

Looking Through a Different Lens to Solve Problems



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A jet pilot, a surgeon and a contractor walk into a bar ... or a commercial kitchen or a supermarket. While this may sound like an interesting set-up for a joke, it's actually an accurate description of a product ideation session that was recently held at The Helix Innovation Center.

There's no question that the current regulatory climate has placed renewed emphasis on product development, creating a sense of urgency around this effort unlike anything our industry has seen in recent history.

In this dynamic environment, it's easy to look toward new technologies as the only answer — and rightly so. But it's as important to solve the industry's challenges by maintaining a clear focus on the development of commercially viable solutions. Simply put, we need to have a

more complete understanding of how our customers will actually deploy, use and get real value from a proposed concept.

To accomplish this, we need to look outside of ourselves and peer through a different lens: through the eyes of the customers.

This means tapping into the breadth of our network of partners who can help us apply new toolsets, technologies and thought processes to our industry's current challenges. It means looking at other industries that may have already solved a similar problem — leak prevention and detection, for example. It means bringing a jet pilot, a surgeon and a contractor together to look at things from entirely different perspectives.

Our new Helix Innovation Center embodies this outward-looking, customer-first philosophy.

Partnerships with a number of top-tier universities and government agencies as well as neighboring resources — such as the University of Dayton and the Wright

Brothers Institute — have helped us build a strong foundation for our partner network. We're also seeing vast potential in online contributors and through industrial communities that share kindred challenges.

The model for this type of ideation is unique to our industry: first define the problem and then deploy as many (or more) opinions from outside our organization as there are on the inside.

By utilizing the real-world "playgrounds" at The Helix — our supermarket, commercial kitchen, residential home and data center — we're able to take new ideas, rapidly prototype them, and test their technical and commercial viability in days, even hours in some cases. Before we launch a solution into the market, we can verify its benefits to the industry, including: equipment performance, servicing requirements, and environmental and economic value.

So what's the punch-line to the above set-up? We hope you'll bring your biggest challenges to The Helix and find out for yourself: Emerson.com/TheHelix.

