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Furniture Maker Haworth Reupholsters Its Portal



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Furniture maker Haworth Inc. relies on its relationships with its global network of dealers. But the company decided it needed to revamp its Web site and Internet portal because it wasn't doing a good job of supporting a network of more than 360 furniture dealers in 120 countries.



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Haworth, which reported \$1.26 billion in sales for 2003, upgraded the dealer portal, which it calls dNet, last year. Mike Stock, dNet's manager, says use of the site far exceeded his expectations. Before the upgrade, the number of visitors to the portal averaged about 12 a month. But after the site was improved in June, the portal garnered about 4 million hits through January. "That far exceeded our expectations," Stock says. "My original measure of success was 400,000 to 500,000 hits."

The company's dealers use dNet to obtain real-time financial information, inventory status, and marketing materials, Stock says. Before the enhanced dNet, Haworth's sales representatives would spend more than 30 minutes on each customer call as they searched various databases for product availability, pricing, and order-status information.

To improve the portal, Haworth turned to systems integrator and IBM partner Ascendant Technology, which helped the company develop dNet using IBM's WebSphere Portal and Lotus Workplace for Web Content Management.

The portal also has increased productivity for Haworth's employees. "Internally, all of our employees now have a centralized place to access order-entry, marketing materials, and product-development information," he says. "They no longer have to walk down the hall or call across the room to get information like part numbers."

Another benefit to Haworth's dealers is easier password management,

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Stock says. "We had pressure from our dealers to reduce the number of user names and passwords they needed to access information," he says. Before the changes, dNet dealers would have to memorize four or more user name and password combinations to access various applications.

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