

Airgas.com Experience Brief

The Experience Brief

So what is an Experience Brief?

An Experience Brief is a synthesis of discovery inputs to date, designed to help focus on the experiences that have the greatest impact on customers and potential customers that matter most to you. It summarizes what we know so far, which is an output of our Discovery phase. This brief helps to set up how we intend to tackle the future experience for Airgas.com.

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1.0 The Challenge

Retain and grow the customer base by making it easier to do business with Airgas online. Improve the ability to find and order products, expand account manage functionality, and provide a wider range of company information and product resources that engage existing customers and attract new ones.

2.0 What We Did

- 1) Spoke with 10 internal stakeholders and 5 customers
- 2) Created an affinity diagram to understand and determine insights gained from interviews
- 3) Performed a content audit
- 4) Synthesized the information

3.0 What We Heard

1. Searchability

Products are hard to find and search often returns no results.

“If it is just information I am trying to look for, I just go to a different source or website because the website is so deep and has so many layers that it goes into a black hole.”

2. Product Information

Product descriptions, images, availability and specifications are incomplete, tough to decipher and sometimes completely unavailable.

“Every customer says ‘Why can’t you be more like Grainger’. A lot of things that they have are better - search and availability, real time inventory, knowing when something is on backorder, better categories and relevant answers.” and has so many layers that it goes into a black hole.”

3. Industry Expertise

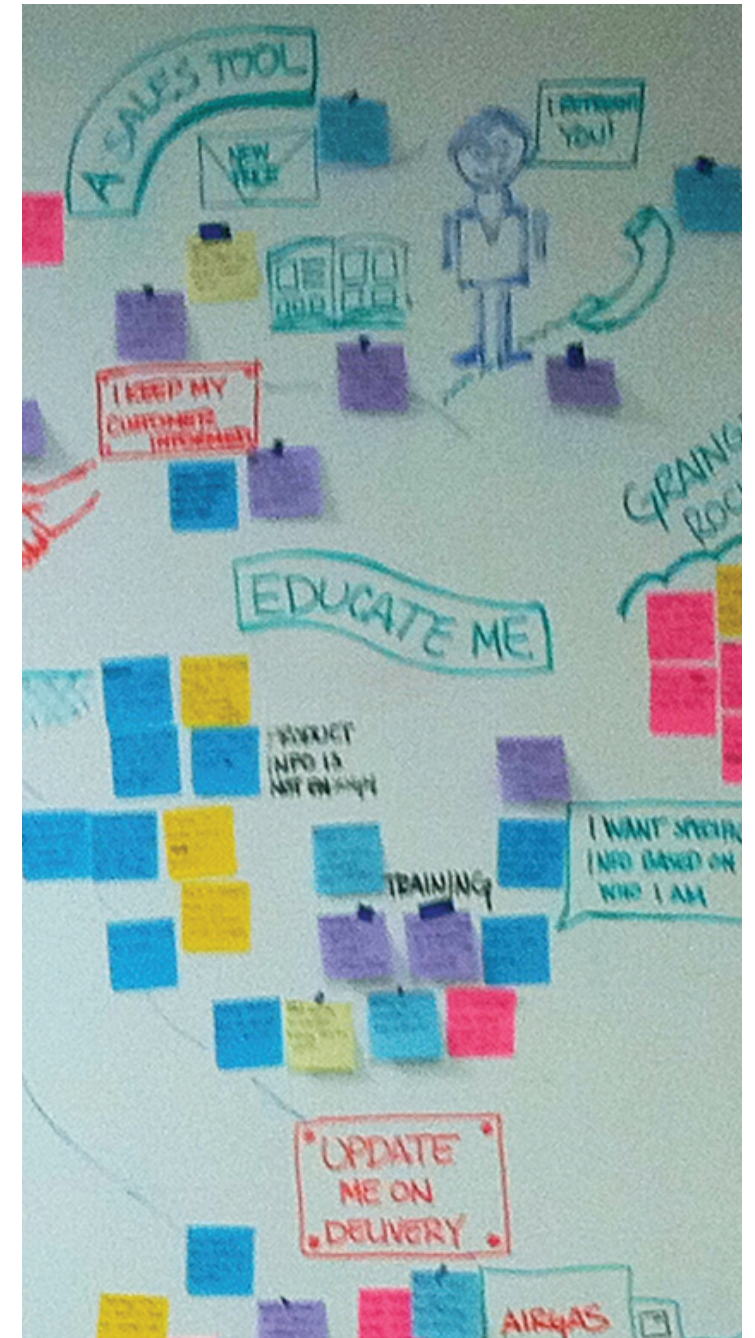
There is no industry expertise or industry forecasting available on the website.

“As a customer I would like to go to the airgas website and then go to industry news - the industry is expecting a shortage. Industry guidance would be really good.”

4. Segment Information

It is hard to find products and information based on industry segment.

“If I’m a scientist at a lab and need information on research-grade gases, there is no where for me to go in to find that information based on my industry or area.”



5. Sales Process

Most of the sales team rely on the paper catalogs and flyers to sell products.

“Grainger has stuff that is put on sale in the huge promo area. Airgas is limited with what we put on the website. We need a better way to market our products. Currently, we don’t integrate these into the website. Each segment has it’s own catalog hosted by a different vendor. Then it’s supposed to go back to the Airgas website so customers can buy stuff. But it doesn’t work like this.”

6. Proof of Delivery

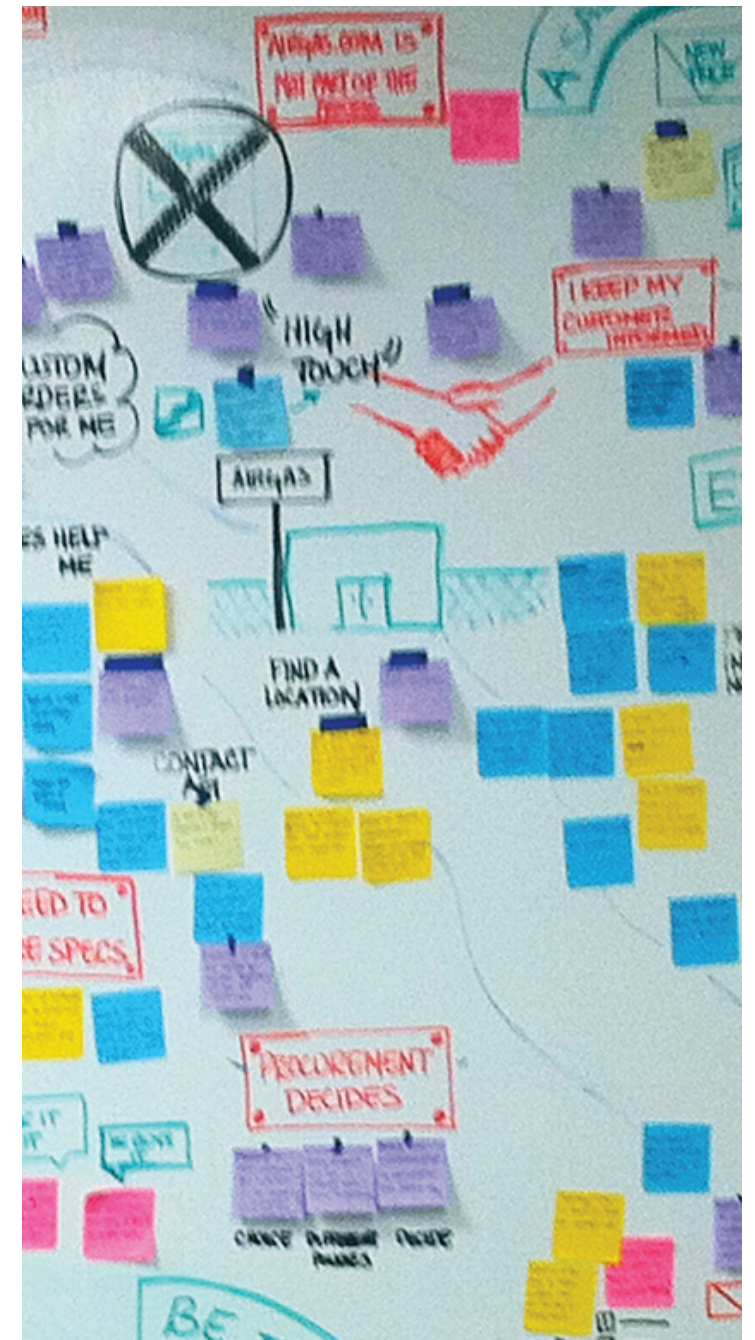
Proof of delivery is a constant customer request.

“We need to capture the proof of delivery digitally. This could resolve a lot of our billing issues and take a lot of burden off our credit and collection departments if this was available online.”

7. Order History

Order history needs to go back further in time.

“I need Order History to go back further in time, say like a year, to be able to make a purchase for my customers who only order every 6-8 months at a time.”



8. Reporting and Usage

Reporting and usage does not exist on the site.

“I need usage reports to be able to say how much nitrogen we bought within a specific period of time.”

9. Templates

Templates are useful, but not flexible enough.

“I want templates to be easy to set up on my own with the ability to adjust or add items to these templates if needed.”

10. Tracking

UPS or FED Ex tracking is not available.

“I want to be able to track where my orders are in the shipping process, like how Amazon does it.”



4.0 What We Found

1. The sales force does not consider the website an effective tool in their sales process.

"We walk customers through the website the way we want them to go through it."

"Our sales people avoid sending customers to the website on the onset. We set them up as customers first."

"We do not want customers to log in the first time without guidance."



2. Customers often lack the right information at the right time.

"I need to know when a product has/needs additional accessories."

"When customers want to buy something they want the tech specs."

"If they were out of stock with the brand I usually buy, I'd buy a different brand if it was shown."

"Manufacturers tend to write the product description in their own speak, which is fine for people working in the field every day. But if you're not, the abbreviations and content can be a little confusing."



3. Online customers do not receive the same “high-touch” Airgas service they receive through other channels.

“We don’t advertise a 1-800 number, so customers need to search for a location.”

“If I need help online, I call Judy.”

“We are high-service and high-touch with our customers.”

“I add notes to my online orders, but 75% of the time they don’t read it.”



4. Customers want more flexibility and functionality to manage their accounts effectively.

“I want to make a new template out of the templates I have.”

“I want the ability to pull-up a year’s worth of order history.”

“I need usage reports to show how much nitrogen I bought over a period of time.”

“If I receive a service record for the external tank, I’m not aware of it. Any of the [healthcare regulatory] agencies could ask me for that.”



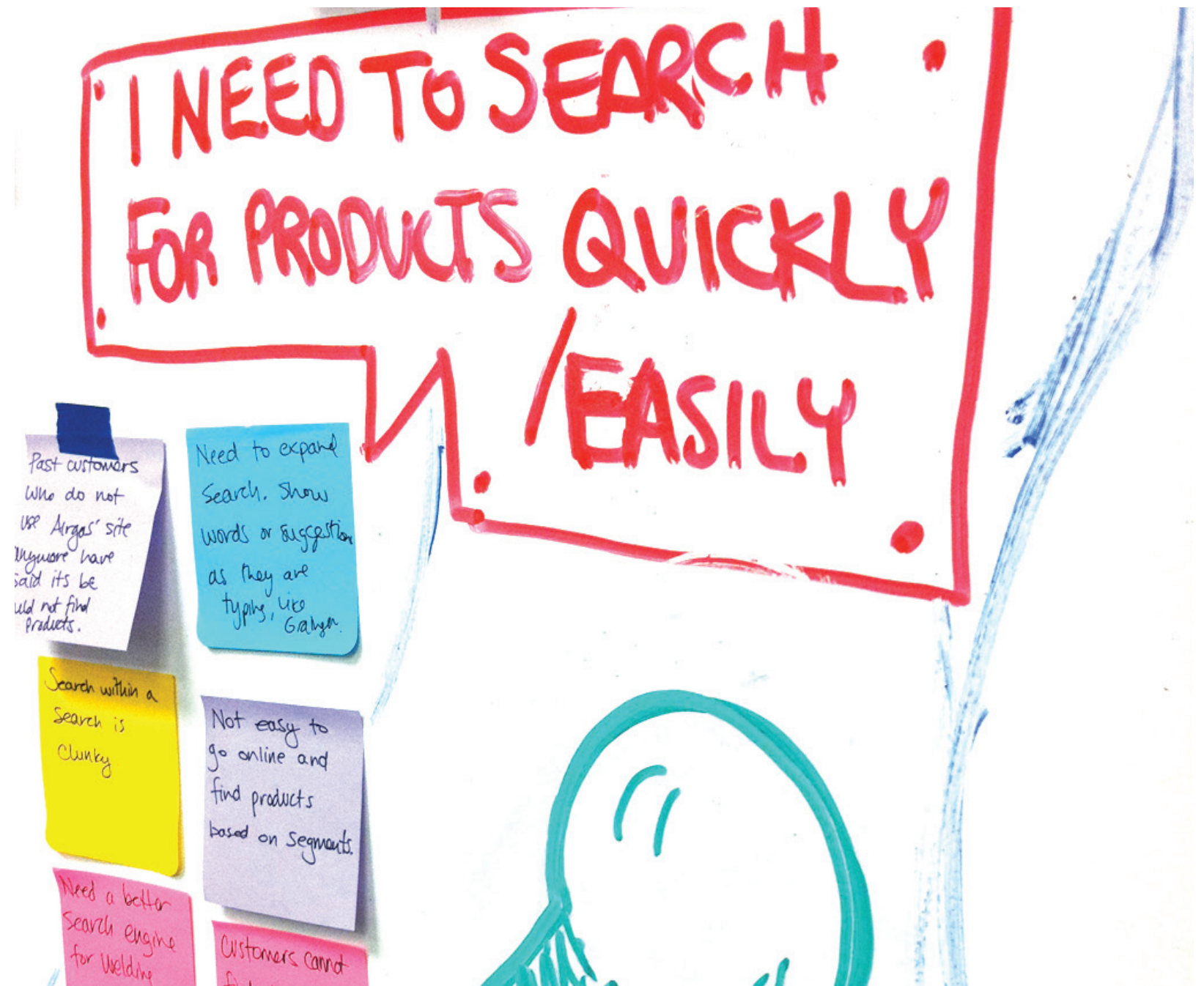
5. Search performance discourages customers from using the site.

"Past customers who do not use Airgas's site anymore have said it is because they could not find products."

"Search results are a mixed bag. You don't know if you will get a result."

"Search engine works differently on 'Express Orders'."

"When I'm looking for general information, I go to a different site."



6. Airgas's account set up process is inconsistent; making it difficult for customers to manage multiple accounts.

"Not all accounts are entered in the same way or with the same format."

"It's difficult to tell when you have switched accounts."

"Airgas sets up accounts. Customers cannot add additional accounts on their own."

"It seems like there should be some way to build orders for different accounts and submit them all at the same time—some way to avoid starting over each time you order for a new department."



7. Today, Airgas.com is designed for orders and account management only - neglecting other opportunities to attract new customers and serve existing ones.

“Need to guide a scientist at a lab to information on research-grade gases.”

“A piece of the site should speak to the procurement customers looking for how big is the company, their rank, and capabilities.”

“Website should be a great big information place, where I can get all the information I need.”



8. Customers are looking for Airgas to share their expertise through education and training.

“Training for safety and safe handling is necessary.”

“I would like an educational segment on gases—what they are used for, their composition. I understand there are experts who don’t need this information, but someone like me would find this very useful.”

“Setting up a template is very difficult.”



5.0 Personas

What is a persona?

A persona is a depiction of representative user for a given system or product. Personas bring the voice of the customer to life—summarizing typical behaviors, objectives, and expectations—and are a key reference point while planning each customer touch point.

Personas focus the design and development process on realizing users' goals as well as meeting business objectives. These representations ensure crucial decisions are not based solely on business-driven assumptions. And personas pay off.

Persona Roster

Through speaking with customers and internal stakeholders and developing insights, we have arrived at 4 high-level illustrative personas.



Martin - The Browser

Auto Repair Shop Owner

“I need to make the right choice fast, and I’ll go with the vendor who helps me do that.”



John - The Expert

Contract Manager

“I need to understand pricing ahead of time to help me bid jobs accurately.”



Nancy - The Buyer

Regional Office Mgr

“I need a little more functionality to help me run reports and find usage information required by my boss.”



James - The Sales Guy

Sales Team

“I need the website to act as an additional tool in my sales toolbox. I’m tired of carrying around catalogs all day.”

Martin Garcia - The Browser

Auto Repair Shop Owner (“DIY Customer”)

“I need to make the right choice fast, and I’ll go with the vendor who helps me do that.”

Primary Search Modes

- Explore
- Locate
- Compare
- Decide

PROFILE

Martin is a 35 year old auto repair shop owner. He has been in the business for 18 years and is excited to finally own his own shop and be his own boss. He often needs his products as soon as possible and searches for the best price out there to keep costs low for his customers.

Martin is loyal to specific manufacturers and brands, but not to Airgas. In fact, he has had difficulty finding what he needs in a hurry on Airgas.com and is he usually has to call for specific welding products and pricing.

Martin is a savvy web user who likes to compare vendor offerings before selecting, but is a poor speller.

REQUIREMENTS

- Martin must be able to search for a product with the manufacturer’s product number instead of Airgas’s as he may do research on the manufacturer’s website first.
- He likes to compare products
- Product availability is key and must be accurate
- Needs clear product images to verify accuracy
- Needs to know how quickly he will receive a product from the time of purchase to the time of delivery

GOALS

- Wants to make sure he can service his customer’s needs in a timely fashion
- Wants to find the right solution but definitely considers price
- Wants to plan ahead of time and be proactive about his future needs
- Wants to have the ability to reference “like” products, if the product he needs is not available



John Jones - The Expert

Contract Manager

“I need to know pricing ahead of time to help me bid for jobs accurately.”

Primary Search Modes

- Explore
- Evaluate
- Decide
- Share

PROFILE

John is a 42 year old contract manager for a large construction company. He has multichannel needs for his projects, everything from welding gas to safety products for his crew.

As a manager, John is expected to forecast the budget and future pricing for large developments 6-8 months ahead of time. He also needs the ability be able to choose the best products at the right price for the future project needs and budget concerns.

John looks to his vendors to provide expert forecasting information in order to help inform his bids.

REQUIREMENTS

- John needs to compare similar products to find the best pricing
- He should be able to search for products in a variety of ways
- He needs consistent interfaces and flows for similar paths so he can learn the interface once and focus on his task at hand
- John needs the ability to create new order lists for different jobs when ordering reoccurring items for his crew
- Looks for easy to read, complete gas and product descriptions, which help him to scan quickly through the information and make quick decisions

GOALS

- Wants to make sure to find the right product for the right solution
- Wants the ability to find forecasting information in order to do his job efficiently
- Wants to plan ahead of time and be proactive about his future needs
- Wants the ability to navigate sites quickly and easily to find what he's looking for



Nancy Roberts - The Buyer

Regional Office Manager

“I need a little more functionality to help me run reports and find usage information required by my boss.”

Primary Search Modes

- Evaluate
- Validate
- Locate
- Convert

PROFILE

Nancy is a 55 year old regional office manager for a large testing facility in Connecticut. She has a variety of duties, including weekly ordering for 200 customers. She relies heavily on proof of delivery in order to invoice each customer correctly and on time.

Nancy is not a product expert, and usually receives order requests via email, phone or fax. Most of her customer's orders are reoccurring, but on occasion, she will need to order something out of the ordinary. She is expected to check the requested products for price, approved vendors and availability and should make recommendations for a substitute if the requested products aren't available or do not match this criteria.

She is a savvy web user, but would like her Airgas experience to be more like her shopping experiences with Amazon and Staples.

REQUIREMENTS

- Receive system notifications about recurring orders instead of having to remember to place them weekly
- Add in new accounts to her profile as her company grows in size
- Create her own templates and adjust these if needed
- Get online help when she has a quick question instead of calling
- View related product options
- Product availability is critical so that she can plan ahead
- View signed delivery slips digitally in order to invoice correctly on time

GOALS

- Ability to order for her multiple locations all at once
- Ability to recommend alternative products if she knows a product is not available in the time needed
- Ability to report gas and product usage for a specific period of time
- Ability to update templates on her own without
- Ability to check on cylinder balances quickly and easily



James Czarkowsky - The Sales Guy

Regional Sales Team

“I need the website to support me and act as an additional tool in my sales toolbox. I’m tired of carrying around catalogs all day.”

Primary Search Modes

- Locate
- Share
- Demonstrate
- Convert

PROFILE

James is a 60 year old salesman who has been with Airgas for 20 years. He has established a solid client base and is always looking for techniques and tools to help with retention numbers, but also needs to develop new leads.

He usually makes contacts with his clients in the field, often on construction sites or in facilities. They don’t always have good access to web connectivity there, so he often carries the product catalogs around to help customers understand the breadth and depth of what Airgas has to offer, as well as showcase new products and offerings.

He wants to increase his use of the website during the selling process to demo new products, features and functions and teach his customers about more self-serving options. He has also been tasked with encouraging his customers to think in terms of overall solutions, rather than individual products.

REQUIREMENTS

- May benefit from pre-determined “scenarios” to demonstrate new site capabilities on site.
- Needs the ability to access client order history and invoicing to help determine new strategies
- Must be able to demonstrate how all products found in the catalog can also be found online
- Would like an easy way to set up new customers online
- Would like his customers to see contractual pricing online specific to products outside of their normal recurring purchases

GOALS

- Ability to use the website as a tool to attract new customers
- Ability to use the website’s functionality to help retain current customers
- Ability to show his customers all that Airgas has to offer, specific to various market segments
- Needs to be able to understand which products are acceptable alternatives for a specific product



6.0 Guiding Redesign Principles

1. Know the Customer

Understand the customers' business and how they work, and deliver the tools and optimized processes that help them get their work done.

2. Provide Simplicity

Remove those things that are extraneous to the task at hand. Do not give the customer something they didn't ask for.

3. Be Transparent

Use the interface to guide the user through a task or completing an action. Give feedback when information is input or submitted. Provide accessible help and use things like tool tips to provide contextual information.

4. Communicate Effectively

Communicate the benefit immediately and make sure it is tailored to the user. Deliver at the right time to ensure it is heard and not ignored.

5. Write for the Web

As the Web is different from print, it's necessary to adjust the writing style to users' preferences and browsing habits. Write pages that can be scanned easily and are quick to comprehend.

6. Use Human Language

Our language and taxonomy should not be overly complex, technical or buzz wordy. It should have a friendly tone to simplify way finding and tasks.

7. Don't Make Customers Think

The web-page should be obvious and self-explanatory. When you're creating a site, your job is to get rid of the question marks — the decisions users need to make consciously, considering pros, cons and alternatives.

8. Don't Be Afraid of White Space

Actually it's really hard to overestimate the importance of white space. Not only does it help to reduce the cognitive load for the visitors, but it makes it possible to perceive the information presented on the screen.

7.0 Content Recommendations

Content Recommendations

The content on Airgas.com will be fundamental in bolstering sales from current customers and attracting new ones by:

- Delivering complete and up-to-date information
- Expanding the range of available content
- Serving the right information at the right time

Based on the audit and interview findings, we recommend four areas of focus leading up to the redesign launch:

- Improve product descriptions
 - Organize resources
 - Expand company information
 - Plan for ongoing homepage refreshes
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Recommended Activities

Each area includes multiple activities:

Improve product descriptions

- Review current descriptions to ensure completeness, working with Airgas subject experts and product manufacturers as necessary
- Offer accessible, nontechnical language for the “non-expert” user
- Ensure all products have images and that the images are consistent in quality and size
- Map each product to its accessories or related parts and to its resource materials
- Standardize the format of overview copy on product category and subcategory pages

Organize resources

- Organize resources in two types: (1) how to choose the right product; and (2) how to use the product
- Provide clear and consistent linking from product pages to related resource pages
- Provide clear and consistent linking from resource pages to related product pages.
- Organize resources in a central library

Expand company information

- Adapt existing content from other Airgas sources, such as annual reports and the investor microsite

Plan for homepage refreshes

- Create a process prior to launch for refreshing key homepage content such as carousel items and any rotating or promotional areas. Assign roles, responsibilities, a review and approval process, and publishing schedule.

Looking Ahead

In the long term, we each areas of focus would expand to include additional activities:

Improve product descriptions

- Establish a process for the periodic review of product descriptions

Organize resources

- Continue and possibly expand production of training videos. Explore the opportunity to leverage training resources that may be available from manufacturers. Seek opportunities such as partnerships that would allow Airgas to host the materials on Airgas.com rather than send customers to other sites.
- Add resources to address gaps in coverage as identified. Prioritize by product popularity or sales initiatives.
- Review resource formats (e.g., PDF, video) for needs or opportunities to provide aggregate information on a given product or service in a downloadable, shareable PDF.
- Create a process for regular, periodic review of help content by SMEs. This may be based on the calendar (e.g., annually) or whenever a change to the industry or Airgas offerings occurs.

Expand company information

- Begin to identify and plan stories for the evolution to “storytelling”—content that illustrates Airgas innovation and leadership through success stories, customer stories, and achievements.
 - Develop periodic industry forecasts or other reports and projections that help clients manage their businesses (e.g., help construction clients in bidding projects 6 and 12 months out).
 - Establish an editorial process, roles, responsibilities, publishing dates, and deadlines for content development and publishing
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8.0 Proposed Sitemap

