



## System Integration

Our client a popular crafts business, had a website, bricks and mortar stores and a warehousing operation.

They had ERP systems to run the wholesale business, with call handlers and salesman taking orders from retailers.

They operated an eCommerce system to sell direct to the public online and finally bricks and mortar stores.

Even though all three businesses were heavily interlinked in business terms, their IT systems were not linked.

The bricks and mortar stores would place orders by fax on the wholesale part of the business. eCommerce orders were received by email and handpicked from the email. Then the ERP system would be updated manually to cross charge the sale.

We reviewed their systems as we suspected there was something very wrong.

The first problem was that the company who developed the ERP system did not write it originally and were not confident to make major changes. We developed specifications and helped the ERP supplier to create interfaces into their system to allow stock to be viewed and orders to be taken electronically using XML interfaces and web services.

Once we had interfaces to allow external systems to read what stock was in the warehouse, we connected the eCommerce system directly to the ERP system. This removed the need to load the website with product information, it was now an automatic process. Also when an order was placed the ERP system could process the order.

The bricks and mortar store and other retailers were then able to place orders using an extranet, just like the eCommerce system.

Additional changes to the ERP allowed retail and trade customers to view their account history.

Once the extranet was built we were able to provide a host of extra services, including scanner ordering and minimum stock level ordering. As a customer sold an item, their systems could update the wholesale ERP of their stock level and when a minimum stock level is reached then an order is placed automatically.

Also for retail customers a barcode scanner linked to a PC application allows the retailer to walk along their shelves, scan an item and it is automatically added to their next order on the extranet.

The net benefit to the client was explosive growth in turnover, profits, customers and customer retention along with significant reduction in costs.