

CASE STUDY

Leading industrial components company discovers a game-changing unmet need

THE CHALLENGE

Ball bearings are a part found in almost any kind of conveyor system imaginable, from lumber mills to airport baggage systems to production lines. Our client had been a long-time leader in the field of mounted ball bearings, and its flagship brand was the front runner in quality. However, competitors from Asia had been making significant inroads within the market, claiming comparable levels of quality at much lower prices. The company saw the market as mature and perhaps stagnant with relatively little innovation occurring for some time.

WHAT WE DID

In order to reclaim and solidify its leadership position in the market, our client sought to identify and address key, unmet needs related to the product or processes surrounding the use and purchase of its mounted ball bearings. The manufacturer partnered with Applied Marketing Science (AMS) to conduct a Voice of the Customer initiative involving end users and OEMs with the aim of better understanding the needs surrounding the purchase, installation, usage and servicing of mounted ball bearings. AMS led the initiative to:

- Conduct customer visits and in-depth interviews to identify a complete set of customer needs involving the product and processes
- Facilitate a quantitative survey to have customers prioritize their needs relative to their importance and level of satisfaction with current alternatives in the market
- Lead a focused, creative brainstorming/ideation session with the client to generate potential solutions to the most important, unmet customer needs

THE OUTCOME

The Voice of the Customer initiative revealed that the most important, unmet need in this field was to keep the bearings properly lubricated. Since lubrication traditionally required human intervention, there was much variability to the process. In the past, several competitors had tried to solve this problem by creating “sealed bearings”, but this solution had failed to catch on. Based on the Voice of the Customer findings, our client generated a solution to offer the customer a set of lines (tiny hoses) that attached to each bearing housing. This allowed lubrication from a central point, making it far easier to apply lubrication. This innovation was highly profitable for our client, providing differentiation in a market that had for many years experienced little or no innovation at all. Later on, the manufacturer removed the human element from lubrication altogether by making the lubrication computer-activated. Voice of the Customer provided the team with the proper customer focus that it needed to create a significant innovation in the market.

CLIENT

A leading manufacturer of industrial components

INDUSTRY

Engineered Products and Components

SERVICES

Voice of the Customer

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