

Winter 1997: Best Practices in Electronic Commerce

Speaker:

Patricia B. Seybold, President & CEO of the Patricia Seybold Group

Synopsis

How are companies communicating, coordinating and transacting business with their customers via the Internet? What are the patterns and practices that are emerging among the pioneers? Which of these practices are likely to become widely adopted? Most companies are leading with customer service. By making it easy for customers and prospects to help themselves to information and products, they seduce customers into continuing to do business with them. The real leaders combine exquisite customer service with consultative selling, capturing valuable customer profile information as a byproduct of helping the customer do research and make decisions. Finally, companies use this customer profile information to customize their Web sites and their products and services for each customer. We'll look at examples across a variety of industries: American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Dell Computer, National Semiconductor, United States Postal Service, Wells Fargo Bank, Reebok, Sharper Image, Net.Radio, The Wall Street Journal, A&A Printers. We'll also examine the emergence of the electronic marketplace in cyberspace and showcase some of the best practices you should look for before you sign up with, or create, an electronic market.

We'll conclude by suggesting a set of steps you'll need to take to get your internal systems and business processes ready to take advantage of electronic commerce on the Web.

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Patricia B. Seybold is the founder, president and CEO of the Patricia Seybold Group, a strategic-technology consulting and information services firm located in Boston, Massachusetts. The Patricia Seybold Group specializes in identifying technologies that will be strategic tools for businesses seeking to excel in improving customer loyalty, reducing time to market, and transforming their industries through the innovative use of information technology.

Seybold has been a computer industry consultant for 20 years. She began working in the electronic publishing field in the mid-1970s, apprenticing with her father, John Seybold, a pioneer in the design of electronic publishing solutions. By the early 1980s, Patricia Seybold was a guiding light in the evolution of word processing into integrated office solutions. She chronicled the growth of personal computers in the office

environment and assisted organizations in adapting their technology strategies to take advantage of PCs.

Moving into the open systems and distributed object computing arena, she assisted in the birth of the Open Software Foundation and spearheaded the formation of the Object Management Group. Today, her firm focuses on client/server computing; workgroup computing; open distributed computing; data warehousing; electronic commerce; and the World Wide Web.

Seybold's primary research focus in 1996 is on the ways that companies are using advanced technologies to improve their relationships with customers. She is researching and writing a book, *Customers.com*, to synthesize the best practices in this area. Seybold hosts an interactive Electronic Commerce Service whose primary goal is to identify the best practices in electronic commerce, to chronicle case studies, and to surface new business models. She is also the editor-in-chief of the company's monthly *Distributed Computing Monitor*, which analyzes leading edge technologies in three-tier applications development, middleware, Internet/intranet, and the World Wide Web.