Writing customer promises

Customer promises help you frame the overall impact of your project, not just specific feature sets.

Every piece of work that anyone on the project does, no matter how big or small, must somehow support your customer promises.

Drawing from your vision statement

A vision statement isn't a plan; it's a direction and a value system.

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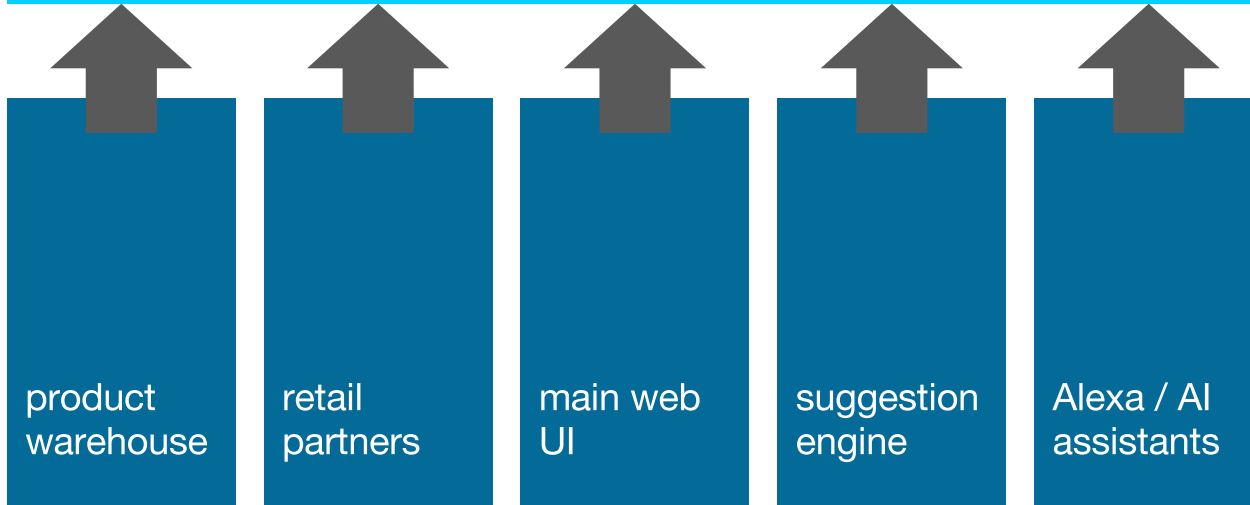
A vision statement isn't a plan; it's a direction and a value system. You have to break it down into a clear plan of action. **Think about your vision — what are its components?**
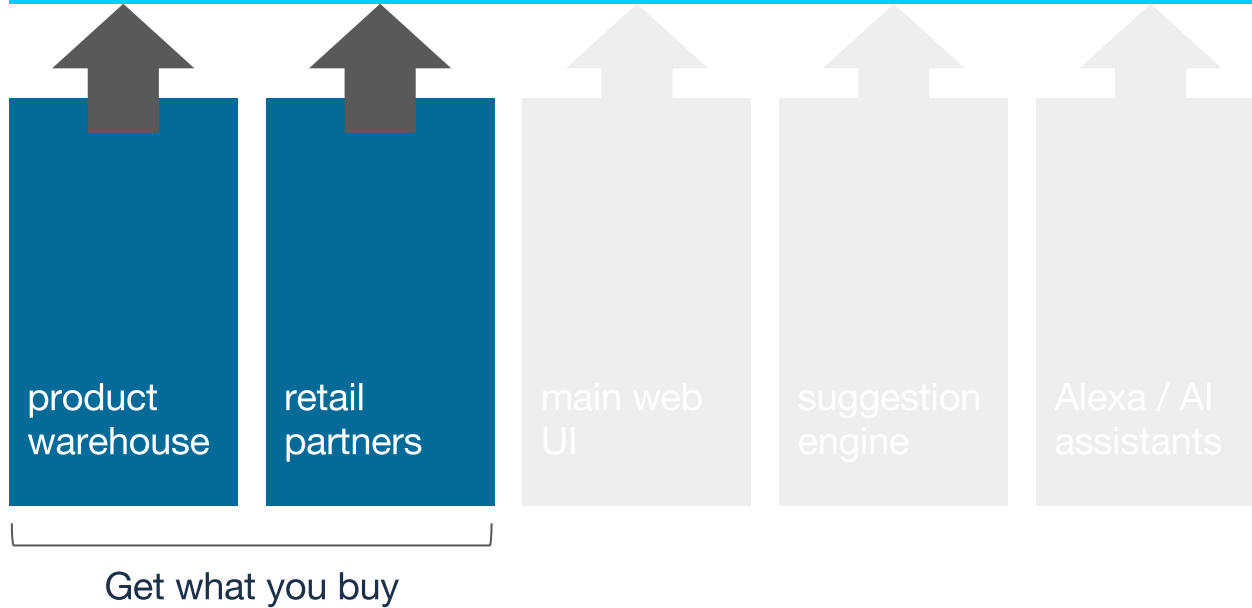
Example (Amazon):
Our vision is to be earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.

a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online

a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online

| product warehouse | retail partners | main web UI | suggestion engine | Alexa / AI assistants |

a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online

product warehouse

retail partners

main web UI

suggestion engine

Alexa / AI assistants

Get what you buy

a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online

product warehouse

retail partners

main web UI

suggestion engine

Alexa / AI assistants

Find & buy

a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online

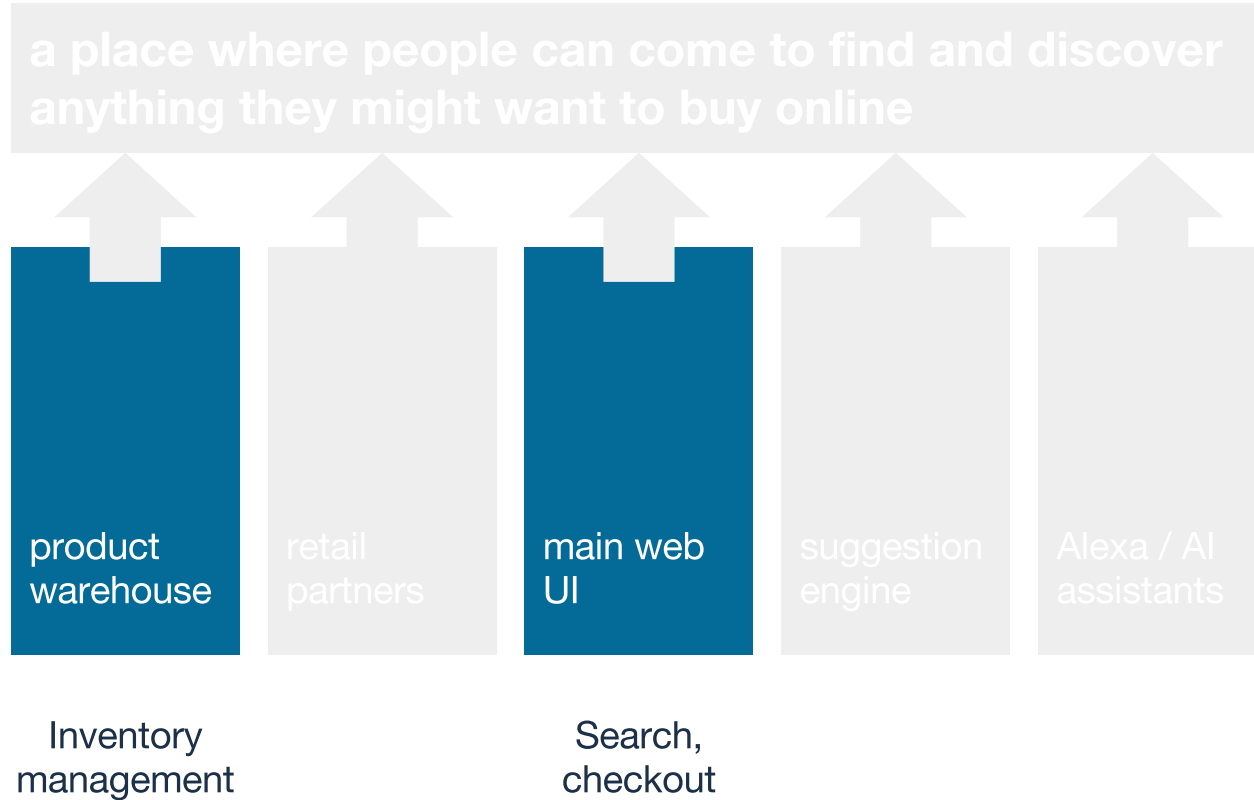| product warehouse | retail partners | main web UI | suggestion engine | Alexa / AI assistants |

Discover new products
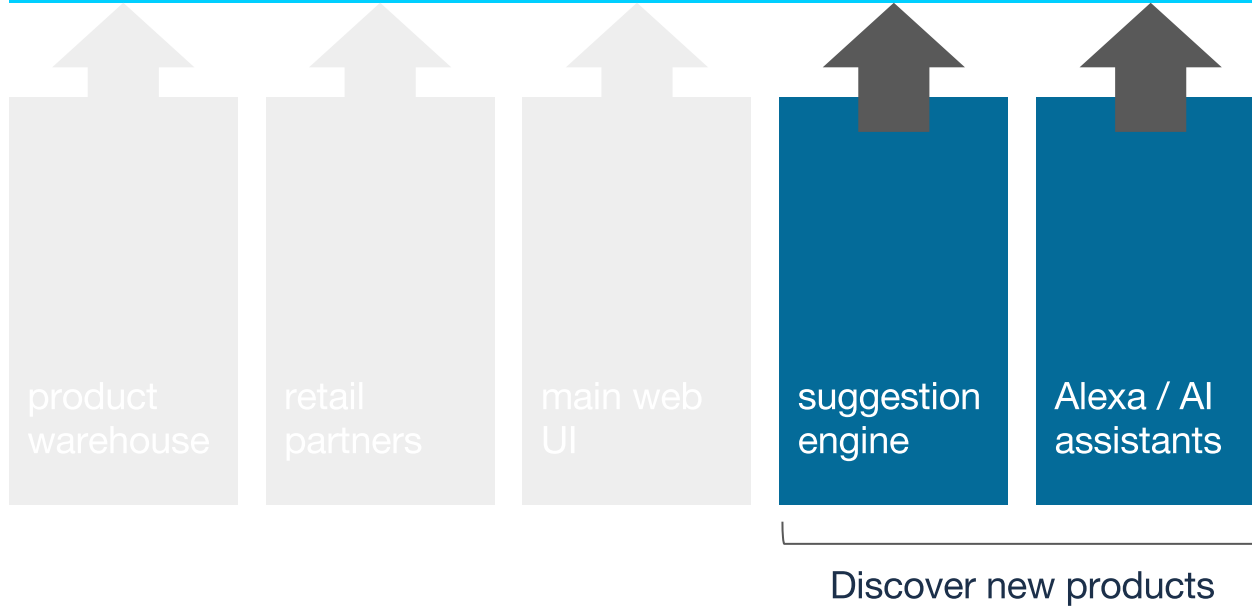
Drawing out customer promises

Now that we understand the pieces of the vision, let's look at the end user experiences that cut across them. These are the customer promises.

Customer promise:
An Amazon customer can find and buy a product stocked by Amazon.

Product work:

a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online

| product warehouse | retail partners | main web UI | suggestion engine | Alexa / AI assistants |

Inventory management

Search, checkout

Customer promise:
An Amazon customer can discover useful and interesting new products.

Product work:

a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online

| product warehouse | retail partners | main web UI | suggestion engine | Alexa / AI assistants |

Inventory products that can be suggested — Surface suggested products — Find products to suggest — Learn user's needs

**Customer promise:
An Amazon retailer can promote new
products to customers.**

Product work:

a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online

product warehouse	retail partners	main web UI	suggestion engine	Alexa / AI assistants
	Inventory products	Surface suggested products	Match products to users	Learn user preferences

Practice

Writing out your customer promises

What are the core components of your vision? Think in terms of services that you can provide to your end users.

Who are your end users? Do you have more than one group? What do they want to use your product to *do*? These high level workflows are your customer promises.

Using customer promises to drive development

Once you have customer promises, what do you do with them?

PM rule of thumb:
When in doubt, prioritize.

Which customer promises do you need to knock out of the park? Which ones just need to get done? Which ones are nice-to-haves?

Then think about timing.

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Then think about timing. There are customer promises that naturally fit together, because they rely on shared infrastructural work. **Even if they're different priority levels, it makes sense to group them.**

From there you can create a rough roadmap for your product.

From there you can create a rough roadmap for your product. **Try not to have too many customer promises in play at any one time — your team needs to be able to keep track of what promises they're working on!**

Remember:
Every piece of work that anyone on the project does, no matter how big or small, must somehow support your customer promises.

That means that each of your work items should be explicitly connected to the customer promise(s) that they support.

That means that each of your work items should be explicitly connected to the customer promise(s) that they support. **And, barring exceptions, the team should only work on items that support customer promises that are currently in play.**