Service Individualization
“The human search for individuality has now reached the mass market.”

Prof. Dr. Frank Piller
Service excellence? Competitive advantages through service innovation? For a long time, these statements had little meaning. Today awareness in business, academic, and social sectors has been transformed. The service industry is finding the strategic position it is due. We are beginning to understand its economic contribution.

Personalized service, or service individualization, is of particular significance in this transformation. In the last few years the most up-to-date technology has been utilized to facilitate interaction between customers and businesses. The creative potential of both partners has become the motor of innovation – through mass customization (see F. T. Piller, 2001), idea competitions (see D. Walcher, 2007), and other inventions. These new forms of interaction facilitate global differentiation for both traditional service providers and for manufacturing companies.

Germany has played a pioneering role within the area of service individualization, and service researchers have facilitated and evaluated businesses offering personalized services for over twelve years. The following pages summarize trends and present examples of these achievements in service individualization.

Important for businesses

- The customer is the focus of traditional services, but is considered an external factor. Service individualization removes this boundary.

- As the services sector professionalizes, standardization of service processes evolves and becomes more important. For example, fast food restaurants could not achieve success without clear process definitions for their staff members.

- However, the business need for standardized processes stands in conflict with the customers’ requirements for individual and unique service experiences. Within this contradictory context, interactive value creation provides an important solution.

Interactive value creation

Interactive value creation describes a common development of solutions by business and its customers.
“Today no one needs to be convinced that innovation is important – intense competition, along with fast changing markets and technologies, has made sure of that. How to innovate is the key question!” Peter Drucker

Peter Drucker addressed two central points in his well-known essay “The Discipline of Innovation” (1998): the elementary significance of innovations in all business areas and the search for an efficient and successful method of innovation management. Morten Hansen and Julian Birkinshaw (2007) continue the conversation by offering an excellent introduction to the innovation process. They describe how an initial concept is transformed into a market-ready service as a result of search, selection, implementation, and evaluation processes. Ralf Reichwald and Frank Piller (2002) make another important contribution when they describe how the customer can play a proactive role in the innovation process as a valued creation partner. This integration is characterized by a joint problem solution between business and customer and is part of a larger integration of the customer into the strategic thinking that guides firm activities.

The challenge of service individualization

Between 30 to 50 per cent of all innovations prove to be flops, yet empirical studies show that early integration of the customer in the innovation process can significantly increase innovatory success (Lüthje, 2000). How can services be developed from customer knowledge? How can customers be involved throughout the entire innovation process? Service individualization yields very useful information and connections that help providers find their own unique answers to these key questions. Because innovation is normally accompanied by high investment, not answering them satisfactorily can threaten a company’s future.

Customer integration in the innovation process

The integration of customer knowledge in value creation – over and above customary market research measures—demands a close and consistent orientation towards the customer. Relationships have to be built up with customers in order to draw on their knowledge for the creation of innovations. In the process, the customer’s role is transformed from pure consumer to a more pro-active role.

This is most often a non-monetary transfer from users to providers. Customers (and potential customers) provide information about utilization requirements and special service demands. They sometimes cooperate in the realization of the problem solution. The joint innovation process between businesses and customers can result in both customer-specific services (mass customization) and market-ready products and services for a larger clientele (open innovation).
As a result of the amalgamation of value creation processes between provider and receiver, the customer was in the past referred to as a “prosumer” (Toffler, 1970, 1980). However, the production factors contributed by the receiver in this definition of an expanded consumer role primarily take the form of information about a particular product/service configuration. When cooperation involves the design and perhaps consumption of an individualized solution, it is more pertinent to refer to the customer as co-producer and even co-designer (von Hippel, 1998; Piller, 2001; Piller & Stotko, 2003).

A company must focus on the customer relationship in order to integrate customers into the innovation process. This is not just “relationship marketing,” which is typically presented in terms of a single customer transaction and assumes a passive role on the part of the customer. Customer integration goes a step further. It defines the customer as an active value creation partner. Management perceives the customer as part of the company’s cultural and social structure. The objective is not the collection of customer requirements through sophisticated market research methods and the subsequent internal implementation of these findings, but the active participation of the customer in the innovation process (see M. Kleinaltenkamp, 1997; C. K. Prahalad & V. Ramaswamy, 2000).

**Mass customization**

The integration of the customer in value creation is an important characteristic of mass customization, a special topic of this report on service individualization. Mass customization provides goods and services for a (relatively) large sales market that conform to individualized requirements. The products and services are offered at long-term prices that are not that far from comparable mass-produced offerings.

The individualization of services within this context does not imply a transformation of the market into exclusive niches as in the case of classical individual production. Successful mass customizers find a larger and more diverse group of customers willing to pay a price that is higher than, but still close to, that found in the mass market. The price often takes into account the value of information collected during the individualization process as well as the utility of a long-term individual relationship with the recipient of the offering (Piller & Müller, 2003). Figure 1 elaborates on these ideas for a more complete definition of service individualization.

**Open innovation**

Open innovation involves the systematic integration of external inputs in some (and possibly all) stages of the innovation process.

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**Fig. 1: Interactive service individualization**

- **Internal (infrastructure) resources; solution information**
- Interactive service development process
  - Innovative services
    - Extension
      - Solution space
        - Concretization
          - Interactive service compilation process
            - Individualized service
              - Customer offers information on requirements and solutions
- Production management and sales management
  - Internal resources; solution information
- Customer provides information on requirements and solutions
  - Interactive value creation in the sense of open innovation
  - Interactive value creation according to mass customization
The successful integration of the customer is decisive for the success of mass customization offers (Piller & Stotko, 2003). As shown in Figure 1, mass customizers are characterized by the fact that the service cannot be performed without the customer. Either the customer is involved in the performance of the service, as in the case of a haircut, or she/he generates information needed by the service provider, as in the case of a call center. This individualized information is subsequently incorporated into the service creation process (Kleinaltenkamp, 1996).

In comparison to mass producers, mass customizers have unique possibilities for collecting customer information. This data can be utilized for more than fulfilling an individual customer order. It can help further development of the entire mass customization system, and be used to make changes in standard products offered to the mass market or specific niches within it. The collection of information can commence prior to the actual sales process at the point contact is initiated. Particularly rich information can be gained during individualized configuration and the execution of the order and can be continued by following the delivery of the product with after-sales measures. A customer-oriented optimization of the value creation chain is made possible through processing and using the generated information, though it should be noted that providers often fall down on this very last step - collecting and even processing information that they do not use.

The interaction processes behind service individualization

The starting point for individualized products is always the customer with his or her individual needs and requirements. At the initial purchase, these requirements are defined and subsequently transferred into a product/service specification with the aid of a configurator. In an ideal case, this would be the point at which a comparison with production planning would take place; for example, the provider would define specific delivery dates.

Following the submission of the order, customer specifications are transformed into corresponding manufacturing orders (if these are required), and transferred to appropriate production areas. Up to this point, the creation of the service has taken place purely on an information level. Only then can a customer specific offering be delivered.

During the utilization phase, the major factor is the nurturing of the customer relationship with the aid of the stored customer data, e.g. through the offer of additional services. Customer information additionally helps not only in the simplification of subsequent orders, but also in the ability to process these orders to individualized customer requirements. Knowledge from the information stored from individualization helps in the further development of the entire system and its offerings. It is, for example, possible to examine the width of available demand from the variation in customer wishes.

The information cycle of mass customization forms a continuous process. Utilizing information originating from the creation of the service does not end at the point of delivery as in customary business. However, broader use is only made possible through the close interaction between provider and receiver during the service creation process, and later when actively putting the compiled information into use.

There are costs associated with increasing interaction and coordination. For this reason, new information and communication technologies take on a central role in the logistic process. The efficient utilization of internet technologies enables efficient direct contact between the manufacturer and customers in mass markets (see R. Reichwald/F. T. Piller, 2002). Sophisticated online configurations and toolkits also play a major role in efficiently depicting the customer-oriented aspects of an offering and bringing it together with the customer's wishes.

Transition from product marketer to solution providers

Mass customization and other individuation efforts entail radical rethinking for a product and brand-centered consumer goods manufacturer. In place of a product, it is the interaction with the customer that takes center stage. As the final product or service does not exist during the sales process, it is vital that the supplier displays competence in the provision of solutions. This competence is on the one hand displayed by the design of the configuration system, but it is primarily based on the competence of the seller as perceived by the customer.

Current retailers are frequently not prepared for this change in emphasis. They are accustomed to selling products (or even standard services) that are not developed in cooperation with their customers. Questions about quality control and responsibility must also be raised here. When standard goods are sold, the manufacturer is responsible for quality, guarantee, and product liability. In mass customization a transformation from pure selling to the provision of a service takes place; the retailer is confronted with the dissatisfaction with the product even if the manufacturer is responsible for the fault.

As a result, the retailer must ensure that a competent member of the sales staff is present to present the product to the customer, receive feedback on the product, and round off the sales experience. However, as the size of the market increases, this labor intensive selling may become prohibitively expensive.

The value of customer data

Two of the significant advantages of mass customization, are the encouragement of subsequent purchases, and the nurturing of customer loyalty. The customer's desires and preferences are not merely utilized for the fulfillment of the initial order, but also to simplify subsequent orders. Once the producer of the service has initially demonstrated that the individualized solution creates pleasure in the purchase experience, and is additionally delivered promptly, the risks faced by the customer in the purchase of individualized products are greatly reduced.
Cross-selling with the supplier’s additional products and services also can be encouraged. It is frequently possible to initiate further purchases with a minimum degree of interaction on the basis of data already supplied. This potential can be utilized if the configuration process is designed so that the greatest possible volume of customer information is recorded during the initial purchasing process, and feedback is collected from the customer following delivery.

However, the possession of customer data and the processing of subsequent orders can create potential conflict. If the manufacturer possesses comprehensive information on the customer (including address data), repeat orders are more profitable in direct sales rather than through the retailer. Direct purchase is also frequently preferable to the customer. Why should a retailer therefore make investments in order to transfer customers to a system in which the manufacturer harvests the fruits? How can the retailer be motivated to collect feedback data, and then make these available to the manufacturer? Is the manufacturer willing to utilize the information in order to cooperate in the improvement of the retailer’s relationship with the customer? At this point, new cooperation methods and distribution of profits must be implemented in order to compensate the retailer for subsequent orders that are processed directly by the manufacturer.

Interaction with several sales channels and marketing approaches
Frequently, the suppliers of personalized services decide to make them exclusively available via a website, not only to lower transaction costs, but also to gain experience in direct contact with the customer. If the argument is brought forward that a potential product is too expensive and work-intensive to be offered by traditional sales channels, it might also be developed to be sold offline.

Other suppliers of individuated offerings choose to concentrate on attracting customers with the experience of configuration and order submission in settings that support human interaction. Products might be sold during special occasions such as sporting events, or during special promotion periods in traditional retail stores. In the first case, the manufacturer sells directly to the end customer; in the second case, the retailer books a supporting team from the manufacturer and the sales take place in the retail store. This approach helps the retailer highlight the local image of his store, and his competence in a specific area – sport shoes for example. Each retailer takes responsibility for the marketing before and during the event. Here the retail industry is fulfilling an important function: it enables the manufacturing company to profit from customer relationships the retailer has developed.
Mr. Mühlschlegel, which trends do you observe in today’s market? The “mega-trend” of individualization is a global phenomenon. This shift in values involves an increasing yearning for individuality. The desire to be unique and distinguish oneself from the masses has great significance. In brief: individuals have to be the focus as never before.

How does adidas react to this move towards greater individuality? With the help of researchers, adidas has been keeping a close watch on the trend toward individuation, and developing new product responses. The move away from mass goods towards individualized products has been successfully implemented with mi adidas, which stands for “my individual adidas.” It offers the customer individual mass production and personalization of adidas sports shoes under the motto “create your own.”

How does the mi adidas concept work? It permits all consumers to create a shoe that is individually fitted to their personal requirements. This is achieved in three steps. First of all, specialists establish the form of shoe that fits best. Second, the features that are important for the relevant form of training are selected. In the final step, the customer is able to design the appearance of his or her adidas shoe.

With mi adidas’ customers are creating a shoe according to their feet and their style. The latter is for numerous customers the top priority: the wish to possess shoes that no-one else has. This is a practical implementation of the motto “create your own.” Our innovative concept permits customers to adapt their sports shoes according to their individual requirements and wishes, for all types of sporting activities and perhaps for many preferred designs.

While individual choice is the heart of the concept, great importance is also attached to personalized advice from the salesperson. This means that tips and advice on correct training methods are also provided by expert members of staff. They additionally record all customer information and requirements on a tablet PC in order to produce an individual profile. This means that shoes can be reordered simply and easily at any time.

Does mi adidas have attractive factors from the retailer’s point of view? This concept offers the retailer several advantages. There is no storage risk involved, as the product is only manufactured following order processing. This enables retailers to help customers who have not found shoes in the store with a desired size or color. The possibility of individual designing a shoe with the aid of high-tech support also functions as a customer magnet and enhances the visit to the store as a special experience. What is more, the complete experience – measuring the feet, receiving competent advice, and the virtual projection of the finished shoe – cannot be substituted by a visit on the internet. For dedicated sportspersons, mi adidas provides a great incentive to visit the retailer.

A final comment? Adi Dassler’s founding concept for adidas still holds true for us today. He wanted to help all sportspersons – for example, his company invented screw studs for the final of the Football World Cup in 1954. That led the German squad to success on wet pitches. “Impossible is nothing.” his original vision, remains valid within the services sector.
The international sports shoe industry is a prime example of innovative variation management. The five big brands – adidas, Asics, Nike, Puma and Reebok – are no longer manufacturer themselves, but have outsourced substantial parts of their production. The core competencies of adidas and its competitors are the identification of market trends through comprehensive market research, as well as the design of new products that respond to these trends. The nurture of a strong brand and an efficient logistics system are viewed as supplementary building blocks of success in the sector.

Nevertheless, even the successful market leaders adidas and Nike are confronted by increasingly complex demands from their customers. Their design competence is challenged by new fashionable clothing brands. Consumers demand high-quality and individual shoes at lower prices, while customer loyalty is nevertheless decreasing. The heterogeneity of customer wishes makes forecasts and plans increasingly difficult.

The results of these trends in the current environment are a high volume of warehouse stock, greater fashion risks, an extremely complex supply chain, and ever increasing discounts to dispose of unwanted products. This is complemented by missed turnover on products that have been more successful than expected, but then are not available in sufficient quantity, or correct sizes. Mass customization is increasingly attractive in this situation.

Mass Customization

As a reaction to the challenges of the market, adidas launched its mass customization project, mi adidas, in 2001, following two years of preparation. The strategy of individualized products achieves not only market differentiation with a simultaneous decrease in market risk, but also addresses the proliferation of variations resulting from the growing individualization of demand. In special retail stores and at selected events, customers can create a unique shoe offered at a price that is only about a third more expensive than mass produced shoes.

The MC process

The mi adidas personalization process is staged as an individual service experience that leads the customer to his or her ideal shoe. This process begins with the measurement of the customer's feet with a foot scanner to determine the exact size, width, and pressure distribution of each foot. Then the customer discusses the scan results with a trained expert.

The sales person enters the selected combination of fit characteristics into a computer. In order to reduce the complexity of the shoe manufacture, and limit the delivery period to about three weeks after the order, individual shoe lasts are not produced for each customer – instead, customers are assigned an already existing shoe last. The size and width spectrum is substantially greater in this match-to-order system than is the case with conventional shoes. It is also important that each foot can be assigned a last with different characteristics, since few people have symmetrical feet.

Trial shoes are available to try on in all stores. Once the customer has selected individual function and fit, he or she can test the trial shoes before progressing to the design phase. Here the customer selects color elements and desired material. Finally, mi adidas offers the possibility of having a name, favorite club, or team number embroidered on the shoe. The result is mi adidas – sports for the individual.

The sports article manufacturer Nike offers visually individualized sports shoes for running, football, and basketball under the name NikeID. The company makes online configuration for a variety of models possible via its internet page. The shoes available are based on the customary model series and can only be individualized by customers choosing color and individual text. Once the customer has selected color combination and text of up to eight characters, the order is concluded with the submission of shoe size and delivery address. They are delivered via UPS around five weeks later. The ten dollar price of shoes adapted to individual customer wishes is only slightly more expensive than standard models.

"mi adidas and I" - sports shoe experience research

Whereas initially the customer played a more passive role, the online platform developed in 2004 with the help of research project WINserv, provided the first ever opportunity to make direct contact with adidas, and have a hand in the design
Practical Example

of services and products in the mi adidas range. Between July and December 2004, customers were asked at the end of their shoe configuration process whether they would be interested in participating in the customer integration project “mi adidas and I”. The project was exclusively developed for the customers of individual running and football shoes. Participating customers were able to view their personal shoe configuration via the mi adidas and I website, and find out more about the special characteristics of their shoe. Customers were surveyed on their satisfaction, brand attitudes, and buying behavior. They also were able to participate in an idea competition that focused on the improvement of current services during the configuration process, and the development of new further services, particularly within the after-sales area.

In summary, adidas answers Peter Drucker’s question “How to innovate?” with the response “Integrate your customers!” Through the now globally available configuration process of mi adidas, the company receives continuous information about its customers’ experiences and wishes. As a result, they offer better product/service through mi adidas. They also benefit from concrete and often innovative suggestions for their standard range of shoes.
Conclusion

The interaction with the end customer enables the mass customizer to collect essential and reliable market research data. The aggregation of the data on every individual customer can achieve results concerning the improvement of individualized products and also for standard products as improved market information can be compiled and more exact forecasts on customer requirements produced. The personalized products and services segment provides similar market research data for mass production, but without the customary distortion. The information is utilized for the improved planning and control of current variations of products and services which are produced as stock. This means, that research results must be repeatedly evaluated from the aspect of their relevance for the production of standard goods. Data such as preferential color combinations for particular countries are vital for the improvement of regional products offered and forecast values. Knowledge of customer preferences enables the retail sector to improve its range of available standard products. It could be of advantage for retailers to share this information with other suppliers. Successful cooperation between manufacturers and retailers produces learning economies and synergies between traditional and individualized services. Both manufacturers and retailers profit from the customers’ new shopping experience during the joint creation of the individualized product. The highly personalized service, which is necessary for the configuration process and the creative potential for the design of a unique product, transform shopping into a special experience.
Hot Spots of Service Individualization
mymuesli GmbH

**Individual breakfast via the internet**

The first muesli individualizer in Germany offers organic muesli without added flavoring or coloring. Strict foodstuffs controls in Germany necessitate a precise list of ingredients with exact weight proportions. That labeling is part of mymuesli’s inventive, yet automated solution.

mymuesli customers can choose from a range of 75 ingredients via the internet. Alongside a large number of basic mixtures, there are fruit, nut, and sweet extras that can be combined according to individual tastes. Detailed information is provided for each ingredient to aid the selection process. Once a basic muesli is chosen, and refined through the addition of further ingredients, customers give their individual muesli blend a name. The muesli mix can then be delivered to the customer by post, or alternatively the customer can collect their mix in Passau. Additionally, gift vouchers are available for fellow cereal lovers, which can be delivered by post, e-mail, or even text message.

Syntops GmbH

**All the news that’s fit to print – on a daily basis**

Syntops GmbH is a start-up company in Augsburg that produces software for individualized print products. The software controls the compilation of an individual daily newspaper, for example, according to the wishes of a reader who is able to select a combination of content from a wide range of newspapers and magazines via the internet. Syntops has acquired the rights from publishers for the further distribution of original pages to their customers. Current “content partners” include “Die Welt,” “Berliner Morgenpost,” “Frankfurter Rundschau,” “Abendzeitung München,” and “The Washington Post.”

A customer might choose to read the politics section of “Die Welt,” the business section of the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,” and world news from “The Washington Post.” The Syntops Software compiles the individual PDF file and sends it to a digitalized printer in the vicinity of the customer. The entire process is fully automated. Logistic services deliver each subscribers’ personal newspaper early each morning to their postal address.

Syntops has won awards for its software, including first prize in a start-up competition run by VDI/VDE, “Weconomy” run by the Wissensfabrik Deutschland, and a competition that resulted in a publication titled “365 locations in the land of ideas.” In addition, the company’s managing director, Gregor E. Dorsch, was recently voted 54th among the “Top 100 managers 2008” by the media magazine W&V.

In principle, the Syntops Software can be used to produce an enormous range of fully automatic individualized print products, ranging from personalized advertising catalogs, magazines, and supplements, to individualized operating manuals for something like a new automobile. This potential expands the group of Syntops GmbH’s target customers beyond individuals to encompass almost every company that wants to respond to the current trend for mass individualization.

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Wunsch & Begehr GmbH

Dreams come true with Schnupperwunsch

We are all too familiar with the situation in which we have a special wish, but do not know how to go about satisfying it. Perhaps the search is for a rare piece of designer furniture, the organization of a special weekend trip to Lake Garda, or tickets for a concert or sports event that is already sold out. Now – thanks to Schnupperwunsch – it is possible to sit back and expect our wishes to come true.

Wunsch & Begehr GmbH is behind Schnupperwunsch (literally “taster wish”), and has been fulfilling customer wishes of all kinds since 2003. The Schnupperwunsch recipient calls the telephone number printed on his or her gift card, and lets the company do the work to fulfill the wish. This is a “radical individualization in customer relationship management,” according to Wunsch & Begehr, which is achieving a completely new and emotional form of customer retention.

It is also an efficient use of Wunsch & Begehr’s marketing resources. They are revolutionizing classical one-way marketing with a combination of seemingly contradictory approaches: a universal but simultaneously individual approach to service. The company client that offers the gift card (as well as the recipient of the Schnupperwunsch certificate) has an individually tailored product, yet Wunsch & Begehr does not need to identify the wishes of its customers to market their appeal.

There is theoretically no limit to the fulfillment of a wish that is jointly organized by Wunsch & Begehr. They fulfill wishes on behalf of clients like VANITY FAIR, PAYBACK and HVB Wealth Management. The Wunsch & Begehr team organizes, researches, and arranges the widest possible range of products and services in the name of these companies and their brands – to be fulfilled on a fully individual basis by those lucky enough to receive a Schnupperwunsch.

AGENT CS GmbH

Day to day convenience that once only the rich could afford

Agent CS is a “personal assistance service.” CS stands for convenience service or concierge service. The company will meet everyday shopping and other needs, but also carries out extraordinary tasks for its customers, including the provision of concierge and butler services.

Customers are able to reduce stress, as well as free-up time spent on things they find disagreeable. The Agent CS team currently processes over 2,500 individual tasks for its customers. There are flexible and mobile employees available to their customers at all times, for general and more unique tasks.

The Agent CS GmbH not only offers the performance of individual services: the utilization possibilities of the company Agent CS can also be selected at will. A selection of five “subscriptions” offered which are oriented towards different types of customers and an additional “non-subscription utilization” is also possible via the telephone service “Agent CS by call”. Persons who have taken out an individual subscription suffer less from stress and the occupation with disagreeable things and can be generally more relaxed. The individual solutions offered by Agent CS offer support for the efficient accomplishment of numerous everyday tasks and therefore provide the customer with more time for himself.

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selve AG

Unique, fashionable shoes are almost every woman’s dream

“The tailor made” shoes by selve find a balance between the traditional craft of shoemaking, in which a personal shoe last is created by the shoemaker, and conventional options available “off-the-shelf.” The company has developed its own individual measurement and size system to create these individualized shoe offerings. Shoes come in 40 different sizes and widths at selve, with up to 70 different color and material variations.

The customer coming to selve’s Munich shop will find that both feet are measured with the aid of a foot scanner, and the measurements compared with the selve shoe last library. The company’s software recommends the appropriate shoe size and width, which is important because most customers find their feet are somewhat different sizes. selve stocks basic models in all sizes and widths to permit a subjective experience of the shoe size combination recommended from the fitting. Once satisfied, customers can select leather types, colors, heels and soles to produce their own individual shoe design. In addition to being ordered after personal assistance at the store, shoes also can be designed and ordered via the selve homepage.

The company will shortly offer an even greater degree of individuality. It is producing individual shoe lasts for the first time. Further, the product range will be extended to include matching handbags and men’s shoes.

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RoomDoctor Ltd. & CO. KG

First aid for the home by interior design consultants

The RoomDoctor offers an individual interior design consultancy service for home or office that is booked online via an internet platform, and subsequently developed locally by professional architects and interior designers.

The RoomDoctor works completely independent of furniture stores, or other firms selling decorating items. Responding to conditions defined in the booking, the local RoomDoctor pays a visit to the rooms in need of treatment, examines the “patient,” makes a diagnosis, and presents the customer with a “prescription” for the swift remedy of troublesome symptoms.

Through clearly defined services packages, the RoomDoctor is able to offer professional interior design services for a wide target of customers. For some, the internet software greatly lowers the inhibition threshold of contacting an “expensive” interior designer. Further, the RoomDoctor’s services are not limited to an initial consultation. They are available to the customer as architect/interior designers who can follow construction phases, or consider multiple needs over time.

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HYVE AG – The Innovation Company

Customized innovation created with customers

HYVE AG involves customers in the innovation process as active co-creators rather than passive service receivers. The company also has a multi-faceted view of the customer: they are seen not just as consumers or users, but also as creative designers, innovators, testers, requirement and knowledge carriers, consultants, and partners. In short, customers are an insatiable source of new, inventive possibilities.

HYVE works closely with nationally and internationally renowned academic institutions to provide these resources to client companies interested in open innovation, marketing communities, and online research. The internet provides ideal conditions for cooperation, permitting the innovative power of user communities to be created and tapped with the aid of intelligent web-based processes and tools.

One of the foundations of HYVE’s innovation is the link they have forged between research and practical experience. New methods are tested and validated with HYVE contacts, then transferred to a practical level. The company also is unique in its experience with open innovation, industrial design, and web-based IT solutions. The combination of these competence areas makes HYVE AG an ideal partner for customer-centered innovations.

Dr. Johann Fullr – CEO of the HYVE AG

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**mi adidas**

**Individualized experience**

In 2001, adidas initiated its project mi adidas which offers its customers a unique purchasing and configuration experience, resulting in the production of individually fitted sports shoes.

Customers are able to purchase individualized shoes in special retail stores and at selected events. This permits the customer to create a unique shoe in a combination of the three factors: fitting, function, and design. These shoes are offered at a price approximately a third more expensive than mass produced shoes.

The personalization process at mi adidas is staged as an individual service experience, which leads the customer to his or her desired shoe design. This process begins with the measurement of the customer's feet with a foot scanner to determine the exact size, width, and pressure distribution of each foot. Then the customer discusses the scan results with a trained expert. Trial shoes are available to try on in all stores. The sales person then enters the selected combination of fitting characteristics into the computer. Once the customer data have been stored, it is theoretically possible to make subsequent orders via internet, call center, or in a retail store.

Through the now globally available configuration service mi adidas, the company receives continuous information on its customers and their experiences and wishes.

**Webasto AG**

**“Feel the drive” – Webasto delivers customer-specific solutions to auto makers**

Webasto AG is one of the largest manufacturers of retractable roofs and auxiliary heating for the automobile industry worldwide. It also stands out for the high level of its innovation, as well as comfort of its product range. The family-owned supplier has around 6,200 employees worldwide. In addition to production sites in Germany, the company has 56 production plants in England, Holland, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, China, Japan, Korea, the USA, and other countries.

Webasto’s core competencies involve the development and manufacture of complete roof modules, retractor and open-topped roof systems, heating systems for automobiles (park heating and auxiliary heaters), and heating, cooling and ventilation systems for trucks, buses, camper vans, boats, and special vehicles. Automobile roof systems include folding roofs, glass retractable roofs – with and without solar cells – and roofs for open-topped vehicles. Park heating systems are available for almost all automobile and truck models.

The company originated with the manufacture of bicycle parts and domestic appliances. The first retractable automobile roofs were produced in the 1930s. In the 1950s auxiliary heating systems were added to the company’s production range. Today their above-average R&D expenditures contribute to creative, customer-specific solutions. Webasto is considered one of the most innovative partners in the automotive industry.