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Branding (as currently practiced) Is Dead

[Regis McKenna](#), 03.25.02

Billions are spent on useless strategy.

Regis McKenna is considered to be the marketing guru of Silicon Valley, having worked with more than 300 startups, including Apple and Intel. He is chairman of The McKenna Group in Palo Alto, California.

People are astonished when I tell them that Intel had better than an 80% market share in microprocessors before it ran its first "Intel Inside" ad. Consumer brand awareness came only after decades of R&D and competitive in-fighting to create a standard and get design wins at IBM, Dell, Compaq, and others. To hear the branding experts talk, one would think that Intel didn't exist prior to their TV ads. Branding is a marketing myth that pervades the thinking of most Information Age marketers.







High-Technology Brands: Misconceptions Versus Realities

MISCONCEPTIONS

Technology products are bought on the basis of the price-performance ratio, period.

High switching costs associated with a large installed base are the key to profitability.

Brand management is used when product differentiation is difficult or impossible.

Branding is something the marketing department does, and as such, it means advertising, trade shows, and sales literature. The results are hard to measure.

REALITIES

Price and performance are important, but other factors may also be highly influential. Additionally, the people involved in purchase decisions may weigh various performance factors differently.

True for a while, but customers don't like to feel trapped, and competitors are dedicated to offering seamless transitions, along with better performance and functionality.

By then it's too late. A brand's promise of value is the core element of differentiation, not an alternative to it.

The promise of value must be reflected in every aspect of the complete product offering in tangible and measurable ways. Even psychological rewards among brand users, like trust, can be measured and related to business performance.

■ FT가 꼽은 '올해의 100대 브랜드' 살펴보니

톱10 브랜드 중 6개가 IT기업

인터넷검색업체 구글이 전 세계 기업 브랜드 중 최고의 가치를 보유한 것으로 나타났다. 우리나라 대표기업인 삼성의 브랜드는 58위에 랭크됐다. 파이낸셜타임스는 20개국 400개 대표 브랜드를 대상으로 선정한 세계 100대 브랜드에서 구글이 2년 연속 1위를 차지했다고 21일 전했다.

구글은 21세기 인터넷시대를 사는 현대인들이 정보에 빠르고 쉽게 전달하는 능력을 바탕으로 가장 강력한 브랜드 파워를 구축한 것으로 분석됐다.

구글 뿐 아니라 마이크로소프트(3위), 차이나모바일(5위), IBM(6위), 애플(7위), 노키아(9위) 등 정보통신(IT)기업의 브랜드가 10위 안에 대거 포진했으며 100위권에도 28개가 포함돼 IT가 소비자들에게 깊숙이 각인돼 있음을 시사했다.

FT는 과거 면도기 등 생활용품 전문 브랜드가 강세를 보였던 10년 전 상황과 비교하며 △휴대폰 보급률이 100%를 넘는 점 △PC가격이 물가 평균상승률에 비해 많이 낮아진 점 등이 불과 10년 만에 전체 기업 브랜드 가운데 IT브랜드 비율을 14.3%에서 28.2%로 2배가량 끌어올리는 데 기여했다고 분석했다.

특히 지난해 아이폰을 출시하며 컴퓨터에 이어 휴대폰 시장에 진출한 애플

FT 선정 올해의 브랜드 톱10

(단위:백만달러)

순위	브랜드	가치
1	구글	86,057
2	GE(제너럴 일렉트릭)	71,379
3	마이크로소프트	70,887
4	코카콜라	58,208
5	차이나모바일	57,225
6	IBM	55,335
7	애플	55,206
8	맥도널드	49,499
9	노키아	43,975
10	말보로	37,324

자료:파이낸셜타임스, 밀워드 브라운 옵티머

구글 2년연속 1위 '영예'
차이나모바일 5위 '약진'

톱은 브랜드 가치가 지난해에 비해 무려 123%나 증가, 브랜드 가치 상승률 순위에서도 블랙베리(390% 증가)에 이어 2위를 기록하며 눈길을 끌었다.

나라별로는 미국이 10대 브랜드 중 8개를 차지했으며 세계 최대 이동통신업체 차이나모바일과 역시 세계 최대 휴대폰제조업체 노키아가 비 미국 기업 중 이례적으로 10위권 안에 안착했다.

윌마트와 벤크 오브 아메리카는 미국 기업 순위에서는 9, 10위를 차지했

으나 노키아 등에 밀려 세계 10대 브랜드에는 올라가지 못했다.

우리나라는 삼성(삼성전자)이 58위로 유일하게 100대 브랜드에 포함됐다. 그러나 삼성은 IT브랜드의 전반적 강세에도 불구하고, 지난해 127억4300만 달러였던 브랜드 가치가 1년 새 118억7000만달러로 7% 감소하며 44위에서 14계단 하락해 체면을 구겼다. 반면에 중국은 차이나모바일 외에 글로벌 인수합병(M&A)시장에서 큰손으로 부상한 중국공상은행(CBC-18위), 중국건설은행(CCB-31위), 중국은행(32위) 등 금융자본의 약진에 힘입어 '브랜드 인 차이나(Brand in China)'의 지력을 과시했다.

이 밖에 나이키(나이), 버드와이저(주류), 도요타(자동차), 코카콜라(음료), 맥도널드(패스트푸드), 벤크 오브 아메리카(금융), 윌마트(유통), 푸에비통(명품)이 업종별 대표 브랜드에 꼽혔다.

조사를 수행한 밀워드 브라운 옵티머의 나이켈 홀리스 대표 컨설턴트는 "브랜드 파워가 강한 업체들은 불황에 오히려 투자를 늘리고 이 덕분에 경기가 회복된 후에는 더욱 강해진다"고 비결을 분석했다.

한편 올해 상위 100대 기업의 브랜드 가치 총액은 1조9400억달러로 1년 전보다 21% 늘어났다.

조은이기자 forange@etnews.co.kr

게임기 삼국지
내달 '격랑 예고'

마이크로소프트·소니·닌텐도가 펼치는 게임 삼국지에 위(Wii)의 강세가 이어지는 가운데 X박스360과 플레이스테이션3가 '그랜드프리트오토 TA IV'를 앞세워 반격에 나선다.

닌텐도 역시 기대작으로 맞붙을 높은 계획에서 5월 게임기 전장이 격랑에 휘말릴 것으로 보인다.

마침내 오는 29일 GTA IV가 X박스360과 P

FT 선정 올해의 브랜드 톱10

(단위:백만달러)

순위	브랜드	가치
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자료:파이낸셜타임스, 밀워드 브라운 옵티머

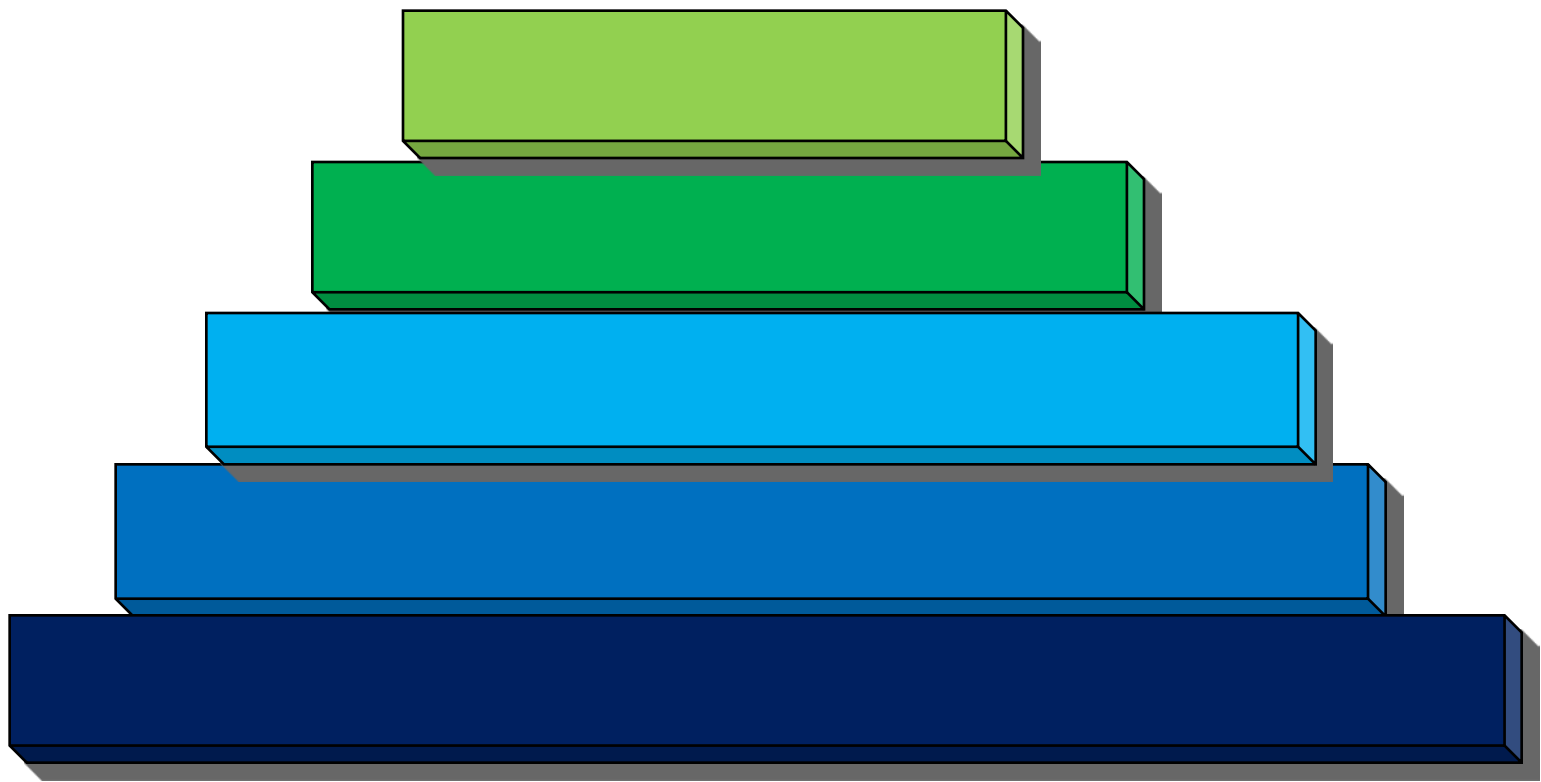


RANK 2007 / 2006	2007 BRAND VALUE \$MILLIONS	2006 BRAND VALUE \$MILLIONS	PERCENT CHANGE	COUNTRY OF OWNERSHIP	
1 1	COCA-COLA	65,324	67,000	-3%	U.S.
2 2	MICROSOFT	58,709	56,926	3%	U.S.
3 3	IBM	57,091	56,201	2%	U.S.
4 4	GE	51,569	48,907	5%	U.S.
5 6	NOKIA	33,696	30,131	12%	Finland
6 7	TOYOTA	32,070	27,941	15%	Japan
7 5	INTEL	30,954	32,319	-4%	U.S.
8 9	MCDONALD'S	29,398	27,501	7%	U.S.
9 8	DISNEY	29,210	27,848	5%	U.S.
10 10	MERCEDES-BENZ	23,568	21,795	8%	Germany
11 11	CITI	23,443	21,458	9%	U.S.
12 13	HEWLETT-PACKARD	22,197	20,458	9%	U.S.
13 15	BMW	21,612	19,617	10%	Germany
14 12	MARLBORO	21,283	21,350	0%	U.S.
15 14	AMERICAN EXPRESS	20,827	19,641	6%	U.S.

RANK 2007 / 2006	2007 BRAND VALUE \$MILLIONS	2006 BRAND VALUE \$MILLIONS	PERCENT CHANGE	COUNTRY OF OWNERSHIP	
16 16	GILLETTE	20,415	19,579	4%	U.S.
17 17	LOUIS VUITTON	20,321	17,606	15%	France
18 18	CISCO	19,099	17,532	9%	U.S.
19 19	HONDA	17,998	17,049	6%	Japan
20 24	GOOGLE	17,837	12,376	44%	U.S.
21 20	SAMSUNG	16,853	16,169	4%	S. Korea
22 21	MERRILL LYNCH	14,343	13,001	10%	U.S.
23 28	HSBC	13,563	11,622	17%	Britain
24 23	NESCAFÉ	12,950	12,507	4%	Switzerland
25 26	SONY	12,907	11,695	10%	Japan
26 22	PEPSI	12,888	12,690	2%	U.S.
27 29	ORACLE	12,448	11,459	9%	U.S.
28 32	UPS	12,013	10,712	12%	U.S.
29 31	NIKE	12,004	10,897	10%	U.S.
30 27	BUDWEISER	11,652	11,662	0%	U.S.







A brand is built over a long time.

The Myth #1



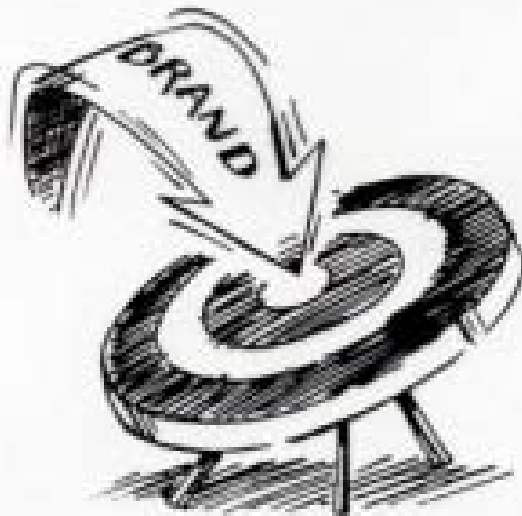
A brand can be built at warp speed.

The New Reality



A brand is precisely crafted for a tightly defined target.

The Myth #2



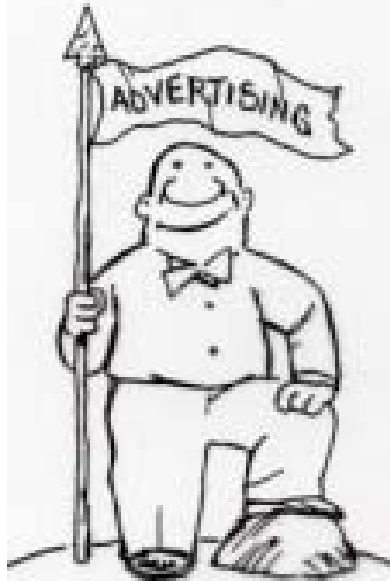
A brand is expansive.

The New Reality



Advertising is the major
creator of the brand.

The Myth # 3



Advertising is only one arrow in the quiver.

The New Reality



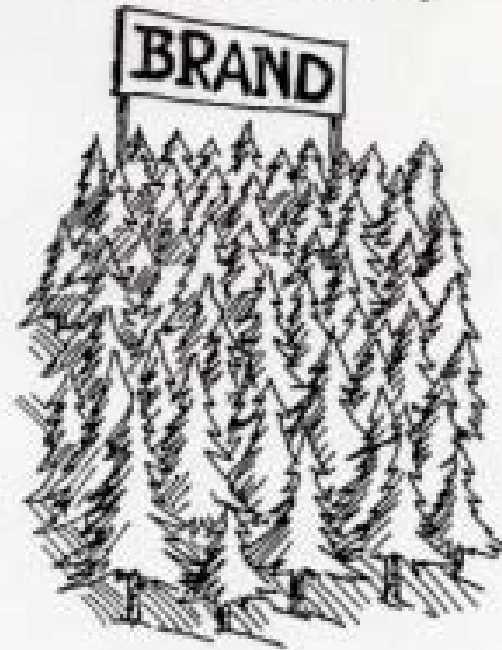
Brand the product.

The Myth #4



Brand a bigger idea.

The New Reality



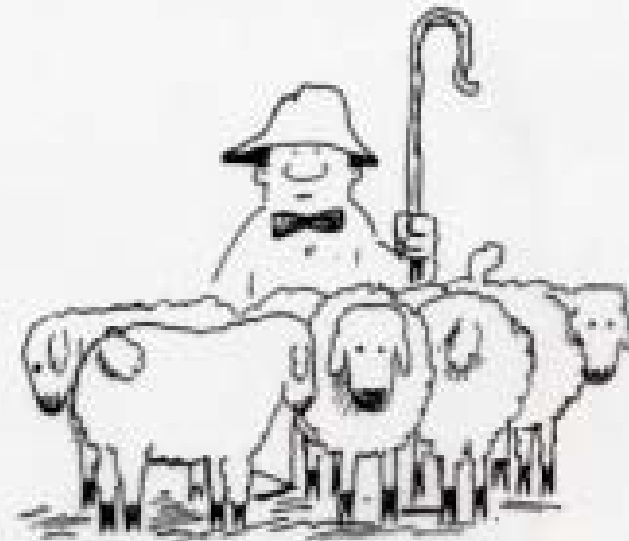
The brand needs a manager.

The Myth # 5



The brand needs a shepherd.

The New Reality



The brand is a marketing concept.

The Myth # 6



The brand is a financial concept.

The New Reality





Once you've got a champion, extend the line.

With Our New SX Models, IBM MAKING THE POWER OF THE INTEL INSIDE LEAP AHEAD.

When the IBM PS/2 Model 90 and 95 XT and 95 AT were introduced, they beat even the starting gun with incredible power, and have not their lead to this day. With the introduction of the new 95 SX models, IBM offers more speed, more than double high-powered computing. The reasons have almost your needs, we have a champion ready for you.

All the Models 90 and 95 are designed to use the most advanced components to achieve optimum performance in power, speed, storage, memory and VGA graphics resolution. Like their predecessors, the new 90 and 95 XT SX models possess a 6.5 MB processor-to-RAM path and advanced Micro Channel™ architecture for lightning-fast data flow and improved data integrity. The 4MB RAM is optional on the 90 models for standard or 8MB on the 95 and 95 SX models.

95 SX models, so challenging because the manufacturers are ready. Models 90, 95 and 95 SX models also include a math co-processor for improved performance in numeric-intensive applications like financial modeling and CAD/CAM.

But perhaps the most compelling feature of today's champions is their ability to adapt to the needs of tomorrow. With Expandable Processor (XP) technology, all models can easily be upgraded to speeds faster than 33 MHz in the future. With the standard SCSI bus, you can add hard drives, tape drives and printers not to mention. You can even add multiple processors with Mass Channel busmaster adapters, the way you get a machine with the kind of strength, flexibility and staying power that makes a real champion.

To find out more about the leaders in IBM technology, contact your IBM Authorized Reseller or IBM Marketing Department. For a worldwide sales guide, call 1-800-270-3436.

How to you going to do it? PS/2™ IBM



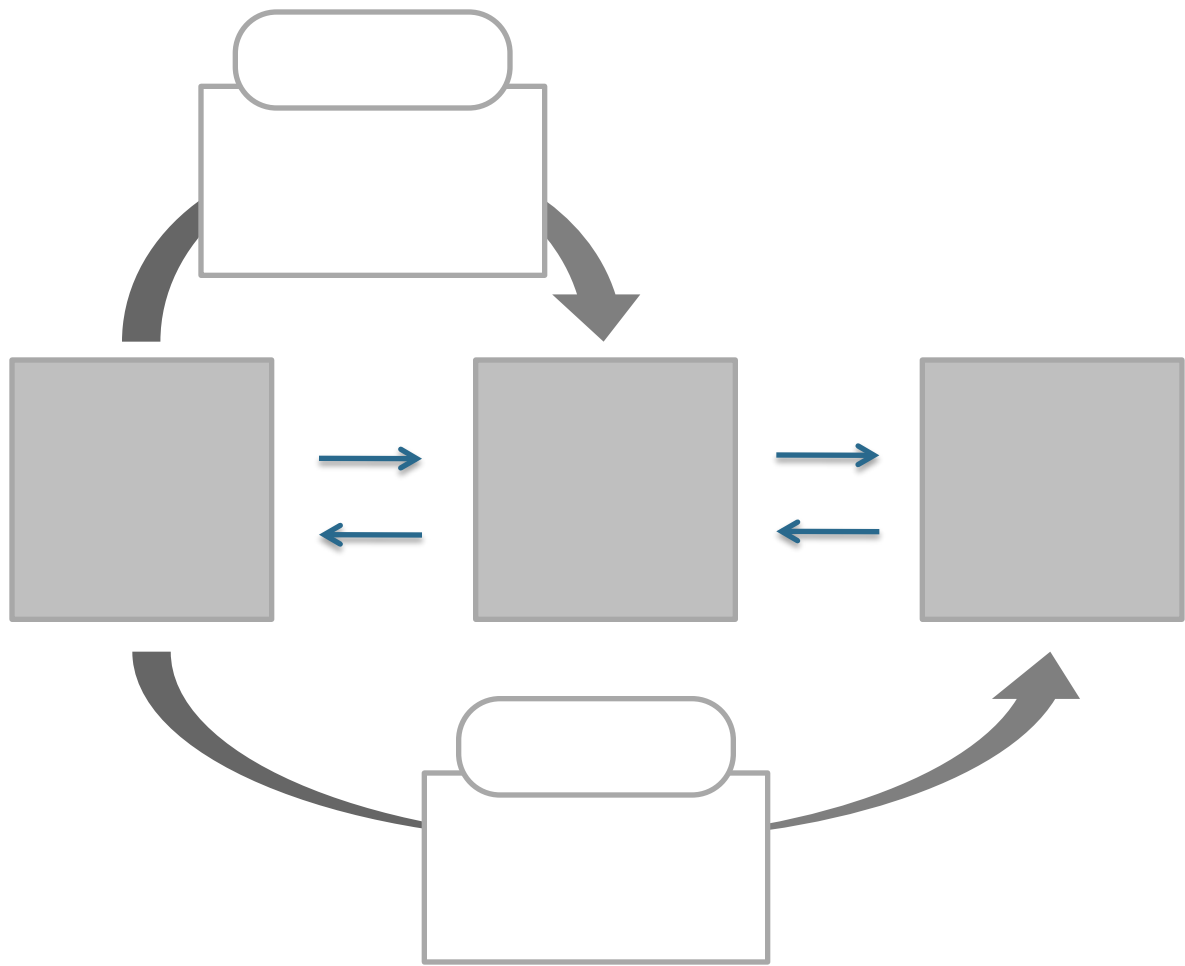
How to spot the very best computers.

It's really quite easy. From notebooks to main frames, just look for computers that have a genuine Intel microprocessor inside. Either the Intel 386™, Intel 486™, Intel Pentium™, Intel Pentium Pro™ or Intel Pentium 4™ microprocessor.

Intel is the world's leader in microprocessor design and development. And so other microprocessors have a larger installed base of software. Plus, every day is literally put through millions of tests. So with Intel Inside, you know you've got exceptional compatibility and unparalleled quality. Or simply put, the very best computer technology.

So look for the Intel Inside symbol on ads for leading computers. Or call 800-541-4725. It'll show you've got a chip for getting the best.

intel.
The Computer Inside.™





GET THE PICTURE? DLP TVs rival LCD or plasma, says TI, but cost far less as slim and sexy—yet they go for about half the price. In September, DLP sets accounted for 28.1% of the big-screen market in North America, neck and neck with plasma and LCD. Sales should reach \$750 million for TI this year, says American Technology Research analyst Erach Desai, up 127%.

PLASMA POWER
 WITH THE PEAK TV-buying season approaching, TI and its customers know their growth is vulnerable. Digital-TV sales are expected to rise 70% this year. But with prices falling rapidly, plasma sales soared 58% from August to September, compared to 28% for DLP sets, according to NPD. So in addition to its TV advertising, TI is also installing slick in-store displays with retailers such as Best Buy, hoping to promote what they claim is the superior picture quality. One factor in TI's favor: DLP sets typically come in much larger sizes than plasmas, making them a more popular choice for sports nuts and home-theater enthusiasts. The upshot: DLP should continue its strong growth even if ever-cheaper flat-panel technologies like plasma grab more share. "I think they have an opportunity," says American Technology Research analyst Erach Desai.

A harder task may be establishing TI's brand in cth-

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS


TEXAS INSTRUMENTS INSIDE?

Its Intel-like strategy: Get consumers to seek its chip technology in flat-screen TVs

BACK IN 1982, TEXAS INSTRUMENTS Inc. had one of the hottest brands in tech. Its digital watches and calculators were everywhere, as were its ads with TV icon Bill Cosby promoting its home computers. But then a complicated and relatively new market for PCs. Intel also gave hundreds of millions of dollars in marketing funds to PC makers that used its chips. Many depended heavily on Intel, boosting its influ-



PHOTO: MUKHERJEE/APP/GETTY IMAGES

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wise view™
 SAMSUNG TFT-LCD

Believe what you see.

WiseView™ digital display technology mirrors reality perfectly.

wise view™
 SAMSUNG TFT-LCD

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The TFT-LCD you always knew made a difference. Super AMOLED, however, can capture the most beautiful, lifelike, healthy and vibrant colors TFT-LCDs could ever hope to match. You'll see the difference right now. Look for the digital quality in Super AMOLED. The difference is what you see.

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View's next?

wise view™
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With the same excellent image quality and vibrant colors as the Super AMOLED™ display, the new Samsung TFT-LCD is now available in a variety of sizes and configurations. It's the perfect choice for your home or office.

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Secure and control documents with digital signatures and encryption	✓	✓
Edit, annotate, highlight and customize PDF files	✓	✓
Convert PDF files into human-readable audio files	✓	



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SONY
99⁹⁰
 clearance

4-HEAD HI-FI STEREO VCR has front A/V inputs, auto head cleaner and universal remote. No Set-Animated. Clearance price good while quantity lasts. Intermediate mark-downs may have been taken. Previously purchased merchandise, new or clearance, is not eligible for price adjustments. Price matching between Target stores does not apply to clearance merchandise.



VCR

DVD

SONY
249⁹⁹
 low price

DVD/CD/VIDEO CD PLAYER has Dolby Digital and DTS outputs, component video output and universal remote. No DVD-Scraper.



PHILIPS MAGNAVOX
269⁹⁹
 reg. 289.99

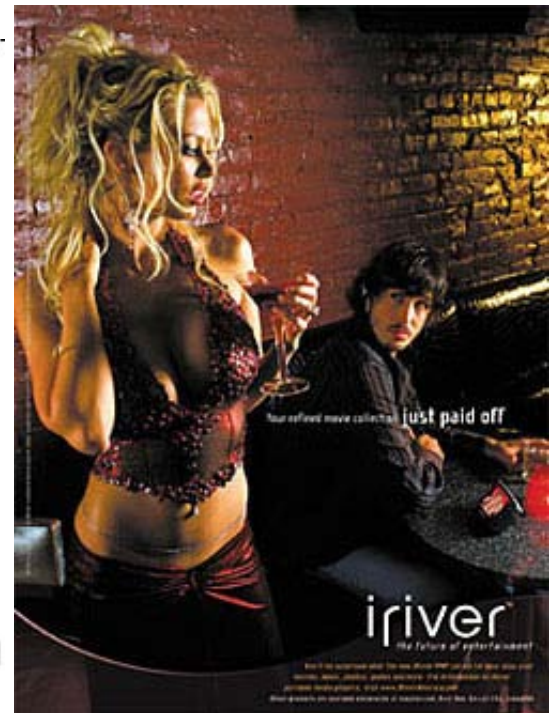
27" STEREO TV with A/V input, auto-channel programming and remote control. No TiVoX.

27" STEREO TV



PHILIPS
299⁹⁹
 low price

TIVO DIGITAL VIDEO RECORDER lets you control live TV! Pause, rewind or replay programs. Records up to 20 hours of your favorite shows for later viewing. No TiVoX. No monthly TV service is not included. Hooks into any modular phone jack.



Your refined movie collection just paid off

iriver
 the future of entertainment

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Mobile Internet Technology

A **redundant** technology if consumers already have Internet access via PC.

A **utilitarian technology** for **serious power users** looking to **enhance their productivity**.

A **technically-sophisticated** technology that is **complicated** to use.

Threatening to consumers who are not comfortable adopting new technologies.

Intimidating to anyone who **does not understand what the Internet is**.

A **thoughtful** purchase for customers with **specific needs**.

Infotainment Service

A service that is **completely unrelated** to PC-based Internet access.

A **delightful and casual** service for people who want to be **current, trendy, up-to-date**.

A **simple** service that is **easy to use**.

Non-threatening, because almost everyone is already comfortable using a mobile phone.

Unintimidating because everyone understands what infotainment is.

An **impulse** purchase for customers with **spontaneous** needs.





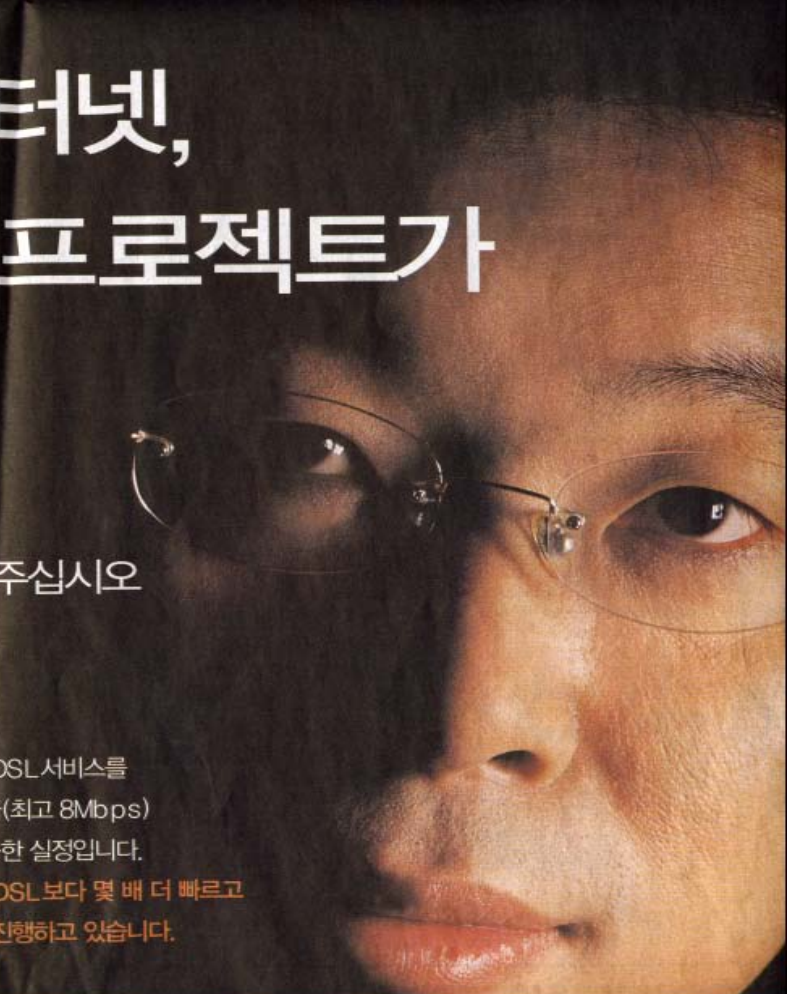


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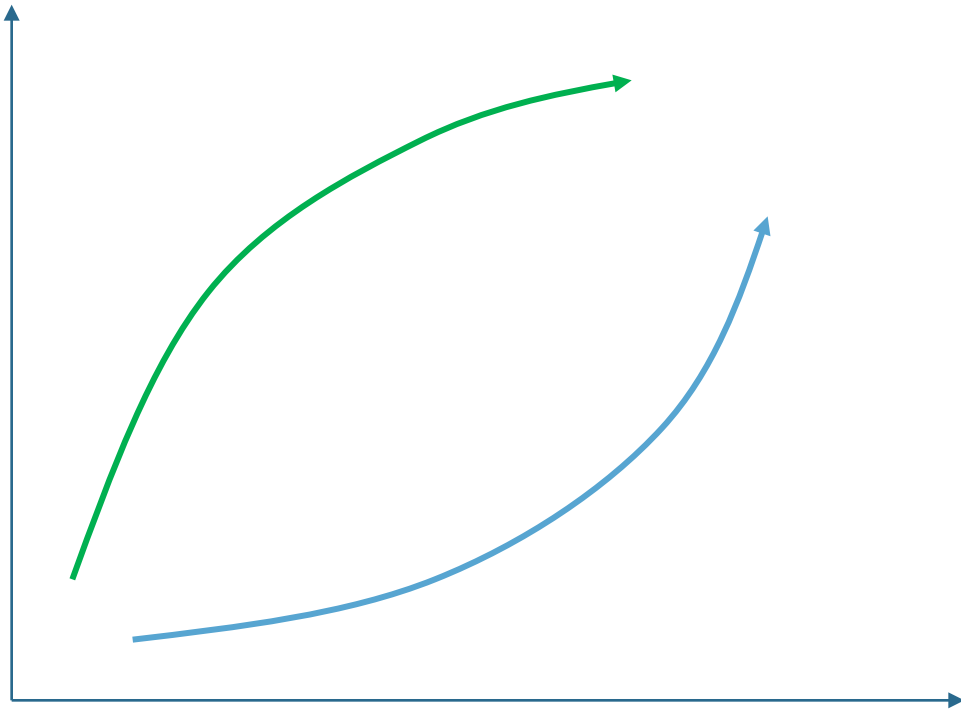
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episode 76
"Great Sexpectations"

"Fuck me badly once, shame on you. Fuck me badly twice, shame on me." - Samantha

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제조사들 “고객의 입을 잡아라”

IT기기 ‘버즈 마케팅’ 활발

제품 출시전 커뮤니티 통해 모니터링
체험단도 운영... 홍보효과 일석이조

제품 사용자들의 입소문을 통해 상품을 홍보하는 ‘버즈 마케팅’이 IT기기의 주요 마케팅 수단으로 떠오르고 있다. 신제품 체험단을 운영하고, 커뮤니티와 블로그를 모니터링하며, 필요한 경우 사이트를 통해 회사의 입장을 적극적으로 전하고 있다.

15일 관련업계에 따르면 제조사들은 제품 출시와 동시에 체험단을 운영하고, 각종 포털에 개설된 제품 관련 커뮤니티와 적극적인 교류를 진행하는 등 고객의 ‘입’을 붙잡기 위해 힘쓰고 있다.

◇**체험단 운용 확대**=내비게이션·PMP·MP3 등 퍼스널 IT제품에 있어 체험단 운용은 제품 출시 이전에 사전 체험단을 운영하는 경우도 있다. 커뮤니티에서 선발된 체험단이 제품 공식 사이트와 커뮤니티 게시판 등에 제품에 관한 체험기와 정보를 전달하는 과정에서의 홍보효과를 누리기 위해서다. 특히 사전 체험단 운용을 통해 제품의 문제

점을 파악하고 출시에 맞춰 수정·보완할 수 있다는 점도 체험단 운용의 장점이다.

과인디지털(대표 김용훈)은 내달 출시 예정인 내비게이션 ‘IQ’ 출시를 앞두고 200명의 사전 체험단을 모집하고 있다. 고가의 단말기 가격을 감안하면 200명의 대규모 체험단은 이례적인 규모다.

USB메모리와 SD카드로 함께 사용할 수 있는 ‘uSD카드’사업에 진출한 엔피오인터내셔널(대표 정혁기)도 500명의 대규모 체험단을 운영한다. 특히 하나포스·팍코넷·베타뉴스 등 포털 및 IT기거 전문 리뷰 사이트와 공동 실시 버즈 마케팅 효과를 극대화한다는 전략이다.

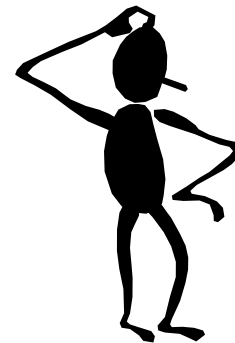
◇**적극적인 온라인 관리**=제품 관련 커뮤니티와 블로그 역시 ‘관리 대상’이다. 게시판에 올라오는 글을 지속적으로 모니터링하며, 잘못된 정보가 올라올 경우 직접 해명도 한다. PMP 업체 한 관계자는 “인터넷에 올라오는 정보는 순식간에 퍼지기 때문에 영향력이 크다”며 “IT

제품을 사용하는 알리어답터나 마니아 계층은 특히 인터넷의 정보에 민감해 주기적으로 모니터링 한다”고 말했다.

카페나 커뮤니티의 오프라인 모임에 참석해 제품을 홍보하는 적극적인 활동도 펼쳐고 있다. 내비게이션 업체 한 관계자는 “소비자들의 온라인 동호회가 이달 말 정기모임을 연다”며 “이때 직원들도 참가해 의견 교환을 나눌 예정”이라고 말했다.

◇**고객 제안 수용으로 ‘윈윈’**=소비자들의 자발적인 제안이나 제품 오작동 정보를 통해 품질을 개선하는 사례도 있다. 내비게이션 소프트웨어(SW) 업체인 엠앤소프트는 공식 홈페이지에 오류신고를 받는 코너를 운영하고 있다. 뿐만 아니라 매피 사용자들의 카페도 ‘오류동사 무수’라는 코너를 통해 자발적으로 지도오류를 접수하며, 회사는 이를 적극적으로 반영하고 있다. 엠앤소프트 관계자는, “오류 정보를 접수해 수시로 개선하고 있다”며 “고객은 불필요함을 개선하고, 회사도 쉽게 오류를 찾을 수 있어 상호 도움이 된다”고 설명했다.







삼보, 네트워크 마케팅 도입

다단계·구전기법 혼용한 새로운 기법 공식 사이트 오픈하고 회원 모집 나서

지난 98년 체인지업 마케팅으로 국내 PC마케팅에 새로운 바람을 일으켰던 삼보컴퓨터가 PC업체로는 처음으로 네트워크 마케팅 기법을 도입해 관심을 불러일으키고 있다.

다단계 마케팅과 구전 마케팅 기법을 혼용한 삼보의 새로운 PC마케팅 기법이 등장함으로써 PC업체 및 유통업체간 이 방식에 대한 논란이 일 것으로 예상되며 국내 PC유통 방식에도 적지 않은 영향을 미칠 것으로 예상된다.

삼보컴퓨터(대표 이홍순 <http://www.trigem.co.kr>)는 지난 15일부터 사이버 판매자가 타인에게 PC구입을 권유하고 그 사람이 PC를 구매할 경우 사이버 판매자에게 일정 인센티브를 부여하는 등 일종의 네트워크 마케팅 기법을 도입한 '사르바이트' 사이트 및 서비스를 오픈하고

정식으로 서비스한다고 밝혔다. '사르바이트'는 사이버와 아르바이트를 합성한 신조어로 본인이 사르바이트 활동을 하고 싶을 경우 삼보컴퓨터 홈페이지에서 회원으로 등록한 후 주변인에게 PC 구입을 권유하면 된다. 이러한 권유를 통해 PC를 구매한 고객은 추천인란에 사르바이트 명단을 기재하면 판매금액의 일정부분을 돌려받을 수 있다.

삼보컴퓨터는 우선 아카데미 행사 제품과 디지털카메라·복합기 등을 사르바이트 품목으로 등록했으며 사르바이트는 추천인이 구매한 제품 판매가의 3~7%를 사이버머니로 받게 된다. 사르바이트는 사이버머니 한도 내에서 삼보의 제품을 구입할 수 있다.

삼보컴퓨터는 이러한 사르바이트

활동을 독려하기 위해 5명의 추천인을 확보한 사르바이트에게는 노트북PC 가방을 증정하며 최고 추천인을 획득한 사람에게는 드림북 노트북PC를 증정하는 등 '사르바이트 왕중왕' 행사를 오는 3월 20일까지 개최할 예정이다. 다만 일부 시중 피라미드판매에서 발생했던 폐해가 생기지 않도록 본인 구매부담은 전혀 없으며 2단계로만 운영된다.

삼보컴퓨터 손흥만 마케팅 상무는 "기존에 국내외 PC업체들이 졸업·입학 전후에 대규모 아카데미 행사를 진행하고 있지만 실제 효과는 그리 크지 않았다"며 "사르바이트 방식은 인터넷에 익숙한 신세대에 접근하기 편한 데다 구전효과도 특출히 볼 수 있어 PC판매를 확대하는 데 도움이 될 것"이라고 설명했다.

삼보컴퓨터는 이번 사르바이트가 호응을 받을 경우 지속적으로 운영할 계획이다.

〈유형준기자 hjyoo@etnews.co.kr〉







BY CLIFF EDWARDS

A Poltergeist in My Plasma TV

My \$5,000 LG plasma TV is haunted. And I'm not talking about "ghost" images you see on the screen even after the set is turned off. O.K., it hasn't yet started whispering "Get out," but it's malevolent nonetheless. In the two months that I've been testing it, the unit has confounded my every attempt to get it to work normally.

I had high hopes for LG's ambitious 50-inch plasma HDTV. The first big-brand television with a TiVo-like digital video recorder built-in, it relies on a 160-gigabyte hard drive and Gemstar-TV Guide software to record up to 14 hours of high-definition or 62 hours of standard resolution programming. With a mirror-like black finish and beveled edges, the set is a real head turner. A thoughtfully designed remote control—also in shiny black—completes the promise of good things to come.

For the first few weeks the LG set delivered. First, I plugged my Comcast cable into the TV as well as an antenna to pluck local digital TV signals from out of the air. Setup is simple and intuitive, taking about five minutes, though you have to wait overnight for eight days of *TV Guide* data to download. After that, at the touch of a button, the hard drive will store programming. I recorded episodes of *The Simpsons*, *The Amazing Race*, and *Family Guy*. The picture, of course, is as good as the signal—in this case delivering excellent color saturation and contrast with little need for fine adjustment.

THE HAUNTING BEGAN nearly a month into my tests. At 1 a.m., the set suddenly and loudly fired up—a disconcerting thing since it was set up in my bedroom. Worse, it refused to turn off, responding neither to the remote nor the off switch on the TV. With no choice, I unplugged the set, then plugged it back in. Nearly an hour later, though, the set burst into life again. For three nights running, I struggled with the same scenario—and lost each time. More frustrating yet, the *TV Guide* data stopped downloading, rendering the core digital video recording feature useless.

Acknowledging defeat, I called the tech gurus at LG. After a bit of hemming and hawing, they sent a flash memory card loaded with software aimed at fixing the problem. Apparently, early production models of the set suffered a software "memory leak." That means tiny errors in the programming replicated in ways that made the TV act unpredictably. Using



THE LG 50PY2DR

the picture-card viewer slot built into the set, I installed the software patch and hoped for the best.

It was not to be. The *TV Guide* data—which by then had not updated for a couple of weeks—yet again failed to download overnight. And after a lull of a week, the set began turning itself on again. An LG executive pointed out that most buyers of this set would simply install a CableCARD and use the built-in recorder, rather than plug in a DirectTV-TiVo and DISH personal video recorder, as I had done. But given that the set has connections for additional equipment, that should not have been a problem.

LG's \$5,000 set worked for a month. Then things got weird

recording function. But like a bad dream, disaster struck once more. Both high-definition multimedia interfaces (HDMI) that I had used to connect DirectTV and DISH Network satellite boxes failed. When I plugged those same boxes into the component connectors, everything looked lime green, and no amount of picture adjustment changed that.

Finally, LG decided to replace the set. LG may either replace or repair a set under warranty, on a case by case basis. Five days into a review of the new set, everything works as promised—complete with all the other devices I had connected previously. No ghosts in the middle of the night. No green slime. Still, I'm not giving up my TiVo just yet. ■

BusinessWeek online Steve Wildstrom is on vacation. For a collection of past columns and online-only reviews of technology products, go to Technology & You at www.businessweek.com/go/techmaven/

PC PATROL

DELL FINDS ITSELF IN BLOG HELL

PC INDUSTRY circles have been buzzing for months about slipping customer support at **Dell**, a claim bolstered on Aug. 16 by a University of Michigan study that showed a hefty drop in customer satisfaction from a year ago. So the last thing Dell needed was for someone to turn the issue into a cause célèbre.

Enter Jeff Jarvis. Over the summer the media critic and popular blogger began writing on his personal blog, BuzzMachine, about his lengthy quest to fix a \$1,600 computer, an ordeal that, according to him, included countless e-mails, some unanswered, and phone calls to Dell's service line. Jarvis wrote that he bought a service package that included in-home repairs, but when the PC overheated and malfunctioned, he was told to

send it in. He did—and wrote that it still wasn't working upon return. Jarvis launched a series of attacks, including an Aug. 17 open letter to CEO Michael Dell: "The bottom line is that a low-price coupon may have gotten me to buy a Dell, but your product was a lemon, and your customer service was appalling." On Aug. 22, Jarvis finally got a refund. A day later he



DELL A critic calls service "appalling"

blogged that Dell's new policy of tracking down unhappy bloggers "is a start."

Jarvis' rants struck a chord with other Dell customers. Daily visits to BuzzMachine have doubled, to over 10,000, estimates research firm Intelliseek. Among the

responses: "Dude, get an Apple." Dell (page 90) is adding more call centers and improving training for phone reps, says consumer chief John Hamlin. As of Aug. 24, Dell had not replied to Jarvis' open letter but says it is "happy to talk with him as a customer." That might yield a happy ending—if he doesn't get put on hold. —Louise Lee

(TOP) PHOTOGRAPH BY ETHAN HILL



