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Patagonia: Encouraging Customers to Buy Used Clothing (B)

The greenest product is the one that already exists, because it doesn't draw on new natural resources to produce. In partnering with Patagonia, we believe the Common Threads Initiative helps fulfill our promise to help you make greener, smarter decisions.¹

—John Donahoe, CEO of eBay, speaking on the partnership

Chouinard agreed to partner with eBay and launch the revolutionary Common Threads Initiative, which promoted buying and selling secondhand Patagonia merchandise. Its purpose was to encourage customers to buy new products only if necessary. eBay created a “Common Threads” marketplace specifically for individuals to sell their used Patagonia gear. Additionally, Patagonia added a link on its Web site where customers could buy “Used Clothing and Gear.” The initiative encouraged sellers to become a Common Threads partner by “taking the pledge” and following the five Rs (see **Exhibit 1**). From these sales, Patagonia received zero commission.

When Casey Sheahan, Patagonia’s Chief Executive Officer and President, initially announced the partnership with eBay there was hesitation among Patagonia employees because they knew it would be a high-profile partnership. However, soon thereafter employees warmly received the initiative.² Over the course of a year, Patagonia’s e-media and eBay’s sustainability and business teams outlined the concept of posting Patagonia’s used products for sale on the Patagonia eBay Web site.

Externally the company had signed up about 21,000 pledges by December 2011, a significant amount considering the initiative was publicly announced in September 2011. Patagonia’s goal was to sign up 50,000 pledges in the first year. Patagonia sold about six thousand products through its Common Threads store on eBay thus far. More important, the initiative had sparked significant conversation regarding conscious consumerism, and Patagonia reported receiving inquiries from other companies interested in creating a similar Web site.

Looking forward, Patagonia and eBay were hoping to integrate a donations program into the Patagonia eBay Web site where a portion of the proceeds sold on eBay would go to nonprofit organizations. This new

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