IBM

DocNet revolutionizes content distribution with Content Manager and DB2.

Overview

■ **Challenge**
Reduce production and distribution overhead costs for customers; eliminate costly pre-printed inventories; increase revenues

■ **Solution**
Web-based content management system enabling content owners to produce and distribute on-demand electronic or bound documents through direct integration between content owner and print production house

■ **Why IBM**
Superior, cost-effective data management platform; availability of all required components from a single vendor with proven world-class support

■ **Key Business Benefits**
For DocNet: Quadrupled customer base in one year; increased customer satisfaction due to faster turnaround time and elimination of investment in production infrastructure
For customer MarketResearch.com: Fulfillment costs slashed by 35%; fulfillment time reduced from several days to overnight, increasing competitive advantage and heightening customer satisfaction

Founded in 1999, DocNet provides leading-edge printing and content delivery logistics systems to middle- and small-market organizations.

More than five centuries ago, Johannes Gutenberg introduced an invention that changed the face of civilization — the printing press. At that decisive moment in history, the written word became accessible and transmittable to everyone, paving the way for public libraries, modern schools and the media.

Remarkably, Gutenberg's invention entailed practically no real technological innovation. Rather, it applied human ingenuity to a carefully selected mix of established, proven technologies, such as metal casting, paper making and the wine press.

"Despite the technological breakthroughs of the past decade, we saw many businesses continuing to manage, produce and deliver their documents no differently than they did centuries ago."

– James McDonald, President and CEO, DocNet

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Key Components

Software

- IBM Content Manager
- IBM DB2® Universal Database™ for AIX®
- IBM WebSphere® Commerce Professional Edition, Version 4.1
- IBM WebSphere Application Server

Servers

- IBM @server pSeries™

Services

- IBM Global Services

"Microsoft SQL Server was neither robust nor scalable enough. Oracle provided no added value over IBM's more cost-effective DB2. As for the other components, there was no single vendor except IBM that could furnish them all, together with proven world-class customer service and comprehensive technical support."

— Ed Francis, Co-founder, DocNet

Today, Exton, Pennsylvania-based DocNet is taking Gutenberg's approach to conceptual innovation to the Internet. With only six employees, DocNet is again fostering innovation in the way in which knowledge is published and disseminated, by combining an ingenious idea with a set of proven data management and e-business technologies from IBM. With its new Web-based system, DocNet is enabling storybook authors and university archives alike to produce and distribute electronic or bound hardcopy documents on demand, in any desired quantity and with negligible overhead expense.

DocNet President and CEO James McDonald explains: "Despite the technological breakthroughs of the past decade, we saw many businesses continuing to manage, produce and deliver their documents no differently than they did centuries ago. We resolved to change that situation and take advantage of e-business to bring new efficiency to the publishing industry."

IBM: multiple technologies, one provider

McDonald foresaw a solution that would leverage Internet technology, enabling content providers to move from the old-school "produce, pick, pack and deliver" paradigm of printed inventory to an immediate purchase-and-print model. Working with IBM Global Services, DocNet designed and implemented a content management solution based on IBM Content Manager and IBM DB2 Universal Database for AIX. Other key components in the DocNet solution are IBM WebSphere Commerce Professional Edition, Version 4.1, which provides buying and selling functionality, and IBM WebSphere Application Server, which manages Java™ code. All of these components run on IBM @server pSeries.

Ed Francis, co-founder of DocNet, says the company's stringent requirements eliminated most of the vendors and products DocNet evaluated — except for IBM. "For the database, Microsoft SQL Server was clearly neither robust nor scalable enough. Oracle was far too expensive and provided no added value over IBM's more cost-effective DB2 platform. As for the other components, there was no single vendor except IBM that could furnish them all, together with proven world-class customer service and comprehensive technical support."

McDonald says the solution has created unique advantages that were previously hard to imagine, citing as an example DocNet customer MarketResearch.com, a leading provider of global market intelligence products and services.

"Our IBM e-business platform provides a comprehensive and reliable document delivery service that has provided significant benefits to both MarketResearch.com and its customers," McDonald observes. "By eliminating the investment and overhead of building and maintaining its own purchase-and-print infrastructure, the information provider has cut its fulfillment costs by 35 percent and reduced fulfillment time from several days to overnight. That gives MarketResearch.com a competitive advantage and increases the satisfaction of its own customers."

According to McDonald, benefits reaped by other DocNet customers have been no less impressive. In fact, DocNet has quadrupled its customer base in the year since its Web-based content management system was launched — extending its services to such market leaders as business information provider EDGAR Online, Inc., the Thomson Financial Municipals Group and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Signed, sealed and delivered — the e-business way

In a typical DocNet application, end users log on to a content owner's Web site. When consumers click through the site to search, browse and order documents, they access pages on DocNet's Web servers that are designed and branded to look like part of the content owner's site. WebSphere Commerce provides a complete purchasing experience with shopping cart, checkout, payment processing and e-mail confirmation. DocNet delivers the requested documents either as secure electronic copies that can only be viewed from the desktop of a single computer, or as printed, bound hard copies.

Proprietary DocNet applications automatically download files from the owner's FTP or HTTP site to a secure Web server at DocNet's facility. If the end user has ordered a soft copy of the content, DocNet uploads it to the user as a secure RTF, PDF or HTML document. For hard copy orders, DocNet applications automatically package and route a PDF file directly to a print bureau along with printing, binding and shipping instructions in comma-delineated text format, as well as a pre-formatted courier label in PDF format. The entire integrated process is automated and requires no manual intervention.

"IBM and Content Manager have enabled us to integrate the business processes of content owners and producers — and to deliver every form of content to their screens or to their doors, quickly and cost-effectively."

– James McDonald

IBM WebSphere Commerce provides ordering, purchase and fulfillment verification of each online transaction made using a DocNet customer's Web site.

Payment processing is performed by IBM WebSphere Commerce, with IBM WebSphere Application Server functioning as a runtime environment for Java code. DB2 Universal Database for AIX houses the tables required for WebSphere Commerce, as well as subscriber data and meta data pointing to the content that resides in IBM Content Manager or on third-party HTTP servers. Additional file transfer and integration functions are managed by proprietary Java modules employing Enterprise JavaBeans (EJB) architecture.

Any kind of content

DocNet's complete IBM solution can be utilized for any distributable documents, regardless of their size, number or nature. In fact, McDonald points out, because Content Manager serves as a single data store for a diverse spectrum of digital information, DocNet is now planning to extend its service to providers of audio, video and multimedia content, and to expand its e-business integration beyond the print realm to film, video and multimedia production studios.

McDonald believes e-business technologies from IBM will have as far-reaching an effect as the printing press. "IBM and Content Manager have enabled us to integrate the business processes of content owners and producers — and to deliver every form of content to their screens or to their doors, quickly and cost-effectively. Even Gutenberg would be hard-pressed to beat that."

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