



case 1-429-230  
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## Patagonia: Encouraging Customers to Buy Used Clothing (A)

*There is no business to be done on a dead planet.*<sup>1</sup>

—David Brower, also etched into the front door of Patagonia's headquarters<sup>2</sup>

*Patagonia will never be completely socially responsible. It will never make a totally sustainable nondamaging product. But it is committed to trying.*<sup>3</sup>

—Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia

As Yvon Chouinard, founder and owner of Patagonia, sat at his desk in Ventura, California, he pondered the possible impacts of a new business venture. His Vice President of Environmental Initiatives, Rick Ridgeway, was proposing that Patagonia partner with eBay and launch a revolutionary program that would encourage its customers to purchase used Patagonia apparel through eBay instead of buying new clothing.<sup>4</sup> Ridgeway had argued that this partnership would complete Patagonia's environmental mantra of reduce, repair, reuse, recycle, and reimagine by providing a mechanism for its customers to sell or trade used Patagonia attire. Chouinard knew that this would be a radical move for a retailer, as it directly threatened to undermine the company's revenue base. However, Chouinard also knew that the partnership could serve as a unique opportunity for his company to influence the consumer apparel industry for the betterment of the planet.

Although Chouinard had a successful history of incorporating sustainability into the heart of Patagonia, this new partnership would go further than any prior effort. Would promoting secondhand purchases undermine his company's source of revenue? Would doing so have little effect because his affluent customers shun used clothing? Would it open a new customer base with those who had less disposable income but who could now afford Patagonia attire? Or would it revolutionize the consumer industry by starting a movement to decrease consumption, which would ultimately benefit the planet at the expense of Patagonia? As Chouinard looked around the office at the bicycles, surfboards, solar panels, and Tibetan prayer flags,<sup>5</sup> he wondered how this venture would affect his loyal customers, employees, and the company's status as an industry leader in environmental sustainability.

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