

In this newsletter I present a way to broaden your product portfolio. And a special offer.

Interface planes: put the kettle on a charging pole.

An interface plane forms the transition between a product and its auxiliary product. Some examples. The little slot at the side of a laptop is an interface plane between the laptop and its lock. A tow bar is an interface plane between the car and its trailer. The specifications of a charging pole http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IEC_62196 form the interface plane between the electric car and its energy supply. The funny thing about existing interface planes is that somebody else has already gone through the trouble of making it into a standard. What's so funny? Because you can start thinking of new products to fit the interface. There are hundreds of USB-gadgets on the market; these are based on that principle. The same goes for Apps on the i-phone. What can be done with bits and bytes, can be done with plastic and steel of course. Below you find a 5 step approach to expand you product portfolio using this principle.

1st Step. List the interfaces your customer runs into. Think of mechanical interfaces (e.g. to hold, like a laptop lock), electrical interfaces (to transfer energy, like a telephone charger or a charger for electric cars) or electronic interfaces (to transfer data, like a USB-port).



2nd Step. Identify which function the equipment at one side of the interface fulfils. For a container this is 'to enable ease of transport'. For a laptop lock this is 'to protect against theft'. For a charging pole this is 'to charge quickly'.



3rd Step. Think of worthwhile combinations. Examples: outdoor café furniture equipped with a slot to fit a laptop lock to protect against theft. Batteries of scooters, mobility vehicles, leaf-blowers or chainsaws and electric water kettles or instant street parties www.plugnparty.nl powered by a charging pole. A production line that has become mobile by fitting it into a container www.conteno.com. A ski-box on a tow bar to reduce drag.



A special case is the 'Cheersch' tapping system by Grolsch. In Dutch kitchen drawers and sheds there are still about 150.000 tapping heads fitting that system. The function of those tapping heads is 'to dispense under CO2 pressure'. The bottles of beer fitting these heads are no longer on the market, in the patent <http://www.wipo.int/patentscope/search/en/WO2008048098> the way of working is clearly explained, so a ketchup- or whipped cream supplier could try it: launch a bottle that fits the tapping heads. Remember to test thoroughly beforehand and check if it is allowed☺.

4th Step. Identify which interfaces there are in your own product portfolio. Think of which other functions you could fulfil by attaching new products to these interfaces.

5th Step. Identify the interfaces in the product portfolio of your competitor. Think of which other products you could attach to these interfaces of your competitor.

Please note: in all cases establish the correct specifications, test the combination before launching and decide how to deal with complaints.

A special offer to my newsletter subscribers: would you like to broaden your product portfolio in this way? I organise in-company brainstorm 'product concepts on existing interfaces'. If you place your order before November 30, this brainstorm, including preparation and report, costs Eur 1199,= instead of Eur 2160,=. Mail to maurits@innovationtools.nl

This is the fifth newsletter of innovationtools. This newsletter with hints and tips on product development is sent about once every six weeks to those interested. If you know someone who might like to read this newsletter, please forward it to them. Thanks very much for doing so. Comment, subscribe or unsubscribe via maurits@innovationtools.nl.

Contact me at innovationtools if you are in need of an experienced project manager for product innovations, especially if your project is in its front end or needs a concept breakthrough.
Best regards, Maurits Willemen +31 6 2222 8944

Next newsletter: late December. Subject: Ikea as inspiration