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ClothingCo Redesigning the Sleepwear Business (B)

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ABSTRACT

This case is a continuation of *ClothingCo: Redesigning the Sleepwear Business (A)*.

Upon completing the appropriate market research, Blake Johnson was certain that ClothingCo's holiday sleepwear line was in need of a drastic redesign. He also knew that CEO Sarah Pintor did not agree with the research results and that she might not support his recommendations. How could Johnson get buy-in from top management for his new vision?

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ClothingCo: March 2008

THE MARKET RESEARCH RESULTS

After viewing the market research reports as well as the results of the focus groups, it was clear to Blake Johnson that for the 2008 holiday season, ClothingCo needed to offer a multipurpose sleep/lounge assortment without a holiday theme. To build the case for this new direction, Johnson knew that he would have to gather additional information on the 18- to 35-year-old segment who appeared to be the trendsetters in the multipurpose category.

BUILDING THE CASE FOR THE MULTIPURPOSE SLEEP/LOUNGE LINE

Johnson assigned one group of team members to focus on the competitive environment. This group was asked to gather information on the sleep/lounge assortment that on-trend players had begun to develop. Johnson wanted to see how ClothingCo could use this opportunity to differentiate itself from competitors without losing its brand identity. The second group of team members focused on gathering data on the 18- to 35-year-old customer segment. Specifically, they were asked to conduct a series of in-home interviews with 18- to 35-year-olds to understand the clothing which that group slept in and their purchasing habits, as well as to develop an understanding of how this segment thought about sleepwear. The third group of team members worked primarily with Johnson to gain insight about the dynamics within ClothingCo that could stymie the development of a multipurpose sleep/lounge line.

The results of these efforts were astonishing. First, the team examining the competitive environment had conducted sufficient due diligence to lead them to believe that department stores, mass retailers, and many specialty players would not deviate from the customary holiday sleepwear assortment. This presented a unique opportunity for ClothingCo to be a first mover into the multipurpose sleep/lounge space among the large-scale retailers.

Second, Johnson learned that the 18- to 35-year-old segment (whom he began to refer to as the “new guard”) conceptualized sleepwear in an unconventional manner. Rather than compartmentalizing clothing into categories such as work, sleep, lounge, and evening wear, this group had a more fluid perspective on clothing. In essence, the traditional lace tank top, leggings, or silk top that were once worn solely for sleeping were now being used in a more versatile manner and worn across different occasions throughout the day. In fact, he learned that the term “sleepwear” itself was antiquated and associated with the “old guard,” that is, the 35+ segment who were more rigid in their conceptualization of sleepwear.

THE MEETING WITH SARAH PINTOR

Johnson mentioned this in passing to CEO Sarah Pintor, who had unexpectedly dropped by his office. Pintor, a self-proclaimed “old guard,” revealed that she did not believe in this paradigm shift one bit. She used her own daughters and female members of ClothingCo as evidence and noted that “be they summer interns or those over the age of 22, we do not see young women prancing around the office wearing clothing that should be reserved for the bedroom.”

It was only one week until the next senior leadership team meeting in which Johnson was to present his vision for ClothingCo's 2008 holiday sleepwear line. He knew that he would need to get Pintor on board before this meeting, but he was unsure of the best approach to get buy-in for his vision.

Discussion Questions

1. What should Johnson do and say in his meeting with his CEO, Pintor?
2. What approach should Johnson take to convince Pintor and the senior leadership team to launch the multipurpose sleep/lounge line for the 2008 holiday season?