

IDEO Job Application Exercise

Business Factors Specialist

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Client: Unilever

Product: Unilever 3x concentrated laundry products (32 oz / 32 loads per bottle)

- All brand Small and Mighty laundry detergent
- Snuggle brand Exhilarations fabric softener
- Wisk brand Multi Action liquid detergent

Issue: The bottle does not have a handle on it, so when the user picks up the product, they do not readily know where to hold the product to allow for easy pouring.

When the consumer holds the bottle on side B and pours toward side A, the detergent pours through a spout easily and as designed (see Fig 1).



Correct pouring direction (Fig 1)

However when the consumer holds on side A and pours toward side B, there is no spout to pour through (see Fig 2). When the consumer picks up the container grasping side A, they need to open the cap, see that they are holding the container on the wrong side, and rotate the container around, so they are now grasping side B.



Incorrect pouring direction (Fig 2)

Because it is not readily apparent which side of the bottle one should grasp, the consumer will pick up the bottle from side A (incorrect) 50% of the time, negatively impacting usability.

Benchmarking:

A trip to the local grocery store reveals that Unilever's offerings are the only products without handles.

The handle on a bottle of laundry detergent or fabric softener serves two distinct purposes: 1) provides a place to easily hold onto the product, 2) provides the user of the product direction about where to hold the product for easiest use.

Many other products have handles, such as milk jugs, antifreeze bottles, windshield washer solvent, dish detergent etc. Typically these products do not have a pour spout like the laundry detergent, in favor of a circular opening. The handle serves only as a sturdy place to hold onto the product, and little else as one can pour products with circular openings in any direction.

Other containers, like a glass pitcher, have handles as well as pour spouts. The pitcher's handle serves dual purposes much in the same way that the laundry detergent's handle does. The handle does give the user direction about where to hold the pitcher, but to a lesser extent than a handle on a container of laundry detergent, because in the case of the pitcher the sight of the spout is not obscured by a cap.

Constraints: Total cost, branding, perceived quality and other functionality cannot be adversely affected.

- Total maximum cubic requirement: 3" x 5" x 10" (Increasing the overall cubic size of the product would affect pack density for shipping and shelf space requirements)
- Manufacturing cost / material content cannot be negatively impacted
- Revised container design must allow flow / pouring to remain within acceptable parameters
- Perceptual quality must remain the same or better. Figure 4 shows that the manufacturer is trying to create brand equity for the shape of this bottle



Perceived Quality (Fig 4)

Solution(s):

- Make the asymmetry of the bottle much more drastic and put in finger dimples on side B – to give the consumer a better idea as to where to grasp the product
 - Requires re-tooling / tooling modifications
 - The least drastic change – while it will help alleviate the issue, it will not entirely solve it
- Adding a handle on side B would give the consumer clear direction as to where to grasp the product to allow for pouring
 - Requires re-tooling / tooling modifications
 - Will affect brand equity and possibly perceived quality
 - Will add a small amount of material content / cost
 - The most drastic change – will almost surely eliminate the issue, but must be balanced against concessions made to other constraints
- Make the pour spout double sided
 - Requires re-tooling / tooling modifications
 - Will add a minimal amount of material content
 - This could affect the functionality of the drain hole
 - This small change will resolve the issue with the least amount of effect to other constraints

Next Steps:

- Better understand all constraints and long term strategy for the product
- Create more detailed proposals for each solution, research the effects on constraints and perform a cost benefit analysis on the proposed solutions and current situation