

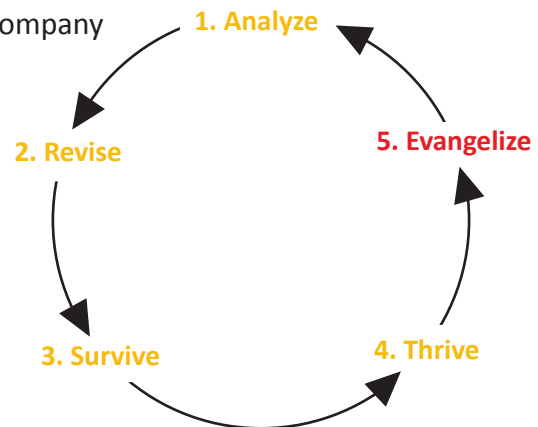
The Stranger in a Strange Land Series:

Five Steps to Services Leadership in a Product-Centric Company

Step Five: Evangelize

By James A. Alexander, Ed.D.

Successfully leading a professional services organization in a product-centric company is not for the faint of heart. Learn what works.



In Step Four, Thrive, I shared a few key steps on how to make your PSO flourish whether your product organization is successful or not! Now it's time to share the fun stuff. Now that you've built up the necessary credibility and consistently delivered large amounts of profitable revenue, it is time to take things to the next level. As Frank Sinatra used to crone, it is time to "start spreading the news." I will provide some actions you can take to preach the gospel of services throughout your entire organization—how to evangelize the power of being a services-led business.

Find the Figures

Senior management is a data-driven group, so the first step in concocting the case is building the base by finding the figures. To convince senior management, you need quantifiable examples of the trend toward services and the contribution of services to profitable revenue, as well as war stories of product-centric organizations that have made the move from product-centric to services-led. Three approaches help yield this information.

First, start with published studies. If done by reliable sources, they can capsulize key data to make your business case. Look for the reputation of the source, the recency of the data, and the relevance of the information.

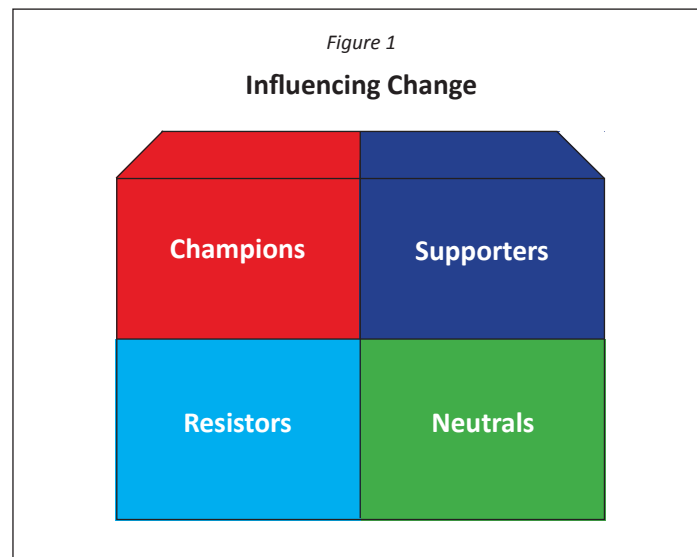
Second, do an online search of industry players, top competitors, and other organizations held in high esteem by your top managers. Check their financials over the last three years, looking at services revenue as a percentage of the overall business. Read annual reports to learn their perceptions of issues and the services opportunity. Do a search of recent press releases, speeches, etc. to gain insight as to their stance on services. All this can build the services case by demonstrating the trends, opportunities, and possible competitive threats of organizations deemed important by your top brass.

Third, if you think more close-to-home information is needed, do your own market research. Use the voice of the customer to nudge the need and to drive the decision to a more services-led business.

Prioritize the Players

The change you are preaching (from product-centric to services-led) is a major transition, one in which some people will perceive that they will win or they will lose power and/or prestige. There is no way around human nature. Therefore, you must understand this phenomenon in your organization and proactively deal with it. You need to develop traction—a critical mass of influential people who will support your services quest.

Just like any savvy key account executive trying to penetrate an important customer, you need to take a hard look at the key players within your organization. First, identify who they are and think through what you know about their attitudes toward services. Next, plot them on the Influencing Change diagram (Figure 1).



Sadly, you probably will have a Resistor or two. Resistors will fight your services initiative, sometimes aggressively. One negative voice from a key stakeholder is often all it takes to kill an initiative, so it is essential to eliminate their resistance. Think about the business issues and personal needs of players in this box, and try to come up with ideas that will move them to the Neutral block. Do whatever you can (within reason) to make the services more acceptable to them. Realistically, you will never get these people to be services champions or even supporters, for that matter. Just be happy if you can deafen a negative voice.

Although Neutrals won't actively support the move to services, they won't resist it either. Your internal selling strategy here is to nudge them along to become a supporter. Again, think through what is most important to people who are Neutrals today, and try and make them Supporters tomorrow.

Supporters will do what their classification implies—support the move to services. They are already on your side and will back your initiative when asked. The strategy here is to get them to be much more proactive, to become a Champion—a flag-waving, pulpit-preaching advocate of the services dream.

Champions are worth their weight in gold. One strong recommendation in a presentation coming from a respected player is worth 20 of your speeches, so nurture and help this select group any way you can.

Build Your Brand

Another very powerful way to evangelize services is to create personal relationships with key clients—those who have the attention of senior management. Actively pursue jointly writing articles about these influential players and presenting case studies about their services success at conferences. Better yet, ask those key clients to jointly write an article with you or co-present at an industry show. This is powerful communication! Make it a point to get to know the movers and shakers in the marketing and industry space you play in. Make your personal brand a part of your industry leadership. Make yourself indispensable.

Market the Message

Start a scrapbook on stories of organizations that “get services right” (the Professional Services Journal is a great source), and circulate it to internal players. Take senior managers to attend industry shows (such as AFSMI summits and Arizona State University’s Center for Services Leadership symposiums) to get better indoctrinated into services. Invite services experts into your organization to share best practices with the true believers (you and your staff) and to separately brief senior management on the global services trends, opportunities, and business implications of transitioning to becoming services-led. Furthermore, these outside services thought leaders can frankly discuss your organization’s overall “services readiness” with your organization’s leadership to help give them the impetus and the direction for change.

Henrik Moeller-Christensen, director of services and support, Canon Business Solutions in Europe, knows the importance of marketing the services story internally:

“Historically, we have done a very good job of building our traditional product-support organization. Senior management knows our contribution to both customer satisfaction and profitable revenue. We now are leveraging that past success as we make the business case to get serious about value-added and professional services. I have personally been finding every opportunity to present the services potential to managers within corporate headquarters and within all our country organizations. In addition, I’ve brought in an outside services expert to tell the services story. Having a highly credible outsider share the benefits of services is a great help in changing the mindset of my senior management colleagues of this mainly product-centric company.”

Sounds like great advice to those of us ready to get serious about helping lead the services transition.

The step of Evangelize is all about changing the game from product-centric to services-led. It is the “once-in-a-career” opportunity to be at the forefront of major organizational change, to lead a transition that can ensure the success of your company. So find the figures, build your brand, prioritize the players, and market your message. This is your chance to truly be a services champion!

This concludes the five-part (Analyze, Revise, Survive, Thrive, and Evangelize) “Stranger in a Strange Land” series.

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