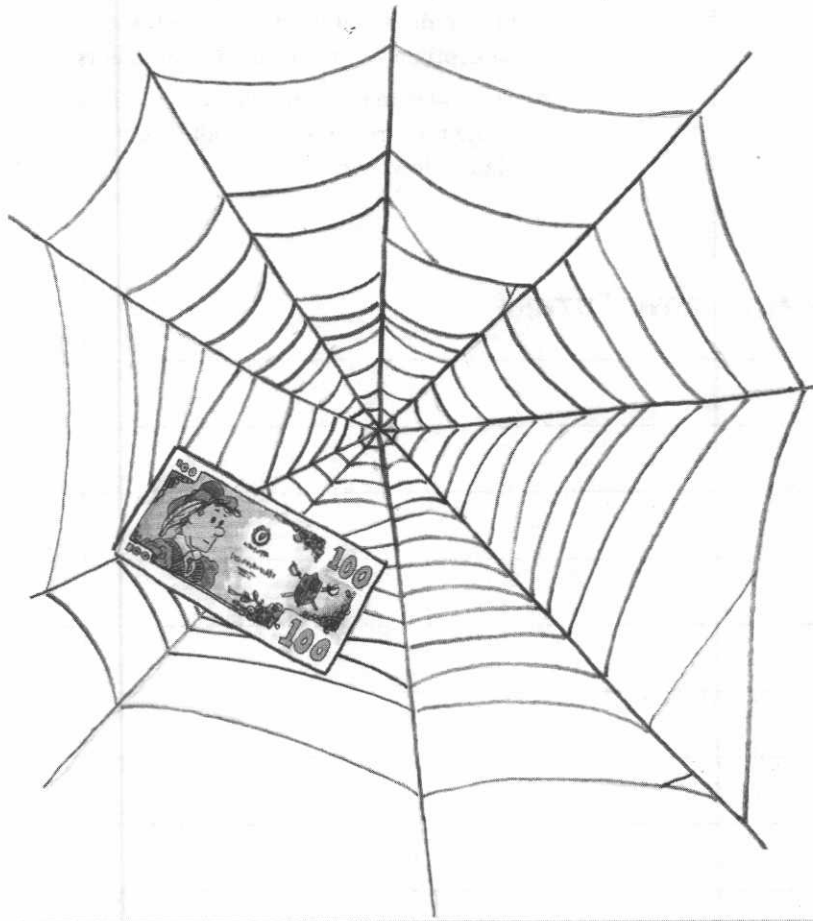


Spider Web



Understand Product Relationships

All products and services coexist within a larger context of an ecosystem of related, complementary, and even competitive products and services. Unfortunately, product designers often fail to recognize and leverage the relationships within this ecosystem. This often means they miss innovative opportunities to create happier customers *and* capture more revenue. The *Spider Web* game helps you understand how your customer sees the relationships between your product and service and other products and services. You can then use this information to capture more revenue by creating innovations around these relationships.

One kind of innovation occurs when you realize that you can do more with your current product. This discovery often leads you to change your product's boundary, or the demarcation between your product and other products, or between recommended and actual usage. Of course, the creator of the product or service is not usually the person who discovers the new usage. I don't think that Proctor and Gamble intended for Bounce Fabric Softener Sheets to be used for dissolving soap scum from shower doors or for wiping up sawdust from a woodworking shop, but these are common alternative uses for Bounce.⁴

Another kind of innovation occurs when you realize that you can create a better total solution by establishing partnerships between your offering and other offerings. A

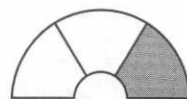
financial-services firm might partner with an estate-planning firm to create a better total solution for families with young children. A yogurt maker might partner with a cereal manufacturer to create a healthy new snack that leverages both brands. A human resources software vendor might integrate its application with a payroll provider to eliminate errors that occur through redundant data entry.

THE GAME

Put the name of your product or service in the center of a circle. Ask your customers to draw other products and services that they think are related to your product. As they draw these products and services, ask them to tell you when, how, and why these are used. Ask them to draw lines between the different products and services. Encourage them to use different colors, weights, or styles to capture important relationships (for example, important relationships can be drawn with a thicker line or a different color pen). The *Spider Web* game works well with the *Start Your Day* game. After your customers review when and where they use your offering, you can explore in a subsequent session the various relationships that exist between the different products and services that they use throughout the day.

WHY IT WORKS

Although you may think you have a solid understanding of how your product or service relates to other products and services, chances are your customers have a different



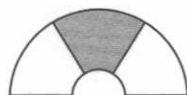
Open-Ended Exploration



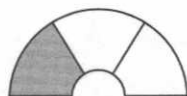
Time Frame of Action



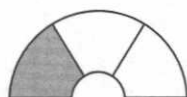
Scalability



Customer Preparation



Market Preparation



Physical Preparation

4. See <http://mountainsurvival.com/bounce.html> or <http://www.asktheladies.com/the-magic-of-fabric-softener-sheets.htm>.

point of view. By helping you understand these relationships from their perspective, *Spider Web* helps you capture more revenue by showing you webs of potentially unknown relationships.

Spider Web is partially inspired by a requirements-analysis technique called *context diagramming*. Context diagramming was originally created to show the data that flows between a given software system and other entities with which this system communicates. These entities can be people, other software systems, physical devices, electromechanical devices, other sensors, and so forth. Context diagrams are a useful tool, usually created by business analysts trained to interpret the perceptions of a customer and who usually manage to make their context diagrams look very neat and tidy.

Skilled professionals who create context diagrams often face special challenges when working directly with customers. One challenge is that customers tend to create pretty messy diagrams, especially when working in groups, and the messiness can make business analysts uneasy. Another challenge is that because business analysts have often studied the problem domain before working directly with customers, they bring their own expectations of how the diagrams should look to the game. The worst situation is when business analysts attempt to guide customers into creating diagrams that match their expectations (“Don’t you think your car should be drawn with a connection to your portable music player?”). The best approach in this situation is to include your business analysts as observers and empower your facilitator to keep them quiet during the game.

Spider Web, on the other hand, encourages customers to directly draw *their* view of the relationships. And because the real world isn’t a neat and tidy place, customer-generated diagrams tend to get messy. Wonderfully messy. Realistically messy. Messy in a way that helps you understand the real opportunities for genuine innovation.

PREPARING FOR THE GAME

The key step in preparing for *Spider Web* is preparing the kinds of relationships you’d like customers to explore. Suggestions include the following:

- **Corporate relationships**—How your customers perceive relationships between your company and other companies they use, which is useful in identifying potential partners and enhanced service opportunities. Example: Customers may perceive or desire a relationship between the manufacturer of laundry detergent and the manufacturer of a washing machine.
- **Location/environmental relationships**—The relationship of your product to the environment or location in which it is used, in all facets of use. Example: Laundry detergent has location relationship with a washing machine (typically nearby) and area of the home where laundry is done.
- **Operating relationships**—The relationship of your product to other products it uses, leverages, or requires to accomplish the total task of your customer. Example: Laundry detergent has an operating relationship with a washing machine.

- **Human relationships**—The relationship of your product to the people who may or do use it. Example: Laundry detergent is used typically used by the person putting dirty clothes into the washing machine.
- **Role relationships**—The relationship of your product to the people who interact with it based on various roles. These relationships are often correlated with various process steps and/or responsibilities within a corporation. Example: Laundry detergent may not be used by the person folding the laundry.

This is not an exhaustive list, and you should carefully consider the specific kind

of relationships you want to explore while preparing to play *Spider Web*. It is best to present two to four possible relationships to customers and let them choose which they want to explore in greater detail.

Create one or two spider webs in your internal product team before doing this exercise with customers. You'll find that the results are probably useful in their own right, and it will prepare you for what you might see from your customers.

Materials

There are no special materials for this game.

The Universal Remote Control Warm-Up Exercise

The "ideal remote control" warm-up exercise can help customers better understand the goals of this game.

"What does your ideal universal remote control look like? What do you want it to be connected to or control in your house or apartment?"

Get customers started by drawing a simple remote control connected to a few devices and invite them to complete the picture.

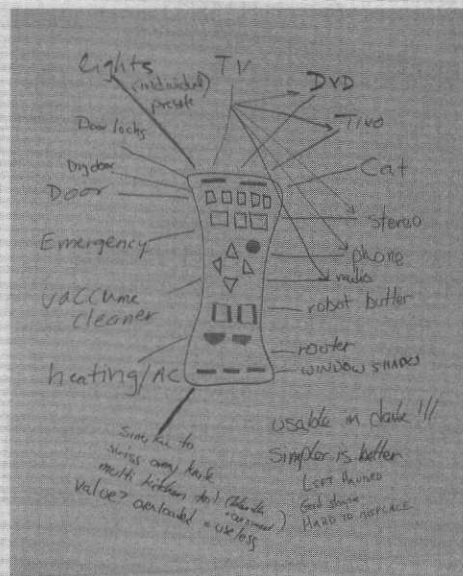


FIGURE 2.9 Universal Remote

PLAYING THE GAME

Give customers the option of working alone or in teams. Although the game typically produces the most interesting results when customers work as a group, the nature of exploring relationships can be personal, and some customers will be more comfortable working alone.

Encourage your customers to draw lines with different colors, weights, and styles. Annotate the lines with as much information as possible; more information fuels innovation and helps you in post-processing the results.

Encourage your customers to include any affected company, system, role, or person. When you review these diagrams with your customer, ask them for names, titles, motivations, and so forth.

You may find that your spider web resembles a process-flow or supply-chain diagram. That's okay.

Try putting the *Spider Web* game together with the *Start Your Day* game by asking customers if they can think of or can draw different webs at different times of the day, the week, the month, or the quarter.

Try varying the location of where the product is used when asking customers to draw their web. Do you think business executives would draw the same spider web for a laptop computer when they're using it on a plane as compared to when they're using it in their office or at their home?

When your customers are finished creating their spider webs, ask them to describe the webs to the group. Encourage customers to directly ask questions and see which customers resonate with various relationships.

PROCESSING THE RESULTS

The relationships captured in *Spider Web* diagrams don't often provide definitive answers. Instead, they provide starting points for further, more detailed discussions. Here are some questions that you can use to help you process the results:

- What kind of entities are related to your product? Are they people? Objects? Locations? Conceptual ideas? Other companies? How can you leverage these relationships to create more revenue?
- What kind of relationship was created by your customer? Are you sharing work products or artifacts, as in a supply chain? Are the products sharing data?
- Do the entities represent areas you should explore to gain a better understanding of your customer? Keep in mind that anything you find surprising should be strongly considered for further exploration.
- Do the relationships represent current reality? Are they part of a planned future? Or do they represent a potential future?
- What happens if you change the focus of control between your product and other products drawn by your customer?