

Unexpected Innovation and Market ‘Norms’

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Innovation is a result of how we see the world around us and how we perceive problems needing a solution. Some forms of innovation are unexpected because the market being served was not demanding a solution. One example of this is the invention of the shopping cart.

In 1936, Sylvan Goldman owned multiple Piggly Wiggly grocery stores in Oklahoma City. He saw a problem with his shoppers — they tended to stop shopping when their standard hand-carried baskets filled up with groceries. Shoppers didn’t see this as a problem as it had become a normal way to buy groceries. It was accepted. But Mr. Goldman saw an opportunity to get his shoppers to buy more groceries — he affixed two baskets on a platform with wheels and added a handle. The first shopping cart. But when he rolled it out (pun intended), the new method of shopping was unexpected by shoppers. It was not in line with what was considered normal and no one used the new carts. To solve for this, Mr. Goldman hired people to use the carts so that others would understand what was expected. This is an example of social proof, a term coined by Robert Cialdini in his 1984 book *Influence*. The idea is that we get our cues on all forms of behavior from those around us. Once other shoppers saw that using the new shopping carts was an acceptable behavior, they began to use them as well.

Empyreal 75® and Motiv® are part of the Branded Feed group at Cargill. Like the shopping cart, these innovations were not expected but created new solutions for issues facing aquaculture and pet food in an unexpected way. We saw a way to apply our Empyreal 75 technology to help solve an issue for salmon and marine species to displace a portion of fishmeal without compromising functional attributes. We saw a way to address shrimp nutrition and disease management through simplifying the diet with Motiv. And we saw a way to free up space in the diets for pet food. We brought these unexpected innovations to these markets along with the unexpected brand promises of reliable supply, quality and a new approach of partnership.