

Debra Bergevine

Meet Novell's CMO



Talking to Debra Bergevine, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) at Novell, is a unique experience. At the risk of perpetuating a stereotype, marketing executives are not generally known for being either succinct or direct. As this interview shows, however, Bergevine is both. Getting to the point quickly, Bergevine explains how she is organizing Novell's marketing efforts to meet well-defined goals with measurable milestones. As Novell begins to roll out a marketing campaign and messaging that support these goals, you will learn the meaning of four words: *Ngage*, *exteNd*, *Nsure*, and *Npower*.

Q As Novell's first Chief Marketing Officer, how do you plan to change the perception that Novell is a dying company?

A I do not believe that the market perception of Novell is that it's a dying company. The market clearly has the perception that Novell is a company focused on legacy approaches to networking, but that doesn't necessarily translate into Novell as a dying company.

We're going to do a number of things to show that Novell is a vibrant company. First, we're going to be very clear in what the strategy is for the company. Second, we're going to take that strategy to the marketplace in a manner that's easy for the market to understand, that's relevant, and that includes evidence that we indeed are doing the things that we claim we are doing and that customers want us to be doing. We're going to focus marketing efforts on four areas of capability and make sure the market hears in every way possible that we are the leading provider in those four areas.

We've already begun to take these steps. The most important element in getting the market's attention is relevance. We're going to change how we talk to the marketplace and who we talk to in the marketplace. Instead of focusing exclusively on IP Operations personnel—the people who already know and are convinced of the strengths of Novell—we're going to aim our marketing efforts at the chief information officers and other business executives who are really making decisions as to the use of information technology.

To talk to those people, you have to speak their language, which means talking in business terms. We will tell them

how Novell can help them streamline their operation and cut costs. We will demonstrate how Novell will help them get beyond their enterprise to be able to conduct business electronically with their customers, their trading partners, and other people they want to do business with.

That's really the story Novell will tell. We'll tell it consistently. We'll use the same language in telling it, and we'll tell it as often as we can to the right people.

Q Could you give some specific examples of how you will market to CIOs and other IT executives?

A Our marketing efforts will continuously emphasize the four key capabilities of Novell. We're going to help them understand how Novell's consulting and services capabilities will assist them in looking at how to change their business processes to conduct work differently. Then we're going to show them how technology can be employed to facilitate those changes. That's the first capability, which we're going to call *Novell Ngage*.

The second thing we're going to help them do is understand how they can integrate new and existing applications, freeing up information that today resides in functional stovepipes. We're going to show them how they can open up these applications and make them available to everybody in their organization. Now the way that we're going to do that is with a set of technologies and capabilities we refer to as *Novell exteNd*.

Once those applications exist and are available and are open in that fashion, our customers need to control who has access to their applications, information, and resources. That's really where all of our efforts around security and identity management and provisioning come into play, and we call that space *Novell Nsure*.

Finally, our customers want to make sure that their IT systems are based on a really powerful environment—one that's highly reliable, one that can grow as their business grows, one that can provide all the services they need to manage that environment. Novell's capabilities in this area are called *Novell Npower*.

Those are the only four things we're going to talk to the marketplace about. Our discussions will always start with a business perspective—what are customers trying to achieve and what capabilities does Novell have to help them achieve that.

We need to build credibility quickly. To do that, we will provide as many customer examples as we can. We're going to make sure the marketplace understands that we have

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solved these problems for real companies they know, recognize, and admire. We're going to do that in virtually every way you can think of—through press coverage advertising, locally conducted events, speaking engagements conducted around the world, and literature provided through our web site. I think that speaks directly to issues of relevance, issues of viability as a corporation, and issues of long-term strength and growth opportunity.

Q Do these four things fit under one Net? Are you keeping one Net?

A Oh, absolutely. The vision of the company truly is information without boundaries, and that's really the essence of one Net—profiting from the information economy by being able to conduct business electronically regardless of location or device, without all of the constraints and boundaries that have historically been inflicted.

How do you achieve the one Net vision? By providing open applications, by securely managing access to the corporation's information, by providing a very powerful and very open platform for computing, and by offering the needed advice, assistance, consultation, and implementation assistance. We think those are the four critical elements that must be in place for the one Net vision to be achieved.

Q When will you begin to roll out the new marketing messages?

A We're going to start within the next few weeks making sure that internally our workforce is well-informed and fully prepared to do this, and then we will follow immediately as we move into autumn with a number of carefully orchestrated external activities.

Q What are your marketing goals, and what are your deadlines for accomplishing them?

A I've already spoken to you about some of those goals. I have two overriding goals: help to transform Novell into a customer-driven company and accelerate the company's growth rate. Both of these goals will help the company generate more money. As far as deadlines for accomplishing those goals, both are fairly enduring goals. Obviously, I expect to measure them

on a very regular basis, certainly measure them quarterly.

Then below that, there are a number of actions and activities I'm putting in place to make those goals happen, and obviously, for each of those actions and activities, there are milestones. Efforts to make this a more customer-driven company include the creation of a customer council, which is a group of CIOs who will meet twice a year with Jack Messman and select members of the WMC [Worldwide Management Committee] and act as an advisory body to Novell. This customer council will take a hard look at new products and services when they're still in the proof-of-concept stage, react to changes we're considering in terms of pricing strategies, policy changes, business process changes, and tell us what they like and what they don't like to help us to steer the course a little bit. I expect to launch that customer council in January.

We're trying to do a much better job in terms of working closely with the sales force to collect the information necessary to understand where the marketplace is going and how the buying patterns and preferences of our customers are shifting. We're using that information not only to shape the marketing activities we do but to help shape the development of new offerings.

One of the goals I've set for myself is to make sure that marketing truly becomes a global organization and has as deep an understanding of market needs in Asia Pacific, Latin America, or Japan as it does in the U.S.

Another significant goal I've put in place for myself is to make sure that we really approach marketing as a company-wide initiative. We need to coordinate plans, carefully orchestrate activities to best leverage all marketing resources and then even beyond marketing to other functions of the company, including the geographical organizations (who are our primary constituents), engineering, consulting, and the other functions of the company.

Q In the absence of the customer council right now, have you shared your marketing plans with any customers thus far, and if so, what kind of feedback have they given you?

A Actually, we have. I'm a strong believer in testing everything before launching it, and we've done that with groups of customers. We've done it in one-on-one meetings and actually have been getting enormously strong support for the notion of making our message simple, focusing on those four things, and expressing our capabilities in business terms. Our approach and the use of Ngage, exteNd, Nsure, and Npower have been extremely well received.

Discussions of our marketing plans are also receiving strong support; customers and partners have been enthusiastic about our advertising plans, customer council, and upcoming events. We're very encouraged by what we've heard so far.

We've also tested these ideas with our platinum partners to make sure they feel we're providing the level of support they need to be successful. And again, we have received some great suggestions and overwhelming support and endorsement.

Q With a master's degree in mathematics, you have an unusual educational background for a marketing executive. What advantages does this background give you in marketing high tech?

A The mathematics degree is actually a good fit. My work experience is really founded in business management positions. Certainly, my background in mathematics and financial analysis lends itself more directly to line management, but I don't think you can do good marketing if you fail to recognize that marketing is only of value if it supports the execution of the business plan.

The recognition of the importance to be able to establish metrics in advance and strive toward them, quantify and measure results, and then assess whether or not you've achieved your goals is actually quite valuable in a marketing environment. The ability to think strategically and logically in assessing a market, identifying opportunities and then considering the viability of those opportunities is equally important. We're working hard to ensure that these abilities become core competencies of Novell's marketing. ●