

In 2003, the company that I ran built and operated small sized systems for others. There were no big systems, these were more of the £100k — £2M scale covering a few million users. Our clients usually wanted to write a detailed specification of exactly what they needed to ensure we delivered. That doesn't sound too bad but even at this small scale then some of the components in these projects would be in the uncharted space and hence no-one knew exactly what was wanted. Unfortunately, back then, I didn't have the language to explain this. Hence we built and operated the systems and inevitably we had some tension over change control and arguments over what feature was in or out of a particular contract.

During one of these discussions, I pointed out to the client that we were sitting around a table arguing over a piece of paper but not one of us was talking about what the users needed. The contract wasn't really the customer here; the client's end users were. We needed to change this discussion and focus on the end user. I suggested that we should create a metric of value based upon the end user, something we could both work towards. The idea fell on deaf ears as the client was pre-occupied with the contract but at least the seed was planted. It wasn't long after this that another project provided an opportunity to test this idea. The client gave me a specification and asked how much would it cost to build? I replied — *"How does free sound?"*

They were a bit shocked but then I added *"However, we will have to be paid to operate the system. We need to determine a measure of value or worth and I'll get paid on that"*. There was a bit of um and ah but eventually we agreed to try out a method of worth based development.