

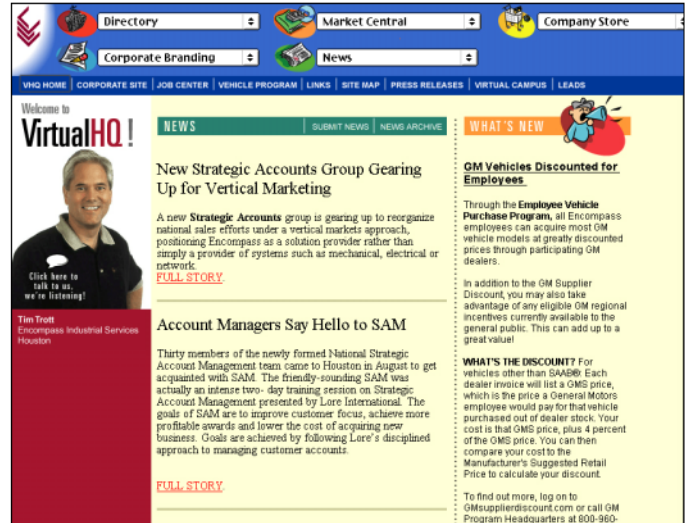
# WEB SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY: ENCOMPASS SERVICES CORPORATION

by April Canik, ABC

Corporate Communications Manager Mary Wiggins specializes in head-on collisions — with communication challenges. She hit the Indy 500 of challenges when she went to work for Encompass Services Corporation, a new company comprised of more than 150 formerly independent electrical and mechanical contracting companies. She had to find a way to reach 8,000 key employees in more than 200 different locations — without a common computer platform and without a formalized IT Department to lean on.

She contacted C.V. Rao, CEO of *The Web Department*, as a first step. “We couldn’t create an intranet until our wide area network issues were resolved,” she explains, “so our temporary solution was to create a password-protected extranet.”

“The folks at *The Web Department* talked to me in a language I could understand. It’s my job to communicate and it’s their job to give me the means to do it — without the jargon. They applied their expertise to our unique situation and, together, we created Virtual HQ, which launched a year ago. We’re continuing to develop the site and the support provided by *The Web Department* has been critical in terms of accommodating the ever-changing



*The Web Department helped Mary Wiggins, Corporate Communications Manager of Encompass Services, develop the corporation's extranet to communicate with 8,000 employees in more than 200 locations.*

scope of this project. They have been very good with both the “hard” issues (like database management) and the “soft” issues (like working seamlessly with the designer) to make sure the site reflects the right look and feel. At the same time, the “back-end” of the site is easy enough for me to maneuver around and do what I need to do.”

The new VHQ site serves as the central source of internal news, corporate branding information, services directory and other key internal communications. Corporate information and materials are now accessible to the field offices, and the site features a search capability that enhances cross-selling by work discipline or location. The Web Department also developed an on-line job bank for the company’s external site.

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*Users of Virtual HQ can use this screen to search the site.*

*When Encompass Services Corp. needed to communicate with 8,000 employees in more than 200 locations using a variety of computer platforms, they contacted The Web Department.*



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“The feedback has been terrific,” adds Mary. “Our employees see how this tool is designed to help them be successful. By year-end, we hope to have the capability to build on-line communities for information sharing.”

“Mary really understands how to use the Internet to implement her communication strategy. It’s been great to work with her and to deliver the innovative ideas she has challenged us with,” says C.V.

The Web Department has developed innovative solutions for a number of other communication challenges as well. “We encourage all of our clients to consider dynamic Web content that pulls fresh information from databases,” he adds. “Static pages are cumbersome to keep updated. Most of our clients want the ability to update content on their own Web sites quickly and easily, so The Web Department builds them back-end interfaces for easy edits and point-and-click content management. With our solutions, communicators only need Web surfing skills to keep their sites up to date.”

For example, one client used e-mail to facilitate the ever-popular employee classifieds until the classifieds grew to 20 pages and clogged the company’s e-mail servers on a regular basis. According to C.V., “The Web Department developed a database driven system to enable employees to post their own ads, search the classifieds by category and for the site administrator to manage all the ads, including categories.”

The Web Department also helped a client create an innovative section called “Community Stewardship” on this corporation’s intranet site. This section features community involvement opportunities along with stories and pictures of employees volunteering at community events. The section also includes information on discount offers from those entities in appreciation for the corporate support.

The Web Department builds solutions for communicators’ needs, including:

- crisis communications;
- news and announcements;
- virtual media rooms;
- HTML e-mail campaigns;
- HR information; and
- event calendars.

“The Web Department is all about leveraging the internet to make the job of the communicator less cumbersome,” adds C.V. “It’s amazing what kind of time savings you can provide to both Web masters and visitors with a well built Web site that takes advantage of technology.”

*The IABC/Houston Web site would not be as far along as it is today without the expertise The Web Department has generously donated.*

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