

Sapient and IBM introduce targeted marketing, greater control and flexibility to Barnes & Noble College Booksellers with new commerce site



You will never hear the word 'typical' used to describe Sapient Corporation, its clients or its clients' business challenges. This IBM Premier Business Partner distinguishes itself by delivering innovative and unique solutions to the innovative and unique Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 global enterprises it serves.

Sapient, like most global service providers, competes for each client, in industries as diverse as retail, automotive manufacturing and travel. Sapient's competitive advantage comes primarily from its ability to deliver custom solutions that address each client's unique and complex business challenges – challenges for which there are, more than likely, no off-the-shelf answers. According to Standish Group International, a research advisory firm which tracks and benchmarks enterprise-level projects, Sapient delivers better than most. The group's latest survey shows Sapient with a track record nearly three times better

than the industry average for achieving client success, on-time and on-budget.

"We are, first and foremost, a unique firm that helps our clients innovate in the areas of marketing, operations and technology," says Teri Green, Sapient's director of global alliances. "We come in at a very high level and help our clients understand their business challenges and integrate technology into their current business processes, enabling them to be more competitive, productive and cost effective."

Green believes her company's active partnership with IBM - they participate heavily in IBM's PartnerWorld® Industry Networks and IBM technical readiness programs - provides the high level support and access to resources critical to their ability to deliver on that promise. "We have an IBM technical specialist assigned to us, who leads quarterly technical readiness webcasts for our internal consultants," she says. "That same person puts

IBM Business Partner: Sapient Corporation

Sapient is a global services provider that helps clients innovate in the areas of marketing, business operations and technology. The company was founded in 1990, and has been an IBM Premier Business Partner since 1999. It is headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



together leader-led training for our consultants, keeping us current on specific IBM technologies and providing product roadmaps on emerging IBM products."

One recent Sapient client, Barnes and Noble College Booksellers, needed an online retail management system for their growing network of 600 company-owned-and-operated university bookstores. Their challenge involved both marketing and technological components, which Sapient believed made them (Barnes & Noble College Booksellers) an ideal candidate for a solution like IBM WebSphere® Commerce.

Barnes and Noble College Booksellers needed to more fully leverage the Internet to grow its business. They needed a better solution for managing the unique dynamic and competitive

pressures at each of their small, mid-size and large campus environments. Additionally their existing systems were challenging to maintain and lacked the ability to add the state of the art enhancements Barnes & Noble College Booksellers intended to bring to the campuses it served.

Utilizing the Extended Sites (eSites) capabilities within IBM WebSphere Commerce Server, Sapient created a Web template system that provides individual bookstore managers with a high degree of flexibility and control over current Website content. Managers can now choose the colors and images displayed on their home page. Additionally they can choose the products featured on their Website enabling stores to increase revenue by selling more school-specific merchandise.

While bookstore-level control is critical from a marketing perspective, Jon Panella, Sapient's director of technology, believes the WebSphere Commerce eSite technology, with its single code base, is key. "We couldn't support 600 code bases, obviously," he says. "And we didn't even want to get into the situation where, having categorized stores into small, mid-size or large campus stores - we were managing even three code bases. WebSphere Commerce Server's eSites functionality is the only product in the marketplace providing a capability to offer that degree of flexibility to the end user, while keeping maintenance at a reasonable cost."

Panella also believes IBM is putting much more investment into the WebSphere Commerce platform, increasing its advantages over competitive commerce products. "A lot of new developments are coming around, such as gift-center, service

scheduling and loyalty functionality – things that don't seem to be on the horizon with other companies. Plus, we find WebSphere Commerce Server to be architecturally superior."

The Barnes and Noble College Booksellers' solution also leverages the IBM DB2® database for all reporting, tracking and Website analytics. This allows bookstores to identify Website visitors as students, faculty or alumni and engage in more targeted marketing. This demographic and psychographic targeting increases revenues through individualized emails, coupons and pop-ups and the ability to cross-sell during the checkout process to increase impulse purchases.

"We didn't put any constraints on Sapient as to architecture, applications and technologies," says Stephen Culver, Barnes and Noble College Bookseller's chief information officer. "They came to us with an IBM solution - one software application with one architecture that provided enough flexibility to enable a Web solution with 600 or more different looks and feels in order to meet individual university and student requirements. And it's all run by the same engine. That was the power the IBM solution brought to us."

While IBM technologies and technology training help Sapient keep pace with the rapidly evolving business demands of its diverse client base, the company leverages PartnerWorld Industry Networks to provide access to solution-oriented, industry-specific applications. "Partnerworld Industry Networks is invaluable in that it lets us tap into a lot of industry-specific resources," Green says. "That makes sense for us as a company, because it enables us to better deliver on client success and it helps us drive more revenue."

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Somers, NY 10589
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03-07
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