

SUCCESS STORY



Customer-Focused Innovation—a Next Generation Manufacturing Success Strategy

Lakeside Develops Winning Ideas



Strategic planning builds a solid foundation for growth

More than 60 years ago, Lakeside Manufacturing, Inc., introduced the first stainless steel cart to the Foodservice Industry. Since that time, Lakeside has taken that expertise and expanded it to include a comprehensive product line that transports, dispenses, stores and displays products for Foodservice, Healthcare and Industrial applications.

In fact, today Lakeside® is known as the best “mobile solutions” provider of serving carts and plate dispensers.

To meet the dynamic aspect of the industries it serves, Lakeside continually engineers new products and updates existing products to stay in tune with industry trends and the customer’s unique needs.

Joe Carlson, president of Lakeside, understands efficiency and encourages ingenuity. But with fewer than 150 employees, Lakeside has maintained its leadership position by providing customers with more than products – it provides solutions.

Eureka! Winning Ways— a scientific method for accelerating profitable growth

When two of Lakeside’s engineers recommended WMEP’s “Eureka! Winning Ways” idea development process, Carlson asked WMEP marketing specialist Mike Quill to present an overview of the process. Because the system is streamlined and practical

Lakeside Results:

Lakeside Manufacturing used the Eureka! Winning Ways process to streamline the process of product development with these results:

- ▶ product development time has been reduced by one-third
- ▶ The cost of product development has also been greatly reduced.

“Eureka! Winning Ways allows us to focus on the right stuff and has made us smarter about what to do, and what not to do.”

- Joe Carlson, president

with a defined outcome, it fit well with Lakeside’s culture. Soon, cross-functional teams throughout the organization were working together to develop product solutions for perceived customer needs as a result of Eureka! Winning Ways training.

Eureka! Winning Ways is a proven, scientific method to develop products customers love, before investing money in specific product development. The first step is **Idea Engineering**—focusing on the customer, the group develops product ideas and writes effective marketing



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messages that clearly state the product's Overt Benefit, Real Reason to Believe, and Dramatic Difference.

Lakeside took this to the next level: "We used the Idea Engineering process as a branding process," said Carlson. "As a company, we defined what we are, and just as important, what we are not. This gave us a platform to evaluate all ideas and provided the lens we needed to focus on the kinds of products that will continue to sustain our brand."

Most companies can develop great products, but unless the product solves a customer's problem, it will not find a market. The **Trailblazer** phase involves detailed study of customer needs, the company's abilities, and innovative ways to combine the two to develop a winning product. The structured method helps companies identify potential roadblocks and adhere to a timeline, to ensure product ideas are continually advanced toward the goal of getting to market.

In this phase, Lakeside engineers, product managers and sales people met directly with customers to discuss a specific product idea. "This part of the process is particularly valuable," said Carlson. "We've gone to the customer with a great product concept, only to find the customer focused on a feature we considered unimportant, revealing a set of needs that ultimately helped us tailor a product that really solves a problem. That's why it's so important to bring the customer into the process."

With customer feedback incorporated into the product idea, a plan for dealing with key issues and threats is developed and an "Action Plan" is created for rapid commercialization of the product. "Right now, we have two products that are in the engineering stage in

preparation for market introduction," said Carlson. "By using the Eureka! Winning Ways process, I estimate that our product development time has been reduced by one-third, and the costs have also been greatly reduced. Eureka! Winning Ways allows us to focus on the right stuff and has made us smarter about what to do, and what not to do."

Laura Voll, WMEP Marketing Specialist, said "Lakeside Manufacturing is a great example of an established company that had numerous product ideas, but needed a way to quickly focus on the best ideas. Eureka! Winning Ways gave them a simple, effective and rapid evaluation method for product development that focuses valuable engineering/design time on the right concepts. An important benefit was how employees from across the company got involved in the innovative solution and now have a whole new set of skills and focus on the customer pull that helps continue the cycles of idea development."

"We use the Eureka! Winning Ways process throughout the company, and it has now migrated to our subsidiary companies," said Carlson. "It keeps everyone focused on the customer, and gives us a reliable way to evaluate product ideas."

Now that the economy is starting to rebound, it's critical that companies focus their product development resources on the products that customers want. Few companies have resources to waste on bad product ideas, and Eureka! Winning Ways can help your company stand above the competition with products that truly serve your customer's needs.

For more information, visit www.wmep.org or call 1-877-856-8588.

