

Using Integrated Marketing to **Increase** Website Traffic

How Crestec Digital
grew the Brother website
from 6,000 hits to more
than 12 million per month



See How Crestec Digital Took Brother's Website from Sew-Sew to Spectacular

Challenge: Brother's Home Appliance Division Seeks New, Improved Image, Sales, and Website

The Home Appliance Division (HAD) of Brother International wants to establish itself as a premier supplier of home sewing, embroidery and quilting machines, accessories, and consumables. They strive to secure a significant portion of the multi-billion dollar industry that is growing out of a national trend toward home-based hobbies, and want to put an exciting new spin on their products and services.

Like most professionals, they are interested in enhancing their web presence, and increasing the number of visitors to their site. They see great earning potential in the internet, and would like to use their website to bolster their sales and image.

Situation: A Website That Doesn't Reflect the Company's Excellence

Prior to working with Crestec Digital, the Brother HAD site was being produced in house, served from Japan, and averaged only about 6,000 hits a month. It loaded very slowly, offered limited information, failed to reflect the excellence of Brother's engineering, and wasn't meeting the needs of its target audience: American home sewing enthusiasts.

Solution: Crestec Digital Adopts Brother

Brother HAD chose Crestec Digital as its agency of record for advertising, public relations and online marketing in the spring of 2002. Crestec Digital strategically recreated Brother's web identity and image, gave them a new address, www.brothersews.com, and differentiated them from the masses. They developed a friendly, feature-rich website with a distinctive brand personality that is in keeping with Brother International's corporate design guidelines. It has its own creative look and feel, while reinforcing Brother's credibility as a global superbrand with a long history of innovative technology and superior manufacturing.

Result: Many Happy Returns: To the Website and, Consequently, on Investment

In-depth and interactive product information, special features and promotions, and a monthly e-newsletter have enabled Brother HAD to forge a tremendous relationship with their customers and dealer base, and have contributed to repeat visits to the new site. Within a mere eight months of its launch, the new Brother website began to enjoy an average of 500,000 hits per month and product sales for the Home Appliance Division had increased by 20%. Today, the site receives more than 12 million hits per month. And the hits just keep on coming.

That's the short of it. But there's much more to this success story. Read on to see how Crestec Digital, through their vision and the use of integrated marketing, breathed new life into Brother HAD's website and, as a result, their business.



The hits just keep on coming

The site now receives more than 12 million hits per month.

The Secret to the Site's Success: Integrated Marketing

Crestec Digital believes that marketing support should be part of an integrated process rather than a series of loosely related events. The benefits of this type of approach accumulate with each new effort in corporate recognition, share of mind and—eventually—in share of market.

Crestec Digital has become expert at integrating their clients' other communication efforts on the web. Online integration, more than any other means, maximizes Brother HAD's visibility and the return on the investment the company makes in the development of advertising, marketing and public relations materials.

With senior software developers—as well as experienced marketing professionals—on staff, Crestec Digital is in a unique position to marry these two mediums. The company offers a full suite of technical, writing, and design services to its clients. Crestec Digital will also collaborate with a client's other strategic marketing communications partners—advertising, public relations and design agencies—to leverage their efforts on the client's website.



Crestec Digital creates content that builds relationships and brands, and develops interactive features that attract, retain and encourage user participation. These results are proven and measurable, and provided to clients as an added value.

Join Crestec Digital on a walking tour through the evolution of Brother's new website and see how these components have contributed to the success of the site.

Every Visitor is a Potential Resource

As Crestec Digital sees it, every visitor to Brothersews.com is a potential resource for Brother, whether they are prospects, customers, dealers or the press. With this concept in mind, they identified and catered to these critical groups, building a community of repeat visitors—and brand loyalty—through sustained programs that benefit these four constituencies, and, consequently, Brother.

Read on to see how this multi-faceted website has become an invaluable tool to several important, yet diverse audiences.

There's No Place Like the Brother Home Page

Crestec designers created the website to be sophisticated, yet homey and friendly so that visitors would feel welcome. They wanted visitors to poke around for a while—average visit is 8.5 minutes—and to return.

The home page captures the look one would expect from a leader in the sewing industry, resembling a patchwork quilt with colorful, interactive squares, inviting visitors to explore new products, register for the Brother Club, or download free designs.

With a name like “Brother,” and a front page that includes a photo of a child working on a design with his grandmother, and a scene reminiscent of *The Sound of Music*, a visitor can’t help but get a warm, family feeling. Playful clothing shots are also prominently displayed, speaking to Brother’s new approachable image, and making the visitor feel comfortable.

As you can see, the front page introduction flirts with the visitor, encouraging them to click and see what the other pages contain.



You Can’t Judge a Site by Its Front Page

Crestec Digital knew that even the best print promotion and an aesthetically pleasing home page wouldn’t work if the website was weak. They ensured visitors would click through by positioning attractive photos and punchy, clickable headlines on the front page. When viewers click through, they are rewarded with valuable web gems.

From Web Presence to Web Presents

These valuable web gems took Brother from being a mere presence on the internet, to a site that gives back to its customers. While all you get from some websites are those annoying cookies that are so hard to shed, Brother rewards its visitors with presents in the form of free patterns and downloadable embroidery designs, project instructions, tips and other information. A monthly companion e-mail newsletter is another valuable freebie that builds community and encourages repeat visits to the site.

Brothersews.com Goes Live

The new Brother site has made every effort to live up to its new address on the web. It appropriately contains an action verb, speaking to the life of the new site that is constantly evolving in meaningful ways. It is continuously updated with fresh content that educates and entertains, because that’s what it takes to establish brand loyalty with computer-savvy enthusiastic, female users.

Search Us

As an added measure, Crestec Digital ensured major search engines were also equipped to direct browsers to brothersews.com. Technical staff continually updates search terms so Brother can maintain its position on the web.

Open House, Bring Your Own Mouse

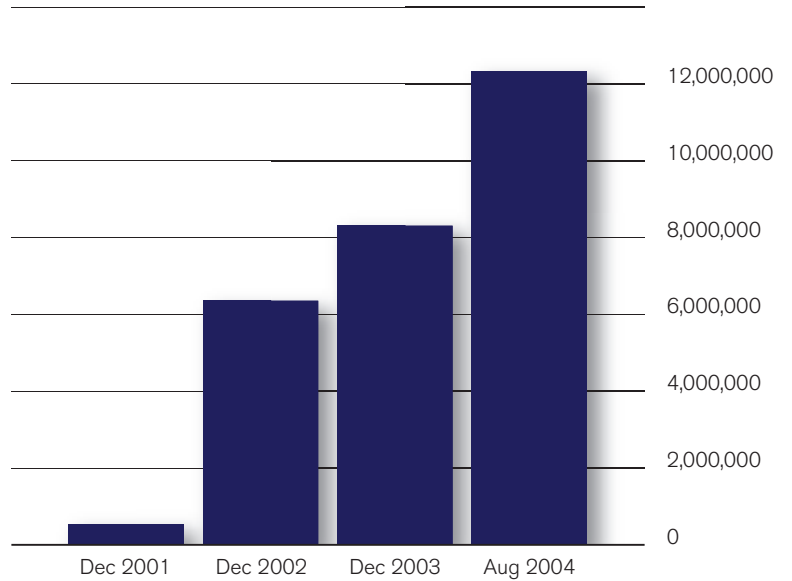
When the new website was complete, Crestec Digital started placing advertisements in key publications, inviting customers nationwide to visit the new site. Every promotional piece directed readers to the website for fulfillment of a specific offer. Once Crestec Digital captured the visitors’ information, repeat print mailings were replaced by lower-cost e-mail reminders that encourage customers to return to the site.



The Hits Just Keep on Coming

This type of marketing, known as “spiral marketing,” a technique that uses offline promotion to generate web traffic, has been highly successful. The web hits have increased exponentially over the last three years, from 6,000 hits a month to 12 million.

While these figures speak positively, they do not tell the whole story. Crestec Digital web developers knew it was important to not only gauge the number of visitors, but what they were viewing within the site. With this end in mind, and through the use of the latest technology including Java, XML, and Oracle, Crestec Digital engineered a highly trackable site. Web tracking provides invaluable feedback that is integral in formulating subsequent e-mails.



Measure What You Treasure

Crestec Digital provides a comprehensive suite of reports on user behavior which Brother managers can view online in a secure administrative area. This allows Crestec Digital marketing professionals and Brother managers to check the success of ongoing promotional campaigns at any time and alter them, as necessary. The reports also detail click-through rates—a whopping 40% from the e-newsletter alone—which helps Crestec Digital learn what visitors are most interested in, so they can enhance the web content accordingly. Unlike other kinds of promotions that are static, the website is updated weekly, and for a fraction of the cost of printing and mailing.

Brother, Building a Family Online

Once they got visitors to the site, Crestec Digital established a communication network between Brother and its audiences. Through the **Ask Brother** and **Contact Us** links, Brother is accessible via e-mail, and has made important contact information available to visitors. As if a direct line to Brother wasn’t enough, the friendly environment Crestec Digital fostered also encourages interaction among customers and dealers.

Through this brilliantly engineered site, these parties have complete access to one another: customers can find their nearest dealer and communicate with them via e-mail, and contribute questions and feedback that becomes available to other sewers.

While Brother is obviously pushing toward online browsing, and this all-inclusive site is fully loaded with product information, they have chosen not to sell online by design. In this increasingly electronic age, they wish to retain personal contact with their customers. For this reason, the **Dealer Locator** and **My Wish List** features have become an invaluable asset to the site.



Join the Club

Another way Brother encourages ongoing communication between themselves and the end user is through **Brother Club** USA Sewing Club. Registration is free, and is low barrier: only a name and e-mail address is required to join. Club benefits include an html e-newsletter, written by the Director of Education for the company, that includes tips, how-to’s, and links to special offers.



Different Clicks for Different Folks

As we’ve established, the Crestec Digital staff ensured Brother had the direct communication element all sewn up. But as marketing professionals, they understand that the genius of the internet is that there are so many ways to reach diverse audiences.

Prospective Customers

Studies show that more and more consumers are doing web research prior to making higher end purchases. Crestec Digital identified an online need for product specifications, and included detailed data on the site to meet this objective.

Color-coded headers contain drop-down menus that enable the potential consumer to locate information with ease. The menus provide key data that assists the customer pre-sale, and enables them to find a dealer to expedite their purchase.

Product Information

This site is fully loaded with all of the information necessary to advance consideration of Brother sewing and embroidery machines to potential customers doing competitive research. A high degree of interactivity on product pages—such as video clips showing key features in use—encourages customers to read and retain more product information so they can make informed buying decisions. The product pages are extensively cross-linked to related data on sewing accessories, books, CDs and embroidery memory cards for the consumers’ convenience.



Make A Wish

The **My Wish List** feature allows customers to save information on the specific products they are interested in. This information becomes a part of their electronic record, and will be accessible to them the next time they visit brothersews.com. The prospect’s desires are immediately sent to a local Brother dealer, who will follow up to establish contact, and to discuss the desired product.



Closing the Deal

While some of Brother’s sewing and embroidery machines are available in retail stores such as Target, Sears and Wal-Mart, many of the higher-end products can only be purchased from a dealer. This is just one of the ways Brother maintains its personal relationship with its consumers.

Dial a Dealer

Links to the **Dealer Locator** feature are prominently displayed and accessible from every page on the website. This tool enables the consumer to find the closest dealer by entering their zip code. They can contact the dealer directly via the telephone number listed on the site, or they can send an e-mail prompting a dealer to follow up with them.



Menu Caters to the Existing Customer

This well-organized site has given the customer numerous reasons to return after making their original purchase. Free designs, tips, information on accessories and education, are just some of the reasons visitors come back to the Brother website.

Free Designs

This feature includes free embroidery patterns to suit every sewer’s taste. Complimentary designs, such as the flower of the month, can be downloaded to the customer’s hard drive for transfer into their computerized sewing and embroidery machine.

Get Creative

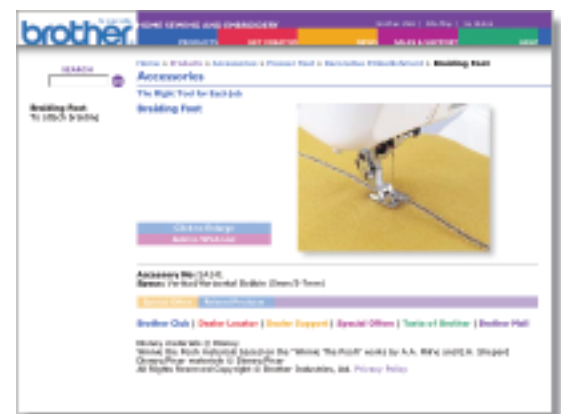
Sewers can delve into an idea database, where they will find countless projects with detailed instructions for sewing, embroidery and quilting.



Accessorize

Brother HAD understands that a site geared toward women should include a section on accessories. Sewers will be able to expand their own wardrobes to include original embroidered items by purchasing the right accessories for their machines. Unlike accessories that are sold in stores, the accessories on the Brother site are fully relational, and cross-referenced to the machines they support.

Whether it’s through classes, seminars, or news releases, Brother keeps its customers informed.



Click for Current Events

Whether the sewer is interested in attending the *International Quilt Festival* in Houston, or the *Original Sewing and Quilting Expo* in Minneapolis, they can find all the information they need on the **Brother Event Calendar**. Dates, times, and locations are listed, along with helpful hyperlinks that take them to a site where they can register.

Big Brother Keeps Customers in the Loop

As a global leader, Brother wants to keep its customers in the embroidery and sewing loop. The **News** features include timely, relevant articles and press releases that help sewers stay informed of developments in the industry. An archiving feature ensures these articles will exist on the site indefinitely, creating a library for visitors and members to use.

Education and Employment

One of the key elements differentiating Brother from its competitors is its emphasis on sewing education. Educational resources are invaluable because the majority of Brother’s consumers work in the home, and may not have an abundance of opportunities to meet or learn about the experiences or challenges of others working in their field.

Seamsters Unite at Educational Seminars

Brother educators make themselves available at nationwide events throughout the year to lend additional support to their customers. The educational classes are an excellent opportunity for sewers to learn about new techniques, machinery, to meet other sewers, and interact with Brother dealers and educators.

Careers in Sewing and Embroidery

Because many of Brother’s consumers are professional, or aspiring to be professional sewers, they have created an online resource where visitors can learn more about others who have made a career out of sewing. They have included inspirational stories about women that have turned their love of sewing into a profitable venture.

My Custom Stitch

This special feature, found on the sewing side of the Pacesetter and the ULT product series, allows sewers to expand upon the number of utility and decorative stitches already built-in to the machines. And the **Your Custom Stitch** feature enables sewers to create something that is truly their own – right on the website. If they like, they can submit their original stitch to be shared online with fellow sewers.

Tips & Tricks

Brother helps its customers work magic with their machine by providing them with helpful **Tips & Tricks**. Infinitely helpful to those who have misplaced their instruction manual, the **Tips & Tricks** section is an excellent way to recapture old information, and to read about new tips. Unlike the manual that came with the product, web information is always evolving. Sewers can check back periodically to see what new tricks Brother has up its sleeve.



FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

This section, broken out by machine model, includes a list of questions sewers may have about their instrument of choice.

Electronic Embroidery Library

Sewers can browse the shelves of the Brother Embroidery Library, where they will find favorite old and new designs that they can add to their Wish List.



Special Offers

This section is continuously updated for Brother customers, giving them a reason to return for free designs, instructions, or other valuable features.



Brother as Tutor

This special **Tutorials** feature won't help sewers with their physics homework. But it will help them learn about the Stick and Pin Method, Hooping Tricks for a Border Frame, Ruffer Tips, and sew on...



Thread Lightly

Brother doesn't want its customers to get strung out looking for the perfect thread color. They know that searching in the store can be like looking for a needle in a haystack. Finding the right threads online is much easier with Brother's **Thread Chart**. It ensures customers get cool threads every time.

Software Upgrades

Brother continually upgrades the technology that runs its machines. In this area, Brother owners can enhance the performance and increase the functionality of their machines by downloading free software upgrades.



Dealer Appeal

Brother simultaneously strengthened their relationship with dealers by creating a website that is also indispensable to them. Abundant promotional and marketing materials, event details, as well as customer leads, are available at the click of a mouse.

Marketing Materials

Crestec Digital designs a variety of high-quality marketing collateral to support the sales efforts of Brother’s 400 nationwide dealers. Dealers may order quantities of printed brochures, spec sheets and postcards directly from the site. In addition, Crestec Digital has made all of the marketing materials available in downloadable files on the website. Logos, copy, key marketing pieces and in-store flyers are available for the dealer to personalize. They can send the high-resolution files to Kinkos for reprints, or use their own color printers to print out the low-resolution files. This tool, while an obvious time saver, also ensures that dealer efforts across the country are integrated and coordinated.



Media Watch

Crestec Digital’s advertising and public relations activities target key end-user publications. In this section, Brother dealers can see what ads are running, where, and read current and past press releases.



Leading the Way

This website has become instrumental in generating leads for dealers. The My Wish List feature encourages customers to click on products they are interested in. The customer must enter their name and e-mail address to use this feature, which are then forwarded to the dealer in real time, who can follow up to close the sale.

Educational Seminars

Educational seminars are an important avenue for dealers to meet potential and repeat customers. These valuable seminars also enable them to learn more about the latest in sewing.

Back to School

This annual event, where Brother dealers converge to learn about the latest in sewing, can be completely arranged in this special area for dealers. All of the tools needed to book this yearly event—from travel reservations to class registration—are included in one convenient place.



Ironing Out the Details For The Press

Crestec Digital is also the public relations agency of record for Brother HAD, so they understand the importance of making information available to the press. For this reason, they have fully stocked the Brother website with news releases, contact information, and many other useful materials that enables the media professional to report accurately on company and product developments.

In keeping with their symbiotic vision, Crestec Digital uses a feature that collects data from media professionals visiting the site. This tool helps them compile a media contact list that can be used to e-mail breaking information and news releases.

Crestec Digital hopes to enhance Brother’s relationship with the press, by creating a site that is user friendly, information rich, accessible and useful. They believe that Brother’s new approachable image, and the wealth of knowledge evident on their site, will encourage media professionals to consider them as expert sources, and consult them on key industry events.

Pressing Information

Up to the minute press releases, under the **Press Room** link, keep the media up to date on Brother products, people and events. Older press releases have also been archived for their convenience.

In the News

Through this feature, the press can stay abreast of Brother’s contribution to the community. The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City, for example, has created two special exhibitions this year in celebration of Brother International Corporation’s 50th birthday. These exhibitions honor Brother’s humble beginnings in the garment district, and commemorate their innovation and impact on fashion and sewing’s future.

Sew On, and Sew Forth

While this white paper highlights many of the rich features that can be found on the Brother site, it doesn’t begin to explore all of the valuable services Crestec Digital has implemented on this all-inclusive site. It has come to be an inspiration to sewers and embroiderers alike, and challenges them to sew forth with their talents.

Crestec Digital invites you to visit brothersews.com so that you can experience the total web encounter they have created. If you are interested in taking your website to the next level, please contact **Jim Gowen** of Crestec Digital Inc., at **856-778-3480, extension 229**.

