



Designing Demand | Case Study | J S Humidifiers

Let us spray! Double turnover forecast for re-designed humidifiers

Background

Set up in 1982 and now operating in over 80 countries, Sussex-based J S Humidifiers designs and manufactures bespoke humidifier solutions as well as supplying an extensive range of air management systems. These provide critical humidity control in a range of locations from hospitals and print shops to car plants and art galleries.

The challenge

Growing competition prompted a determination to find ways of safeguarding existing markets and reaching new customers for, in particular, the company's original flagship product range, Jetspray cold water humidifiers.

The response

Not only has the Jetspray range been re-designed and manufacturing efficiency improved but the company's corporate identity has been comprehensively overhauled and updated. Plans have now been put in place to re-design the company's other product ranges.

The outcome

The launch of the new range in September at a trade fair in Germany resulted in 300 new leads. The success of the project has led to forecasts of turnover for the Jetspray range doubling within a year.

“The effect has been extremely positive,” said Tony. “There has been a huge surge of interest by both customers and the sales team.”

Design project 'exceeded all expectations'

Even the most successful, well-established companies need to watch their backs when competitors are pulling out all the stops to increase their own share of the market. With a 25-year track record, 66 employees and a turnover approaching £7 million, J S Humidifiers were clearly doing something right.

However, the directors recognised the need to safeguard their markets in the face of increasing competition they decided to re-design the company's flagship product range, Jetspray water humidifiers, whilst also looking at ways of reducing costs and improving manufacturing efficiency.

To assist with the project, University of Brighton graduate Stanislas Brahier was seconded to the company for two years through the SEEDA-funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) which helps businesses to improve their competitiveness through the better use of knowledge, technology and skills.

It was in January 2007 while working with Business Link Sussex – which produced a Business Improvement Action Plan for the company, targeting areas such as ICT support, premises move and succession planning – that J S Humidifiers first heard of Designing Demand, a programme developed by the Design Council, funded by SEEDA and delivered by Business Link.

Technical director Tony Fleming said: "Our Business Link adviser explained how the programme helps companies to make strategic design decisions and set up and run design projects.

"We could immediately see the benefits and joined the programme. James Duguid was appointed design associate for the project and his input as mentor and adviser has been invaluable in helping us keep the specification tight. As we already had four in-house industrial designers, including Stanislas, working on the project we didn't need help with choosing a designer which is normally part of the Designing Demand service."

What began as a simple product re-design turned into a much more comprehensive look at the company's activities, thanks to the Designing Demand programme.

Tony said: "We wanted to give our products a strong corporate identity through design – to make them attractive to customers, user-friendly and up-to-date. It was also important to us to address sustainability issues, minimising the use of water and compressed air, increasing recycling and cutting

down waste. Reducing costs and stock levels, improving the quality of parts and the commonality of components were all aspects we confronted."

Design associate James Duguid encouraged the directors to look at the company's overall branding strategy.

"It was all a bit outdated," admits Tony. "J S Humidifiers was founded 25 years ago and we've been concentrating on the excellence of our products. So while we are now in a position of being one of the world's leading humidifier specialists our image did need updating."

The company logo had a facelift, the stationery was re-designed and then attention turned to the complete range of products – water humidifiers, aircurtains, air conditioners, coolers and actuators.

"The effect has been extremely positive," said Tony. "There has been a huge surge of interest by both customers and the sales team. In fact this whole exercise has gone much further than our expectations. We have design guidelines set up for future development and will be updating all our products in due course."

The company anticipates that turnover for the Jetspray range of products will double to over £1million in the 12 months following the launch which took place at a trade fair in Germany in September and resulted in 300 new leads. The company aims to increase overall turnover to £10 million by 2010.

Jackie Walker, regional programme manager for Designing Demand at Business Link in the South East, said: "This is a superb example of a dynamic, small but world-class British company being pro-active to maintain its position as an industry leader.

"J S Humidifiers acknowledged the need to improve and grow. The advice the company received from James Duguid was fully implemented and the outcome has been a resounding success. Improved margins should lead to greater profit and the company is aggressively targeting overseas markets."



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