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Cargill grows a better Web site

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- [Cargill Reports First-Quarter Fiscal 2005 Earnings](#) Oct. 12, 2004
- [Cargill today reported a record \\$457 million in earnings from continuing operations for the 2005 first quarter...](#)
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Customers We Serve

- Crop & Livestock**
Cargill produces and distributes crop nutrients and feed ingredients to farmers, livestock producers and animal feeders. We originate and process grain, oilseeds and other agricultural commodities for distribution to makers of food, feed and other products.
- Food**
Cargill collaborates with food manufacturers, food service, distributors and retailers with a focus on customer and consumer benefits. Cargill offers insights in food and beverage ingredients, meat and poultry products, and food applications that help customers succeed.
- Health & Pharmaceuticals**
Science-based, health promoting ingredients for pharmaceutical and dietary supplement companies.

Before the redesign of the Web site ...

Company had dozens of sites, little coordination

By John Reinan
Star Tribune Staff Writer

With 101,000 employees worldwide and sales last year of nearly \$63 billion, Cargill Inc. is the nation's largest private company.

But it took an e-mail from a frustrated farmer to nudge the Wayzata-based giant into re-examining its online strategy.

The farmer, looking for information on fertilizer, couldn't find it on Cargill's Web site. He sent an e-mail that "traveled all over the company," said Tim Krause, director of Web services. "That was a spur to take a look at how our site worked."

When Cargill took that look, two years ago, it saw a mess. Its 89 business units worldwide had 65 different Web sites, a number that since has risen to 140. There was little coordination of online technology or design, and no consistent brand strategy.

That was a problem, said Ann Ness, Cargill's director of advertising and brand management. For companies today, especially those with global reach, the Web is becoming the key point of interaction with customers.

"It is the go-to place for any aspect of communications," she said. "It has become the front lobby."

Cargill enlisted two Twin Cities-based companies, Connect@jwt and Stellent, to spearhead its re-vamping. Connect researched and designed new sites; Stellent provided content management software that lets non-technical users

... and after.

create material that's automatically translated into Web formats.

Over time, Cargill plans to bring more of its sites under the umbrella of Cargill.com and develop design templates to ensure a consistent user experience.

Scott Litman, North American president of Connect@jwt, said companies are waking up to the need for better brand management on the Web.

"You have brands that have had such careful stewardship in print and on TV," Litman said. "Then you go to the Web and all of a sudden it's the wild, wild West."

By making the online experience easier and more logical, Cargill hopes to increase cross-selling among its customers. The majority of Cargill's customers deal with only one business unit, Litman said: "Getting the businesses out of the silos is important."

Cargill also is looking to raise its overall profile with a new TV ad campaign by Martin/Williams of Minneapolis. One of the ads touting Cargill's role in developing sugar-free chocolate, ran during the Olympics and "inundated" the Web site with requests for information, Krause said.

Long content to stay quietly in its business-to-business niche, Cargill is seeking greater public awareness of its reach, Ness said. In particular, Cargill wants to boost knowledge of its wide-ranging presence in the food business.

"For the first time, there is a specific management focus on brand strategy — a declaration that Cargill stands for something beyond commodities," Ness said.

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