



YOU'VE GOT TO BE IN IT TO WIN IT

Journey Mapping Case Study

In B2B transactions with large companies, it's all too easy to forget that no matter how big (or even faceless) a company might seem, individual decisions are still made by individuals, just as surely as if it were a mom-and-pop shop up the street. Journey mapping is the perfect tool to explore the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of those individuals, to boost sales and enhance business relationships.

Our client, a well-respected powerhouse in the financial services industry, offers software that accelerates manual process. They called on Heart of the Customer for a kind of company "tune-up," to ensure they were staying one step ahead of the competition, and to grow sales by gaining insight into their customers' software-selection process.

We began the journey-mapping process by interviewing both existing clients and prospects. This data-gathering phase helped us identify the different phases of the decision-making experience, and to identify the two key segments (or "personas") that made up our client's customer base: Frustrated Frank and Inclusive Anne.

As the successful VP for a growing company, Frank has overseen the opening of many new branches, but is stymied by software that's hampering growth. Integrating systems from new and established locations, and often between front- and back-end systems, is wasting time and resources. He wants a solution that will increase efficiency and productivity ASAP. He and his staffers have worked with effective systems in past positions with other institutions, and he taps that network of knowledge and connections for potential solutions. Once he has a list of whom to trust, he narrows down the possibilities to a few finalists, then – and only then – reaches out to IT, Finance, and other departments, to get their input before finalizing his choice. Any company not already on the radar of someone in Frank's network isn't going to be considered, no matter how informative, persuasive, or accessible they make their website and marketing materials.

Our second persona was Inclusive Anne. As a long-time VP who has worked at several organizations, her customer segment has a different approach. Anne is motivated to upgrade her out-of-date and disconnected system after it caused red flags to be raised during a recent audit. She seeks out recommendations within her own network – including former co-workers and personal contacts who are just as likely to look to her for suggestions – and also casts a wide net across all her various teams, seeking input in the early stages of the selection process from representatives in IT, Finance, and other departments. The large initial list they compile will come from



trusted contacts with which they have a personal connection, not cold-calling salespeople. She and her staff vet the recommended companies – online, by phone, and in person during a months-long winnowing process, cutting it down to a couple of finalists that she’ll present to senior leadership, who will act on her recommendations. Anne wants to get it right and takes her time. But here again, any vendor who doesn’t already have someone within the network singing their praises isn’t even going to be investigated, much less land the sale.

For both personas, the scrutiny of vendors builds and intensifies as the search process moves toward a conclusion – but, obviously, only for companies already under consideration.

Our findings showed that word-of-mouth recommendations were the guiding force behind the decision-making process for software purchases. Which means their clients needed to make a positive recommendation before prospective clients start searching for software solutions. Certainly, they’ll seek out more information by phone or online, but that comes later – and it will be too late, if they’re not looking for you in the first place

Bolstered by recent studies that indicate about 57% of a B2B purchasing decision is made before a prospective customer ever contacts a vendor’s representative, our “aha!” revelation led our client to rethink their marketing strategy. Building, not selling, a great product, was what counted. The company diverted more resources toward product development and enhancement, and retained Heart of the Customer for an additional project: using the journey mapping process to reveal ways to improve their core product in order to strengthen the relationships that would, ultimately, increase their referrals and maximize their chances of getting “the call.” Our client discovered that making an impression on potential clients long before the decision-making process even began was paramount to attracting new business.

