



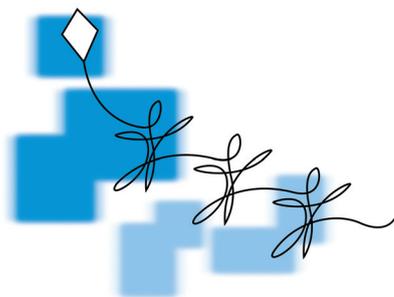
# What the Customer Really Needs

## The Background

Our client was a manufacturing company which had been acquired by a North American organisation. As part of the integration, the client had been asked to expand the European marketing of a new range of products. The products had some sales in Europe, but at a level well below the aspirations of the newly enlarged company.

Whilst the client understood the market well, the products were new to them, and they were unsure how best to promote them. Some guidance had come from the North American parent, but our client found it superficial and unconvincing.

## The Project



It was recognised early in the project that it would be possible to gain a deeper level of understanding from the limited number of customers in Europe already buying the product. The staff of The Galbraith Muir Consultancy designed an interview structure which could draw out from these customers obvious and less-obvious reasons for purchasing this particular range of products. The Consultancy also ensured that the interviewees included senior managers and technologists as well as the usual purchasing managers. The Consultancy carried out the interviews, then analysed and reported the findings.

Much to the surprise of the client, it emerged that their customers did not even know of the expansion to the range. Our client had been so immersed in the acquisition that they did not realise that many customers had not even noticed it. A basic information exercise was therefore launched before the sales campaign.

The client also learned that their existing reputation for excellent service was valued by the customers more than brand names or keen pricing. Again, the client's customer-focused culture was so deeply engrained that the client took it for granted – though the customers did not. It also emerged that price was less important than either the American parent or the European company had realised. By confining previous dialogue to the purchasing function, price had been given undue emphasis.

## If the project had not been carried out....

Before the project began, the American parent's perception was that the following were the most important product features – cost, ease of use and ability to customise. Our client's perception was that the most important factors were likely to be brand name, consistent quality and customer service. Without the project, the client would have been promoting the wrong product qualities – to a customer group which did not even know they sold the product!

### Recommendations and Actions

A PR campaign was used to inform the market before the selling effort began

The sales campaign was based on the real needs of the customer and included stronger emphasis on customer service

### Benefits

UK business resisted USA pressure to cut prices, and so retained excellent margins

The internal sales staff who had built the reputation for excellent customer services were recognised and rewarded