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News: Smart Button Helps Break Rewards Barriers

DM News

May 10, 2004

By David Raab

Software Review

Personal computers were supposed to let small companies compete with big ones by giving them equally sophisticated computer systems. But it turned out that even with cheap hardware, integration and maintenance cost more than small businesses could afford.

The Internet was going to solve the problem with "hosted" systems run by specialists who spread the costs across many clients. But impractical business models, awkward Web-based interfaces and above all, poor integration with other systems mean this, too, was not enough.

It's always dangerous to declare, "mission accomplished" before the dust settled. But today's hosted systems are priced realistically and provide competitive user interfaces. The remaining problem, interactions with external systems, appears to be solved by a technology known as Web services.

How web services work is important only to people who run them; what matters to marketers is they may remove the final barrier to getting sophisticated software at an affordable cost.

SportTrak is a powerful customer rewards system offered on a hosted basis. Like other rewards systems, SportTrak lets customers identify themselves during transactions, offers rewards for customer activities and tracks reward redemptions. In the process, it builds a customer database that can be used for conventional direct marketing promotions and customer analysis.

If you'd like to receive a full reprint of David Raab's Smart Button software review, please email marketing@smartbutton.com and a copy will be sent to you. Be sure to include your name and mailing address in the email.

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