

Highlights from E2E

IDEA's Electro E-biz Forum provides insights into maximizing the potential of e-business.

The world of neat electronic gizmos has its Consumer Electronics Show; the world of professional installers of such things has a twice-annual event, the Electronic House Expo; and the world of those interested in e-business and e-commerce has the annual Electro E-Biz Forum (E2E).

Sponsored by the Industry Data Exchange Association (IDEA), the 2005 E2E show was held in late September in Florida. IDEA posted the event's presentations online at www.idea-inc.org/news/ebiz2005-postshow.php. Here are excerpts from some of the presentations:

Do's and don'ts

Steve Bieszczat, vice president of information services for Activant, presented a list of "Industry Data Warehouse (IDW) Do's and Don'ts":

1. Do establish and prove network connectivity.
2. Do start by uploading and downloading small test data sets.
3. Do separate the mechanics from the content.
4. Do download only the data needed. Don't download everything at once and do work with smaller data sets.
5. Do use trading partner IDs rather than multiple company IDs.
6. Do get the file-naming convention right to avoid overwriting data; use unique file names if the system can handle it.
7. Do download data at night when using EDI.
8. Do use the mass authorization features and tailor authorizations later.
9. Do remember that each time the save request button is clicked, a request is posted. Don't just keep clicking.
10. Do authorize price sheets to avoid getting unwanted data.

Activant recently purchased Prophet 21, so the company—already a significant force in the industry via its vendor relationship with IDEA—has become



Electro E-Biz Forum attendees participate in one of the educational sessions designed to provide insight on top business and technology solutions to help increase productivity and drive down supply chain costs.

more important. Bieszczat compared the old IDW with the new IDW2:

- The core mission of IDW is unchanged.
- IDW was designed to operate from EDI-based APIs as a "black box."
- IDW2 will operate from a user interface. It's more flexible, intuitive, and faster—a transparent industry resource.

E-biz growth

Jordan Colletta, vice president of e-commerce marketing for UPS, gave a presentation on the company's experience with online packaging tracking requests. Here are the highlights:

- 12/95—100,000 requests/month
- 12/96—1 million requests/month
- 12/97—1 million requests/month
- 12/98—1 million requests/month
- 12/04—16 million requests/month

There's a book of words in those few lines—a painstaking description of how self-service via the Web went from "gee, ain't this new thing great" to routine. Looking back to 1992, many of those Web clicks originally took the form of telephone calls.

On another growth topic, many find discussions of UL standards boring, but without them, where would the industry

be? The answer can't be contemplated. While e-business, if done wrong, doesn't threaten human life, it can incinerate big bags of \$100 bills.

That's why standards come first. Much of what IDEA does, routinely, is establish standards. For example, in mid-August IDEA's Standards Committee released *New Product Catalog Descriptive Field Guidelines*.

Manufacturers should use these guidelines in creating catalog numbers and descriptive fields. If an ideal world ever materializes—one in which every supplier standardizes the way these things are done—every record will look the same on every distributor's computer system.

That's why the "Standards Playbook" presentation by IDEA's Mary Shaw stood out. Shaw provided lists of standards that are useful in given circumstances. For example, she provided a list of recommended "basic start" transactions, information on EDIPro, and details on flat files. Here's some information that distributors might not automatically know:

- RMTA stands for Remittance Advice to A-D (form 820).
- Replenishment B2B EDI forms are numbered 852, 855, 857, and 861.
- An 867 is a Point of Sale/Point of Transfer EDI form. ■■■

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"Brightest IDEA" awarded at E2E

Liz Norman, EDI manager for Siemens Energy & Automation, and Tammy Paters, pricing manager for Werner Electric Supply, received the "Brightest IDEA" awards from IDEA at the 2005 Electro E-Biz Forum. This is the first electrical industry awards program in which all of the honorees were women.