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## An Agreement That Works

Thomas Hoffman

**June 12, 2006** (Computerworld) When Agristar Global Networks Ltd. in Chicago launched a satellite-based service in 2003 to connect commercial farmers and ranchers with trade partners, it wanted to provide customers with a portal where they could check on news, weather and market prices.

But when it requested proposals from vendors, Agristar Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Joseph Kruszynski discovered that many outsourcers wanted \$50,000 just to implement and launch the portal service, never mind the monthly user and service fees that would be added on top of that.

After shopping around, Agristar entered into a software-as-a-service agreement with InfoStreet Inc. in Tarzana, Calif. The application service provider (ASP) provides a customizable portal called StreetSmart and charges Agristar about \$4,000 a month for the service, which includes training and support costs.

Under the contract, which started in May 2003, Agristar paid InfoStreet a "nominal" fee to set up the portal and integrate the system with Agristar's e-mail system, says Kruszynski. Agristar also had to shell out a small amount of money to integrate the system with the Hughes Network Satellite services it uses. "It wasn't much of a cost," says Kelly Paradis, director of Web development at Agristar, which now has several thousand customers using the portal.

Although Agristar is happy with the agreement, it has the option to back out of the contract with 90 days' notice at a cost of less than \$5,000, says Kruszynski.

InfoStreet has made one modification to the original agreement. When Agristar first signed the deal, InfoStreet guaranteed 99.95% uptime for the portal. Beginning in April, the ASP upped that guarantee to 99.99%, says InfoStreet CEO Siamak Farah.

"Part of the reason that our termination costs are so low is that we stand by our product," Farah says.

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