

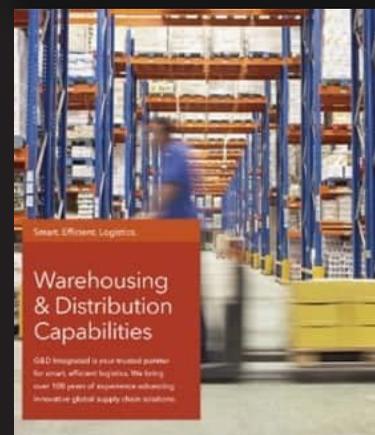
Specialty Distribution had been very successful establishing their distribution business for plasma centers, obtaining 80% market share. They decided to leverage this competency into an adjacent market – dialysis clinics. The challenge? The market was dominated by large corporations like Cardinal, McKesson and Amerisource Bergen.

Initially, Specialty Distribution applied their plasma center messaging to their dialysis center collateral, but unfortunately this approach did not gain traction. I was asked to help the company identify more impactful positioning

## Devising The Message

I initiated the project by interviewing company employees about the services they provide, looking for services that differentiated the company from its competition. Unfortunately, the team could only identify standard distribution services. These features had already been applied to the dialysis brochure. As a result, the company's brochure promoted the same features and benefits as its competitors.

When this was explained to the leadership team, it led to a deeper examination of the services the company provided to customers, which uncovered several candidate services. Many of these newly identified services were not promoted by the big companies (Table 1).



## Table 1: Differentiated Features

### Proprietary software that learns item usage patterns to track & replenish inventory

- Reduces variable cost / treatment
- Provides cost savings of 18%
- Decreases inventory counts
- Reduces backorders < 3%
- Decreases product consumption variation
- Decreases cost / treatment
- Automatically calculates order

These features held promise for a marketing campaign that could differentiate Specialty. Promoting these services could potentially capture customer mindshare. Being first to communicate them would position Specialty as an innovator, even if the competition eventually copied Specialty's service offerings.

## Verifying Customer Needs

However, this would only work if customers valued the benefits of the new services. I interviewed many of Specialty's customers to understand why they left a big distribution company to understand what customers valued. I also interviewed a few prospects that elected to stay with their distributor to identify Specialty's service limitations.

With this knowledge, we set to work to develop a positioning statement that would resonate with the customer. Then from that statement we created benefit statements that could be applied to Specialty's marketing collateral. Then we developed descriptive new phrases that would stand out from the terminology used by every other competitor in the hope that our new terminology would become industry-wide catch phrases. Our message testing confirmed that our message approach was believable and impactful (Table 2).



**Table 2: Comparison of Big Company & Specialty Distribution Positioning**

	<b>Big Distribution Companies</b>	<b>Specialty</b>
<b>Benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust functionality to help you manage your business</li> <li>Technology solutions that reduce costs</li> <li>Better inventory control</li> <li>Effortless ordering reduce staff time; reduce freight spend</li> <li>Improve inventory turns</li> <li>Maximize shelf space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve clinical supply efficiency</li> <li>Reduce administrative time</li> <li>Streamline ordering workflow</li> <li>Optimize inventory levels</li> <li>Breakthrough data analytics to gain control over your supply costs</li> </ul>

## The Results

Specialty Distribution’s new marketing campaign resulted in such significant sales traction that the company needed to expand its sales team to capitalize on all the qualified leads that surfaced.

## Conclusion

This case shows there are three important keys to developing the right messaging:

1. Features need to be transformed into benefits appreciated by the customer. Companies often become so enamored with their product’s feature set they forget to do this.
2. But just identifying differences are not enough. Customer messaging requires customer input to make sure it stimulates the intended response. This can only be accomplished through customer message testing.
3. Too often, marketing departments make the mistake of creating a product brand with an internal focus; without considering the messages their customers receive from the competition. When companies develop their message in a vacuum, its message risks getting lost. For this reason, it is always a good idea to compare your message to the competition.

In this case Foresight was able to identify and promote a message that compelled qualified customers to connect with the company about its distribution service offering.



Foresight works with companies that are faced with marketing challenges like this company. We apply the clarifying lenses that help companies deliver improved marketing performance in such areas as: developing product positioning, messaging and branding, formulating marketing strategy, preparing product launches, integrating customer needs into product design, investigating customer needs and competitor tactics, developing digital and non-digital marketing campaigns, and creating compelling sales collateral.