



NOVY

Belgium, www.novy.be

A 100-year-old company became involved in a government-sponsored design programme. Together with two designers they developed a new generation of cooker hood which was well received by the market. Today the company still applies the methodologies used during the design process in its new product development

Executive Summary

Novy is a manufacturer of cooker hoods that had been relying on their initial product (an invisible cooker hood) for over 10 years. As part of an open innovation project with a team of designers they developed a new product – a standalone cooker hood. Approximately 600 units of the new product were sold as of November 2016. The co-creation instilled a new dynamic into the company and changed its attitude towards open innovation.

CASE N° : SD22

SECTOR: HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

TECH INTENSITY: LOW-MEDIUM TECH

LIFE CYCLE STAGE: RENEWAL

INNOVATION VECTORS: PRODUCT

01 PARTNERS: INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS

KEYWORDS: Expert, designer, cooker hood, product development, product design, governmental programme

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NOVY[®]
INSPIRED BY QUALITY

BACKGROUND

In 1907 Hilaire Lannoy founded a bicycle production company after a career as a racing cyclist. Later he launched into the production of motorbikes. In 1964 the market for motorbikes crashed, causing most Belgian manufactures to cease production. This was the result, on the one hand, of the introduction of small cars and, on the other hand, of the competition coming from Japanese motorbike manufacturers.

Based on the factory's knowledge and technology to treat plating they decided to convert the factory into the production of a totally new product: the cooker hood. In 1965 the first cooker hoods were manufactured and patents were filed. In 2014 the company expanded its position in Europe. Today the company employs 250 people.

In future, the company wishes to grow and expand in the EU and across Europe in general. They want to introduce innovation to the cooker hood and kitchen hob markets.

INNOVATION CHALLENGE & MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

In 2014 the company acquired new equity and sought to expand internationally. One of the challenges that the new CEO acknowledged was an urgent need to innovate. The company had been relying solely on their baseline product – a very thin and silent built-in cooker hood – for the last 10 years. They needed to innovate in order to stay competitive in the market. They needed fresh ideas in the company.

NOVY observed the cooking process and made important conclusions about how the market was changing. Many households had cooking islands and were open to products that would stand out in their kitchen. As NOVY's baseline product was an "invisible" cooker hood, they could not serve that need in the market with their current product. They needed a new product line to adapt to the new trends and changes in the market.

OPEN INNOVATION TRAJECTORY

Concept development

It was the right time to step into a 5x5 initiative* organized by the Flemish government. It gave them an opportunity to start a co-creation project with a senior and a junior designer. The development of the concept was a joint process between NOVY and two external designers David Pas (company David Pas Consulting gcv) & Orlando Thuysbaert (company Absintt). NOVY contributed with their technical knowledge and their insights into cooking habits. The partners helped with moodboards, inspiration and design thinking to come up with new concepts.

Several concepts were created. The final concept was a cooker hood which looked more like a light and stood out in a room. It had integrated smart sensors to be able to communicate with the cooking surface. Furthermore, the user could customize the kitchen hood by choosing the desired light intensity and colour shade. Last but not least, the kitchen hood opened up to a larger or lesser extent depending on the amount of steam.

Together the team selected one concept to be developed. Next to eye-catching design the most important criteria were functionality and feasibility. The final detailed concept design was made in cooperation between NOVY and the partners (designers).

*Designregion Kortrijk (Belgium) runs a 5X5 programme in which 5 companies in the region of Kortrijk have the unique opportunity to work together with both a junior and a senior designer for one year. The company and the designers follow a fixed 5X5 methodology to create a new product together. Design region Kortrijk covers a substantial part of the design costs and supports the entire process from the initial idea through to the development of a product that is ready to be commercialized. The prototypes and concepts of ongoing collaborations are shown at the Biennale Interieur exhibition. More information: <http://www.designregio-kortrijk.be/en/organise/5x5/>

The development process, IPR and competition strategy

In the initial concept there were many moving

parts (the cooker hood could go up and down based on the cooking activity). But at that time NOVY did not have enough knowledge of electronics and controllers to make that possible. Instead they decided to develop the concept without moving parts. The initial functionality was upgraded at a later stage, with NOVY having to invest additionally in controllers and software. In the final stage, NOVY developed a software platform and launched a new product (the Mood) that integrates all the functions they initially had in mind.

All IPR and licences on the products developed in partnership with the designers are owned by NOVY (as initially agreed and suggested in the partnership programme). It was important for NOVY to have a clear IPR agreement at the beginning. That was one of the pre-conditions for them to engage in any kind of co-creation with external parties. NOVY had had previous experience with collaborations with university students but found it difficult to deal with the fact that their professors claimed IP rights.

The product is unique because it is an ambient light in combination with a functional cooker hood. It is a niche product for a target group that wants a design touch in their kitchen. This allows NOVY to differentiate themselves from the competition.

Commercialization and follow-up

The scaling-up and roll-out of the concept was a challenge. Translating the nice design into a product ready for manufacture with materials which offered an acceptable level of tolerance was not always feasible. As this step in the development the design partners could not help because of the specific know-how required. The initial design was aesthetic but not enough attention had been paid to tolerance measurements and risk management. As a result, certain elements of the design had to be adjusted before the product was fit for production.

The 'Novy Mood' was launched during the leading design event Biennale Interieur. A new distribution channel (premium channel) was developed to facilitate its launch as well as for two other exclusive products. To stress their exclusivity, they were made available only through selected retailers. NOVY wanted to prevent online distribution for the same reason.

After their collaboration with the designers NOVY continued on this track by developing more exclusive products based on the initial co-designed concepts. No external partners were involved in this step.

BUSINESS IMPACT

The open innovation project with the designers contributed to the development of a new product (i.e. the innovative cooker hood). It also helped create for the company a different view of the development process: production of moodboards, evaluation techniques, milestone setting and decision making techniques. The methodologies used during the design process are still applied in the company today.

The project helped to re-vitalize the company's innovation mentality. It acquired new knowledge about the use of other materials and technologies that they can now also apply in further generations of products.

Approximately 600 units of the new product were sold as of November 2016. The company made a small profit because of low margins on the product, but the product is intended more as an eye catcher and brand promoter. Since then the Novy Mood has inspired the launch of several other new products.

LESSONS LEARNED

A traditional R&D department (not used to working with external parties) decided to participate in a co-creation programme with external parties with the aim of innovating their product range. This was triggered by a government initiative and a concrete, well defined offering. Co-creation enabled them to work with new materials, technologies and processes and led to the launch of a new product. The positive result led to a change in attitude towards open innovation, which has been adopted in several other projects since then.

Main lessons learned:

1. A company entering a design-driven open innovation partnership needs to monitor the technical feasibility and capacity of the design outcome. The designer may not always pay attention to the technical capabilities of the company.
2. A government organization can provide the trigger for a company to consider a co-creation process.

3. The positive experience changed their view and strategy towards open innovation. Today they seek help externally for the development of new products.
4. Besides the expected result of the co-creation process (development of a new project), the company also adopted the design process methodology which they learned during the process.
5. IP rights should be clearly agreed at the start of the project to give certainty and support the full commitment of the partners.