

Tommy John -A Case Study



Tommy John

- Founder: Tom Patterson, Medical Device Salesman, fan of CNBC's *The Big Idea with Donny Deutsch*
 - *“All of the featured products or services ... were created out of personal frustration,”* recalls Patterson. *“I found myself constantly looking around, asking, ‘What can I make better?’”* -Fortune
- Entrepreneurial Alertness –looking for a big opportunity
- The Pain: Stepped out of the car and found his undershirt untucked and bunched up. He would constantly have to tuck his undershirt into his slacks. It was too baggy, too boxy, too short and didn't fit well.
- Opportunity: No stores offer an undershirt that solved this problem.
- Solution: He took a sketch to a tailor and had him make a prototype. The prototype was exactly what Tom Patterson wanted.



Primary And Secondary Research

- Tom Patterson asked 15 of his friends and family to try out the undershirts and tell him what they thought.
 - They loved it and some even wanted to order more.
- He bought 200 more undershirts
- He found an attorney to patent it.
- Online research shows that the men's undergarments market is a \$30 billion industry worldwide.



Primary Research by Watching Customers

- Tom Patterson spent many hours at department stores watching people buy the men's undershirts. He drew two major conclusions:
 1. People either bought quickly or they didn't know which alternatives to buy. Those who bought quickly went for the brand they've been buying for years.
 2. Men only buy undershirts for 17 years in their lifetime. From birth to 17, their mothers will buy their undershirts. From age 34 on, their wives buy for them. Thus he concluded that women are the majority of the buyers –not men!



Tommy John (cont.)

- Niche: Affordable undershirts that has a perfect combination of fit, comfort, breathability, and style.
- Market: Women buying their kids, boyfriends, husbands undershirts.
- Mission :
 - “Renowned for its innovative fit, feel, and functionality, Tommy John is the solution for the modern man who desires luxurious clothing at an affordable price.”
 - “Tommy John took what was once a basic undershirt and has redesigned it to be an indispensable part of every man’s wardrobe. We have quickly become the go to brand for men everywhere.”



Tommy John – Finding the Fabric

- In 2008, Tom Patterson continued to work on his undershirt prototypes.
- He decided on the name “Tommy John”.
- He tested many fabric blends trying to develop the perfect combination of fit, function, comfort, breathability, and style.
- A fabric named “micro modal” (came from beech trees).



Packaging for Success

- He felt that a good package design was important to the firm's success.
- Hi packaging used feminine colors: chocolate brown and Tiffany blue.
 - (This idea came from his intuition that “women had high positives for both chocolate and Tiffany jewelry).

Finding a way to go to market

- Tom Patterson called his undershirts, “The Second Skin Collection”, because it fits well like a “second skin”.
- He first tried to sell to men’s specialty stores with little success.
- He later decided to try to get distribution in department stores instead.
- He got through to a Newman Marcus buyer and spoke to her about his ideas over the phone. They were to meet the following week.



Neiman Marcus is sold on Tommy John

- Before he hung up, he asked the buyer if she'd mind if he send samples to her husband and some men in the office. She agreed.
- When they met, the buyer said that the men who got the shirt were really impressed.
- She decided to test it out in 15 Newman Marcus stores.
- Within the first month, the undershirts achieved a 60 percent sell-through rate.
- They later expanded to 42 stores
- Within three months Nordstrom also became a customer.
- Soon they were nationwide



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- “I found the most perfect undershirt. It is made by a company called Tommy John. It has changed my life.”
 - Andrew Sorkin –NY Times (quoted on the Tommy John website)
 - “It is the most brilliant underwear on the planet, and I’m not kidding. Tommy John has saved and changed my life.” –
 - Howard Stern (quoted on the Tommy John website)



Revenue Growth

- Revenue in 2011 was \$1.5 million,
- up from \$900,000 in 2010



Discussion Questions

- Break into small groups of 4-5 people and discuss and come to a common answer to these which you can later share with the class:
- 1. Write a concept statement for Tommy John. If Tommy John was still in the start-up stage and Tom Patterson asked you to whom he should distribute the concept statement, what would you have told him?
- 2. What type of gumshoe research did Tom Patterson benefit from when he was developing Tommy John, and what additional gumshoe research could he have conducted while he was investigating the feasibility of his business?
- 3. If you were running Tommy John, would you try to move into the market for women's underwear?
- Elect a team spokesperson to present your statement and answers to the class.



Discussion Questions

- Make a list of people whom Tom Patterson talked to about his product during the design phase.
 - What insight(s) does this list provide you about the nature of feasibility analysis process? Were there any tactics that Tom Patterson used to get feedback about his product that you think were particularly clever?
- What types of insights did Tom Patterson pick up by spending hours in stores watching people buy men's undershirts? What role did these insights play in the final design of the product? In what ways do you think Tommy John products might be different today if Tom Patterson hadn't spent the time watching people buy men's undershirts that he did?
- Complete a First Screen analysis for Tommy John. What did you learn from the analysis?
 - four areas of product/service feasibility, industry/target market feasibility, organizational feasibility, and financial feasibility.



Tommy John references

- YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqtbsM6b7ZU>
- Tommy John: <http://www.tommyjohnwear.com/?gclid=CMOGn4Xg6MACFWwQ7Aod0VoAtQ>
- Men's underwear leaves the Stone Age
 - <http://fortune.com/2012/01/27/mens-underwear-leaves-the-stone-age/>
- Tommy John Underwear: Tames Sweat, Stays Tucked, Changes Lives
 - <http://www.thestreet.com/story/12041511/1/my-new-underpants-just-changed-my-life.html>

