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Demo “Storylines”: The Journey, The Destination, or Both

Many software vendors talk about “The Journey” or “The Customer’s Journey” as a storyline for their demos. We need to ask ourselves, however, what is important to the customer?

Is it *really* the Journey or is it the Destination – or possibly both?

Let’s think critically about promoting the Journey vs. the Destination before deciding how to best position our demos...

It’s All About Value

Here’s a very simple way to determine if the Journey, Destination, or both should be the focus: Where does the customer get value?

- If the customer gets value *along* the Journey or if there are sufficient waypoints of value along the way, then the Journey should be promoted.
- If the customer only gets value from the Destination, then push the Destination.
- And if both, then both...!

But be cautious about making assumptions. For example, a “Journey to the Cloud” *could* entail both – but you need to assess this carefully. For example:

- If the Journey is just a series of tasks and steps to migrate a customer’s existing environment to the cloud – and there is no real value returned to the customer at each of the steps – then the Destination is the correct positioning.
- Contrariwise, if the customer enjoys value realization at several (or all) of the steps, then you should likely promote *both* the Journey and the Destination.

When It’s *Not* the Journey...

Many vendors try to glorify the workflow(s) enabled by their software as “Journeys” but may be misunderstanding the *customer’s* perspective. Vendors, after all, are often in love with their own software. What does the customer think?

After all, a workflow is still *work*: A series of steps or tasks that need to be completed. Most software products automate and streamline traditional workflows, often embracing a broader range of functions, while making them faster and with fewer possibilities for errors. But is a workflow a Journey?

Here are a few examples where the Journey is likely *not* the desired experience, from the customer's perspective:

- Anything to do with Set-Up Mode: Anything done once to implement a system is not a good Journey storyline for a demo, particularly if there is no value associated with the Set-Up steps.

For example, entering information into a database or CRM system delivers no value to the user; it is only when the database is large enough to provide useful search results and analysis that value is gained.

- For an executive or senior manager, most workflows are not particularly interesting and don't make for a compelling Journey.

Workflows are simply sets of tasks that need to be executed by staff members. Senior management *does* want to make sure that their staff will be comfortable using the software, but that is (potentially) the staff members' Journey – not management's.

- For staff members, workflows are the tasks they likely do repeatedly – this is not a Journey.

Anything you do over and over and over at work, is just that: work. Commuting 45 minutes in heavy traffic to an office twice a day is an example of a workflow – definitely *not* a Journey!

When It's *Not* the Destination

This is actually harder... It is more difficult to think of software products where the Destination is *not* a desired deliverable. Perhaps:

- *Ad hoc* exploration of large masses of data – looking for novel trends or unanticipated relationships could be an example.

("But," I hear you cry, "aren't finding the trends or relationships actually Destinations...?"
Hmmm, I think you're right...)

Again, we can apply the simple test: where does the customer get value? If there is no value in a Destination, then the best positioning is the Journey. Note, however, that the customer needs to get value from the Journey – or this particular product is at risk!

When It *Is* the Journey

- Employee onboarding: This could be a good example journey, leading from hiring, through initial HR onboarding forms and documents, to receiving hardware, to identifying and executing training, ongoing development, career advancement, etc. As with life, one's career is (hopefully) a Journey, with waypoints of accomplishments along the route.

Note, of course, that these waypoints may also be Destinations in their own right...!

When It *Is* the Destination

Frankly, it is likely that *most* software solutions focus on Destinations – for example:

- Finding and addressing problems.
- Identifying root causes.
- Delivering reports.
- Providing alerts.
- Exposing opportunities.
- Surfacing exceptions.
- Achieving governance.
- Enabling a process.
- Facilitating continuity.
- Establishing and confirming compliance.
- Optimizing systems, processes and workflows.
- Improving performance.

Even avoiding loss can be a Destination (think about it...).

If the customer receives all of the value based on arriving at the Destination, then position accordingly.

A Matter of Perspective

Another point of view on the Journey vs. the Destination is exactly that – it may depend on the point of view of the customer. Here's an example:

You are flying (pre/post Covid-19) overseas for a vacation at a beautiful resort... Is it the Journey, the Destination, or both that matter?

- If you are flying in a cramped middle seat in coach – in front of the couple with the teething child, struggling for part of the armrest with your neighbor in the back of the plane for 11 hours, and getting up every hour for that same neighbor to go to the lavatory – it is probably *not* the Journey that is of interest! It may be an *experience*, but perhaps one that you wouldn't like to repeat... (Are you getting value from the experience?)
- On the other hand, if you are in first-class, enjoying the first-class lounge and fine dining, comfortable seats, unlimited drinks, a lie-flat bed and noise-cancelling earphones – then the Journey might be worthwhile as well...! (Are you getting value from the experience?)
- In both cases, the Destination is *definitely* important – that gorgeous resort (fill in your own description of the perfect vacation paradise!)... (Are you getting value from the experience?)

Perspective may also depend on job title.

For senior managers, the process of achieving critical objectives may include components of both Journey and Destination – and value is likely gained for that manager through both components.

A vice president of sales celebrates each rep's newly closed business, growing and developing the team through the year, while working towards achievement of the quarterly and (especially) annual goals. Journey *and* Destination.

Staff members doing individual tasks will likely only gain value from each task's completion, however – task-based Destinations.

The accounting staff closes the books every month, producing reports for management. The process of closing the books is a repetitive series of tasks – so it is the Destination they desire, not the Journey.

A story: Many years ago, I was flying from San Francisco to Switzerland to attend my first European Users' Group meeting. I was in coach on a 747; my vice president of sales and CFO were in business-class. I can share with you that the Journey was *not* a pleasant experience for me – but senior management had a great trip!

A Few Additional Ideas

Many software products enable the *same* end-result to be achieved (the customer's current situation), but faster, better, or cheaper. This is a case of the same Destination, different Journeys (different methods of getting to the Destination). Analogy? Drive 1000 miles to visit a sick relative vs. flying.

If you have ever been the *customer* and previously (or currently) used the product – you are in a terrific position. Ask yourself, “Did you enjoy the Journey or was it the Destination that was desired – or both?”

Finally, most people want to get to their Destination as fast and smoothly as possible. Ask yourself: How well aligned is that desire with the Journey as your demo storyline?

It's All About Value (Again)

When you are determining the best positioning and storyline for your demos, consider where the customer gets value:

- If the customer gets value *along* the Journey or if there are sufficient waypoints of value along the path, then *sell* the Journey.
- If the customer only gets value from the Destination, then *sell* the Destination.
- And if the customer enjoys value gains from both, then *sell* both...!

And so ends this Journey... (Did you get value along the way?)

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