

Mastering Supply Chain Partnerships with
Oblix NetPoint:
Achieving Core Business Objectives through
Effective Identity Management

W H I T E P A P E R



Copyright © 2003 Oblix, Inc. All rights reserved.

This white paper is for informational purposes only. Oblix makes no warranties, expressed or implied, in this document. Mention of third-party products within this publication is for informational purposes only and constitutes neither an endorsement nor a recommendation.

The information contained in this document represents the current view of Oblix on the issues discussed as of the date of the publication. Because Oblix must respond to changing market conditions, it should not be interpreted to be a commitment on the part of Oblix, and Oblix cannot guarantee the accuracy of any information presented after the date of publication.

Software and documentation Copyright © 1996-2003 by Oblix, Inc. All rights reserved. Oblix, NetPoint, Oblix NetPoint, and the Oblix logo are registered trademarks of Oblix, Inc. NetPoint COREid System: User Manager, Group Manager, Organization Manager, IdentityXML, Certificate Processing Server (VeriSign®), COREid Server, and WebPass; NetPoint Access System: Access Manager, Access Server, WebGate, and AccessGate; COREid, FEDERATEDid Layer, Oblix IDLink, Associate Portal Services, NetPoint System Console, NetPoint Ready Realm, NetPoint Federation Services, NetPoint Mainframe Security Connector, NetPoint SAML Services, and their logos are trademarks of Oblix, Inc. All other company and product names are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective companies.

Printed in the United States of America.

Printing Date: July 2003

Part Number: obx64a

Oblix, Inc.
18922 Forge Drive
Cupertino, CA 95014, USA
T 408.861.6800 F 408.861.6810

European Headquarters
Atrium Court
The Ring, Bracknell
Berkshire RG12 1BW, UK
T +44(0)1344 393 054

www.oblix.com

Executive Summary	1
Key Objectives in Today's Supply Chain Portals	2
The Role of Identity Management	3
Leading Corporations Turn to Oblix NetPoint	4
Large Aerospace Manufacturer Drives Down Supply Chain Interaction Costs	4
Large Automobile Manufacturer Enables Successful Partner Collaboration	6
CUNA Mutual Empowers its Sales Force	8
Driving Real Business Results	10

Executive Summary

eBusiness continues to drastically change the way companies procure, manufacture, sell, and distribute products. Companies that rely on a supply chain (referred to as "supply chain companies") have jumped at the opportunity to leverage the Internet as a powerful means for enhancing business with customers, partners and suppliers. In particular, many supply chain companies are transforming their corporate portal into a strategic tool for streamlining partner interactions and optimizing operations. An effective supply chain portal drives competitive advantage by:

- Reducing supply chain interaction costs
- Improving partner collaboration
- Improving product development and quality
- Increasing customer satisfaction
- Increasing revenue and sales productivity

These companies are finding that the success of their portal initiatives depends heavily upon the application of stringent and highly granular access control measures, since the very same information that helps a supply chain partnership can harm the chain if key data falls into the wrong hands. Infrastructure scalability and flexibility are equally important, since a single supply chain company may collaborate with hundreds or even thousands of partners, each with their own particular set of business processes and objectives. In other words, successful supply chain portal initiatives require a scalable and highly flexible Identity Management solution that provides high levels of security while at the same time delivering cost effective administrative solutions.

This paper explores the business objectives behind supply chain portals, the benefits associated with them, and their underlying Identity Management requirements. It describes how real world supply chain companies have implemented Oblix NetPoint®, the leading Identity Management solution, and why they found Oblix NetPoint to be the best choice for their supply chain portal initiatives.

Key Objectives in Today's Supply Chain Portals

In the past, companies considered information an asset to be closely guarded, rather than shared. Today however, rather than companies competing against companies, supply chains compete against supply chains. Supply chain companies now understand that effective information sharing streamlines supply chain interactions and builds more profitable business relationships. Rather than promoting adversarial relationships, supply chain companies are learning to trust their partners. Supply chains that facilitate the rapid, secure, and free flow of information can better understand and react to the needs of the customer as well as to market changes.

For this reason, many large supply chain companies are delivering services and information through online portals as a way of managing customer, supplier, distributor, and service provider relationships. For example, companies linked in an extended, global manufacturing supply chain profit from sharing a wide range of sensitive resources via the Web: forecasting systems, sales tools and pricing models, ordering histories and systems, customer feedback reports, inventory records, quality reports and defect updates, sales results, shipping reports, customer databases, and even engineering documentation and schematics.

When implemented properly, supply chain portals enable companies to achieve the following critical business objectives:

- **Reduce Supply Chain Interaction Costs**

The highly competitive nature of supply chains are forcing companies to look at ways of increasing margin without increasing end-prices. Supply chain partners doing online business can driver greater efficiency and reduced supply chain interaction costs by providing immediate access to critical business information.

- **Improve Collaboration Between Partners Within the Supply Chain**

The ability to form partnerships in a timely manner and effectively operate as a single entity allows some supply chains to thrive while others fail. Providing Web-based access to secure applications though a corporate portal enables tighter collaboration between partners, suppliers, and customers, resulting in better product development and quality, and increased customer satisfaction.

- **Improve Revenue and Sales Productivity**

Supply chain companies striving to increase their margins through increased revenues can do so by providing their distribution network with immediate access to critical business information, such as sales, inventory, and market analysis data. Providing this information in real-time, and in a relevant way, improves the productivity and operational efficiency of sales teams.

The Role of Identity Management

While building infrastructure to better leverage the Internet's capabilities may result in a significant competitive advantage, failure to choose the right approach can result in a system so inflexible and unscalable, that it incurs significant overhead and administrative costs that outweigh the desired benefits. Providing supply chain partners with access to services and information through a corporate portal is no exception.

To successfully collaborate with partners through a supply chain portal, companies must maintain a delicate balance between making information, processes and systems highly available without compromising their security. Clearly, the resources that have the most value for a partner could also cause the most damage if they fall into competitors' hands. An opposite, but equally serious security failure, would be an access lockout that accidentally blocks legitimate partners from needed resources. For this reason, companies undertaking such collaborative initiatives must accurately identify each network user, including users outside of their corporate boundaries, and control which resources each user is authorized to access.

At the same time, organizations need to give their partners access to business applications and data quickly, with a minimum of hassle, so that partners can access what they need, when they need it. Providing partners with features like single sign-on and personalized views of data leads to improved end-user satisfaction and productivity, benefits that are difficult to quantify, as well as quantifiable benefits, such as reduced help desk and other administration costs.

These challenges then dictate the following Identity Management solution features as underlying requirements for successful portal initiatives:

- Highly granular and secure single sign-on to multiple Web applications
- The ability to exchange user credentials across security domains to facilitate seamless access to critical information
- The ability to utilize identity information to create a personalized, relevant user experience

To truly achieve the goal of increasing cost margins, there are also hard requirements for system flexibility, scalability, and ease of administration, since supply chain companies often deal with hundreds, if not thousands of partners. Some companies have faced the security challenge by building security "front-ends" to applications, each individually hard-coded with access policies and utilizing its own data repository to keep track of legitimate user identities. Unfortunately, while useful in the short term, the architecture soon becomes a liability as the number of online interactions and users grow both in number and complexity. Before long, the heterogeneous network of security front-ends become inflexible, ineffective, and expensive to maintain.

For this reason, successful supply chain portals require the following additional Identity Management requirements:

- A centralized infrastructure to manage security policies and enforcement
- A highly scalable and performance-oriented architecture
- An effective and scalable means of managing and administering user identities and groups, that is flexible enough to accommodate varying organizational structures and business processes
- The ability to easily add, delete, and change access policies and identity information through scalable multi-level delegated administration and user self-service

Leading Corporations Turn to Oblix NetPoint

Oblix NetPoint is the leading Identity Management solution uniquely positioned to meet the requirements outlined in the previous section. In the following sections, we take a closer look at how real world customers have implemented Oblix NetPoint in their supply chain portals to achieve key business objectives.

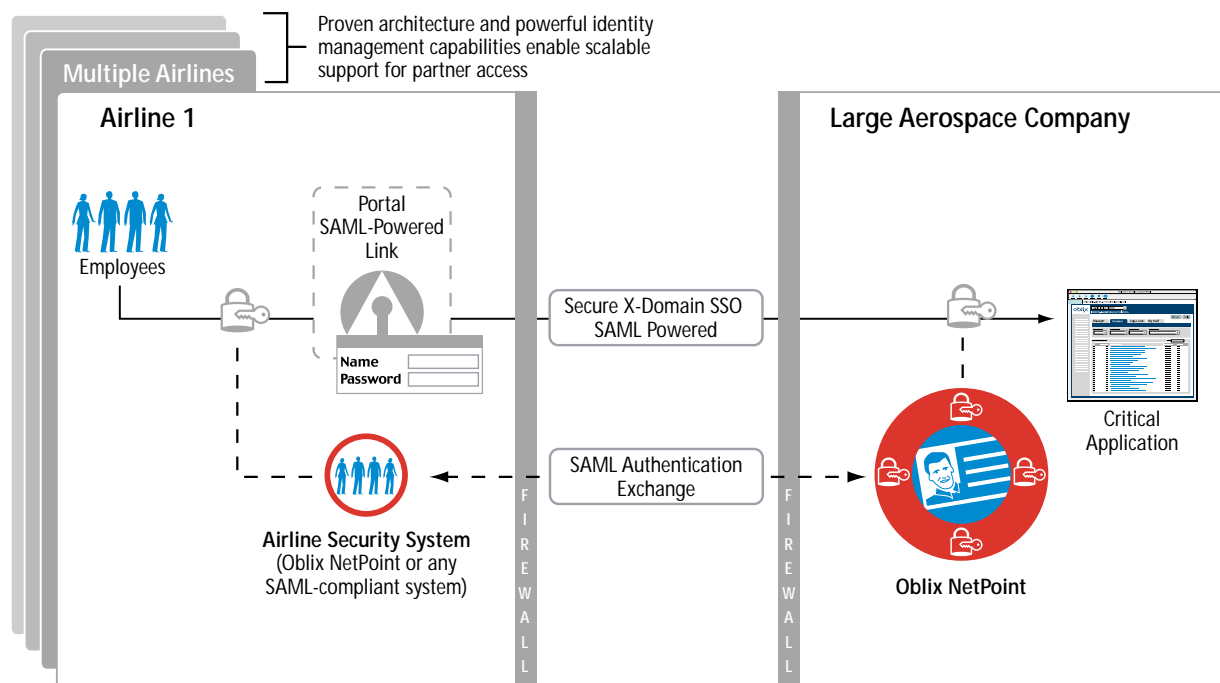
Large Aerospace Manufacturer Drives Down Supply Chain Interaction Costs

This section examines how one of Oblix's customers, a large aerospace manufacturer, discovered that leading edge interoperability technology found within Oblix NetPoint is a requirement for sharing highly sensitive information across security boundaries with a partner. The aerospace corporation partners closely with a particular airline that buys airplanes exclusively from the aerospace manufacturer. In return, the aerospace company provides the airline's mechanics with access to an application containing highly sensitive airplane maintenance information. While this type of supply chain interaction is quite standard, significant gains are realized by carrying it out electronically through the Internet. Compared to more traditional information exchange methods such as printed manuals, Web-based access is significantly more efficient, less costly, and more secure. It also provides a high level of data integrity, ensuring that partners see only the most up-to-date information.

Implementing the Web-based partnership was complicated by a number of constraints. First, to reduce overhead costs associated with lost passwords and multiple login account management, the airline mechanics require access to the maintenance information with only a single sign-on to the airline corporate portal. At the same time, the aerospace company must maintain complete control over who accesses this highly sensitive data. Herein lays the challenge: two corporate security systems must exchange and trust one another's authentication and authorization events, yet exist under the governance of separate corporations. Given that the aerospace corporation hopes to develop similar partnerships with other airlines, each with hundreds or thousands of employees, the solution must be highly scalable.

Enabling a user logged into one security domain to transparently access resources in another domain protected by an entirely different security system is known as federated single sign-on. Oblix NetPoint is uniquely positioned to address the aerospace manufacturer's federated single sign-on challenge with the following key features:

- **The NetPoint SAML Services™** for a secure means of exchanging trusted user authentication, authorization, and user attribute assertions between Web sites each having their own security system. Through the NetPoint SAML Services, the airline's mechanics have seamless single sign-on between the airline's corporate portal and the aerospace manufacturer's maintenance application, while the aerospace company maintains absolute authorization control over its applications. Compliant with the OASIS-defined SAML version 1.0 standard, Oblix NetPoint's SAML Services are differentiated from other solutions on the market by the completeness of its support for the standard, and by the fact that it supports the first and only existing real world SAML system implementation today. For more information about the NetPoint SAML Services, see *Oblix NetPoint SAML Services: The Building of Secure Online Partnerships*, available at www.oblix.com.
- **Market-leading Identity Management** capabilities for scalable support of SAML-based partnerships. Federated single sign-on requires identity federation — the exchange and synchronization of user authentication (and possibly authorization) information across security domains. For example, prior to the exchange of SAML messages between the aerospace and airline companies, they



A large aerospace corporation relies on Oblix NetPoint to deliver critical applications to its partners across security domains

must synchronize a common set of identifiers for each airline user requesting access. They must also maintain these identifiers over time, even as the airline employees are hired, retired, or change job roles. This can become a costly administrative issue for companies trying to support hundreds of SAML-based partnerships. Oblix NetPoint solves this problem by allowing partner companies to accurately exchange, synchronize, and manage identity data in a scalable and cost-effective way through features such as support for dynamic groups, identity workflow, multi-tier delegated administration, self-service, password management, and identity Web services. Only Oblix NetPoint features complete SAML support integrated with market-leading Identity Management features.

- **Proven performance and scalable architecture** to ensure scalable support of multiple SAML-based partnerships. Oblix NetPoint has consistently demonstrated itself to be a market leader in performance and scalability, both in benchmark testing, as well as by real, large scale deployments supporting millions of users.

Large Automobile Manufacturer Enables Successful Partner Collaboration

Leaders in both automobile and aerospace industries recognize that they are in a climate where they compete more based on the ability of their supply chains, and less at the level of their individual products or services. Collaborative partnerships have now become the foundation for delivering higher quality services and achieving competitive advantage. One of Oblix's customers is a leading automobile manufacturer with a long history of supply chain innovation focused on improving partner collaboration. One of those innovations is a portal for authorized supplier partners. The portal connects over 17,000 supplier companies with the automobile manufacturer, giving over 70,000 users access to the portal (53,000 of those are from supplier companies, external to the automobile manufacturer).

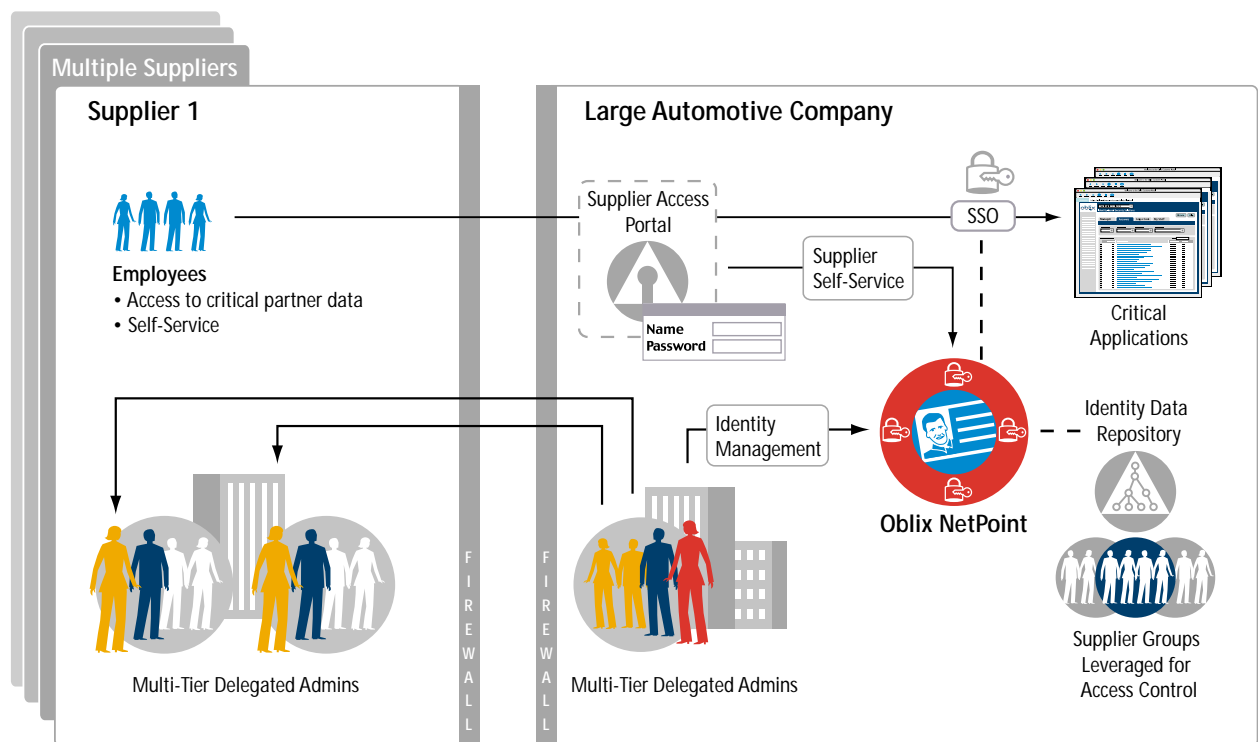
For example, when the automobile manufacturer contracts a supplier to provide brake shoes for a specific car model, the supplier employees can go to portal to check on production schedules, enabling them to become more agile in managing inventories. The supplier avoids building up too much inventory ahead of time based on an anticipated demand that never materializes. At the same time, the supplier also doesn't underestimate demand, thereby missing revenue opportunities. The automobile manufacturer is ensured that its supplier is building, stocking, and shipping parts in lockstep with its forecasted schedules.

Prior to implementing Oblix NetPoint in 2002, the automobile manufacturer used a homegrown system to manage supplier access to the portal. Although the system provided adequate access security features, its Identity Management features were not easily customized to match the automobile manufacturer's way of managing supplier identities. Designating who could access the portal, and what information they could see, quickly became a laborious and expensive task. In the end, the administrative costs became prohibitive; the system was too complex, unreliable, and did not scale.

For the automobile manufacturer, and other firms facing similar challenges, Oblix NetPoint provides the right features for the management of partner identities, which can be leveraged to securely control access to sensitive portal content. Today, Oblix NetPoint enables the automobile manufacturer to successfully collaborate with its suppliers in a cost-effective and secure manner.

Key Oblix NetPoint product features for scalable and flexible management of portal user identities include:

- **Group management** to manage and control Web access as a group, rather than individually handling each user's needs, and to make it easier to add new users and new applications to a secure environment. Oblix NetPoint supports static, dynamic, nested, and hybrid groups. In all, the automobile manufacturer is effectively managing over 100,000 supplier groups with Oblix NetPoint.
- **Multi-level delegated administration** to allow distribution of responsibility of identity information management throughout a network of internal and external users. Oblix NetPoint's delegated administration capabilities enable fine-grained delegation of administrative rights, and unlike competing products, supports unlimited levels of delegation. The automobile manufacturer set up a distributed, top-down administrative structure comprised of 7 layers of administrators, 3 of



A large automobile manufacturer relies on Oblix NetPoint's Identity Management capabilities for flexible, scalable, and cost-effective administration of identity data

which reside within supplier companies. This model flexibly accommodates varying organizational structures across both the automobile manufacturer and each of its suppliers, with each layer of administration responsible for structuring and maintaining their own supplier groups and sub-groups, and able to delegate specific administrative rights to the next layer below.

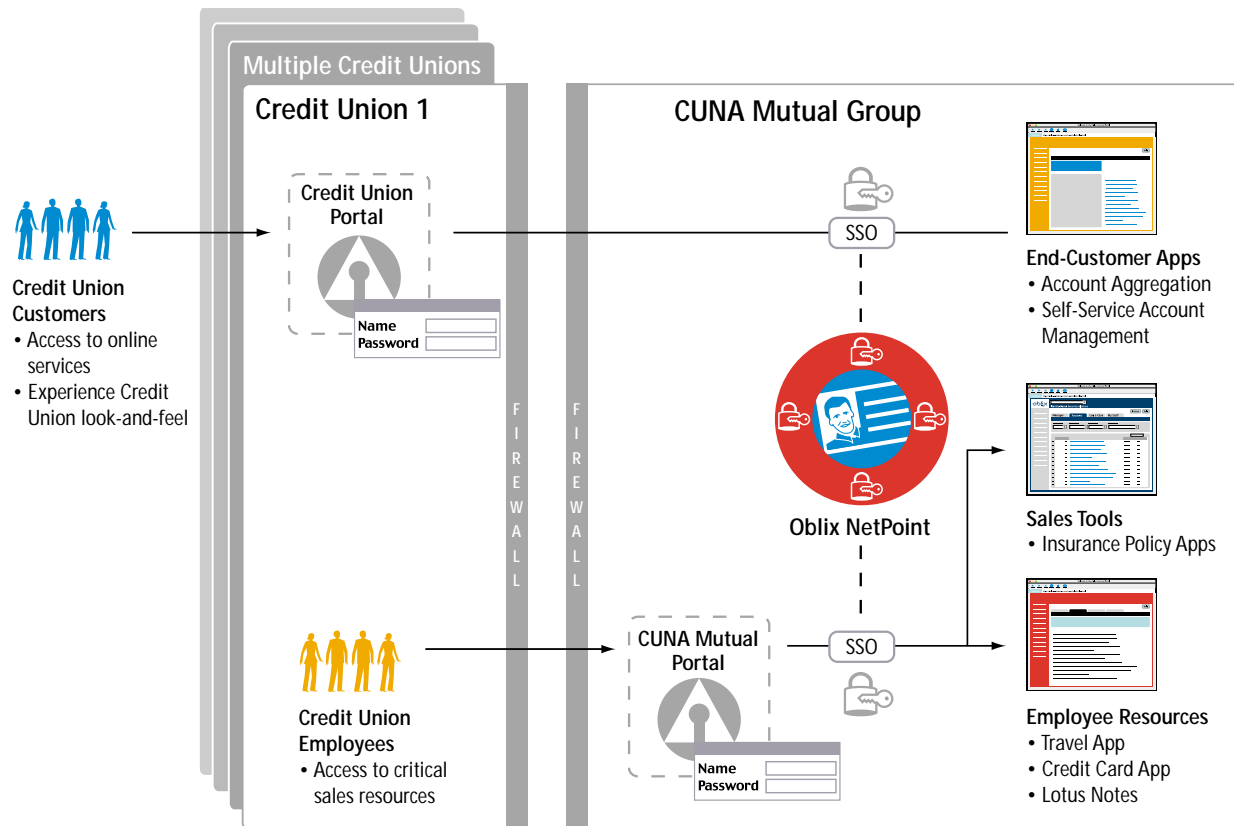
- **Workflow-based self-service and self-registration** to automate and streamline otherwise costly processes for portal users to administer their own identity information and request services. The automobile manufacturer implemented Oblix NetPoint's self-service and self-registration features to streamline supplier requests for access to the portal, and to specific applications within the portal, with approval up the administrative chain.

CUNA Mutual Empowers its Sales Force

CUNA Mutual Group is the leading financial services provider to credit unions and their members, partnering with nearly 95% of the 10,000 credit unions in the United States. Over the last five years, CUNA Mutual has jumped at the opportunity to deliver an ever-growing range of financial services over the Web. These services include online banking, account aggregation, insurance loan, and instant credit decision services. While these services are targeted towards consumers, they are marketed by the credit unions, many of which could not easily provide such a wide breadth of services on their own. CUNA also delivers Web-based sales tools and employee resources to its own remote sales staff housed in credit unions. CUNA relies on Oblix NetPoint to provide highly secure Web single sign-on across these services and resources, as well personalization services. With this, CUNA is empowering its sales forces with the right tools to drive increased revenues and improve sales operations productivity.

CUNA leveraged the following key Oblix NetPoint features:

- **Highly Scalable SSO** for secure real-time access to multiple Web applications. With this, CUNA provides 60 million consumer customers with seamless access to portfolios of financial services — a level of service required to satisfy customers today. Providing single sign-on to sales tools not only increases sales force effectiveness, but also eliminates serious security risks and help desk costs associated with remote sales representatives having upwards of 12 passwords without it.
- **IdentityXML™** for programmatic access to Oblix NetPoint-managed identity data, which in turn can be leveraged for personalization. Through IdentityXML, the interfaces for each of CUNA Mutual's consumer products can be customized with the look-and-feel of each credit union portal, thereby enabling the credit unions to present a consistent and better experience for their customers.



CUNA Mutual relies on Oblix NetPoint for seamless and personalized delivery of sales services and tools

"They're the experts in Identity Management and access control. By partnering with Oblix, we believe we are providing a high level of security for our Web-based systems. We also like Oblix's responsiveness to meeting customers' needs. They're proactively leading the pack to provide functionality that we're going to need in the future. Oblix started in Identity Management and moved into access control. What we found is that access control is the easy part. The hard part is Identity Management. We think Oblix does that better than anyone."

— Steve Devoti
IT Department Manager of Directory Services
CUNA Mutual

Driving Real Business Results

Regardless of product, service, or industry, companies today understand the criticality of building strong supply chain partner relationships and streamlining partner interactions. Mastering partner relationships through the supply chain portal is delivering real business benefits today, from increased margins to improved partner collaborations, to higher levels of product quality. These companies have learned that effective Identity Management plays a critical role in the success of supply chain portal deployments. Oblix NetPoint has become the leading Identity Management solution, powering supply chain portals by providing high levels of security while at the same time delivering cost effective and flexible administrative solutions.