

Fabergé pushes boundaries to deliver luxury shopping experience on the Web

Overview

■ Business challenge

To re-launch a global brand - aimed at a very select target market - by recreating a luxury brand experience online, reaching clients wherever they may be.

■ Solution

Providing each client with an individual, highly interactive and personal service online. The client may, at their discretion, interact online with their dedicated sales advisor to help them explore and discover individual pieces. IBM used its Accelerated Visioning process to understand Fabergé's requirements for the unique project, and then redefined the online shopping model, translating traditional luxury selling methods to the Web.

■ Key benefits

- *Successfully translates a pleasurable, luxury purchasing experience to the Web*
- *Provides exclusive, dispersed clients with access to products, wherever they may be*
- *Provides secure and private environment for clients*
- *Flexible framework offers opportunity for enhanced features as site evolves.*



Only one of the greatest brands in luxury goods – Fabergé - would have the vision to question the notion that online shopping models are inappropriate for luxury goods and their discerning customers.

Fabergé's challenge was: how do you free up a very select client set from the constraints of salon locations and opening hours? The company felt that the medium of the Internet offered new and exciting possibilities for enhancing the experience of buying luxury items and reaching clients wherever they may be, at any time of the day or night. However, the experience of buying luxury goods like jewellery involves an emotional reaction, taking your time to appreciate the quality of the items on display and building a trusted and intimate relationship with a knowledgeable sales advisor.

Fabrice Paget, Chief Marketing Officer at Fabergé explains: "Today, retailers take the Internet as it is and try to adapt their businesses to it. We wanted to put our clients back in the driving seat and, instead, adapt the Internet to our clients' needs. Our goal was to recreate the intimate, trusting - and above all very pleasurable - experience of a traditional high-jewellery store by encouraging a close, one to one dialogue with a dedicated sales advisor, showing each piece with its own unique feel and with the quality and richness you would encounter in a high-end salon. We had a very clear vision of how pieces, clients and sales advisors should interact but we didn't know if this was achievable."

Transforming Luxury Purchasing

Business benefits

- Successfully translates a pleasurable, luxury purchasing experience to the Web
- Provides exclusive, dispersed clients with freedom to discover and explore the products, wherever they may be
- Provides secure and private environment for clients
- Flexible framework offers opportunity for enhanced features as site evolves
- Supports brand values of craftsmanship, skills and innovation
- Online Fabergé collection can be maintained in-house.

“IBM’s Accelerated Visioning process was one of the most rewarding experiences of my career so far. I was impressed by the strength and thoroughness of IBM’s methodology. It enhanced our vision and transferred it, step by step, to IBM. From this point on I never doubted that IBM would help us deliver exactly what we had in mind.”

– Fabrice Paget, Marketing Director, Fabergé

Confirming the possible

Fabergé selected IBM as its partner in this ground-breaking project based on IBM’s customer experience design capabilities, plus the added benefit of the extreme breadth and depth of IBM’s overall technology and business strategy innovation. The IBM design team’s first step was to gain a thorough understanding of objectives and target audience by guiding Fabergé through its Accelerated Visioning process. During a week at the IBM Interactive Innovation Centre in Atlanta, US, a series of highly interactive and collaborative workshops with Fabrice Paget and Fabergé’s Sales Director Eric Brindejont helped define the online representation of the brand from the creative look and feel to the VIP sales model.

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To ensure a client-centred approach to the solution, every member of the IBM team immersed themselves in the high-end jewellery world, going through the process of buying from a top class salon to understand the experience they were trying to recreate online.

Throughout the project IBM drew on its global skills and talent in London, Atlanta and Boston to deliver the best in customer-centric design and to push the boundaries of technical achievement. The approach was one of true collaboration. “IBM and Fabergé developed the concept together,” confirms Paget. “Although we come from very different worlds, there was a strong synergy throughout the development of the project.”

The result is a radical redefinition of the online experience based on multi-layered access to products and a personal Fabergé sales advisor who can interact with the client via video link, the telephone or on screen messages, at the client’s discretion.

Discovering hidden treasure

Unlike standard shopping sites where all customers have self-service access to the entire product catalogue, Fabergé pieces are revealed progressively as the client relationship develops. This unique interaction is enabled by technology but controlled by clients and sales advisors.

The Fabergé experience starts at the “shop window”, the public space where potential clients receive their first glimpse of a small number of pieces. Clients can only progress from this public space by invitation or following a dialogue with a Fabergé sales advisor who is able to create a personalised selection of pieces for the client to explore, based on their individual interests.

Once through to the “Inner Sanctum”, clients can gradually explore pieces and benefit from the one to one services of a Fabergé advisor. A personalised space, known as the “Cloud”, presents a subset of designs from the Fabergé collection specially chosen for the client. Pieces appear at various distances and levels of focus, inducing temptation and aspiration. Depending on the client’s preferences, the advisor may change the contents of the Cloud and the client can bring any piece from the Cloud to the “Desk”. The Desk is analogous to the desks of a traditional salon and it allows the client to explore and interact with pieces more closely.

When exploring a piece, clients are presented with far more than hyper-quality photographic images. There are different discoveries to be made for each piece, reflecting its own particular story. Discoveries might include hyper-detailed photographs, cinema quality videos, insight into the craftsmanship, detail of a particular stone or a jeweller’s certificate.

To enable each piece to be represented uniquely without having to build material from scratch for each item in the collection, IBM provided Fabergé with a powerful framework that is flexible enough to link content items to create an individual interactive representation of the piece. The collection will be refreshed constantly with new pieces and the framework enables Fabergé to develop all the required content and load it onto the site.

Natural, discrete interaction

The greatest differentiator of the Fabergé site is the replication of the exclusive, personal interaction between the client and their personal advisor – exactly what Paget and Brindejont had in mind. Creating an interaction that reflects the natural, trusting and one-to-one dialogue of a private salon over the Web was IBM’s greatest challenge, particularly as it meant avoiding the need for the client to download any special tools.

An extensible sharing framework enables client and advisor to share screen views and collaborate securely without browser plug-ins and without the advisor having to take control of the client’s computer. At their own discretion, clients interact one-to-one, in real-time with their advisor by text, telephone or video chat. Advisors respond to client’s requests, answer questions, help them explore particular pieces and propose new pieces, interacting dynamically with the client.

Redefining the online luxury experience

As Fabergé prepares to launch its new brand, Paget says: “In just over a year from start to finish, IBM has gone to extraordinary lengths to turn our vision into reality. Despite the paradigm shift we wanted to create, at no point did the team try to make us compromise. It was rewarding to work with people who have such capacity to understand and adapt to your requirements and deliver exactly what you envisioned.”

Key components

IBM Services

- IBM Global Business Services
 - IBM Interactive
 - IBM Application Management Services
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Transformation at a glance

As part of the renaissance of its luxury brand of jewellery, Fabergé was looking to transform the experience of accessing luxury items, putting the Internet at the heart of that experience to free discerning clients from the constraints of salon locations and opening hours. In collaboration with Fabergé, IBM used the global breadth and depth of its customer experience design, business strategy and technology expertise to create a ground-breaking online experience. Chosen pieces from the Fabergé collection are revealed to clients in the highest possible quality with the uniqueness of each piece reflected in its presentation. The greatest innovation of the site is the exclusive and intimate interaction it enables between the client, the pieces and their sales advisor, reflecting and enhancing the quality of experience found through traditional VIP private selling methods in a highly-interactive and personal service. Clients have reacted extremely favourably to the site which represents a paradigm shift for luxury online.

During testing, potential Fabergé clients were delighted with the site. They easily understood how to travel through it and were particularly impressed with the quality of presentation of each piece, which has actually provided an enhancement to the perspective gained when viewing the item in real-life. They also appreciated the one-to-one relationship with their advisor and were very comfortable with the way the experience mirrors buying from a traditional, luxury salon.

Peter Carl Fabergé, original founder of the company, was an innovator who was known to be ahead of his time. A key strategy behind the renaissance of Fabergé was to revive his pioneering values. The introduction of what is believed to be the very first online luxury purchasing experience provides just such a parallel between the company's history and the company today.

Following the launch, IBM will support the new site, maintaining its innovation as the brand and online distribution model evolves.

Mark Dunhill, CEO at Fabergé concludes: "When we started on this journey we realised we were setting IBM an enormous challenge – in fact we felt we might be asking them to do the impossible. Incredibly they achieved everything we wanted of them."

For more information

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