



**BEYOND SERVICE:  
CREATING AN INTEGRATED  
E-COMMERCE  
SOLUTION FOR  
YOUR ORGANIZATION**

**The World Wide Web is a valuable tool for organizations striving to improve services and streamline operations.**

# Creating an e-Co



*Seamless integration is essential to maintaining organizational control and efficiency. It can also save your staff time, money, and resources, and earn high marks from your members.*

Making your website the resource of choice will cement customer relationships.

**By Marcia Dresner**

**E**ffective commerce! What does that mean in today's environment? It means using the best tools available to integrate CRM and back-office systems (customer data, purchasing transactions, activity records) with a Web presence. When done properly, an organization benefits in two critical ways: it delivers services faster and it spends less money, which frees up resources that can be better used for developing new initiatives to advance an organization's mission.

The Internet has redefined people's expectations for service. Business hours limited to a standard nine to five workday no longer apply when dealing with the Web. People are resisting the hassle and delay of corresponding by postage mail, when they know that an e-mail could instantly accomplish the same goal. Using the Internet, they expect to find what they need 24 hours a day, seven days a week from their desktop browser. Customers share these prevailing attitudes, so you must meet their expectations promptly in order to maintain a positive relationship with your customer base.

---

## The Web-Based Organization

Every organization's website must start with message-focused, essential information. When customers or prospects log on, they must be able to quickly grasp the who, what, where and why of an organization. But that is just the beginning. The experience of the Mortgage Banker's Association of America (MBA) is a prime example of taking an organization's website to the next level.

MBA began its journey to its current Web-based, integrated front and back-end solution when it decided to add e-commerce functionality that included product ordering and meeting registration. The organization did not want to add more custom software to what it already had. Instead, MBA sought a customizable system that could be implemented quickly, address its growing needs, and include e-commerce solutions that span website contact management, meetings, order processing, and more.

*"We are moving rapidly towards the day when we can provide personalized services to customers who use our website,"*

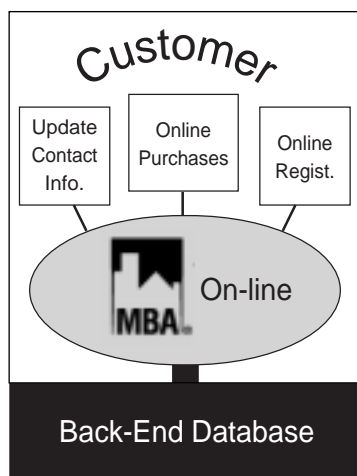
Amy Licato,  
Senior Director of  
Business Product and  
Development at MBA

# mmerce Solution

A Web-based system, like MBA's, is ideal for performing an organization's essential task of keeping track of customers and prospects. It also allows customers to transact all of their business themselves, saving staff time and eliminating errors. At MBA, customers can update addresses, change demographic information, pay fees and more — all over the Web. And, the information is updated in the back-end database, in real-time, automatically. This seamless integration is essential to maintaining organizational control and efficiency.

Meetings are both a service and a source of revenue for MBA. A streamlined, online process that captures registration data and processes credit cards immediately, replaced paper registration via fax or mail. MBA, which handles 40 meetings a year, has seen real savings from implementing online meeting registration. The online process eliminates duplicate data entry and the loss of revenue associated with expired credit cards.

Contrary to popular belief, e-commerce did not really start with Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com, but he created the ideal model: give people a pleasant interface, provide access to detailed information,



*Like MBA, your organization can use the Internet to integrate your back-end management system with your front-end Web presence to deliver faster service and eliminate errors.*

streamline the ordering process, send the product out immediately, and answer questions in real-time. MBA has instituted this kind of e-commerce model for its 400 product and service offerings. The system captures information about who is ordering what, saves three to five days of fulfillment time, and provides an updated and accurate customer profile for MBA's customer service representatives. Product managers can see which products are selling and plan new offerings accordingly.

An organization that successfully implements such an integrated system will certainly get high marks from its customers. But equally important, the staff will be able to use the knowledge gained and the time saved to develop new products and services to benefit those customers. Amy Licato, senior director of business products and development at MBA is looking forward to that. "We are moving rapidly towards the day when we can provide personalized services to customers who use our website," she says.

## Integration Defined

According to Forrester Research, one of the biggest problems for businesses today is the lack of integration between back office business systems and Web-based e-commerce systems. It is essential for companies to implement an e-commerce solution that comes with integration to a solid, back-office platform. Here are several features an organization should look for when evaluating integrated e-commerce solutions:

- **Integrated price and product tables.** A product pricing change in your back-office system automatically appears on your website in real-time.
- **Integrated financial transactions.** Payments made through the website are automatically integrated into the

back-office system.

- **Integrated customer information.** Customer information available in real-time with each transaction.

Another example of an integrated e-commerce solution is the Sigma Chi Foundation, which recently implemented a Web-based customer management system allowing constituents to make changes to their personal records, register for special events, and request information of interest. But better than that, the system is integrated into its back-office, allowing Sigma Chi to track volunteers and even plan special events. Says Mark V. Anderson, president of Sigma Chi Fraternity, "The new solution essentially gives us better control of our database and saves us valuable time and resources. And, in the fund-raising industry, timing is everything."

## Staying Connected

An organization's website is critical for attracting and retaining customers. Making your website the resource of choice will cement customer relationships.

An organization's website should be more than just a "pretty face." As the MBA example shows, it should be a critical component of an integrated e-commerce solution that takes information from that website and feeds it into back-office databases and knowledge management tools. Once that solution is in place, an organization can go beyond basics and create a more sophisticated business platform to serve its customers and prospects, further enhancing the organization's value.

*Marcia Dresner is a freelance writer in Silver Spring, MD. She spent 11 years with the American Chemical Society, and also owned and ran a computer software company.*

**About Advanced Solutions International, Inc.**

ASI is an international provider of Web-based software solutions, with nearly 18,000 users worldwide. The company markets its software to organizations through a world-wide network of Authorized Resellers, which provides the benefit of local service and support.

Founded in 1991, ASI has grown from a start-up venture with \$37,000 in sales to a market-leading software developer with revenues of almost \$12 million. ASI's impressive track record of growth earned them a spot on Inc. magazine's list of the 500 fastest-growing privately-held businesses in America in 1997 and 1998.



---

Advanced Solutions International, Inc.

901 N. Pitt St., Ste. 200

Alexandria, VA 22314

800/727-8682

[www.advsol.com](http://www.advsol.com)