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Smart Business Brief

Advice for Success!

Catering to the Customer

Customize your products and services to appeal to basic customer groups

Gillette, a division of Proctor & Gamble, had a stronghold when it came to men’s shaving products, but they were chasing Schick in the sale of women’s razors. That presented a challenge and an opportunity for growth for Gillette. When you look at how Gillette has proceeded to meet the challenge, there’s a lesson for businesses of all sizes on how to expand into a new niche.



Evaluate your services or products. Think about the effectiveness of your services and products and evaluate them as if you were the customer. Is there room for improvement? For years women’s razors have been little better than a pink version of men’s razors, so Gillette saw room for lots of improvement.



Identify the competition. Who’s your competition? You may be ahead of them in some areas, but are there niche areas where you feel you’re falling behind? Know all you can about your competition – services, products, quality, pricing, etc. Evaluate how you stack up against them and identify areas where you need to improve.



Do some basic research. What products or services does your target market require? Also think about how they will be used. Your current



customers are a good place to begin. Gillette researched how women used their products by asking women to try them in their test facility in England. Gillette observed customer behavior, scientifically measured how their products were used, created new products, and retested. You can learn more about your customers by surveying them, or simply by asking them. Start with some of your best clients and look for specific likes and dislikes. Is there a client niche you are having difficulty capturing? Ask those customers what services or products they would like to see offered. By listening to what people want and how they use your products or services, you can begin to customize your offerings and offer additional accessories or services they need.

Customizing your services. In Gillette’s case, their research led them to break women into four basic niches based

on shaving habits or needs. They then created a series of products for each category. Look for ways you can offer a service or product to a broader customer base by slightly customizing your offering to subcategories of customers. For example, if you’ve identified two basic customers – ones who want things done in a very detailed manner, and others who want a quick fix, you can customize your services and prices to accommodate each type. Also consider targeting by age group, income level, or activity level.

While it may be easier to stick to one product (or one process for providing services), and you do not want to stretch yourself too thin, it is important that you recognize that one size does not fit all. You may have to adjust or segment your offerings a bit in order to capture a broader audience.