
Case Study: Removing the Roadblocks from Product Development



Challenge

A global packaged goods company was considering whether, and how, to launch a new product category in response to market trends and interest in the category across the company. Its decision was complicated by the fact that the company sells through multiple channels, and while products and categories cross these channels, each channel does its own development, launch and marketing. Given the company's decentralized structure, no one group would be overseeing the development of this category across the organization. In fact, there was no agreement as to whether the category should stand alone or be launched as a subset of an existing category. Our client engaged Point B to develop a clear path forward.

Using an execution lens

Point B brought an execution-driven approach to resolving conflict and making recommendations that could be effectively implemented. The project's biggest challenge was the sheer number of stakeholders with differing interests. That tension was compounded by the short timeline, which coincided with early product testing in several major retail markets.

We quickly developed a common framework for defining the product, its attributes, and its relevance to all constituent groups in the company. We used this framework to understand and document the situation across internal functions and for the industry as a whole. We conducted employee interviews and an in-store survey of the product category across six U.S. markets.

Among our key insights, we identified tension points and contradictions among various functional constituencies in the company and made actionable recommendations—including questions to be answered and

issues resolved in order to move ahead. In highly decentralized organizations, functional product teams must understand their role relative to other teams. Leading and following are both strong roles, but they are different roles with different challenges. We also delivered a point of view on product strategy that resonated so well that our client was able to incorporate it into its broader portfolio strategy.

Making decentralization work

Point B provided a unified understanding of product development plans across the organization, which allowed our client to make decisions consistent with overall organizational goals. By identifying areas of compatibility, tension points, and potential roadblocks, we clarified areas and relationships that needed focus. With a common roadmap for decision making, our client's product development plans are now streamlined around shared goals.