

Innovating on the frontlines to expand your business

Traditionally, companies have focused significant resources, innovation and implementation rigor on product and service operations and the supply chain.

So what about The Demand or the Consumption Chain? Have you looked BEYOND traditional product and service marketing?

Have you considered a holistic view of your demand chain and systematically applied innovation and executional excellence to this end of the equation? Simply put, the demand chain involves all the activities between your firm and your clients – its how they buy your product, how they use it and how they dispose of it.

Think about the **expansion opportunities** that may arise when you look at your “demand chain” activities from your client’s perspective. When you truly understand how they go about understanding they have a need, how they identify solutions to meet their needs and how they pick the solution they go with, you are likely to find new, better and more ways to serve them. What’s more, when you fully understand their entire purchase, use and disposal cycle, new opportunities in terms of products, services and enhancements will emerge.

You may learn they have a need for other services in your line or that an existing product in your line can be modified to meet their needs and enhance your total offering. It is likely that you will learn how to better make them aware and stay informed of your solutions and how best to position your products and services so they see the value and choose you over the options they have.

As you consider these ideas, here are a few steps that can help you get started:

1. First, map all the activities your customers engage in through the demand chain.
2. Next, gain activity based insights - drill down by asking the right questions. Think about the intersections of activities that could bring about new ways of serving your target markets and customers.
3. Finally, organize and prioritize your insights for action.

Don’t limit your thinking to innovating around just your products or services. You can apply tools like this to all your demand chain activities - for example, in the design and development of your website, in new ways of cross selling your products, in keeping your name, products and solutions in front of your customers and positioning your firm as the expert and right solution when it is time to buy.

There are plenty of tools available to innovate and stay in front of your customers. A few ideas include:

1. Your website is a place where they can view your entire offering and learn about other products and services that you have.
2. Email communications on a systematic basis through newsletters and announcements can effectively keep your clients informed on news, products and services about your company. The good news is that this is one area where you have permission to communicate with them – it is also the most cost effective way of communicating with your clients.
3. Blogs, forums, online surveys and related tools to name a few can help you gain insight and involvement by your customer.

WINNING STRATEGIES and ENDURING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE are coming more and more from these “front office” activities – the engagement of your business with your customer. The best companies have shifted their focus and resources to winning on the frontlines and so can you. It will open up all kinds of opportunities to expand your business and engagement with your customers and provide you with compelling growth answers!