

Helping the Help Desk, the Intel Way

Stuart Elliott

PURPORTEDLY perfect places go by many names, among them Shangri-La, Oz, paradise, Wonderland, Xanadu and Utopia. A major technology marketer is about to conjure up an ideal world called ITopia.

As might be gathered from the fanciful name — and from the identity of the sponsor, which is Intel — ITopia is the promised land for information technology professionals. A campaign that is scheduled to begin on Monday presents the Intel Corporation as the problem-solver for the people who solve the computer network problems for others.

The business-to-business campaign, with a budget estimated at \$50 million, is planned to appear in 10 major markets: Brazil, Britain, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Russia and the United States. The campaign is the brainchild of three agencies that are part of the McCann Worldgroup division of the Interpublic Group of Companies: McCann Erickson Worldwide, MRM Worldwide and Universal McCann.

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Intel is moving quickly to shift its media spending to the Internet and other nontraditional media, from conventional media like television. About 80 percent of the spending for the ITopia campaign will be for online advertising; the rest will go toward magazine ads.

The online elements will include a section of the Intel Web site (intel.com/itopia) and discussions on Open Port, a new community site for Intel (communities.intel.com). The campaign will also feature banner ads and ads on blogs and forums dedicated to technology, including Boing Boing, Cool Hunting, CrunchGear, Engadget, Gizmodo, Popgadget, Slashdot, TechCrunch and Übergizmo.

"It's not about just pushing ads out to people," said Nancy Bhagat, vice president for sales and marketing and director for integrated marketing at Intel in Santa Clara, Calif.

"The main focus of our campaign is the interactive nature of the relationship we're trying to build with I.T.'s," she added, not only "listening to what they have to say" but also "creating forums on the discussion boards for I.T.'s to talk among themselves."

Those aspects of the Internet, often called Web 2.0, present "a different way of looking at the dynamics of marketing," Ms. Bhagat said.

A traditional tactic like a TV commercial "is one-dimensional," she added, while Web 2.0 efforts like social-network marketing offer "an opportunity for dialogue, for two-way conversation."

Except for some emerging markets, Intel has "stopped using TV on the consumer side," Ms. Bhagat said, referring to campaigns aimed at buyers of PCs and other technology products.

As Intel and its agencies adjust the media mix, Ms. Bhagat acknowledged, there have been high points and low points. "We're learning a lot along the way," she said. "I'd rather be a leader and make mistakes than watch others learn and have us trail."

To underscore the Web 2.0 elements of the campaign, the ads are taking what Ms. Bhagat described as "a conversational tone." For instance, the home page of intel.com/itopia will offer visitors light-hearted greetings like these: "Welcome to a room full of green lights. To walking the hallways at a casual pace. To virtual servers equaling fewer servers."

In a similar vein, the print ads will carry headlines like "Viruses fear you more than you fear them" and "Your machines are virtual, your great performance is real."

The intended audience for the campaign “would far more rather hear something like this than hear sales- or marketing-speak,” said Michael McLaren, president at the McCann Erickson USA division of McCann Erickson in New York.

Intel has “aggressively moved into the digital space,” he added, “and part of that is a challenge to all the agency partners to be as innovative and imaginative as possible on the Web.”

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The campaign is centered on “an insight we’ve been working on for a while,” Mr. McLaren said, which is that “a perfect world is the dream of every I.T. guy because in the real world, there are business problems, technology problems” requiring their constant attention.

There will be a section of intel.com/itopia devoted to visitors’ answers to the question “What’s your I.T. utopia?” Sample replies include “Not spending two days on a server upgrade,” “Less phone calls about viruses” and “An end to annoying maintenance visits.”

To help achieve that Xeon version of Xanadu — Xeon being the brand name of an Intel chip — Intel engineers will be available to answer questions and chat with the information technology professionals who visit the ITopia section of the Intel Web site.

“The core tenet is trust,” said Augustine Fou, senior vice president for digital strategy at MRM. “It’s Intel employees earning the trust of I.T. professionals over time.”

The desired audience for the campaign “is online 24/7,” Mr. Fou said, “and they turn to digital to get information from their peers.”

“You can no longer think of digital as a channel,” he added. “It’s part of the landscape.”

Intel is not alone in making a perfect world the centerpiece of a new initiative. Adweek.com reported this week that Quicken Loans, part of Rock Holdings, is working with ePrize to develop a community site called Qtopia, which will offer Quicken customers financial planning tools, podcasts and virtual places to visit, like a Q Cafe.

Hmmm. ITopia, Qtopia, Utopia. Just 23 more to go.

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