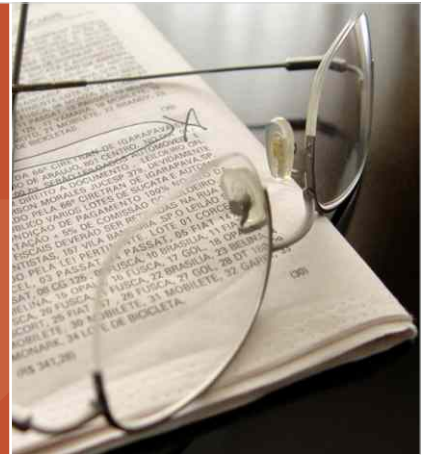


## Case Study

# Desktop Solution for a Consumer Internet Program



### ➤ THE CUSTOMER

An innovative media and direct marketing company which helps individuals and families save money through their redeemable rewards program. Their business model involves having several affiliated websites, where their members can purchase things and a certain percentage of the purchase is given back to the members as redeemable US savings bonds.

### ➤ THEIR NEED

A desktop product to enhance the online saving experience of their members. This product would keep members updated of various offers or savings available with different affiliated suppliers in the market. This would allow the customer to provide direct marketing opportunities to advertisers seeking to create and reinforce their brand, and at the same time provide their members valuable offers and help them attain their savings goals.

### ➤ OUR DEED

As this was a B2C product and the target audience was not expected to be tech-savvy, it was vital that the product be very easy-to-use. Aspire worked closely with the customer to develop a user-friendly GUI for the product. Aspire was also closely involved in every stage of product development, right from recommending the best technology, conceptualization, design and development, to release to beta users.

### ➤ TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES USED

**Technology:** Java, J2EE, XML, JavaScript, .NET, Crystal Reports, SQL and Stored Procedures/functions

**Architecture:** Part 1: Servlets and JSP, Part 2: Struts

**Tools:** Eclipse 3.1, MS SQL, Query Analyzer, VSS, .NET framework 1.1, Visual Studio 2003, and Crystal Reports 9

## DESKTOP PRODUCT - REDEEMABLE REWARDS

The desktop product was designed to be a shopping assistant for the customer's members/end-users. It would help users get savings for purchases made at any of the affiliated partner websites without having to log in to/through the customer's website.

- Savings Alert: The member/user has control over the type of alerts displayed by the product. He/she can choose to receive or not receive the following types of alerts: savings alerts, advertisements, notices/updates and confirmations.

### Key benefits to the customer:

As this was a B2C product and the target audience was not expected to be tech-savvy, **it was vital that the product be very easy-to-use**. Aspire worked closely with the customer to develop a (user-friendly GUI) for the product.

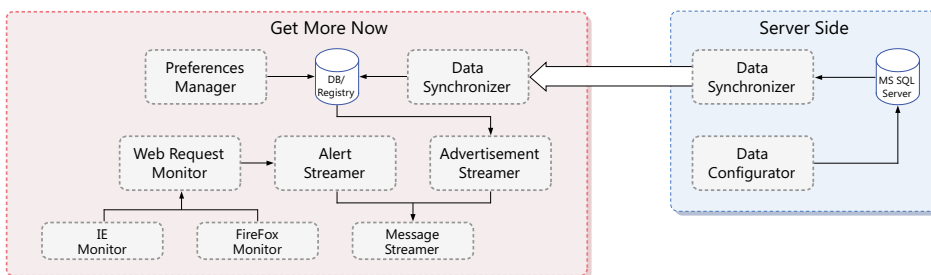


# Desktop Solution for a Consumer Internet Program



- **Secure Management and Multiple Accounts:** The user has the option to manage more than one Rewards account. Each user must add and save their own user information in order to get savings to their account.
- **Savings Assistance:** Whenever the user shops online at a non-participating seller, the product alerts the user about affiliated websites that sell similar products, where they can get Rewards.

## High Level Architecture Diagram:



Aspire had the entire engineering responsibility for developing this product. It included conceptualization, design, development and release to beta users. The Aspire team assisted the product management team from the customer's side to gather requirements and arrive at a Requirements Specification document from the Business Specifications.

## Choosing the right Technology:

This product had a combination of server and client (desktop) components.

Aspire recommended .NET technology for developing the client (desktop) component considering the product roadmap. Some of the plug-ins had to work inside Internet Explorer and .NET eases the development of such components. So, .NET was chosen as the client side development technology. Another reason for choosing .NET was the easy availability of .NET skill sets in general, making maintenance of the product in the future simple.

The configurations for the application (like the advertisement scheduling, merchant data updation) needed to be easily manageable at a single place. Hence, it was decided to handle them in the server so that this data could be synchronized by the desktop application as and when needed. This enables the product to deliver the highest possible performance to the user by maintaining the synchronized data in the local system.. J2EE was chosen as the technology for the server side as the customer's existing web application was built with J2EE and this was an extension of it.

## Engagement Model:

Aspire worked on a partial onsite/offshore model for this project. The project leader

### Key benefits to the customer:

Aspire had the **entire engineering responsibility** for developing this consumer internet product. This included (conceptualization, design, development and release to beta users).



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traveled to the customer's offices during the initial 3 months to closely study any hidden and implicit requirements, iterate through the prototype and clearly define the product requirements. Being onsite also ensured good communication between the customer's team and the offshore team.

## Challenges

- As the product built was a consumer internet application, it needed to be as simple as possible. Even though the underlying architecture and security related requirements were complex, the front-end needed to be straightforward and easy-to-use.
- Software distribution was challenging as .NET needed to be distributed along with the application, else users had to have the .NET framework installed on their systems before trying to install the product.
- Bandwidth utilization was a key aspect of the project – considerable amount of efforts went into optimizing the data transfer between the client and the server-side components of the product.

## SUCCESS

Aspire successfully completed the beta phase of the product within schedule and budget. Due to the product's ease of use and innovative features, there were more than 500 beta users trying out this product for their online purchases soon after its release. The beta release has been quite successful and the product is being used effectively by beta users.

Aspire succeeded in developing a user-friendly GUI for the product along with a solid underlying architecture and powerful security features. This product is available at [www.bondrewards.com/getmorenow](http://www.bondrewards.com/getmorenow)

## ABOUT ASPIRE SYSTEMS

Aspire Systems is an Outsourced Product Development firm committed to helping our customers build software products better and faster. We work with some of the world's most innovative Independent Software Vendors and software-enabled businesses, ranging from start-ups to established industry leaders, transforming the way software is built.

Aspire provides complete product lifecycle services, ranging from new product development and product advancement to product migration, re-engineering, sustenance and support. Our product development teams are spread between our Global Innovation Center in Chennai, India and offices in the United States.

### **Key benefits to the customer:**

*Aspire successfully completed the beta phase of the product **within schedule and within budget.** Due to the product's ease of use and innovative features, there were **more than 500 beta users** trying out this product for their online purchases **soon after its release.***



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