

Demanding Innovation:

In sales spaces that have become a lot of noise, develop your product to cut through the clutter.

As a customer, it is noisy out there. So many things to see, to look at, and to notice before selecting what you need...or want. Same holds true whether you are looking for yourself or making a decision for business. Employees are faced every day with that challenge—how do I get the end-user customer to look at my product? The solution is simple; develop a product to cut through the clutter.

Ok, maybe not too simple. But there are ways to set yourself and your team up to achieve just that. Below are four general rules to follow in developing your next innovative product to make sure it is selected in the marketplace.

Rule 1: Foster a culture of ideas, diversity, and creativity.

It starts here. Internally. If you own another employee's experience, how are you fostering their ideas through diversity and creativity? Good or bad. If there is one thing you should be paying attention to with the millennial generation is that they have ideas and want to be heard, so how are you making that possible. They are the next decision makers so set it up right for them now.

Look around you and how decisions are made and business is getting done. If there is only one department responsible for the innovation and launch of a new product then it is time to branch out and push the limits. Walk down the hall and ask the first person you see that has never been asked what problems they see in the industry with your product(s) or the way it is presented. Why do they play the lottery, why don't they. At some point, an answer is heard generating an idea. It could be a new way to get the word out, a new way to market an existing product, a tweak, or a new product all together that will solve a problem you currently are not properly identifying.

Rule 2: Have a team dedicated to innovation.

This is not the role of marketing. That is the first big mistake some corporate structures still believe. Those are also the same businesses

that typically are not innovating either; probably not a coincidence. Marketing and sales are the driving forces behind what does sell, but not the only people that should bring ideas to the table. Those are the people giving status updates of the industry, identifying needs and even existing problems. But the drive to innovate exists within every department. Set up a team of people to drive ideas of what needs to exist to solve problems, drive more sales and see something in the marketplace. Then let your research and development teams develop those ideas and come up with the actual solutions.

Look at Kickstarter for example to grab some inspiration. It is full of unique product ideas and those idealists don't even know how they will go about achieving the end product, but they know there is a solution somewhere. This is the start of collaboration, the start of ideas and innovation at its finest.

Rule 3: Use a third party you trust.

Look to your contact list as to whom you can trust to grow and develop your idea. It could be a vendor within the industry to move it from idea to product. It could be a trusted advisor to give an outsider's perspective to solidify the need. Depending on your idea or problem, the solution may also be not just the product but how it is displayed, encased or shown off to grab attention. Use your outside experts to polish the idea for you.

Rule 4: Don't forget the fun, think like a customer, and sell it!

You are one, so it shouldn't be hard. Remove yourself from the internal working and relate it back to how you choose your groceries, your new shirt or even a new landscaper. How do they catch your eye, how did you hear about them and what made them special. It may sound odd; your shirt choice and a lottery product, but it is relatable. Remove the actual product and think experience and what made you want it, what made you pay attention in the first place. Develop your plan and sell it! ■



What are you looking for in a next big thing? Feel free to comment or ask questions to Kayt at kayt.gabrielson@ownrev.com or connect with her on LinkedIn.

Kayt Gabrielson is currently a Product Manager for Schafer Systems, Inc. with an extensive background in sales and marketing covering diverse industries such as lottery, wireless and apparel. She currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the American Marketing Association Iowa Chapter.