



FLIPPING THE DIGITAL & IT PROPOSITION

ABSTRACT

Despite all the miraculous digital “work-arounds” during COVID, businesses are grappling with mixed bag digital experiences found to be wholly incompatible with both traditional and desired post-COVID digital business models.

In fact, 48% of firms feel their “IT” exists in a perpetual “struggle” to ‘keep the lights’. As such, the dark arts of break/fix and managed support are now regarded as missing the mark where just 3% of firms are geared for real transformation. Where firms have invested in digital optimisation or renewal, global project success statistics reveal even digital project delivery is highly problematic; only 6% of 50,000 research projects were said to realise the anticipated value; just 13% having a coherent strategic purpose and objectives.

Indeed, with NZ slumping to from 9th in the world to 26th in 1 decade – with alarm bell declines since 2017, in world innovation rankings, issues reflect deterioration in all

indices of ideation, education, talent development, business sophistication and tech adoption.

Remarkably, the data only reports on the precursor impacts of COVID. Further data is anticipated. This will reveal the real implications upon digital adoption within the best “*economic response to COVID is a Health “response”*” yet which lacked a digital-renewal response in all industrial, technology and talent-development domains; amid wickedly and wildly disproportionate restrictions.

Notwithstanding this, the nation’s plight with digital is an expression of Digital “Transformation” and any number of thematic IT verbiage being the highly promotable Kool-Aid (or themes) in the IT industry for decades.

Given the current situation, the credibility of the IT sector with often technically or product-geared, “cloud” or “digital” transformation or “support” proposition is now being questioned.

As a result, as other countries open and accelerate with Post-Covid regeneration, New Zealand remains in a peculiar place of puzzlingly pointless restriction, regressive policy-settings, a weakening education-tech footing. The country, consequently faces being left behind in the international idea economy.

Thus, real danger facing New Zealand is to further entrench international and domestic business issues by persisting with contemporary IT management “strategy” propositions and support models devoid of any genuine capacity to equip businesses, practitioners, and workforce with the means to leverage digital for the generation of ideas that help businesses (and the region) to thrive in a disruptive world

“A value proposition is a clear statement of the commercial relevancy, added value and mechanisms for how a customer attains tangible business outcomes or results from engaging in a journey with you, or using your products, or your services”

So, where do issues lie noting the opportunity for system regeneration and human focused digital is resplendent?

Well, part of it is that most IT firms professionals and service providers still go to market with lousy value propositions. Indeed, in reality, they're weak. Indeed, they are so weak that even the IT business marketing "what to do" advice for forming Value Propositions, that IT professionals and companies all too easily fall for, are as weak as the output they generate!

Thus, in an industry awash with standards, the situation is paradoxical. Indeed, having shelled out thousands at the "creative agency" (to promote the IT proposition), remarkably, unsuspecting IT firms succumb to a creative marketing ruse that often, mistakenly, is a glossy cut and paste resemblance of a or the firm's offering's, features or services, alleged capabilities and is often sandwiched between a cool thematic-area or two.

Sprinkled on top, there is the usual garnishing of a fear-based tag line to round off a distasteful serving of a few technically geared specifications.

Or – the 'proposition' is soured with so much self-aggrandizing puffery the actual proposition meaning is hard to spot. As a result, customers are often left utterly bamboozled and are unable to translate the jargon into any relevant business terms.

Digital adoption falters, sales opportunities meander and customers seldom see any genuine transformation or substance in or from such a proposition; translating into class-level and broader international implications with a lack of digital transformation, human-capability development and or 'brain' drain implications.

As part of the series, this paper seeks to clearly define value propositions and will provide a

comparative guide on the formation and attributes of weak propositions vs. strong propositions.

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THE VALUE PROP

The more customer specific your value proposition is, the better.

Highly successful propositions and engagements, therefore, often occur without even mentioning the solution, the domain of interest or field(s), genre or terminology. Indeed, there really is no need to.

Weak Propositions

However, here are a few examples of weak value propositions:

1. "It's the most technologically advanced and robust system on the market".
2. We offer scalable, flexible, managed IT?
3. "We improve communication and morale".
4. "We offer training classes in a wide variety of areas".
5. We benchmark x theme, to sell you y solution"
6. "Because of x theme, you should consider, y prescription"
7. "My product was rated the best-in-class by leading authorities."
8. "These are the services we already provide you, please sign here"



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When it comes down to it, weak IT or digital propositions are characterised by the fact that they are often internally devised. It is a self-inflicted business injury often determined from a singular persons or functions perspective or view of a narrow world through foggy windows and can be easily spotted with glossed with assumptive benefit statements based on features of a solution – devoid of any client-centred engagement.

As a result of the inward-out blinkered thinking, these propositions are devoid of essential market, customer centric research or needs analysis. They are rarely substantiated with proven market war or client-success stories.

Often, they are very easy to spot as they are delivered with a “tell” mentality. “Let me tell you about my a, b, c, it can do x, y and Z” or “you should look at x, y, z theme” or “this is a huge problem elsewhere, therefore...”....

The customer will more than likely say “So what?!” “Maybe later”. “Look, so and so might be interested...go and talk to...”.

Such brush-off’s are symptoms or expressions of exactly what most customers, overall, think and or do when you share a weak value proposition. Weak propositions are common and are heard as what they are; agenda fueled lines pushed with or by competitors within markets of overall weak-sophistication; yet, they’ve been heard, responded to, rejected and brushed off like a zillion times as the content of which, simply, fails to resonate.

Without evidence of success, customers simply don’t believe you one little bit or simply have lost patience before the engagement has begun.

Fundamentally, any credibility wanes quickly even if you do manage to get passed the tele-sales call handler as you haven’t shared what’s in it for them - and that’s all customers relate to.

Confused reactions from customers suggest that such propositions simply fail to hit the mark. For the provider, performance goals and objectives are rarely attained.

Thus – to understand strong propositions – the fundamental question requires self-diagnosis - “Why is a potential customer going to buy from you?”

In order fully to understand what your value proposition is, you need to understand the dynamics of the marketplace, your competitive position; and do the same, also for your prospect client – placing yourselves in their moccasins and asking the same question as if you were the question seeking to develop their business.

With today’s tight economy and overburdened decision makers, businesses need their own strong value proposition to break through the clutter and to get their attention. That means, to unleash a Digital change proposition, which need to be considered as people-based journeys, not technical solutions or projects, and to support their (the customer’s) own proposition transformation, you need a results-oriented value proposition that speaks to the business critical issues they’re facing – and helps them (re) define their own proposition.

Yes, that means defining two propositions.

Yours, and theirs - as a function of yours – and your ability to articulate both as a function of each other. Mastering this interplay not just from the proposition design and promotion stage, but through an experience over time - is crucial.

Thus, when it comes to quality digital engagements built upon consultative and change focused outcomes – over the type of time required to define, deliver and provide/prove a customer’s results - that means a method that extrapolates, defines and includes real, specific numbers or percentages; where doing so means



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you get the decision maker's attention even faster.

Strong value propositions, therefore, include mechanisms to find, define, curate, orchestrate, deliver, and cultivate, continuously, improved tangible results, as both a partner, sherpa and problem-solver/opportunity creator, to and like:

1. Increased revenues, growth, diversification, agility
2. Faster time to market
3. Decreased costs
4. Improved operational efficiency
5. Increased strategic alignment or agility
6. Decreased employee turnover
7. Improved customer retention levels
8. Improved decision making
9. Heightened responsiveness

Technology speak, for unleashing strong digital is limited or not even required (or helpful) at all. Indeed – resorting to technology speak over, above or to, even, quieten customer language is a sure sign that something has gone badly wrong with a client engagement (or will go very wrong).

Strong Value propositions, with this lens, unleash business potential with these considerations. However, truly effective propositions incorporate the reasons why, what, how customers will obtain and self-service their own value, results and methods (from working with you through a digital transformation experience). This means methods that translate the intentionality into actuality through the empowerment of the customer.

Given this - documented, front and centre, success stories written in client language or that express client results, transformation and user-stories - make you believable to prospective customers in that sector and other sectors. It shows care and attention to getting genuinely

involved in a client(s) business has led to proven outcomes. Solutions then carry the same currency as your then developed expertise in that client circumstance for future circumstances. It shows your ability to 'place yourself in the moccasins' of the client. Your proposition is the clients proposition.

So how does your value adding proposition look? Does it differentiate? Do you differentiate?

Can you describe what you do in terms of tangible business results? Can you link to documented success stories?

Can you articulate a game plan for your customers to attain the value and business outcomes?

A strong proposition reflects three layers in a teleological system (over time) and designs itself through the process of engagement; where, in highly successful terms, a customer can answer the following questions:

Abstraction	The focus	The Meaning
Why	Establishes - Strategic Fit, Value, Relevance	Why will this proposition will add value to my business?
What	Establishes - Business & \$ orientated outcomes	What commercial results and or financial outcomes can I expect to gain? Can you substantiate these claims with evidence or success stories?
How	The game plan	How do I or we achieve these outcomes? Or How do you ensure intentions deliver into successful outcomes?



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With these factors, the starting point for a quality Digital value proposition, starts by defining one's own proposition by addressing these points:

1. Define and articulate ways in how your company truly adds value to its customers through
2. Define, prove and articulate how your proposition offers tangible business results, financial outcomes, to your customers, and will work with you to create case stories
3. Determine your customers receptivity to experiencing your proposition in practice