

Savannah Interactive Entertainment: International Distribution Strategy

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Introduction:



Savannah's first CD-ROM game, *Bellini and the Mystery of the Missing Boy*, released in 1997, was elected the 1998 children's game of the year in Denmark.

"Our mission is to produce quality entertainment for interactive and traditional media aimed at families and children," exclaimed Per Rosendal, creative director of Savannah Interactive Entertainment, who founded the company in 1995.

Savannah's commitment to developing "imaginative and intelligent" entertainment for children differentiated the company from most of its competition. By combining traditional game development with innovative interactive media, the company created a unique category of children's CD-ROM games that were neither typical edutainment nor action-driven arcade games.

Since 1998, the company had aggressively pursued international expansion. Using third-party distributors and licensees, Savannah distributed CD-ROM games in 20 countries. However, the performance of these third parties had been mixed and the directors felt that it was now time to review Savannah's international distribution strategy. "We have proven that we can create great content, but content by itself is not enough. We have to demonstrate that we can successfully market our products outside our home market," observed commercial director Michael Buch.

Moreover, the rise of the Internet offered new distribution possibilities. Some commentators were already predicting the demise of CD-ROM games as players migrated to the Internet.

Company Background and Products

In 1995, Rosendal wanted to buy a computer game for his son. Unimpressed by the available selection, Rosendal created Bellini and the Mystery of the Missing Boy. Savannah Interactive Entertainment was founded and this CD-ROM game was launched as Savannah's first title in 1997.

Bellini was an instant hit with both the children and the press. It pioneered the company's early success in the Danish market. Savannah's reputation for innovative and fun children's games grew as it released more titles.

The company was rooted in Scandinavian tradition. "We would like to transfer some of the literary values that this tradition embodies to new media. We also want to continue to create entertainment that respects and speaks to the children's own culture," declared Rosendal.

Children's universe. Community. Respect. Versatility. Children's culture. These concepts became synonymous with the company philosophy. While it had grown to more than 25 employees, Savannah kept its creative, down-to-earth work environment. (Refer to **Figure 1** to view organizational structure.)

Figure 1: Organizational Structure

Positions	Number of employees
Creative director (Per Rosendal)	1
Commercial director (Michael Buch)	1
Project managers	4
Artist/designer/illustrators/web designer	5
Programmers	5
Web programmers	2
Author/scriptwriters/idea developers	4
Sound/localization	4
Sales/marketing/administration	2
Total number of employees	28

Source: Company records

Product Strategy

Savannah's product strategy was based on the release of a series of titles. Between 1997 and 2000, Savannah released four titles in the Bellini series. Each title included 15 to 25 games that were intertwined with each other as well as lots of catchy songs. Children could navigate from one game to the next within the framework of one title. They could also play repeatedly within various plots in each CD-ROM and select different characters, based on the character's personality and abilities. Each title offered several hours of entertainment for children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old. (Refer to **Exhibit 1** for a description of Bellini's Universe.)

Savannah decided to significantly expand its product portfolio in 2000 in order to migrate into platforms other than the CD-ROM, enter new distribution channels,

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