



Case Study

Competitor Intelligence

Assessing the potential threat levels posed by alternative solutions in the steam management market

The Challenge

Our client, a manufacturer of pumps, steam management systems and associated fluid path technologies, needed to evaluate the prospects and demand for steam management systems in certain core process industries as part of their future business planning, with a special focus on potential competitive threats.

The client's strong position in the market could be under threat if there is a considerable move to the use of alternative solutions to the conventional steam and condensate loop. Although steam had several key advantages and had been used for many years, there were several alternative solutions that could be used within the client's target markets and present a potential threat.

Aside from the competitive threats, the client required market insight in the short-term to better equip sales teams with arguments to further promote the benefits of steam technologies, and to be armed with counter-arguments when competitive process approaches are being considered. To this end, the client required a detailed and independent view on how its core markets were evolving in their use of steam solutions. The overall aim of the research was to develop a better understanding of the changes in the need for steam and the progression of alternatives to steam including predicted future trends within our key target industries. The design of the study was not intended to obtain detailed measurements to quantify the scale of the opportunity or specific future projections of market demand for steam. Rather, the aim was to identify which trends in the use of alternatives to steam were gaining traction across the different target verticals.

The Solution

As the need was to understand themes and trends and not quantify market size or opportunity, B2B International undertook a large-scale qualitative programme that spanned several geographies (including developed and developing markets), multiple industry verticals and different respondent types from operational/managerial roles and end-users to consultants and equipment manufacturers to provide a thorough and detailed assessment of the market to identify consistencies and differences across different themes. Target contacts were identified through initial desk research to review the sectors of greatest interest, identify key organisations within each one and within these begin to build contact lists through sources such as LinkedIn and other published information. Lists were reviewed and refined with the client on a regular basis to retain focus on the sectors and organisations of greatest interest and potential value and were subsequently supplemented with existing customers and known contacts provided by the client. Exploratory interviews consisted of screening respondents to identify the most relevant person within each organisation to provide detailed feedback both on the use of steam and related solutions but also on the decision-making process and key considerations that would be made when choosing between steam and alternative solutions. In total, 95 interviews were completed to ensure sufficient coverage was achieved across each sector and that for each we could review different types of organisation e.g. developed/developing market, existing sites vs new builds, end-users vs. senior management etc.

The Insight

At an industry level, we were able to advise the client on the potential threat level posed by alternative solutions and the potential impact on the wider business. Overall, the threat posed by alternative solutions was relatively low but by looking at the detail across different sectors, an assessment of the opportunity for the client at the sector level was developed that considered the extent to which steam was favoured and the likely growth of the sector overall. Ultimately a SWOT analysis was created that lead to a series of recommended actions that could be consistently applied across all sectors including greater engagement with consultants to guide discussions on steam use in the future, positioning the client as an expert in the area of safety to allay concerns around steam use and developing models or simulators to help illustrate the benefits of steam in terms of energy efficiency.