

CASE STUDY

A leading manufacturer of kitchen cabinetry innovates customer experience

THE CHALLENGE

In order to improve their market position among contractors and the growing aging population of home-owners looking to remodel, our client, a leading manufacturer of kitchen cabinetry, sought to understand how physical challenges and functional limitations manifest themselves in the kitchen. The company faced the challenge of developing products and improving the customer experience in a way that would appeal to the mass market, while at the same time improving safety, accessibility, and maneuverability in the kitchen for those with physical limitations.

WHAT WE DID

AMS designed a Voice of the Customer and ethnography initiative aimed at understanding the unstated needs of the value chain, which in this case consisted of three key segments: dealers, contractors, and disabled, non-disabled and aging consumers. The ultimate goal of the research was to identify performance gaps across the value chain in order to effectively focus future brainstorming sessions for new ideas and innovative solutions. The engagement relied heavily upon ethnographic observation to identify unstated needs and to gain empathy for end consumers. In order to gain an understanding context, AMS observed a mix of consumers performing daily tasks in their kitchens. AMS was a partner throughout the engagement: designing the sample plan, managing visit logistics, crafting an effective discussion guide, conducting the field research, compiling analysis and bringing the results to life.

THE OUTCOME

The research revealed that although access and organization were important elements of the kitchen experience, these areas were both already well served by the market. There was an opportunity, however, related to accommodation and universal design. Consumers reacted favorably to the idea of having a more comfortable way to sit or stand while cooking or cleaning, as well as having adjustable counters. Nevertheless, the biggest insight uncovered from this initiative wasn't related to the physical product at all, but to the upfront planning and remodeling process. Customers sought more trusted knowledge sources on how to meet their specific accommodation requirements for age and disability related needs. They wanted assurance that they were working with the best contractors. The company invested in developing several successful interactive tools to make it easier for customers to access information, view unbiased customer reviews, and visualize what their kitchen would look like before construction begins. Through developing a deeper sense of consumer empathy, and understanding what was truly important throughout the value chain, the company focused its innovations on the things that mattered to customers. They were able to make adjustments to their products and services in order to maintain mass market share, while at the same time growing share among the aging and disabled.

CLIENT

A leading manufacturer of kitchen cabinetry

INDUSTRY

Building Materials and Durables

SERVICES

Ethnographic/Observational Research, Ideation and Co-Creation, Voice of the Customer

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