

How your company benefits from us.

Understanding customers

The background

The management of a midsize, global machine-manufacturing company had finally succeeded in focusing on its product/market portfolio. Traditionally, the firm had operated with a broad portfolio, in numerous sectors, offering average technology. The new strategy focused on four growth sectors with high-end solutions. Now the objective was to reposition the brand.

Metaplan's assignment

Metaplan's job was to find out how the market leaders in the four sectors saw technology developing, and what how they assessed our client as a potential competitor.

Our approach

Working with the executive team, we first had to decide what questions needed answering. This was more difficult than we initially suspected because the search for the questions reflected insecurities and resistance brought about by a strategy debate that had allegedly been concluded. Metaplan prepared and moderated a debate at a retreat that ultimately reached agreement on possible dialogue partners and areas for further scrutiny. Deciding on dialogue partners was particularly important. It emerged that we would have to approach individuals who made the long-term decisions affecting technology. Over the course of 15 interviews with these decision-makers, we succeeded in unearthing their underlying decision parameters. For example, we clarified why these decision-makers found our client's portfolio satisfactory or disappointing, and in what respect.

Metaplan gained access to the decision-makers through a simple but effective promise. We agreed to conduct the interviews together with key account officers and to present our main insights to the department of sales representatives first. The decision-makers became curious during the interviews. Until then, most of them had given neither trends, nor the reasons for their decisions, a great deal of thought. By presenting the results to the sales staff and selected interview partners, we were able to cross-check and tighten our hypotheses.

During the final presentation to the client's executive team, and the ensuing debate, the central assumptions underpinning the strategy debate were reconciled with the results of the market exploration. This allowed the company to align its market positioning and strategy.

The results

The interviews in the focus sectors and the subsequent examination and tightening of the results flowed into a customer typology and provided the basis for the brand campaign. The insights into market and technological trends not only reassured the company that its strategic decisions were correct; they also had the effect of anchoring the strategy deep in the executive team.

Contact Person:

Dr. Bennet van Well
P +49 (4106) 617-0
E BennetvanWell@metaplan.com