

Insight2 Case Studies: Garden Hose Innovation



Innovation is often associated with cutting edge technology or highly creative work. However, the most challenging innovation projects are often the simplest.

A client with whom we'd completed several successful projects approached us looking to innovate one of their most tradition-bound lines: garden hoses. The hose market does not substantially

change from year to year, and true innovation is a rarity. This stagnation isn't due to strong market paradigms or misconceptions. Hoses are so straightforward that companies were unable to find any potential for innovation.

We captured observational footage of dozens of situations in which hoses were being used. We spent time in consumers' yards as they watered plants, we shadowed kitchen workers as they cleaned up after a shift, and we even watched zookeepers bathe an elephant. Through the observations, it became apparent that consumers and professionals may buy similar products, but had very different expectations of the products.

Despite the differences, there was one common thread that connected all of the interviewees. During the process of using the hose (for whatever purpose), there were flashes of severe frustration. A variety of issues arose which triggered these flashes: a hose being too short, getting snagged, leaking, breaking a plant's stem, etc. No matter the cause, just about everyone had that moment where they flashed a scowl or muttered a curse as they had to stop and fix the problem.

This emotional output was hard to communicate. Standing beside these individuals and seeing their demeanor change so quickly in response to a seemingly small inconvenience didn't translate to video. We needed to make sure our client truly understood how frustrating a project could become when a hose is working against you.

We invited our client to our offices to compete in an event we affectionately called the "hose olympics." The event consisted of a simple relay that

forced our clients to perform common activities that require a hose.

To make sure they fully understood their consumers' pains, we rigged the situations to reflect the most frustrating situations we'd seen in the field. For instance: as one gentleman carried a coiled hose between two points, the water left inside leaked all over his khaki pants. In another case, we had our intern park his car on a hose in use. By the end of the activities, our clients were dirty, tired, and flustered.

After our clients had time to cool down, we regrouped and watched video of consumers experiencing many of the same problems that had just been illustrated. Instead of the standard, casual note-taking, our clients were loud and animated, empathizing with the consumers on film.

By this point, our clients couldn't wait to start innovating. This experience had opened their eyes to a variety of opportunities that were invisible to them just days before. The project was not just successful, but memorable. Our clients actively talk about and apply these insights when they are designing new products to this day.

Could your team benefit from experiencing your consumers' pains firsthand? It's common for companies to have difficulty innovating because they can't truly empathize with their consumers. The Insight2 team has developed all kinds of events and activities that simulate real-life to give clients a taste of their consumer's struggles. If you would like to learn more about innovating through hands on activities like this, email us your situation (name, company, and the product you'd like to innovate) at contact@insight2.net.



Our clients experienced a hose that was just a little too short, grimy hands, and the dreaded "knot" left when kids put the hose away.

