

Cotton Incorporated Creates “The Joy of Shopping.com”

The Customer

Cotton Incorporated is a not-for-profit company funded by U.S. cotton growers and cotton product importers to increase the demand and profitability of cotton through marketing and research. At the time of its establishment in 1970, cotton’s market share of all textile products sold at retail in apparel and home markets was plummeting toward a low of 34% from a 78% market share in the previous decade. Competition from manmade fiber producers presented the major challenge for cotton, as artificial fibers were aggressively marketed and merchandised throughout the supply chain from mill to consumer.



Cotton Inc. (cottoninc.com) moved aggressively with innovative marketing programs aimed to produce an identity for cotton and attract consumer attention at retail. In 1973 The Seal of Cotton[®] was introduced. By the end of the year, 18% of American consumers could identify it.

By 2003 the number of American consumers identifying the cotton brand had risen to more than 80 percent, making The Seal of Cotton one of the most recognized brands in America.

Today Cotton Incorporated’s marketing acumen is respected across industry as innovations continue. In 2002 Cotton Inc. established the website “Fabric of Our Lives” (fabricofourlives.com) to provide comprehensive information to consumers on the attributes, applicability and care of cotton, receiving more than 500,000 hits in the first three months. With the upcoming availability of “The Joy of Shopping” website to the general public (thejoyofshopping.com), consumers will be able to shop for over 35,000 cotton products sold and serviced by more than 85 quality retailers.

The Challenge

Cotton Incorporated wanted to go beyond creating consumer preference for cotton; they wanted to help the industry even more by directly facilitating the purchase of cotton products at the retail level. The company began by offering selected apparel items featured in fashion magazine articles by linking directly to retailer storefronts from the Fabric of Our Lives website. The value of selling cotton products became apparent, but the manual linking and updating necessary was cumbersome. The company sought

Customer: Cotton Incorporated, whose Seal of Cotton is among the most recognized consumer brands, has long been fueling consumer demand for cotton products at retail for the apparel and home furnishing industries. With an annual operating budget of over \$60 million, 60% devoted to consumer marketing efforts, Cotton Inc. employs 165 people in 8 offices globally, including its Consumer Marketing Division based in New York City, corporate headquarters in the Research Triangle Park region of North Carolina, as well as overseas offices in China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.

Challenge: Cotton Incorporated’s challenge was to enable consumers of apparel and home furnishings attracted by cotton brand advertising to purchase cotton products online from its corporate website. The corporation wanted to feature only products meeting strict content requirements from quality retailers, all presented under its control and brand image. However, the company had no interest in establishing retail operations or investing further in associated technology.

Solution: ArkdomSM Commerce Affiliate (ACA) from Web Commerce Group was the selected solution because it could extend the customized control required to Cotton Inc. while providing the desired features, functionality, content and connectivity. Operating transparently behind the Cotton Inc. consumer website with a seamless look and feel, ACA is a managed service solution delivering constantly updated product description, availability, and pricing information from quality retailers over a scaleable on-demand infrastructure.

Benefits: Participating retailers, consumers, and manufacturers all benefit along with Cotton Inc. from the ACA solution. Cotton Inc. can control product presentation and sales within its brand’s environment; participating retailers can fill new orders generated by Cotton Incorporated’s brand advertising; and consumers are satisfied with their shopping experience, selecting products from the brand they prefer with high assurance of product availability and quick fulfillment.

technology companies that could automate operations on a large scale, but found no available solution or willing partner until hearing of WCG's ACA solution.

The Solution

The patent-pending Arkdom Commerce Affiliate solution proposed by Web Commerce Group enabled Cotton Inc. to empower consumers to select and purchase apparel and home furnishings from the world's largest collection of cotton products. Because ACA includes quality retailers that fulfill product orders, Cotton Inc. had no requirement to establish retail operations. With ACA delivered as a managed service, no investment in technology or infrastructure was required. In addition, because ACA is customized for the company, the website has the look & feel of Cotton Incorporated's advertising, surrounding customers in the environment of the brand.

The Benefits

Benefits received through Cotton Incorporated's adoption of ACA extend throughout the supply chain including product manufacturers, participating retailers, and consumers of cotton products. With the launch of The Joy of Shopping in June 2004, Cotton Inc. becomes the first major corporation to embrace the full capability of ACA as a marketing tool. With the power of ACA, Cotton Inc. will have a new way to demonstrate its ability to build demand for cotton by correlating marketing efforts to sales produced at retail. ACA can play a key role in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of consumer marketing efforts.

- Cotton Inc.
 - Converts consumer interest into sales, leveraging services gladly provided by retailers
 - Surrounds consumers with cotton's brand image and message
 - Shields shoppers from competitive products as they make their purchase decisions
 - Exercises control over its brand and the shopper's experience without infrastructure investment
- Participating Retailers
 - Gain a new channel to sell merchandise
 - Fulfill new orders from new customers resulting from advertising done by others
- Consumers
 - Shop exclusively for their preferred brand
 - Browse in a relaxed environment, without distractions typical of portals
 - Select products with high assurance of immediate retail fulfillment



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