CHAPTER 3   INFORMATION SYSTEMS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND STRATEGY

CASE 2   ## IT and Geo-Mapping Help a Small Business Succeed

VIDEO CASE

SUMMARY   Emily Meyer and Leigh Rawdon started The Tea Collection, a children's clothing wholesale business, in 2002. Their first product line consisted of three baby sweaters and a single shop. Today The Tea Collection has expanded to over 300 department and boutique stores and now includes women's clothing. Information technologies played a critical role in their success from design, to production, customer targeting, and marketing. L=4:57.

URL   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_GmukX5sfM

CASE   IT is not just for huge, multinational companies. Small business entrepreneurs use a variety of information technologies to do all the things much larger firms do, but on a much smaller budget. IT allows small firms to act and look like much larger firms, amplifying the power of entrepreneurs, and creating the conditions for sustained and rapid growth. The Tea Collection (teacollection.com) exemplifies how entrepreneurs can use inexpensive but powerful information technologies to create a successful business.

The Tea Collection was founded by Emily Meyer and Leigh Rawdon in 2002 in San Francisco with just three pima cotton baby sweaters and a vision of bringing the fusion of worldwide cultures and modern design to fashion. Emily Meyer grew up in Texas and started sewing when she was 3 years old. Growing up, her mom introduced Emily and her sister to the languages, arts, and cultures around the world. To follow her love of fashion, Emily left Texas

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to study fashion design at Parsons in New York. After spending a year living in Paris, she returned to New York to design menswear for top designers Ralph Lauren, Perry Ellis, and Alexander Julian. Lured to San Francisco by love, she spent days and nights designing childrenswear at Gymboree and Esprit.

Leigh Rawdon has a complementary but very different background. Leigh's dad taught her to spell *entrepreneur* when she was in second grade. She was always recruiting her neighborhood friends for door-to -door bake sales or an afternoon of playing shopkeeper. In high school, she had her first business license to sell balloons for parties. After studying English at Davidson College, she returned to the business world but quickly realized she couldn't work for someone else.

While attending Harvard Business School, she continued to search for the big idea. It didn't arrive until she had moved to San Francisco to work in Silicon Valley. Leigh got to know Emily socially through their husbands' friendship. "Emily and I could talk for hours—over coffee, at parties—about her idea for a children's clothing company inspired by cultural traditions around the world. The mission of making the foreign familiar and the importance of bringing the world into the home and family resonated with me, and my priorities in life." The idea was right for both of them.

Nearly ten years later, the business is going strong with their leadership, ranked on the *Inc Magazine* list of fastest growing private companies five years in a row. The firm has expanded into women's clothing. Leigh's passion for entrepreneurship continues at Stanford's business school where she is a lecturer, teaching a new generation of aspiring consumer and retail entrepreneurs.

VIDEO CASE QUESTIONS

1. Identify the key software applications used by The Tea Collection.

2. How does the geo-mapping software help the company grow? Explain how sales reps use the results of the geo-mapping system.

3. What is the main technology challenge identified in the video? How would you suggest this challenge should be addressed?

4. Do you believe this company can continue to grow rapidly with the existing software and hardware they have demonstrated in this video? Why or why not?