by Leahanne Hobson, Founder, Alinea Partners Consulting

We recently completed some research on the Top 30 Cloud Solution Providers (CSPs) in Europe and here are some things I found interesting:

Confusion

Who is the target customer? Or the expected Buyer? Many of the Cloud offers are perfect for small and medium businesses, but the language used is highly technical versus business oriented. It appears that many CSPs are using the language they use with their technology partners vs. the language of small and medium business owners or their teams. Many of these buyers – especially in the micro segments – do not even have a CIO. We in the high tech and telco worlds have been guilty for ages of talking to ourselves and using our own private vocabularies more than we communicate with potential buyers. It seems this is still happening.

 More Confusion There seems to be general confusion over products, a services and solutions.

- Products - physical entities that are manufactured from raw materials
- Services - non-physical entities that are often a result of the application of know-how, skills and technology
- Solution - a product, service, and often both that is delivered as a compound entity

There are many different definitions and the words are used loosely – sometimes just listing them all across the website and dropping down to 10s of different menu items. And amazingly, some CSPs are still selling 'Products'. Actually, when we looked, they were online services, but that just added to the overall mess.

There is more, but to keep this just to a summary…

The more confused a buyer is, the smaller the chance he or she will buy. Considering that buyers are anywhere from 66% to 90% of the way through their purchase journey using your website before they reach out to you (according to *Forrester*). And, 55% of visitors spend fewer

than 15 seconds on your website (according to
Chartbeat
), there are about 12 seconds to capture their attention.

Quite Clear - It takes less than 15 seconds to say ‘I’m confused...’ and leave.

Few Are Nailing Their Services Strategies

About 10% of the CSPs had services that focused on business outcomes. It shows they have really thought through ‘What is the value we can bring to our customers that will improve their businesses’ and ‘How can we get more invested into our customers’ businesses and build trust overtime.’

The majority of CSPs have a bit of a hodgepodge of services that are usually focused on values that sound like ‘brochureware.’ In an earlier post I discussed that today’s websites need to be selling vehicles (part of your salesforce) versus communications tools that host a lot of documents.

Of the CSPs that are getting it right, we are seeing a mid to long-term Services Roadmap that reflects a Cloud Managed to Adoption Services Model and could include …

- Adoption Planning Services
- Solution Design
- Build, Develop & Deploy
- Connectivity & Consumption Monitoring
- Consumption Optimisation
- Process Consulting & Optimisation
- Staffing Services

We’ve seen and collected a report on various services and deliverables under these service categories, but this is the direction CSPs are (or should be) moving.

Industry focus is about 50/50% with some focusing on industries while others appear to be appealing to individual buyers. Of those deploying this strategy, here are the industry offers covered (alphabetically):

- Construction
- Energy
- Entertainment
- Financial Services

- Healthcare
- High Technology
- Insurance
- K-12 Education
- Legal
- Manufacturing
- Nonprofit/Associations
- Restaurants
- Small and Medium Businesses
- Start-ups
- Transportation

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About Leahanne Hobson... With +15 years' management and field experience in the high technology and telecommunications markets, she has directed go-to-market strategies and new business development programs for global companies of all sizes. She has held European management positions for Avaya, IBM and Lucent Technologies.

In 2005, Leahanne founded **Alinea Partners Consulting**, a European new business development network (sales, channel and marketing) for telecommunications and high

technology companies. She works with a variety of companies in the telecommunications, high technology and financial markets on new customer acquisition, growth strategies and customer experience management she has also supported many companies recently as they change business models and plans to make them more competitive and profitable in the cloud computing market.

Clients include: Atieh International, Arrow, Alcatel-Lucent, Arrow Europe, Avnet Embedded, BASE (a KPN subsidiary), CCT Solutions, Capsuling, Cisco, Convergys Corporation, Dell, Fujitsu Technology Solutions, IBM, Intel, Lions Club Austria, Microsoft, NEC, Prediki, PilotLite Ventures, SaaSPlaza, Sun Microsystems, Tangoe, Telekom Slovenije/Aventa/SiOL, Trout Loud, UPC, miscellaneous financial investment firms, etc.

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