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Homework #1

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***Compaq Case***

Greg Memo was the leader of the consumer notebook design team and the man who commissioned the focus groups. The main goal at hand (For Compaq) was to switch from a product orientation to a market orientation, and better understand what members of these segments desired. These focus groups centered around their new notebook designed explicitly for the consumer. Weight of the product was the initial focal point of the group- weight was thought to be an important part in the consumer decision-making process – a two-pound difference between models was shown and explained. The leader speaks to the ability to make a thinner and lighter design when you introduce the capability/idea of using external speakers, removing the built-in speakers – Consumers are hesitant to welcome the change, and are worrisome about a lack of convenience and the added-on concern of losing external products necessary to reach full realization of the product’s potential. There was a level of discontent concerning the ability to add on extra components that would only be sold exclusively form the notebook manufacturer- Interchangeability is desired and required. Convenience is stressed heavily- An all-in-one package is the desired outcome. Multi-tasking capabilities are emphasized by the focus group. Safety concerns arise with the modular design – A thinner package might be more susceptible to damage. Many of the members of the group were supremely uninterested in having to purchase and connect external devices to cut down on the product’s weight, whether it relate to external speakers or disk drives. Headphone attractiveness was split as an alternative to external speakers. Noticeable lack of difference between the product inclusive and exclusive of speakers. Next, the idea of a 10.4” display (smaller) was introduced. Members of the group want a larger screen, and don’t really care about what weight or aesthetic differences would ensue. Again, convenience and ease of use/reading is stressed on screen size. Touch pads were desired for a futuristic look/feel, and the removal of the mouse.

I think that a better understanding of whom the test group subjects represent in the larger consumer sample is incredibly important. This focus group was representative of those in-market, or previous purchasers, for a consumer notebook, so it might be assumed that this is strictly for personal consumption and not for professional purposes. The main emphasis of the focus group was to determine the importance of product weight, and the resulting impact in the consumer buying process. It was highly apparent that this group of test subjects were not overly concerned by a slight difference in weight, and were even more hesitant to accept a difference in weight if it meant a decrease in performance. Conversely, the idea of cheaper over better was brought up a few times during the discussion, possibly meaning that high performing machines weren’t a necessity to these subjects, tying back into the idea that this wouldn’t be a product sold in bulk for professional use. 20 years ago, aesthetic appeal wasn’t widely discussed, at least using this as a baseline. I think that Memo should expand their sample size before making business based decisions to reduce the margin of error, but I also think there was an underlying tone surrounding each group members’ voice in this exercise. Convenience. An all in one package that exemplifies ease of use and multi-tasking capability without the consumer having to purchase and connect external devices. If a marketing campaign was commissioned based on this evidence, we would likely want to tie in consumer friendliness, and the idea of a ‘total package’, where consumers don’t need to sacrifice any features to render their ideal notebook. References to Bluetooth and Touchpads were made during the meeting, speaking to a desire for futuristic technology

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For this particular instance, I would lean more towards a focus group research method, although I could see the importance of conducting a mail survey for more statistically reliable results and scalability. Both research methods are more traditional in nature, and they focus on primary research, rather than secondary research. Before conducting the actual research and gathering all the data, we have to know what the question at hand is. Here, it is a relatively simple question: Is Thomas Dolusio’s immersion program a success in the eyes of Hispanic students’ parents, exclusively. It is important to note that Hispanic students’ parents are the subject of our research, and as such, they should be the only voices prevalent in our survey to not contaminate or produce garbage results. With cost not being an issue, we must compare the pros and cons of each method. With focus groups, we’re likely to be able to provide a more efficient explanation of the immersion program. If there are any misconceptions or rumors going around about what exactly the program entails, we can clear this up. The downfall here is that we are working with a much smaller scale, as our reach is limited to the subjects of the group – Compared to a mail survey, however, we might get more data from a sample of this size due to the low response rate amongst these types of research methods Also, we can hear of potential complaints or possible enhancements for the program from the parents of students within the program- Taking more of a consumer orientation rather than a product orientation and discovering what exactly we could do to make sure that we are providing a product that fits the consumer’s needs (the product is the program, and the consumer is the student/parent combination). As detailed amongst the asynchronous work, mail surveys are subject to misinterpretation and mis-proctoring, but more so than that, I believe that the best way to successfully identify and interpret emotions are through human interaction. There is very little in terms of tonal recognition that can be gained from a scan tron reflection of consumer emotions towards the program. The question at hand is more complicated than a yes or no answer, and if we limit it as being such, we may be conceding any kind of enhancement to the program itself. The idea of something being successful or not, specifically a program like this that is more defined by intangibles, is not best reflected by placing it into black and white segments. If it is simply a matter of success or failure, we aren’t portraying much interest in knowing why it is the way it is, and what we could do as the product manufacturer, in this instance, to create something better. Mail surveys limit the voice of the subjects that we are interested in collecting data on. That isn’t to say that focus groups are a perfect system, as we may see levels of demand bias, where the parents want to please the leader of the focus group, and the school where the students attend. Both methods are likely to be slow in nature, and generally expensive, so those cons can be cancelled out. The real difference between the two is the quality of the data that is being collected, and the idea of letting the subjects have a voice outside of the one that we provide to them (through mail surveying). Emotions often can’t be quantified or realized through a selection of ‘fill in the blanks’ and would best be collected through either one on one or group interaction. Unless the mail survey is incredibly in depth and has potential solutions present to each and every issue surrounding the program, or allows the correspondent to write their own words to express their feeling of the program, we aren’t doing the program or the subjects justice. To counter my points above, if it is truly a black and white representation of success vs failure that we are trying to quantify into a statistic, a mail survey might be the easiest way to get a yes or no answer.

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