ENCOMPASS SOFTWARE: MANAGING ENTREPRENEURIAL GROWTH

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INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES

CASE DESCRIPTION

The primary subject matter of this case concerns **Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Marketing, and aspects of New Product Development and Marketing Planning in an entrepreneurial context.** This case addresses key issues faced by entrepreneurs when transitioning startups into successful long-term ventures. Specifically, the case explores the key tasks to be undertaken in a business (a technology firm focused on the development and commercialization of software with utility in scheduling patients in a healthcare setting) and encourages students to consider the priorities needed for continued success. The case has a difficulty level of three, appropriate for junior level courses in entrepreneurship and marketing. The case is designed to be taught in a 75-minute class period and is expected to require up to 2 hours of outside preparation by students.

CASE SYNOPSIS

The case is written from the perspective of the protagonist, the CEO of Encompass Software, a startup company dedicated to the development and commercialization of software with utility in scheduling patients in a healthcare setting. The CEO has a challenge, one critical to the company's continued growth.

In this case, the CEO faces the dilemma of how to best position the company and its product offerings for continued success in an increasingly competitive environment.

[NOTE: This case is a fictionalized account of a real-life situation. Names and other identifying information have been changed. However, the relevant facts and situations are true to the real case. Additionally, the actual dates and timeframes of the industry statistics presented have been adjusted for the purpose of this case.]

SUGGESTED TEACHING APPROACH

The case may be used to explore several key issues in Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Marketing, New Product Development and Marketing Planning (particularly how product-based startup entities might approach the risks of growth) in an entrepreneurial context. Thus, the instructor can exercise considerable discretion in emphasizing areas of particular interest and relevance to the class. The instructor notes identify those highly relevant topics based on the facts of the case and the opinions of the authors. The case can be used in a variety of

undergraduate courses: Introduction to Entrepreneurship, New Venture Creation & Planning, Managing Entrepreneurial Growth, and Entrepreneurial Marketing. Throughout these notes, we provide references serving as reading supplements designed to help students better prepare for class discussions.

Case Goals and Learning Objectives

By researching the issues presented in this case, students will:

1. Learn to apply critical thinking skills to solving issues that arise in an entrepreneurial context, particularly relating to managing entrepreneurial growth.
2. Learn the significance of establishing and implementing effective marketing strategies for an early stage enterprise.
3. Appreciate the importance of strategic market analysis in a fast growing, entrepreneurial enterprise, including (but not limited to), external and customer analysis, competitor analysis, market analysis, environmental analysis and strategic uncertainty, internal analysis, obtaining a sustainable competitive advantage, differentiation strategies, growth strategies and diversification.
4. Appreciate the importance of the product life cycle and how early stage companies must recognize the potential transitions associated with changes in the marketing situation, thus impacting product and marketing strategy and the marketing mix.
5. Understand the concept of strategic marketing planning/product marketing strategy and how it may be used to identify opportunities to increase revenue for a growing entrepreneurial business.
6. For more advanced classes in both Entrepreneurship and Marketing and depending upon the instructor's particular interests, the case can be used to explore how marketing can be made more appropriate in an entrepreneurial context and specifically, to examine ways in which entrepreneurial marketing differs from traditional marketing theory.

Assignment/Discussion Questions

As CEO of Encompass Software, consider and answer the following general questions:

1. Review the facts of the case and identify the primary issues faced by Encompass CEO, Jane Haywood.
2. For each issue, list, research, and describe the alternative courses of action that may be taken, and determine the likely consequences of each proposed action for you as the CEO.
3. Based on the above, what are your priorities and what are the specifics as regards to how you will move forward?

As CEO of Encompass Software, consider and answer the following specific questions:

1. Evaluate Encompass' marketing efforts as described in the case. Do you agree with the approaches taken by the company?
2. How would you answer Haywood's questions: "Can we have sustained success as a

one-product company?" "If not, what additional products should we offer and what criteria should be used to prioritize resources?" "What can we do to make sure our customers continue to do business with us?"

3. Do you agree with the decisions ultimately made by Haywood?

In the first instance, students may be directed towards appraising the performance of Encompass to date based upon the facts of the case and the data presented. Students should readily appreciate that Jane Haywood and the Encompass management team have moved beyond the new venture creation/startup stage and have developed a successful entrepreneurial enterprise serving a previously unmet need in the healthcare sector for significantly more effective and efficient patient scheduling. In just three years, Encompass has achieved both impressive revenue growth ($3.2MM) and profitability (20%). The company's roster of clients has risen to 30 healthcare facilities, and customers seem satisfied with the product and customer service package that the company offers, although feedback from customers (following initial experience with the product) has suggested areas for possible improvement. Moreover, as time has passed and SchedEaze has gained wider acceptance amongst key customers and accounts, the company itself has gained insights and experience relating to the consumer buying process, particularly how the purchase decision is made and post-purchase behavior (see also below).

A key question asked by Jane Haywood concerns the viability of Encompass as a one-product company, particularly in light of emerging competitive pressures from other vendors offering related technologies to potential healthcare customers. Students should appreciate the issue Encompass faces is far from unique in new ventures. Largely because of financial constraints, startup companies rarely have the resources to develop and commercialize multiple products at one time.

However, attractive market opportunities exist for businesses that are "first to market," and unless there are robust barriers to entry, competitive activity should be anticipated. Meanwhile, products are rarely "static" in the marketplace, the dynamics of which also change, and students should understand that products transition through various product life cycles. The instructor may wish to introduce the concept of the product life cycle as articulated by Vernon (1966) and challenge students to describe where in the product life cycle SchedEaze is at the time of the case. Related concepts, particularly diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2010), may also be discussed in the context of SchedEaze, relating this typology of customer adoption to the Encompass patient scheduling software solution and the implications for product-market growth planning considerations (see also below).

Implications of Buyer Behavior and Buyer's Remorse

The instructor should reinforce that thorough analysis of the market must be a prerequisite for arriving at appropriate and actionable product market strategies. Apparently, the management team at Encompass is well equipped to undertake this, but customer feedback is also of paramount importance. Encompass has been operating in the healthcare/patient scheduling software space for some three years to date and insights from key accounts and purchasing decision makers will be crucial to formulating product-market strategy going forward and addressing the questions Jane Haywood asks to herself.

At this point, the instructor might like to reinforce an understanding of the 5-stage buying process as a model that is necessary for any organization making marketing decisions (Webster and Wind, 1972; Sheth, 1973; Sheth et al., 1999). The model implies that customers/consumers

pass through all stages in every purchase (although in more routine purchases, customers often skip or reverse some of the stages). The facts of the case do not lend themselves to an appreciation of whether Encompass considered all components of the model or are now simply confronted with issues relating to post-purchase evaluation by users of the SchedEaze system. However, the latter is certainly an issue meriting Encompass consideration. An interesting digression is for the instructor may be to introduce the concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962). The most common example of cognitive dissonance in the business world is the occurrence of "buyer's remorse." This happens when a consumer makes a decision to purchase an item and, shortly after, experiences guilt over the choice, wondering if another equally appealing product or service might have brought greater satisfaction. Given that in the case of SchedEaze, competition is increasing in the form of alternative patient scheduling software solutions, it is possible that customers may review competitor offerings or even switch to these, should they perceive a compelling reason to do so. The instructor may emphasize that it is the job of the marketing team at Encompass to influence customers by reinforcing that the product satisfies and will continue to meet their organizations' patient scheduling needs.

The importance of encouraging the client that he or she has made the right purchasing decision is also significant for the Encompass team to embrace as regards to formulating product-market strategy. Thus, Haywood should actively seek out feedback from the company's existing customer base. The case describes areas of both positive and "negative" feedback from SchedEaze users that students should be encouraged to assimilate into their decision regarding product-market strategy. The instructor can discuss what these formalized mechanisms for feedback might comprise: For example, Encompass developed a customer survey process where, at least quarterly, the company sent customers electronic survey materials for completion. These were input into the Encompass Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and results reviewed and analyzed. Increasingly, CRM's are a vital tool for managing a company's interaction with current and potential future customers. The instructor can discuss the nature of CRM systems that compile information from a range of different communication channels, including a company's website, telephone, email, live chat, marketing materials, social media and more (Shaw, 1991). Through the CRM approach and the systems used to facilitate CRM, businesses are able to learn more about their target audiences and how best to cater to their specific needs. In summary, information gleaned from the use of effective CRM systems can be vital to early stage companies contemplating alternative growth strategies.

In reality, the Encompass CRM provided the company with "alerts" regarding overall or individual customer problem trends so that these could be addressed as needed. The company also utilized individual user feedback sessions at annual User Group meetings, where customers spent time with key company personnel and other users discussing product functionality and customer service. The company used these sessions to gain useful feedback on the use of SchedEaze and how to best improve the product. Encompass also ensured that customers were visited several times each year to review the system use and to identify potential areas for improvement. Finally, analyst groups routinely monitor the healthcare software industry (as they do in other industry sectors), and these groups are able to provide detailed customer feedback as well as competitor information and data.

Product-Market Growth Considerations

At this point, the instructor may introduce students to a widely used strategic planning tool that provides a framework to help executives and marketers devise strategies for future

growth. Since it was first introduced in the 1950's, the Ansoff Product-Market Growth Matrix (Table 1 Ansoff, 1957) is a widely used tool for marketers to evaluate ways to grow their business via existing and new products and markets. In particular, the matrix illustrates that the element of risk increases as strategy moves away from known quantities – the existing product and the current market. Thus, Product Development (requiring, in effect, a new product that is substantially modified or improved) and Market Expansion (a new market) typically involve greater risk to the organization than "Penetration" (existing product and existing market); while Diversification (new product and new market) generally carries the greatest risk of all. The instructor can use class discussion to contemplate Encompass available options relating to the alternatives defined by the Product/Market Ansoff Matrix viz., market penetration, market development, product development and diversification. Students should be asked to prioritize Encompass actions on these strategic alternatives and contemplate how Jane Haywood might execute on these.

Of particular relevance to the present case study is Ansoff's seminal perspective that firms wishing to diversify have to make choices between product and market diversification (or a combination) (Ansoff, 1957). The product–market matrix provides managers with four strategic diversification options. First, managers can choose to diversify their product line extension while maintaining their current market focus (i.e., sell new products/services to existing customers). Second, managers can maintain their current product line but expand their markets (i.e., sell current products to new customers, by expanding either geographically or to a different client set). Third, managers can choose to keep both their current product and market mix. The final choice is to expand both the product line and markets.

Table 1 Ansoff Product-Market Matrix (Ansoff, 1957)

	EXISTING PRODUCTS	NEW PRODUCTS
EXISTING MARKETS	Market Penetration – sell more of the same to the same market	Product Development - sell a new product into the same target group
NEW MARKETS	Market Development - Sell your existing product into a new market	Diversification - Produce and sell a new product into a new market

Application of Ansoff Matrix to Encompass Product-Market Decisions

Encompass Market Penetration Considerations

A market penetration strategy usually considers products that are currently offered by the firm and that are also directed at an existing market. Utilizing this strategy, there can be further exploitation of products without necessarily changing the product (itself) or the outlook of the product. This process may be possible through the use of different promotional methods, varying

pricing policies that may attract more clientele, or efforts to make distribution more extensive.

In market penetration, the risk is usually the least since the product(s) are already familiar to the consumers and the traditional market is familiar to the firm. Another way in which market penetration can be increased is by utilizing various initiatives that might encourage increased usage of the product. Students will likely be familiar with examples experienced in everyday life (e.g. coupons and related promotion tactics) that encourage market penetration.

In the present case, Encompass considered how to best position SchedEaze for continued growth within the industry. The company reviewed data from the VHA Study that indicated a significant number of healthcare organizations (39%) had still not implemented enterprise scheduling, and concluded there was scope for further revenue growth in the current market. The company, therefore, prioritized marketing activities to maximize success with current customers and to consolidate its market position to other "like" healthcare facilities. Encompass used actual improvement results from current customers, of which a number were "top 100" healthcare facilities. Because of the positive reputation of these customers, the company was able to leverage client testimonials and results (through "white papers") combined with target focused marketing to gain increased market awareness, which led to an increased customer base.

Notably, the Company also rolled out a "subscription-based" pricing option instead of its traditional license fee-based model. With the subscription model, customers paid a small upfront installation and training fee and then a monthly fee based on the use of the system. The advantage of this option for the client was that it significantly reduced the upfront investment costs of SchedEaze by spreading out payments. Encompass benefitted from the development of a continuing, likely revenue source. Additional promotional strategies leveraged a well-conceived strategic marketing plan to increase both product and company awareness in an increasingly competitive market (examples included 3-dimensional direct mail pieces and advertising in major healthcare trade publications).

Depending upon the focus of the class and the instructor's interests, these activities indicate a shift from an entrepreneurial marketing orientation to a more traditional marketing approach as the start-up enterprise evolves and grows (see also below).

Encompass Product Development Considerations

In adopting a product development strategy, new products are introduced into existing markets. Product development can differ from the introduction of a new product in an existing market, or it can involve the modification of an existing product. By modifying the product, one might change its outlook or presentation (e.g. packaging), or increase the product's performance or quality. By doing so, it can appeal more to the already existing market. Students will be familiar with iconic companies such as Apple and Gillette who consistently utilize effective product development strategies to influence product life cycles via incremental innovations.

Encompass focused much of its research and development resources on this strategy, believing it could increase revenue by selling new, complementary products to existing customers. The Company felt a particular strength of this approach was it could sell at a higher close rate and lower cost to existing clients. Encompass, therefore, assessed customer feedback to develop three new products, Encompass ID, Medical Necessity, and its Call-Back Reminder system. These products worked in conjunction with SchedEaze and are described in these notes. The instructor may wish to use this implemented strategy to lead a class discussion as to the merits of such new product offerings.

Encompass Market Development Considerations

The third available product-market strategy according to Ansoff's rubric is market development. In this approach, the business sells its existing products to new markets. This strategy can be made possible through further market segmentation to aid in identifying a new client base. Market development assumes that the current markets have been fully exploited; thus there is a need to venture into new markets. There are various possible approaches to executing market development, which include: new geographical markets, new distribution channels, new product packaging, and different pricing policies. In new geographic markets, the business can expand by selling their products to other (new) countries/overseas markets. It may also mean setting up other "branches" of the firm in new territories. The instructor might use the example of franchises and discuss how various companies have adopted this (franchise) model as a way of establishing a presence in new markets. From the perspective of Encompass, the company believed that it had an opportunity to increase revenue by selling to a "down market" or smaller, typically non-traditional Encompass customers. Although part of the overall hospital market and representing over half of the total hospitals in the US, Encompass had previously focused on larger, better-funded facilities and had thus ignored this market. Encompass identified new potential customers (under 100-bed institutions) that were generally in rural locations and had limited budgets (for technology solutions) and "lesser" product functionality needs. From the case, students might note that fully 51% of hospitals were in this new potential market category.

Thus, and with the addition of new SchedEaze product features, Encompass decided to rebrand its current version of the software (without new product features) as a product designed specifically for smaller healthcare facilities. Pricing was also adjusted (reduced) for this product, from an average of $350,000 per sale to around $100,000.

Encompass Diversification Considerations

The fourth product-market strategy to consider is diversification. This growth strategy involves an organization marketing or selling new products to new markets at the same time. It is accepted to be the riskiest strategy among the others as it involves two unknowns, new products being created and the fact that the business may not be fully cognizant of development problems that may occur in the process. There is also the fact that there is a new market being targeted, with unknown characteristics. For a firm to take the step to diversify, they need to appreciate what might be gained versus the risks involved.

At Encompass, much time was spent amongst the management team assessing this option. The instructor might raise a discussion regarding what could comprise both new products and new markets for Encompass as a viable diversification strategy.

The Company considered taking its scheduling expertise into other markets such as physician office scheduling, veterinary medicine appointments, as well as into non-healthcare markets, including equipment maintenance scheduling. Although the Company felt the opportunities in other markets were large, it ultimately decided not to pursue these possibilities due to the Company's limited resources (at the time) and because of management's lack of expertise in these industries.

Entrepreneurial Marketing vs. Traditional Marketing

For more advanced classes, the case represents an ideal vehicle for discussing critical differences between traditional marketing and entrepreneurial marketing as summarized in Table 2 and amplified in Table 3 (below).

Table 2 Entrepreneurial Marketing Compared to Traditional Marketing Concepts (Stokes, 2000)

Marketing Principles	TRADITIONAL MARKETING	ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING
Concept	Customer-orientated: Market-driven, product development follows	Innovation-oriented: Idea-driven, intuitive assessment of market needs
Strategy	Top-down segmentation, targeting, and positioning.	Bottom-up targeting of customers and other influence groups
Methods	The marketing mix Four/Seven P's	Interactive marketing methods Word-of-mouth marketing
Market Intelligence	Formalized research and intelligence systems	Informal networking and information gathering

Information relating to the scope of Encompass marketing efforts is limited in the case, although this may lend itself to a discussion of the differences between entrepreneurial marketing approaches compared to traditional marketing concepts (as presented in standard textbooks e.g. Kotler, 1988). Entrepreneurial marketing is focused on innovations and the development of ideas in line with an intuitive understanding of market needs. In contrast, traditional marketing assumes that a thorough assessment of customer needs precedes product or service development. Entrepreneurs target customers through a bottom-up approach to the marketplace, not the top-down segmentation, targeting and positioning processes typically associated with traditional marketing. As appears to relevant to the instant case, entrepreneurial marketers have a preference for interactive marketing methods, working closely with existing customers and relying on word-of-mouth communications to find new ones. Thus entrepreneurial marketing is characterized by informal information gathering through networks of personal contacts, rather than the systematic market intelligence gathering advocated in traditional marketing approaches and texts. Entrepreneurs collect information through informal networking rather than formalized data systems. These processes play to entrepreneurial strengths and represent marketing that is more appropriate in entrepreneurial contexts, rather than marketing, which is second best due to resource limitations (Stokes, 2000).

Table 3 below summarizes several of these fundamental differences, suggesting that an entrepreneurial marketing approach requires changes not only in behavior but also in the underlying attitudes held by those responsible for marketing activities. Engaging in actions that are innovative, entail risks, or are more proactive implies that managers understand and have a positive affect/bias towards such normative behavior. They must develop skill sets to support these activities. Thus, entrepreneurial marketing is more than simply an examination of the role of marketing in entrepreneurship or the role of entrepreneurship in marketing. It entails a shift from the use of the word "entrepreneurial" as an adjective to entrepreneurial marketing as a central concept that integrates the two disciplines of marketing and entrepreneurship. It represents an alternative approach to marketing under certain conditions (Morris et al., 2002).

Table 3 Applying Entrepreneurial Marketing at Three Different Levels (Morris et al., 2002)

	Traditional Marketing	Entrepreneurial Marketing
Basic Premise	Facilitation of transactions and market control	Sustainable competitive advantage through value-creating innovation
Orientation	Marketing as objective, dispassionate science	Central role of passion, zeal, persistence, and creativity in marketing
Context	Established relatively stable markets	Envisioned, emerging, and fragmented markets with high levels of turbulence
Marketer's role	Coordinator of marketing mix; builder of the brand	Internal and external change agent, creator of the category
Market approach	Reactive and adaptive approach to current market situation with incremental innovation	Proactive approach, leading the customer with dynamic innovation
Customer needs	Articulated, assumed, expressed by customers through survey research	Unarticulated, discovered, identified through lead users
Risk perspective	Risk minimization in marketing actions	Marketing as vehicle for calculated risk-taking, emphasis on finding ways to mitigate, stage or share risks
Resource management	Efficient use of existing resources, scarcity mentality	Leveraging, creative use of the resources of others; doing more with less; actions are not constrained by resources currently controlled
New product/service development	Marketing support new product/service development activities of Research and Development and other technical depts.	Marketing is the home of innovation; the customer is co-active producer.
Customer's role	External source of intelligence and feedback	An active participant in firm's marketing decision process, defining product, price, distribution and communications approaches.

The Decision

In summary, Haywood and her team concluded that to achieve continued success, they must expand their portfolio beyond the company's sole offering of SchedEaze to include additional products designed to solve other pressing customer needs. Additionally, they decided to reposition the Company's current product (without increased functionality or the additional products) to serve a previously untargeted sector of the healthcare industry, smaller hospitals, and to revise its pricing strategies.

Haywood's team reflected upon previous conversations relating to issues that often negatively impact a hospital's ability to service customers. They then devised a development plan to solve these problems by extending the company's' product line beyond scheduling.

Encompass considered how to best position SchedEaze for continued growth within the industry. The company reviewed data from the VHA Study that indicated a significant number of healthcare organizations (39%) had still not implemented enterprise scheduling, and concluded there was scope for further revenue growth in the current market. The company,

therefore, prioritized marketing activities to maximize success with current customers and to consolidate its market position to other "like" healthcare facilities. Encompass used actual improvement results from current clients, of which a number were "top 100" healthcare facilities. Because of the positive reputation of these customers, the company was able to leverage client testimonials and results (through "white papers") combined with target focused marketing to gain increased market awareness, which led to an increased customer base.

The functionality of SchedEaze was also increased, so that it served as an access point, or overlay, through which all other administrative functions (such as patient demographics checking, insurance verification, and patient reminders) were seamlessly and efficiently coordinated. Haywood believed that by using SchedEaze in this way, the company's platform would become a necessary hospital component for enhancing the physician healthcare interaction experience.

In addition to its primary scheduling software SchedEaze, the Company decided to develop and market, three other products to expand the functionality of Encompass offerings to customers. These products, "SchedEaze ID", "Medical Necessity", and "Call-Back Reminder" performed tasks instantly coordinated at the point of scheduling. Haywood believed that this would result in a seamless and effortless flow of patient service throughout healthcare organizations: SchedEaze ID automatically verified the demographic information provided by a patient. The system checked and automatically corrected a patient's first and last name, her or his date of birth, and the patient's current billing address. The benefits of Encompass ID were a reduction in returned patient bills and improved revenue collection.

The SchedEaze Medical Necessity module verified insurance patient information before scheduled procedures to ensure the insurance company would cover the appointment. This module enhanced Encompass by greatly reducing the risk of denied and improperly submitted claims, thereby increasing profitability and efficiency. By automatically verifying compliance for insurance, financial responsibility was properly identified in advance of resource expenditures.

Also, the SchedEaze Call-Back Reminder system used interactive voice technology to automatically trigger appointment reminders for patients. Call-Back Reminder places automated callbacks to patients, enabling confirmation, re-scheduling or appointments, or cancellation – quickly and easily with the touch of a telephone keypad. The benefits of the Call-Back Reminder system to customers were significantly reduced same day cancellations and no-shows.

Haywood and her team also decided to rebrand the current system (without new product features) to "SchedEaze Lite" and market it to smaller healthcare facilities. Pricing was adjusted (reduced) for this product, from an average of $350,000 per sale to around $100,000.

Notably, the Company rolled out a "subscription-based" pricing option instead of its traditional license fee-based model. With the subscription model whereby customers paid a small upfront installation and training fee and then a monthly fee based on the use of the system. The advantage of this option to the client was that it significantly reduced the upfront investment costs of SchedEaze by spreading out payments. Encompass benefitted as a result of the development of a continuing and predictable revenue stream. Additional promotional strategies leveraged a well-conceived strategic marketing plan to increase both product and company awareness in an increasingly competitive market (examples included 3-dimensional direct mail pieces and advertising in major healthcare trade publications).

Finally, the Company considered taking its scheduling expertise into other markets such as physician office scheduling, veterinary medicine appointments, as well as into non-healthcare markets, including equipment maintenance scheduling. Although the Company felt the

opportunities in other markets were large, it ultimately decided not to pursue these possibilities due to the Company's limited resources (at the time) and because of management's lack of expertise in these industries.

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