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# Focus On The Journey, Not The Map

*3 minute read*

**The process of mapping is where true real value lies.**

Over the last three years I have been fortunate enough to coach hundreds of marketing executives across New Zealand through the Marketing Association. In my experience, I have noticed some very consistent trends in the questions I'm asked: 'what map should I use? Service blueprint, experience pathway? Where do I start? How do I know how to approach the map?'. Herein lies the issue - despite how impactful and brilliant the visual representation of your journey map can be, true value is not actually in the map itself. This is just one shiny artefact.

In fact, the true value is in the art of the doing. It's in the journey taken, the design thinking workshops, the insights and the challenging of internal assumptions. It's the bravery to do things differently, with a process to match that can bring about change.

It is my observation that maps can quite quickly become a smokescreen diverting from the real value. Getting your organisation on the journey needs to be the focus for any professional. That is where the true value lies.

**The 'Post Map' Phase is critical.**

It is likely that your organisation has dabbled in this process before, perhaps not generating the outcome sought after. Why is that?

Rather than just another piece of artwork to add to a wall, mapping done right is a living and breathing artform, fluid and iterative. Too often customer centricity is seen as a destination to reach, which is why many businesses fail to bring about the change they seek. They run out of steam or operational challenges take centre stage.

However, mapping (if one is focused on the art of doing) continues and shows up in prioritisation sessions, workstream selections, roadmap delivery, excellent project management and sometimes even recruitment and restructure. All of which are required to pivot an organisation towards customer centricity and keep the journey alive. Too often this stage is

overlooked, and the impact can be to fall into apathy instead of action. If Covid has taught us anything it is that leaping into the uncertainty of new ways of working is critical and journey mapping can free up your teams to do so.

### **Businesses who adopt are more profitable.**

Another trend I hear is that companies are unsure how to get the wider business to embrace doing things differently.

Research by Forrester indicates that businesses who place customer journey mapping at the core of their strategy and tailor their organisational structure around this are twice as profitable and sustainable.

This is not surprising - the reason mapping has been around since the 1990's (service blueprints for example) is because it works. The process of systematically reviewing the intricacies of a journey and optimising for both customer and business, enables companies to narrow down on their goals, remove costly experience inefficiencies, identify new revenue opportunities and refine internal KPI's and roadmaps. Not too shabby.

The key is to have the right people in the room. Too often mapping is given to one individual to execute or put on a new job title which limits its effectiveness from the very beginning.

Putting mapping at the heart of C-suite conversations can seem somewhat indulgent. Yet, the commercial and operational value can be significant, and I encourage all senior leaders to embrace the art form as they seek new ways of doing things in this new normal.

So, how can you make the journey worthwhile?

#### **1. Shape your map and then move on**

Remember that mapping doesn't have to be complex. There is no one size fits all. Just because you may have mapped in a particular way in the past doesn't make it right for your business today. Decide on a structure that works for your context today and move on into action.

#### **2. Name the myths that hold you back**

Get real about the current state of customer centricity within your business. Identify the myths that exist and seek to bust them through research. In my experience these often get in the way of change and hold professionals back from feeling they can make a difference.

### **3. Enrol your mapping advocates early**

Identify who your internal champions, evangelists and sponsors are. Ideally let them self-enroll. If you are the sponsor ensure you have a cross functional team obsessed with an aligned mission. Who are your people that spend most time with the customer? Get them in your team.

### **4. Identify if cultural change is required**

Culture must be primed and ready to embrace the journey. How primed are your people? Prioritise the job to be done here and don't leave it to the last minute.

### **5. It has to come from within**

Get external help to ignite the process if internal alignment is challenging But remember, growth only unlocks when the internal collective truly own and take it forward.

Journey mapping isn't about the map, it is about the journey and people being in action.

Start bringing your people together today.

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