Boeing Spare Parts Web Site: E-Commerce Success Story

100% Annual Growth; Site Supports Nearly 75% Of World Jet Fleet

One of the most successful business-to-business web sites, the Boeing PART Page, is three years old this month, and continues to post impressive growth numbers.

The volume of transactions on the PART Page has grown more than 100 percent each year since its launch in 1996, and it supports nearly 75 percent of the world's jet transport fleet in spares-related business.

The Boeing PART Page provides airlines and maintenance firms with a direct link to half a million different types of spare parts stored in seven distribution centers worldwide. The web site is accessed by the carriers or maintenance providers responsible for most of the 11,000 Boeing and McDonnell Douglas jetliners in service around the globe.

Currently, the web site processes about 18,000 transactions on an average day, including orders as well as inquiries about shipping status, inventory levels and pricing. The acronym PART stands for Part Analysis and Requirements Tracking.

"When we launched the site three years ago, we had no idea how quickly our customer base would adapt to e-commerce on the World Wide Web," said Tom DiMarco, director of spares systems at Boeing. "In retrospect, it was one of the best steps we've ever taken. It saves time, simplifies business processes for our customers, reduces paperwork, and has improved the productivity of our work force. It's infinitely more efficient than relying on phone, fax or telex, which are slower and more error prone because data has to be manually re-keyed into our system."

A secure, password-protected site, the PART Page provides airlines with a web-based interface to the Boeing mainframe computer system that manages the parts inventory and ordering processes. This has extended the benefits of electronic commerce to many more customers.

"Previously, only the very largest carriers could conduct spares business electronically," DiMarco said. "They used electronic data interchange (EDI), in which their mainframe systems linked directly to the Boeing database.

"Today, thanks to the PART Page, hundreds of smaller airlines are enjoying the benefits of electronic commerce as well. Even the larger carriers find that the web site is often more efficient and flexible than using EDI, especially for urgent orders."

DiMarco noted that almost 85 percent of all spares ordering from Boeing is conducted electronically, including both EDI and PART Page transactions.

"Now that most of our customers are accessing the PART Page, we don't expect to see the huge percentage gains of the past couple of years," DiMarco said. "However, we're continuing to develop the site's capabilities. For example, we plan to add the Boeing illustrated parts catalog as an aid in parts identification. In fact, we'll give consideration to any new feature that makes it more convenient for our customers to do business through our site."

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