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In Depth: 2001 e-business Awards

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Business-to-business

1st place: Telcobuy.com; 2nd place: Heybridge; 3rd place: Cejka & Co.; Honorable mention: Ferguson Fasco Motors

Tom Anderson

Telcobuy.com has integrated its Web site into a business-to-business marketplace for the telecom industry.

The company had \$610 million in 2000 revenue and projects more than \$1.2 billion this year. Telcobuy's largest customers include Southwestern Bell, Global Crossing and Verizon.

Spurred by its success, Telcobuy had planned to raise \$100 million through an initial public offering last year but withdrew the plan in November, citing unfavorable market conditions.

"While others are exorcising the dot-com from their monikers, we are still proud to be a dot-com," said Bob Olwig, chief technology officer.

What's next in the company's development?

"Our goals have not been met," Olwig said. "The old cliché about it's the journey and not the destination certainly holds true for us."

Launched in 1997, the Web site is a channel used to improve communication between the company's customers and suppliers, Olwig said.

The company worked with Cisco Systems in developing its site. Telcobuy is both customer and equipment reseller for Cisco.

All the development was done in-house. Olwig declined to disclose the cost.

"That's a secret, but it's safe to say that it was over \$1 million," he said.

One important decision in building a site is choosing the right technology, Olwig said. Telcobuy chose to use Java and

partnered with Oracle for some e-commerce functions.

Telcobuy.com has been building business-to-business capabilities for more than four years. The site has nearly 30 distinct online functions, Olwig said. Telecom companies can track orders, get quotes for equipment and chat with Telcobuy's customer service personnel.

David Jennings, a judge for the e-business awards said: "The site appeared extremely functional with the opportunity to use helpful added features, such as Internet conferencing and business partner services.

The Web site's next generation will tie Telcobuy's operations closer to the operations of its customers. For example, when an engineer at Southwestern Bell orders a switch, she only will have to enter the order on her own system, instead of entering twice -- once for Telcobuy and again for her company.

Telcobuy.com isn't the glitziest b2b marketplace on the Web, but that's by design.

"We probably have the ugliest site in town -- and we're proud of it," Olwig said.

"Our site really focuses on true business transactions and not around all the hype," he said. "We're more akin to the functional green screens of old than the Play Station-type effects that some Web sites tout."

However, Telcobuy is not without some technological pizzazz.

Jennings noted that "the site used multimedia presentation of corporate marketing material that was effective without being cumbersome or unavoidable."

Olwig said some flash is necessary in his business. "We are a tech company after all."



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