3MINDS

Developing your business, by design.

1. Become Customer Focused

Understanding your customers and focusing on their needs is critical to your success as a business. Developing the right products and services for your customers will make it easy for them to buy from you and have a positive impact on your sales. So, how do you do it?

Firstly talk to your customers, not just about what you offer, but about what they need and how you may be able to help. It sounds simple but taking time to talk to your customers can be one of the best investments you will ever make. It may be that you need to develop a new product with improved functions or with a new user interface, or make a simple change to an existing product that addresses a problem you have never thought of.

Focusing on your customers and where you sit in the your market can help you to find new opportunities, for your business. What this amounts to is, what is your USP (unique selling point)? What is it in your business or product that connects with the user and makes them choose you over the competition. If you can't answer this question confidently you will need to enhance your existing offering or create those USP's!

2. Design and Innovate to Differentiate

If you simply try to sell 'me too' products they soon become commoditised and deliver low margins which is why companies seek to offer products that are different from their competitors.

It's generally accepted that good design and innovation can deliver differentiation that will help you build your brand and generate sales but how do you innovate? To innovate successfully you need to gather as much knowledge as possible and develop ideas from as wide a team of people from marketing, sales, engineering and design functions.

Cast your net far and wide and encourage all ideas no matter how humble they may seem. Examine every part of the product life-cycle from delivery through setup, use and it's eventual disposal. If you can generate ideas that make a significant difference in these areas and promote them appropriately you can increase your sales dramatically.

To multiply the impact on your market and your sales, design your products as a coherent range and increase the value of your brand.

3. Add Value and Extend Markets

Use design to add value to your products. During the design phase it pays to incorporate saleable features which may add little or no cost to the design and tooling budget. Think about the way the product looks and will be used, installed and serviced. Making your product appealing to the eye and easy to operate can give your product a leading edge.

So, you've created a successful range of products or services and you want to know what to do next. If you tap into your knowledge base and look to other markets you may spot opportunities to move into them by diversifying your product range. This can have a massive impact on your sales and increase your margins, especially if you can implement new variants quickly with little risk.

Think about other businesses that have taken such 'creative leaps' like Dyson with their AirBlade hand dryers for public conveniences and there new Air Multiplier blade-less cooling fan. Remember too however how Dyson tried but failed to capture market share with their innovative washing machine which was withdrawn apparently because it was unprofitable. The secret of success is to stick to what you know, and to take advantage of your existing knowledge base and apply it elsewhere. In Dyson's case this seems to be the movement of air!

You might also like to look at ease of use, maintenance, storage and performance. Adding value to your product like this can give you a serious edge over the competition.

For more information on 3Minds design services please call us on 0845 680 1024.