

Oral-B

From Idea Management to Marketing: Project Management in a Global Business



Oral-B is one of the leading providers in the global toothbrush market, worth in excess of \$11 billion U.S. dollars. Since 2006, the company has been part of Procter & Gamble, and manufactures manual and electric toothbrushes for children and adults, as well as many other oral hygiene products. Oral-B products are those most used by dentists worldwide.

Introduction

The development of the latest generation of Oral-B toothbrushes at Procter & Gamble demonstrates how creativity and comprehensive project management can be integrated through the use of software solution MindManager. MindManager not only provides transparency, but also generates significant time-savings during key activities that are a part of the Oral-B development process, such as the comparing of ideas put forward by the project developers with hundreds of trademark rights, and the filing of applications for new patents.

CHALLENGE

When developing a new toothbrush, not only do the many different ideas from employees need to be managed, but more than 1,000 existing patents and designs must also be considered.

SOLUTION

The technology manager of Oral-B, Dr. Jungnickel, organizes complex ideas and patent management using project management software from Mindjet. MindManager is also used for managing the timing of patent applications.

RESULT

Through the use of MindManager, redundancies were eliminated and efficiency was significantly boosted. The large number of patent specifications in existence could be easily accessed and viewed only once in order to see a complete picture.

“MindManager is the ideal software when it comes to integrating creativity and project management into a single interface, and ensures an excellent visual representation of the required information at any time.”

Dr. Jungnickel Project and IP Manager, Oral-B

The Challenge

It is hard to imagine the extent to which technology underpins the design and production process for Oral-B toothbrushes. Whether manually or electronically, many hundreds of patents, registered designs, utility samples, and design models have to be registered for the devices, which form an indispensable part of daily life for customers. Dr. Jungnickel is responsible for the entire area of project management relating to manual toothbrushes, and when considering new designs or technologies, must carefully check whether they are already protected or whether they can be registered as new innovations.

In a new, comprehensive project at Procter & Gamble, Jungnickel was required to deal with a very large volume of information. “There were a lot of brainstorming sessions”, explains Jungnickel, Project and IP Manager. In order to structure the many ideas generated through these sessions, and gain an overall picture of the information involved, Jungnickel decided to use MindManager, with which he was already familiar from a previous place of work.

The Solution

Using MindManager’s ‘map’ format, Jungnickel recorded and clearly structured all of the ideas and suggestions that had been submitted from the different development areas. He then attached remarks and additional supporting information about the individual points in various document formats, such as Word, to the relevant branches within the map. The next step was what Jungnickel calls “connecting the dots”—establishing connections and logical links between the individual map branches and their contents. “Using tools such as relationships, flags, or priority markers, this is quite easy to accomplish,” says Jungnickel. “Making sense of this in

the form of continuous text would have been an impossible task, and management and other colleagues would have found it equally difficult to digest and understand”, adds the Project and IP Manager.

The second major milestone of the extremely large project was the inspection of the patents, trademark rights, utility models, and design patterns relevant to the project. Using MindManager, the aim was now to create a patent landscape, through which the required information could be easily found and referenced later. With the large number of competitors in the market, as well as the enormous variety of toothbrush products available, around 1,000 patents had to be inspected. “The key goal was to only have to handle each patent document once”, explains Dr. Jungnickel. “Using MindManager, the most important points relating to this were listed within the map, and the full patent documents were then hyperlinked to the relevant branch in the map.”

After all of the ideas of the Oral-B developers, as well as all relevant patent law information, had been consolidated within the central map document, Dr. Jungnickel could begin the core element of his work—idea management by comparing the ideas with patents and other important elements. This complex process was drastically simplified, thanks to MindManager’s clear format that imposed a visual structure on the mass of information and ideas. As a result, Dr. Jungnickel was quickly able to establish which ways the new product under development was different from the state-of-the-art products already available, and which patents and utility models could be filed in the form of new patents. “The many different functions within MindManager to filter views and information mean that it is a very effective tool to use for such tasks. Even highly complex maps can always be clearly viewed and edited in a focused, structured, and easily-digestible way,” explains Jungnickel.



The work of the project and IP managers definitely doesn't end there, though. As a patent manager, Jungnickel must remain consistently on the ball during all of the subsequent development, production, and testing phases. "We want consumers to like our products. We must therefore ensure that our developments are in line with market trends", explains Jungnickel. The problem: if new Oral-B toothbrushes are tested and information about this reaches the public, no patent application is possible. Dr. Jungnickel must also work very closely with product development teams with regards to time, and was therefore delighted to discover that MindManager's project management capabilities enabled him to maintain visibility and control of the project time line. "From my previous work with the software, I was completely unaware that MindManager could be used this effectively for project management, in the more narrow sense", explains Jungnickel. "But organizing the timing as a project manager is just as easy as idea management with MindManager—two or three clicks and finished. This means that my maps do not just have a "content-related" dimension, but also facilitate "time-management", enabling the triggering of patent applications. I found this so effective that I no longer use Microsoft Project or Excel for project work."

The Result

From the recording and consolidation of ideas, to the development of innovative ideas, to implementation and production, Dr. Jungnickel manages his complex range of responsibilities at Procter & Gamble exclusively with MindManager. "Not only does working in this way enable me to minimize redundancies", says the project manager, "it also makes me significantly faster and more efficient. For me, MindManager is the tool that allows me to bring together both creativity and excellent project management within a single interface."

Dr. Jungnickel's way of working has also influenced the rest of the areas within the company. After a certain amount of initial hesitation among project administrators, who were used to using other PM tools, more and more positive feedback was given regarding MindManager's capabilities.

Dr. Jungnickel himself has his own perspective on "his" tool: "I now see the map as a structured database, in which I deposit all the information, and then at any time it can provide me with a precise overview of where we are in the project."

Mindjet provides the leading SaaS platform to drive repeatable business innovation. Our innovation management suite, including SpigitEngage and MindManager, are used by the world's most innovative brands and over 83% of the Fortune 500. Our technology platform incorporates social dynamics, purposeful collaboration, visual mind mapping, crowd science, and analytics. Our software capabilities help leading brands surface and develop the best ideas from their employees, partners and customers to drive product and process innovation and create an engaged organization with a culture of innovation. Mindjet is headquartered in San Francisco with offices throughout the US, UK, France, Germany, Japan, and Australia.

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