

## Human Infrastructure Magazine: The Limits Of Customer Use Cases



# What Customer Use Case Stories Mean To You

**By Ethan Banks**

Technology marketers promote customer use case stories because they show a product being used in real life. Here at Packet Pushers Heavy Industries, we like these stories because they take products out of the land of unicorns and place them a little closer to reality. When one of our sponsors asks if it's okay to bring a customer along, we're generally in favor.

Customer use case stories are also comforting to those investigating a product, because it lets people know they aren't the first. "Hey, look! Some other company is using this product. And they're willing to talk about it publicly. Must be OK."

Well...maybe.

## **Do You Care?**

The question is, do you actually care that someone else is using product X? Maybe, but you have to place the customer and their use case into your own context.

**Does the customer look like you internally?** Different companies have different business models and operational processes. How closely does the customer in question look like your company?

**Does the customer have similar problems?** Companies (should) install technology because it solves a problem they have. Does your company have a similar problem?

**Does the customer match your industry?** Often, products tend to map well to specific industry verticals. A product doing well for health care might not work as well for higher ed. A product doing well for financials might require some wrestling to function in retail.

**What is the customer's relationship to the vendor?**

Customers with big buying power influence the direction of a product. Therefore, it's worth knowing whether the

customer financed the product, or whether they bought it off the shelf. It could be that the product works well for them because they helped bring it to life. That might be good for you, or might mean the product has gone in an odd direction that won't work well for your organization.

**How is the customer's IT department staffed?** Products can be made up of marvelous technology, but that's only relevant if your company can put that tech to use. In large IT shops, there's a decent chance the company has the staff to make use of a new product. Do you have enough folks? Over the decades, I've observed several large technology purchases that didn't improve IT operations simply because the company lacked the staff to extract the product's value.

## **Dig Deeper**

A customer use case story helps a product pass the sniff test. Yes, smells okay--there's maybe something worth investigating. In short, the customer use case story means that a product might be worth evaluating.

Then, you can dig a little deeper. Ask qualifying questions and carefully consider the answers. If you get satisfactory answers, bring the product in for an evaluation and see how it fits in your specific world.

## Licensing: It Goes Both Ways

**By Greg Ferro**

Software licensing is all the fashion right now in our hit-driven Enterprise IT model. Our biggest IT vendors have been told that the future of their money is recurring revenue.

Why? Because public clouds are making bowza bucks from renting computers, and IT vendors want some of that 'styling' in their 2018 range of products.

How to do you make recurring revenue out of a router or switch? In the past, vendors charged a large sum of

money for a permanent software license, around 30-50% of the total solution cost.

So the easy answer is to change from permanent to yearly licensing. That's simple enough.

But the temptation has proved too great for vendor product managers, who have turned the licensing process into a complex and arcane procedure.

Today's network licensing schemes are mind-boggling time wasters. Few engineers want to become a 'vendor licensing expert', and the mindless tedium of working out which features or functions are included in the license can crush your soul.

Sales grunts love these schemes because they provide endless reasons to interact with the customer and thus influence/control the decision-making process.

Network professionals are not experienced in licensing negotiations, so vendors exploit this weakness by foisting overly broad licenses onto customers who have little understanding of what they are buying.

## **You Can Push Back**

The other side of licensing is harder to see. You still pay full price for hardware on day one but only a partial fee for software. Once a year, you have a chance to 'review' the license status.

The sales grunts will see this as an opportunity to maintain customer control, but you can take this opportunity to push back on the vendor.

Have they delivered on their promises? Why are you paying money if bugs haven't been fixed? Where are the features that were promised? (You did get it in writing, didn't you?)

## **You Can Go Elsewhere**

When I look at current licensing models, I think the public cloud is attractive. I don't get harassed by sales grunts upselling licenses or negotiating maintenance contracts. The cloud providers have to make licensing straightforward.

So why didn't we get this model earlier? In the early 2000s, Cisco made a substantial marketing push around the message of "Cisco is a software company" because IOS software is the heart of networking.

In reality, Cisco was facing stiff competition from Bay Networks & 3Com and attempted to move the message away from hardware to software to differentiate the value of the proprietary IOS CLI.

It never worked out because Cisco sales grunts found it easier to shift metal than to sell intangible software features. Because Cisco rose to domination, few people in networking are familiar with licensing models.

But we aren't stuck with the status quo any more. There are two alternatives to traditional vendors:

- 1) Move stuff into the public cloud
- 2) Consider open source software

Both are challenging options, but dealing with vendor licensing is probably harder.

# Thanks Internet

All kinds of things wash up in our social feeds. Sometimes they're funny.



**Martin Williams**  
@Martin1Williams



This brings back memories

[Original \(Englisch\) übersetzen](#)



4:21 nachm. · 15 Feb. 18

# Internets Of Interest

Links to stories you might find interesting, curious, enraging, or otherwise worth your time.

## How It Became Normal to Ignore Texts and Emails - The Atlantic

Just because we can respond immediately to texts, emails, Slack messages, chat windows, and other forms of written communication doesn't mean that we do--and sometimes that can freak people out. [This piece from The Atlantic](#) looks at how not responding right away may carry a subtext that the would-be responder isn't aware of (or maybe they are!)

I didn't realize how fraught non-verbal communication could be. Now that I know, I've got some old emails I need to get back to.

[LINK](#)

# Google Data Center Execs Say Industry Headed for Talent Crisis - Data Center Knowledge

The Web site Data Center Knowledge [reports on comments](#) made by two Google executives at a conference about a talent crisis poised to hit the data center industry.

*"Data center leaders tend to hire from their existing professional networks, which today consist primarily of middle-aged white men, they said. As we've [reported before](#), many of those men are fast approaching retirement age, while few young people enter the profession – dynamics that make for an unsustainable talent pool."*

The Google executives spoke of an industry-wide need to diversify the workforce, attract more women and minorities to STEM fields, and adjust hiring practices to help eliminate implicit biases and unconscious behaviors that narrow the pool of qualified workers.

[LINK](#)

# Recent Podcasts

## The last 5 podcasts published on Packet Pushers

- [Datanauts 127: Found On The Internet Series 4](#)
- [Network Break 177: Dell Launches New Branch CPE; Sonic In The Spotlight](#)
- [Show 382: Whitebox In The Enterprise With Pica8 \(Sponsored\)](#)
- [BiB 037: Emulate Big WAN Links with Apposite's Netropy 100G](#)
- [Datanauts 126: Stephen Foskett On Storage, Containers & Cloud](#)

[Subscribe to the podcast on iTunes](#)

[Subscribe to the podcast via RSS](#)

# Did We Miss Something?

Got an link or an article to share? Email it to  
[humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net](mailto:humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net)

## The End Bit

Sponsorship and Advertising - Send an email to  
[humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net](mailto:humaninfrastructure@packetpushers.net) for more information. You could reach 4,985  
people.

**Human Infrastructure is bi-weekly newsletter with view, perspectives, and  
opinions. It is edited and published by Greg Ferro and Drew Conry-Murray from  
PacketPushers.net. If you'd like to contribute, email Drew at  
[drew.conrymurray@packetpushers.net](mailto:drew.conrymurray@packetpushers.net).**

We don't give away your email address or personal details because that would suck.

Copyright © 2018 Packet Pushers Interactive LLC, All rights reserved.

[Unsubscribe From This List](#) | 95 Hidden Lane, Northfield, NH 03276