

Liquidprice.com

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Company: Silverline Technologies Customer: LiquidPrice. com Submitted by: Silverline Technologies Date: Summer 2001 (USA) LiquidPrice. com, headquartered in Cupertino, California, has implemented the first online buyers marketplace. The company's reverse-auction website allows customers to request a specific item from an extensive catalog, and then have multiple retail vendors bid to see who offers the best deal. Founded in July 1999, the privately held company was built with the vision to exploit the power of the Internet in order to provide a faster, smarter way for people to buy and sell products.

It is the world's first and only competitive online marketplace for brand new products.

Challenge: Develop Sophisticated Reverse-Auction Site in Three Months

For Internet companies, time-to-market is critical. But for LiquidPrice, debuting its e-commerce website in time for the Christmas 1999 buying season meant the difference between a so-so launch of its new company and a blockbuster roll out. " We wanted to be first to market not only to get the edge on our competition," said Prashant Gupta, VP of engineering, " but to take advantage of the big Thanksgiving/Christmas holiday season. As a new dot. com e-business, we had a lot riding on being operational by then." To meet its November 29 deadline, LiquidPrice had to team up with a development company that specialized in record-fast implementations. They interviewed several groups and chose Silverline. " Silverline was clearly the most experienced and professional team. They had developed sites like ours before, so that gave us a lot of peace of mind, especially given our tight time

frame and technical needs: the site had to be extremely high-performance and stable. If it goes down, not only would we lose transactions, but some customers won't come back if they have a bad experience.

In short, our company is our website, and we needed a development team that was as dedicated as we were to the project.”

Silverline Solution: Experience and Expertise Allow Team to Meet Deadline

The planning began in mid-August with a five-day marathon session. “ There was absolutely no room for error given our schedule,” explained Gupta. “ So the initial planning and design phase was crucial. If we had to stop and rethink the project once we were well underway, we wouldn't meet our deadline. This is where Silverline's experience was very valuable.

” Doing a detailed analysis of the available technologies and design options paid off big dividends in the end. Every step of our initial plan fell into place, thanks to the expertise brought to the table by Silverline.” Developing a 24x7 reverse-auction site has more challenges than a typical e-commerce site, especially when it comes to scalability. “ Silverline found several software packages that could give us 50 to 60 percent of the development solution we needed,” said Gupta. “ But while pre-built apps would have saved us time, they would also be hard to expand and scale to meet our growing future needs.

So, we decided to build most of the components from scratch. The downside to that option was time; it was quickly slipping away. But I had a lot of faith that our team along with Silverline could build the components without

extending the deadline, and they did.” IBM’s Java-based WebSphere Application Server product is the basis for the LiquidPrice.com architecture. The custom-built, LiquidPrice application components simply slotted into the WebSphere run-time platform. XML (the World Wide Web Consortium standard eXtended Markup Language) and XSL (Extensible Stylesheet Language) technology is extensively used to deliver product information from LiquidPrice’s product catalog to the portal. Use of XML separates the presentation of data from its delivery, thereby permitting the look and feel of the site to be changed dynamically without impacting the back-end processes. XSL was used extensively to format documents for email, etc.

Site Handles Eight Times the Targeted Amount of Traffic

At the outset, LiquidPrice set a goal: its website had to be able to handle 1 million customer requests a day.

A request includes all of the buyer’s and sellers’ hits associated with one customer’s request for a product. When the site was finished, benchmark testing verified the site could handle 8 million requests during a 10-hour bidding period. “ We didn’t believe it,” said Gupta. “ The scalability of the site went beyond our wildest expectations. On top of that, the development stage of a website the size and complexity of ours usually takes six to eight months.

Silverline and the LiquidPrice team had it up and running in two and a half months. That’s an extraordinary feat; we still talk about that.” Since going live on November 15, 1999, Liquidprice.com hasn’t been down except for

planned upgrades. “ Everything worked out better than we planned,” noted Gupta.

“ Our site is a solid performer day in, day out. That’s because we designed it correctly in the very beginning, and made the right decisions along the way. The LiquidPrice and Silverline teams worked extremely hard and produced an e-commerce site in record time that met all of our requirements and then some. We certainly made the right decision when we chose Silverline.”

Results

- The Silverline Time-to-Market Approach enabled LiquidPrice. com to go live in two and a half months versus eight.
- Silverline helped develop a fully customized application on the WebSphere platform to ensure the stability and scalability of the site.
- Benchmark testing verified LiquidPrice. com can handle 8 million requests in a 10-hour period, eight times the initial expected rate of 1 million a day.
- The LiquidPrice. com site has been up and running without a glitch since going live November 15, 1999.

About LiquidPrice. com

LiquidPrice. com is a privately held company offering the first online open market to both consumers and retailers. LiquidPrice. com was built with the vision to exploit the power of the Internet to provide a faster, smarter way for people to buy and sell products. It is the world’s first and only truly competitive online marketplace for brand new products.

Operating in a real-time environment, LiquidPrice. com is highly beneficial to buyers, retailers and manufacturers. Founded in July 1999, LiquidPrice. com is headquartered in Cupertino, California. LiquidPrice. com is powered by Java from Sun Microsystems (Nasdaq: SUNW), IBM (NYSE: IBM) and Microsoft (Nasdaq: MSFT) featuring brand name manufacturers including Toshiba, Philips (NYSE: PHG) and Kodak (NYSE: EK).