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Title: Product Design Lessons Learned the Hard Way: Why Don't We Apply Behavior Principles to Ourselves?

Abstract: An energy efficiency program fell in love with a promising new product idea. It filled a gap that technical staff had identified, and once built, it would advance a new technology and lead to significant energy savings. Unfortunately, this is not the happy tale of the product that people never knew they needed, but which they would later discover they couldn't live without. The program built and patented the product. It worked. But their customers did not respond.

What did the efficiency program miss? And how is it designing new products now? Using product design methodologies relied upon by for-profit businesses working in quickly evolving markets, this presentation shows how the efficiency program examined its internal and external behaviors when designing this and other new products. Drivers for early efficiency programs "Can we do it?" had to give way to "Does the customer need this?" Using ratepayer-customers as collaborative partners for informing new-technology appropriateness led to creative, disciplined, customer-centric analysis and design, enabling faster, evidence-based decision making.

Case studies illustrate internal behaviors that caused the efficiency program to misunderstand the market, and how the missteps prevented their product from having the desired impact. By changing its own behaviors, the program has crafted a process for more (and more cost-effective) innovation and scaling. This presentation guides designers through behavior processes for generating product ideas and for collaborating with customers in product design. It also offers milestones for when it's time to break up with the idea you love.