

—RAKO STUDIOS—

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Subway sandwich shop system design

I got a large drink at a Subway shop.
The straws were too short for the cup.



Dear Mr. 2006 Subway CEO:

Make the straws as long as the cups.

This is not as silly a situation as it sounds. It highlights a common design problem.

Management comes up with some specific new initiative. Often the initiative is in reaction to a competitor's product. All the minions rush off to do management's bidding. No one bothers to look at the whole system.

It is easy to argue who is at fault. The minions blame management for not thinking things through. Management blames the minions for a stupid oversight. Everybody can blame the store for not going out and buying longer straws, despite that they wouldn't have the snazzy Subway logo on the paper cover. The store owners just shake their heads and blame the whole home office.

The real fault is always with management. But in this case management's failure is not having a marketing function or department. By marketing, I don't mean sales, which most companies stupidly call "marketing".

A marketing function is living a day in life of the customer. A marketing department would at least have visualized how a customer would use the new cup. Perhaps they would put some prototype cups in a store and asked customers what they thought.

When told that it was stupid to have straws shorter than the cup, marketing could then have tasked the minions with changing the straws or selecting two straw lengths for the stores.