

REDEFINING THE BATTLEFIELD

Claire Macland, senior EMEA marketing director at Juniper Networks, took on a major rebrand in just six months during this latest recession – and the brand emerged stronger. **Lucy Fisher** reports

Macland is quietly confident, exuding a calm authority. I'm guessing she needs to be in her role as senior EMEA marketing director at Juniper Networks, managing a team of 38 people, spanning countries as diverse as Sweden and Dubai. I ask her to briefly explain the challenges she faces, with the products she markets.

"We sell the technology that underpins big networks – such as routers, switches and security devices," she says. "For us, if the most senior person can see the business impact of what we're offering, they are more likely to sign off a multi-million pound purchase order."

Taking on the big boys

Another major challenge, I suspect, is Juniper's most obvious competitor, Cisco. Macland is clear on the approach needed when taking on such a big name: "Our budget is very small in comparison, so we have to choose our battles. We don't get pulled onto anyone else's agenda. You can't outspend them, so you must try to outsmart them."

"I've never worked anywhere where we've been the biggest," she adds. "I love the mental discipline of trying to outsmart, and I don't think I'm a big company person. I like to see where I can make an impact. That's why I left BT."

Last year, Juniper Networks was entirely focused on a project Macland refers to as 'constellation' – the idea behind its name being that a series of announcements: technical innovations, significant partnerships, and so on, would all be focused within one, overarching and strategic story about how Juniper knows what is affecting businesses today.

"It was the biggest corporate launch we'd ever done and we did it during the recession. It was an opportunity not only to punch at a

high level but also to rebrand. Our CEO Kevin Johnson, who's ex Microsoft, called it 'playing offence'," she says.

The project kicked off in May 2009, and amazingly, Juniper was given a deadline of 29 October to complete the rebrand – which encompassed the whole look and feel of the company, the logos, the collateral, its web presence, and even the buildings.

The word "ambitious" barely seems sufficient. Macland explains the rationale behind such a bold move: "Logo changes can often be very vacuous but we had such a huge amount of change we wanted to articulate that it was absolutely the time to make those kinds of cosmetic changes."

All budget decisions were re-allocated accordingly. The pace of PR activity, for example, was slowed down, only to spike back up again as the official launch date neared: "A week before the launch there was still a huge veil of secrecy. We hadn't revealed the full story even internally, and everyone had signed non-disclosures."

Then a leak hit US business publication *Forbes*. This proved a real test in the new social media world. "Twitter went nuts," she admits.

In response, Juniper – and its agencies – engineered a lot of "very, very quick" PR activity, given that 250 press and customers had been invited to turn up at the New York Stock Exchange for a launch meeting where they had been told to expect a surprise. PR activity was centred around the message, "You don't know the whole story."

Macland says the handling of this unexpected turn enabled her to really grasp the art of PR management: "We used the leak artificially as an extra teaser and I don't think we lost one person at the event."

She describes the whole strategy as "an aggressive assault" on the networking space: "We took some huge risks. We took a narrow window of opportunity and we outmanoeuvred the competition. Our

stock price rose five per cent."

She says it was CMO Lauren Flaherty, who was new to the company at the time – and a former senior marketer at IBM; one of the team that turned IBM around in the 1990s – who had suggested that rather than a series of announcements, the company should be looking at a whole new rebrand. It was Flaherty who came up with the notion of a 'constellation': "She had a vision. We had to work out how to make it happen."

What's next?

Four months on, I wonder what the remaining impact of the rebrand has been. "It's still a big 'internal culture' project," says Macland. She plans a lot more social media activity throughout 2010, building on what the company has learnt.

"Social media is a great way to broaden the marketing mix. It can really bring events to life. You can drive people to an event, agree the agenda, take questions, post videos and comments."

But here a word of warning from Macland: "You have to remember the huge power behind social media. You can't control it. You have to think through all the implications before you act."

Juniper's approach over the coming year will be "interactive, conversational, charging off in the direction of advocates." Macland well understands the benefits of getting customers to tell the brand story, and says she can count on support from the CEO on this: "He understands the importance of this type of marketing, and the fact that it's one route to outsmart the competition."

Can't she now rest on her laurels, just for a little bit? "In 2010 we're not going to sit back. Lauren Flaherty doesn't sit back! We'll keep forging ahead with social media. It can really surprise you. It's unpredictable. And at this point no-one is an expert."

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