



Goodyear's XPLOR: IBM Technology Helps an Extranet Solution Get Traction

An IDC e-business Case Study

THE SUBJECT

The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company is the world's largest tire company, with a presence on six continents and annualized sales of more than \$14 billion. In addition to Goodyear brand tires, the company produces and sells tires under such well-known brand names as Dunlop and Kelly-Springfield.

THE GOAL

To build a scalable, robust B2B extranet solution to deliver value-added services to dealers, company-owned outlets and various other channel partners. Through the solution, Goodyear seeks to provide better, more convenient service—and more service options—to its channel partners.

THE SOLUTION

The solution highlighted in this case study is Goodyear's XPLOR system, a B2B extranet running on IBM RS/6000 servers located in IBM's Raleigh, NC hosting facility. XPLOR is designed to provide dealers with order management (e.g., online ordering, order tracking) and online information delivery (e.g., product information, policies); shift call center volume from routine inquiries to higher value-added activities; and reduce a range of communications and administrative costs. XPLOR is integrated with Goodyear's ERP solution and other legacy systems via IBM MQSeries middleware.

WHY IBM

"IBM and Goodyear have had a long, positive relationship on a number of fronts. IBM is capable of bringing to the table all the critical resources—from core technology to architecture development to content hosting services—that we need to bring XPLOR to the next level."



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Executive Summary

Innovation Spotlight

XPLOR provides dealers with realtime data on tire inventory availability across Goodyear's network of warehouses. This functionality, which has allowed dealers to more effectively manage their own inventory levels, is enabled through seamless integration between XPLOR's IBM-based Web infrastructure and its backend ERP system.

The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, which boasts such notable brands as Goodyear, Dunlop and Kelly-Springfield, has also made a name for itself in the B2B e-commerce arena. Since the introduction of XPLOR—its innovative dealer services extranet—in 1998, the company's aggressive enhancement of the solution has been met with a rapid growth in transaction volume. Originally conceived as a means of reducing call center volume and reducing Goodyear's dealer-related communication and printing costs, XPLOR has led to an even wider range of business results. Annual communication costs have been reduced significantly, dealers' order cycle times have been slashed, and call center employees now focus more of their time on value-added tasks.

By early 2001, XPLOR's rapidly growing transaction volume made it necessary for Goodyear to upgrade its infrastructure from a two-server to a seven-server architecture built around IBM RS/6000 servers. Deployed with the assistance of IBM Global Services, the new XPLOR platform delivers not only better application throughput, but near-perfect up-time performance. Through its XPLOR platform, Goodyear—via IBM technology and expertise—continues to raise the bar for B2B extranet solutions.

Goodyear's XPLOR Solution at a Glance

- ▶ **e-business State** Internal Integration
- ▶ **Core Functionality** XPLOR's Information Delivery service provides users with customized product and marketing information. XPLOR's Order Management service enables users to place orders online and to access realtime information on pricing, inventory availability, and order status.
- ▶ **Software** IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite V4.1, IBM WebSphere Application Server, IBM WebSphere Edge Server, IBM MQSeries, IBM DB2 Universal Database, Lotus Domino R5
- ▶ **Servers** IBM RS/6000 Model F80 (running IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite and Lotus Domino), IBM RS/6000 Model 43P (running IBM WebSphere Edge Server)
- ▶ **Services** IBM Global Services: Hosting Services, Application Management Services, Business Innovation Services (Raleigh, NC)
- ▶ **Key Benefits**
 - ▶ Annual print, postage and communication costs have been reduced significantly.
 - ▶ Goodyear's call center staff is now better able to address more complex, value-added tasks.
 - ▶ XPLOR's inventory checking feature has led to a significant increase in dealers' fill rates, enabling them to better manage their inventory.
 - ▶ XPLOR has reduced dealers' order processing cycle time from overnight to realtime.
 - ▶ XPLOR's new architecture weathered a 175 percent month-to-month increase in order volume with no diminution of performance.

Situation Analysis

► Background

Besides being the world's largest tire company, the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company also sports one of the world's most recognizable brands. Built on the strength of its quality products and projected by its well-known blimps, the Goodyear name has become a familiar image on the American cultural and business landscape. But in recent years, Goodyear—through its North American Tire unit—has also inflated its reputation in the e-commerce arena. In 1998, Goodyear began rolling out a B2B extranet service known as XPLOR to its network of over 5,000 independent and affiliated dealers (a.k.a., “dealer-customers”) and company-owned outlets in the US and Canada. The system, running on IBM infrastructure technology, provides dealer-customers with valuable, realtime product and marketing information as well as the ability to place and track orders online.

In addition to providing dealers with better service, more current information, and faster order turnaround, XPLOR promised to deliver Goodyear a host of hard, bottom-line benefits—the most important of which was reducing the costs associated with supporting and communicating with its vast dealer network.

XPLOR was originally conceived in 1996 through the collaboration of Goodyear's Electronic Commerce and Call Center Management groups, which saw the XPLOR system as a “win-win-win” proposition—benefiting Goodyear, its dealers and their customers. In addition to providing dealer-customers with better service, more current information, and faster order turnaround, XPLOR promised to deliver Goodyear a host of hard, bottom-line benefits—the most important of which was reducing the costs associated with supporting and communicating with its vast dealer network. Among the most significant cost reductions targeted by the company were the printing and postage costs associated with its weekly mailing of information kits to all 5,000 plus dealer-customers. Goodyear also saw the elimination of communication and transaction costs related to its aging DOS-based order management platform, known as DealerLink, as a tempting goal. Moreover, the fact that Goodyear's customer service call center was handling an average of 2,500 calls daily from dealer-customers—many of them routine—posed a fertile opportunity to shift some of this volume to the Web.

But above all, Goodyear saw XPLOR as the embodiment of an emerging strategy built on providing dealer-customers with alternative methods of interacting with the company. According to Duane Hand, Goodyear's e-Commerce Manager for Extranet Systems, Goodyear's Web business strategy is predicated on the idea that call center-based services and Web-based services are synergistic channels for delivering customer service to dealer-customers. “The crux of our service delivery strategy is all about providing dealer-customers with a choice of channels, and guaranteeing consistency of information across these channels” says Hand. “This channel-neutral approach—where we provide no advantage or disadvantage in using one system over the other—allows a Goodyear dealer-customer to choose the option that fits its needs.”

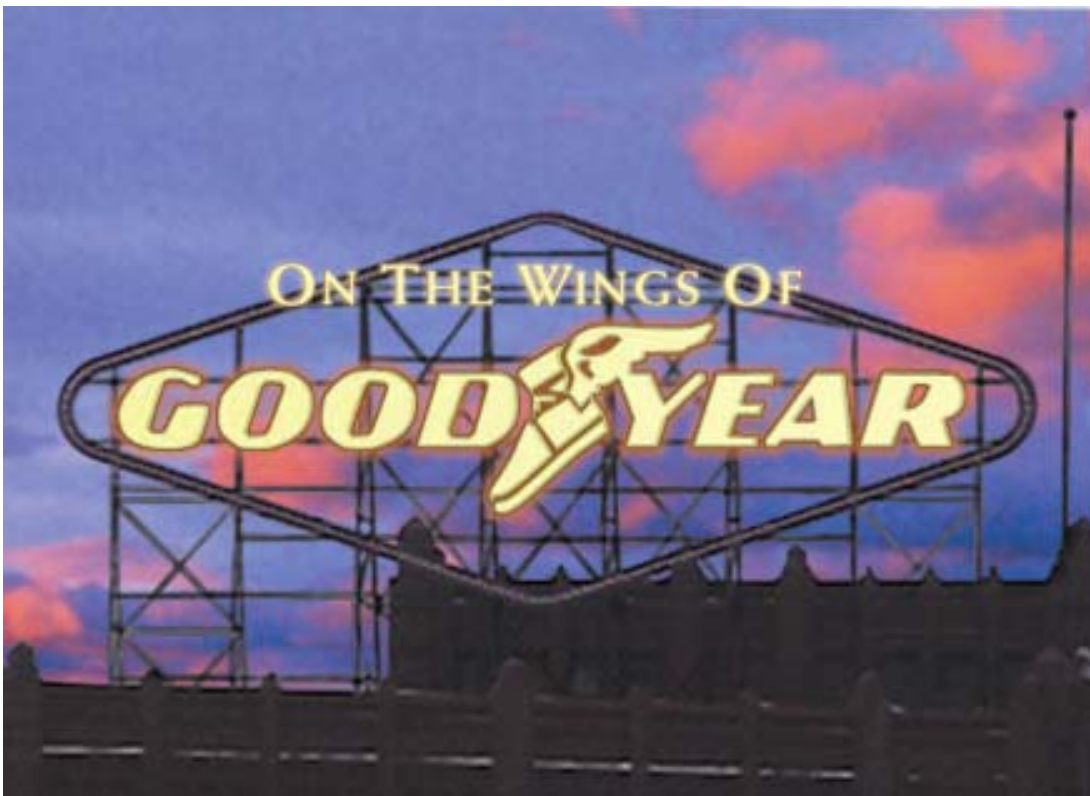
► XPLOR Today: A Success Story

Since introducing the XPLOR extranet to its dealer-customers, Goodyear has

continuously enhanced the functionality and broadened the range of services offered through the solution. In its current release, XPLOR allows dealer-customers, via the Web, to:

- View product catalogs
- Place and track orders
- Perform realtime price and inventory availability checks
- View product information, marketing program information and policies
- Obtain post-sales service
- Report sales
- View accounts payable information and invoices

Among the more important changes to XPLOR was its recent expansion to include Goodyear's Kelly-Springfield dealer-customers and products, as well as the final replacement of the outdated DealerLink EDI system with XPLOR. On the application side, Goodyear added a third module (to its existing Information Delivery and Order Management modules) known as XP2, which allows users to view invoices and accounts payable data online. Behind the scenes—within the solution's architecture—Goodyear has increased the degree to which the XPLOR platform is integrated with its backend ERP system (an SAP R/3 implementation recently upgraded from R/2). This deep and broad integration, enabled by IBM MQSeries, lies at the core of XPLOR's realtime reporting capability.



But the real success story, says Hand, has been the rate at which dealer-customers have adopted the XPLOR system and incorporated it into their core business practices. From year-end 1999 to year-end 2000, the number of dealer-customer locations using the XPLOR system more than doubled, to approximately 3,000. At the same time, the number of XPLOR transactions had gone through the roof. While Hand attributes some of this rise to an increasing population of dealer-customers using the system, he points to more intense usage as the real driving factor. “We’ve seen a clear pattern where dealers come to the site—try it—and then steadily increase their transaction volume,” notes Hand. “The numbers we’ve seen are a ringing endorsement of what we’ve done so far—as well as the direction that we’re going.”

► Growth Triggers a Need for e-Infrastructure Investment

By early 2000, with XPLOR growing rapidly—in terms of services offered, number of users and overall usage volume—the need to upgrade the underlying hardware and software infrastructure had become clearly evident to Goodyear’s planners. XPLOR originally ran on two IBM RS/6000 servers, one delivering Information Delivery services (via Lotus Domino), the other delivering Order Management services (via IBM Net.Commerce and DB2 Universal Database). According to Hand, the growth of XPLOR services and usage volume was threatening to impact the system’s performance—a condition that could undercut Goodyear’s efforts to bring new dealer-customers on board. “We needed to ensure that the performance of XPLOR did not end up being a victim of our success,” says Hand. “The need to bring infrastructure in balance with the scope of our ambitions was clear.”

Action Plan and Decision Process

► First Steps

As a prelude to its infrastructure planning process, the Goodyear team met with representatives of IBM Global Services, which led the initial design and development of the XPLOR solution. Outlining its priorities, the Goodyear team identified the performance parameters it sought to improve through its infrastructure upgrade, including scalability, redundancy and availability. As Hand points out, the performance needs arising from the addition of the Kelly-Springfield brand to the XPLOR solution exemplified the need for a more powerful architecture. “The complexity of the solution is closely related to the number of unique products of all brands displayed at the site,” explains Hand. “Adding the Kelly-Springfield line to XPLOR increases not only the complexity of the realtime inventory checking function, but also the customization function [dealer-customers are presented only those brands they are allowed to purchase]. Coupled with an overall increase in usage, these factors made a strong case for a more powerful infrastructure.”

► IBM: “A Partner for the Future”

“The IBM team demonstrated how an architecture built around WebSphere Commerce Suite and WebSphere Edge Server could deliver the kind of scalability, performance and robustness that we clearly needed. We saw the WebSphere family of products as a solid, reliable platform for XPLOR and any other e-business initiatives we pursue in the future.”

— Duane Hand,
e-Commerce Manager,
Extranet Systems,
Goodyear

With the need to upgrade XPLOR’s infrastructure clear, the XPLOR team shifted its focus to the question of technology and provider selection. Given the success of the initial platform, the XPLOR team looked favorably on IBM, which provided critical technology and expertise in its development. As Hand points out, the Goodyear team looked at many of the same factors that drove its 1997 decision to choose IBM as its initial vendor—namely, the strength of the existing relationship as well as IBM’s ability to provide a complete solution. “IBM and Goodyear have had a long, positive relationship on a number of fronts,” says Hand. “IBM is capable of bringing to the table all the critical resources—from core technology to architecture development to content hosting services—that we need to bring XPLOR to the next level.”

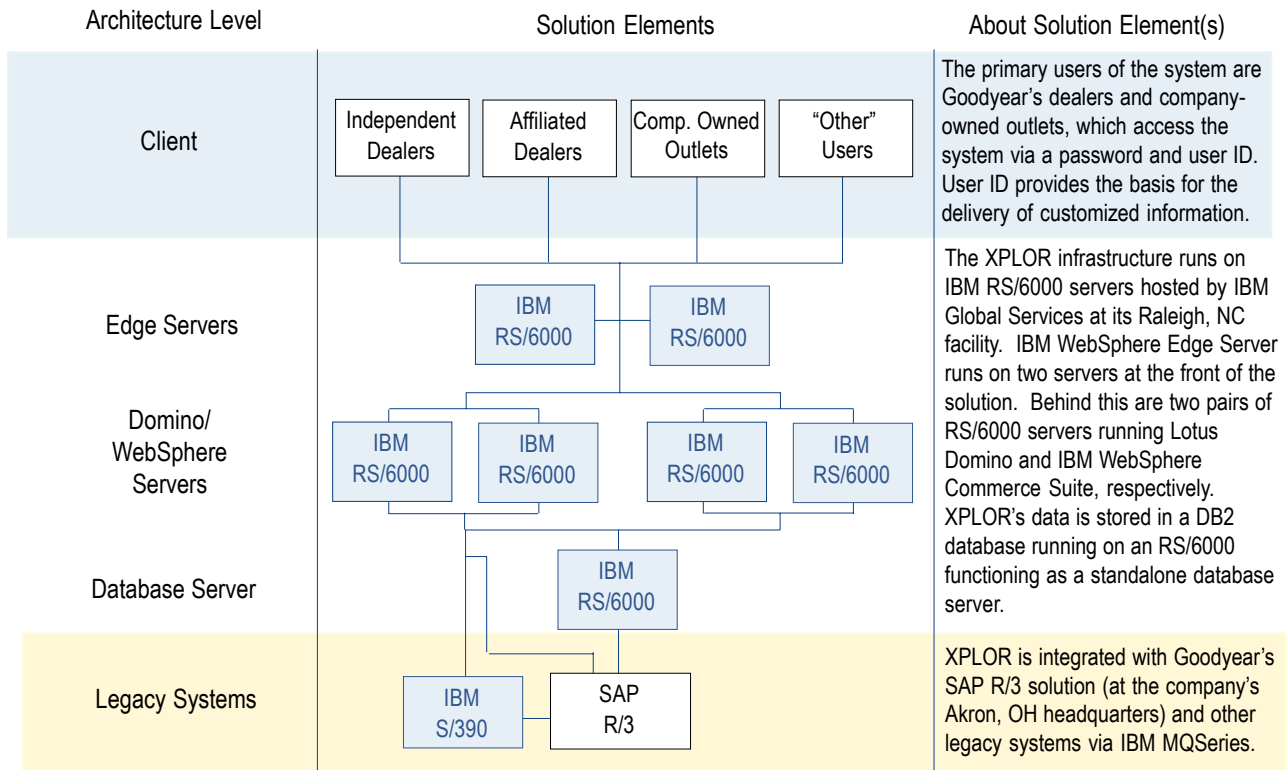
While Goodyear’s early-2001 decision to deepen its ties with IBM was based on these same factors, the strength of IBM’s portfolio of infrastructure-based software products emerged as perhaps the most important driver. Indeed, one of the most compelling factors cited by Hand was IBM’s WebSphere suite of products, which the XPLOR team saw as a tight fit with Goodyear’s emerging set of needs. “The IBM team demonstrated how an architecture built around WebSphere Commerce Suite and WebSphere Edge Server could deliver the kind of scalability, performance and robustness that we clearly needed,” says Hand. “We saw the WebSphere family of products as a solid, reliable platform for XPLOR and any other e-business initiatives we pursue in the future.”

► XPLOR Gains a More Scalable, Robust Architecture

With its eyes fixed squarely on the long-term, the Goodyear and IBM team mapped out an infrastructure strategy that would ensure the high-levels of performance and reliability that Goodyear demanded from XPLOR. Central to its strategy was a move from its previous two-server architecture to a more scalable and robust seven-server configuration (all of which are IBM RS/6000 servers) located at IBM’s Raleigh, NC hosting facility. In addition to doubling the number of servers running the core Information Delivery and Order Management solutions (from one server per solution to two servers per solution, for a total of four), the new architecture also moves the solution’s IBM DB2 database to a separate server at the back of the solution. But perhaps most importantly, the new architecture positions two edge servers at the front of the solution, providing a load-balancing capability and level of robustness that had not been present in the initial implementation of XPLOR.

Infrastructure software also plays a critical role in bolstering the performance of the new XPLOR architecture. While Lotus Domino, IBM DB2 and IBM MQSeries remain at the heart of the solution, WebSphere Commerce Suite serves as its core commerce engine, addressing all aspects of product, pricing and inventory data presentation—including the customization capability that enables XPLOR to display data specific to each dealer-customer. At the front end of the solution, another product in the WebSphere product line, WebSphere Edge Server—part of the WebSphere framework—provides the load balancing, performance and scalability that was so important to the Goodyear XPLOR team. Goodyear’s Hand sees both WebSphere products as

Basic Architecture of Goodyear's XPLOR Solution



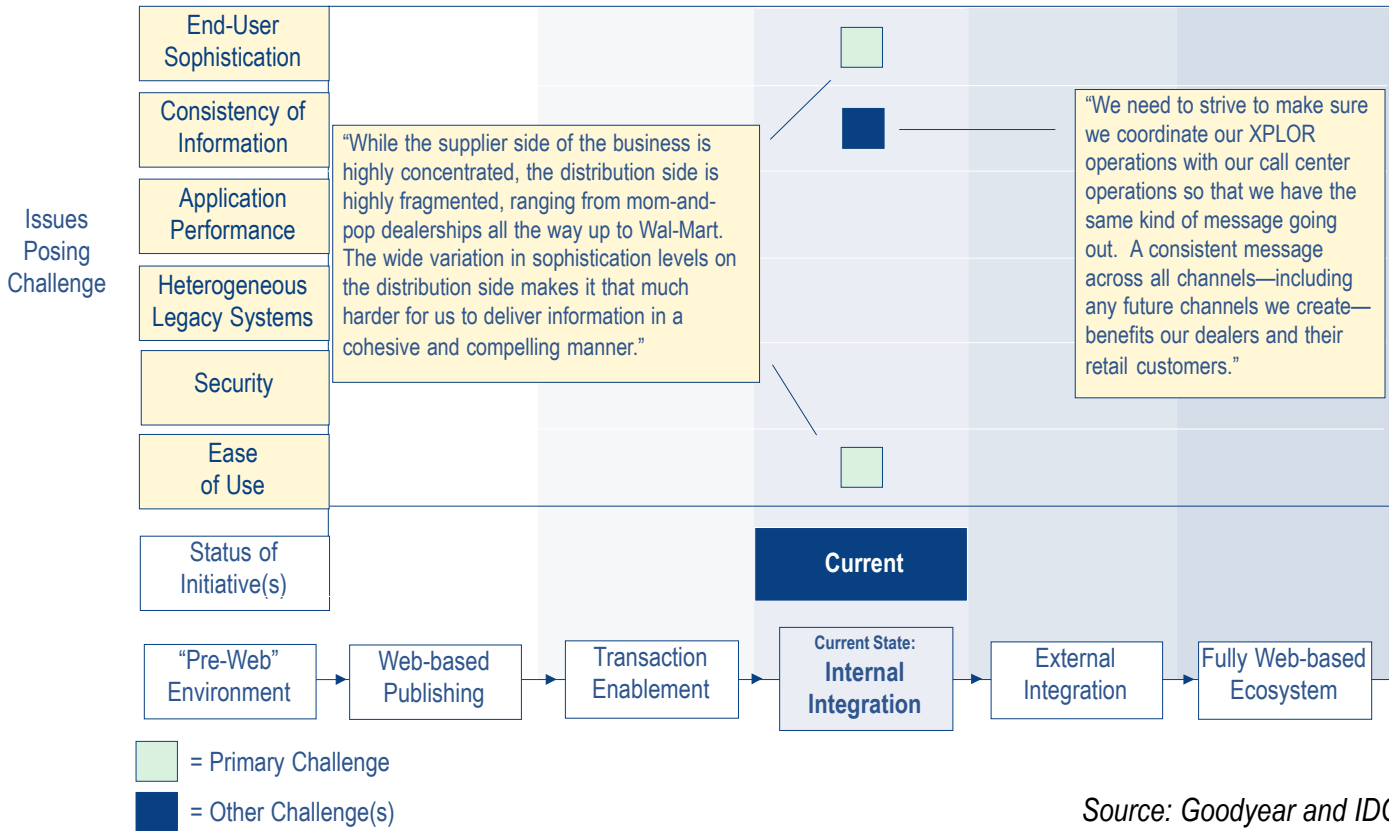
Source: Goodyear and IDC

key elements in XPLOR's technology arsenal. "Given the number of dealer-customers that are reliant on XPLOR, reliability, up-time, and performance are mission critical for us," says Hand. "IBM's suite of WebSphere products guarantees our ability to follow through on that obligation to our dealer-customers."

► Challenges

In addition to the technical and architectural issues discussed previously, the Goodyear team also faced a number of challenges at the business level related to the advancement of the XPLOR program. One major source of challenge was the sheer diversity of XPLOR's target audience, which made balancing ease-of-use with rich functionality even more crucial. Indeed, Hand sees his team's mission—providing Goodyear's dealer-customer community with efficient, high-quality, value-added service—as inherently challenging given the nature of the tire industry's value chain. "While the supplier side of the business is highly concentrated—with only three or four major players—the distribution side is highly fragmented, ranging from mom-and-pop dealerships all the way up to Wal-Mart," explains Hand. "The wide variation in sophistication levels on the distribution side makes it that much harder for us to deliver information in a cohesive and compelling manner." The issue of technical sophistication is also highly relevant at the low-end of the distributor population, where smaller operations often lack the means and/or the desire to do business online.

Challenges at Various States of Goodyear's e-business Evolution



Another key challenge cited by Goodyear relates to its previously stated strategy of providing consistent information—ranging from products and pricing to policies and procedures—across its service delivery channels. Specifically, Hand sees Goodyear’s ongoing challenge as ensuring that not only do Web-based channels like XPLOR present a consistent message—but that all consumer touch points deliver a consistent message. “We need to strive to make sure we coordinate our XPLOR operations with our call center operations so that we have the same kind of message going out,” says Hand. “A consistent message across all channels—including any future channels we create—benefits our dealers and their retail customers.”

Solution Profile and Implementation Strategy

► The Solution in Action

Users seeking to access the XPLOR site are authenticated via a user name and password. XPLOR’s Information Delivery features, running on the Lotus Domino platform, enable dealer-customers to view product and other information specific to that dealer-customer, while keeping this data secure from other dealer-customers. The system also enables individual dealer-customers to specify which users at that site should have access to various information. Thus, pricing information can be limited to a few select dealer-customer

employees, while service bulletin information can be accessed by all employees. Similarly, Goodyear can control the content that specific dealer-customers (or groups of dealer-customers) are allowed to see. Of note, the XPLOR solution's security parameters (as described on the previous page) are governed by WebSphere Commerce Suite's personalization capabilities, although Lotus Domino is used to establish and maintain these access rules. This property of the solution demonstrates the high level of integration between multiplatform Web servers (e.g., Lotus Domino and WebSphere Commerce Suite) present in XPLOR's architecture, and is arguably the factor that most sets it apart from other vertical Web solutions.

Dealer-customers using the Order Management portion of XPLOR platform can either browse for specific products or search (by tire size, etc.) through a product catalog. Prior to placing orders, dealer-customers can check Goodyear warehouses within a given region (determined by the location of the dealer-customer) for price and product availability. During this query, the XPLOR system indicates the number of tires located at a particular warehouse, as well as the number of products in transit and/or on back-order. As mentioned previously, this realtime reporting capability is underpinned by tight integration between XPLOR's WebSphere Commerce Suite front end and Goodyear's SAP R/3 ERP system and other legacy systems, with IBM MQSeries providing the necessary messaging middleware to link the systems.

While Goodyear has primarily targeted XPLOR to its traditional dealer-customers and company-owned outlets, a number of non-traditional channels—such as large regional retailers, wholesale distributors and custom brand distributors—have begun using the system. The XPLOR solution has also been increasingly adopted by Goodyear's field sales representatives to keep abreast of their customers' recent account activity—thus increasing their sales effectiveness. Hand sees the successful use of XPLOR as a *de facto* data mart as evidence of its versatility as well as a window on Goodyear's future service opportunities. "We're happy to be able to further leverage the valuable data resource that XPLOR has become," says Hand. "We see this as evidence of a tremendous opportunity to integrate XPLOR's data resources with other business processes."

► The Timeline for XPLOR's Upgrade

Soon after resolving to upgrade XPLOR's infrastructure in late 2000, the Goodyear team finalized its decision to employ IBM technology, and to use IBM Global Services staff to assist in implementing the hardware and software upgrade. As part of the upgrade, the XPLOR site was shifted to IBM's state-of-the-art hosting facility in Raleigh, NC. The IBM Global Services team handling the migration completed the set-up of the RS/6000 Model F80 servers at the end of January [the solution had previously run on two RS/6000 F50 servers]. After loading the application software and the XPLOR application code onto the servers, the team transferred all relevant underlying data from servers on the old hosting location and from Goodyear's SAP R/3 systems and other legacy systems in Akron. Testing was completed at the end of February, and the new solution went live on March 10, 2001.

Development Timetable for the XPLOR Solution Upgrade

	December 2000	January 2001	March 2001	April 2001
Goodyear resolves to upgrade XPLOR's infrastructure.	■			
IBM Global Services begins deploying XPLOR's new "multi-box" architecture at the IBM Raleigh, NC facility.		■		
The new XPLOR solution goes live.			■	
The new XPLOR solution handles a 175 percent increase in transaction volume with no performance or availability problems.				■

Source: Goodyear and IDC

Business Results

► Building a Solid Track Record of Real Benefits

Since its introduction, XPLOR continues to deliver a wide range of benefits to Goodyear, including significant reductions in print, postage and communication costs. Other operational benefits include a more efficiently deployed call center staff which—now relieved of a large volume of routine inquiries—is better able to address more complex, value-added tasks. Dealer-customers have also harvested major benefits from XPLOR. For instance, XPLOR's inventory checking feature has led to a significant increase in dealer-customers' fill rates (the incidence of dealer-customers actually receiving the products they order from a warehouse), enabling them to better manage their inventory.

Since its introduction, XPLOR continues to deliver a wide range of benefits to Goodyear, including significant reductions in annual print, postage and communication costs.

Goodyear's Hand also points out that for dealer-customers, inventory management means more than just having the right quantity of products—it also means paying the "right" price. "XPLOR provides dealer-customers with an improved ability to leverage any special pricing programs. As dealer-customers build an order, two transaction elements—price and inventory—now tie together through XPLOR, because dealer-customers now have better visibility to those pricing programs and have an improved ability to leverage them, which helps dealer-customers in their decision process as they build the order." XPLOR's ability to help dealer-customers capitalize on marketing programs has also been a major plus for Goodyear by increasing the flow of new business resulting from these programs.

XPLOR has also produced a major impact on all aspects of product ordering cycle time. For example, under the traditional, fax-based ordering scheme,

Overview of XPLOR's Business Results Achieved

Business Process Area	Nature of Benefit	Description or Metric
Customer Service	Reduced Costs	Significant reductions in print, postage and communication costs.
Customer Service	Lower Costs/Higher Productivity	Goodyear's call center staff is now better able to address more complex, value-added tasks.
Logistics	Increased Efficiency	XPLOR's inventory checking feature has led to a significant increase in dealers' fill rates, enabling them to better manage their inventory.
IT Desktop Administration	Reduced Cycle Time	XPLOR has reduced dealers' order processing cycle time from overnight to realtime.
Application Performance	Throughput and Scalability	XPLOR's new architecture weathered a 175 percent month-to-month increase in order volume with no diminution of performance.
Customer Service	Customer Satisfaction	XPLOR enabled Goodyear to keep up with a flood of inquiries resulting from a competitor's product recall.

Source: Goodyear and IDC

orders sent in to the customer service center may not have been entered into the Goodyear system until late in the day, delaying their processing. Similarly, orders submitted through the now-defunct DealerLink EDI system required a 24-hour turnaround time due to the batch processing nature of EDI. The move from these older ordering methods to XPLOR has dramatically shortened the order processing cycle—from overnight to realtime, which has decreased costs and increased customer satisfaction.

► A Spike in Transaction Volume—and XPLOR Doesn't Blink

In April 2001, Goodyear launched a promotion designed to further stimulate ordering via the XPLOR system. As Hand explains, the Goodyear team expected an increase in order volume, but was unsure about the sustainability of the increased XPLOR volume over the long haul. “Our concern was that in the following month, the order numbers would fall back down to pre-promotion growth,” says Hand. The promotion's short-run result was a stunning 175 percent monthly increase in order volume, but the most promising result was

the sustained nature of the increase. Indeed, since the April promotion, overall transaction volume—both orders and information-oriented services—has increased every month. Hand sees the breadth of transactions processed on the system as evidence that dealer-customers are beginning to incorporate XPLOR more deeply into their business processes, which is Goodyear’s key goal. “Months after the promotion, usage levels for all XPLOR features continue to rise,” adds Hand. “We see it as a testament to the richness and value of XPLOR—and to the strong appetite for realtime information within our dealer-customer community.”

The April transaction surge—during which XPLOR hit its year-end target in the first week—also provided a glimpse of the increased scalability and performance that Goodyear had acquired only weeks earlier through its upgrade. David Hess, e-business specialist on the IBM team notes that as transaction volumes soared well beyond earlier peaks, XPLOR handled all the volume without a hitch. “The load balancing and redundancy capabilities of WebSphere were evident throughout the spike in volume,” says Hess. “We missed no transactions, which meant no dealer-customers were left out in the cold.”

The scalability and robustness of the XPLOR platform was even more apparent in the wake of a competitor’s tire recall, which saw dealer-customers scrambling to get information and react to the situation. As a result of the recall, Goodyear was inundated with an unprecedented number of inquiries and orders, well in excess of its call center capacity. As Hand points out, XPLOR proved crucial to Goodyear’s success in weathering the episode. “XPLOR helped our dealer-customers handle this spike in demand by providing them realtime inventory information on a 24 by 7 basis,” says Hand. “XPLOR also proved invaluable as a communication tool, allowing us to get a consistent message out to our dealers—and their customers—at a time when information consistency was critical.”

Case Epilogue

“Through the XPLOR program, we’ve benefited from IBM’s technology, vision and expertise. Their commitment to us as a partner has been—and will continue to be—a key element of XPLOR’s success.”

— Duane Hand

Going forward, Goodyear plans to expand the usage of XPLOR through continued efforts to increase the penetration of and usage volumes within its dealer-customer population as well as newer segments, such as small and medium-sized manufacturers. The company also plans to continue enhancing what has become the industry’s preeminent dealer-customer extranet solution. One example of innovations in the works include the integration of Goodyear’s call center and XPLOR infrastructures to enable Goodyear associates to perform collaborative, Web-based selling. Another is the integration of XPLOR with dealer-customers’ point-of-sales systems to strengthen their selling capabilities. As always, the company continues to aggressively seek and act on feedback from its dealer-customers—an information channel that has already produced a number of valuable improvements.

On the technical side, the Goodyear/IBM team plans to continue enhancing the

XPLOR platform, enabling Goodyear to better serve its channel partners and their customers. For instance, the team has begun looking at creating XML-based external data linkages with some of its larger retail channel partners through public exchanges, to which retailers sometimes outsource some or all of their procurement functions. Among the many challenges of this external integration initiative will be the need for XPLOR to provide customized, partner-specific catalog data to these large channel partners via the third-party exchanges. Hand sees Goodyear's partnership with IBM as a valuable expertise as XPLOR heads toward more complex—and ultimately more valuable—integration issues. “Through the XPLOR program, we've benefited from IBM's technology, vision and expertise,” says Hand. “Their commitment to us as a partner has been—and will continue to be—a key element of XPLOR's success.”

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