

Market Mapping

Market Mapping is a distinct, well-codified methodology for organizations seeking to align their marketing strategies and processes and/or product development priorities more closely with the problems that customers need to solve most urgently. It is particularly well suited to situations in which the primary mode of product or service distribution is via indirect channels (e.g., distributors, value-added resellers, retail, etc.)

Market Mapping integrates the best of three generalized approaches to marketing process improvement. Its explicit objective is to generate organizational momentum for specific change, while avoiding the pitfalls to which each approach alone can be vulnerable:

- 1) *Introspective marketing process mapping and product feature/function analysis* can provide an essential baseline of information and insight. By itself, however, this approach lacks traction in confronting and examining managerial bias and does not provide the collective ‘reality check’ of fresh, direct customer input.
- 2) *In-depth market research*—on its own—is often rejected, marginalized, or ignored when it conflicts with managers’ trusted “mental models” of customer needs and market dynamics. It can also fail in accurately identifying customers’ deepest problems and the alternative solutions and strategies they employ to solve them.
- 3) *Facilitated executive brainstorming, strategy, and decision-making workshops*, while valuable in context, can easily float off into feel-good fantasy, or devolve into political infighting among product, function, or other organizational “silos.” Such sessions tend to be useful only when ventilated by plenty of new data on both internal processes and external realities.

Market Mapping has been applied for over a decade across a range of industries including life sciences, financial services, high tech manufacturing, and consumer products. It typically includes the following steps (adjustable to fit specific client requirements):

- Broad examination of current marketing processes; collection of internal data on product features and product line scope; analysis of current market positioning, competition, and effectiveness of recent marketing campaigns.
- Executive brainstorming workshop(s) to generate hypotheses (often by market segment) about customer problems, perceived alternative solutions, and compellingly differentiating attributes that customers desire.
- In-depth semi-quantitative market input to test specific hypotheses.
- Market Mapping workshop to examine hypotheses in light of market input.
- Decision-making workshop(s) to further assimilate data and to make choices about what to change in the marketing mix and how to go about it.