

# Insight2 Case Studies: Paintball Innovation



Some projects are destined to be a lot of fun. *This was one of them.*

We were tasked with developing a new line of paintball markers (or “guns”) that could drive growth in a declining market. A cursory glance at the industry made a few things abundantly clear:

- paintball consumers weren’t typical; we were dealing with bona-fide adrenaline junkies
- in retail, paintball markers (guns) were differentiated almost exclusively on price and firing speed
- the entire sport was driven by paintball manufacturers; our client and other marker manufacturers were at the paintball makers’ mercy

In order to be successful, we knew we had to immerse ourselves in the sport and sub-culture that surrounded it. So, we started making calls around the country, trying to find hotspots for the sport and getting ourselves invited to observe every variety of the game we could find. We also set up interviews with various experts (e.g. specialty retail owner, former Navy Seal, etc.) so we could get their perspectives.



*This is what a “paintball expert” looks like*



We knew we would learn a lot from these events and people, but what good was our knowledge if our client couldn’t see and hear what we were experiencing? Our video guys had no idea what they were getting into....

So, we suited up in protective gear and captured local backyard games, formal and informal matches at various facilities, and even a 48-hour simulated “war” in South Carolina. This kind of research had never been attempted in this industry. Many hours of video and dozens of welts later, we had immersive clips

that enabled our client to see their customers experiencing frustrations that nobody in the market was addressing.

For example: The cost of a given day of play was quite high. The upfront equipment costs (mask, marker, CO<sub>2</sub> tank, ammunition hopper) could take a first time player over \$200-\$300 before they ever saw a game. After the equipment, a box of 2,000 balls cost around \$60 or more. While 2,000 rounds may seem like a lot of ammunition, keep in mind that high-end markers boasted firing rates of up to 30+ rounds per second.



*Pictured: 2,000 rounds or a whopping 67 seconds of fun*

While this math allowed paintball manufacturers to send their kids to a great college, it was also drove players away from the sport, toward cheaper alternatives. Much of the paintball market consisted of teenagers and young adults with limited budgets that couldn’t afford to stay involved in the sport. We heard it clearly: “I love to play, but I can’t afford to do this more than a few times a year”.

Before seeing this footage, they’d not had any reason to break free of the balls-per-second paradigm. After watching edited clips of player after player using strategy and cunning (not endless barrages of expensive paintballs) to have fun, they saw an opportunity. Real consumer experiences motivated them to design and launch a new line of pistol-style markers.



These new markers were designed for slower, more strategic gameplay. When held to traditional market standards, these new markers were an “inferior” product doomed to fail. However, consumers immediately grasped the value. Our client pre-sold their entire first round of production, and doubled their forecasted sales in the products’ first year. Both our client and the Insight2 team agreed that this project was a huge success.

*Are you in an industry bound by a revenue or margin-killing paradigm? Changing the rules of competition can expand margin, grow revenue, and give you a competitive advantage over your competition. Insight2 has helped many companies change the rules in their marketplace by understanding and addressing consumers’ real needs. If you’re interested in changing the rules of competition in your market email us your situation (name, company, and your industry paradigm) at [contact@insight2.net](mailto:contact@insight2.net).*