

case 1-429-332
April 1, 2013

Hydraid: Safe Water for the Base of the Pyramid

“Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”

—Genesis 1:20

Christina Keller, Business Unit Leader for Triple Quest, was preparing for the board meeting in one week during which she would present the 2013 sales and income forecast for Triple Quest and its Hydraid® BioSand Water Filter. Organizationally, Cascade Engineering (Triple Quest’s parent company) and Triple Quest had participated in socially responsible programs since Keller’s father, Fred Keller, founded Cascade in 1973. Reaching break-even had been a struggle for Triple Quest, and now the company’s future hung in the balance. The organization’s passion for social responsibility was not improving the company’s bottom line. While company leaders wanted Triple Quest to be a leader in providing populations in developing economies with lifesaving access to clean water, at the end of the day, the company had to cover operating costs, or the Hydraid would be discontinued. The ultimate challenge for Triple Quest was to find a viable funding model to make the company sustainable, secure a reliable supply chain, and get populations in the Base of the Pyramid (BoP) that often did not see lack of clean water as a priority, buying and using the Hydraid.

Keller found herself contemplating a number of questions as she prepared for her board presentation: Should Triple Quest pursue a for-profit model? Or should it continue with a non-profit model under which an elaborate network of corporations and foundations would donate Hydraid filters to impoverished third world communities? Should the company focus its attention on one region of the world, such as Ghana, to evaluate what the best business model is for Hydraid, and then expand? How have others successfully marketed to the BoP consumer? Each decision would impact Triple Quest’s short- and long-term viability and investor support, as well the sustainability of the company and its Hydraid filter as a clean water solution for impoverished parts of the globe.



The Global Water Crisis

Water is an essential resource for life and good health. Yet, one in three people around the world lacked enough clean water to meet their daily needs.¹ Globally, the problem was getting worse as cities and populations grew, and the need for water



© 2013 William Davidson Institute. Published by GlobalLens, a division of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.

This case was developed under the supervision of Paul A. Mudde, Associate Professor of Management, at Grand Valley State University by graduate students Eric Grossnickle, Douglas Huesdash, and Yvette Iyiguhaye as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either the effective or ineffective handling of a situation.