

# eCommerce Technology Austin



Randy Hankamer, president and CEO; Steven Olshefski, Business Development Director; Pansy Narendorf, Creative Director; Leah Caddell, Technical Director; and Cindy Vo, Database Strategy Director.

The president of eCommerce Technology Austin, Randy Hankamer, learned an unexpected lesson in business survival while running through the streets of Pamplona in the 1970s: Stay well ahead of the bulls.

Avoiding the manic thrills of do-or-die risk may lack the flash of a Hemingway adventure or even an IPO-bound high-tech startup, but it certainly beats ending up out of the race altogether. With a sensible business plan outlining steady growth - unlike many high-flying tech firms, you'll find no money wasted on foosball tables or splashy corporate blowouts here - and a partnership with no less a power than IBM, ECTA has positioned itself to stay up and running with the bulls ... and fend off the market bears, too.

As the Austin licensee for Chicago-based eCommerce Technology, ECTA uses the IBM e-business platform to create and maintain an online business presence for small- to medium-sized companies. Since accepting its first job for an antique dealer's online catalog, ECTA has made e-commerce possible for companies involved in computers, plumbing, real estate and Texas history and memorabilia.

Hankamer founded ECTA in September 1998. Interested in the Internet's growing abilities to automate business processes and join disparate elements, and with a desire to form a sound, ongoing alliance with an established force,

Hankamer found kinship in ECT and its partnership with IBM. He began building a team to create the front end - the online storefront visible to customers - offering features such as ordering systems, shopping carts and "mall" setups for companies too small to host their own online stores.

More programming, database and IT - (back end) services are joining the mix as ECTA grows.

When IBM's e-business software became available for a more robust platform, ECTA was the first company in the United States to learn the upgraded application, and all employees have completed training for the central development tool, IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite. They keep in touch daily with IBM representatives to stay cutting-edge-current on the software's latest developments and issues. The company has upgraded its initial certification as an IBM Business Partner to Premier Partner status, and it even supports other ECT offices with web design and application development in addition to serving its Austin-area clients.

Hankamer credits this diligence for attracting IBM's attention and earning the extraordinary relationship ECTA shares with IBM's technical and sales support staffs. ECTA is among the first Texas companies in its field to have gained unconditional recommendations from IBM's regional new-business representative to implement the latest version of IBM WebSphere Commerce Suite.

As befits Hankamer's strategic planning background, his company strives to help the client create a vision that includes an Internet strategy within a long-range business plan. Flexibility is key: Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all template, ECTA works with customers on personalized design and development. Its "Start simple. Grow fast" attitude creates a solution with as much site control as the customer desires, while ECTA maintains the look-and-feel and functionality over the life of the project.

ECTA considers every customer long-term, and looks forward to running each of its e-commerce sites through second and third generations and beyond. — And that's no bull.

Leah Caddell and Pansy Narendorf develop each site's visible storefront.

