



FROM THE EDITOR'S BLACKBERRY™

As a shopper in the early 21st century, selection never seems to be a problem for me. If a product exists in the world, I can most likely find it online; chances are I will even be able to comparison shop to get it at some sort of discount. Or, if I need something sooner rather than later, there are always the neighborhood “Super Stores”—I have five or six within 20 minutes of my house.

But is what I am being offered to purchase really what I *want*? Too often, the perfect product for me is one that no manufacturer has yet introduced—a cleaning cloth that is slightly damp, but not soaking wet; a laptop with a wider screen; a magazine that sacrifices a bit of content for slightly larger type.

Despite what some may say, personal experience tells me that there is no shortage of untapped consumer demand—that all of our wishes have not, in fact, been fulfilled. Rather, there is an ongoing shortage of insight into what consumers want, a massive gray area just waiting to be colored in, if we will only acknowledge its existence. To find it, however, requires a particular combination of desire and innovation—which are, it seems to me, inextricably linked.

This is a clear manifestation of the great need for a new focus on “consumer-centrism” across the marketplace—because today’s customer with unmet needs is tomorrow’s non-customer. With the technologies at our disposal in 2006, there is no reason not to bond with the consumer and fulfill those opportunities that build businesses.

Kicking off this issue of *KNOW* is Patricia Graham’s eyes-wide-open look at what consumer-centrism really means in today’s world. It is, she writes, about leveraging today’s technologies to create a seamless connection with consumers—and thus deliver the products and services (including customer service) that they crave.

In her inspiring *KNOW* interview, Kelley Styring—former Frito-Lay consumer insights maven and now an in-demand consultant—tells how researchers can use their

unique expertise to carve out a role in guiding not just products, but company strategy. Implicit in this process, she says, is the development of a more holistic approach to consumer-centrism.

Passionate and early-adopting consumers are key to the success of any product; they are the sources of advance buzz (good and bad). One promising approach to winning the trust and feedback of these invaluable marketing “collaborators” is through online communities of interest, as Daniel Slotwiner and Audrey Rosen show. And Justin Edge takes another look at the value of communities to the healthcare industry—their ability to locate and build relationships with those who have low-prevalence illnesses, as well as their caregivers.

Some say that engagement is destined to become a core benchmark of media measurement. In this issue, Maura Clancey and Fox News Channel’s Paul Rittenberg use the environment of cable news networks to test an important theory about attentiveness—that engagement in television content rubs off on the advertisements on those same networks.

And, in the midst of some “static” from a certain best-selling commentator about focus groups, Suzanne DuFore tells how they can be effectively used to gain understanding of consumer habits that would be hard to obtain by any other means.

We hope that you find this and every *KNOW* highly “reader-centric.” Our goal is to meet your needs for information and expert opinion, perhaps before the need even materializes. If you have thoughts about this *KNOW* or ones you would like to see in the future, we would love to hear them.



Editor in Chief

know@knowledgenetworks.com