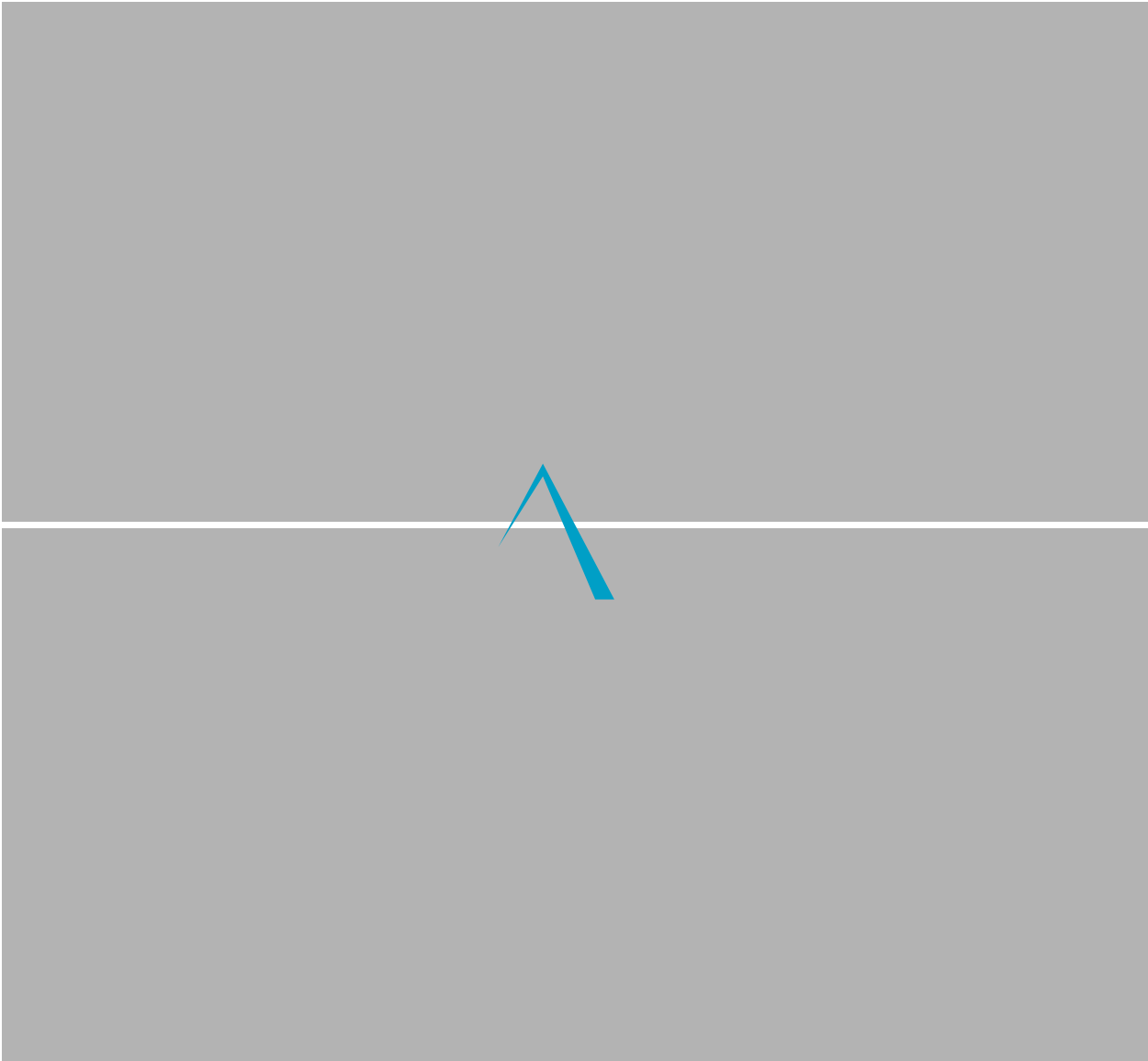




Technology and the Religion of the Customer

mindAmp Viewpoint





Technology and the Religion of the Customer

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| <p><i>The religion of the customer forces technology agnosticism.</i></p> | <p>It seems like behind every rock these days there's a technology fanatic wanting to frantically evangelize on the benefits of the latest microprocessor, platform, operating system, system architecture, language, development environment, parser generator, development methodology, database, networking protocol, object model, and so on. All too often these fanatics make martyrs of first their peers (or employees) and customers, and then themselves, as the latest technology turns out not to be the rapture that they had expected.</p> |
| <p><i>What's the difference between a technology fanatic and a terrorist?</i></p> | <p>We have a different perspective. We have replaced the religion of technology with the religion of the customer. We use a rigorous process to build a pareto analysis of the customer's requirements, and then choose a technology based on the results of that analysis. Technology bigotry isn't a factor; customer bigotry is the only form of preference allowed.</p> |
| <p><i>You can negotiate with a terrorist.</i></p> | <p>This customer bigotry translates into an overwhelming passion for results.</p> |
| | <p>Passion for Results and Bomber Pilots</p> <p>To illustrate our different perspective, we often tell the story of two bomber squadrons. The pilots of the first bomber squadron were sent on a mission to bomb a bridge. They ran into rough weather and a fierce anti-aircraft defense. 50% of the pilots were able to hit the bridge; 50% missed the bridge.</p> <p>The pilots of the second bomber squadron were sent on a mission to bomb a different bridge. They too ran into rough weather and a determined defense. As with the first squadron, 50% of the pilots were able to hit the bridge and 50% missed the bridge.</p> <p>The difference in this situation became obvious only when the pilots of each squadron landed back at base. The pilots of the first squadron were ecstatic. Both the pilots who successfully bombed the bridge and those that missed the bridge celebrated their acumen at various skills involved with bombing. "Did you see the way I climbed after I released my</p> |



*Success means
achieving the
customer's objective,
not achieving
some technical
theory of glory.*

bombs?" said one while another exclaimed "I was able to fly under the bridge!".

The pilots of the second squadron responded differently. The pilots that successfully hit the bridge celebrated a successful mission completed. The pilots who missed the bridge didn't celebrate, but instead focused on the mistakes made that caused their bombs to miss the bridge and resolved themselves to hitting the bridge the next time.

If you've spent any time at all working with product managers and software developers, you can recognize which "squadron" each would fit into in this story. Many product managers celebrate shipping a product without ensuring that it meets all of the requirements for which it was designed. Many software developers celebrate internal attributes of their tools or their software without concern for meeting schedule or quality goals. We don't do that. Our success is our customer's success.

Not Just What, But Why

The "religion of the customer" is based on gaining a deep understanding of the business goals and operations of the customer. This means that we must become incredibly well-versed in the marketing, sales, services, and development challenges of each of our customers.

In order to do this, we have to know why a customer wishes a solution, product, or service developed rather than just what the customer desires. Our goals assessment process, which is the discovery and engagement process we use when we first engage a customer, is designed to root out the underlying belief structure of the customer. Once we understand this, we are able to use our business and technology skills to develop a set of structured recommendations for that customer.

All too often companies engage consultants to tell them what they already know. The difference between mindAmp and most consultants is that mindAmp always brings new knowledge to our customers and we follow that up with aggressive, rigorous, and disciplined plans that we execute.

Technology Opinions

Of course we have opinions concerning technology. We have a number of technology preferences, primarily based upon our views of the overall information technology marketplace. Here are a few examples



- ⌘ We prefer reusing existing code than writing code from scratch (note: think about how rare that really is!)
- ⌘ We prefer XML to proprietary storage techniques.
- ⌘ We prefer Business Objects products for advanced business intelligence applications.
- ⌘ We prefer Oracle relational database technology for high-bandwidth, high-reliability database implementations and prefer Microsoft SQL Server relational technology for less demanding, more price-sensitive database implementations.
- ⌘ For very high-end decision support applications with very large (over 200GB currently) databases, we prefer NCR's Teradata database; otherwise for less demanding decision support applications we prefer the Oracle database.
- ⌘ We prefer Microsoft Visual C++ and Microsoft's COM+ for Microsoft-based homogeneous environments and prefer IBM's Java implementation and Iona's CORBA implementation for heterogeneous environments.
- ⌘ In Microsoft environments, we prefer Microsoft's MFC and Rogue Wave's Stingray components for traditional, fully featured clients and we prefer Microsoft's ATL for lightweight client components.
- ⌘ We prefer Microsoft's IIS for Windows NT- and 2000-based web servers and Apache for all other web servers. Of course, we've written proprietary embedded web servers for customers who had requirements that neither IIS nor Apache (nor other Web servers) could handle.

The religion of the customer means that the customer's needs are paramount.

Obviously, we could go on and on. Because all of us at mindAmp have worked in so many different environments, in so many different situations, for so many years, well-formed opinions regarding the merits of different technologies are easy to come by. But we're different because we don't allow these opinions to get in the way of the unique needs of each customer and that customer's project. The religion of the customer means that the customer's needs are paramount.

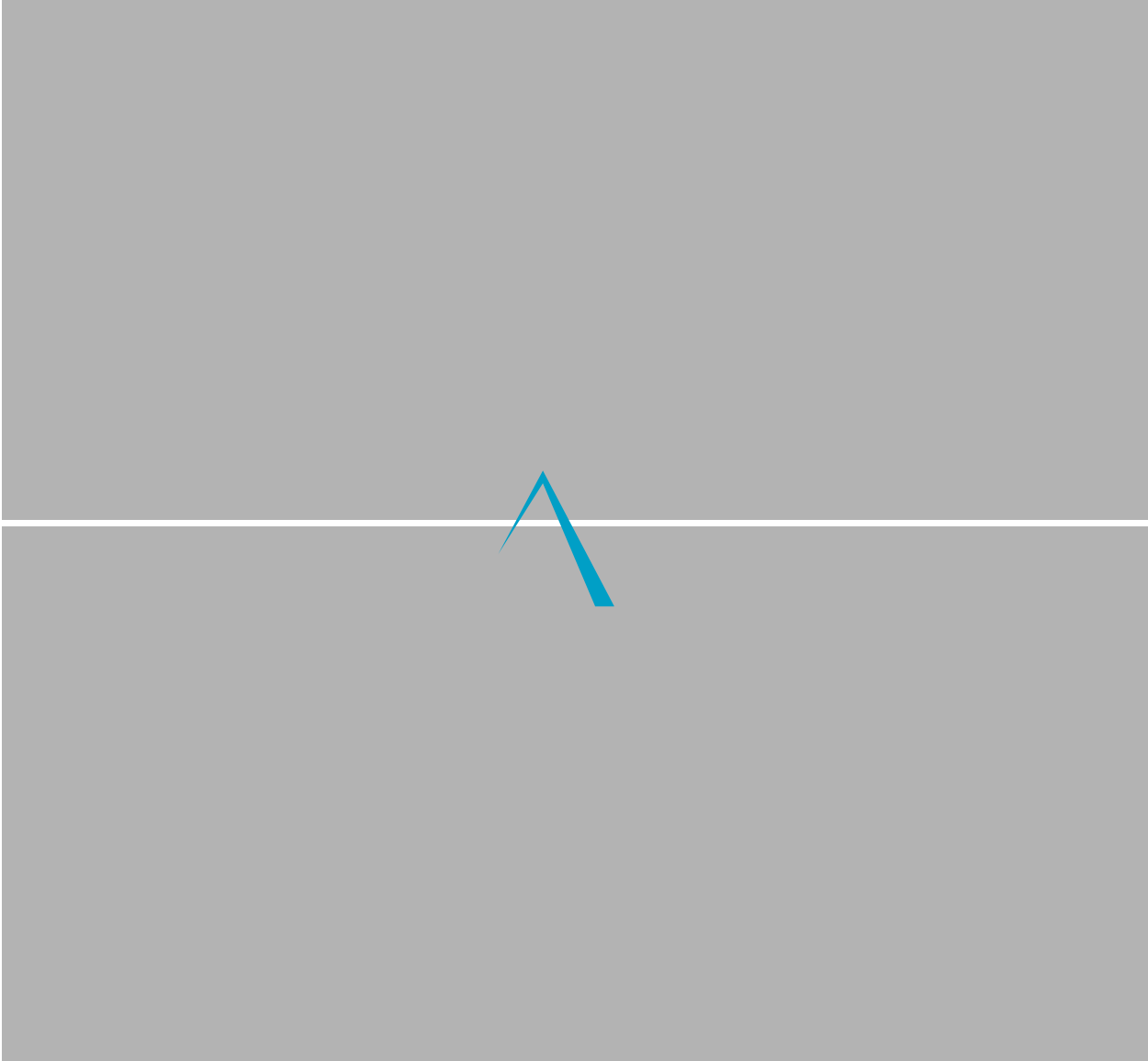


*fewer, richer,
engagements*

Differentiation

Why are our views on technology and the religion of the customer so different than most software services companies? The fundamental reason is that most software services companies are based at their core on a transactional model. This means that their ability to attract increasing number of customers and thus an increasing number of transactions to fuel their revenue growth plan is their most important objective. This is a transactional model rather than a relationship model, regardless of the protests of almost all companies that they are relationship-based. mindAmp is built around the concept of fewer, richer engagements and upon growing revenue by continually increasing our value to our customers.

This difference in business model translates to a fundamentally different set of operating principles. The “bait and switch” principles of most software companies is the most obvious difference. With regard to technology, the difference is that while other companies view core competencies in technology platforms and products as something to nurture and protect, we instead view our understanding of the customer’s business goals and environment as a key core competency coupled with our ability to quickly learn and adapt to new technology platforms and products.





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