

COLUMBIA HOUSE – CASE STUDY

Turning multiple clubs into a unified entertainment experience.

With the e-commerce boom in full swing, the venerable Columbia House Music and Video Clubs found themselves under siege: the brand was perceived as old, the business model no longer relevant.

Exciting online upstarts such as Amazon.com and CD-NOW—with huge inventories, discount prices, excellent customer service and next-day delivery capabilities—were stealing share from the 15-million member club.

Working with e-business branding and technology consultancy USWeb/CKS, Columbia House embarked on an end-to-end overhaul of its brand and its business model.

USWeb/CKS conducted research with Columbia House members and prospects, implemented a comprehensive study of the online entertainment market, and thoroughly analyzed current Columbia House business processes and practices.

The study led to several key recommendations for the brand going forward:

- *Let the website drive the brand.* The catalogues and mailings were seen as old-fashioned, and while some members still enjoyed flipping through pages, most agreed the “paper club” was slowly approaching extinction.
- *Integrate the clubs.* At Amazon.com, consumers could buy books, tapes, DVDs, and

CD’s—not to mention pharmaceuticals and power tools—all via one shopping cart. This was perceived as “state of the art,” and anything less would reemphasize the perception that Columbia House was “old school”—a poor positioning for an entertainment company.

- *Turn the club into a real club.* Using the inherent capabilities of the

Internet, leverage the millions of members in the club community to interact with each other and add incremental value to the membership.



The final

deliverables consisted of:

- A brand framework and branding principles to guide product development and ensure consistency between the online and offline branding messages;
- A comprehensive user experience description detailing website information architecture and UI design;
- Graphic design for web pages and for related materials such as packaging and website advertising inserts;
- And a technical spec detailing necessary upgrades to the back office to enable the front-end experience.

Columbia House is in the process of a multi-year implementation of these recommendations.