

## **Web-based trade show called first of its kind**

Associated Press

**ST. LOUIS** - A suburban St. Louis accounting firm has the answer to the cost of traveling to trade shows - a Web-based virtual technology fair.

Brown Smith Wallace is sponsoring the distribution industry's first Internet-based tech fair Tuesday and Wednesday at <http://www.virtualtechfair.com>. Brown Smith Wallace produces an annual software guide for the distribution industry, and its consulting group advises companies that are choosing software.

The fair will bring together software vendors and buyers from warehousing and distribution firms. Buyers can browse a convention "floor" displayed on the site. They can read information and then talk to vendor representatives staffing virtual booths, using instant message chat, e-mail and Internet-based phones.

At their leisure, visitors can hear educational presentations from a dozen speakers. The virtual fair even offers attendance prizes.

Jeff Gusdorf, an accountant in Brown Smith Wallace's consulting group, said software vendors have sought a more cost-effective way to reach their audience.

The typical vendor spends \$20,000 on a trade show, including the cost of travel, shipping for booth displays and employees to man the booth. At the virtual fair, the 25 vendors pay from \$2,500 to \$4,000 to participate.

Also, Gusdorf said a virtual fair means anyone with an Internet connection can attend. Admission is free.

If the virtual fair is a success, Brown Smith Wallace will offer it twice a year. The company expects 1,000 people to register.

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Information from: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, <http://www.stltoday.com>.