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## Atlanta Falcons Case Study





 **Hitachi Solutions**



## National Football League Team Gives Back to Fans with New Online Store

### Customer Profile

Founded in 1966, The Atlanta Falcons Football Club is one of 32 teams in the National Football League. The team plays in the NFC South division and is based in Atlanta, Georgia.

### INDUSTRY

Sports and Entertainment

### LOCATION

United States

**“The site is much more fan-friendly than the previous site. The new site has much easier navigation — it’s more like what you see on larger ecommerce sites like Amazon.”**

**Don Norton, Manager of Business Information Systems, Atlanta Falcons**

The Atlanta Falcons Football Club, one of the 32 teams in the National Football League, is a well-established sports franchise with a great fan base. In order to streamline its merchandising service for their fans, the team decided to revamp its merchandise operations, which meant a makeover for its not-quite-Monday-night ready website. The previous Falcons 365 website, online since 2005, left much to be desired on both the back office and front store. For one, orders were not well integrated with the ERP. Frequently orders required laborious manual processing, such as moving information from the store once an order was placed and updating the store once the order has gone through processing. Also, customers were not able to track their orders easily, and the navigation of the site was not as polished as the team wanted. Implementing the standard Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce product remedied all these problems, and features such as online purchase and advanced redemption of gift cards made the site top of the line.

### CHALLENGE

The Atlanta Falcons began their 2008-2009 season not only with a new quarterback and coach, but revamped the online store as well. As a large organization in such a fan-centric industry as professional football, the Atlanta Falcons found its online store to be lacking the right fan experience for their customers. The previous store, online since 2005, was not robust enough to track the online purchasing habits of







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Chris DiPierri, Director of Retail  
Atlanta Falcons

the fans or make their experience the best it could be. And having to manually process some orders with its ERP and payment processor delayed order realization. So when the organization decided to move its warehouse fulfillment from a third-party to inhouse, they also decided the online store could use a renovation as well.

The previous site was not providing the user experience that the organization wanted to communicate about the brand. After conceiving a list of needs for a new site, the IT team realized that it would be more costefficient to find an out-of-the-box ecommerce solution that hit everything on their wish-list. Top features the Falcons needed included better search engine optimization, automated integration with their ERP and streamlined gift card purchase and redemption with integration to their gift card providers. In addition, the site needed to be updated to give the fans an all-around great experience with easy navigation and a clean interface, and needed to be easy for site administrators to quickly maintain or change content.

## SOLUTION

After searching extensively for a cost-effective solution, they found Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce. “We saw how extensive and expensive it would be to custom-develop [such an application],” said Don Norton, manager of business information systems and executive support for the Falcons. “So we looked for an IT company that could integrate with our systems as part of its out-of-the-box offering.” Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce proved to be just the software, allowing the company to accomplish not only its main goal (to automatically integrate its front store with the back office) but other needed features as well.

The Atlanta Falcons IT team chose to install four Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce modules. There are six modules available with the Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce package, all of which offer flexibility and robust automation and seamless integration:

- Core Module, which includes one storefront as well as fraud detection and real-time reporting
- Merchandising Management Module
- ERP Integration (Basic) Module
- ERP Integration (Advanced) Module
- Business to Business Customer and Reseller Management Module
- Marking and Promotions Management Module



**“Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce not only easily integrates into the back-office ERP to help boost a merchant’s online productivity but also is a marketing and selling platform with powerful search engine optimization and marketing analytics that help merchants like the Falcons sell more with no additional labor cost. That leads to an incredible ROI and productivity story.”**

Sandeep Walia, Executive Vice President, Hitachi Solutions America, Ltd.

Each module that the Atlanta Falcons purchased provides them with the much-needed features they requested in their initial search for a new site. For example, with the Core module, the sales team are able to gauge store trends and best-selling products as well as search engine optimization results. The Marketing and Promotions module makes incentive and promotion-based selling a breeze and at the same time increases a retailer’s \$ per order by introducing intelligence cross-sell and upsell capabilities. Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce not only made tracking orders and product inventory simple for the Atlanta Falcons, it also facilitated the transition to in-house warehouse fulfillment by easily managing the site’s remaining dropship items. The ERP Integration Module makes sure information is transferred between the online retail store and the company’s Microsoft Dynamics GP in near real-time.

As a Microsoft Gold-Certified Business Solutions Partner, Hitachi Solutions has implemented its proprietary software for over 150 sites with the majority of them integrated with either a Microsoft Dynamics ERP or Sage ERP. Hitachi Solutions understood the goals the Falcons had for the online store. By implementing the standard out-of-the-box software and adding a few customizations, the expertise of the Hitachi Solutions team ensured the new Falcons 365 online store was a touchdown. “Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce not only easily integrates into the back-office ERP to help boost a merchant’s online productivity but also is a marketing and selling platform with powerful search engine optimization and marketing analytics that help merchants like the Falcons sell more with no additional labor cost. That leads to an incredible ROI and productivity story,” said Sandeep Walia, Executive Vice President, Hitachi Solutions America, Ltd.

## **BENEFITS**

### **Automated Integration with Microsoft Dynamics GP and Payment Processing**

One of the main benefits of the transition to Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce was its integration with Microsoft GP. Now the site’s administrators no longer have to manually pull information from the front store and back as orders make their way through processing.

Another automated integration, credit card authorization and charging, has also increased efficiency and streamlined order processing. Before, site administrators had to manually charge a customer’s credit card and update the information into GP. Now, Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce communicates with the site’s third-party payment processor so an automatic credit card authorization takes place as soon as the customer orders, with the actual charging automatically occurring once the order is shipped.



## WHY HITACHI SOLUTIONS?

Hitachi Solutions is one of the largest, most qualified and highly experienced Microsoft Dynamics consulting firms across the globe, capable of handling complex tier-one displacement projects. Our company's caliber of expertise and commitment to customers is evidenced through our consistent recognition from both Microsoft and industry analysts. Contact a Hitachi Solutions expert to discuss how our Microsoft Dynamics Solutions can help improve your productivity.

### Easy Gift Card Purchase and Redemption

Prior to the new site, customers could not redeem more than one gift card at a time. Hitachi Solutions leveraged its gift card/gift certificate functionality and integrated it with the Falcon's third-party gift card validator, SVS. Now, a customer can redeem even multiple gift cards with one order quickly and easily and use the same cards either online or at brick and mortar stores.

### World-Class Customer Experience

The new site offers fans a superior user experience. New features on the front store include advanced browsing and better product images, simplified checkout processes, and a My Account section that tracks the status of all of a customer's orders and stores order history, addresses, and credit cards. In addition, there are features that entice a customer to come back to the site, including promotions and newsletters alerting them of the football team's in-store appearances or new branded gear. "Incorporating Hitachi Solutions Ecommerce into our storefront has helped us better serve the fans by giving up-to-the-minute details on the latest product lines and team promotions while delivering a much greater degree of shopping interactivity," says Chris DiPierri, Atlanta Falcons Director of Retail.

### Better Sales Tracking Tools

The old site offered limited reports and tracking resources for the web store staff to track what fans were buying online. Now the site automatically up sells products while in the shopping cart. Falcons staff can also see where customers came from, what search terms they used to get to the store and Customers can see similar products or other products that customers also purchased. In addition, search optimization and anti-fraud tools included in the Core Module ensure that the people get to the site easily and suspicious orders are flagged for review and removed.

Already, the new site has seen great results. The store's ROI has been very apparent; the site now processes orders three times the volume that it did last year with no additional labor cost to the Falcons compared to the previous year.

The streamlined look and operation of the site has been a hit with the fans, and if 2008 was any indication, fans of the Falcons team will be buying from and interacting with the Falcons team in a higher volume than before.