

Pizza Hut reaches for bigger slice fast-food pizza with Web ordering

Overview

■ Challenge

Increase revenues and market share in Australian fast-food market by targeting 18-to 24-year-old consumers through the Internet

■ Solution

B2C pizza-ordering Web site integrated with existing order-processing system

■ Why IBM?

Existing order-processing system runs on IBM DB2® for AS/400®; IBM addressed all integration issues; parent company, Tricon Global Restaurants, had positive experience with DB2

■ Key Business Benefits

Faster customer service; 66% reduction in presentation-layer development costs; fast and easy online ordering and repeat ordering; 50% reduction in length of future development cycles

■ Business Partner

Multitask Consulting



Pizza Hut has been operating in Australia since 1970 and now employs more than 40,000 people.

Topped with everything from anchovies to zucchini, pizza may well be the world's most adaptable dish. No wonder it's a fast-food staple in almost every country. Indeed, the world's largest pizza restaurant chain, Pizza Hut, has nearly 12,000 units and kiosks—serving approximately 4 million people every day in more than 88 countries. But with a smorgasbord of fast-food competitors, Pizza Hut needs every enticement it can muster to sustain the market's appetite for its fare.



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– Roger Eaton, General Manager,
Pizza Hut Australia

e-business—redefining the competitive environment in your favour

Key Components

Software

- IBM WebSphere® Application Server, Advanced Edition, Version 3.5.3
- IBM DB2 Universal Database™ for Windows NT® and AS/400

Servers

- IBM Netfinity® 5000
- IBM AS/400

Services

- IBM Global Services: Software Implementation Services
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“The J2EE/EJB framework supported by WebSphere Application Server will enable us to reuse Pizza Hut’s basic service building blocks—such as menu selection, order entry and payment—thereby shortening future development cycles by as much as 50 percent.”

– Paul Thackray, Managing Director, Multitask Consulting

In Australia, Sydney-based Pizza Hut operates 350 restaurants, which produce a total of 30 million pizzas every year. Still, the restaurant chain’s Australian management realised that, beyond innovative topping combinations and merchandising gimmicks, the ultimate way to boost order volume was to give customers what they craved the most: fast, convenient service. And nowhere is speedy service more critical to customer satisfaction than in delivery orders.

With one of the world’s highest rates of computer and Internet usage, Australia is an attractive venue for online pizza ordering. An estimated 74 percent of Australian 18- to 24-year olds—the most lucrative segment of pizza consumers—use the Internet. “We wanted a dynamic, fast and fun Web site that would appeal to young adults,” says Roger Eaton, Pizza Hut Australia’s general manager. “But we weren’t about to change our time-tested order taking and delivery processes. The Web site had to mesh seamlessly with them.” At the same time, the company wanted to be able to scale quickly with customer demand, while adding new features not only to maintain interest but also to increase its online customer base.

Since Pizza Hut’s existing phone order processing system ran on IBM DB2 Universal Database for AS/400—and its parent company, Tricon Global Restaurants, had proven DB2 in its own corporate IT environment—Pizza Hut looked no further than IBM for its e-business solution. Supported by the technical expertise and creative talents of IBM Business Partner Multitask Consulting, IBM Global Services designed and implemented a Java™ 2 Platform, Enterprise Edition (J2EE) technology-based architecture for the Web site.

Driven by IBM WebSphere Application Server, Advanced Edition, and IBM DB2 Universal Database running on an IBM Netfinity server, the Web site offers both high-energy graphics and high performance on a standard Web browser. “The result,” claims Eaton, “is fast, fuss-free access to the world’s greatest pizza products.”

Pepperoni pizza—pronto!

Although Pizza Hut's extensive array of toppings, crusts and pizza sizes allows for infinite combinations, it has deliberately kept its online ordering process simple. Registered users need only specify a delivery address or select their preferred pickup location, make their menu selections, choose a payment option and submit the order. Repeat orders can be completed in just four clicks.

Keeping its target audience in mind, Pizza Hut requested that the Web site be both graphically compelling and fast—even over the 28Kbps dial-up connections prevalent in Australia. At first, the team considered Macromedia Flash for the presentation layer, but they ultimately opted for a Flash introduction, with JavaServer Pages (JSP) and HTML for the remainder of the site. "The JSP/HTML combination powered by WebSphere Application Server provides a shorter response time than Flash," explains Paul Thackray, managing director of Multitask. "And the development and maintenance costs are about 66 percent less."

Solid technology infrastructure accommodates fast-food fads

To protect the business-critical information on the company's backend AS/400 server, Pizza Hut replicates all the menu, store location and user registration information from the legacy ordering system to DB2 Universal Database on the Netfinity server. WebSphere Application Server also resides on the Netfinity server, providing the runtime environment for Enterprise JavaBeans (EJB) that extract menu information and store locations from the database, enter registration information and build the orders. As each order is generated, it is transferred instantaneously to the legacy order processing system running on an AS/400 server at Pizza Hut's customer service centre.

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At Pizzahut.com.au, picky eaters can create their own specialty pizzas, then save them as "favourites" for rapid reordering.

Elegant as the Web site is now, Pizza Hut knows it will need to continually reinvent its online offerings to retain the interest of its youthful customers. "The J2EE/EJB framework supported by WebSphere Application Server will enable us to reuse Pizza Hut's basic service building blocks—such as menu selection, order entry and payment—thereby shortening future development cycles by as much as 50 percent," Thackray notes.

All the right cooks in the kitchen

Code reuse was just one reason for adhering to the J2EE framework. Another was the isolation of application tiers, which helped IBM define clear roles for the various members of the development team and enabled each member to focus on his or her area of expertise. For example, Multitask's page designers could proceed with page layout without needing any knowledge of the business logic that the developers were creating.

Of course, no technology platform can replace hands-on team management to assure successful completion of an e-business project. IBM used its Worldwide Project Management Methodology (WWPMM) to minimise the development resources required, ensure seamless communication between the team members from Pizza Hut and Multitask, as well as accommodate mid-project design changes. IBM also helped the developers navigate uncharted waters in J2EE technology implementation. "We found IBM to be highly professional and extremely resourceful in overcoming the technical issues and finding a solution within our budget," Eaton notes.

Web pizza ordering to pervade Australia

Live since August 2001, Pizza Hut's online ordering service is currently available in all New South Wales metropolitan areas. According to Eaton, the success of this first phase is likely to drive rapid rollout of online ordering throughout Australia. "Take-up has far exceeded our expectations," he says, "and we certainly are excited about its prospects Australia-wide."

For more information

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