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**The play that's making the Internet a star** SEE NEWS, PAGE 12

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**RFID users get set for the long haul**

Tracking goods with tags is just the first step. If companies want to get the most out of the wireless hardware, they're going to need the right middleware, too. Find out how to keep on trucking.

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## Zip.ca shows off the IT behind Canada's answer to Netflix

BY BRIONY SMITH

On the day in 2004 that Ottawa-based online movie rental company Zip.ca opened its e-doors, it didn't even have some of the very first 11 DVDs requested, sending an exec scuttling to Best Buy to get the right titles.

Today, through its commitment to hardcore proprietary software development (and a few word-of-mouth-friendly Web 2.0 strategies), it's succeeding in keeping its virtual shelves stocked.

The development team at Zip.ca, which is owned by the Ottawa-based registrar Momentous.ca, is familiar with the rigors of a quick turnaround, said Kelvin Osborn, Zip.ca's development manager. In three months, three developers built the Web site and its peripheral parts in-house, allowing Zip.ca to leap into the market in 2004 in the wake of the massive success of the American online movie rental com-

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## Microsoft tackles integration of legacy ERP, CRM systems

Convergence show highlights additions to the company's Dynamics line

BY VAWN HIMMELSBACH

SAN DIEGO – Microsoft provided details of its plan to transform business applications at the 11th annual Microsoft Convergence conference earlier this month, which involves doing a better job of getting CRM and ERP in synch.

"There's a reason why companies limit deployment," said James Utschneider, general manager of Dynamics marketing with the Microsoft Business Solutions Group. ERP systems have traditionally been too complex and, from a usability perspective, there's a "fundamental shift that has to occur in our segment."

Microsoft announced the release of Microsoft Dynamics

Sure Step, a tool set for implementation, migration and upgrades, as well as Microsoft Dynamics Client for Office and SharePoint Server, a low-cost licensing package that makes ERP solutions available to more employees through familiar tools. And RoleTailored is a new "user experience" design that builds on the look and feel of Vista and Office 2007.

"Our core goal is to fuse systems together," said Microsoft's Satya Nadella, corporate vice-president of the Microsoft Business Solutions Group during a keynote address to 8,500 attendees. According to AMR Research, only about 15 per cent of information workers inside an organization actual-

ly use business processes, and Microsoft is looking to expand that to 100 per cent.

**MAKING INROADS**

Microsoft is making inroads in the ERP market, though it still has a relatively small share. SAP is the leader, followed by Oracle, according to research from IDC Canada. Tied for third place are Sage and Infor, followed by Microsoft.

But nearly half the market is made up of other vendors. This is because many customers are still using legacy applications and aren't sure how to move away from them, said Joel Martin, vice-president of enterprise software with IDC.

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