

## The art of decision-making



**Making strategic decisions is not always easy when several protagonists are involved. Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School helps companies to structure and facilitate their decision-making process. "An objective third party is often crucial," points out Filip Van Pottelbergh, head of Brady's European Marketing & New Product Development department.**

Brady is a global player in industrial identification and safety signage. The company has a turnover of 1.2 billion dollars and employs about 8,500 people.

### Theoretical framework

"A couple of years ago we decided to invest more in e-marketing," explains Filip Van Pottelbergh. To get that strategic objective on track, the marketing manager turned to Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School. "We needed an objective voice that could cut across the various inputs from our marketing, IT and sales people and give the decision-making process the necessary credibility. I knew Professor Steve Muylle from one of Vlerick's Master Classes and from the School's marketing round tables. I was aware that he and his American colleague, Amit Basu, had developed a theoretical framework for rolling out e-business in established companies, which had already proved feasible in practice. So we wanted to check out whether it was something that could work for Brady."

### Brainstorming

The first step was to ascertain the current situation as regards e-marketing. Filip Van Pottelbergh: "In March 2008 I sat down with a few of my strategic colleagues: the IT Director, who would have to free up staff and budget resources for the project, the e-marketing manager, who would be largely responsible for implementation, and the CRM specialist, because efficient e-marketing assumes input of data from the CRM system."

Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School brought its own expertise to the process and tailored the theoretical framework to Brady's particular situation. The next step was a brainstorming session, which yielded various ideas aimed at improving the company's e-marketing, in terms of both trade processes and decision-support processes.

### Action

Brady's horizontal structure required the suggestions to be reviewed by all European business leaders, future leaders and distributors. The main action points to emerge were improvements to the distributors' site and the European website. The ideas were then translated into action in Brady's new European websites and a revamped distributor-only development site.

### Success

Brady can look back on the decision-making process with satisfaction. Filip Van Pottelbergh: "The e-marketing manager found his field of operation organised on a more professional basis, the IT Director was properly accountable for budget spending, the marketing director could use the academic framework as a robust tool for the necessary sales buy-in, and even the CRM specialist was happy with the results, as the project would be linked in with Brady's CRM programme. The first step towards expanding our e-marketing was definitely a success."