

Due to this flow, then the best way I've found for determining user needs is to start by looking at the transactions that an organisation makes with them. This will tend to give you an idea of what it provides and what is important. The next step is to examine the customer journey when interacting with those transactions. By questioning this journey and talking with customers then you will often find pointless steps or unmet needs or unnecessary needs being catered for. Another mechanism I've also found to be exceptionally useful, especially when your users are in fact other corporations, is to go and map out their landscape. In most cases I find these users have a poor idea of what they actually need. If you're a supplier to such a company then discussions tend to degenerate to things they want and things they think are necessary rather than things they need. By mapping out their landscape, you can often clarify what is really needed along with finding entire new opportunities for business.

Discussion and data collection are a key part of determining user needs and so talk with them and talk with experts in the field. However, there is a gotcha. In many cases they turn out to be both wrong! Gasp? What do you mean they're wrong? There are two important areas where the users and the experts are usually wrong in describing their own needs. By happenstance, both are crucial for strategic gameplay.

The first area is when a component is moving between stages of evolution e.g. when something shifts from custom built to product or more importantly from product to commodity (+utility). The problem is that the pre-existing installed base causes inertia to the change. Invariably users will be fixated on a legacy world and hence they will