

Sigma creates virtual trade fair for leading wholesaler

Under contract to Edw H Thomée AB, a leading wholesaler in the hardware and building supplies sector, Sigma has created an application for virtual trade fairs on the Internet. The inaugural fair resulted in approximately 4,000 visits to about 60 exhibits and some 200 new users of Thomée's ordinary Internet store. Thomée sees the virtual trade fair as an effective way of saving time and money for its customers, suppliers and for itself.

Previously, Sigma has implemented for Thomée the Bison business system, developed by Sigma for wholesalers and others. The new trade fair application - the first of its kind in the industry - was integrated into Thomée's business system before the inaugural fair in March this year.

"E-commerce between companies is expanding strongly and our deliveries of systems to Thomée demonstrate how IT can be made an integrated engine in the business process," says Sune Nilsson, Business Area Manager for Sigma's e-solutions, which, following the proposed division of the Group into three listed companies, will become the new Sigma, with emphasis on business operational consultancy services.

Thomée's retailers consist of hardware stores and building supply outlets throughout Sweden. Many of these have limited resources of time and money to spend on visiting trade fairs. By arranging virtual trade fairs, Thomée can often present new products and can reach a greater number of retailers compared with traditional trade fairs.

The invitation to the first virtual trade fair was in the form of direct marketing aimed at retailers and via advertising in the trade press. Interested parties were asked to register with Thomée to obtain a password for the trade fair. Thomée had also involved a large number of product suppliers who acted as hosts for the various exhibits. Visitors to the fair were offered special discounts and could also participate in competitions and win prizes. Furthermore, Thomée profiled itself in different ways, for example by introducing its new trademark, "eXPO," for the virtual trade fair. Marketing and trademark profiling was taken care of by a specialist company within Sigma. The trade fair ran for two weeks and will be followed by more.

Björn Lindberg, Senior Vice President, Marketing at Thomée comments: "The fact that we are the first in the business to present a virtual trade fair is of great value to our profile. We also hit the bull's eye by gaining so many new users for our ordinary Internet shop through the inaugural trade fair. However, we will always need traditional trade fairs to some extent."

Sigma is a leading supplier of consulting services in the areas of e-solutions, embedded solutions and engineering solutions. The three business areas are expected to be listed on the exchange as three independent companies by the summer of 2001. The Group, which has some 3,300 employees in 13 countries, focuses on solutions for interaction, innovation and integration. Sigma's guiding principle is to strengthen its customers' competitiveness and brands. (www.sigma.se)

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