



A Corporate Member Program of the PDMA

ISSUE STATEMENT

WORKSHOP #50:

UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMERS AND MARKETS:

USING VoC FROM CONCEPT THROUGH MARKET INTRODUCTION

JUNE 17, 18, 19, INDIANAPOLIS, IN

In this workshop we will address translating qualitative customer research (VoC) into clear product and process definition, and keeping customer requirements and needs clear from concept through introduction.

Workshop # 49 explored how companies go about understanding customers and markets – the role of ethnographic/qualitative research, how the different levels and functions participate, and how companies have built in processes, practices, and knowledge management to make customer understanding an ongoing and corporate-wide effort.

This workshop, #50, will address how, after they've collected qualitative customer knowledge, companies translate that knowledge to inform product and process development. There is a danger here that much of the tacit information – the needs customers can't articulate, needs that may be latent or future, or discernable only when the customer's processes and environments are understood (and which can be surfaced in a good qualitative approach) -- will be lost as teams try to come up with clear, measurable requirements. IAPD member companies want to know how to preserve this contextual knowledge, what the pitfalls are, and also how some companies have gone about preserving contextual knowledge as their teams begin the disciplined work of developing products.

They also want to explore how to keep customer information relevant and fresh as development proceeds. First, how do you keep from losing what you know? For instance, what forms of "QFD" are companies using in order to link and track product definition/development to customer information? Next, how do you refresh and recheck knowledge? Some of these issues include: what is the impact of digitization? how are companies using rapid prototyping and the internet? how can customer knowledge be integrated into flexible and/or lean product development?

Other issues that member companies have talked of include: how do you connect customer needs to the corporation's existing capacities, for example by using platforms? What is the appropriate role of the different functions? How do you balance the needs of different customers (customers around the globe, purchase decision makers vs. end users, regulatory bodies, and so on) in the design/development process? How do you keep knowledge fresh during long cycle times?

Member companies should plan to bring cross-functional teams that include, at a minimum, R&D and Marketing. Other functions and responsibilities that will benefit from attending include KM, design, strategy, and resource planning and management. There will be time in the workshop for company teams to review current company practices, determine areas for improvement, and create action plans to implement the learnings.

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