

Colony Ants Build Info Solutions

By [Brian Proffitt](#)

Letting ants into your home or business is not usually something people think is a good idea. Transcom Software's product line will make you reconsider, particularly when you see how helpful this Colony of Ants can be.

The Ants are actually autonomous search agents, part of the Colony 3.0 application from Transcom. Designed to be like their biological namesakes, Colony's agents are relentless and tireless in their pursuit of information on the Web.

That isn't all these agents can do. Besides search functions, the intelligent agents within Colony can interact with users as well, using what Transcom calls Automated Intelligent Decision-Making technology. With AIDM, Transcom claims, agents "operate with AI-like qualities of inference, probabilistic reasoning and induction."

The solutions found within Colony can be customized for enterprise, vertical, and meta portals. A good example of this last can be seen at [PlanetColony.com](#), which functions as a typical meta-search engine--though with a nice twist.

The twist is a natural language agent called CoolDroid that camps out on the front page of PlanetColony. The agent does a fairly good job of answering questions and providing answers, though the information it has at hand is a bit sparse. This does not seem to be so much a performance issue as a just the newness of the PlanetColony portal.

Besides the solo search features of Colony, you can also implement the search functions with other users, as collaborative group information management. This feature can also be examined with up to 10 users at the [TryColony](#) Web site.

This collaboration methodology highlights one of Colony's greatest strengths: that while the individual agent actions are unpredictable, the actions of the group are self-organizing over time. This is true for a group of human users or the intelligent agents within Colony.

Colony will run with the Windows NT 4.0 Server with SP3 or higher, with MS SQL Server 6.5 or higher and IIS 4.0. Client interaction can be performed with any standard Web browser.