

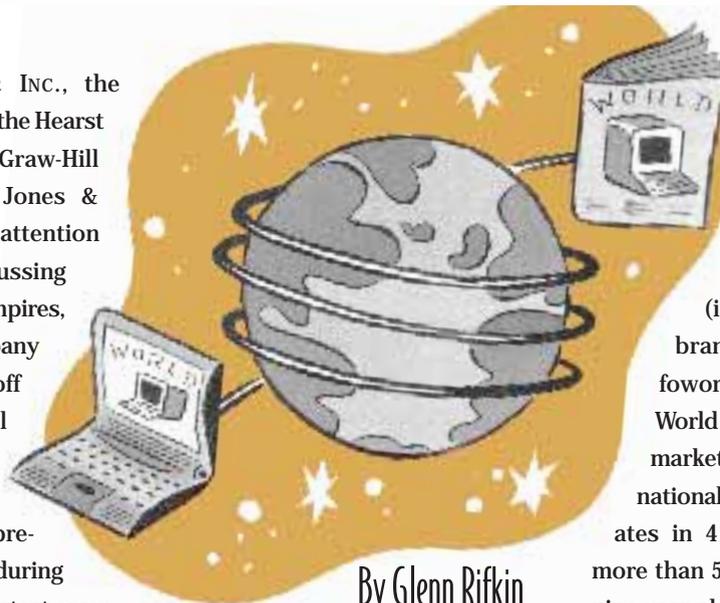


How I.D.G. Builds Knowledge-Based Brands on Seven Continents

This publishing and research company creates high-performance brands in country after country. It does so by sticking to its entrepreneurial roots.

WHILE TIME-WARNER INC., the News Corporation, the Hearst Corporation, McGraw-Hill Companies and Dow Jones & Company grab all the attention when people are discussing media and publishing empires, one Boston-based company has remained largely off stage: the International Data Group. For the past 35 years, though, its founder has made prescient bets and built enduring brands in the world's fastest growing industry.

Targeting the nascent information technology marketplace in 1964, I.D.G.'s founder, Patrick J. McGovern, foresaw a burgeoning global marketplace for computers. Fresh from the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Mr. McGovern pre-



By Glenn Rifkin

dicted a growing audience for information about technology, along with computer vendors anxious to reach that audience.

Today, at 61 years old, Mr. McGovern is a billionaire and I.D.G. has mushroomed into a company with some staggering statistics: 1997 re-

ported revenues of \$2.05 billion, 9,000 employees, 290 computer newspapers and magazines published in 75 countries (including its signature brands: Computerworld, Infoworld, PC World, Network World and CIO). The company's market research arm, the International Data Corporation, operates in 41 countries and within more than 500 market segments. Its nine-year-old publishing venture created the hugely successful "For Dummies" series that started with how-to books for personal computer users and now includes more than 350 titles and 50 million books in print. Then there are its 225 Web sites and a profitable trade-show business responsible for about 100 media expositions.

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Glenn Rifkin has covered technology for The New York Times and has written for the Harvard Business Review and Fast Company. He is co-author of the forthcoming book "Radical Marketing," to be published by Harper Business in February 1999.

Even within the world of trade publications, I.D.G. has an international presence that dwarfs its nearest competitors: Ziff-Davis Inc. and CMP Media Inc.

The formula used to create such success is unusual. For example, I.D.G. is the only major media company exclusively focused on information technology. While competitors, including Cahners Business Information and Ziff-Davis, have viewed information technology as just one market segment, I.D.G. has strayed little — thereby creating a vast and loyal base of readers and advertisers.

AN INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION

The affable but enigmatic Mr. McGovern has created a loose confederation of independent businesses built on individual brands. While competitors concentrated on the 80 percent of the world's technology business that was based in the United States, Mr. McGovern created a global business structure. He started doing business in China in 1978, for example, and now I.D.G. is the largest international publisher in a country that promises to become an extremely lucrative market in the 21st century.

At home, before the options-based Silicon Valley business model became de rigueur, Mr. McGovern built a large and loyal staff with lucrative bonuses and a widely praised employee stock option plan that has made hundreds of long-term employees millionaires. In the process, he erected an empire with high barriers that would keep competitors at bay,

all while remaining disarmingly conservative in style, decidedly unlike Rupert Murdoch or Ted Turner.

I.D.G.'s decentralized management structure is legendary in high-tech publishing. Mr. McGovern keeps a tiny corporate staff and makes individual business units responsible for their own bottom lines. As a corporate entity, I.D.G. is kept in the background in favor of building the brands of the individual publications and research business units. Mr. McGovern, though, keeps tight control of strategic planning as head of the company's executive committee. He easily disposes of some business plans, while favoring a "let's try it" approach (one of his 10 corporate values) to preserve products that to others appear lifeless.

For example, he poured tens of millions of dollars into a personal computer publication called Infoworld for more than a decade, even though it initially showed lackluster results and his staff advised him to fold it and acquire an existing publication such as Byte magazine. Today, Infoworld is the company's most profitable product, which easily competes in the desktop computing market against the Ziff-Davis publication PC Week. Though his "loose/tight" management style has sometimes confounded employees, in the end, no one can argue with Mr. McGovern's brand-building skills.

BRAND-BUILDING LESSONS

Kelly Conlin, I.D.G.'s president — a Harvard University graduate who tried journalism first at The New York

Times and CNN — has spent the past decade working closely with Mr. McGovern. He notes that there are five key lessons Mr. McGovern has taught him about building brands:

1. A brand must be built globally. In I.D.G.'s market, a domestic brand is a limited brand.
2. Brands need champions — people who are passionate about the brand and who can act as articulate spokespeople for the brand. They must always be looking for the next opportunity to extend and nurture the brand.
3. Brands require creativity. Brands cannot be put in a straitjacket and locked into place, but must be intelligently extended.
4. The organization must share its best practices. There is no monopoly on innovation. A company needs a system and mechanism in which a good idea can be replicated quickly throughout the brand family.
5. There must be a brand point of view — a consistency and rigor to the branding process. The "let a thousand flowers bloom" point of view will not work. There has to be a plan for the brand and brand stewardship on the part of company executives.

With these tenets as a foundation, I.D.G. has nurtured a set of brands that have thrived — domestically and globally. The I.D.G. corporate brochure, with postage-stamp-sized covers of all its international publications, stretches out to more than five feet. A new I.D.G. publication is introduced somewhere in the world

every month. What is most notable is that each country contains the same titles as those found in the United States. Computerworld begets Computerwoche in Germany, which begets China Computerworld, which begets Computerworld Brazil — all independent publications, sharing the same name and target audiences but with locally produced editorial content. I.D.G. boasts that 90 million technology buyers read its publications weekly, a powerful selling message, especially as giant computer vendors such as the International Business Machines Corporation, the Hewlett-Packard Company and the Compaq Computer Corporation start buying more advertising on a global basis. Central advertising buying has been growing 30 percent annually for I.D.G. publications and now represents nearly 10 percent of the company's revenues, up from just 2 percent five years ago.

"If you are driven off a single brand and have a disproportionate amount of your profits in that brand, when the market turns against you, you can see steep declines," Mr. Conlin explained in an interview. "Our approach is not to publish one magazine for all countries. It won't match local customer interest and it creates undue risk for a single product. We believe you have to look at the brand through the lens of the audience you are serving." So today, even while growth in Computerworld in the United States has flattened in recent years, revenues for the Computerworld brand worldwide continue to grow 15 percent annually, and the

company estimates that its 47 Computerworlds in 52 countries are read by 12 million technology professionals every week. By comparison, Ziff-Davis's PC Week is published in 11 countries and CMP's InfoWeek in six.

WEAVING A WEB FOR BUSINESS

Because of his early and steadfast commitment, Mr. McGovern has built an international powerhouse that can

now leverage its global ubiquity as a major competitive advantage on the Internet as well, offering hundreds of locally run Web sites with the ability to share data and resources.

While I.D.G. publications are part of a broader family, they are not tightly managed in a central fashion, Mr. Conlin says. "We're not Clorox bleach," he states. "We don't have a three-ring binder of all the rules for the brand. But there is a consistency in how we manage the brand. It's network driven rather than hierarchically driven."

Mr. McGovern believed early on that the only way to be effectively responsive to a market was to have local managers running the show who could make decisions quickly without having to rationalize every move to a central authority. Thus, the network that drives the brand is self-policing

and responsible for that brand. "What gives a brand great value is to have teams of people who spend all their time focused on that one product," Mr. McGovern says. "In that sense, we're more like Procter & Gamble. Buyers of soap can't tell you who the parent company is and our readers generally don't know what I.D.G. is."

Leveraging brain power is a major benefit to the brand. Country man-

"What gives a brand great value is to have teams of people who spend all their time focused on that one product," Mr. McGovern says.

agers meet regularly and share ideas and content in a way that competitors can only envy. Three years ago, I.D.G. initiated its Global Product Support Centers, where managers of different publications come together to share best practices and new ideas. In this peer-oriented, sharing culture, good ideas get replicated quickly around the world. PC World Germany, for example, completed a brand awareness survey two years ago that included interviews with 10,000 desktop computer buyers who were asked to rate the best brands among Dell, Compaq, I.B.M. and others. The survey proved to be a useful tool to the computer vendors in understanding the needs of buyers and resulted in increased advertising revenue for the publication. The idea was presented at PC World's Global Product Support Center and was quickly adopted by five

other countries. The following year, 15 more countries joined in. The results, which were positive for each individual country publication, coalesced into a 20-country PC survey that I.D.G. can leverage widely with its advertisers.

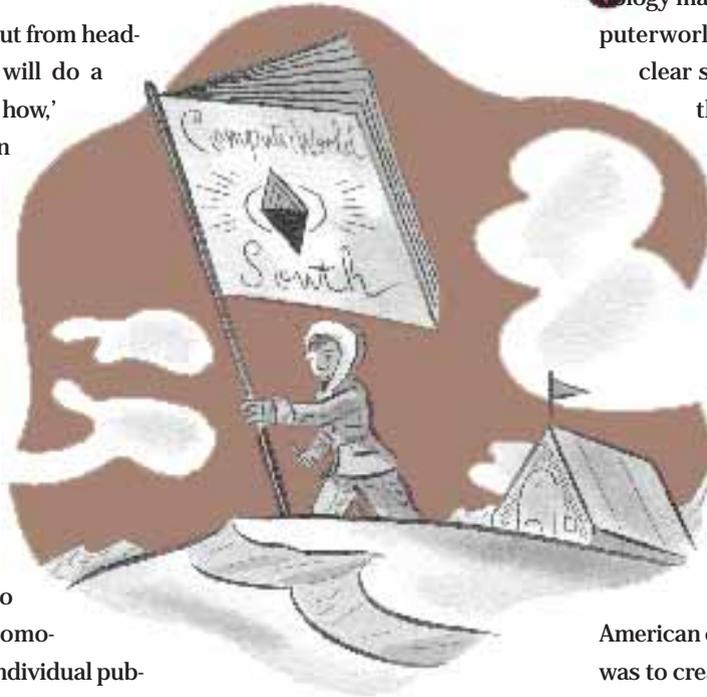
“If we sent a note out from headquarters saying, ‘you will do a brand survey and here’s how,’ we would have gotten nothing but resistance and reasons why it wouldn’t work,” Mr. Conlin says. “This process is driven instead by market needs and by peers.”

I.D.G.’s Market Services Group also leverages its global presence by bringing together advertisers who sponsor worldwide promotional campaigns with individual publications. I.B.M., for example, worked together with Computerworld to create its Global Innovator Series, an editorial project in which computer innovators in 25 countries were identified and profiled in an I.B.M.-sponsored special issue. In this way, the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts.

CLAIMING THE LAST CONTINENT

The breadth of the I.D.G. concept and empire captivates Mr. McGovern. In 1997, he trekked to Antarctica, braved hurricane-force winds and camped in a tent in temperatures of 40 degrees below zero, in order to introduce Computerworld South Pole. This

made it possible for him to brag that I.D.G. had a presence on all seven continents on earth — a bit of well-earned showboating and the culmination of a dream even he could not have had 35 years ago.



A genius, some say, is a rising market — but you have to see it coming. Mr. McGovern started his company in a small gray house in Newton, Mass., in 1964. “Pat was absolutely a prophet,” says Jack Edmonston, editor of Computer Advertiser’s Media Advisor, an industry newsletter. “He saw that the computer would revolutionize the way society functions and never wavered for a second on the idea that computers would become ubiquitous.”

The International Data Corporation, Mr. McGovern’s initial effort, provided research reports and newsletters to computer users. But Mr.

McGovern discovered a more lucrative route to success. Three years after founding the company, he realized computer manufacturers would gladly pay monopoly rents to reach the decision makers in the growing technology marketplace. He started Computerworld in 1967 and instituted a clear set of policies that became the benchmark for I.D.G.’s expanding library of publications.

Computerworld identified a target audience — in the early days of the computer revolution, these were the white-coated data processing professionals who tended to the data entry needs and the care and feeding of the room-sized mainframe computers in American corporations. “Our mission was to create a relationship with that target audience and establish the attributes of the brand,” Mr. McGovern recalls. Among the attributes: a trusted product of high quality that would interpret information, make it actionable and stimulate discussion in an expanding community.

Though other publishers such as McGraw-Hill, Cahners and Penton Media Inc. put stakes in the same turf, I.D.G. displayed a tenacious commitment to its core audience that was unmatched. Computerworld quickly became an industry bible and a must-buy for advertisers. Its growth was stunning and fueled the profits for I.D.G. for the next three decades. Though its growth has recently

slowed and current competitive pressures have forced Computerworld to rethink its strategy, the publication remains one of the top four brands in its field, along with sister publication Infoworld and rivals InformationWeek from CMP and PC Week from Ziff-Davis. After Computerworld and Infoworld, I.D.G. introduced similarly successful publications — PC World, Network World, Federal Computer Week, MacWorld and CIO magazine — all of which are the No. 1 or No. 2 publications in their respective markets.

RISK-TAKING ABILITY

In hindsight, it seems like an easy bet. Today, the information technology sector accounts for a stunning 40 percent of all trade advertising revenues, but 30 years ago the future was far murkier. When other publishers wavered or hedged their bets by pushing into other venues, Mr. McGovern stuck with his vision. Each publication would stay with its target readership. Different audiences have different decisions to make, Mr. McGovern reasoned, and he never hesitated to introduce a new publication to address a nascent market.

Tenacious, yes. Willing to take risks, also yes. Mr. McGovern seemed to take ideas further than others. For example, he put the word “international” in his company’s title and employed the word “world” in his initial publication. Though others scoffed at the time, Mr. McGovern foresaw a worldwide market for computers and decided early on to plant the seeds of his empire around the globe. Indeed, rather than start other publications in

the United States, Mr. McGovern’s priority was to take Computerworld to other countries and start the same publication overseas. “It was absolutely unique,” says Mr. Edmonston, a former I.D.G. executive. “Nobody was doing that then, and he didn’t license the publications. He owned wherever he could.”

The business model was consistent, according to Bill Laberis, a former editor of Computerworld who now runs a custom publishing business in Holliston, Mass. Mr. McGovern would find a publisher that was successful, take brands established in the larger countries and plant those brands in the smaller countries. Because he was a hands-off manager, Mr. McGovern would allow successful local publications to operate under their original brand names, but he also nudged them to take advantage of the brand power of I.D.G.’s publications. Data News, for example, was Brazil’s top computer publication and a part of the I.D.G. family. It kept its own name for years after Mr. McGovern acquired it, but in 1991 the publication changed its name to Computerworld Brazil and revenues jumped 50 percent in a single year. Similarly, an Apple publication in France called Golden changed its name to MacWorld France and saw an immediate spike in advertising and subscriptions.

Mr. McGovern started his first overseas publication in Japan in 1971 and ventured into China seven years later. China Computerworld started in 1981 and is now the dominant computer publication in that vast market.

Mr. McGovern was recently awarded honorary citizenship in China for 20 years of doing business there and was given a Chinese passport. So successful has I.D.G. been in China in recent years that the company has been approached to use its infrastructure there to publish such consumer brands as Esquire, Cosmopolitan and Men’s Health.

Like other great success stories, I.D.G. benefited from luck, timing and favorable business conditions. Mr. Edmonston points out that as I.D.G. continued to grow in the 1970’s and 1980’s, giant rivals such as Cahners and McGraw-Hill tried to compete for what was obviously a lucrative market. But as publicly held companies competing against the closely held I.D.G., they were prisoners of quarterly earnings numbers and shareholder scrutiny. “When you launched something, every nickel came from the bottom line,” Mr. Edmonston said. “It was impossible for them to launch because they couldn’t stay with the publications long enough to succeed. They had to make their numbers quarter to quarter. I.D.G. could stick with something until it worked.”

OUTSIDE THE CIRCLE

Because of its decentralized nature, I.D.G. has been able to nurture businesses outside its core publishing efforts. One of its early failures, a traveling global computer trade show called Computer Caravan, was reborn years later as a highly successful trade show and conference business. I.D.G. Books, a relatively recent addition to the corporate stable,

Taking the Fear Out of It All

John Kilcullen, the 38-year-old president and publisher of I.D.G. Books, might consider another addition to his hugely successful stable of books: "Brand-Building for Dummies." Over the past nine years, Mr. Kilcullen has done nothing short of revolutionize the book industry by creating a publishing brand built not on the traditional author-based model, but on two catchy title words that speak volumes and, better yet, sell volumes.

The "For Dummies" books, starting with the innovative "DOS for Dummies" in 1991, have fueled tremendous growth

for I.D.G. Books, with more than 350 titles and 50 million books in print. The concept has moved from books into CD's, board games and videos — even a television show is being considered. Not surprisingly, competitors have sprung up trying to cash in on the same market.

Fueled by the seemingly limitless expansion of the brand, I.D.G. Books has become a highly profitable, \$150 million enterprise. In 1998 it became the first business unit of I.D.G. to offer its shares to the public. Simultaneously, Mr. Kilcullen has himself become a media darling, a brand-builder

extraordinaire who has been written up in People magazine, Time magazine and The New York Times.

All this seemed like a pipe dream back in 1991. I.D.G. Books was a struggling startup venture within I.D.G., publishing uninspiring technical books, when Mr. Kilcullen remembered a dinner conversation with a friend a few years earlier. His friend had been in a bookstore and overheard a customer asking for a how-to guide for Microsoft's DOS operating system. "I need something easy for someone like me, you know, like DOS for Dummies."

has flourished due, in no small part, to Mr. McGovern's willingness to nurture an entrepreneurial environment. Its research arm, I.D.C., which was the company's first business unit, has grown into a \$125 million worldwide brand, the leading information technology research company in the world. I.D.C.'s 500 research analysts produce widely quoted market numbers, industry forecasts and analysis. Competitors such as Dataquest Inc. and The Yankee Group have been acquired and subsumed into advisory companies such as Gartner Group.

Like its sister business units, I.D.C. is extremely focused on pre-

serving its high-profile brand. "We invest a lot in maintaining that brand," says Kirk Campbell, president and chief executive officer of I.D.C. To that end, I.D.C. does more primary research than its competitors and produces more than 300 end-user and channel surveys each year. In a business where a high profile translates into revenues, I.D.C. actively encourages its research analysts to develop press contacts. Mr. Campbell boasts that nearly one-third of all information technology press quotes come from I.D.C. research analysts, and he has hired a public relations company to tout the company's Internet research.

Although these research analysts are not directly compensated for being quoted in the press, such contact is tracked carefully, according to Mr. Campbell. "In the long run, we do expect that if a person is going to be a research guru, they need to provide quality research, give speeches and get quoted in the press," he says.

Unlike its parent company, I.D.C. operates as a single global business with offices in 41 countries and nearly 800 employees worldwide. In the decade that Mr. Campbell has run I.D.C., the research company has developed more joint projects and conferences with most of the company's

The name stuck in Mr. Kilcullen's head, and by 1991 he realized I.D.G. Books needed some radical thinking to break out into a viable business. Mr. Kilcullen had worked for a year on Madison Avenue for a leading ad agency and had been highly influenced by the lessons in building brands and establishing consumer markets. His conversations with colleagues at I.D.G.'s many successful publications kept coming back with the same message: The dummies approach was demeaning and not in concert with the company's image. They suggested titles such as "The PC World Guide to DOS."

Like other successful entrepreneurs, Mr. Kilcullen followed his own instincts. He had always

wanted to create a consumer business and here was an untapped opportunity. "Let's get the masses tuned in to the computer revolution," he said. The dry instructional books on the market were cumbersome, serious and unfriendly. With a little comic relief and the right attitude, a how-to guide could break out of the pack.

He found an author, Dan Gookin, and then created the template. The book would make a statement about learning in the morass of technobabble and undecipherable product documentation that characterized the computer marketplace. It would work on a simple customer premise: "You're smart but you're being made to feel dumb. Let us help you in plain, simple English

and not take ourselves too seriously." The premise struck a deep chord with buyers both within the computer industry and out in the consumer marketplace.

"DOS for Dummies" was published in late 1991 despite the misgivings of Patrick J. McGovern, I.D.G.'s chairman, and other company executives who felt that the concept flew in the face of conventional wisdom and that the title might be too demeaning to customers, the information technology professionals who read *Computerworld* and other serious industry journals. But as Mr. Kilcullen recalls, to his credit, Mr. McGovern stuck to one of his 10 corporate values and said, "Let's try it!"

The initial print run was 7,500

top publications than in the past. Mr. Campbell noted that because I.D.C. is so dependent on hiring and retaining high-quality people, Mr. McGovern's decentralized, employee-focused strategy has been a key to I.D.C.'s growth and success.

"Mr. McGovern's strategy provides a much higher rate of both employee and customer satisfaction," he says.

INTERNET CHALLENGES

I.D.C., along with I.D.G. companies, has targeted the Internet as a crucial vehicle for future growth. Unlike competitors such as Ziff-Davis, I.D.G.'s ap-

proach follows its long-held strategy. Rather than create a single supersite like Ziff-Davis' ZDNET or Time-Warner's Pathfinder, I.D.G. is leveraging its global presence to create a network of resources. IDG.net thus becomes a gateway site to 225 other I.D.G. sites and gives customers both an access point and a navigational tool to get useful information from the company's wealth of data.

With its broad and deep network of companies, I.D.G.'s Web strategy is simple, according to Mr. Conlin: "We looked at the destination supersites that try to satisfy everyone from the chief information officer to the games

enthusiast, and in every case study of media logic, the specific always drives out the general."

Like other publishers, I.D.G. is not yet ready to concede the future to the online world. "We don't view this as a transition from one medium to another but rather an extension of the brand from one medium to encompass another," says Rich Mikita, *Computerworld's* vice president and general manager of new media services. "We don't have a scenario plotted out in which the brand moves from print to online. We see both co-existing in both media for the long term."

In fact, the move to the Web has

and it immediately sold out. The book, with its unconventional, light-handed approach along with cartoons by popular computer cartoonist Rich Tennant, hit at what Mr. Kilcullen calls the crucial psychographics of the customers. Waldenbooks, at the time one of the nation's biggest book retailers, refused to carry the book. So Mr. Kilcullen took a grass-roots approach, went store to store and convinced retailers to carry the title.

He attacked the packaging with the same consumer-oriented point of view. He had read in a Forbes article about how the Detroit automakers used color to elicit emotion to sell cars. He learned that yellow was the most attention-getting color. Black and

yellow, it turned out, were used on the international signs for caution, a perfect designation for dummies. And he conducted "the 10-yard test" on the new design. Could a customer see the name from 10 yards away when he walked into a store?

The packaging included elements that would support the concept of the brand. Every cover would look the same with a protest sign and chalk-like, children's lettering to promote the idea "that we're rebelling against incomplete documentation that leaves you frustrated and we want to learn at our own pace," Mr. Kilcullen says.

In developing a distinctive set of marks, Mr. Kilcullen created a trademarked look and feel for

the product line and then set out to rigorously promote and protect the brand. It was a work in progress, but Mr. Kilcullen had his own definition for the four P's of marketing: positioning, packaging, point of sale and publicity. At the heart of his strategy was a simple premise: define the market to your advantage.

Brands, he adds, create an emotional link with a customer base. Once that link is established, there is a foundation on which to build. And Mr. Kilcullen built quickly and effectively, staying focused on technology titles but pushing the envelope and moving into uncharted territory for I.D.G.

By 1994, I.D.G. Books had two dozen "For Dummies" titles on the market, all in the high tech-

been a series of fits and starts in search of a winning formula. Mr. Mikita says that initially, Computerworld's site distanced itself from the publication, with an ampersand in front of the name and a message that the Web site was a distinct operation from the publication. "We were diluting the brand," Mr. Mikita admits. The editorial staff wrestled with the issue for many months, trying to retain the positive elements of a separate entity but leverage the strengths of the publication.

"It's important for publications to make their content available in this format," he says. "But to determine what we want the brand to represent

in this different [medium] — not just to be a paperless print product — that's a harder proposition." The important question, he adds, is not when will the death of paper occur, but when does the center of gravity shift for the reading audience, and when for the advertisers. "Those questions don't necessarily have the same answers," Mr. Mikita says.

Computerworld's Web site designers realized that most subscribers were not interested in reading the publication online. They wanted access to breaking news, which led to a daily news section; more importantly, they wanted a re-

source. A search capability through I.D.G.'s vast network of data was critically important, and career-related information such as a job posting and search capability was also a draw. Like other online offerings, the site continues to be a work in progress, searching for a flexible model that will produce revenues and enhance the brand.

The site is advertising driven, says Mr. Mikita, and makes a small profit. He admits that if he were charged back for the editorial content, the site would not be profitable. But such is the benefit of being part of a global publishing empire. The con-

nology sector. The company broke out of that space with "Personal Finance for Dummies" in 1994 and its immediate success convinced Mr. Kilcullen that he could extend the brand well beyond initial estimates without doing damage. Not long after, he proposed "Sex for Dummies" with Dr. Ruth Westheimer as the celebrity author. I.D.G.'s executive committee, which was thrilled with the unexpected success of the series, balked at the move, claiming it corrupted the brand. "People wanted to believe that the Dummies brand stood for one kind of literacy," Mr. Kilcullen recalls. "I said, 'no, the premise is to revolutionize all kinds of learning: sex, sailing, fly-fishing. Any anxiety-producing

topic, any need to know, like golf or wine, [was] fair game.'"

In a few years, Mr. Kilcullen succeeded in achieving the brand-builder's dream: becoming part of the popular lexicon. The familiar black and yellow covers dotted bookstore shelves in departments as diverse as gardening, cooking, baseball and computers. The EMI Group approached with a proposed joint venture to market music for dummies (there are currently 26 CD's on the market) and Pressman followed with board games. Music gets the brand into HMV and Tower Records, and toys take the brand into Toys "R" Us. Thus the brand becomes not only the driver of the consumer strategy but of the channel strategy as well. Offers have flooded

in for so many different media, including movies and television, that Mr. Kilcullen hired International Creative Management in Hollywood, one of the largest talent and literary agencies in the world, to field offers.

Although the sky is the limit on subject matter, he is quick to point out that I.D.G. Books remains committed to the corporate mission: 290 of the 350 titles are focused on technology, and there are no plans to stray too far. But with the results thus far, Mr. Kilcullen is unlikely to get conservative anytime soon. He points out that he believes strongly in I.D.G.'s corporate values, particularly the unwritten 11th value: It is better to ask forgiveness than permission. **SB**

tent exists to be leveraged. The mandate is to find the best and most efficient means to do that.

In these early years of the Internet, the value proposition remains unclear. For I.D.G., the Web sites have a direct impact on print advertising. Deals for banner advertising for companies that advertise in print are available, for example.

Perhaps more important, the Internet offers the opportunity to leverage the corporate and individual brands in ways that have not been available in the past. People who read Computerworld, Mr. Mikita says, do not know what I.D.G. is. But online, the

product and corporate brands can be linked in ways that benefit both the company and its customers. Computerworld's many global incarnations, for example, can be used to great advantage online, he says, because scale is becoming more and more important in the electronic world.

"The I.D.G. brand is very important to our future online," he says. "It is the only way we'll get credit and share of mind for the audience we command. And with the strategy we have, there is much more incentive for internal sharing because there is no sense of concern or competition among the Web sites about IDG.net.

We can all agree on its value."

Pundits agree that it is far too early to declare winners in the Internet wars. Mr. Conlin suggests that the number of hits a site receives is a false measure of success. "We're in the answer business," he says. "For us, it's about how people spend their time. We've measured and we figure that people are spending three times as much time on our sites as on ZDNet, if you add up all our sites. If you save people time, provide useful information and make them more productive, you (can) create loyal readers." **SB**

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