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**Haworth Transforms Business Operations With IBM and Ascendant Technology's on Demand Solution and Enhances Customer Service for Dealers ( Replaces Oracle Portal and Increases Transactions With Its Worldwide Dealer Network )**

SOMERS, NY, Mar. 15, 2005 (MARKET WIRE via COMTEX) -- IBM and Ascendant Technology today announced that Haworth, Inc., a global manufacturer of office furniture and adaptable workspace environments, has transformed its business operations with an enhanced IT infrastructure that enables them to communicate and exchange secure, real-time business information with its worldwide network of independent furniture dealers.



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Haworth implemented a new online portal application that allows them to more easily interact with its dealers and enables them to gain access to information including financial data, inventory and product information in real-time. As a result, Haworth has increased sales and significantly improved its business process efficiency with enhanced customer service.

Prior to adopting the IBM and Ascendant Technology on demand portal solution, Haworth's sales representatives spent more than 30 minutes on each customer call, manually looking up information from disparate sources such as product availability, pricing and order status. Now, sales staff and customers can obtain on demand access to vital product information. By making this information accessible to customers and staff in real-time, Haworth has significantly reduced the time employees spend answering customer service calls, resulting in increased sales and improved service.

Based in Holland, Michigan, Haworth is one of the world's largest manufacturers of office furniture, with reported sales of \$1.26 billion in more than 120 countries worldwide. The company's network of deal customers access Haworth's dNet portal daily to obtain information such as the cost and availability of products, marketing, sales and financial data.

Haworth replaced its existing Oracle Portal for dNet, developed by Ascendant Technology and based on IBM WebSphere Portal and IBM Lotus Workplace for Web Content Management. The Oracle Portal did not offer secure single sign-on capabilities, making it difficult for Haworth's customers to manage separate sessions and view sensitive content such as financial information with confidence. The

customer-maintained portal access and authentication process, written by Ascendant Technology, allows Haworth's customers to sign on and securely obtain specific financial and pricing data. Haworth chose the joint IBM and Ascendant Technology solution after two years of unsuccessful attempts to implement an effective, secure and efficient portal that could help the company effectively synchronize product collateral and communicate with its customers.

"The Java-based IBM and Ascendant Technology portal solution has allowed us to fundamentally change the way we communicate with dealers and internal employees," said Mike Stock, dNet Manager, Haworth. "We needed a scalable Web-based solution that would serve as a primary mean of secure, on demand communication between Haworth and our dealer network. Prior to deploying the joint IBM and Ascendant solution, dNet averaged 12 visitors a month from a couple of dealerships. In the six months following the implementation we had more than four million hits in over 21 countries, which far surpassed our expectations and transformed the way we do business," said Stock.

"Teaming with IBM was critical in signing Haworth," said Jim Deters, managing partner, Ascendant Technology. "By combining Ascendant Technology's technical and industry expertise with IBM's open middleware, our solution architects were able to work with IBM to deliver a customized portal solution that meet all of Haworth's business needs. Access to IBM's technical resources, such as its Innovation Center, along with working closely with IBM's marketing and sales teams, has opened the door to new markets and opportunities for us."

#### About IBM

With 80 years of leadership in helping businesses innovate, IBM is the world's largest information technology company. IBM is a leading provider of e-business solutions and is dedicated to helping companies, business partners and developers leverage the potential of the Internet and network computing across a wide range of businesses and industries. The company offers a host of cross-industry and industry specific solutions designed to meet the needs of companies of all sizes. For more information on partnering with IBM, please visit: <http://www.ibm.com/isv>.

#### About Ascendant Technology

Ascendant Technology is a Premier level member of IBM PartnerWorld and systems integrator with a national Portal and Workplace Practice headquartered in Austin, TX. Ascendant Technology specializes in helping mid-market organizations align their IT investments with business objectives to create an On Demand business.

#### Press Contact:

Kaveri Camire IBM Phone: (914) 766-1324 E-mail: [kcamire@us.ibm.com](mailto:kcamire@us.ibm.com)

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