

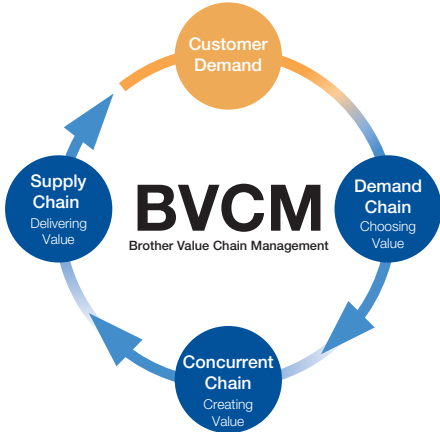
Product Development

We take customer opinions as the starting point of our business activities and deliver products and services that meet customer needs.



Brother's unique management system for value creation

The Brother Group practices an original management system called the "Brother Value Chain Management" (BVCM) and delivers superior products and services to customers based on the "At your side." spirit. In the Concurrent Chain of BVCM, the product concepts created in the Demand Chain are given a concrete shape. Product simulations and focus group testing by intended users are run again and again before and after prototyping. Through this process, we develop and design our products speedily while ensuring high product quality. The production engineering department designs optimal production lines to deliver our products at the right time for our customers. Respective departments concurrently work toward the commercialization of products while sharing information with each other to swiftly address customer needs with our products.



Case Example **Brother's efforts to listen to customers' opinions and understand their usage environments lead to products that satisfy their needs**



▲ Interview with customers



▲ An employee conducting a wearability test of the prototype when getting on and off a customer's delivery truck

American customers of Brother's 4-inch thermal mobile label/receipt printers mount their printer in vehicles or wear it on their belts to print invoices and shipping labels in delivery destinations, distribution warehouses, and other work sites. These customers, therefore, expect mobile printers to be easily connected to information terminals from anywhere and to have enough robustness to withstand strong shocks and loads produced when they get in or out of a truck or carry packages. To respond to these demands, product planners and mechanical and software developers at Brother exercised their ingenuity. In addition, to create further superior products, visits to such American customers were arranged to show them a prototype, which was nearly a finished product. During the visits, planning, development, and quality management staff conducted,

from their respective viewpoints, interviews and usage surveys with the customers and gained multifaceted information. In addition, the staff were able to recognize what they had not been able to find by themselves, such as real on-site users' unique ways of operation and challenges by observing how they operate the prototype. The staff's efforts to learn on the spot and hear the opinions of the customers until just before the end of the product development period led to generating products with new, detail-oriented values which are not shown on the catalog specifications. Such values include an operability improvement that allows users to load paper with one hand, and space created on the products to enable users to put labels for managing multiple mobile printers.