



Case Study

SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd

Electronic commerce solution to SEMF's expansion

SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd

is an Australian-owned engineering firm. It has frontline skills in multi-disciplinary design. The company undertakes projects within Australia and overseas and has gained an enviable reputation for the quality of its work and its value-for-money products. It employs more than 50 professional and administrative staff and has managed projects of more than \$50 million.

The company offers a wide range of construction, environmental, materials handling and information technology services.

SEMF's success is founded on its ability to gather data, evaluate the information, determine the needs of its clients and work with them until problems are solved.

It has its headquarters in Hobart, with additional offices in Launceston and Sydney.

Electronic commerce solution to SEMF's expansion

SEMF Holdings Pty Ltd decided to keep its headquarters in Hobart as it expanded its operations to include offices in Launceston and Sydney.

The ability to share information between each of company's centres was a major challenge. It was extremely important that staff had access to the information they needed for their work. In addition, it became important to be able to send some fairly large documents to their colleagues and clients. Many of these files could cause problems if sent by email. The company also needed to promote itself in the national and international markets to ensure that it continued to grow.

SEMF approached the Tasmanian Electronic Commerce Centre Pty Ltd (TECC) to help it develop its electronic commerce solution. The TECC supported the project because it saw that electronic commerce was the appropriate solution for SEMF to communicate between offices, store information and communicate with its clients as well as market itself internationally.

The SEMF electronic commerce project.

The project employed a secure virtual private network (VPN) to establish an integrated website, internal email service and a database of client information. More specifically the project aimed to:

- develop and maintain a market product register database;
- develop and maintain a client database that would capture details of potential clients from websites and maintain a client contact reminder feature;
- develop and maintain a website that contained a password protected area for clients to access information relevant to their projects; and
- provide access at any time of day for staff to SEMF's offices from national and international sites to ensure they have the resources for design, construct and deliver the company's products.





Benefits for SEMF

Improved communication between offices and staff

The project ensured that there is excellent communication between offices and staff through email and file sharing facilities. Staff associated with particular projects are assigned to groups that have embedded levels of security where login names and passwords are needed.

When particular skills are unavailable in one office, the company can draw on the skills of other staff in other locations, knowing that other staff assigned to projects can communicate effectively and access the information they need. In addition, people who are contracted temporarily to projects can be given security clearances to the data they need.

Staff are able transfer large data files between design offices, clients and sub-contractors using the VPN. This approach of leaving these sometimes large files on the database for staff and clients to "pick up" is more effective than transmitting them by email. In addition, using the VPN as an email system is more secure and stable than it would be through an independent Internet Service Provider.

The cost of communications has been reduced considerably because staff at each office no longer have to make telephone calls to connect to Internet Service Providers.

Effective client database

A client database is stored on the company's Hobart server and is accessible through an ISDN base connection by the Launceston and Sydney offices. All information relevant to each client is entered onto the database, such as meeting notes and the dates of the next meeting. This provides strong support for customer relationship management. All the relevant personnel automatically receive emails about past and future meetings. This process is highly efficient.

Effective marketing

The website, which provides company information, has raised the profile of SEMF on the national and international markets. The number of enquiries to the company about it's service has increased considerably.

Prospective clients are able to leave expressions of interest on the website, which is then automatically transferred to the client database. Head quarters is then notified to make contact with the potential clients.

Clients have more access

Website easily found

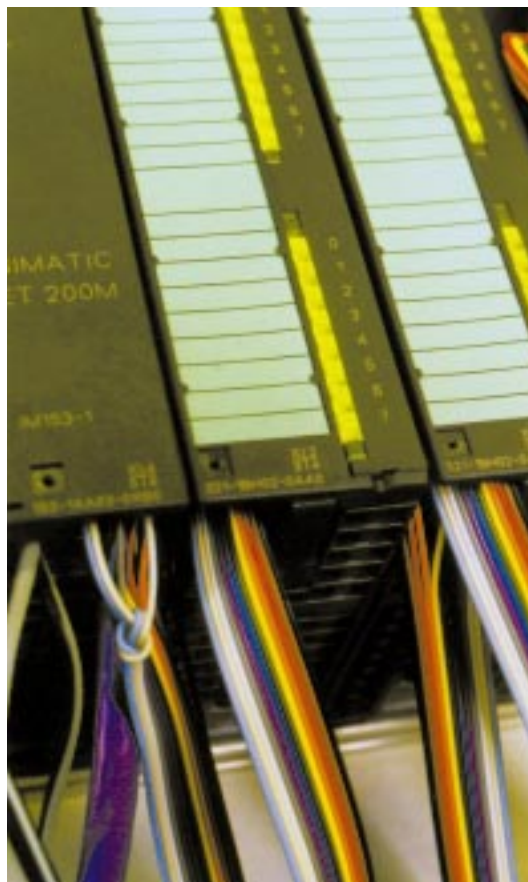
The website is recognised by a number of the major search engines, such as AltaVista, Yahoo, Excite, HotBot and Lycos (how was this done?). In addition, cross links have been established with a number of related sites, such as IE Aust, Tas On Line, ACEA and the Property Council of Tasmania.

When potential clients visit the site, they have the opportunity to express their interest in the company's work and are guaranteed that the company will contact them for further discussions.



Registered clients have access to relevant data

When SEMF is conducting work, clients have password access to data and files about their projects. In many instances, files are left on the server for clients to download when it is convenient to them. This is preferable to sending them by email because many of the files are large and can be held on one of the company's servers indefinitely.



The future

Since the project was completed the company has increased its bandwidth threefold because e-commerce has been shown to be important, effective and advantageous to SEMF.

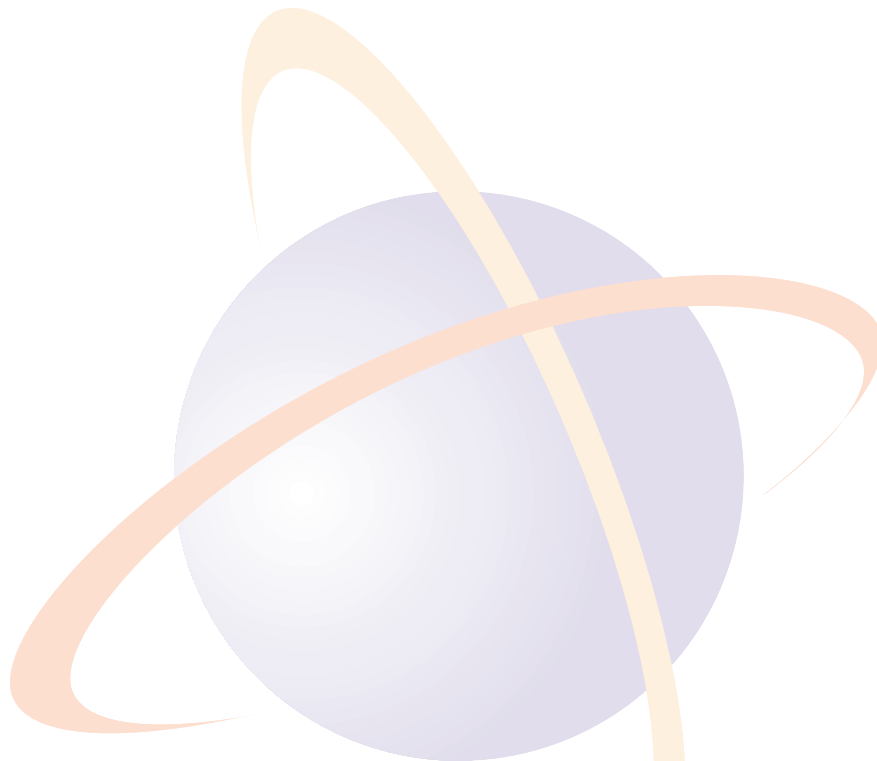
Larry Hude, SEMF's financial controller, says that e-commerce will play an increasingly vital role in the future. He says the company will expand the technology to ensure that it can operate and address problems with the sophisticated equipment it builds, such as ship loaders and sliding roofs over buildings, without staff leaving their home bases.

"E-commerce has been extremely beneficial to SEMF and the technology will ensure that the company can grow while maintaining its head office in Hobart," Larry Hude said.

We're showing Tasmanian business the way to benefit from electronic commerce.

Since 1998 TECC's key role, innovation and unique approach to electronic commerce in Tasmania is helping Australia become a world class leader in the information economy. TECC has developed a range of specific products, including EC Aware, Online Outcomes Seminars and Workshops, EC Business, EC Market and EC Ready, to assist small, medium and large Tasmanian companies benefit from electronic commerce.

Contact us to discover how your business can benefit from electronic commerce.



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