

Del Monte Foods Turns to Dog Owners to Unleash Innovation

MarketTools® Insight Networks™ Give Del Monte a Platform to Connect and Collaborate with Its Target Customers

Innovation Through Collaboration

It's not easy to be an innovator in a mature, intensely competitive market. Yet the payoff for new products and services that delight customers is enormous. The question for marketers is how to stay plugged in to the fast-changing behaviors, preferences, and opinions of their target consumers—particularly in today's online world, where time and attention spans are short.

No company is more aware of the challenges and the rewards of innovation than Del Monte Foods. Since its inception during the California Gold Rush of 1849, Del Monte has become a \$3 billion company, leading the food industry in innovative processing, distribution, and marketing practices.

Recently, the Pet Products Division of Del Monte Foods decided to leverage Insight Networks, a new offering from MarketTools, to connect with dog owners in a whole new—way to get closer to them, gain fresh perspectives on their attitudes and behaviors, and drive true innovation.

Creating a Stronger Connection

Specifically, Del Monte's Pet Products Division wanted to explore the unique relationships between dog owners and their dogs. By better understanding the role dogs play in the lives of their owners through ongoing visibility into these relationships, the company hoped to gain new insights as well as to collaborate in the development of new products and services based on those insights. The Pet Products Division markets and distributes nationally known dogfood brands such as Kibbles 'n Bits®, Gravy Train®, and Nature's Recipe® as well as dog snack brands such as Milk-Bone®, Snausages®, and Meaty Bone.®

Customer	Del Monte Foods, Pet Products Division
Challenge	Gain an in-depth understanding of a key customer segment to drive more-effective product and service innovation
Solution	A customized MarketTools Insight Network, providing continuous access to online communities and delivering real-time analysis that sparks new insights and deeper customer understanding
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ability to stay in tune with the evolving opinions, tastes, and preferences of dog owners > Ongoing, continuous, interactive dialogue with targeted consumer segments > Collaborative concept evaluation and testing in real time > Better products, higher customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty

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“Through previous research, we had identified one particular segment of the dog-owner community as a target for most of our dog brands, and we wanted to really understand the needs, motivations, and attitudes of that segment in more depth,” said Gala Amoroso, senior market research manager at Del Monte Foods.

The Pet Products Division found, however, that traditional market research techniques simply weren’t providing the depth of customer understanding that the company required. Traditional qualitative research methods are either too time-consuming (ethnographies) or do not allow enough time for deep consumer understanding (focus groups). Quantitative methods, although useful for answering specific questions, did not allow for interactive exploration and observation. “We needed a new alternative that would allow us to open a dialogue with the people in our target segment,” said Ms. Amoroso.

Connecting with Millions of Dog Owners

Insight Networks provide companies with a direct, interactive connection to their most important consumers for observation, interaction, and collaboration. They tap into consumers’ own means of communication—blogs, chat rooms, message boards, podcasts, videos, and online groups—and bring together specific groups of people who share common interests or characteristics (such as dog owners, adventure travelers, or software engineers) to create an ongoing, interactive dialogue. Insight Networks capture the universe of consumer voices and conversations that are relevant to a marketing organization.

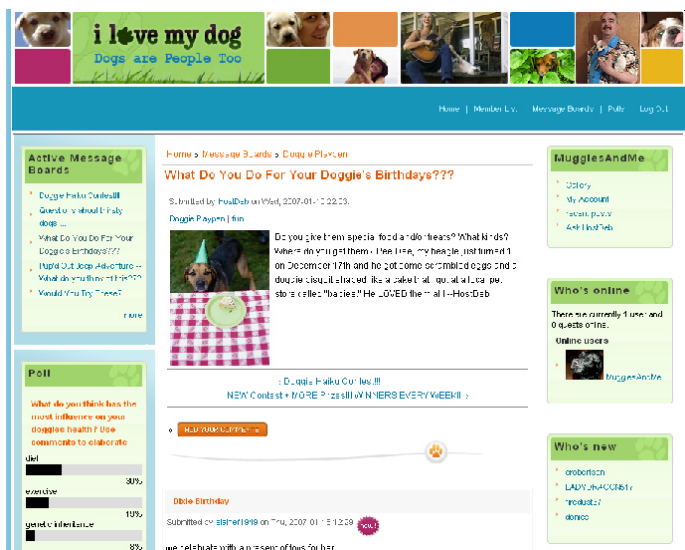
This unique approach enables the researcher to join the conversation and stay abreast of fast-changing moods, issues, trends, and tastes. The result is a deeper understanding of the target market and an ability to draw insights from questions that researchers hadn’t thought to ask before.

There are three distinct components of MarketTools Insight Networks:

- > **internet-wide text analysis.** By gathering and analyzing relevant content from more than 50 million blogs, message boards, and online media sites, MarketTools helps clients discover relevant opinions and thoughts from consumers, connecting them with millions of voices.
- > **Targeted community interaction.** MarketTools creates a custom online community through which the client can continuously observe and interact with target customers and obtain authentic, in-depth insights.
- > **On-demand survey research.** MarketTools’ online survey research platform, extensive market reach, and deep research expertise provide clients access to on-demand survey research to quantitatively assess the potential of concepts and ideas.

Feature	Favorability Ranking	Volume Ranking
Daycare	1	6
Personality	2	2
Gifts/parties	3	7
Massage/grooming	4	5
Dogsitter	5	3
Travel	6	1
Hotel/resort/spa	7	4
Well-being	8	8
Air travel	9	9
Apparel	10	10

By analyzing the discussions from more than 50 million blogs, Del Monte identified key topics of interest.



The “I Love My Dog” community gives members and Del Monte a place to interact and collaborate.

Blogosphere Delivers Fresh Insights

Having identified dog lovers as the key target segment, Del Monte Foods and MarketTools created a custom Insight Network. One of the first activities provided by the solution was text analysis, in which relevant content from more than 50 million blogs was collected and analyzed to evaluate current topics of discussion among the target consumers.

The text analysis identified several key pieces of information that could potentially have an impact on product and promotional planning for the Pet Products Division.

First, the analysis revealed that, of the topics dog lovers are most interested in, doggie daycare, travel with dogs, and pet entertainment were some of the most popular. Compared with other subjects, dog care proved to be a high-involvement topic that generated repeated mentions among bloggers in the target group. Dog care engagement was higher, for example, than holiday cookie baking, an online topic used to benchmark engagement level.

The text analysis also revealed that while each age group has a dog-lover segment, this segment is most prominent in the baby boomer demographic. Older dog owners seem to prize the companionship their dog provides at a proportionately higher level, whereas Gen X tends to be more concerned with on-the-go issues such as daycare and travel. Gen Y tends to not concern itself as much with the responsibility-oriented themes (such as daycare and grooming); the focus is on companionship, dog care, and apparel.

Building a Community

The second component of Insight Networks is an online community. For Del Monte, MarketTools created an online community of dog lovers, where Del Monte personnel could observe interactions, stimulate discussion on specific topics, and lead collaborative solution building. Using a proprietary community platform that allows panel members to create personal profiles, view multimedia, participate in threaded discussions, and more, MarketTools created a secure environment where carefully selected community members could engage in continuous dialogue.

By further exploring topics of interest, allowing members to participate in the development of their community, and collaborating with them, Del Monte has identified a number of fresh product concepts and distribution strategies with great potential.

“The online community Web site gives us a wealth of information about our target consumers’ pains and needs and provides a platform for us to explore and understand their attitudes and behaviors,” said Ms. Amoroso. “It helps us anticipate and identify opportunities, and it enables us to collaborate with our target market to develop new solutions that truly meet their needs.”

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Evaluating and Refining

The third component of Insight Networks is on-demand survey research. This allows Del Monte to quickly determine the viability of new strategies and ideas. By testing concepts and messaging with a sample of target customers, Del Monte can determine which strategies will be effective and which won't. The survey research provides the validation it needs to act on business opportunities and develop innovative, breakthrough products.

New Levels of Innovation

Ms. Amoroso is extremely positive about the results achieved through Del Monte's use of its Insight Network. "We are using the results of the text analysis and the community to ask new questions and explore new concepts," she said. "We can quickly determine which concepts have merit, which need more refinement, and which we should not pursue. This saves us time and money, helps us focus on the concepts that our customers will most value, and gives us a new competitive edge."

Two new product concepts that were refined and evaluated through the solution have now been released to the marketplace with great results.

- **A new variety of Pup-Peroni® dog snacks** was introduced in early 2007 with new packaging and a new marketing campaign that resulted in increased sales of the product.
- **A new product, Snausages Breakfast Bites,™** was released in June 2007 with flavoring, ingredients, and shapes influenced by the Insight Network. The product has resonated with the market, and sales have been good.

"Next-generation research solutions like Insight Networks will give us an even broader perspective on consumers' preferences, allow us to test ideas, and become even more responsive and innovative."

—Gala Amoroso
Senior Market Research Manager
Del Monte Foods

About MarketTools

MarketTools is the defining provider of on-demand market research, giving companies and individuals the ability to continuously understand their target customers through innovative approaches based on advanced technology, research expertise, global market reach, and an online panel community of more than 2.5 million individuals worldwide. MarketTools' full range of research applications and services provides organizations from Fortune 500 companies to nonprofits and small businesses with unique access to their target markets to uncover unmet needs, reduce time to market, and capture market share.

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