CASE W2.1

EC Application

BOMBAY SAPPHIRE IN VIRTUAL GLASSES

Bacardi USA, marketer and distributor of Bombay Sapphire gin in the United States, was looking for a new way to market the product. In its print advertisements, the company had used one-of-a-kind martini glasses designed by big-name designers like Karim Rashid and Dakota Jackson to symbolize the "classiness" of the drink. Likewise, the company's Web site was stunningly executed. However, it was a one-way communication effort—from the company to the consumer.

Bacardi decided to team up with MFP Interact (MFPI) and Mass Transmit to plan an interactive campaign for the product. They developed a "make-your-own-martini-glass" campaign, which was launched in October 2001 at *asexpressedbyyou.com*. Visitors to the site can design their own martini glasses by manipulating properties such as transparency, scale, and color. Bacardi provided detailed specifications on how things could visually look (e.g., only bright blues are available to match the brand). Site visitors create their own martini glasses and can then e-mail them to friends.

The campaign showed early signs of success. Within the first month online, 8,921 glasses were designed; and two-thirds of the users agreed to receive advertisements for future Bacardi promotions. The average visit to this site is 5 to 20 minutes. Considering that the usual visit to a similar site is measured in seconds, this is a solid accomplishment. Consumer feedback is very positive, and the company plans to go global with the campaign.

Sources: Compiled from Hurwicz (2002) and from *bombaysapphire.com* (accessed April 2003).

Questions

1. How is personalization done in this case?
2. Why do you think the glasses are virtual and not manufactured by the company?
3. What lessons for online branding can be learned from this case?
4. Enter *bombaysapphire.com* and design a glass. Comment on your experience.

CASE W2.2

EC Application

CISCO'S VIRTUAL CLOSE

Cisco Systems, the company that supplies the vast networks that connect computers to the Internet, is using technology to develop a product, Virtual Close, with which a company can close its accounting records (its "books") more quickly. This will be done by connecting the accounting and financial records of an entire company, even one with operations in dozens of countries, via an intranet. Cisco's infrastructure will permit information sharing almost instantly.

Cisco is implementing such a system for itself. Closing the quarterly accounts used to take up to 10 days. Within 4 years, the chief financial officer worked the close down to 2 days (and significantly cut its cost). And, within five years, Cisco achieved its goal: It closes its books at the end of the quarter, the month, and the year by noon the next day.

The advantages for Cisco and any other company that uses Virtual Close are:

- It provides strategic advantage to corporations, enabling then to make better decisions.
- Companies can become proactive, spotting problems at any time, instead of just once a quarter. Problems that would otherwise have remained unseen for months can be quickly addressed and their damage minimized.
- New opportunities can be detected early, allowing companies to exploit them quickly.
- Virtual Close will enable quick "drill-down" analysis, which locates the causes of either poor or excellent performance.
- It will bring huge productivity gains related to corporate financial reporting.

Implementing Virtual Close in a large company is a lengthy process that may end in failure due to the project's complexity. However, not implementing it might result in a competitive disadvantage.

Sources: Compiled from McCleanahen (2002), Beiser (1999), and press releases at *cisco.com* (2000, 2003).

Questions

1. What are the advantages of a virtual close?
2. How can Cisco benefit, as a vendor, from marketing this concept?
3. Is this EC? Why or why not?