

**Can ordering from a contract lab be as easy as shopping on the Web? To optimize its customer service and order processing, Lünen-based UCL Umwelt Control Labor GmbH is setting up a LIMS-based Web Shop. Customers can use it to order tests and view test results at any time.**

“We noticed that every one of our customers had recurrent orders, and we could use these to determine their so-called ‘top ten’!” This realization, which resulted from extensive customer surveys, was borne out by UCL president Martin Langkamp in a project to add a Web Shop to the services provided by his contract laboratory. “On our side, the new feature was intended to, above all, to simplify the process of receiving and managing orders, since we still receive many customer orders by fax or even over the phone, sometimes even after we’ve received the sample.” Saving time and money and reducing potential transcription error are therefore the main motivations for implementing this project.



### **Web-savvy customers**

Customers of the laboratory group’s six locations are already used to receiving the results of their analyses via the Web. UCL has been operating the Web Info system which allows customers to log on at any time to find out the status of their analytical jobs and even view detailed order results online. Martin Langkamp foresees no problems with the introduction of a Web Shop. All he needs is a structure and level of user-friendliness that is comparable to the online query system, which was set up to be largely self-explanatory and is supported only by a context-sensitive help system. Apart from that, the Web Shop will be connected via an interface to the LISA.lims, in which all analytical and working processes are mapped.

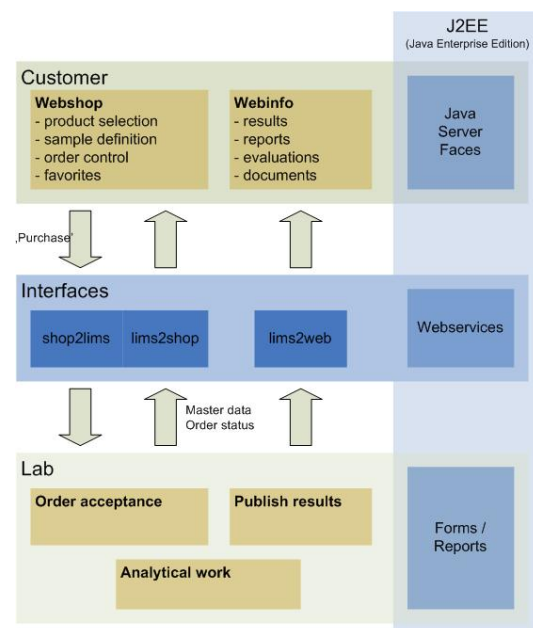
## Products and favorites

The survey of UCL customer job profiles revealed that it would be possible to record around 80 percent of orders with the new Web Shop and optimize the order processing at the same time. This high proportion comes from the fact that the majority of test jobs in the “Air, Soil and Water” analysis divisions, which are UCL’s main areas of activity, are fixed. They are based partly on regulations such as the landfill directive, the sewage, soil protection or chemicals directive, and partly on customer- and project-specific requirements. The potential for standardization results from the fact that these recurring tests can be combined into defined “Products” or “Favorites.” Customers can set up entire analysis packages and then order either all or parts of them at the click of a mouse. It was important to UCL’s management that this “top ten theme” be reflected not just in a fixed test area and in predefined electronic order forms. This is because in spite of the standardization, UCL wanted to maintain total flexibility in the composition of orders: “The system must reflect what the customer wants, and we will continue to give our customers the full range of options for customizing their orders,” confirms Martin Langkamp. He sees an attractive benefit in the fact that customers can use the standard projects they set up to create their own databank basis, which can be used in subsequent evaluations such as project-related analytical procedures.

## Starting with one complex customer profile

At the start of the project, UCL decided to team up with just one customer, whose complex requirements were identified from the Web Shop through the combined efforts of the laboratory and the engineering office. After successful monitoring and evaluation of this pilot phase the Web Shop was progressively opened to more customers and customer groups, until the entire range of UCL services – environmental and pollutant analysis, business analysis, work analysis and plant protection and drinking water analysis were mapped in the Web Shop. **Result:** The

combination of new Web Shop and LISA.lims has achieved a conceptual continuity that links together the areas of product selection, shopping cart, analytical status information and a view of results and makes them accessible for customers through the internet!



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