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Leading IT Girls Take to the Catwalk

By Guennadi Moukine

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Daria Barova of Yandex, Klera Vilenskaya of Plearn.ru and Marina Khaustova of Click.ru attending the event. **Guennadi Moukine**

Women from leading IT companies changed their workstations for catwalk on Friday, showcasing fashion gear from one of the leading online retailers, Lamoda.ru, for IT Girls, an exclusive event dedicated to women in the IT industry.

"Information technology is not some strange thing that weird guys do in their basements," said Dominik Picker-Huchzermeyer, Lamoda's co-founder. "The industry has become very exciting, cool and sexy. There are many professional, intelligent, ambitious and beautiful girls who work for IT companies and make them successful,"

Women working for Lamoda, which employs more than 1,200 staff in Russia and Kazakhstan, have been instrumental in the company's success, Picker-Huchzermeyer added.

In June this year, the company landed the largest investment deal in the history of Russian e-commerce, securing $130 million from Access Industries, Summit Partners and Tengelmann,

pushing the competitor Ozon.ru and its $100 million funding in 2011 to the second spot, The Wall Street Journal reported.

This is in addition to the nearly $60 million investment the company received from JP Morgan in September 2012, which helped the company to outperform its competitors, such as KupiVIP.ru, Ozon.ru and Otto Group subsidiary Bonprix.ru, East-West Digital News reported.

Lamoda, one of Russia's leading online fashion retailers, offers more than a million clothing products and accessories from more than 900 international brands for men and women of all ages. It also runs its own logistics network and courier service.

Lamoda CEO Niels Tonsen told The Wall Street Journal that, while having its own logistics network is expensive, it is money well spent.

"If you are able to offer next-day delivery and a high service level, you really see that those clients give us high scores in customer satisfaction and they come back much more often than they would if we delivered through the Russian post office," he said.

The company believes that its customer service and a carefully selected product range are the reasons clients keep coming back. Lamoda has had more than a million customers, and its website attracts more than 18 million monthly visits, Tonsen said.

"If you go online, you should take it seriously," Picker-Huchzermeyer said. "We've seen several offline shops that think, ok, we'll get one person to do online sales. But it doesn't work that way. All areas [of online sales] — marketing, product development, customer experience — must be taken seriously."

For people who buy clothes online, the Internet has become a natural shopping environment, said Yelena Razumova, CEO of flower delivery network Interflora Russia.

"Most of Interflora's customers place orders online, so our market overlaps [with Lamoda's one]. Those customers for whom online shopping is second nature are very important for us," Razumova said.

Data Insight estimated Lamoda's net sales for 2012 at about $150 million, which is about the same level as KupiVIP.ru and Bonprix.ru.

Russia's e-commerce market expanded more than 21 percent in 2012 and is set to reach $25 billion in 2016, according to eMarketer.

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