sell for the kitchen because more than 12,000 items are in current inventory.

Many Sur La Table stores offer cooking classes taught by well-known chefs. Also, the company is proud that many of its employees are themselves excellent cooks and culinary professionals so they provide customers with knowledgeable answers. Compared to shopping in many stores, that's truly civilized.

About MarCole Interactive Systems

MarCole Enterprises, Inc., developed its pioneering Gift RegistryWorks solution for retailers who want a multilingual, multi-channel gift registry system that delivers real-time access whether a customer buys in a store or orders on online.

The privately held company, based in Walnut Creek, CA, went into business in 1991 and has had a close relationship with IBM ever since. MarCole solutions run with IBM WebSphere, and DB2, and Linux and Java on all servers of the IBM ^ family. MarCole designs its solutions to be both scalable and modular.

Its customers are located around the world, and the company has developed gift registry and electronic catalog systems for such familiar names as Linen 'N Things, Neiman Marcus, Office Depot and Target stores in Australia. Other MarCole customers range from trendy operations such as Piercing Pagoda and the National Football League to the traditional quiet atmosphere of Trimmingham's, the family-owned department store in Hamilton, Bermuda, founded in 1842.

What these varied MarCole customers have in common is the desire to make the shopping experience easier for *their* customers.

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