Sproxil: Saving Lives Through Technology and Social Enterprise

As he read the media reports on Sproxil's successful completion of the first phase of the company's work in Nigeria, Ashifi Gogo, founder and CEO of Sproxil, Inc., wondered if the achievement would be one of many for Sproxil or one of a kind. Sproxil now had a proven technology in place and Gogo had identified the regions he would like to enter with his technology. But he was still reviewing data on national markets to determine which markets to enter, as well as the right business model to use: a pure for-profit model or a social enterprise. Sproxil had started making revenue in 2010, but now Gogo had to find sources of commercial investment to build the Sproxil brand and keep it sustainable.

Later that afternoon Alden Zecha, Sproxil chief financial officer and strategist, discussed with Gogo an analysis of their expansion strategy and various options for structuring the Sproxil business model.

A memo from Zecha had identified three categories of customers for Sproxil:

- **Patients:** The company could protect consumers in developing nations from counterfeit medicines. Consumers could receive purchase support via a call center as part of Sproxil's service.

- **Pharmaceutical manufacturers:** Sproxil delivered value to these customers by taking counterfeits out of the marketplace. The counterfeit medicines were costing these businesses billions of dollars in sales. Sproxil was also able to act as a data source for manufacturers and generate a better understanding of the value of their products in the marketplace.

- **Government and law enforcement authorities:** Sproxil provided this set of customers with an additional set of tools and intelligence reports to enable them to find and prosecute counterfeiters as well as those who helped counterfeiters in a timely way.

Sproxil's Mobile Product Authentication MPA™ was an information intensive product. First, the population had to be taught why it should use the product. Then it had to be taught how to use the product, as well as how the service would enable them to reduce the number of counterfeits in their communities. This process would include information dissemination to consumers on: (1) Sproxil's easy anti-counterfeit solution, using any mobile phone; (2) using the solution only involved scratching, texting, and receiving a response; and (3) if the response indicated the medicine was "fake," how to contact Sproxil or the government to take action. In 2010, the company used posters, fliers, and waybills to disseminate these messages.