

# **MACE MARKETING GROUP**

## **PromoPipeline**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 PromoPipeline

Imagine for a minute that you are a new car salesman. Your income is purely commission based, so you eat what you kill. Your dealership represents not the typical one to three automotive manufacturers, but 15 and you must know about and sell all models. The market is very price sensitive and the only way for you to find out about weekly and monthly rebates, free options, and special financing deals is to sift through a 12 inch high and wide stack of snail-mail that is dumped on your desk every morning and afternoon. It gets worse. There are not 15 manufacturers but 5000 and they each make 10 distinct models. Not only do you have 50,000 products you are supposed to sell but 25,000 of those disappear every six months and are replaced by completely new ones. How are you supposed to do your job? How are you supposed to make a living?

What Mace Marketing has found in business to business sales channels is illustrated by the above story. Resellers are not able to get the information they need to close deals. They feel their effort to obtain useful product and promotion information is at best a scavenger hunt. This is especially true in business to business technology sales, where accelerated innovation exacerbates the problem. So, instead of a bag of snail-mail being dumped on a salesman's desk he instead receives 500 – 1,000 promotional emails a day. Who has time to read all of those emails or who even wants to? The business to business reseller does exactly what we all do; he deletes them without a second glance and gets irritated in the process. His only other choice is to log onto a product vendor's web-site and click 25 + times, usually remaining empty handed when all is said and done.

Today's rapid product innovations and technological change require easy, fast and relevant access to information that simply has not existed until now. PromoPipeline's mission is to improve business to business marketing, rendering it more effective. PromoPipeline does this by offering a searchable web service that warehouses promotions, product information, newsletters, and solution email templates like a focused *mini-Google*. It enables vendor customers (product manufacturers) to reduce opt-in email usage, generate sales leads, increase revenues, expand product knowledge and maintain brand control.

In a marketplace that's already tired and weary of digital clutter, PromoPipeline is the destination center for channel promotions and product information.

## 1.2 Project Background

**TiBA Solutions**, headquartered in Greenville, S.C., provides customized information technology solutions for mission-critical business needs. TiBA offers a full line of services: strategic planning, business consulting, project management, and customized software application design and development.

The effectiveness of TiBA's project approach and technology experience produces solid results: quality solutions delivered on time and within budget and with high performance, availability, reliability, and security.

Mace Marketing Group worked with TiBA Solutions to create PromoPipeline based on their concept and vision. This approach optimized the use of high-demand Mace Marketing Group resources. The company did not have to hire and manage a software development team and even more important, they increased the availability of their management team for other critical activities.

## 1.3 Project Approach

The project consisted of three major phases:

1. Needs Analysis
2. Requirements Engineering
3. Design and Development

TiBA Solutions held workshops with Mace Marketing Group to capture the detailed requirements to support the following high-level objectives:

- ◆ Provide resellers with an easy to use "mini-Google" web site to find promotions of interest thus eliminating spam email and the need to visit each vendor's web site to look for applicable promotions
- ◆ Provide vendors with a common easy to use location to post their promotions thus eliminating the need to maintain their own internal promotion web sites
- ◆ Allow resellers to view detailed information about the promotion and email the promotion to others – possibly customers
- ◆ Provide PromoPipeline administrators with tools to manage security and access to the website as well as maintain web site configuration

- ◆ Provide PromoPipeline administrators and vendors with a flexible reporting environment which allows for analysis of promotions and viewing patterns by resellers

TiBA Solutions designed and developed PromoPipeline and assisted Mace Marketing Group in its implementation. The system was put into production in November, 2005.

*i*SOLUTION™  
*Methodology* 

## 2. Business Value

PromoPipeline is a repository where Value Added Resellers (VARs) can locate the promotions they need, when they need them. Using PromoPipeline, vendors can generate market pull and significantly increase the Return on Investment (ROI) from their promotional dollars.

### 2.1 Business Benefits

PromoPipeline provides a valuable service for sales channel resellers:

- ◆ Allows vendors to reach their audience (resellers) without having to send “spam” emails.
- ◆ Allows resellers to easily find promotions that meet their needs and the needs of their customers.
- ◆ Centralizes promotions for a variety of vendors thus saving resellers search time.
- ◆ Delivers a business solution that benefits its users, is cost effective, and takes advantage of current technologies. .

### 2.2 Technology Benefits

PromoPipeline took advantage of the investment already made by TiBA Solutions in strategic technology and architecture. PromoPipeline has benefited from the resulting technology readiness in multiple ways:

- ◆ **Established an architected application framework utilizing strategic technology.** The application was built on the .NET Framework with architected extensions and uses strategic web-based technology. PromoPipeline now has a State-of-the-Market system on which to build. In addition, this strategic technology is fundamental to future initiatives.
- ◆ **Made use of previously developed reusable software components.** Key components of the system were implemented at a significant schedule and cost savings as they had been previously developed by TiBA solutions and were used “off the shelf”. These components include *iFramework*<sup>™</sup>, *iSecurity*<sup>™</sup>, and *iReports*<sup>™</sup>.

## 3. Innovative Solution

### 3.1 Application

The new PromoPipeline (PPL) solution delivers business benefits through a web-based application with the following functionality.

PromoPipeline: Key Business Functions
<b>Use Promotion Information (Reseller)</b>
Search by Vendor / Distributor
Search by Product Category
Search by Keyword
Search by Promotion Start Date/End Date
Bookmark a Search
View Search Results
View Printer-Friendly Promotion Details
Print Printer-Friendly Promotion Details
Save Printer-Friendly Version of Promotion Details
Send Promotion Details via Email
View Tutorials
Provide Customer-Satisfaction feedback on surveys
Manage Profile
<b>Manage Promotion Information (Vendor)</b>
List Promotions
View Promotion Status
View Promotion
Add New Promotion
Modify Promotion
Publish Promotion for Approval
Deactivate Promotion
Delete Promotion
Track Promotions (most frequently viewed)
Provide Customer-Satisfaction Feedback on surveys
Manage Profile
<b>Manage Promotions (PPL Administrator, System)</b>

PromoPipeline: Key Business Functions
Administer system controls (for example, maximum number of email recipients)
Grant and Revoke Access
View Reseller Status
View Vendor Status
View Promotion Status
Approve Promotion for Use
Automatically Expire Promotion on Expiration Date
Track Promotions (counts of viewed, printed, emailed)
View Customer-Satisfaction Feedback on surveys

## 3.2 Architecture

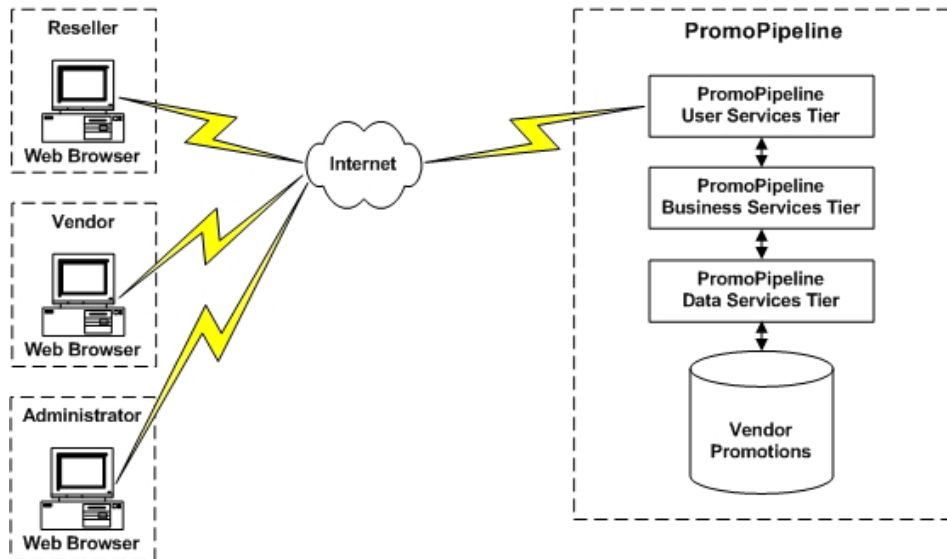
PromoPipeline was designed to have a flexible and robust three-tiered application architecture:

- ◆ **User Services Tier** presents application browser pages to the user
- ◆ **Business Services Tier** manages the application flow and formulates data requests
- ◆ **Data Services Tier** manages, stores, and retrieves the data

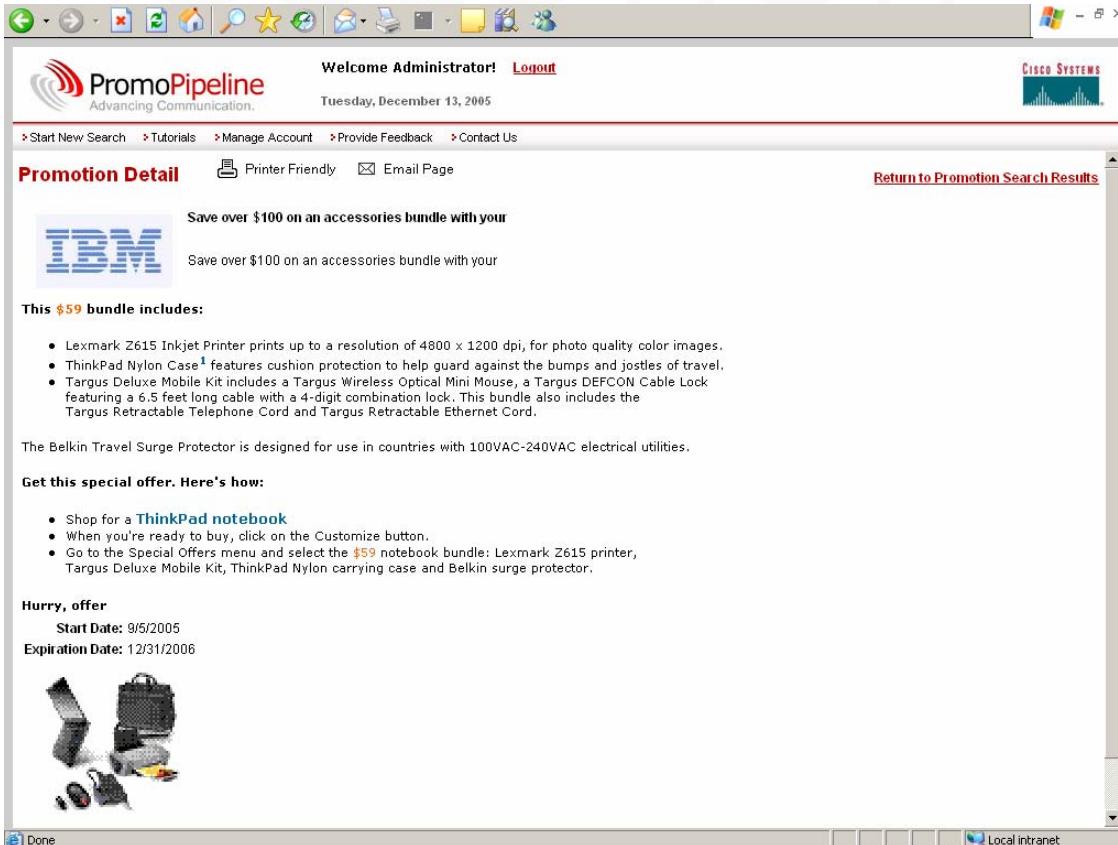
An immediate benefit of this architecture is a highly secure environment to protect confidential business data, since the architecture separates the tiers, limits each tier's capabilities, and manages the interface for each tier. In addition, this architecture facilitates long-term goals of application scalability and maintainability.

PromoPipeline includes three component applications: a business user application, a security application, and an administration application. Security and administration are managed through a separate and secure browser-based interface available only to the individuals responsible for maintaining the application. This approach allows the application interface and capabilities to be tailored to the needs of the user and offers additional flexibility in system and hosting decisions.

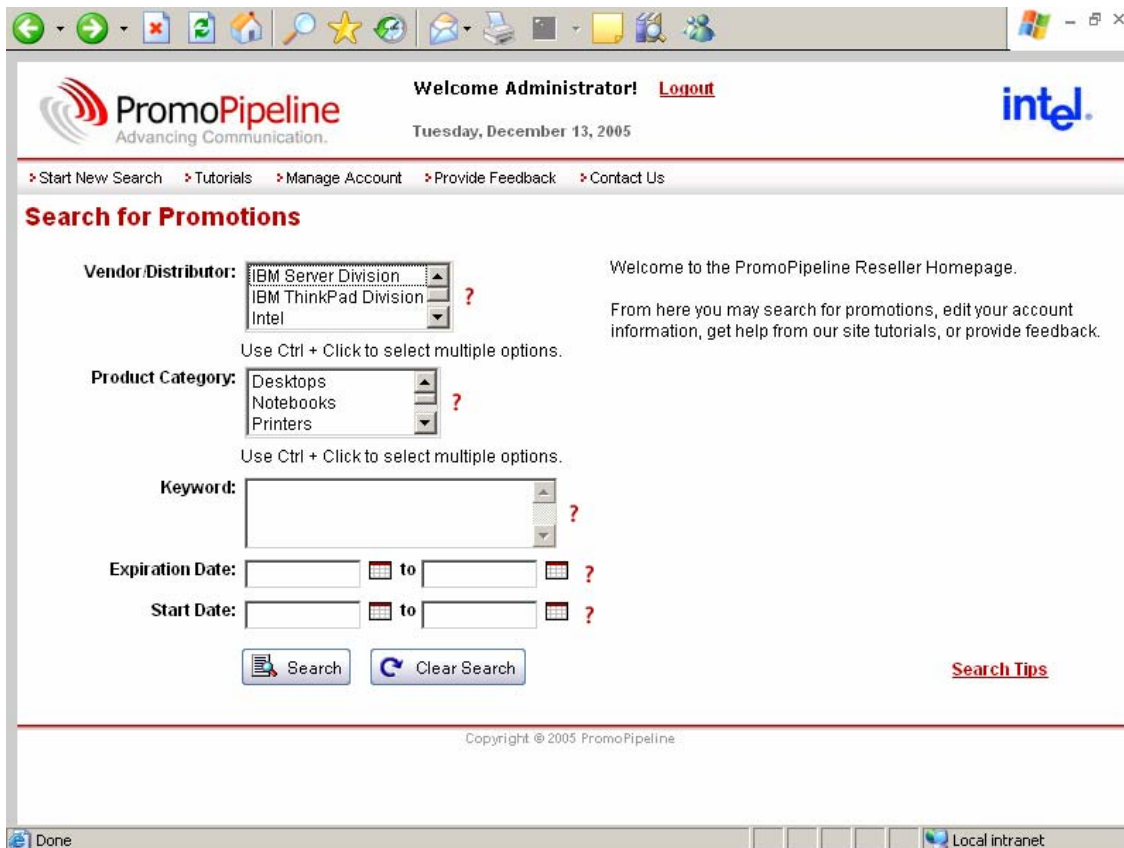
## Software Architecture



PromoPipeline has a user-friendly interface for a reseller to access promotion details.



PromoPipeline has an easy-to-use query capability to search/view a promotion by vendor/distributor, by product category, by keyword, and by promotion start/end date.



### 3.3 Technology

Drawing on state-of-the-art web technologies, TiBA Solutions created an innovative solution. PromoPipeline uses the following technologies:

- ◆ .NET Framework
- ◆ Microsoft .NET C#
- ◆ Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- ◆ Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services
- ◆ Internet Information Services (IIS)
- ◆ Windows 2003 Server
- ◆ TiBA's iSolution™ Suite

## 4. Business Results

The ASCII Group, Inc., the world's largest community of independent computer resellers with more than 2,000 members in North America and with system-wide end-user sales of approximately \$10.5 billion, and PromoPipeline have announced a partnership that promises to significantly improve communications between vendors, distributors and resellers.

"Most vendors are concerned about decreasing returns to their promotion efforts." states Colin Martin, president of PromoPipeline. "Our unique platform enables vendors to touch resellers when they are about to make a purchase decision, increase the shelf life of promotions and measure the impact of those promotions. Our partnership with the ASCII Group – the world's most respected community of resellers -- is a tremendous validation of the value that our platform brings to the channel. We are also pleased with the enthusiastic reception our platform has received from the vendor and distributor communities."

Alan Weinberger, chairman and CEO of ASCII said: "Our resellers have been asking for a powerful, neutral, yet easy to use platform to find the promotional information they need. By making the PromoPipeline platform available to our community, we are delivering a high value service that will enable our resellers to efficiently win new business."

Executives from ASCII and PromoPipeline are already working together in the Sales and Marketing areas. Further, the ASCII community has enthusiastically embraced the new offering and its potential, and several ASCII resellers were testing the technology before final launch.