



Wilkem Scientific Continues to Boost their Competitive Advantages through the InnoSpecting Framework™

Continuing to leverage Ever Evolving's custom tools, tips, and techniques keeps the company ahead of competitors seeking to dethrone them.

Wilkem Scientific

Wilkem Scientific is a distributor of scientific equipment, supplies, chemicals, safety supplies and laboratory furniture. Based out of Rhode Island, Wilkem Scientific represents many of the World's leading manufacturers of products for the Scientific Industry.

Ever Evolving, Inc.

Ever Evolving, Inc. helps companies realize more value from their innovation investments through a standardized framework, and copyrighted sets of tools and templates. As the creators of the InnoSpecting Framework™, they coach their partner clients through the *Capture-REFINE-Retire*™ process, providing their partners with a consistent means of taking new ideas from conception to completion.

Introduction

Wilkem Scientific is a company that has been in business for over three decades. In a field where sales margins are razor-thin, Wilkem is always on the lookout for a competitive advantage. Early on,

that competitive advantage was based around technology.

In the 1980's, they invested in a custom enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. They were one of their first in their industry to marry world-class customer service with data-driven insights. Founder Jim Wilkie Sr. elaborates, "we built the original system to better respond to our clients on both sides of our pipeline. We needed to be able to tell our manufacturers how much of their product we could move. And we thought that we would be able to use our customer's historical orders to better serve them with anticipated reordering, as well as enticing them with new sales."

The next leap forward happened in the late 1990's when Wilkem saw the potential disruptive capabilities the internet was providing companies. Again, they were one of the first in their industry to build a web portal. At first, the portal was a means to make it easier for a potential customer to be able to contact their sales staff. Then, they slowly expanded its capabilities to display their current product lines before finally allowing their customers



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to submit and review orders directly through the internet. But, with the pace of technology quickening, it was getting more difficult to keep their competitors at bay.

The Challenge

Wilkem began to get squeezed from a couple different angles in the early months of 2010. Mr. Wilkie continues, “what we did was we married our sales and reporting processes to a couple specific technologies. And when those system began to age, what once gave us an advantage over our competition, was now beginning to act like an anchor.”

New competitors were beginning to pop up all over the place. Without the burden of past investments, these new challengers were able to quickly generate leads and gain business insights. Contrast that to established players like Wilkem, who had the industry connections, but customer expectations and technology investments from yesteryear were forcing their staff to perform herculean tasks just to keep pace.

“What we learned was that our corporate innovation could no longer just rely on the next technology wave to come again in 10 years, but we needed a way to continuously evaluate new tools and be able to marry them with our customer service model, which is the backbone of our continued success,” Wilkie explains.

Having been in business for over three decades, Wilkie knew there had to be a better way. They just weren’t sure how to get there.

Solution

Wilkem knew that their next move would need to be forward facing. Their solution could and not just be technology-focused, but must also strategically address their corporate, customer, and industry pain points. They turned to Ever Evolving, who helped them with the implementation of the *InnoSpecting Framework*.™

Action

The *InnoSpecting Framework*,™ and its supporting tool suite, fundamentally shifts a company’s approach to innovation. The three-phase process starts with an open and honest communication strategy where the goals and purpose of the effort are clearly identified. In the case of Wilkem, they were looking to reduce their overhead efforts and find efficiencies, while continuing to exceed the expectations of the manufacturers and customers.

Using that as a baseline, and with the support of the Ever Evolving team, they consulted their staff to elicit their first set of organizational objectives. At the conclusion of the first Phase, the *Capture Phase*, it was identified that they needed a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution that could handle the pick, pack, and ship requirements of their warehouse staff, provide the proper reporting for their accounting staff, and generate better leads and be accessible to their increasingly mobile sales staff.



During the second phase, known as the *REFINE™ Phase*, organizations prototype a variety of solutions designed to address their highest-priority needs, and implement those solutions that show the greatest promise. For Wilkem, this meant addressing their aging ERP system. Their team began experimenting with a variety of 3rd party SaaS ERP providers that could handle their various requirements.

The Wilkem pilot group headed, by Jim Wilkie, Jr. sampled a variety of products that supported their high-priority requirements. Using tools designed by Ever Evolving to evaluate the various solutions, the team settled on CentralBOS ERP®, a real-time business management software created by CentralBOS LLC.

The Wilkem team then explored a variety of methods to procure the product of choice. In this case, to free up cash for other initiatives, it made sense for the Wilkem Team to finance the purchase of CentralBOS through monthly payments.

While there were a variety of financing options, Co-founder of Ever Evolving Steve Palmer explains that the important thing during this stage is to ensure the effort is fully financed. Palmer continues, “[p]artially funding an idea is a great way to waste money. Through the implementation of our process, ample opportunities are provided for an organization’s staff to provide honest feedback to the Executive leadership about the level of commitment it will take to execute. The last thing an executive wants to do then is undercut what their staff is telling them.”

Once the purchase was complete, Wilkem simultaneously began implementing the solution while training the staff. During Implementation, they hired an outside consultant to transition their data from their old ERP and web-portal and upload it into the new tool. Wilkie Jr. explains this move by noting that “[they] have no desires to grow expertise in data science at this time. We are a distribution company. And with good data being the foundation of a successful implementation, we found it best to spot hire for this one-time effort.”

While that was on-going, Wilkem leadership began working with CentralBOS to train their staff and began the tool's new capabilities. Focusing particularly on how it would improve their daily work activities. Once the transition of data and employee training was complete, they then methodically rolled out company wide.

After everyone was on the new platform, the old 1980's ERP system was Retired, fulfilling the final Phase of the *InnoSpecting Framework*.™ "It was almost bittersweet turning off our old ERP. That system was one of the main reasons we were so successful. It helped us buy our house and raise a family. But the new CentralBOS platform provides us with so many exciting opportunities for expansion. In the end, the decision was an easy one," according to Wilkie, Sr.

Results

The early results of the approach are encouraging. Within 90 days, the sales and accounting staff have seen their traditional work reduced by over 35%. They have now been able to redirect their efforts, once reserved for "busy-work," towards money generating activities. While are already leading to more warm sales leads.

Jim Wilkie Jr., who is Wilkem's *InnoSpecting Champion*™ and oversaw the implementation of the CentralBOS product clarifies, "we use to have to guess at what our customers needed. It was an educated guess, because we had been working with some of them for over two decades. Now, we are calling people because our data is telling us that it's time for them to reorder."

As a result, Wilkem is no longer getting squeezed by an outdated business model. They have modernized a vital part of their business and have other ideas in their pipeline for how to continue to innovate. Wilkie, Jr. continues, "[t]he implementation of CentralBOS ERP was only the first step. It was a strategic first step, because it opens up other efforts for us. And we will continue using the *InnoSpecting*

Framework™ to identify where our processes and technologies can be improved, rank those ideas based on biggest corporate impact, and then execute the ones that have the greatest potential."

Statistics

Wilkem Scientific purchased Ever Evolving's *Reinvention Package*, where the Ever Evolving staff provided support throughout a one year period. Our staff worked side by side with Wilkem to guide them through tailoring their implementation of the *InnoSpecting Framework*™ to ensure alignment with how they did business. We coached them on how to get the most value out of the *InnoSpecting Framework Management Tool*©, as well as a variety of other tools and template the team provides.

At the conclusion of the one-year period, the Wilkem team was in a position to continue using the Ever Evolving tools and techniques without any guidance. Palmer adds, "we feel that the continued consultancy business model isn't the best for our partners because businesses and outside consultants have fundamentally different interests over longer periods of time. Spot hiring, as Wilkem did for the data cleanse, is one thing, but if our partners need support over longer periods then our recommendation is that they hire to address those needs. What we aim to do is make our partners self-sufficient by coaching them on how to employ our templates, tools, and techniques, and then leave them behind so that they our parents can continue to use them long after our contract ends."

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