

GameChanger Shakes Up Consumer Product Industry

Larry Popelka wants to tackle your toughest growth problems. His new consulting agency, GameChanger, utilizes a range of unconventional, entrepreneurial approaches to help companies solve growth problems.

Popelka, former VP of Marketing at Clorox, and six other former packaged goods executives from P&G, Nestle, Quaker Oats and Orange-Glo International formed GameChanger to fill what they saw as a market void in consumer products.

"Most large consumer products companies are struggling for growth," said Popelka. "Yet marketplace innovation is at an all-time high. What has changed is that most innovation and growth today is coming from small companies and start-ups. The big company growth models just aren't as effective as they were in the past."

Popelka and his team worked with and studied over 50 consumer product start-ups. By combining the best of the big company skills with the best techniques employed by start-ups, they developed a new growth model, and a number of new tools.

GameChanger helps large companies launch more successful innovative new products. It also helps revitalize mature brands, and provides services to a collection of high-potential start-ups.

While at Clorox, Popelka and GameChanger partner Sandy Brawley utilized the GameChanger techniques to develop and launch the successful new Green Works Cleaners brand. Analysts estimate this new platform is on track to generate \$300M in revenue for Clorox.

"The key is utilizing our consumer tools to more objectively identify and act upon emerging opportunities," said Popelka. At Clorox, the Home Care business unit was focused on products that provided superior cleaning and disinfecting performance. Popelka and team worked directly for CEO Jerry Johnston, and identified natural cleaning as an overlooked opportunity.

"The natural cleaning segment was small, and none of the products worked well, so there was low consumer interest," said Popelka. "But we also found a fundamental dissatisfaction by many consumers with chemical cleaners, because of the chemical fumes they created in their home. Even

though Clorox was spending millions of dollars on consumer research, their research tools had missed this insight – because the organization was focused on chemicals."

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 New Brands, New Rules... It's A Whole New Game!



Popelka and team identified, tested and sourced formulas for the Green Works product line for less than \$200K within a few months. "Our research projected it as a \$200M new brand," said Popelka. "But no one in the company believed us because they had never had any new cleaning products that big. So when the product was launched, they under-produced, and it ended up on allocation for several months."

Part of GameChanger's process involves direct communication with senior executives at leading retailers on a confidential basis to assess and provide input to opportunities before they are developed. Sandy Brawley, former Clorox National Sales Manager, is a partner at GameChanger. For Green Works Brawley floated the idea to senior executives at Wal-Mart and Target, and received a strong thumbs up, along with advice on how to make it work best in their stores. As a result, when Green Works was launched, these retailers were strong supporters, and provided significant merchandising.

GameChanger's seven partners each have an average 20+ years of consumer products experience, working for both large companies and start-ups. In addition to Popelka and Brawley, the team includes:

Bob Hill a veteran of Nestle and former president of Kern's Beverage. Hill led a turnaround on Kern's from a -10% trend to +25% growth.

Cindy Bath, former Consumer Research Director for P&G and Clorox, who also launched Master Replicas, a successful start-up, which she grew to \$50M in revenue before selling.

Jonathan Tofel, a former P&G marketer who was one of the early members of the Orange-Glo International team that launched Oxi-Clean, a \$250M business that was created with just a \$50K investment.

Anne French, former P&G marketer and consultant who engineered the turnaround of J&J's KY Brand, including the new Yours & Mine, Intimates and Touch products, which have more than doubled that business.

Wilmer Fong, an award-winning graphic designer who has designed packages for Clorox, Dreyer's, Nestle, Del Monte, Diamond Nuts.

One of the keys to GameChanger's model, according to Popelka, is to have highly-experienced, over-qualified individuals doing the work. Everyone on the GameChanger team conducts their own consumer research. This allows them to more closely understand consumer reactions while assessing and analyzing responses and thinking through business implications. This, combined with the neutral, external perspective, allows the team to quickly identify opportunities and hidden needs often overlooked by brand owners.

The team also integrates these insights with other aspects of its process, such as package design, naming work, marketing plan development and sales planning. Their marketing and testing plans focus on fast, inexpensive tools that allow for real-time refinement of the proposition.

In addition to helping traditional consumer products companies and start-ups, GameChanger has taken on some trail-blazing projects. It recently signed an agreement to launch the first NFL Fan's brand – "The Black Hole," from the Oakland Raiders.

"We're going to create merchandise, events and social networking opportunities under the Black Hole brand," said Popelka. "The Raiders have licensed this brand name to a group of its fans – so everything we do will be fan created and/or approved. This is a whole new concept in branding, actually letting the fans own the brand. It will be exciting to see how it develops," he said.

GameChanger can be found at www.gamechangerproducts.com or at 510-521-7985. The company is based in Alameda, CA.