

Opportunity Discovery: Cleaning up through Productivity Innovation

Client: Market Leader in Commercial Cleaning Supplies

Challenge: Working with the Senior Vice President of Marketing, the mission was to identify opportunities for sustainable differentiation in the commercial cleaning supplies business. The client wanted to expand market share through unique offerings that addressed unmet customer needs. The client had excellent cleaning formulations and a clear channel to market. What they lacked was a wow factor differentiator that would leapfrog the competition. **You want to create a sustainable competitive advantage in your market. You need a way to delight your customers.**

Diagnosis: The client had excellent technology in chemical cleaning systems for a wide range of commercial situations. However, they did not know much about the actual use environment and users of their products. Most of their information was secondhand through distributors and large commercial contractors.

The client was convinced that they were missing opportunities to open new accounts with their products. They also had hints, via complaints from the field, that their products were being misused in some situations. Cleaning effectiveness and efficiency was being questioned by some customers. Others were complaining about damage to surfaces, supposedly from the harsh chemicals used in some of the supplies.

In order to support the client's desire to develop sustainable differentiations based on satisfying unmet user and stakeholder needs, Product Genesis employed an Opportunity Discovery (OD) methodology. This approach allowed the client to see inside the inner workings of their end-customers, the cleaning crews, and intermediate stakeholders such as the cleaning contractors and distributors. **You really have to understand your customers and stakeholders in order to identify sustainable innovation.**

Methodology: Product Genesis' Opportunity Discovery is a powerful set of tools. Its first group of modules provides a framework to capture detailed Video-Voice-of-the-Customer™ and Stakeholder insight. The methodology employs Digital-Voice-of-the-Customer (DVOC)™ tools, combining video or audio captured in-depth interviews with customers and stakeholders, and on-site observations in the actual use environment of the products. The resulting rich customer information is

processed into manageable data clips encompassing a single customer need, and data based for reference.

Post processing of the captured customer needs results in affinity groupings of similar needs (KJ Analysis with needs-based segmentation). Solution concepts are then formulated to meet the identified unsatisfied needs, and tested with the segments sharing the common requirements. **Needs-based segmentation allows unique, premium solutions to be targeted to the customer who will value them the most.**

Results: The Opportunity Discovery process identified major productivity and product use challenges in the commercial cleaning arena. Many of the client's cleaning solutions were provided in concentrated form, designed for mixing and dilution on site. This made the materials easier to transport, and allowed for flexibility in the cleaning blends to address different situations.

Unfortunately, many cleaning crews deployed in commercial operations had limited English skills. They were unable to read dilution and combination instructions. Crew supervisors were hard pressed to support the need to interpret instructions and coach crews in proper mixing and dilution. Errors were made that were at minimum non-productive and potentially damaging to

surfaces to be cleaned.

The innovation identified was a system approach, combining pictorial-based cleaning instructions tied to color coded solutions that could be mixed through a central, push-button mixing /dilution station. For any given cleaning challenge the crew member simply referred to the pictorial guide, the blended the cleaning solution in the bucket or sprayer based on a simple color/count method. (For "toilet" image one shot red, two shots blue into a bucket; for "kitchen counter" image, two shots red, one shot green into a sprayer, etc).

The patented solution system delighted the cleaning crews and the commercial operators. Productivity was dramatically increased, mistakes were avoided, and once a training and dilution system was placed, the distributor and our client had a lock on the account. Sales skyrocketed based on the dramatic productivity improvement allowed by the system. **The detailed understanding of unmet needs at the end-customer, intermediate customer and stakeholder level, enabled systematic innovation, a sustainable competitive advantage, and profitable market share growth to be achieved.**

