

Whilst having user needs is a great start, just knowing the needs doesn't mean the stuff will now build itself. There are other things involved and this is what we call a value chain. It can be simply determined by first asking the question of "what is the user need" and then by asking further questions of "what components do we need in order to build this capability?"

For example, in the case of our online photo service, once the basic user needs were known then we could describe our top level capabilities, our top level components. We could then describe the subcomponents that these visible components themselves would need. The best way I've found of doing this, from practice, is to gather a group of people familiar with the business and huddle in some room with lots of post-it notes and a huge whiteboard. On the post-it notes write down the user needs and the top level capabilities required to meet them. Place these on the wall in a fairly random order. Then for each capability, using more post-it notes, the group should start to write down any subcomponents that these top-level components will use. This can include any activity, data, practice or set of knowledge.

For each subcomponent further subcomponents should then be identified until a point is reached that the subcomponents are now outside of the scope of what you're mapping. Power doesn't need to be broken down any further if the company consumes it from a utility provider. By way of example, to manipulate online digital photos needs some sort of online digital photo storage component. This in turn needs a web site which in turn needs a platform that in turn needs compute resources, storage resources, an operating system, network,