

From drawing unicorns to writing a neverending story with your clients

Building strong and lasting revenue should come from a strong foundation built with your customer, an investment that they make in your vision, and a common understanding shared at the highest executive level. You are committing to take your customers further than any of their traditional vendors. To do that, you must look further than the product, beyond the solution and harness the beauty of the story telling to craft a never ending story with your clients.

Storytelling is not just an art, when based on facts that are properly qualified through detailed workshops it can be an absolute masterpiece. However, if you've never done this before, you will probably be faced with writer's block: where should you start?

Bastian: 'Why is it so dark?'

The Childlike Empress: 'In the beginning, it is always dark.'

Accept that the product does not do it all

Having a stellar product and being the leader in your market can hold back your current and future revenue architecture. Wait what? (note that this applies to non self service, non community based B2B sales). This is what I call the balance default: you've put all your eggs in one basket. The product is extremely good, it almost 'sells itself'. You did not need to hire senior people. SDRs turned into calling machines, focusing on maximising quantity, locking in demos that are not prepared or qualified. Account Executives and pre-sales will deliver demos and quickly push some sort of ROI that will remain a feeble promise on the procurement desk. To treat the volume and bring in revenue, the average sales price will rarely pass 100K. Your product does sell itself... but at a low value. Customer success will then have to fight to keep and build long term relationships and avoid the churn. There are exceptions in your team, people who want to create value but do not dare take the time of a thorough qualification process because of the pressure of expectation from the company sales process.

The Childlike Empress: Bastian. 'Why don't you do what you dream, Bastian?'

Bastian: 'But I can't, I have to keep my feet on the ground!'

Believe that people buy from people

To avoid such a scenario, one doesn't necessarily have to hire a seasoned sales

team. Building strong, sustainable revenue streams relies on partnerships. Customers that have perceived the tremendous value of your solution, prospects who share the dream at an executive level. Taking the time to lay out the foundation for these powerful lasting relationships will secure exponential revenue. Relationships are formed over trust, a customer facing role (SDR, AE, AM, CSM etc) who takes the time to understand the issues the solution should solve, reformulate it with their interlocutors, and enter into what we commonly call: value selling. It enables you to uncover and develop future champions who will carry your flagship to their executives.

Falkor: 'Having a luck dragon with you is the only way to go on a quest.'

Co-create a powerful business story

Now that you have understood the importance of qualification and building champions, make sure to spread the word. Prior to sending any numbers and proposals make sure to sit down with your prospect to write your story together, a narrative commonly known as the 3 whys:

Why should the customer do the project?

Here you want to avoid the biggest competitor of all – especially if your product is absolutely mind-blowingly awesome – the do nothing, the void. Often, when your product is perceived as a benefit (attention marketing people here, how do you present yourselves?) you end up being a nice to have rather than a priority.

Atreyu: 'What is the Nothing?'

G'mork: 'It's the emptiness that's left. It's like a despair, destroying this world. And I have been trying to help it.'

Atreyu: 'But why?'

G'mork: 'Because people who have no hopes are easy to control; and whoever has the control... has the power!'

This part of the executive summary should be a condensed understanding, in your prospect's words, of the things they cannot do: the technical issues and their functional and business impact. If you were able to quantify the impact, even better, add it in here. Work on this with your champion. It is an essential brief to help anyone within the client company, no matter their knowledge level of your solution, whether they met you or even heard of you, to understand the reasons why they need to do the project.

Why should the customer do it with you?

If you have implicated real issues that need fixing, then you've done the hardest job of all. Nevertheless it is important for your own sake to attach the highest value to your solution. Here, in your champion/customer's own words, tell the story of why they chose your solution over anything else. Don't stop at the obvious features/functions that solve the technical problems, add your holistic differentiators: who you are, who your investors, your customers, where your vision comes from and the boundaries will disappear...

G'mork: 'Fantasia has no boundaries.'

Atreyu: 'That's not true! You're lying.'

G'mork: 'Foolish boy. Don't you know anything about Fantasia? It's the world of human fantasy. Every part, every creature of it, is a piece of the dreams and hopes of mankind. Therefore, it has no

boundaries.'

Lock it in with a compelling event; why do it now?

If you struggle to find an answer here, it is probably because you were not able to implicate a business impact. Think about it, every week that passes, the business impact piles up, your compelling event is right there: losing talents, losing market share, revenue at risk, reputation at risk... just make sure your customer not only has a good understanding of the implications but is willing to act on it.

Storytelling is an art, and finding the right content is a science. When you work hand in hand with your customer to create strong foundations, the revenue will flow and remain, taking your valuation to whatever you want it to be.

Bastian's Father: 'I got a call from your math teacher, yesterday. She says that you were drawing horses in your math book.'

Bastian: 'Unicorns. They were unicorns.'

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