

commerce marketing manager at Electricco noted the following:

[T]echnical people have realized that they need marketing people to be able to make a success of the Web site, and marketing people have realized that they can't make it all-singing; they have to look at technical requisites.

However, there are two points of view with regard to the role of the sales force. To many sales professionals, Internet technology facilitates the communication between the sales force and the customer and provides much greater and easier access to information that can add significant value to the relationship. Conversely, many sales professionals believe that Internet technology can maintain the current level of sales and increase profits by eliminating a portion of the sales force. However, in line with findings of Avlonitis and Karayanni (2000) and Kotab and Helsen (2000), our study supports the former point of view because we found that the sales department and the sales force play a central role in the successful implementation of the Internet marketing strategies for industrial organizations. Most respondents indicated that salespeople would never be eliminated. The managing director at Textileco stated that "good sales people obviously are extremely important people in the Internet business."

Similarly, our findings support those of Eid and Trueman (2004), Hofacker (2001), Quelch and Klien (1996), Samiee (1998), and Wood and Robertson (2000), who note that an in-depth understanding of the foreign marketing environment has been found to play a critical role in B2B IIM success. All the three companies we studied agreed that it is important to understand the foreign market's environment to achieve better results for B2B IIM efforts, but they all used different tools to obtain the required information. Petrolco used its local operating units, Electricco used its foreign offices, and Textileco used its sales people to obtain the desired understanding of the foreign markets.

It is clear that access to resources plays an important role in determining the sophistication of Internet usage. However, whereas Mehta, Grewal, and Sivadas (1996) observe that the Internet provides a level playing field for a small company in relation to a large company in international market, Arnott and Bridgewater (2002), Kotab and Helsen (2000), Quelch and Klein (1996), and Samiee (1998) all agree that large firms still enjoy a substantial competitive advantage because they have greater resources and more visibility among prospective customers worldwide. This finding is also supported by our interviews because all companies agreed that resources required for working globally play a crucial role in facilitat-

ing B2B IIM efforts. As the e-commerce marketing manager at Electricco noted,

[Y]ou need to have locally a dedicated resource for Internet marketing or at least, if it cannot be 100% on Internet marketing, somebody who is responsible for it who can quickly respond to customers, and the best way to do that is through a local resource.

Finally, the choice of compatible technology that is capable of delivering appropriate information at the right time is important, but the system will work only if all personnel are adequately trained and motivated. Companies must ensure that all their employees understand the corporate Web strategy and must be aware of the Web site's content. This is illustrated by Chan and Swatman (2000), Duggan and Deveney (2000), Lynn and colleagues (2002), Samiee (1998), and White (1997), who all find that employee training programs that align with the Internet strategy are important for successful B2B IIM. Indeed, the current research also finds that training marketing people is a key factor. However, although there was a high level of agreement about the importance of training programs among the three companies, the way those training programs have been developed, the people that are involved, and the time base all varied. Petrolco trained its marketing people and customer service center internally every new launch. Electricco continuously trained its marketing people externally. Finally, Textileco occasionally trained all employees internally and externally (see Table 2).

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### Market Factors

This study identified several external success factors for Internet customers, including trust, security, successful relationships, easy and affordable access to the Internet, delivery channel, and customer acceptance. The trust factor is consistent with the work of Hoffman, Novak, and Peralta (1999), Ratnasingham (1998), McCole (2004), and Urban, Sultan, and Qualls (2000), who observe that an environment of trust must be present in Internet marketing. However, this is not necessarily because of a lack of confidence in the security technologies themselves but rather because in many cases, people are not sufficiently aware of the possible protection

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Table 2.  
Training Programs in  
Participating Companies

Company	Time Base	Involved Users	Developed
Petrolco	Every new launch	Marketing people Customer service center	Internally
Electricco	Continuously	Marketing people	Externally
Textileco	Occasionally	All employees	Internally and externally

that exists (Furnell and Karweni 1999). Urban, Sultan, and Qualls (2000) discuss this point in more detail and find that Internet trust could be divided into three stages: trust in the Internet and the specific Web site, trust in the information displayed, and trust in delivery fulfillment and service. However, although our interviewees agreed that trust is important in the virtual world, means of building Web site trust varied from one company to another. To build Web site trust, Petrolco relied on two tools: (1) virtual advisor technology to gain customer confidence and belief and (2) the offering of competitive products that support its brand name. Electricco used unbiased information and delivery fulfillment as a key to build Web site trust, whereas Textileco relied on trust built offline and depended on the company's history.

As the findings of Evans and King (1999), Furnell and Karweni (1999), Honeycutt, Flaherty, and Benassi (1998), Ratnasingham (1998), and Samiee (1998) support, security in placing orders and in providing confidential data is essential for successful efforts of B2B IIM. Ratnasingham further divides Internet security into two significant areas: Internet security and transaction security. The former addresses the network, system, and applications components of the electronic commerce solution, and the latter addresses the requirements for secure electronic commerce transactions. However, the security requirements have already been recognized in the Internet/e-commerce community, and several technologies exist that may be used to satisfy different elements. Our interviews support this finding. For example, the Petrolco sites enable customers to place and track orders using standard Web browsers with Secure Socket Layer encryption. Petrolco invested a lot of money in technology, such as single sign-on technology, and placed a great importance on this issue. Similarly, Electricco used Secure Socket Layer to make Web communications more secure.

The findings of this study seem to reinforce the increasingly accepted view that Internet companies are required to develop more responsive, deeper, and broader relationships with customers, suppliers, and distributors to increase the success level of their Internet marketing efforts (Furnell and Karweni 1999; Naude and Holland 1996). The strategic implementation of the Internet depends on effective online and offline relationships with customers, suppliers, and distributors. Our three cases agreed that companies must use databases to acquire an understanding of the individual customer's needs and develop strong customer relationships. The e-commerce strategy manager at Petrolco noted, "With good communication and establishment of strong relationship, the customers will be unlikely to leave if their needs are met."

Easy and affordable access to the Internet (connectivity) is another factor that has been found to affect the success of B2B IIM. This finding supports the previous studies of Palumbo and Herbig (1998), Phan and Strata (2002), and Samiee (1998). Companies should not expect to find the same easy electronic access that exists in the United States in all countries. To this end, companies have two options: to adopt a proactive or a reactive solution. The proactive approach means that companies should use their own resources to solve the connectivity problem. For example, Intel tested its connectivity with customers in a production environment. Because performance can vary significantly in different countries, Intel went the extra mile to bring customers' connection up to the global standard (Phan and Strata 2002). Conversely, the reactive approach suggests that companies should wait until these countries invest in better telecommunication infrastructures before they can take full advantage of the opportunities the Internet offers for global commerce (Palumbo and Herbig 1998). Petrolco followed the latter approach, as cited by its e-commerce strategy manager: "Your B2C [business-to-consumer] is ultimately your B2B customer, and if there is a high adoption rate in Internet use in particular countries, then we invest in [those] countries." However, the cost of connection has not been cited as important for the success of B2B IIM. Resources that are available for B2B companies may explain this result. In other words, if the connection costs play a critical role in the case of B2C, they cannot play the same role in the case of B2B because of the resources that are available for B2B companies. Our interviews support this view. The respondents at Electricco and Petrolco agreed that access cost is not important for B2B IIM. The e-commerce marketing manager at Electricco said, "[W]e're talking about [B2B] marketing; for the majority of people, cost is no issue."

In line with the findings of Palumbo and Herbig (1998), Poon and Swatman (1998), and White (1997), we identify delivery channel in this study as a critical factor that contributes to the success of B2B IIM efforts. Thus, the Web page that promotes the company's products should also show where they can be acquired. However, the delivery channels in participating companies varied, depending on the size and position of the company. Electricco depended on distributors to deliver their products to each country, Petrolco used the local level (branches) to deliver its products, and Textileco used its own trucks to deliver its products.

The final market factor is customer acceptance (Chaffey et al. 2003; Chan and Swatman 2000; Cronin 1996b; Phan and Strata 2002). We found this to be the most important external factor. Customers visiting the Petrolco Web site will find applications available to them based on their own user name