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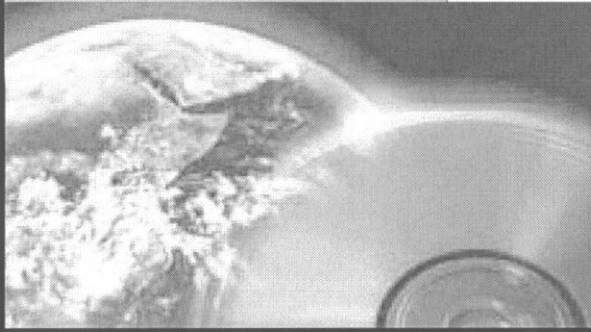
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InfoTech Update

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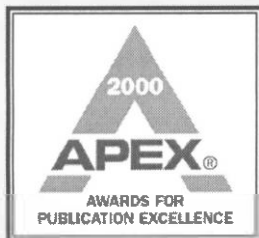
IN THIS ISSUE

1
KM Systems: Imperative Systems to Enhance Enterprise Core Competencies
Knowledge Management Systems are business-as-usual in today's top companies. Discover the tremendous impact KM has on enhancing intellectual capital.

5
What is CRM?
Delivering what customers want and need isn't guesswork — it's CRM. Find out how CRM can improve service delivery.

7
Don't Forget the PR
Learn how to garner publicity for your Web site and heighten awareness of your firm or company's efforts.

10
<http://toptech.aicpa.org>: A Must Visit Web Site!
The newly revised Top Techs Web site is ready for visitors — review the enhancements and features to the site, and learn how to integrate the 35 Top Tens with your firm or business.



KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT/KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

KM SYSTEMS: IMPERATIVE SYSTEMS TO ENHANCE ENTERPRISE CORE COMPETENCIES (INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL)

By Gary S. Rushin, CITP, CPA

Gary S. Rushin is president of sFusion, Inc., a strategic business and technology consultancy firm that provides BPR, business analysis, system development, integration, deployment and knowledge management services. He is a member of the Top Technologies Task Force, and is a recipient of the AICPA's newly created Certified Information Technology Professional (CITP) designation.

Hidden within the sanctum of the company lies what some may consider their true potential earning asset—the file archives and data within the database management systems. The ability to ferret data and information from external and internal resources, and link them into a collaborative system for use by knowledge workers fosters the creation of knowledge. Knowledge systems formalize management's efforts in promoting and exploiting intellectual capital. (adapted from AICPA/PDI Course, "Developing Knowledge Centers.")

Knowledge management (KM) and KM systems are new, emerging business methodologies and technologies that impact both the corporate and government landscape. The AICPA 2001 Top Ten Technologies Lists ranks

KM and knowledge systems as the second most important application impacting the accounting profession (<http://toptech.aicpa.org>), and according to International Data Corporation, overall knowledge management consulting service spending reached \$3.4 billion in 2000.

KM systems attempt to harness, filter, and manage data and information, and transform findings to knowledge that enhances the enterprise's intellectual capital. In the ever-increasing competitive landscape, corporate executives are using KM systems to help meet their objectives. KM systems help support business strategies, providing critical information used to develop tactics, such as increasing contract backlog, streamlining customer-processing and getting new product to market in the shortest period of time. Many corporate executives have decided to implement KM systems to determine enterprise knowledge gaps, failures and inefficiencies, as well as identifying best practices.

Not surprisingly, the U.S. Federal government is one of the largest implementers of knowledge management systems in the country. Faced with large, upcoming retirements of the

continued on page 2



KM Systems: Imperative Systems to Enhance Enterprise Core Competencies *continued from page 1*

“Baby Boomer” generation, along with tasks associated with downsizing, the government has begun an ambitious task of transforming government agencies into knowledge-centric organizations. The U.S. Navy, for example, has spent \$30 billion to transform itself into such an organization. Yet, while many business leaders are aware of the military’s use of KM for competitive intelligence and knowledge-based warfare, civilian agencies also are reaping the benefits of KM initiatives.

For example, the Naval Air System command (NAVAIR) recently deployed a KM portal that enables 3,000 employees access, through desktop computers, to access document management, business process re-engineering (BPR) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. The KM portal provided a platform for collaborative problem solving, effective decision-making and performance measurement capabilities. By combining enterprise applications, backend databases and the Internet, the system reduces delays and provides greater accuracy for mission-critical data and knowledge. NAVAIR supports the

Navy by acquiring and managing naval aeronautical and related technology systems in its quest to provide technical and functional capabilities to meet the demand of the 21st Century.

Last May, the GartnerGroup estimated that U.S. government spending on technology to enhance government programs would grow from \$1.5 billion to \$6.5 billion by 2005. To promote its commitment to KM and foster KM systems, the Federal government established a dedicated Web site to educate federal workers at www.km.gov.

According to the Hurwitz Group, recent advances in KM technologies have followed two trends: an ever-increasing automation of catalogs of information and people, and a shift of focus from document-centric storage to people-centric collaboration. For example, Lotus Development Corporation, (www.lotus.com/km) is at the forefront of developing a people-centric, collaborative KM strategy designed to enhance clients’ knowledge infrastructures by providing products built around five core technologies: Business Intelligence, Collaboration, Knowledge Transfer, Knowledge Discovery and Expertise Location.

Knowledge Portals — the Emerging KM Tool

The emergence of the Enterprise Information Portal (EIP) is the latest knowledge-enabling tool. It offers a solution to knowledge workers who have struggled to find information on crowded desktops, and lessens the need to master the distinctive interfaces of various IT platforms. By its nature, the strategic business value of EIP deployment is to supply a single, personalized point of access to enterprise-wide information and knowledge resources. Its goal to increase the knowledge worker’s use of the portal exploits the EIP KM system by enhancing time to market, lowering overhead and improving the enterprise competitive positioning.

Unlike earlier versions of portals that use basic data aggregation tools, next-generation EIPs allow communities of interest, project teams and workgroups to collaborate and share information. Plumtree Corporate Portal 4.0 (www.plumtree.com) has an architectural approach the uses a class of gadgets or application services. This allows the system to simultaneously process inputs from multiple gadgets.

Comcast, the \$5 billion broadband cable network operator and content provider, implemented a KM portal to enable its 15,000 plus employees. With the goal of driving revenue and product to market, its “MyComcast” portal, supported by the Plumtree Corporate Portal, provides a single, personalized page that allows knowledge workers access to retirement plan information from its benefits manager. Workers also can search

continued on page 3

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KM Systems: Imperative Systems to Enhance Enterprise Core Competencies continued from page 2

phone directories, use a glossary of common broadband communication terms, read industry-specific news feeds, access Web-based educational courseware, see order status from Comcast equipment-providers and review job postings.

As the principal owner of such television mainstays as QVC and Comcast SportsNet, along with controlling interest in E! Entertainment Television, the Philadelphia Flyers and 76ers, Comcast needed a means to enhance its intellectual assets in a decentralized network structure. The Plumtree personalized information and applications Web portal platform organizes links to different types of corporate documents in a Web directory, and assembles application and Internet services from different systems in a personalized Web page.

Recently, Lotus released an integrated collection of KM technologies (formerly known as “the raven project” and presently known as the “Discovery System”) that include the Lotus K-station and Lotus Discovery Server. Lotus’ collaborative browser-based single point-of-entry portal, “K-station,” allows knowledge workers to acquire, share and transfer enterprise knowledge. The portal creates personalized, Web-accessible team workspaces. Lotus Discovery Server is a knowledge server developed to provide knowledge-enabling tools. The server culls through structured and unstructured content to extract, organize and store relevant data to a given business task. Both the K-station and Discovery Server are designed as stand-alone KM solutions, but can interoperate with other enterprise portals.

Transforming Tacit Knowledge to Explicit Knowledge

Executives of intellectually rich organizations recognize that the most valuable knowledge often does not get written down or captured in a reusable form for the enterprise to exploit. Knowledge reuse can become very important, especially in a period of rapid employee turnover. The knowledge key employees have of business processes, customers and detailed operations are of significant value to the organization, and the tangible and intangible cost of knowledge loss tends to be high. As a result, KM systems are designed as a solution to mitigate this problem.

When it comes to types of knowledge, there are two forms: tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is captured through trial and error, and tends to be personal through experience and context specific. It is the knowledge that is “in between workers ears.” Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is categorized and formerly converted into another media, i.e., databases, charts, e-mail or paper/digital documents—better known as “codified knowledge.”

According to Thomas H. Davenport and Laurence Prusak in *Knowledge Management* from Harvard Business Press, data is transformed into information by adding value, described by them as the five Cs:

- ❖ Contextual—the purpose of data is known,
- ❖ Categorized—the units of analysis or key components are known,
- ❖ Calculated—the data may have been statistically or mathematically analyzed,
- ❖ Corrected—errors have been removed from data, and
- ❖ Condensed—the data has been summed.

Although data with endowed value is transformed to information—it is *not* knowledge. For information to be considered knowledge, it must have the ability to create action. KM systems are designed to cull and filter information that enables the knowledge user to create such action.

KM System Seven-Layer Architecture

In reviewing the implementation of a KM system, it must be determined whether the system provides the necessary level of knowledge enabling services. This should provide the knowledge worker with acceptable applications that are reliable, and provides as much transparency as possible to the timely transfer and movement of information and knowledge.

The KM Seven-Layer Architecture created by Amit Tiwana in *Knowledge Management Tool Kit* published by Prentice Hall (a taxonomy similar to the Open System Interconnection 7-Layer Reference Model) can be viewed as a building block for KM systems (see Exhibit 1). The architecture defines a single physical network in the form of a hierarchy and a model for assessing the enterprise knowledge component infrastructure:

Layer 7 — Repository Layer — includes all existing database and other archival resources within the enterprise.

Layer 6 — Middleware and Legacy Integration Layer — enables connectivity between legacy data and systems and new systems.

Layer 5 — Transport Layer — the protocol that provides the end-to-end service of transferring data and information between knowledge users. This includes TCP/IP, PPTP-based virtual networks, remote communication access, WAP, mail servers and streaming audio.

Layer 4 — Application Layer — provides the application needed to facilitate the KM process. Collaborative tools such as directories, video conferencing, yellow pages and conventional decision support tools are included.

continued on page 4



KM Systems: Imperative Systems to Enhance Enterprise Core Competencies *continued from page 3*

Layer 3 — Collaborative Intelligence and Filtering Layer — provides the processes, including agents, that add intelligence within the KM system. The intelligence process enables the filtering process by culling and ferreting information and knowledge for the end user.

Layer 2 — Access and Authentication Layer — provides the required security necessary to protect internal content and the network system.

Layer 1 — Interface Layers — offers information at the front end that provides connectivity to the KM system.

The KM Seven-Layer Architecture can be used as a checklist in selecting and implementing a system as well as a checklist for auditing the enterprise's existing knowledge technology infrastructures.

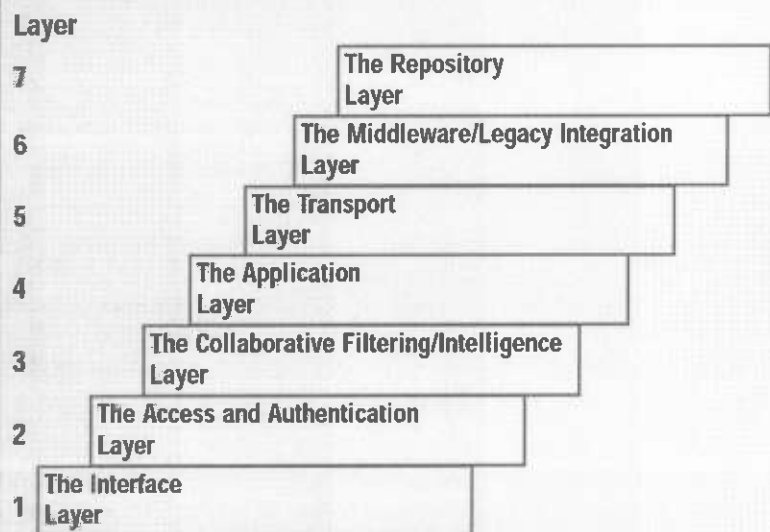
edge, and includes tools that convert repositories, distribution channels, enterprise data and external data.

Information Source Meta Components—provides source feeds of raw data and information into the KM system. These include intelligent agents, and network mining components and tools that encompass project management tools, distributed searching tools, transactional reports, electronic whiteboards, and multimedia content.

Information and Knowledge Exchange Meta Components—facilitates the enabling of the exchange of information across tacit (people knowledge) and explicit (codified) repository sources.

Intelligent Agents and Network Mining Meta Components—allows for the mining, linking, retrieving, and patterning of information and data.

Exhibit 1
Knowledge Management Seven-Layer Architecture



THE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM BLOCKS

Knowledge Technology Framework Meta Components

Within the KM system is a technology framework of enabling Meta components. To understand how these Meta components interrelate, appreciating their primary set of function and secondary functions are important. Meta components include:

Knowledge Flow Meta Components—includes web site, pointers, databases, file systems, collaborative tools and legacy systems.

Information Mapping Meta Components—links and maps the flow of information that may later be converted to knowl-

An example of the importance of integrating Meta Components into a KM system is Procter & Gamble's (P&G) KM portal. P&G markets about 300 brands to nearly 5 billion consumers in over 140 countries. With more than 110,000 employees enterprise-wide selling such diverse brands as Tide, Crest, Vicks, Oil of Olay and others from 70 countries, P&G needed a way to empower workers to assess and implement opportunities, and to foster market development in an environment of a diverse technical architecture.

Its solution was to implement a Web-based KM portal (The Plumtree Corporate Portal) that aggregates more than 1 million Web pages, and thousands of Lotus Notes databases and file servers. Through the use of knowledge agents, P&G knowledge workers gained access to the company's SAP/R3 ERP system, Oracle data warehousing and business intelligence applications, and E.piphany E4 analytic CRM system. Understanding the Meta components within the framework of the KM System 7-layer architecture allowed the successful implementation of P&G's KM portal.

KM Outsourcing to ASPs

KM systems can be developed, built or rented. Many organizations are turning to Application Service Providers (ASPs) to outsource their KM needs. Some companies may lack the time, expertise and/or money to develop a KM system, and some considered developing or building a customized KM system a distraction from their core business. Others consider outsourcing to ASPs a least expensive, faster means to increase community of knowledge, online collaboration and online business exchange.

continued on page 5

KM Systems: Imperative Systems to Enhance Enterprise Core Competencies continued from page 4

Several ASPs provide Web-based portals to deliver KM solutions. Examples include b2bScene (www.b2bscene.com) whose e-Business Community Platform promotes B2B interaction and collaboration in communities that include organizations, partners, customers and employees; Portera Systems (www.portera.com) that provides Web-hosting and outsourcing services to the professional service industries; and Citadon Inc. (www.citadon.com) that supports the construction and engineering industry.

Overall, the key to KM success lies in a decision to make knowledge capture and knowledge sharing a priority and an integral part of a company's culture. According to Roman Kepczyk, president of InfoTech Partners North America, Inc. (www.itpna.com), KM will become a critical component of every CPA firm's strategic plan. KM and KM systems can be a prime solution for corporate and government managers to achieve the organization's mission-critical objectives.

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WEB-BASED APPLICATIONS

WHAT IS CRM?

By Jay Fruin

Jay Fruin is president of the Integration Services Division of Leveraged Technology, Inc. in New York City. A founding partner of the firm, he has spent more than 20 years developing and managing software systems. His firm has provided expertise to 40 varied and complex CRM projects.

CRM is Customer Relationship Management. But what exactly is CRM? Many definitions exist, but most experts agree on what it is not: CRM is not about technology any more than hospitality is about throwing a welcome mat on your front porch.

Corporate America is focusing on the software application development that will provide enhanced service offerings. The two main areas of this growth include CRM initiatives and e-Business, and the two are inevitably linked. The goal of e-Business is to create new channels of contact with present and future customers, and CRM provides the operating platform with those current and prospective customers.

Properly understood, CRM is a philosophy that puts the customer at the center of the design phase — allowing a corporation to become intimate with

that customer. CRM is an extremely important strategy, not a process, and is designed to understand and anticipate the needs of the customer base. It is critical that a corporation's CRM technology permit a customer to choose preferred communication channels without sacrificing access to those channels. A unified CRM strategy, one that spans all contact media (fax, e-mail, voice, etc.) is an absolute necessity. Although most customer support managers would prefer to provide customer support solely through "e-channels," the reality is that most customers need a 'safety net' of direct human voice contact with real customer service representatives. As customers become comfortable with results from "e-channels," they will eventually come to use them as they would any other customer service capabilities.

Knowledge of the past is necessary to understand the future of CRM and to create a strategy that focuses on, and empowers, customers. Only a short time back, a CRM strategy might simply have been called "customer satisfaction." Today, CRM attempts to enhance the customer experience and customization of a company's marketing message based upon the understanding of those cus-

tomers needs. Admittedly, all too often, a company misunderstands or underestimates a customer's needs, or their understanding of those needs is incomplete and based solely upon previous purchasing activities. There is still a long way to go, but one must start somewhere. There are four distinct tactics, which taken together, form a most basic CRM requirement: improved customer service, enhanced product offerings, one-to-one marketing and mass personalization.

Improved Customer Service

A Happy Customer is a Valuable Thing
Improving customer service is the first and most important requirement of any CRM solution. Unhappy customers usually don't result in repeat buying. Happy customers, on the other hand, are quite valuable. The cost of retaining such a customer is considerably less than acquiring a new customer, and the effort required to keep a happy customer is much less than the investment in finding a new one.

The value of such a customer is considerably greater than one might initially think: not only will the customer buy more of the things already purchased, but s(he) is likely to purchase new products

continued on page 6



What Is CRM? *continued from page 5*

and services, too. And, a happy customer will likely recommend a company to other potential customers, lauding just how happy they are with such company. (The flip side of this is of course, unhappy customers will probably not speak too highly of a company, and may be even more likely to put in a bad word against a company than they would a good word.) Therefore, quality customer service is absolutely necessary. Business practices and technology must be in place in order to try more sophisticated uses of customer relationships.

Enhanced Product Offerings

Industry Consolidation Yields Product/Service Overload

Over the past several years, significant consolidation has taken place in a number of industries, causing product and service offerings to expand almost exponentially. An example of this would be the recently formed 'financial supermarkets,' with services and products ranging from banking to insurance to stock trading. Leveraging customer bases for cross-selling opportunities was one of the reasons this was done. This proved not as easy as one might think. With diverse systems, results like customer confusion, lack of corporate-wide product and service knowledge, and lack of corporate-wide customer knowledge stymied potential growth, and will probably continue to do so into the future.

There is still a tremendous opportunity to cross-sell to consumers, but two important factors must be understood. First, the company must determine the total relationship it has with the customer, and second, the company must ascertain which of its products and services are the best fit. All customer service representatives must have thorough knowledge of all products and services offered by the company, and this infor-

mation must be made available to them.

One-to-One Marketing

Sell me What I Might Want

One-to-one marketing is built upon expanding relationships, with the existing customer or new prospect as the target. The solution is to create unique offerings as the relationship grows and new knowledge is acquired.

By understanding previous purchases, coupled with present demographics and a little personal knowledge of the customer (i.e., marriage/divorce, recent large purchase, etc.) a company can tailor offerings to that particular individual that will be more easily received than a standard and conventional marketing message.

An inexpensive, effective means of communicating via one-to-one marketing is the Internet. Effective one-to-one marketing programs can generate significantly better response rates than conventional marketing through opt-in e-mail campaigns and personalization of Web content. The technology of CRM makes up the center of this effort because it provides a means to deliver and measure these campaigns.

Mass Personalization

We Want it our way!

As the paraphrase of a famous fast food marketing campaign has shown, the personalization of products on a mass basis easily can be achieved. Burger King may have brought "Have It Your Way" to the forefront of the American psyche, but other companies have also developed marketing strategies around the concept. Two great examples are Levi's Jeans and Dell Computers. Dell offers a customer many options for a computer prior to building it, customizing it as the consumer sees fit. Levi's offers custom-fit jeans designed to fit your body.

This mass personalization of product is creeping into other types of businesses. Those same financial service supermarkets are tailoring a broad range of customized offerings, like banking, brokerage and insurance, all suited to the customer's specifications. These offerings will not just be a choice of one versus another, but will be truly customized for varied and distinct needs.

A Look Ahead

The CRM foundation in this article has both business practice and technological dimensions. The demands placed on these systems will continue to expand, creating the inevitable need for flexibility, and there will be areas that are unpredictable. Just the use of the Internet both as a support and sales channel creates a good number of possible complications.

Each of the four tactics creates new technological challenges and opportunities. The diversity of product offerings will channel companies to knowledge bases and expert-system technology, making service representatives who are knowledgeable about all goods and services a necessity when communicating with a present or future customer. One-to-one marketing will create its own set of demands on present systems that will necessitate new and better techniques to save increasing data about customers. This data will have to be mined in order for it to be beneficial, so a company will need both software and staff to use it.

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ITII



NET ISSUES

DON'T FORGET THE PR

By Bill Corbett Jr.

Bill Corbett Jr. is president of Corbett Associates, Inc., one of the New York metropolitan area's leading public relations, marketing and governmental affairs firms. With more than 10 years' experience promoting companies from many different business sectors, his firm specializes in media placements, public relations program development and implementation, as well as the development, launch and promotion of corporate Web sites and Internet businesses strategies.

Ten years ago, who would have thought that virtually every business—from the local delicatessen to the largest Fortune 500 corporation—would have designed, built and launched a Web site? And who would have imagined the rapid expansion of dot.com companies and the e-Commerce boom that has taken place over the past five years? Not many technology experts ... and certainly not many stock market analysts.

As we begin a new century, there are a number of changes taking place in e-Commerce. While naysayers abound, the Internet and the Web sites it supports are here to stay, and should be part of every operation's model and plan. While every business will not develop an e-Commerce component for various reasons, the ability to use the Internet to market and promote products and services, as well as communications, is vital.

Competition for page views and site hits continues to increase; today, the Web hosts more than 1 billion Web sites. Despite this ever-increasing information overload, it is a significant challenge for a CPA or accounting professional to place information about a Web site or company in the media. However, due to of the changing dynamics of the information-driven world, it is more important than ever to use traditional, proven public relations techniques to attract attention to a Web site.

Telling the Firm or Company Story

In addition to the competition flourishing on the Internet, the expansion that was predicted for online shopping has not yet been realized. Many online merchants did not achieve their sales goals during the 2000 holiday season, and dot.coms from Silicon Valley to Silicon Alley have begun to shut their doors and lay off staff members.

What does this all mean to the average business or company seeking to have a successful Web presence and drive traffic to their site? It means companies should examine their advertising

budgets and promotional efforts to ensure they are getting the most bang for the dollars they are spending.

First, it is important for every business, small and large that has a Web site, to provide some form of current and timely information. For example, small- to medium-size CPA firms may not have any significant news to post on their site every week, but *something* newsworthy can be found on a monthly basis. To keep sites "current," it is important to post this information on a regular basis. If you have to, hire a consultant or staff to do just this task. Staff changes or promotions, awards, peer recognition, tax tips or financial planning strategies are all topics that can be drafted into press release form and placed on a firm's site.

Why is this so important? For a small CPA firm or any business seeking to provide services to clients, updated information demonstrates activity. Potential and current clients will see this information and be better equipped to judge the firm and the reputation of its partners and staff.

Although leveraging press coverage on the Internet is essential, it is very important to have a news area on a business Web site. Most company sites today are considered "brochure sites"—much like a standard brochure, the site provides information about a company's products and services. The primary audience for a brochure is potential clients and possibly new clients who do not know about all of the products and services offered by the firm or company. A brochure Web site contains much of the same information, but allows the company to provide much more information, along with supporting materials.

To put this in perspective, a recent survey commissioned by Advantage Payroll Services, Inc. and conducted by McBain Associates of Manhattan (see Exhibit 1) found some very interesting information about corporate Web sites used by small business. The survey discovered that 61 percent of all corporate Web sites are little more than brochures describing the company and what it does. Interestingly, the survey also found that 75 percent of the companies surveyed had a Web site, which leads to the conclusion that the majority of companies *are* using the Internet, but for the most part, only using their sites as a marketing or promotion tool.

One way to bridge the gap between brochure-oriented sites and more dynamic ones is to leverage media coverage on the site. By placing articles that have appeared in print—or even online—on company Web sites, potential customers can garner

continued on page 8



Don't Forget the PR *continued from page 7*

more information than they would have by reading marketing pieces and brochures.

As is the goal with every article placement, the company receives what is considered a "third party endorsement" from the author or publication where the article appears. Since the article was not written by the corporate staff or marketing consultants, it carries much more weight with the Web-browsing public (potential clients or customers). When articles are incorporated into a Web site, a separate, stand-alone section called "news" or "recent articles" is a good way to feature this material.

The only real problem is ascertaining each publication's requirements regarding reproduction of articles. Typically, as long as articles and authors are identified, the publication will

As technology changes, other techniques may be found.

However, at this point, Adobe's photo document format, also known as "PDF," is the best means of providing this information.

Promoting a Company Through a Web Site

Web sites must also contain news or press areas. Frequently, members of the media are seeking quick access to information, and the Internet enables them to do this. This often assists the press in verifying facts and finding the answers to questions. Some publications and reporters use these sites to collect background information and download photographs.

A Web site's press area should contain the following information, if applicable, that permits easy research and access by the media:

- ❖ corporate backgrounder,
- ❖ photographs of key staff members,
- ❖ biographies of key staff members,
- ❖ company press releases,
- ❖ articles that have been written about the company,
- ❖ photos of corporate facilities or offices,
- ❖ photos of products or services descriptions,
- ❖ video clips, and
- ❖ company press contact information/after-hour contact numbers for PR staff.

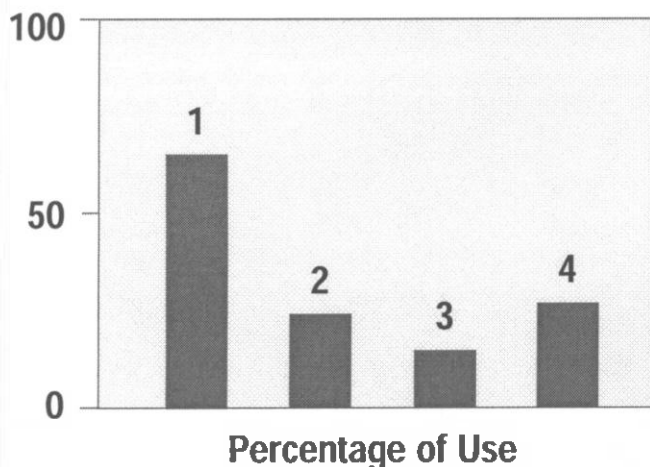
Since the media is no longer restricted to television, radio and print, those who promote their Web sites have many more opportunities for coverage. By providing comprehensive information, members of the media can use a corporate Web site as a key resource. With the 24/7 news cycle so prevalent, reporters and others are seeking information all the time.

With the growth of the Internet, there is a significant increase in the number of publications that write about Web sites, as well as entire sites dedicated to what is happening on the Internet. Opportunities abound, but at the same time, competition for this coverage has increased exponentially. Every new site with a few dollars behind it can, and will, send out a press release by e-mail or fax. This simply bombards the media with tons of information, much of it unneeded and unwanted.

It is important to remember that while a firm or company may be one in a thousand or even one in a million, just the fact that you make an effort significantly boosts your chances of standing out among your peers or competition. The Web site should be looked upon as a tool to assist the company in gaining coverage, and it is important to remember that the site itself should not necessarily be the subject of the pitch to the media for coverage. Unless the site does something truly unique, stick to promoting your products or services.

continued on page 9

Exhibit 1
Uses of Company Web Sites



- 1 = Corporate Brochure Describing Company and What It Does — 61%
- 2 = Contact and Communications with People in Company — 22%
- 3 = Web Site Is Used to Submit and Track Orders for Products — 12%
- 4 = Do Not Have a Company Web Site — 25%

Source: McBain Associates

agree to the usage. As a sign of good faith, it is a good idea to include a hyperlink to the publication, or e-mail address to the author. It also is recommended that articles and press releases *not* be presented in word-processing or any other format that can easily be altered. Today, Adobe's Acrobat Reader is becoming the standard by which documents are presented. This format also allows color graphics and photos to be incorporated into documents without significant use of computer memory.

Don't Forget the PR continued from page 8

Crafting a Unique Message

Every company that launches a site should also develop a list of publications and media outlets that cater to potential clients or customers. Using this database, companies can craft creative pitch letters and releases. Media outlets receive thousands of releases by fax, and now with e-mail, even more solicitations. To be effective, companies must first have an effective and compelling story to tell. Not just a "Hey look over here, we have a new Web site" release; the message must be crafted, along with refining what a company has to say for each publication or media outlet.

In the case of e-mails, remember to keep the subject line on-target and short. What has been really successful is to provide a catchy subject line followed by a very brief explanation or short press release, one paragraph in length. If the Web site has a "news area," the sender can include a link in the e-mail that steers the reporter directly to the press release or information at the company's site.

Now comes the real work: the task of actually getting to members of the media and pitching the story.

First, remember what you are promoting. Are you promoting a Web site with the goal of getting page hits or promoting a company using the Internet and Web site to sell a product or service? You must have a clear understanding of your mission. Web sites that provide free information to the "public" and make revenues from click-throughs or prearranged advertising relationships, need to generate large numbers of page views. Your strategy for this kind of promotion will be different than the approach that will be used to attract consumers to an e-Commerce Web site.

While the approach may be different, the techniques are the same. Remember that you are pitching an idea that at times might be great and at other times not as wonderful. Nonetheless, you have a job to do and you have to be ready to do it, which leads to the public relations person's best friend — the telephone. To pitch your idea you must get on the phone with the reporters, editors and contacts from your database and start selling.

This can be a very long process due to the extensive use of voice mail, but with persistence, you will eventually get to

talk with a real person. Don't be surprised if you call 10 or more times to certain individuals before you speak to a person. When you do get a real person on the phone, you will probably have a very limited amount of time to make your pitch. Like your e-mail, your pitch should be short and to the point, and remember to customize your pitch for different media outlets.

Second, how do you get to know and become friendly with members of the media? The answer is similar to the first question — it takes time. Over a period of months, years or longer, relationships develop. If you can provide reporters with good, solid information, you can become a valuable resource to them. Again, if your Web site or client's site offers information

reporters can use they will determine that you can be very helpful to them. Most reporters are appreciative when you can assist them in this capacity. This enables you to develop relationships and hopefully, when you go back to them with an idea, they will occasionally be receptive.

In the case of promoting a Web site or Internet business, your promotional efforts should have clear goals and objectives. Broadcast faxing or sending information by e-mail rarely works and can frequently annoy the media. Try to narrowcast your efforts. Concentrate on your business sector and, when appropriate, Internet publications. Due to the

huge volume of calls and press releases members of the media receive, getting through to them can be a time consuming and frustrating task. With determination and patience, this task can be accomplished.

When examining the results that public relations activities can have for a company's Web site and business, there is no doubt such activism can be effective when done creatively and properly. Remember that Yahoo!, Amazon, eBay and many other online ventures started with limited advertising budgets and aggressive public relations efforts. If a site is part of your business model or will be part of your future, don't forget that public relations it is essential for online success. Remember, if you build a Web site, people may find you, but with a public relations effort, your message finds your audience.

Contact Bill Corbett Jr. at wjcorbett@corbettpr.com. 

Small businesses have only modest expectations for increased use of the Internet in marketing, purchasing and recruiting.

Marketing:

48% expect Internet usage to increase 20% or less
21% expect Internet usage to increase 21% to 40%

Purchasing:

44% expect Internet usage to increase 20% or less
28% expect Internet usage to increase 21% to 40%

Recruiting:

51% expect Internet usage to increase 20% or less
32% expect Internet usage to increase 21% to 40%

Source: McBain Associates, Inc.



TOP TEN TECHNOLOGIES

HTTP://TOPTech.AICPA.ORG: A MUST VISIT WEB SITE!

By the Webmaster at <http://toptech.aicpa.org>

Have you been called upon to help a client make sure their Web site is secure? Have you taken advantage, for instance of WebTrust offered by the AICPA? As a CPA practicing in today's information climate, you constantly use technology to benefit your clients. However, the whole area of IT may seem to be a little elusive, because keeping on top of a field that changes so rapidly is tough.

As a member of the IT division of the AICPA, you need to know we've done your homework for you ... created a Web site tailored ideally to the needs of a CPA who uses IT to give his or her clients and employers expert advice. We take the "search" out of research for you.

Information is being exchanged daily at lightning speed. It's virtually impossible to be an expert in accounting, business and IT, yet you need these skill sets to be successful for your clients and customers. We know you are being tugged in many directions, and your time is limited. We've designed a Web site that will provide ONE source for all the information you will need to tailor technology specifically to the CPA.

You may have already visited the first version of our Web site. If so, please visit



our updated Web site — which has a new URL (<http://toptech.aicpa.org>), new content, new navigation, and a whole new look and feel.

If you've never visited the Top Techs Web site, you're in for a treat. We set out to create a site to make your life easier, more profitable and ultimately, to make you more proficient in your profession. We began by assembling a

group of experts in both IT and accounting who identified 35 topics that would most dramatically affect your profession in the year 2001. Although information technology is a vast topic, they tried to pinpoint those areas truly applicable to the field of accounting, including such hot topics as "Security Technologies," "E-Learning," "M-Commerce" and "Wireless Technologies."

<http://toptech.aicpa.org>
A must visit Web site.

continued on page 11

[HTTP://TOPTECH.AICPA.ORG](http://TOPTECH.AICPA.ORG): A Must Visit Web Site! *continued from page 10*

We then broke these 35 topics down into four categories called "Issues, Applications, Technologies and Emerging Technologies" depending on where the topic was in its lifecycle. And because we knew you'd want to keep current on these topics, we created a new section called "Learn More."

After you've read the main article, you can click on "Learn More" and you'll be given six choices. Some people absorb information better visually, others through audio and others interactively. We think we've covered all the bases to provide a comprehensive support tool for you, the member:

1. "Learn More By Reading" gives you the most current AICPA articles and up-to-date books on each topic.
2. "Learn More By Looking and Listening" provides CPE courses from both the AICPA and third-party sources, as well as audio interviews you'll find educational.
3. "Learn More Online" covers fast-breaking articles from a large variety of the hottest technology sites.
4. "Learn More From Conferences" presents a series of relevant trade shows and conferences held throughout the year to provide you invaluable opportunities to network.
5. "Learn More From Cases That Came Before" reveals in-depth case studies, best practices and extensive resource centers, all providing free e-mail newsletters you'll find of value.
6. And finally "Learn More by Asking" lets **you** get involved. Although we are asking for "Frequently Asked Questions" right now, our vision is to evolve this section to include a bulletin board where you can interact with your peers who face similar challenges. For now, we want to post commonly asked questions that may be of general interest, and share suc-

cess and failure stories, so others in your profession can benefit from your experiences.

Ultimately, you are judge and jury as far as our success. WE WANT your feedback, both good and bad. We have big plans for the future, which go way beyond bulletin boards, to include e-commerce, glossaries of relevant terms and other areas. However, we want to hear YOUR ideas for what we can provide to help you — and ultimately your clients and employers — to keep on top of the



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We've all felt helpless when our networks go down, our hard drives crash, or we expose our company to the latest

what's hot and what's new as it relates specifically to the accounting profession. Bookmark as one of your favorites so you can visit us today, tomorrow or in the future as your needs arise.

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