



Inform Software Systems helps pharmacists fill cabinets through e-marketplace.

Application	B2B e-marketplace connecting independent pharmacists with wholesale drug suppliers
Business Benefits	For Inform Software Systems: extended market reach For Unipharma.net: 1,000 transactions per month; 7% of independent pharmacists ordering from site with growth to 20% projected by second year
Software	IBM DB2® Universal Database™
Premier Business Partner	Inform Software Systems

When supplies are low, independent pharmacists face the tedious, time-consuming task of sifting through printed lists of thousands of products. After finding what they need, they also spend time comparing prices and suppliers. The developers of Unipharma.net, a start-up based in Glasgow, Scotland, knew that Internet technologies could help pharmacists bypass this entire rigmarole. All they needed was a robust e-business solution offering the scalability and reliability to support their vision.

“When you first approach a vendor, you want to establish their credibility and credentials, so Inform Software Systems’ status as an IBM Business Partner makes an impact. And the fact that they are at the premier level means IBM has high regard for them.”

– Hesham Mehanna, CEO, Unipharma.net



Inform Software Systems used IBM e-business solutions to create an award-winning pharmaceutical e-marketplace.



Software Business Partners e-business Solutions



Hesham Mehanna, CEO of Unipharma.net, is pleased that his growing pharmaceutical e-marketplace was developed with IBM e-business solutions.

That's why the developers turned to IBM Premier Business Partner Inform Software Systems, which offered its expertise in IBM e-business solutions to create the Unipharma.net site. Winner of the DTI U.K. Dot.com Start-up Award, presented by the Information Society Initiative and InterForum for best practices in e-commerce, Unipharma.net is a business-to-business (B2B) e-marketplace bringing together independent pharmacists and wholesale drug suppliers.

Says Hesham Mehanna, CEO of Unipharma.net, "When you first approach a vendor, you want to establish their credibility and credentials, so Inform Software Systems' status as an IBM Business Partner makes an impact. And the fact that they are at the premier level means IBM has high regard for them."

In its early stages, Unipharma.net—the first of its kind in the U.K.—has already registered 7 percent of the U.K.'s 7,500 independent pharmacists as members. By its second year, the company expects to see its membership jump to 20 percent. On average, the site processes 1,000 transactions a month, each ranging from about £500 (U.S.\$700) to about £10,000 (U.S.\$14,500).

A platform to grow on

At Unipharma.net, pharmacists can select products, compare prices and check availability. After they compile their order, the e-marketplace sends it to the chosen supplier, who handles delivery and invoicing directly with the pharmacist.

Inform Software Systems developed Unipharma.net with JavaServer Pages™ (JSP™) technology and IBM DB2 Universal Database for Sun™ Solaris™. "DB2, which manages product, supplier and account information, has provided the scalable, reliable solution we needed to meet Unipharma.net's goals for growth," notes Rob Walker, managing director at Inform.

Unipharma.net has nine employees and is currently raising venture capital. "Because we're a small business, we're using partners as extended sections of our company, so Inform will supply pretty much all of our IT requirements," says Mehanna.

"We got introduced to Inform Software Systems based on their very strong reputation for Java solutions as well as their reliability and ability to team with us, not just work for us."

—Hesham Mehanna

Skilled in IBM

Also based in Glasgow, Scotland, Inform Software Systems is a 40-employee e-business division of QSP, a provider of electronic financial management solutions for Global 2000 companies. Founded in 1993 by Walker and Eddie Keane, technical director, the company got its start developing solutions with Lotus® Notes®, joining the Lotus and then IBM Business Partner programs.

Over the years, Inform Software Systems incorporated other IBM e-business solutions into its repertoire, including: IBM WebSphere® Commerce Suite, IBM VisualAge® for Java™, IBM MQSeries®, IBM MQSeries Workflow and Lotus Enterprise Integrator. For customers new to e-business, Inform uses the IBM Application Framework for e-business as a roadmap to provide ideas and direction.

It was this impressive tool set, expertise and its status as an IBM Premier Business Partner that helped Inform Software Systems win the Unipharma.net project. Says Mehanna, “We got introduced to Inform Software Systems based on their very strong reputation for Java solutions as well as their reliability and ability to team with us, not just work for us.”

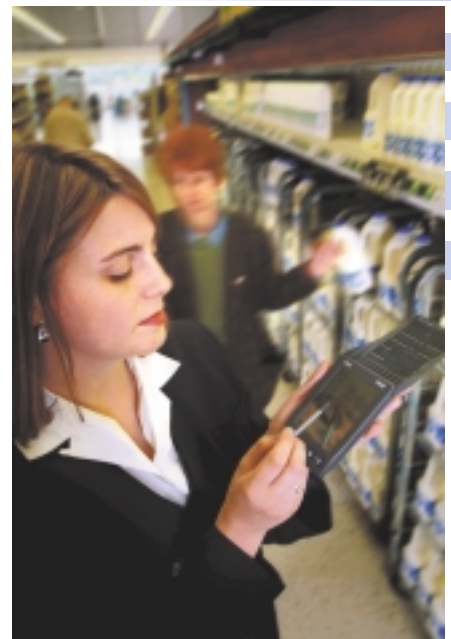
Delivering Lotus expertise to leading dairy

Although Inform Software Systems now has expertise in a wide range of e-business software solutions, the company still attracts clients based on its Lotus skills. Take Robert Wiseman Dairies (RWD), the U.K.’s fastest growing milk supplier. Providing 800 million litres of milk annually to households and leading supermarket chains, RWD needed to enhance customer service by improving upon its paper-based system of delivering customer service and competitor information.

Customer service representatives who visit customer sites to evaluate service quality and product displays, track store pricing and assess competitor activity were taking handwritten reports and then logging the data into the computer system at RWD’s Glasgow headquarters. This created an unwieldy system where papers got lost and storage was a hassle.

“We particularly like the challenges of working with businesses that are trying to gain maximum advantage from new technologies, and there’s still an awful lot of opportunity to do that. So, with the support of IBM, it’s e-business as usual for us.”

– Rob Walker, Managing Director, Inform Software Systems



Robert Wiseman Dairies tracks customer data on PDAs using a system developed by IBM Business Partner Inform Software Systems.

Inform Software, also a Lotus Premier Business Partner, used Lotus Domino™ and Lotus Notes to create a system where service representatives could enter the data they collected on to laptops or personal digital assistants (PDAs). This data is then sent to headquarters by a land line or mobile phone, and is transferred to the Domino server, which is linked to an IBM AS/400® server by Lotus Enterprise Integrator. Employees can then view the information from their desktops through a Lotus Notes intranet.

“The integrated Lotus solution has helped RWD significantly improve the quality of customer service,” says Ian McLean, business process director for the dairies. “It’s unlikely we could have achieved this without Lotus and Inform. We can now make informed and realistic business decisions much faster, and we can spot trends and problems as they develop and rectify them.”

The North of Scotland Water Authority (NOSWA) — which supplies water to more than 60 percent of Scotland — also called on Inform Software Systems for its Lotus expertise when it wanted to enhance its Lotus Notes environment. Together, the team has unveiled new ways for NOSWA to communicate and collaborate, including discussion databases and remote access to Lotus Notes applications.

Inform Software Systems also provided technical education, strategy workshops and infrastructure and help desk support for a Lotus Notes environment of more than 1,000 users.

Ready for new challenges

It’s clear that the e-business solutions space in which Inform Software Systems competes is crowded. But being able to access the proven and well-known consulting skills within its parent company, QSP, gives Inform an additional advantage. Walker’s goal is to triple his staff in the next three years, while enriching the team’s core competencies.

Says Walker, “We particularly like the challenges of working with businesses that are trying to gain maximum advantage from new technologies, and there’s still an awful lot of opportunity to do that. So, with the support of IBM, it’s e-business as usual for us.”

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