IBM Thinks Up New Campaign

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IBM has launched a major revamp of its PC market strategy, dubbing it the "Think" campaign. Combining marketing spin with actual software and services, the campaign is intended to present IBM PCs as easier and more efficient to use than competitors' offerings.

IBM has long used the word "think" as part of its corporate self-branding. According to company lore, the concept originated with an executive named Thomas Watson, who promoted innovative conceptualizing among employees by handing out pads of paper emblazoned with "Think."

Apart from their fresh packaging, IBM's ThinkVantage Technologies will include a number of new programs to make PC operation more headache-free, including disaster recovery software and configuration tools.

Open Source

The new campaign, in effect, posits that hard drive speed and size were the benchmarks of the first of three phases of personal computing. In the second era, manufacturers continually sought to bring more powerful machines to market at ever-cheaper prices.

Now, IBM is aiming to launch the third era. "This new phase will be driven by the ability to embrace open industry standards and provide innovation on top of them to solve real business problems," said Fran O'Sullivan, general manager of IBM personal computing.

Industry observers noted that Big Blue's reference to open standards refers to IBM's promotion of the Linux operating system, a move that may impact its competition with Microsoft.

"IBM has a major history of promoting Linux," Aberdeen Group analyst Bill Claybrook told NewsFactor. However, he said, if Linux vendors expect to capture the desktop market, they must enable more reliable Internet connections and improve the operating system's user interface.

The IBM Think strategy is also intended to make the company's PCs simpler and easier to operate, reducing maintenance costs.
Market Spin

Part of Big Blue's new campaign will involve repackaging existing elements, including renaming the company's current line of desktop PCs and related services.

The company said it will sell ThinkServices and ThinkAccessories. Next year, its NetVista desktops will be called ThinkCenter desktops. The company's new services and solutions -- the bulk of what is truly new in the company's strategy -- will be referred to as ThinkVantage Technologies.

Autonomic Software

Apart from their fresh packaging, IBM's ThinkVantage Technologies will include a number of new tools to make PC operation more headache-free.

RapidRestore, an application that will be preloaded on IBM PCs, will restore previously saved data and applications after a software failure. Similarly, Embedded Security Subsystem, composed of both hardware and software, will help protect data from viruses and other attacks.

The company's Access Connections tool will help users reconfigure connections in various environments, including home and office, wireless or landline.

Each of these technologies relates to IBM's hefty investment in autonomic computing -- a push to develop computers that can diagnose and repair themselves with minimal human assistance.

Market Laggard

IBM ranked third in the global PC market in the third quarter, according to research firm IDC. While Dell and Hewlett-Packard had 16 and 15.5 percent market share, respectively, IBM lagged far behind with 6 percent.

Therefore, analysts say, the company could use a fresh campaign to help reshape those numbers. IBM representative were not immediately available for comment.