



Leading retailer makes Internet shopping a personal experience

By matching the ambiance of its unique stores, Brookstone (www.brookstoneonline.com) has elevated its online offerings of innovative, eclectic and hard-to-find tools and products from simply a digital catalog to an integrated shopping experience that can be shaped according to each consumer's interests. According to Brookstone, its e-business strategy had to be based on three key principles: close integration with other operations to deliver a seamless "Brookstone experience"; continued marketing to promote new and repeat site traffic; and the capacity to keep up with anticipated growth.

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—Michael Anthony,
President and CEO at Brookstone

"Brookstone worked hard to translate the special atmosphere of their stores and catalogs into their online site. They simulated walking down an aisle in the store and made it easy for visitors to browse," says Sharyn Rached, vice president of operations for the i9 Internet Commerce Group, the co-developer of www.brookstoneonline.com.

Creating a comprehensive solution

Brookstone Company, headquartered in Nashua, NH, realized early on that online success depended on more than merely hosting an online catalog. As a result, IBM Business Partners i9 Internet Commerce Group in New York City and Trifecta Technologies in Allentown, PA built and launched the new site. Subsequent updates to the Web site have been made by Web Emporium in Phoenix, AZ.

Brookstone's comprehensive e-business solution incorporates IBM Net.Commerce, Net.Data and DB2 on AIX powered by the IBM RS/6000 Web server. One reason Net.Commerce was selected was its robust

Application	Internet-based electronic catalog with secure online ordering
Business Benefits	International presence; site traffic increasing 10 percent each month; increased sales; increased knowledge of customer base
Software	IBM® Net.Commerce IBM DB2® IBM Net.Data™ IBM AIX®
Hardware	IBM RS/6000®

AIX solution, which offers high performance and extensive hooks for the planned integration with Brookstone's fulfillment systems. Another key reason was the scalability of



Brookstone brings its unique ambiance to the Web for an integrated shopping experience.

Net.Commerce, which was necessary to accommodate the ever-increasing volume of visitors to Brookstone's site. Brookstone launched its Internet site in November 1997, and thanks to an aggressive marketing strategy, more than 100,000 consumers visited the site in the first month.

By January, Brookstone had expanded the site's offerings and capabilities. The site is updated daily, plus randomly displayed home page graphics and other selections ensure the site remains fresh to frequent visitors. Descriptions and photos convey the appeal of more than 600 available products, which represent about 50 percent of the products listed in Brookstone's print catalog. About 6 percent of online orders are from overseas customers, giving Brookstone an international presence it never had before.

Creating a unified image

Brookstone made a strategic decision to incorporate the "look and feel" of both its catalog and storefront operations into the Web site. The experience of "thumbing" through Brookstone's print catalog is duplicated by allowing shoppers to electronically "browse" their product selection by price or product description. Web Emporium designed the site's browsing feature to give all products an equal chance of being purchased. Upon entering the online catalog, each visitor sees a different set of products.

Specific items can be located by using the site's search engine, another unique Web Emporium design. Visitors to the site can conduct a free-form search based on any combination of catalog numbers, price ranges and specific categories including categories for special holidays, such as Father's Day.

Currently, after making a selection, customers can place orders online with secure credit card transactions or by phone or fax. In the near future, Brookstone plans to integrate the online site with its financial, inventory and logistics systems, which, for example, will allow customers to find out if an item is in stock before ordering or to view an estimated shipping date. Brookstone will benefit by being able to reduce call volumes at its call center.

Cultivating customers

In addition to creating synergy between its real-world stores and its Web site, Brookstone is also looking to its e-business solution to increase customer traffic. Traffic to the site has increased an average of 10 percent per month since the site was launched. A primary focus of the site is to register customers. Their profiles differ somewhat from Brookstone's retail and catalog customers. By cultivating these customers, Brookstone can expand beyond its traditional customer base.

"It's a convenient way to shop online," says Michael Anthony, Brookstone's president and CEO. "The interactive nature of the medium also allows Brookstone to easily and inexpensively communicate with our customers about their product interests. Brookstone has a wide variety of specialty gift items. The more we know about our customers, the more we can personalize and customize products for their needs."

Putting the focus on business

In addition to the usual traffic-generating tactics of promoting the Web site in its catalog and registering with search engines, Brookstone is also promoting mutual marketing agreements. These agreements offer other sites a commission for Brookstone products sold through that site. "Many companies make the mistake of designing a site, then creating a marketing plan to promote that site," says Barry Levine, president of the i9 Internet Commerce Group. "It's much more effective to create your marketing plan first, then build your site. That way you know what the goals of your site are, and you can more easily shape the site to meet targeted customer or prospect requirements as well as corporate imperatives."

Like IBM, the folks at Brookstone believe e-business is more than just technology. With careful planning and consistent integration with its existing promotional strategies, Brookstone has opened a store in cyberspace that delivers the same impression as its other retail stores. Everything's there at www.brookstoneonline.com — everything, perhaps, except for that heavenly feeling of sitting in a Brookstone massage lounger.

For more information, please contact your IBM Marketing Representative or IBM Business Partner.

Visit our Website at:
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For more information on Brookstone, visit its Website at:
www.brookstoneonline.com

For more information on i9 Internet Commerce Group, visit its Website at:
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For more information on Web Emporium, visit its Website at:
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