



## Mastermind Toys launches new website to enhance online shopping

### INFORMATION

Location: Toronto, ON  
 Web site: [www.mastermindtoys.com](http://www.mastermindtoys.com)  
 Industry: Retail

### CHALLENGE

Develop and implement a completely new website for Mastermind Toy's online retail channel, offering greater functionality, improved performance, and a variety of new features, to enhance customer online shopping

### SOLUTION

Affinity Systems proposed using a proven e-Commerce framework written for modern Microsoft technologies, and upgrading the operating system platform to Windows Server 2008 and the database engine to SQL Server 2008.

### TECHNOLOGIES

- Visual Studio 2008
- Mediachase ECF G5
- Windows Server 2008
- SQL Server 2008
- IIS 7.0
- C#
- ASP.NET 3.5

Mastermind Toys is a leading specialty toy retailer in the Greater Toronto Area. Since 1984, Mastermind has been famous for its extraordinary selection of carefully chosen toys and books that challenge thinking, awaken creativity, develop imagination, and offer children hours of fun. Over the years, Mastermind has built a large customer following by offering outstanding service and product selection in its eleven stores and through its website [www.mastermindtoys.com](http://www.mastermindtoys.com).

The original website was written over ten years ago using, at the time, modern technologies from Microsoft, including ASP, IIS, and SQL Server. As the business grew and requirements changed, the technological platform slowly became obsolete and the existing software was enhanced to the point where it became very difficult to maintain and performed below industry standards.

Affinity Systems was chosen by Mastermind to develop and implement a completely new website for its online retail channel. An updated and streamlined site with greatly improved performance and a variety of new and improved features was needed to provide customers with an easier and more versatile way of shopping for books and toys online.

### OUR SOLUTION

Affinity Systems proposed making use of a tried and tested e-Commerce framework written for modern Microsoft technologies. We decided on ECF G5, from the U.S.-based firm Mediachase ([www.mediachase.com](http://www.mediachase.com)). This e-Commerce technology boasts an extensible and flexible platform that addressed many of the requirements specified by Mastermind Toys. ECF has a significant installed customer base, sharing similar functional and performance characteristics with those desired by Mastermind.

*“We’re delighted with the greatly expanded functionality of our new website and the many additional and improved features that make the online shopping experience much easier and more enjoyable for our customers.”*

— Andy Levy  
 President, Mastermind Toys



Affinity recommended that Mastermind leverage their existing investment in Microsoft server technology by upgrading their operating system platform to Windows Server 2008 and database engine to SQL Server 2008. We also suggested that the existing server configuration should be slightly modified so that SQL Server would no longer run in a virtual environment, since it is most optimal to run the database natively on its host computer.

# CASE STUDY



Software by Design



NORTH AMERICA'S PREMIER ONLINE TOY STORE

## BENEFITS

- an expanded search function and filtering system to help customers narrow their choice of toys
- a sophisticated sales promotion engine that is unparalleled in the online toy marketplace
- a "quick view" capability to provide additional product details and links to a library of product videos
- a new "wish list" function that lets customers keep track of future toy purchases
- a facility for customers to share comments and feedback about products they already own
- a means of determining if a customer qualifies for a particular promotion
- the ability to provide online coupons previously available only in-store
- a simplified checkout process that makes it easier for customers to finalize their purchases, including gift wrapping and tagging

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The development environment that Affinity Systems proposed was Visual Studio 2008 combined with Mediachase ECF G5. The web server ran IIS 7.0 with the ASP.NET 3.5

*"The close collaboration between Affinity and Mastermind throughout the project made the shared vision for the new site a reality."*

— Leslie Goldsmith  
Director, Affinity Systems

framework. C# was used as the code-behind language, and was also the implementation language of ECF. Affinity considered that this platform was optimal, but it had the additional benefit of ensuring that there were no unusual integration issues with Mastermind's customization of ECF. The ECF framework provided a good starting point for an e-Commerce

site, yet had enough flexibility to provide unlimited customization of existing features, as well as the addition of new ones.

The new Mastermind Toys website was launched in October 2010 and can be viewed at [www.mastermindtoys.com](http://www.mastermindtoys.com).

