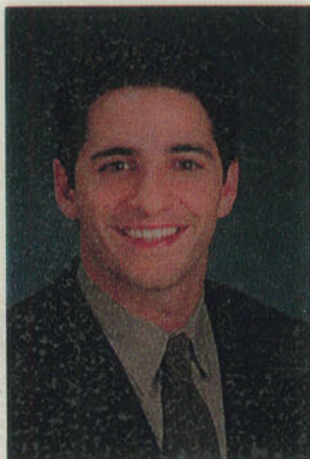


Working the Web Without a Modem

Web Elite's Unplugged software offers an alternative to wireless frustrations.

Has spotty signal strength, slow modem connections and frustratingly long download time made you want to pitch your Palm Pilot or cell phone out the window of a moving test vehicle? If you're like many auto engineers who spend months out of each year doing development drives and certification loops in remote areas, you've been tempted. Admit it.

Wireless devices promise easily accessible, real-time information and data for mobile users. But it's often just a promise. And the bad con-



Web Elite CEO Jacques Habra says the company's Unplugged software was developed to help an OEM client.

nections are always coupled with squinty-eyed peering at teeny screens. What's the alternative?

A new software product from Web Elite allows mobile computer users to run existing Web-based programs without an Internet connection. It's called Web Elite Unplugged, but it's not wireless technology. Unplugged downloads programs and data from your company's Web applications right onto your laptop — and in exactly the same format as if you were on line in real time.

You can access documents, check your digital calendar and manipulate any item, all without modems and phone cables.

Your updates and changes are stored in a queue and when you're finally able to physically hook up to the Web, it's all synchronized back into the actual application.

And unlike most competitors' products that allow remote data links, Unplugged makes no difference whether your mobile device carries the same programs as your company's IT network.

"In terms of doing real busi-

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ness, the Unplugged product is all about interconnectivity, and that's the real value of the Web — not real-time internet connections," argues Web Elite CEO and founder Jacques Habra. He claims real-time use accounts for only 10 percent of Web value.

Habra and Matt Brown, executive director of development at the Ann Arbor, Mich.-based e-business software technology and consulting firm, note that Unplugged is a response to a need from an OEM client. The automaker (the identity of which they will not divulge) had sunk more than \$1 million into a Web-based application for its warranty-claims

reps. The Web tool gave them access to various vehicle, dealership and technical information.

But when in the field, the reps often could not connect to the application at dealerships — when they most needed the information. This forced them to revert back to the exact process that the application was intended to replicate online. Integrating Web Elite Unplugged gave the field reps the identical applications interface wherever they are — Internet connection or not.

Web Elite's software applications are developed using a trademarked, proprietary tech-

nology called phabric. It's a Java-developmental framework with a built-in object database. This allows for scalable, modular development as well as faster, lower cost product development, Brown explains.

"The technology we build doesn't generate revenue, it cuts costs," says Habra. For the auto industry that includes Proteus Answers — an online real-time data analysis tool and decision-support platform. Proteus Answers is a response to demand from one of the domestic Big Three, which was struggling to organize cost-cutting and technology ideas from its suppliers. The customizable Pro-

teus provides real-time information collection and sharing through each layer of the supply chain, during each state of vehicle development and production.

Web Elite's growing client list includes General Motors, Ford and DaimlerChrysler, as well as Visteon, Tower Automotive, Textron and many other suppliers. Officials at some of those companies say they do business with Web Elite because of its agility, customized products and size — current staff is 40, including satellite offices in San Francisco and New York.

For more information, see www.webelite.com

— by Lindsay Brooke

"Unplugged is all about interconnectivity, and that's the real value of the Web." — Jacques Habra Web Elite CEO.

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