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## THE ENTERPRISE NEWSLETTER

Issue No 15:

# PORTAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Outstanding Examples of Corporate and e-Business  
Portals

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[Courses](#)  
[Certification](#)  
[Projects](#)  
[Papers](#)  
[TEN Archive](#)  
[Contact Us](#)  
[Search](#)  
[Links](#)  
[Online Store](#)

## Contents

### [Portal Excellence Awards](#)

- [Herman Miller e-Business Portal](#)
- [Further Information](#)
  
- [Previous Issues of TEN](#)
- [Glossary of Terms](#)
- [New Subscribers to TEN](#)

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## PORTAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

PERTH, AUSTRALIA – April 9, 2001: There has been great interest in the emerging field of Corporate Portals. Also called Enterprise Portals or Enterprise Information Portals, a recent prediction estimated that as many as 80% of the Global 2000 enterprises will use Corporate Portals by the end of 2001 (Meta Group). Whether this aggressive forecast is actually achieved or not, there is definitely much happening in this area. This issue of TEN discusses the Portal Excellence Awards, which highlight the business benefits of this technology.

Clive Finkelstein  
TEN - The Enterprise Newsletter

Back to [Contents](#).

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Digital Consulting Institute (DCI), Imaging and Document Solutions, and Intelligent Enterprise Magazine sponsor the Annual Portal Excellence Awards. These awards recognize customer portal solutions that provide significant and measurable business benefits, and that make innovative use of portal technology. DCI announced the Annual Portal Excellence Award winners at DCI's Corporate and e-Business Portals Conference in San Francisco on January 24, 2001. Awards were presented in two categories:

**Best Internal Corporate Portal:** An internal corporate portal supports informed decision making by providing internal business users with a personalized and efficient Web interface to business content managed by intranet Web servers, business intelligence systems, office and document management systems, and front- and back-office applications.

**Best e-Business Portal:** An e-business portal enables an organization to optimize its business operations and business relationships by allowing external trading partners, key clients, and business users to collaborate and share business content via a personalized Web interface.

Many submissions were received in each category. Judging was done in two phases. In the first phase, all submissions were scored on:

- Business Benefits and ROI
- Architectural Design
- Innovative Use of Portal Technology

The three entries in each award category that achieved the highest scores became finalists. The winner in each category was then selected from these finalists in the second phase.

And the winners (with their Portal software suppliers) are ...

- **Best Internal Corporate Portal:** *Ford Motor Company*

*(Plumtree Portal)*

- **Best e-Business Portal:** *Herman Miller (TopTier Portal)*

We will discuss the Ford portal in the next issue of TEN (due July). We discuss the Herman Miller portal in this issue. The following submission that was entered by Herman Miller and TopTier for the DCI Portal Awards speaks for itself.

Back to [Contents](#).

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## **HERMAN MILLER E-BUSINESS PORTAL**

Clicks-and-bricks retailer Herman Miller does most of its business selling high-end, pre-assembled office furniture. With a global presence in over 40 countries, and nearly \$2 billion in revenue during fiscal 2000, Herman Miller has been working with TopTier's e-Business Integration Portal for the past 18 months as an integral component of an aggressive five-year plan to double the revenue of its business. By streamlining operations and compressing time-to-market, Herman Miller plans on doubling its throughput without the need for additional material planners, trucks or square foot of warehouse space.

In order to accomplish this, Herman Miller has deployed TopTier Software's e-Business Integration Portal to create an industry first: a truly virtual value-chain called MySIGN (Supplier Information Global Network). The portal serves as a personal webtop, providing every party throughout the company's value chain with real-time information from the enterprise's ERP applications and databases. This sharing of information will give Herman Miller and their suppliers a competitive advantage, helping them stay "in sync" with customer demands, changes to internal schedules, and inter-company receipts and payments.

In partnering with TopTier in the creation of MySIGN, Herman Miller is aggressively increasing their speed and reliability in supporting this streamlined supplier relationship. Because most of the company's raw materials come from 600 suppliers around the world, it desperately needed to streamline communications and payment procedures with them. This best-in-class virtual value chain is closing the loop between demand forecasting and supplier-managed inventory by creating an online supplier source for up-to-date information on demand, supply, exception orders, invoices, delivery

schedules and lag times - all of this critical business intelligence synchronized on one computer screen.

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In choosing a portal solution, Herman Miller looked for a forward-thinking, easy-to-implement solution that would allow the organization to increase efficiency and reduce lead times, while at the same time increase reliability and improve customer and supplier relationships across the enterprise. They needed to eliminate the waste in communicating with their suppliers, but they had been unsuccessful in the past at getting widespread adoption of EDI because many of their suppliers lacked the technical sophistication or the resources.

Herman Miller had two main requirements in building the portal. One was to have two-way communication ... back-and-forth collaboration with suppliers. The second was to give suppliers a real-time look at Herman Miller's business. The portal was designed to help suppliers in two areas: on the financial side, suppliers can look at prices to make sure they're in sync, as well as invoices; on the planning side, suppliers can look at Herman Miller's manufacturing lead times and engineering data like materials requirements, drawings and revision letters.

Some people at Herman Miller were afraid suppliers would feel like the company was putting the burden on the suppliers. However, the reception has been very positive, since the benefits for suppliers more than make up for any burden. In the past suppliers had to make decisions based on very limited information, so they were often making assumptions in shipping materials. The portal eliminates the need to call three people at Herman Miller to get information, which is a big time-saver. The portal has shifted the old purchasing model of "The more information you had and the less your supplier had, the more power you had" to an information-sharing focus, which has been beneficial to all parties involved.

Kelly Nelson, customer service/scheduling representative for Milwaukee-based Mid-States Aluminum, one of Herman Miller's suppliers, says that before using the portal, Mid-States was sending Herman Miller four or five inaccurate deliveries per month (i.e., shipping the wrong parts). But in the 18 months it's been using the portal, 95 percent of its deliveries to Herman Miller have been accurate. "We're much better able to plan our machinery and our people," Nelson says, adding that the portal has also helped Mid-States cut inaccurate billing by "at least 70 percent." In this way,

Herman Miller has become a much more valuable (read "profitable") customer to Mid-States

From the senior executives on down, Herman Miller has decided they will connect their suppliers and customers. Everything tied in to that corporate strategy, and the company has made a commitment to doing so. Over the past five years, Herman Miller has invested heavily in technologies to improve internal and external business processes. These investments, which include deploying the portal, have enabled them to bring their reliability from 75 percent to more than 95 percent in on-time shipments.

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Currently, Herman Miller has over 500 internal and external users actively employing the portal and it is anticipated that usage will double in the next 12 months. Internally, portal users include personnel in various roles such as supply management personnel, material planners and quality engineers. Suppliers also utilize the portal and users are found in multiple departments, such as management, customer service, scheduling, quality assurance and finance.

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Herman Miller's portal went live in September 1999, and took three months to develop. Herman Miller chose to take a phased approach to the implementation and gradually implemented new functionality, so while the portal was initially only introduced to employees it has since been extended beyond the enterprise to suppliers. While the portal has been developed and maintained by a group of employees who work on multiple projects, the time they spend on the portal is the equivalent of one full time employee.

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The technology and architecture of the portal solution are discussed next, in the areas of personalization, categorization, searching, security, and open architecture.

## **PERSONALIZATION**

**Interface:** The TopTier Portal provides users with a single, consistent and easy-to-use interface to all their enterprise

applications.

**Personalized Experience:** Based on their authorizations, users can select what to display, control thresholds for automatic notification, change order, and customize look and feel.

**Personal Style Settings:** "The only designed Portal on the market", TopTier Portal lets end-users easily configure its look and feel to better fit in their corporate environment.

**Document Submission:** Add a document to the Portal with its built-in submission tools, get it approved, and your workgroup will be able to access it

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## SEARCH:

**Concept Searching:** TopTier's TrueSearch allows users to search by concept, rather than only by pure boolean logic.

**Multiple File Types Support:** TrueSearch supports over 150 file formats, including Microsoft Office, Exchange, Lotus Notes, Adobe Acrobat, and many others

**Highlight Results:** TrueSearch automatically highlights the terms searched for in the search results.

**Federated Searching:** With TrueSearch, TopTier Portal 4.0 offers true federated searching. This means users can search their own Portal, Portals from other departments, and the Web.

**Support for major search engines:** TopTier offers adaptors for most major web search engines, as well as Microsoft Exchange, Lotus, and many others

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## CATEGORIZATION

**Taxonomy (Document Directory):** Users can look for documents by browsing a directory, or taxonomy, that is categorized by subject.

**Automatic Categorization:** The Portal automatically categorizes any document into the taxonomy, dramatically saving time for its administrators.

**Web Content:** TopTier's categorization technology allows administrators to schedule content grabbing from websites they're interested in, ensuring the Portal is automatically updated.

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## APPLICATION INTEGRATION

**Support for dozens of applications:** TopTier's application components - called "iViews" - provide extensive and deep content for today's leading enterprise applications. Over 500 iViews provide access and integration with Web sources.

**Content Configurator:** With TopTier's exclusive Content Configurator, an industry focus, role, and applications can be chosen. Within one click, dozens of relevant iViews are then available.

**Alert-driven content elements:** iViews automatically alert users to events they need to know about.

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## SECURITY

**Single Sign On:** No matter how many applications the Portal accesses, users only have to sign on once. TopTier Portal 4.0 automatically signs users to their applications.

**User Mapping:** TopTier Portal 4.0 offers full User Mapping, allowing administrators to map groups of users in the Portal to different security profiles in accessible applications.

**Support for Existing Enterprise Security Systems:** TopTier Portal 4.0 automatically authenticates users against Windows NT & LDAP based systems.

**SSL Support:** TopTier Portal 4.0 fully supports the Secure Sockets Layer, allowing customers and partners to access the portal via industry-standard encryption protocol.

**Item Level Security:** Item-level security is in effect throughout the system, ensuring that end-users can view only what they are allowed to.

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## OPEN ARCHITECTURE

**Robust Editing Tools:** TopTier Portal and its application component iViews are based on open standards, specifically XML.

**Syndicate Content:** Portal 4.0 makes projecting content to business partners easy, with its built-in syndication features

**Extensions and Web Navigator:** The Web Navigator allows developers to quickly integrate any legacy application or relational database into the Portal.

**Drag & Relate between Applications:** TopTier's patented "Drag & Relate" navigation lets end-users easily "surf" from one application to another.

**Web Components:** TopTier Web Components allow users to start B2B transactions right from their home pages.

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TopTier's portal solution features the company's patented HyperRelational™ technology, which allows users to access, interconnect, update, edit and delete information from multiple software applications and data sources through a simple Drag and Relate™ process. For instance, suppliers can click on and drag a payment figure into a section called "payment details", which will instantly provide information on all of the different invoices that make up that payment.

This "Drag and Relate" technology allowed Herman Miller to connect their Baan system with existing legacy applications, eliminating the need to convert all systems into the Baan applications. And this integration is versatile: Herman Miller can grow the support over time, enjoying higher levels of functionality and compatibility as they add, change and develop new enterprise applications. Existing applications do not require extensive changes and can evolve to

more integration levels as needed.

This technology has enabled Herman Miller to create a collaborative advantage for their enterprise by driving a real-time, frictionless flow of information between employees, suppliers and customers.

Back to [Contents](#).

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## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about TopTier (now called the SAP Enterprise Portal) is available from SAP at <http://www.sap.com/>. For example, CD videos demonstrate the use of TopTier by SAP in the MySAP web site (<http://www.mysap.com/>) - to integrate databases within and across ERP vendors, such as between SAP and Baan. Many software companies have licensed TopTier software, including SAP, Baan, Microsoft and others. Details are available from the TopTier web site.

Back to [Contents](#).

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## AUTHOR

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