



Van Houtte Café

COMM 388 | D.Studio

John Lu
Winnie Sun

Rushab Haria
Bryan Michaleski
Ben Chen

Introduction

Recap of Design Brief

After visiting the Van Houtte office in Coquitlam, our team decided that we should focus on external factors in this business to decrease the carbon footprint of this company. We have identified an opportunity that Van Houtte has as a B2B company that has regular contacts with its clients. Due to the nature of its business, Van Houtte sends drivers to each client on a weekly to monthly basis, depending on their size. This means that they can be influential to the clients they visit. Our team plans to maximize this business relationship in order to achieve our goal.

Goal

Our goal is to reduce the carbon footprint of Van Houtte's clients (and by extension, the Van Houtte business) while adding value to this company. The ideas we propose will add value to Van Houtte's brand by making other businesses perceive them as an environmentally friendly company.

There are several benefits in achieving our goal. First, it would promote Van Houtte as a green company to other businesses, including its existing clients and potential clients. This will add value to its brand. This will also benefit the partnership that Van Houtte has with Climate Smart. As Van Houtte's reputation as a sustainable company grows, it can help promote Climate Smart's mission to reduce the carbon footprint of businesses in Vancouver. Finally, achieving our goal will help spread the sustainability movement. Spreading sustainability initiatives to Van Houtte's customers will help it spread to other businesses as well.

In order to achieve our goal, we have used the ASK. TRY. DO process.

ASK

Purpose:

To find opportunities to increase Van Houtte's engagement with their customers on green initiatives. We want to find out whether this can be achieved through daily interactions between Van Houtte deliverymen and its clients.

Hypothesis:

A good relationship exists between Van Houtte's truck drivers and its clients. This relationship can be leveraged to spread Van Houttes green initiatives.

Assumption Dumption:

	Assumption	Dumption
1	Van Houtte would eventually benefit from their clients' more sustainable behaviour whether they are measurable or not.	We talked to Morten, and he has developed a passion for green initiatives beyond what would be measurably beneficial for Van Houtte.
2	Van Houtte is almost as green as possible.	Spend day with a driver
3	Drivers have enough time to interact with the client.	Spend day with a driver
4	Drivers' "green" interests are aligned with Morten's.	Spend day with a driver
5	Companies are not doing anything to become green, but are open minded.	Even if the companies are doing something green, they would want to continuously reduce their carbon footprint as demonstrated by Van Houtte.

TRY

Purpose:

To test the hypothesis by trying various methods of observations alongside an evaluation criteria.

Method:

To conduct primary research by following 2 drivers for a day on separate occasions. The methods of observation included filming and note-taking.

The note-taking was aimed around the following evaluation criteria:

Evaluation Criteria for Observations:

Questions for the drivers:

1. What is your typical day like?
2. How long are your visits to companies?
3. What do you do when you go into an office?
4. What are the different types of jobs when you go into the various clients.
5. Do they stay on the same route for many years?
6. How much do you know about Van Houtte's green initiatives?
7. Do they have green habits in their personal lives?

Questions for the clients:

1. What is your company's thoughts on sustainability?
2. What are you guys doing so far for being green?
3. Who uses the coffee machine? traffic?

Things we looked for:

1. How friendly are the interactions?
2. Who do they interact with? How long?
3. How well, How long have they know each other?
4. The depth of the conversations?

Observation:

During the time we spent with our drivers, Darrell and Paul, we found out that they both had a great relationship with their customers. After all, they have been working with Van Houtte for over 20 years combined, and have been serving the same customers year after year. Both of these drivers also know a lot of the green initiatives that has been implemented at Van Houtte. In fact, Morten's enthusiasm for sustainability has evidently affected his staff, like Darrell and Paul. They have actively made sustainability a part of their daily lives, such

as using propane gas, not idling their vehicles, using frozen ice packs in the van instead of a fridge, and taking their vans home.

More importantly, we have observed that the drivers have an ability to influence their clients to take sustainability initiatives. One of Van Houtte's clients has created a sustainability committee in her whole office building and actively helps Darrell with recycling plastic and cardboard in the building. We feel that this is a breakthrough for our group. If we can get Van Houtte's deliverymen such as Darrell and Paul to influence other people to take green initiatives, we can create other "Mortens" in other companies as well.

DO

Purpose:

Since the hypothesis was confirmed, the "Do" process was intended to find ways to utilize the observed business relationships to expand the green initiative of VanHoutte to their respective clients. In order to do this, we would like to implement a 3-tier strategy:

1. Introducing to current clients the idea of sustainability through Van Houtte Branded perks (coffee mugs and "What goes in this trash bin" posters), utilizing the drivers as Point of Sales.
2. Encourage the formation of "green" committees in client's offices on a section of Van Houtte's website dedicated to green initiatives and offer a hassle-free "starter kit".
3. Support "green committees" by facilitating collaboration through Brunch series and offering Van Houtte and Climate Smart's expertise.

Objective 1: Generate interest about sustainability to Van Houtte's clients and establish the connection of sustainability to Van Houtte.

Tactic 1A: Create a new line of sustainability mugs and have the drivers distribute them to current clients.

Techniques used: A crucial component of this tactic is the relationship the drivers have with each client. To test our assumption, we conducted a field study using the ASK. TRY. DO. process by shadowing two of Van Houtte's drivers in two different areas. We had the chance to observe the drivers' interaction with employees at the office. We also gained valuable insights from Paul and Darrell about the different aspects of their job by interviewing them.

From our research, we found that not only do the drivers have a great relationship with the key operators at each office, they can also influence decisions made in offices. The drivers have excellent rapport with the key operators in each office. They have very trusting and friendly relationship. They would also give away small gift packages with Van Houtte-labelled coffee mugs to a few employees. Often, they know who the decision makers are in the office.

Beyond driving the trucks, they are also sales people and customer relationship reps. Because they are responsible for regular maintenance of the machines, they noticed the habits of the coffee drinkers in each office, and are in the best position to suggest new services that will be suitable for each client. From suggesting new machines for the offices to new blends of coffees, they are well trained in communication with different type of people. We have concluded that they were a viable channel of communication.

To come up with ideas of what means of communication we should use, we asked ourselves the specific question of “HOW MIGHT WE...” We asked questions such as:

- “How might we attract attention from employees?”
- “How might we reach a large number of employees from every level of corporate hierarchy?”
- “How might we make a call to action without being aggressive?”

One of the challenges Van Houtte faces is that as a coffee provider, they do not have the credibility to preach sustainability to their clients.

Our solution: Create a line a sustainability mugs that will extend drivers’ scope of influence. Through our observations, most offices have mugs in the kitchen that everyone shares. These mugs given to offices as gifts would be added to that collection. These mugs will include Van Houtte logo, website, commitment to sustainability slogan and tips on being sustainable. They will serve three purposes:

1. Communicate that Van Houtte is committed to sustainability.
2. Remind employees to take the small steps to save the planet.
3. Call to action to take the green initiatives in their own company.

The mugs are a more sustainable and effective way to communicate our message than the conventional way of flyers or brochures printed on paper. Firstly, the message printed on them last longer. Employees get repeat exposure to the message and Van Houtte logo every time they drink coffee. Secondly, the mugs would reach anyone who drinks coffee, from the administrative assistant to CEO, which could facilitate initiatives being implemented. Finally, offering coffee mugs as a gift to offices is in-line with their current business practice and is not an overly aggressive way of spreading the message.

Tactic 1B: Posters above recycling bins and garbage cans

Techniques used: Co-creation with the drivers. While we were shadowing Paul, one of the drivers, he spoke of a disappointing behaviour that he noticed in offices. People do not always know what kind of garbage goes in which bin. Even though they might have the intentions to recycle, when they are standing in front of four similar bins, they do not spend the time to figure out which one is the right one. He suggested color-coding the different types of recycling bin to give

more clear directions to people. In his experience, people do not like to read, no matter how few the words; they simply disregard any instructions in writing.

Our solution: Put signs with images of the typical products someone in an office might want to throw away above the bins. Through our observations, most offices have at least 2 different kind of recycling. We want Van Houtte to take the opportunity to provide a simple and cheap tool that will get ride of a daily inconvenience for many people. The Van Houtte logo would be present on each sign and they would be offered to companies for free. We do not expect much resistance form client management since it is completely free and could only change the behavior of people for the better by facilitating the decision process employees go through before throwing away their trash.

Objective 2: Encourage and facilitate the formation of “green committees” in client offices.

Tactic 2A: Improve Van Houtte Website.

Techniques used: Concept Mapping. To quickly generate layout to try and fail fast to see which one would work best. Organize the content that would go in it. Sketching layouts and then prototyping on the computer.

Our solution: create a separate section devoted to sustainability. The new page would be easy to access through the home page of the company’s website. It would include:

- The initiatives Van Houtte has already taken
- Resources for people who wish to know more about sustainability and personal tips
- A Starter-kit available for free download for individual who wish to start green committees in their company (see below)

Tactic 2B: Sustainability Starter-kit.

Techniques used: We conducted Ethnography Interviews with Van Houtte’s clients. We have spoken to people who hold different functions, from green committees representatives to administrative assistants. Their experiences helped us establish criteria for green initiatives:

- Easy to implement – initiatives work best in small incremental changes. They cannot be an extra burden on anyone else’s existing job.
- Cheap – The cheaper they are the more people welcome them
- Small chance of resistance from higher management – Most green initiatives are taken by employees on a lower level and scaled up. Management often do not have the time to implement measures.

We also found out that most companies are keen to be greener, but are unaware of ways to do so beyond recycling.

In addition, the Van Houtte drivers gave us valuable insights. In their opinion, the most successful and efficient green initiatives are lead by a committee (internal or external) of small number of passionate people.

Our solution: Offer a simple tool paired with quick implementation plan that will make it easy for sustainability enthusiasts to start a green committee and persuade others to join them.

Objective 3: Provide Support to newly formed “Green Committees”

Tactic 3A: Sustainability Brunch Series.

Techniques used: We used Role-Play to create the scenario in which someone who is interested in sustainability, who has followed the starter-kit and had created a green committee who wants to learn more. During the conversation, the person playing Morten invited the employee to tour Van Houtte office.

From that interaction, we got the idea that Van Houtte could hold regular session to inform their clients of their green initiatives. Through an interview with the drivers, we also found out that Morten had visited the office of Hemlock, a printing company to gain ideas for sustainable initiatives.

Our solution: Host a Sustainability Brunch Series to stay with the non-boardroom corporate culture of Van Houtte. Assuming that there are other people in other companies who are as passionate about sustainability as Morten. A different company could host the brunch on a monthly basis. Creating a community of people who help each other and collaborate on becoming more green. Because each host would invite their partners, it also becomes a great networking opportunity for people with a commitment to the environment.

Tactic 2: Climate Smart Training

Techniques used: Co-creation with Morten.

Our solution: Van Houtte can invite its clients to participate in the Climate Smart training. This will help improve customer relationships and increase education about sustainability.

Conclusions

Our hypothesis is confirmed: there exists a significant business relationship between the product delivery drivers and their respective clients. This relationship can be utilized to encourage clients to take green initiatives.

Areas For Further Research

One area for further research is the use of propane injection on delivery vans. Propane injection uses propane vapor in diesel engines in order to help fully burn the wasted fuel. It acts like a catalyst with the diesel to help burn the fuel completely. This creates a cleaner burning engine. Currently, Van Houtte uses partly propane-injected engines, however a possible way to further greenify the delivery process would be to use fully-propane injected trucks.

The proposed benefits could include:

- Easy installation and maintenance.
- Cleaner burning fuel.
- Better fuel economy.

Reflections

Reflection of Strategic Design Process: ASK. TRY. DO.

The strategic design process was a new process that our team had not encountered before. Prior to learning about this processes, most of our idea generating came from brainstorming and observations. With the ASK. TRY. DO. process, we were able to come up with many more great ideas than the traditional brainstorming sessions. In addition, we really appreciated the prototyping stage. This allowed us to come up with potential ideas, and test them out before suggesting a solution. During the course of our project, we considered and scrapped many ideas. Overall, this process was effective in helping us come up with innovative business ideas.

Reflection on Learning About Sustainable/Responsible Business.

Coming into this project, nobody really had any ideas about the use of sustainability in businesses. Therefore, this project has been an eye-opening experience for all of us. We now appreciate how sustainability can be in fact a value to a company rather than a cost. In addition, our interactions with Morten has left us inspired about creating sustainability in the business world.