



**NETWORKWORLD**<sup>®</sup>

## Network World's Implementation of mBLAST's Buyer's Guide

*mBLAST CASE STUDY*

**mBLAST User:** Keith Shaw, Reviews Editor, Network World  
**Most Used Modules:** Buyer's Guide, mBLAST Toolbar  
**Favorite Feature:** mBLAST's automatic handling of contacts  
**Best mBLAST Experience:** Completing a Buyer's Guide of 130+ companies with more than 200 products  
**mBLAST Motto:** "Enabling Living Buyer's Guides"

For Keith Shaw, reviews editor of Network World, putting together a Buyer's Guide was a tedious and sometimes painful process.

"We would put together a set of survey questions, then try to track down the right contacts at the companies we wanted to include, then mail out the surveys," he says. "When we moved the surveys to the Web, it got a little easier. But there was still a lot of contact back and forth that took a lot of time. mBLAST has eliminated most of this work."

Indeed, moving the entire process onto mBLAST has reduced the headaches involved and saved enough time that Network World is now in a position to add to its total of six annual Buyer's Guides. "Before six was all we could handle. We haven't decided how far to take it, but we can add more if we want to at any time," says Shaw. "Just last month, we did two Buyer's Guides at the same time, using the same resources -- something unheard of before mBLAST."

Setting up a Buyer's Guide on mBLAST could hardly be easier. The initial process involves setting preferences and parameters, such as naming an administrator and setting up deadlines. The administrator creates a survey using the on-line survey creation tool, and then selects the target companies and contact names from the mBLAST database. In many cases, that contact information -- including PR contact information by beats -- is already in mBLAST's database, where 79,000 companies are already listed. When contact information isn't already there, it can be added for each survey, either directly by mBLAST administration or by inviting participants to log into mBLAST, another simple automated process.

One of the best features, says Shaw, is the ability to let participants preview the survey questions and make comments.

"In the past, a lot of people who responded to a survey thought we'd left things out or didn't like the way something was done," he says. "They'd comment to us when they'd respond to the survey. If we'd left something out, the only choice was to go back and ask all the other survey participants to

respond to that question. It was a nightmare.”

Now, participants, who are contacted electronically and invited to participate in the survey, have a pre-set period in which they can file comments and recommend changes.

“I can modify the questionnaire immediately,” says Shaw. “It makes a better survey and it makes the vendors happy. I’ve got a survey in preview right now on anti-spam and we’ve gotten 40 comments.” Other timesaving features include automatic notification to the survey respondent of problems in filling out the form. “Before, if they didn’t answer a required question, we’d have to get back in touch with them to fix it, which was time-consuming,” he says. “Now the system notifies them immediately. Also compiling the data is much easier.” The mBLAST system can solicit product pictures, company logos, and other graphical support in the process, he says.

Once the survey is completed, mBLAST allows him to automatically upload it onto his Web site as a matrix, or download it directly onto a PC in an Excel or XML format.

The whole process has shrunk from requiring several people in different departments, each contributing in different ways over a four-month period, to something Shaw can largely do himself, with minimal involvement, in as fast a time frame as he wants to set. “In December, 2002, we had to kick out an entire Buyer’s Guide in one week, and with mBLAST, we actually had time to spare.” Network World is in the process of XML-enabling its site to take feeds from mBLAST at any time, so that Network World can have “Live Buyer’s Guides,” where vendors can update their information at any time.

From a company standpoint, using mBLAST conserves valuable IT resources. In the past, Shaw had to take the survey data and contact information to his IT department to get it set up and sent out, and to help in data compilation.

“We don’t bother them at all anymore,” says Shaw. “mBLAST handles it all.”