IBM

IBM and Partnership for A Drug-Free America: Creating an Adaptive Enterprise

Exploring the e-business imperative

Since its inception in 1986, the Partnership for A Drug-Free America (PDFA) has used mass media to reduce the demand for illegal drugs, especially among children. It has become increasingly clear to the organization that in today's Web-savvy culture, PDFA *must* exploit the Internet to fulfill its mission. PDFA Director of Operations Michael Townsend calls the Internet "the most efficient medium in history" – an obvious and mandatory channel for the Partnership's campaign. However, with only a static Web presence and no internal e-business expertise, PDFA approached longtime funding supporter IBM for help in translating its success in traditional media to the online world.

Reinvention through Sense-and-Respond

Consultants from IBM Business Innovation Services came onboard to explore PDFA's e-business and technology options and, in doing so, discovered the opportunity for a more comprehensive change through an improved business model. In turn, PDFA committed to a fundamental Adaptive Enterprise overhaul based on the Sense and Respond model, which incorporates a wide array of innovative concepts, tools and methods – including a commitment management system inspired by an IBM patent. This model enabled PDFA to maximize its business efficiencies while its underlying values remained intact.

Challenge	Develop flexible, powerful and forward-looking e-business model
Solution	Participative Sense-and-Respond engagement
Benefit	Alignment of strategic, tactical, technical and communications efforts; faster response times and better teaming across the enterprise

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As a coalition of communications professionals, PDFA is about reaching the right audience and being heard. The aim of the IBM engagement was to boost the Partnership's ability to *un*sell drugs by listening to and learning from its audience. PDFA would learn to sense and respond rather than predict and presume, and in turn, be able to offer highly customized information and services to its audience.

Beyond an academic exercise

The IBM Sense-and-Respond engagement included a three-day class for PDFA team members on the theory and vocabulary, and a five-week onsite engagement by IBM consultants skilled in this breakthrough approach. During the engagement, team members practiced — and began to apply — authentic communications, coordinated teaming and outcome planning, based on negotiated commitments.

"The biggest barrier," says Townsend, "was the worry we'd get too involved in theory." He was surprised at how quickly PDFA saw tangible results, including redesigned business capabilities and a newly flexible infrastructure. Just as crucial was a vital, new focus on collaborative speed and action. Spirited, spontaneous discussions on marketplace standing and customer value broke out in the halls, and pending projects were suddenly owned and implemented by self-organizing PDFA team members.

"Speed is absolutely critical. The IBM Sense-and-Respond approach is all about increasing organizational speed."

— Steve Pasierb, EVP,
Director of State/City Alliance Program,
Partnership for A Drug Free America

Preparing without predicting

In this era of electronic communications, rapid response to customers is crucial. The Partnership, as an Adaptive Enterprise, is thus focusing its business design efforts on flexibility and everfluid customer requests. A "sensing and responding" e-business leverages technology that is properly coordinated with business and human systems. For example, PDFA is currently developing a robust Internet organization to dimensionalize offline outreach, drive funding and provide worldwide database access — all via the Partnership's Web site, *www.drugfreeamerica.org*.

Future phases include integrating the Web channel with PDFA's infrastructure. Other customer-backed changes cannot be anticipated, but "a road map can be had via the Sense-and-Respond method," says Townsend. "No matter what happens next, we're all convinced we'll be better off, and the cause will be better off. We're all convinced of that."

Sense-and-Respond was invented at IBM, based on the work of Steve Haeckel (*Adaptive Enterprise*, Harvard Business School Press 1999). To learn more about Sense-and-Respond, refer to the white papers *Adaptive Enterprise* by Steve Haeckel and *Adaptive Marketing* by Mike Wittenstein.

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