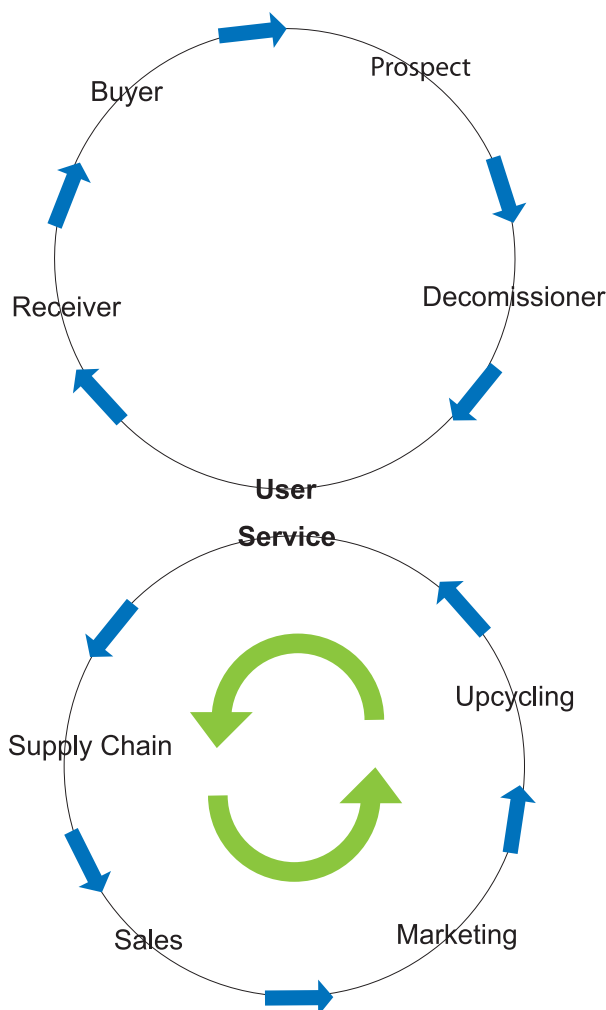# 8. Design the processes – The Process Domain of Information
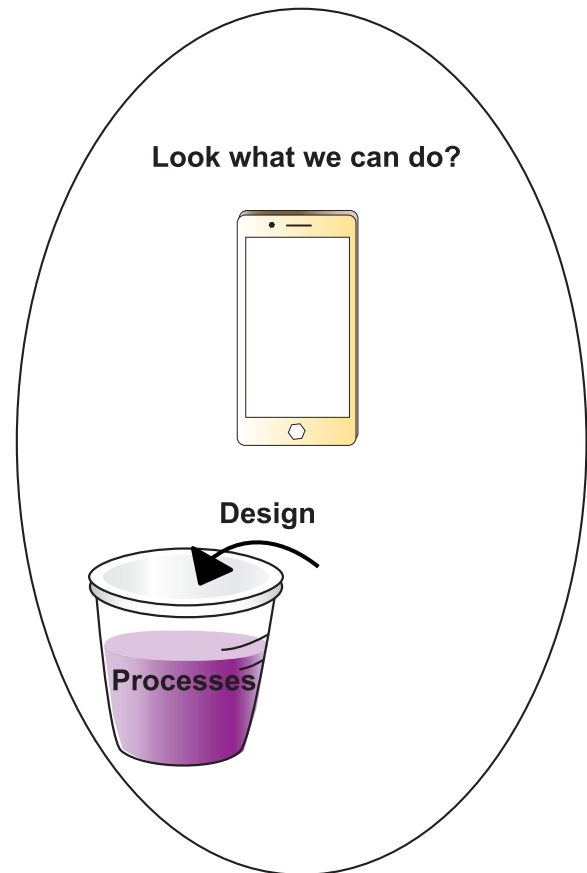
The optimal processes in your company are always the result of an iterative work method in which the initial process and product design is first created and then gradually refined to perfection. Refining the initial design requires access to more detailed information about the customer, needs, functions, and solutions. Therefore, you need to revisit the other information domains several times during process design. This iterative approach to filling the domains with value-critical information increases your chances of creating a WoW product and the customer experiencing not one, but several WoW moments.

The whole essence of the Process Domain of Information can be summarized in the following way:

Design your processes to delight your customers, not to maximize your company's convenience.

The company's world

Look what we can do?

Design

Processes

Buyer — Prospect — Decomissioner — User — Receiver

Service — Upcycling — Marketing — Sales — Supply Chain

You need an outside in perspective when designing your internal processes. Adapt and design your processes not to make them easy, cheap, and comfortable for your organization but to make the customer journey easy, effortless, and enjoyable.

The established term customer journey is unfortunate as it creates the wrong understanding of how to organize internal processes. A better term would be customer cycle or -continuum, a seamless, ongoing process with a sequence of crucial touchpoints. By providing positive customer experience at each touchpoint, businesses will fuel a spiral of increased engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty. Although loyal customers don't appear on a company's balance sheet, they are nevertheless the biggest asset for all successful companies.

I often find it helpful to describe this continuum of touchpoints as two interacting cycles. Your

internal processes move the customer from one state to the next at each touchpoint. This metaphor is particularly effective because it highlights the interconnectedness of these two cycles. These touchpoints become more evident when summarized into five areas:

- Marketing, turning the target group into prospects.
- Sales, turning prospects into buyers.
- Delivery, turning receivers into users.
- After-sales, turning users into loyal customers.
- Upcycling, turning loyal customers into repeat buyers.

Alignment is crucial because a well-designed product supports the customer continuum, facilitating a seamless experience for the customer and ultimately enhancing satisfaction and loyalty.

A WoW product must contain and deliver some essential properties, characteristics, and features to be effective at each touchpoint. It is a common misconception that product development cannot influence, for example, successful marketing and sales. On the contrary, nothing could be further from the truth. Your product's characteristics and performance are always the most essential factor in marketing and sales. The tired phrase that anything can be sold with killer advertising simply does not hold up. As product developers, we hold the key to success in all these touchpoints. In the following, I will briefly discuss these five touchpoints.

This chapter will contain the following:
8.1 Marketing, turning the target group into prospects.
8.2 Sales, turning prospects into buyers.
8.3 Delivery, turning receivers into users.
8.4 After-sales and servicce, turning users into loyal customers.
8.5 Upcycling, turning loyal customers into repeat buyers.

## 8.1 Marketing, turning the target group into prospects

Launch and marketing aim to attract and turn your target group into potential buyers. This is done by creating attention and interest, build-

ing prestige around your company, and creating a need and demand for its products. Getting your message across in the flood of information drowning today's prospects is not easy.

Your company must create a message about itself and its products that can be heard and attract the target group. It must be a simple and clear message that can be conveyed with credibility, persistence, and power. We call this message image. I define an image as:

- **Image is to possess an essential value concept in the minds of the target group.**

The keywords when building an image are endurance and credibility. Endurance is that it takes time to create an image and even longer to change a bad one. Creditability means that your product must live up to the message.
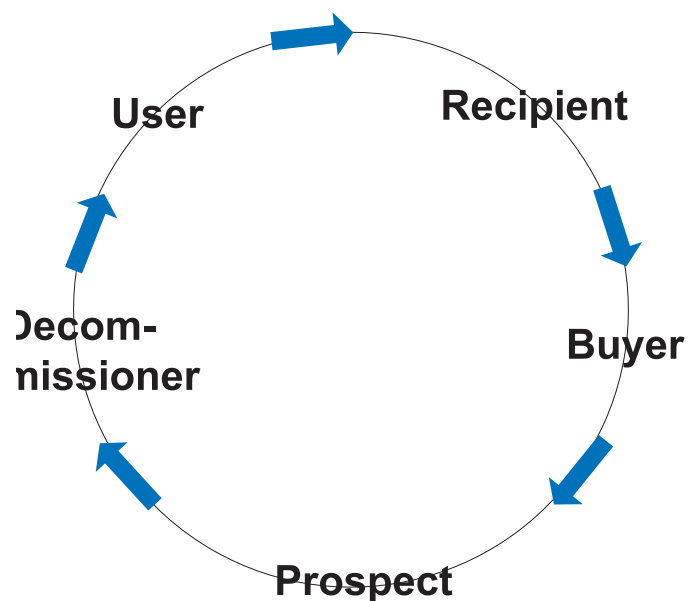
Crafting an image that is easy to communicate is wrong. You should craft an image that resonates with a core value of your target group.

Deciding on what your company's image shall be is a strategic decision. A decision preferably taken by your board of directors. There is an easy way to test whether your company has a clear image or not. I have practiced this test on numerous companies around the globe.

Gather a group of colleagues and ask them to quietly write down the first word they believe comes to the customers' minds when they hear your company's name or brand. Once everyone has written down their responses, review the answers together. If most colleagues express the same concept, it reflects that your company has a well-defined brand identity. Examples of such concepts include quality, safety, reliability, or status. Your company lacks a clear image if the responses vary widely and lack consistency. If your colleagues don't have a shared picture of the image, you can be assured that the customer doesn't have a clue.

A strong brand image requires that it has been defined, the perception is shared internally, and has been conveyed with endurance and credibility. This exercise helps to gauge internal understanding of your image and serves as a vital step toward aligning your company around a shared vision.

Volvo Car is among the companies in the world with the most potent image, the image of safety. In my training, I have tested this numerous times. If I write Volvo Cars on a flip chart and ask people what pops into their minds, most people say safety. To own such a strong customer value in the minds of millions of potential customers is not by chance. Every new car model Volvo cars make must be equipped with a new safety feature that is new to the world. It is part of the company's DNA, and it all starts in product development. WoW, products are characterized by a strong image.

You must build this image into your new product. Otherwise, your launch and marketing people will be forced to convey empty words without connection to the image. A message that your customers will see right through and reject. Credibility will be hammered, and the uphill struggle to create and enhance your image will be even more challenging in the future.

8.2 Sales, turning prospects into buyers

Once the customer has evaluated and sifted through the offers available on the market, only a few alternatives of interest are left. This short-listing process is crucial as it allows customers to focus on the most promising products or services and analyze these alternatives in more detail. At this stage, customers enter a phase of more intensive scrutiny, comparing each option's features, benefits, and potential drawbacks. Customer value is in focus because all customers strive to attain maximum value for their money. Remember that Customer value is defined in the European standard EN 12973:

- **Customer value is the ratio between the satisfaction of customer needs and the use of customer resources.**

Creating a compelling value proposition and providing clear information to help guide the customer's decision-making process is essential. Sales teams play a crucial role by clearly outlining how the product or service addresses the customer's most important needs and resource concerns.
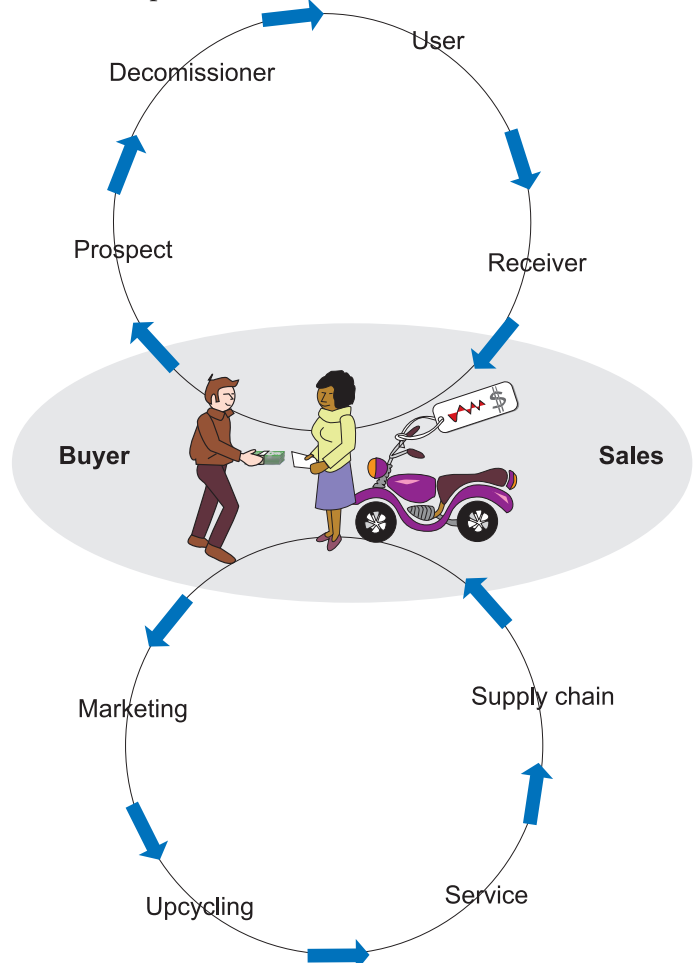
> **Creating a product that is easy to sell is wrong. You should create a product that is easy to buy.**

The logic in the value proposition must follow the steps:

- How the customer's most important needs and resource concerns have been translated into functions
- How the product is able to perform these functions
- How the performance metrics of these functions make your value proposition outstanding.

You can easily test your company's capacity to create value propositions that connect with value-critical information in the Domains, Needs, and Functions. Take a sales brochure or print a webpage describing a best-selling product. Take a marker and highlight any correctly formulated and value-critical needs or functions you can identify. I would not be surprised if you found only a few or none. This exercise could be an eye-opener for management and people in sales.

If you are going to succeed with your WoW product, you must ensure all marketing and sales material connects with the new product's supriority on value-critical needs and resource concerns. The ideal situation is if you have identified one or a few value-critical performance metrics in your Value Chart, and the new product has superior performance on these metrics. In that case, all the elements for value-based selling are in place.

It is also vital to create a feeling of security for the customer. Even if the customer understands your product's superior value, no business will be done until the customer feels sufficiently comfortable and secure. You need to investigate how your development project can help your company to:

- Provide references or testimonials from satisfied clients.
- Offer guarantees and warranties.
- Offer trial periods to mitigate the customer's perceived risks.
- Be transparent about any limitations or poten-

tial challenges the customer may encounter.

By making the unrivaled customer value of your new product clearly visible for customers and addressing rational and emotional factors influencing purchasing choices, your company can effectively guide customers through their decision-making process and turn prospects into buyers.

8.3 Delivery, turning receivers into users

Once a purchase is made, the customer enters the recipient phase. Customers often want the new product delivered immediately after making their purchase. The key word here is precision. I define precision as:

- **Precision is supplying the correct information and delivering the right things at the right time and in the right way.**

How the product is delivered provides an opportunity to increase value for the customer.
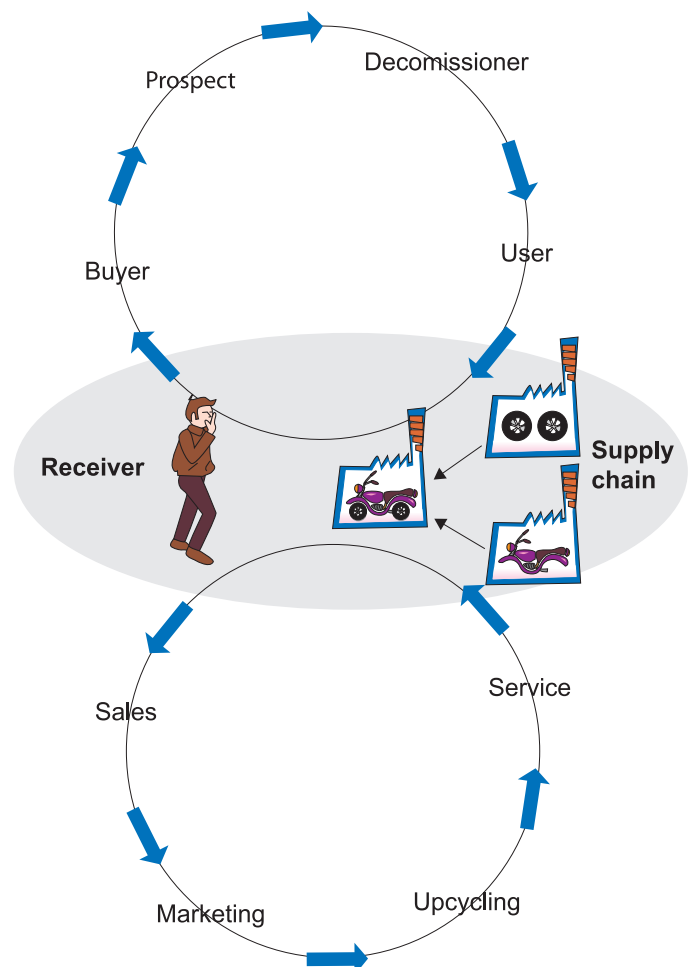
A classic example is IKEA, the Swedish chain of furniture stores. Using a clever knockdown design and a compact package, the furniture could be picked up directly at the store, transported, and assembled by the customers. A good example of a WoW factor.

Opportunities may be identified by investigating the following during the delivery phase:
- What is the customer doing?
- What are we doing?
- What are other players doing?
- What could be changed to create more value for customers?

When customers can't receive a product immediately, ensuring that the waiting period is positive becomes essential. Providing customers with quick, accurate, and reliable information about the expected delivery time is crucial. Clear communication helps customers feel informed and in control, allowing them to plan and organize their work effectively around the anticipated arrival of the product.

Customers place a high premium on delivery precision, especially when your product is integral to their workflow or business processes. For these customers, the delivery timing can impact their operations and productivity. High delivery precision not only offers greater flexibility but also helps to minimize waste. When deliveries are accurate and timely, customers can better allocate their resources and avoid unnecessary costs associated with overstocking or last-minute changes. The Just-in-Time (JIT) concept exemplifies the importance of delivery precision.

In product development, there are numerous ways to influence delivery precision. One practical approach is to design a product that can be easily sourced from multiple suppliers. This strategy enhances flexibility and minimizes the risk of supply chain disruptions. The system architecture, previously discussed in the Solution Domain, is pivotal in enabling delivery precision.

In addition, a modular product design can also contribute to delivery precision. Companies can reduce lead times and improve responsiveness to changing demand by designing products with interchangeable components and modular architecture. This approach enables easier product maintenance, repair, and upgrading, enhancing delivery precision.

8.4 After-sales and service, turning users into loyal customers

The customer's experience as a user has the largest influence on the company's future image and business. Positive experiences that meet or exceed expectations are the best guarantee customers will return to do more business. The key concept the product must fulfill in this touchpoint is outstanding quality. I define quality as:

- **Quality is the ability of the product to deliver the expected value over time.**

This is the product's ability to perform expected functions at an expected resource consumption for the customer. This makes quality a concrete,
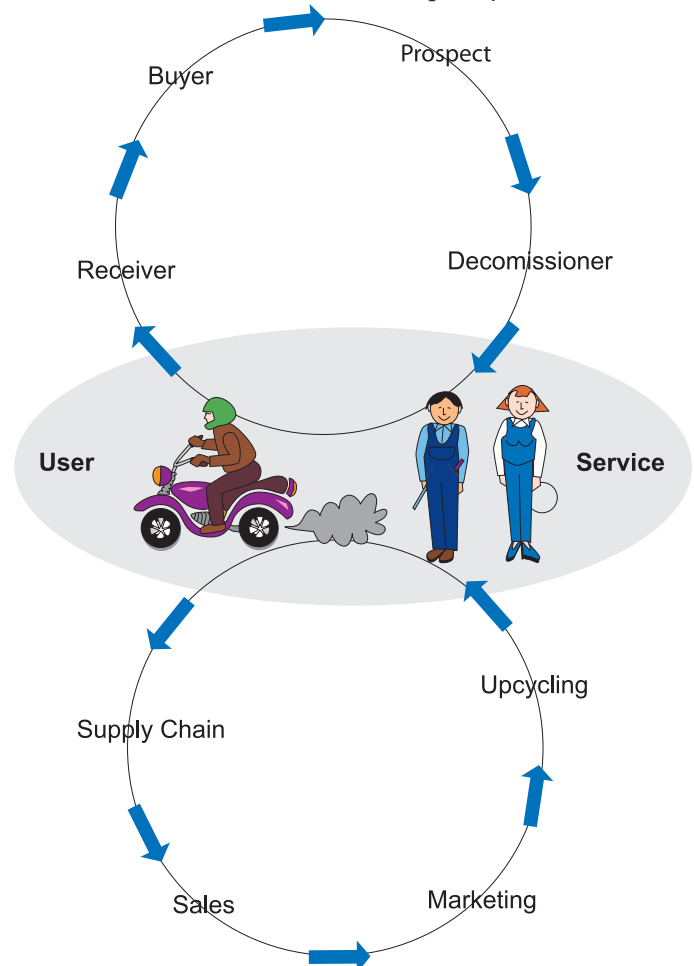
practical, and measurable concept. I also believe this is the generally held understanding of the concept by customers. A product that works well for a long time has higher quality than a product that works less well or works well for a shorter period. In the same way, a product that has lower operational and maintenance costs than expected is considered to be of high quality. In contrast, a product that has higher costs than expected is considered to be of poor quality.

A key aspect of quality concepts often overlooked is the ratio between promise and delivery. A product's ability to meet customer expectations is crucial. If you promise" the moon" in marketing and sales to secure more business, but the product fails to deliver on those expectations, the customer's perception will be one of poor quality. This is true even if your product is objectively superior to the competition. If your product does not live up to the expectations your company has created among customers, it will damage credibility and tarnish your image.

Accordingly, as early as in the development stages, the goal must be to create a product that guarantees problem-free customer usage. The analysis is clarified if divided into a few natural phases as follows:

• Getting started with the product
• Running and using the product

Satisfaction of customer needs
Use of customer resources

Customer expectations

High Quality

Low Quality

Time
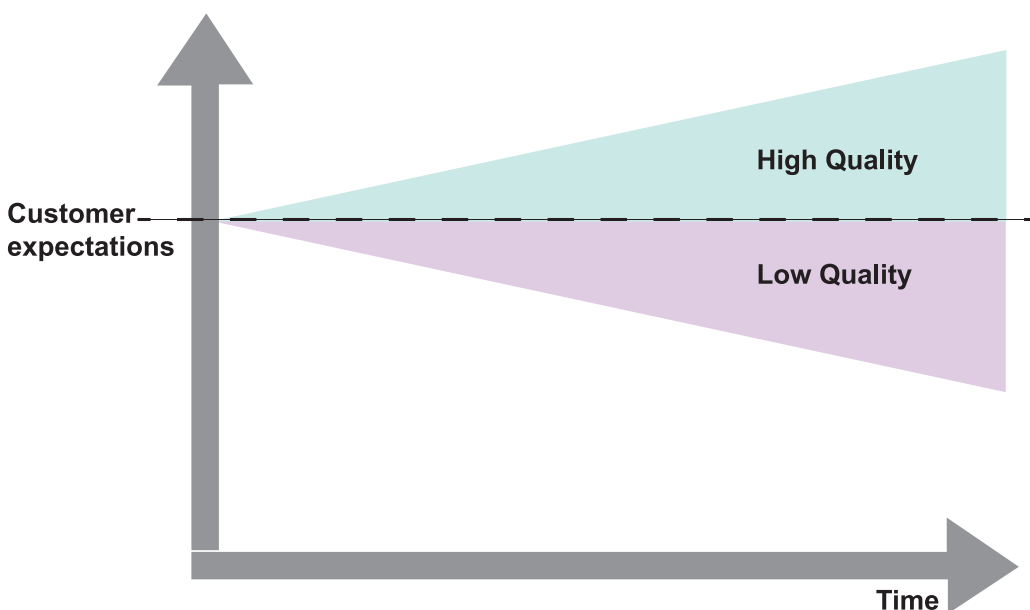
Designing products that are easy to service is wrong. You should design products that don't need any service.

• Changing, updating, and maintaining the product
• Stopping and shutting down the product

Ideally, the product itself should be capable of supplying the information required to get started. The first impression created often sticks. Can you honestly say that you do not almost always put the user manual aside and get on with it? It is fun as long as it works. However, it often does not work, and there's nothing else for you but to open the user manual. A book that is sometimes so full of technical terms that it is more or less impossible to understand.

Instead, you should design user interfaces so that each detail and control indicates its function. Properly using shapes, pictures, colors, and symbols is the key to success. The poka-yoke philosophy is the right way of designing your product. It should always be easier to do it right than wrong. Solving a complex step for the customer in the user manual is begging for customer complaints.

It is not unusual to discover that users, in reality, do not use the product in the way described in the manuals or as expected by the producer. This can only be discovered by studying the actual users in their own environment.

You may have to revisit the customer and needs domains to ensure your new product has solved any such issues.

How often have you not been an-

noyed when an error message appears on your screen? "*The program has performed an illegal operation and will be shut down*," and you are only offered two choices. Stare idiotically at the error message or confirm it is OK. No apologies, regrets, or instructions on solving the problem. Ensure that your new product eliminates all such sources that cause customer irritation.

Energy consumption is one aspect that must be considered when creating a new product. For the customer, this can be synonymous with the majority of the operational costs of the product. Added to this are the harmful effects of high-energy consumption in the form of emissions and other environmental burdens. Many WoW products are noticeably better than their competitors in this area.

Changing, updating, and maintaining the product. Under this heading, two completely different scenarios can be defined:
• service and maintenance
• updating and improving.

The first topic applies to those occasions when the product requires service. An undesirable situation as value temporarily vanishes. Extending the time between services is the obvious way to increase customer value.

Some companies still protect their lucrative spare parts sales by creating proprietary interfaces incompatible with industry standards. However, this approach can backfire, as it often corners customers into a limited and disappointing experience.

Instead, you should focus on creating an open product compatible with spare parts and consumables from other manufacturers. This can be achieved using standard interfaces, whether physical, electrical, or logical. To protect your spare parts business, you should instead focus on being competitive in availability, quality, and having a fair price. Also, the product should be designed so that service and maintenance can, as far as possible, be carried out without any special tools or specialized competence.

The second case deals with when the product needs to be improved or updated. I believe this is a prominent area for profitable after-sales activities. I have always been surprised by the lack of interest from various companies in exploring business opportunities in this area. I have never been offered the opportunity to upgrade my washing machine, refrigerator, dishwasher, or car. Instead, they seem to have a business model that forces me to throw away the old one and buy a new one. There are endless opportunities to create a WoW brand by creating such products. The throwaway era and the companies with this business model must be thrown away. **Our planet and environment demand it.**

Stopping and shutting down the product. Sooner or later, all products must be stopped or shut down for shorter or longer periods. The reason can be that they require upgrading, modernization, or decommissioning, or the customer does not require the functions supplied. A good way of creating more value for the customer is by developing features that simplify stopping the product and guaranteeing that it does not downgrade when it is out of service. Another way of providing more value is if the product shuts itself down when there is a risk of crashing, personal injury, or if malfunction is imminent.

8.5 Upcycling, turning loyal customers into repeat buyers

The decommissioner phase or End-of-Life, where customers decide to discontinue the use or dispose of the product, is often overlooked. However, it presents a valuable opportunity for companies to promote sustainable practices like recycling or upcycling. Additionally, this stage provides a chance to collect feedback on the customer's experience.

For a long time, the goal in this phase was focused on recycling. The idea was to design products where the materials and resources could be recycled and reused in other, often lower-grade, products. I now believe this goal is misguided.

• **Upcycling is the ability of the product to be reused multiple times in the commercial cycle, often with a higher value than the original.**

Designing products that can be recycled is wrong. You should design products that can be upcycled.
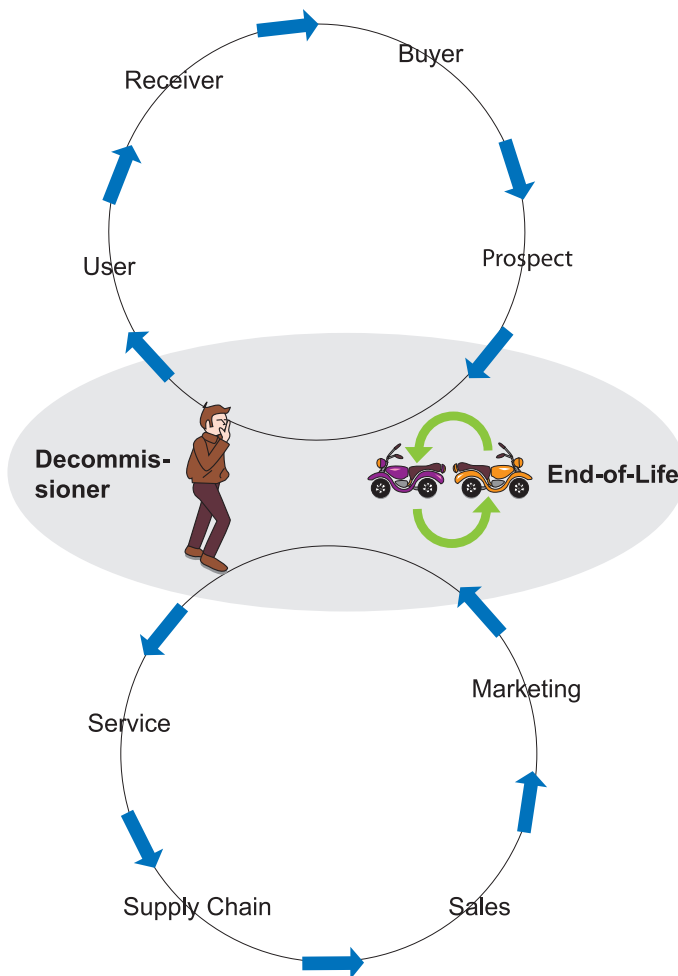
Instead, the focus should be on upcycling the product. The products should be repaired, upgraded, and improved to be returned to customers. Some companies I have worked with have adopted this philosophy. They offer buy-back programs, where customers can trade their old products for refurbished ones. They are offered the same guarantees as new products but at a lower price.

As sustainability becomes increasingly important to consumers, incorporating upcycling into business processes can enhance the customer experience while addressing environmental concerns.

8.6 Summary Design the processes.

To deliver exceptional customer experiences, you must make sure that your new product supports and delivers in the following areas:

Image
Your new product must radiate your company image. Contribute and ensure your company will possess an essential value concept in the target group's minds. An image that launch and marketing can use to turn the target group into prospects.

Value
Your new product must have a visible and compelling value proposition. Deliver exceptional customer satisfaction with minimal use of customer resources. A value proposition that sales can use to turn prospects into buyers.

Precision
Your new product must have a system architecture and be built so you can achieve a high level of precision in delivery. Precision in the supply chain and delivery process that turns receivers into users by delivering the right product at the right time and in the right way.

Quality
Your new product must be designed to maintain the expected value over time. Deliver expected functions and performance with the expected use of customer resources. Exceptional quality in the product and after-sales process turns users into loyal customers. Remember not to create more expectations in marketing and sales than the product can deliver.

Upcycling
Your new product must be designed to be refurbished to its original or higher value, reducing waste and promoting sustainability. Upcycling that will turn your loyal customers into repeat buyers.

These five aspects are critical to creating not one but several WoW factors for your customers.