

## To Spray or Not to Spray

*Topic:* Product (Harmful Ecological Impact)

*Characters:* Robert Whitney, product manager at Crocodile Cleansers

Crocodile Cleansers, a small company in the southeast, markets a variety of cleaning products. Although the company competes with major national brands, it has had a strong local following, especially among the working class. One of its principal products is Ab-Stain, a fabric stain remover available only in liquid form. The new product manager for Ab-Stain is Robert Whitney, who has worked at Crocodile Cleansers for four years. Robert began his career at Crocodile as assistant product manager for Ab-Stain. When his old boss, the product manager, left the company, Robert was very pleased to be offered the job.

Robert faces a serious problem in his new position. Although Ab-Stain is superior to national brands as a stain remover for most types of stains, sales have been declining. After doing some market research, Robert finds that customers are switching to national brands. They are switching not because of the superior cleaning ability of the national brands but because these brands are available in aerosol sprays. Consumers find the aerosol sprays much easier to apply and less messy than Ab-Stain, which tends to spill into areas of the fabric other than the stained area.

Robert realizes that to remain competitive, an aerosol spray should be offered. After a short discussion with Research and Development, Robert finds that the propellant necessary to make an aerosol spray for Ab-Stain contains hydrocarbons. Robert has read that hydrocarbons contribute to the creation of ozone in the lower levels of the earth's atmosphere. During periods of extreme heat and stagnant air, ozone levels rise. Ozone irritates the respiratory system and can cause respiratory diseases. During periods of high ozone, ozone alerts are issued. At these times, people in the area are asked to avoid heavy exertion outdoors--especially the young, the elderly, and those with respiratory problems such as asthma.

Because of these concerns, Robert decides to do a study testing consumer attitudes about two new dispensers--an aerosol and a pump--and compare consumer reactions to their attitudes towards the original liquid. He hopes that the pump, which does not use hydrocarbons, is as acceptable as the aerosol. To his disappointment, consumers rate the pump equally with the liquid form but are very enthusiastic about the aerosol.

Robert is faced with the difficult task of deciding whether to offer the environmentally damaging aerosol version of Ab-Stain, which is certain to reverse declining sales, or remain with the liquid. He knows he cannot appeal to consumers' concern for the environment or health. If his target market were really concerned, they would not be switching to aerosol products offered by competitors.

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