

Summary

RedCart, a San Francisco-based Internet service company dedicated to enhancing the online shopper's experience across the Web's leading retailers, launched its site in November 1999. With the launch of the site, RedCart defined a new category in online shopping. The patent-pending universal shopping cart enabled seamless transactions across multiple sites. Shoppers could make selections from top online retailers and check out with a single click. RedCart also provided its users with a wish list to save their selections for purchase at a later date. RedCart was an associate of over 25 premium online retailers, including Amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, Beyond.com, CDNow, drugstore.com, macys.com and The Sharper Image. With its universal shopping cart technology, RedCart distinguished itself from online wallets, which only addressed the problem of form completion, and created a technological breakthrough that enabled the entire shopping experience, from selection to sharing to purchasing. The McRae Agency was hired a mere three weeks prior to the launch date, which necessitated an "all hands on deck" approach to plan and execute a successful Internet launch. Additionally, the budget was very modest for the type of launch the company hoped to carry out.

In preparation for the launch of the website and the universal shopping cart technology, The McRae Agency conducted extensive informal research in conjunction with RedCart. Based on our interviews with the company's CEO and other management, we identified several objectives for the launch:

- Create positioning and key messages
- Create a press kit to explain and showcase RedCart's new technology
- Create an expansive database with pre-qualified news media, with a minimum of 200 contacts
- Obtain press coverage in a minimum of four top business publications

The agency started writing press materials about two

weeks prior to the launch. An extensive database was created by the agency, including Internet news, business and trade print media, top market newspapers, wire services, and radio and TV shows which concentrated on technology and Internet-related news. Since RedCart was associated with many established Internet sites, we chose pre-qualified media contacts based on the specific market each covered and added them to our already extensive database of general business and trade contacts.

We also brainstormed as an agency to decide how we would target the top 35 technology and Internet journalists in the country with a special mailing. We wanted to get their attention and brand RedCart as a unique and efficient new technology. We overnighted a special press kit to the top 35 journalists, which included a miniature shopping cart painted red with a RedCart logo, products from merchants with whom RedCart had partnered and the press kit. The press kit included a launch news release, biography and photo of RedCart's CEO, fact sheet, list of retailers, and a screen shot of the site's homepage. To grab the media's attention right away, we created the "Answers to the 'So What?' Test," which concisely outlined on one page why the media should be interested in RedCart. We sent press kits in red shopping bags (stapled and actually mailed through the U.S. Postal Service) to the remaining media.

Results

Even with our creative red shopping cart addition and mailing the press kit in two stages, we were able to stay under our budget. We created an effective press kit as well as an expansive database for RedCart, with over 300 pre-qualified contacts. As a result, we obtained excellent coverage in *Time Magazine*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *Gannett News Service*. The total number of impressions for the launch was over 9.2 million. We met all of our objectives and even surpassed some of our expectations, especially considering the incredibly short lead time we were given.