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STRATEGY

How customer focus is at the heart of Reaxys strategy

by Katy Van Amerongen-Halliday
3 July 2018

How do you gain the edge on your biggest competitors? Simple: Do the job better. On a mission to become a true market leader, Reaxys set out to glean valuable insights into customer experience through in-depth customer studies. After all, the better we understand how our customers' needs are changing in today's evolving information and technology landscape, the better we can determine the most effective ways to educate them and raise awareness about our products.

Last year, the Solution Marketing Team, led by Prima Sung, (together with close collaboration from the Product Management and CDI [Customer Discovery and Innovation] Teams), funded and conducted an in-depth study of academic customers to help us refine our product strategy, with the goal of exploring and developing Reaxys in new directions. We knew academics would be an important and strategic growth segment for Reaxys. However, incremental product improvements would not be enough to reach our targets.

We wanted to identify business and innovation opportunities for Reaxys product development to drive commercial growth.

Project goals:

- Understand how chemists conduct research projects
- Understand how librarians teach chemistry information retrieval skills and chemistry information solutions
- Understand the underlying process that leads to acquisition of Chemistry Information Solutions
- Find pointed insights and areas of opportunity for future innovation

> **Customer-centricity at Elsevier**
>
> **Elsevier knows my business**
>
> We identified how chemists work, how librarians teach retrieval skills, and how they acquire chemistry information systems
>
> **Anticipates my needs**
>
> We use those insights to drive future innovation in Reaxys product development
>
> **Commits to my success**
>
> We are following customer workflows and making innovative changes that reflect the way they retrieve information

Embarking on this exciting study provided many insights into customer research behaviors and needs. It also surfaced two key approaches that will make Reaxys more visible and integrated into researchers' workflows.

Googlization

The first major lesson that emerged from the Academic customer study centers on Google's impact on researcher search flow. This is a major change already occurring in the market — one that demands our attention. As part of the study, we asked librarians and researchers a set of questions, including the following:

- How do they (the librarians) teach information literacy?
- What kind of tools do they need or use?
- What other information might they need? Where is chemistry research headed?

The answers revealed that students no longer rely purely on professional guidance to develop how they search for information. They often don't attend research training sessions that libraries arrange. Students are so accustomed to doing simple searches in search engines — primarily Google — that they typically don't consider using Reaxys and other sophisticated tools. They prefer to be self-reliant and like getting information as quickly as possible.

Our approach has been to drive researchers to the Reaxys homepage. By doing this, we're asking researchers to exit their natural workflow to use Reaxys. To synchronize with researchers' organic, natural search approach, we need to reinvent ourselves by making Reaxys much more visible in Google.

For example, PubChem, a free chemistry database maintained by the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Biotechnology Information, is already well-indexed by Google. PubChem receives a lot of its traffic from Google, specifically from students between the ages of 18 and 24.

Our goal is to partner with PubChem to ensure Reaxys is linked to it properly so researchers can use the extensive information that Reaxys provides. Rather than forcing users to access Reaxys independently, we need to establish an easy flow for users to search for information. In other words, we need to follow their workflow.

In addition to establishing external partnerships with PubChem and other organizations, we're also looking to internal partners. For example, a Reaxys release is scheduled with ScienceDirect, with the objective of improving interoperability between the two products.

To increase visibility and to bring more researchers to the website, we need to embed Reaxys in as many research access points as possible. We're building a free layer so that Reaxys has a presence outside of the paywall. Researchers will be able to see the user interface and click on various buttons, but no actual data will be given away. In-product messages will pop up, giving information about contacting sales for further details about access.

The Importance of ELNs

The second major point the study revealed is that Reaxys needs to be better integrated into electronic (or digital) laboratory notebooks (ELNs). ELNs are computer programs that collect and organize data and notes, replacing the need for paper lab notebooks. LabArchives and SciNote are examples of the many ELNs now available. Integrating Reaxys into ELNs would make it more readily accessible, as well as increase awareness and usage.

Adopting a Distributed Model

Our top competitor SciFinder's foothold in the market cannot last because it remains anchored in the past. By focusing on the researchers' workflow —and how today and tomorrow's researchers need to work — Reaxys will win. Working together with the Reaxys product management team, our colleagues in Research Marketing, including Prima Sung, are leading the way in driving such transformation through our competitive marketing program.

Addressing the question of how Reaxys might adopt a distributed model, she says, "What we've talked about is: When people look in Google, Reaxys will be there; when people look at their ELN, Reaxys will be there, too. Instead of waiting for researchers to come, Reaxys will always be there for them." Increasing the number and quality of access points via a distributed model will help Reaxys surpass SciFinder.

Most important, we'll wow our customers by doing the best job — in fact, our customer focus is our most powerful strategy. This very project is an example of our methodical and strategic steps for beating the competition … and the lessons we've learned will propel us to the top of our field.

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Simon Anderson, London, says:

Thanks - a very interesting article. It really underlines the necessity of gaining an in-depth understanding of our target audiences in order to engage with them effectively via the channels, platforms, and workflows they typically utilize. I see come parallels with our customer-centric approach at The Lancet, where we are using behavioural insights to better understand our audience and tailor our messaging and content recommendations to individual users.

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Rick Misra, SanDiego, says:

Great article Katy! I wanted to share that we have been using the ScienceDirect Topic Pages as an SEO focused traffic driver with some very positive results in Google search ranking. We recently launched Topic Pages in Chemistry (in Feb) and are very interested in accelerating a Reaxys integration into the Topic Pages to help drive discoverability. Good timing for a combined effort and a way to improve end user value of Elsevier products. Very interested in reading the user research if you have that in a shareable report!

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