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E-COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR THE BUSINESS LANGUAGE CLASS

Business language faculty can take advantage of the new learning opportunities and wealth of materials that corporate Web sites provide. This paper has two purposes: to illustrate how instructors can develop class projects on e-communication from corporate Web sites, and show how companies develop relationships through e-communication with their Web audience.

In an advanced English business communication course at Thunderbird, the author designed a class project based on corporate e-communication strategies. The Communicating through E-commerce project involved five steps related to the communication strategies that companies use to get closer to their customers. (See Figure 1 for a description of the project.) During the first week of the six week 1.5 credit graduate class, students formed teams of three to four people and chose a company to study for the final project. They selected a company from the list shown in Figure 2. Then, the teams completed the project in stages, one part each week. They received feedback from peers and the professor, and then revised the part for the final project.

The five parts of the Communicating through E-Commerce final project consisted of the following:

- Assignment 1 New Strategies to Connect with Customers
- Assignment 2 Reaching Global Markets through E-Commerce
- Assignment 3 Measuring Success through E-Communication
- Assignment 4 E-Commerce Sales Messages

Assignment 5 Online Employment Opportunities

Appendix 1 contains a detailed description of the assignments, which appeared in the course syllabus. The project let students see for themselves how companies use this new communication channel to build relationships with customers. The students enjoy learning about the companies and their Web sites as they go through the project. See below:

Figure 1

Final Project: Communicating through E-Commerce Project 30 points

The final project focuses on how e-commerce has transformed traditional business communication practices. You will choose a global company to study from the list below. Your report will cover how the company communicates through the Internet and e-mail.

The report will include an analysis of your company's Web -based communication practices, online recruiting, strategies to connect with customers via technology, e-mail messaging, and adaptation of Web sites for global e-commerce. Each week you will complete one part of the report, post it on My Thunderbird, and revise it according to feedback you receive from peers and instructor. For the final project, you will assemble the parts into a cohesive report.

Figure 2

Company List

BC 4000 Business Communication
Communicating through E-Commerce Project

Select a company from the list below for your class project. Indicate your first, second and third choices. You will be assigned a company. You may work alone, or with one or two partners on the project.

AT&T	Federal Express	Microsoft
Cargill	Ford	Motorola
Citibank	Hewlett Packard	Nokia

Coca Cola	Intel	Phelps Dodge
Daimler Chrysler	Marriott	Sony
Disney	Michelin	United Parcel
Service		

Through e-communication, companies have new opportunities to develop personal relationships that bring them closer to their customers. In the e-communication project, students studied how companies take advantage of these opportunities to connect with customers through Web sites, e-newsletters, and e-mail. Since companies update their Web sites frequently, information contained in this report may no longer apply.

E-COMMUNICATION AND THE CUSTOMER

Prominent corporate leaders consistently identify two key strategies for success that relate to business communication: communicate continuously and listen carefully (Neff & Citrin, 1999). Electronic communication greatly facilitates both processes with the potential to reach massive numbers of customers. According to Tom Peters (1997), information and technology will drive the new American economy, but companies must also have a passion for customers.

New technologies have made customers the locus of decision-making. They make it possible to get unprecedented amounts of information about customers, as well as give them access to vast quantities of information. (Vervest & Dunn, 2000.) The Internet provides the perfect vehicle for this extensive communication and exchange of information. Customers today expect companies to communicate with them via multiple channels, and require global companies to use the Internet and e-mail as business communication tools. People want instant communication when they need it, using whatever media is most convenient at the moment. Companies need to keep record of the multimedia transactions with a particular customer that occur over time. The transaction might begin with a phone call, followed by e-mail, then Web chat within a period of time. Customers also expect the company to respond to inquiries quickly, correctly, in a friendly manner, deliver goods when promised, and remember them personally with knowledge of past transactions. (Daly, 2001.)

With sophisticated customers demanding more and better service, companies try to integrate email, phone, fax, and Web chat for seamless

customer service. Incomplete knowledge of the customer can cost the company a sale or a relationship. Data integration must occur in real time and have a high level of accuracy. (Daly, 2001.)

Through technology, customer and business information is continuously available, visible around the world, and accessible to anyone who needs it within and without the organization. Companies mine data about customers through an analysis of their interactions, and plan future interactions. They can manage and coordinate every place that touches the customer, such as the Web, call center, or sales force in the field. Companies face two major technical challenges: to collect all customer-related information across product lines and departments, and use this information to help work flow smoothly from one operation to another, that is, from order entry to product delivery (Seybold, 1998.)

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a driving force in marketing today. CRM involves a company's approach to understanding and influencing customer behavior through ongoing relevant communication. The basic purposes of CRM are to acquire, retain, and improve the profitability of customers. Through its CRM system, a company analyzes which customers are most profitable, and plans how to make them even more productive for the company (Curry and Curry, 2000.) CRM gathers data about customers to target products and services more accurately to individuals. Amazon.com, for example, has access to important information about its customers: who reads what, how often they buy, their special interests, and how they search (Vervest & Dunn, 2000.)

Some basic tenets of CRM hold that customers, especially a company's best customers, are a company's most valuable assets. Getting the right customers and holding on to them is more important than getting a lot of customers. The measure of CRM success is customer lifetime value. What a company does to maintain an ongoing relationship with customers, to show that it cares, is more important than what it says in communications.

Companies use Web sites to increase cost-efficiency, grow in the global market, deliver personalized service, and build customer relationships and loyalty. Customer satisfaction, supplier efficiency and capacity, and business relationships all impact a business' performance. More and more companies are realizing that e-business is just business after all, enabled by information technology. Major goals of e-business

are one-to-one communication and loyal customers. The all important “first face” to the customer might still be e-mail from the Web site or a call center responding to a telephone call. But it could also be live text or voice chat, in real-time interaction.

Companies have spent \$2 billion on advertising to attract new customers to their Web sites. But it is not easy to turn surfers into buyers, and even more difficult to make them loyal customers. People want a high level of service and individualized attention (Caplan, 2000.) Companies use technology to help them build one-on-one personalized relationships with their customers. Software collects data on customers to give companies a complete profile of their behavior, purchases, inactivity, preferences, history of interaction with the company, contact and financial information.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH E-COMMUNICATION

“Make every customer feel like he or she is your only customer,” says Bill Meddaugh, GE Supply’s president and CEO (Daly, 2001,p.8.) Companies are learning how to exploit the Internet’s great capacity for communication to build and strengthen relationships. The challenge is how to personalize and humanize information through e-communication (Bonnett, 2000.) Relationships are built on trust (thus the importance of privacy policies and Internet security) and communication.

E-COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS

Companies use their Web sites to connect with new customers, and strengthen relationships with existing ones. From an analysis of the fourteen companies’ Web sites, a number of standard and best practices emerged in the ways that companies communicate with clients and build relationships.

E-COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED IN WEB SITES

1. Currentness
2. Audience analysis
3. Design for ease, access, speed
4. Content
5. Relationship and community building

- a. Customer involvement
 - b. Personalization and privacy
 - c. Interaction
 - d. Feedback
-

CURRENTNESS

Web site content must change often and remain fresh to attract new and returning visitors. To connect with customers, sites need to reflect what is happening in business, society, and our lives. Each of the fourteen companies demonstrated currentness in various ways, through reference to an ongoing situation, provision of timely articles, and updated information. For example, all of the companies responded to the tragic events of September 11, 2001 in New York City and Washington, DC on their home pages. Through corporate messages, pop-up boxes, or a moving quotation from Desmond Tutu on Intel's site, the companies expressed deep sympathy for the victims and their families, and many committed millions of dollars of support to charities related to the tragedies.

German-owned DaimlerChrysler contributed \$10 million to the children of the victims. The Japanese corporation Sony gave \$4 million to relief efforts and wrote: "Sony Corporation and their employees worldwide want to express their deepest sympathy to the families and friends of those lost in the tragic attacks on New York and Washington DC on September 11." Hewlett Packard responded with a statement that "HP has established a crisis office for our customers who have systems at risk in the aftermath of the terrorist attack. This information gave the customer a reason to return to the site to learn about the latest developments at the company.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

The corporate Web site must show a clear sense of audience. Developers analyze and respond to the following questions: Who will be visiting this site and why? What information will they seek? What do they want from the Web site? What does the company want to

communicate to them? How can the company attract them to the site, and keep them coming back?

The typical audience of corporate Web sites consists of individuals (business to customer: B2C) and businesses (business to business: B2B). For example, AT&T divided its audience into consumer services division and business services, while Marriott's Web site was designed for business and leisure travelers. Citibank further broke down its Web site audience as individual banking customer, small business client, and large company client. FedEx and UPS placed more emphasis on business customers, but served individuals as well.

Intel targeted four principal groups: home computing, business, developers, and solution providers. Hewlett Packard finely segmented its audience into home and home office, small and medium business, large and corporate business, government, hp in education, IT professionals, developers and solutions partners. In its deep, content-rich site, Microsoft had the most differentiated audience on its home page, divided into the following segments: home/home office, businesses, IT professionals, developers, Microsoft partners, educators, investors, and journalists.

Several sites such as Sony and CocaCola focused primarily on customers rather than on other businesses. DaimlerChrysler and Ford also aimed their Web sites at potential buyers. Understandably Disney targeted children and families, while appealing to people of all ages.

DESIGN FOR EASE, ACCESS, AND SPEED

Convenience underlies most Web site design. Most Web sites format their home pages to fit everything on one screen, with major destinations just a click away. Users prefer not to scroll down or click through multiple layers of the site to find what they need.

According to a survey conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide of over 1,000 households using the Internet, customers listed the following preferences in a Web site:

- Useful information (45%)
- Easy to navigate (38%)
- Well-designed (28%)
- Loads quickly (17%)
- Timely information (7%)
- Fun things to do (6%) (Bonnett, 2000)

In a marketing study, customers told researchers “we want it functional; we want it quick; we want minimal graphics” (Seybold, 1998, p. 90). Most homepages feature similar topic buttons to lead viewers deeper into the site. The AT&T site had a fairly typical layout, consisting of horizontal buttons for its main audience: consumer, business, wireless and broadband services. Then vertically it presented buttons to access the Newsroom, Search site, About the company, Research, Account management, Employment, Worldwide AT&T, and Write to AT&T. Like AT&T, most Web sites also included a link to their privacy statements on the homepage.

The Sony Web site design was very attractive, with buttons leading to Music, Movies and tv, Electronics, Playstation, Online games, and Go shop! Clicking the music button led to more choices. Under “age 13,” click here was a button to a site designed for young children. The music page then led to categories that include Artists, Music, News, Live, The story, Contests, Join, and Tell us.

Customers avoid frustrating sites with lengthy delays or complex paths to information. As a result, companies work hard to make their sites user-friendly. Companies like United Parcel Service do extensive market research to determine the functionalities needed, and ways to make the site easier to use. In their most recent re-design of the UPS site, marketing researchers videotaped clients using their Web site in order to understand customer usage patterns and problems. In addition, they conducted in-depth interviews to learn new and better ways to make their site convenient for customers.

Most of the Web sites studied were user-friendly, with intuitive navigation that got the user to the desired place quickly and easily. For example, CocaCola’s traditional red site led to its content through creative pictures of people and phrases. Intel had a remarkably simple, clean and blue design that has excellent functionality. Through its clever homepage design, Microsoft gave users speedy access to a huge amount of information. The content was extremely well-organized in a user-friendly environment. FedEx had a simple lead-in to its highly productive site, emphasizing the global reach of its delivery network. The user chose a country and quickly went to its secure Web site.

Amazon.com is known for convenience shopping. At Amazon.com, customers can order books, CDs and other goods from home or anywhere

24/7. Some people who know just what book they want are able to complete their shopping trip, and make their purchase in less than 23 seconds! Then the product comes directly to their door. The company wraps books as gifts and ships them to people, making gift buying simple and fast. Customers can pre-order books before they come out, such as the latest Harry Potter book. A customer can write a wish-list and post it on Amazon.com so relatives know what to buy for Christmas or birthdays.

CONTENT

Content provides useful information and a reason to communicate

Many visitors go to Web sites for specific information about the company, its products or services. There they find product descriptions, online catalogs, video or audio clips, pricing, comparison with other products, or the location of dealers. Some sites such as CocaCola did not sell products, although they did sell Coke souvenirs. UPS' site had a Brown and Brown store that illustrated how the company promoted e-commerce, through the purchase of a model UPS truck or other souvenirs. Disney online had a Disney store, and held auctions as well.

Ford provided safety and maintenance tips in addition to information on quality care service, recalls an insurance program and extended warranties. Potential customers could preview new cars by visiting the virtual showroom. In addition, Ford included information about its corporate heritage, news about the company and industry, and environmental issues related to the auto industry. The site had links to homepages in other U.S. regions and countries. Similarly, DaimlerChrysler gave information on its various brands and showed video clips and photos of car interiors and exteriors. Some companies like CocaCola gave running updates on their stock prices.

Offer valuable services

Citibank was an excellent example of a service-oriented site with online banking for savings, checking, money market, and credit card accounts. For these, Citibank offered online statements, statements by e-mail, and online bill paying options. Customers could also send money by e-mail.

FedEx and UPS concentrated on domestic and international delivery services worldwide on their Web sites. They also engaged in supply

chain analysis, trade consulting, and special-needs shipping. UPS Capital offered trade financing to its customers to enable global e-commerce. Both shipping companies' Web sites provided customers with information on ways to ship, pay, track shipments, manage the account, and e-business tools.

In its deep site, Microsoft offered many services, and let users choose a language package in order to read content in a particular language. Then the user could download demo software applications and programs for free, or access MSN (Microsoft Network) links to information and services such as hourly news, weather forecasts, free music downloads, and money management. Information was also available about professional training programs and certifications, seminars, trade shows and conferences.

At the Marriott site, users could check rates and availability of rooms, find a hotel, reserve a room, and get directions to the hotel.

Give resources and things to do

Companies typically included a variety of resources on their Web sites. For example, Citibank provided informational articles, insurance quotes, investment tracking, debt reduction programs, student services, and financial calculations. As a service to users, Amazon.com posted book reviews by publisher and readers, as well as lists of similar titles purchased by those who bought a particular book.

Marriott offered a mapfinder on its Web site. When a user input an address, Marriott listed the nearest hotels. In addition, the site had a route planner where the user could enter a beginning and end point for a trip. Marriott plotted the route, and listed the hotels which were located along the way.

A number of companies such as CocaCola, Intel, Microsoft and Marriott offered contests, sweepstakes and giveaways online. For example, Intel's sweepstakes gave users a chance to win one of ten Dell Dimension 8100 desktop PC systems.

Intel's industry solutions and business strategies sections provided in-depth advice and articles for individual industries, as well as testimonials from companies about how Intel helped them seize business opportunities or solve problems.

RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Ultimately, the goal of e-communication strategies on the Web is to build personal relationships, and thereby brand loyalty, with customers. As part of this effort, some corporate Web sites try to develop a sense of community, a feeling of belonging to a group of individuals with similar interests or beliefs. To make customers feel more connected, companies use the following e-communication strategies on their Web sites: 1) involve the customer; 2) personalize and protect privacy; 3) promote interaction; and 4) encourage feedback.

Customer involvement

E-communication on the Internet involves the customer in many ways. Through their Web sites, companies can forge new and deeper relationships with customers by providing information, service, contests, games, and weekly or daily updates. Web sites let customers decide which information to access. They can choose to sign up for e-mail notification or newsletters, enter sweepstakes, play a game, or download music or free software.

One effective technique to encourage the customers to return to the site is to have them leave something behind on the Web, such as a personal story (on the CocaCola site), stock portfolio (on the Citibank site), or up to 1,000 commonly used shipping addresses (on the FedEx site). This strategy is based on the belief that a customer who spends time entering information on a Web site will return. The customer made a personal investment of time and effort. In addition, the Web site serves as a valuable repository of personally relevant information.

Companies also keep customers coming back by providing them other services such as managing accounts online (AT&T, Citibank, UPS, and FedEx), keeping track of minutes used on AT&T wireless phones, and sending messages to friends and business associates on wireless devices through AT&T Web site.

Creating a sense of community

Web site developers can create a sense of community in the same way that distance learning educators promote a feeling of connection among their virtual students. Six elements are key to creating community in a group of Web site visitors or customers: honesty, responsiveness, relevance, respect, openness, and empowerment (Palloff & Pratt, 1999,

p.160.) The power of community strengthens the connection of customer-to-customer and customer-to-company.

CocaCola built community on its Web site in a unique way to reinforce its brand identity, as well as support its new Cause Branding initiative. Coke's cause was "Developing Youth in our Community" through reading and education initiatives. The home page buttons that related to Coke's advertising campaign and social causes were: Life Tastes Good, Spill It, Virtual Plant Tour, and Live the Magic. Life Tastes Good let the user access TV spots, music and lyrics used in Coke's ad campaigns around the world. These were available in English and Spanish.

Spill It was a place to write and read personal stories that had some connection with Coke. The site users rated the top ten stories, and wrote about love stories, and family experiences. People could enter their own stories, and then vote on others' as to which were the best. Some of the other categories for stories were: I did it, My family, Making a difference, and Full speed. People could access their own stories, and see them up on the Web site. Coke also offered a chat zone where users could talk with one another.

Another Coke button was Live the Magic, which connected the user to a Harry Potter site. Coke's stated mission here was to improve the quality of life in the community and enhance individual opportunity through education. Coke wanted to bring families the fun and magic of reading. The company donated millions of dollars to 10,000 school libraries. In addition, the CocaCola Foundation contributed over \$100 million to education in the past decade. In a number of ways, the functions and content of CocaCola's unique Web site enhanced and complemented the company's cause branding.

Disney's Web site aimed to build strong communities of children and families through its related Web sites. Blast was the number one online club for kids. Kids Island provided games, music, and zoog Disney, a Web site mentioned frequently in children's programs on the Disney Channel. Families could find a link to family.com with a party planner, recipe finder and crafts finder.

On its Web site, Microsoft built community through its newsgroups, technical chats, live chat sessions, and user groups in the area or around the world. These community-building techniques fostered

communication among individuals with common interests and promoted a spirit of belonging.

Personalization and Protection of Privacy

E-communication has contributed significantly to the development of Customer Relationship Management as companies collect more and more personalized information about their customers. Many sites use a membership system or registration which permits a two-way flow of information. For example, Hewlett Packard enabled users to register products, view their products, create a profile, and update a profile. HP allowed the user to select the language of communication with the following options: German, English (UK or American), Spanish, Finnish, French, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Dutch, Portuguese, Swedish, Chinese (Traditional or Simplified). HP cited a number of benefits to the user for registering onsite: “enhanced customer service, faster expert technical support, timely notices of product and software upgrades, free newsletters with exclusive tips and tricks, and special offers specific to your needs.” These advantages certainly apply to registering online at other companies too.

Intel’s home computing section helped people choose which PC best fit their needs. The user could get utilities, drivers, software downloads, and free newsletters and technology news updates, as well as personalize their page and sign up for free newsletters. The feedback section kept Intel informed of customers’ changing needs.

Interaction

Collecting information about customer profiles and preferences through registration online allows companies to tailor information to individual’s specific needs. When people register and indicate an interest in information, they willingly ask for the information and participates in the process. This is very different from receiving unsolicited, “junk” e-mail.

The give-and-take of personal information online with the customer’s consent builds closeness and a feeling that the company cares about what the customer wants. When the company takes the trouble to remember a person’s previous transactions and preferences, it shows that it values the individual as a customer. The person feels like an insider with privileged access to the latest news and information. The sustained communication

of e-mail notifications and newsletters helps to cement the relationship over time and builds brand loyalty. In this way, a company that communicates through technology with faceless, virtual interactions can build strong personal relationships with customers. That is the power of e-communication.

Privacy matters, since customers clearly want to know that third parties outside the company will not have access to their personal information, and bombard them with unwanted e-mails or calls. Typically, each company refers customers to its privacy policy for more detailed information. For example, Intel reassured its customers, “ Your information will only be used for the purpose for which it was collected. For more information, see our *privacy policy*.”

Sony, Amazon.com and Marriot have done extensive work to refine the collection and application of personal information. Under Sony Music, the Join button led the user to a personalized registration form. Sony encouraged users to “Tell us your favorite artists and your favorite types of music, and we’ll send you e-mail with the latest artist and music news and online happenings at Sony music-all based on your preferences.” A dropdown menu of artists let the user select the ones of greatest interest, and the preferred types of music. After that, the user could choose from eight types of information to receive from Sony, for example Wiretap Weekly, Daily Dish, Sony Classical News, or news about DVDs or minidisks.

Marriott also asked the user to create a personal profile for faster, easier reservations. When calling for a reservation, past preferences came up in the computer and simplified the process. Marriott encouraged online registration to get valuable information about customers to understand new travel trends, and gain better knowledge of customer behavior, likes and dislikes during their stay. In return, customers received promotional e-mails about special deals or discounts for cities they list as their most desirable travel destinations.

Feedback

Companies give customers the option of contacting them through multiple channels for information and feedback. At Hewlett Packard, customer feedback and communication was clearly a priority. The “open door policy” was a basic management tenet at HP, and it translated to their Web site. This policy of open communication was intended to build

mutual trust and understanding. HP sought to create an environment where people felt free to express their ideas, opinions, suggestions and concerns (Packard, 1996). The Web site made different communication channels easily available to the customer.

In its customer support section, HP asked customers to select a specific category that most closely fit their problem in order to field the question to the right agent for a quicker response. CocaCola used a friendly Virtual Assistant who encouraged the customer to write questions about the company, product or Web site. A company representative then sent an answer via e-mail.

CONCLUSIONS

Using a variety of e-communication strategies, English business communication students at Thunderbird learned how companies were using their Web sites to connect with customers. The experience benefited both faculty and students. Using the Web for classroom projects enhances the teaching and learning experience. The Web resources are well-suited for business language classes.

The major challenges facing corporate e-communication are how to maintain a personal relationship with great numbers of individuals, avoid communication overload of customers, keep communication relevant and interesting, maintain customer privacy, and deliver excellent personalized customer service. Companies have to keep communication personal on a massive scale, managing all the data with CRM software to streamline processes, and better meet customers' diverse needs. The extent to which the company can maintain the feeling of intimacy, build personal relationships, foster a sense of community, and provide individualized excellent service will determine the future success of their online e-communication efforts.

Focusing on e-communication in a class project opens up the corporate world to the business language student and faculty member. Both learn about the new ways companies are building relationships with their customers through electronic communication.

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Appendix 1

DESCRIPTION OF WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

COMMUNICATING THROUGH E-COMMERCE PROJECT

Complete the five assignments below, one per week, and organize them into a report for your final project on Communicating through E-Commerce. In each assignment, you will analyze and compare specific e-communication practices of your company to gain an understanding of best practices in the field.

The weekly assignments should run 2-3 pages in length. Double space your work and use 12 font. Your final report will consist of a title page, table of contents, executive summary, and the five revised assignments.

Assignment 1 New Strategies to Connect with Customers

A. *Passion for Customers:* Go to your company's Web site, and see how it communicates with visitors.

- Who does the company want to attract to its site? How is the Web site adapted for that audience?
- Discuss the ways that potential customers can interact with the Web site.
- How does the company use its Web site to develop new customer relationships, and encourage existing customers to return?

B. *Building Customer Relationships through Service:*

- What services does the company provide through its Web site or e-mail communication? Consider signing up for a free service such as e-mail notices or newsletter. (You can use this information later in Assignment 4!)
- Why does the company provide these services?
- How and why does the company collect information about customers through these services?

C. *Your Thoughts on E-Commerce Strategies to Connect with the Customer:*

- What corporate Web site(s) do you visit regularly? Why do you keep coming back?
- What e-mail notices do you receive regularly from companies? How does this communication affect your relationship with the company?

Assignment 2 Reaching Global Markets through E-Commerce

A. Reaching Global Markets

- How has your company adapted its corporate Web sites to communicate with audiences in different countries? Compare and contrast the design, content, language, and communication style of the company's U.S. Web site with three Web sites in countries on different continents.
- How is each Web site localized for the target culture? How do they respond to language and cultural differences in the target audience?
- How does the company maintain consistency and brand image across the four Web sites serving different countries?

Assignment 3 Measuring Success through E-Communication

A. Measuring Success:

- How does your company measure the success of its Web site and e-commerce initiative?
- What are the objectives of your company's Web site in terms of communicating with customers?
- How does the company measure success of its e-communication, (for example through number of hits, new sales generated, number of people subscribing to e-mail services, number of online orders processed)?
- What are the costs and benefits of communicating online?
- Remember that you can request this information through the Web site.

B. Your Thoughts on E-Communication Strategies for Success:

- Which of the 3 companies has the most successful e-business communication strategies?
- What best practices can you identify?

Assignment 4 E-Commerce Sales Messages

A. *Compare an e-mail sales message from your company (if available) with the sample messages posted on My Thunderbird.*

- How do the messages attract the attention of the reader?
- How are the messages personalized?
- Which sales appeals do they use?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each message?
- After reviewing these e-mails, identify best practices in this type of sales message.
- What can e-mail messages do that direct mail or telephone sales cannot?

Assignment 5 Online Employment Opportunities

A. *Online Recruitment:* Go to your company's Web site and visit the area that deals with hiring new employees.

- How well does it communicate about the company, openings, and position requirements?
- How clear is the job application procedure?
- What image does this Web site area present of the company?
- What best practices can you identify?

B. *Job Application (Optional)* See if there is a job or internship that you qualify for with your company or one of its competitors.

- If you are interested, apply for the position.
- Prepare a scannable version of your resume if necessary.
- How does the company respond to your application? Include a copy of your communication with the company in your final report.

C. *Your Thoughts on Online Job Applications:*

- What has the online option done for the recruitment process from the company's point of view? From the applicant's perspective?
- How do you feel about applying for a job or internship online?

- Do you know anyone who has found a job or internship this way? Explain the circumstances.