

Sell More Hammers

BY RICHARD MADER

A highlight of the recent ARTS User conference was a presentation by Lynn Myers. The data architect for Lowe's described in detail how the world's second-largest home improvement chain uses the ARTS Data Model to guide its data management.

Myer talked tech — about SOA, MDM, enterprise-level canonical and RDBMS — and provided tips for managing and maintaining purchased applications, like making them conform to your data architecture, avoiding custom code and ensuring that the vendor has an ARTS relationship. And every now and then in discussing these topics he would add, "Remember — sell more hammers."

A real danger for retail IT folks is that we can get so caught up in the technology that we forget the business is about selling products and services, and that every project must be measured against the objective of having a positive impact on the core business.

As the technology standards division of NRF, ARTS works diligently to ensure that our standards relate to the retail business operation. ARTS standards are for IT, but each is developed to have a direct correlation to potentially improving the bottom line, and the development methodology requires that each new standard proposal begin with a business justification.

Active involvement

I must admit that we sometimes have to do a little "arm twisting" to get the world-class technicians that form ARTS' committees to focus on developing the business case. Building standards, like any IT project, requires active involvement of business partners for maximum success; ARTS needs the same, and it continually encourages members to provide business experts for our work teams.

The business cases documented in ARTS technical specifications are summarized in our "Solution Center" kiosk, a highlight of the ARTS Pavilion on the NRF EXPO hall floor. They inform visitors about how ARTS standards have a positive business impact. One example:

Do you need to lower payroll cost without reducing customer service? Workforce management (WFM) applications create work schedules based on the expected volume of sales transactions and can link directly to time



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management and payroll applications. The ARTS RFP for WFM will help you select the best application for your business model, and ARTS XML schemas will help you implement the selected application quickly and at less cost.

Solution Center

Needless to say, we were quite pleased that the presentations at the ARTS User conference provided testimony for our "Solution Center" standards.

Adidas and B.J.'s spoke of using ARTS RFPs to select applications. Adidas is now using the POS RFP as the measuring stick to evaluate if the current application is providing optimal service to its customers and efficiency to the employees.

Reject Shop related how it used the ARTS XML schemas to implement an ERP application on time and within budget, thereby delivering the forecasted ROI to help support planned expansion.

Easy Homecenters followed the SOA Blueprint and implemented XML schemas to create a store platform that provided business flexibility and reduced the total cost of ownership. Shaving one-tenth of a point off IT expense adds to the bottom line.

B.J.'s used the ARTS PCI Best Practices to get a head start on implementing PCI-DSS, thereby reducing risk and saving time and cost in achieving conformance.

El Corte Ingles discussed how it manages pricing — from initial price through promotions — using the ARTS Data Model and Price Schema.

Clearly, you cannot run a successful retail business without IT support, and these leading retailers say ARTS standards implemented by their IT departments have a bottom-line impact. Want to sell more hammers? Join them and use ARTS standards.

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