

Box On The Shelf: Positioning A Product

Structuring a product delivery

“Ability to” statements define what a product helps people do. Now we need to describe those capabilities in a simple way.

Our capability statements describe what the product helps a customer do: it casts a product in a series of ability-to statements in order to help us think about a product idea from a user’s standpoint.

Now, we’ll develop a simple way to present that value and idea to a customer, so that they can understand the benefits of our design.

Articulating value, simply

When a physical product is sold in a store, the box describes the benefits in a simple, quick manner.

Physical products are often stocked on a shelf next to competitors, and the box itself becomes the way a customer makes a purchasing decision. The box communicates value in a variety of ways.

- A large image of the product, acting as an emotional attractor
- A high-level product offering statement, describing what the product does in a simple and fast sentence
- A series of ability-to statements, cast as customer benefit statements
- Usage guidelines, showing how easy or powerful a product is

For example...



Product value promise

Customer benefits: capability statements, framed as colloquial characteristics

For example...

**iRobot®
Roomba®**

**iRobot®
Roomba®**




Smart
iRobot® 2.0 Navigation with Visual Localization helps Roomba® explore and efficiently navigate an entire level of your home, recharging as needed until the job is done.

Simple
The iRobot HOME App lets you Clean and Schedule conveniently—anytime, anywhere™. Or just press CLEAN on the robot.

Clean
The AeroForce™ Cleaning System with Carpet Boost provides up to 10x the air power™ of the Gen 3 motor on carpet and rugs, where dust and dirt hide.

Intelligent
Le système de Navigation iAdapt™ 2.0 avec Repérage Visuel permet au Roomba® de se déplacer efficacement à travers tout un étage de votre maison, se rechargeant au besoin jusqu'à ce que le nettoyage soit terminé.

Simple
Utilisez l'application iRobot® HOME pour programmer le nettoyage à votre convenance, n'importe où, n'importe quand™. Ou appuyez simplement sur le bouton CLEAN du robot.

Efficace
Le système de nettoyage AeroForce™ avec Accélérateur de Débit d'Air offre jusqu'à 10 fois la puissance du moteur de 3ème génération sur les tapis et les moquettes, là où se logent la poussière et le saleté.

Inteligente
La Navegación iAdapt™ con localización visual permite que Roomba® explore eficientemente y se recargue cuando es necesario, hasta terminar todo el trabajo.

Sencillo
La aplicación iRobot® HOME le permite programar y programar convenientemente, en cualquier momento y desde cualquier lugar™. O simplemente pulse CLEAN en el robot.

Limpio
El Sistema de Limpieza AeroForce™ con impulsor para moquetas proporciona hasta 10 veces más potencia de aire que el aspirador 3ª generación en alfombras y moquetas, donde se esconden el polvo y la suciedad.

Customer benefits: capability statements, framed as colloquial characteristics

**iRobot®
Roomba®**

**iRobot®
Roomba®**

Vacuum Cleaning Robot
Robot Aspirateur
Robot Aspirador

What is it?

We have a passion for helping you get more done every day. Just press CLEAN.
Notre passion est de vous aider à faire plus.

Simplicity Promise



Nos apasiona ayudarte a hacer más cosas cada día. Solo pulse CLEAN.



For example...

What is it?

RUGGED SOLAR
POWERED LIGHT
+ USB PHONE
CHARGER

PRO
INDOOR/OUTDOOR SOLAR LIGHT THAT IS PERFECT
FOR CAMPING AND ESSENTIAL IN A POWER OUTAGE

Implicit
Testimonial

THE SOLAR LIGHT USED BY MORE THAN 10 MILLION PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

Customer benefits: capability
statements, framed as colloquial
characteristics

45 HOURS
OF LIGHT PER CHARGE

24 HOURS
OF LIGHT PER CHARGE

50 LUMENS
AT FULL POWER

2.7 WATT
SOLAR PANEL

24 HOURS
OF LIGHT PER CHARGE

50 LUMENS
AT FULL POWER

2.7 WATT
SOLAR PANEL



For example...

A promise of simplicity



A promise of simplicity

**HANDMADE
DECORATIVE
PLANTER**

**EASY TO DO...
FUN TO GROW!**
Contains: • Handmade pottery planter
• Chia seed packet for 3 plantings
• Convenient plastic drip tray
• Planting and care instruction sheet

What is it?



Articulating value, simply

Digital products have a “shelf”, too. It’s their digital trail: homepage, social media, and more.

Most of our products are digital. We’ll borrow “box on the shelf” methodologies in order to describe our own competitive positioning, and to think about how we structure the delivery of our product to the market.

Specifically, we’ll cast our digital product offerings around simple statements of value, capability, and usage.

For example...

What is it? (Kind of...)

The best platform for cross-functional work

Want more efficiency in your organization? Asana is easy for all teams to use, so you can deliver quality work, faster.

Value promise

Get started

See how it works

OPERATIONS

These goals are on track

- Monitor budget 90%
- Train 10,000 employees 78%

The screenshot shows the Asana interface for a project titled "Annual planning". The left sidebar contains navigation options: Home, My Tasks, Inbox, Goals, Projects, and Annual planning (selected). The main area shows a timeline view for the month of March. Tasks are represented as colored boxes with arrows indicating dependencies: "Product OKRs drafted" (green) leads to "Stakeholder review" (blue), which leads to "Set targets" (pink). A vertical line marks "OKRs due" on March 17th. The top right of the interface shows 71 team members.

PRODUCT

Automatically send messages

Task marked Approved → Message Engineering

27 tasks

For example...

Drive or deliver Eat Ride

Get in the driver's seat and get paid

Drive on the platform with the largest network of active riders.

[Sign up to drive](#)

[Learn more about driving and delivering](#)

Value promise

The Uber you know, reimagined for business

A platform for managing global rides and meals, and local deliveries, for companies of any size.

A shifting business goal

This website uses third party advertising cookies to serve you relevant ads. You may opt-out from these third party ad cookies by clicking the "Opt-out" button below. If you have an Uber account, you may opt-out of the "sale" or "sharing" of your data [here](#).

Opt out [Got it](#)

For example...

Join over 700 million registered users who trust Dropbox

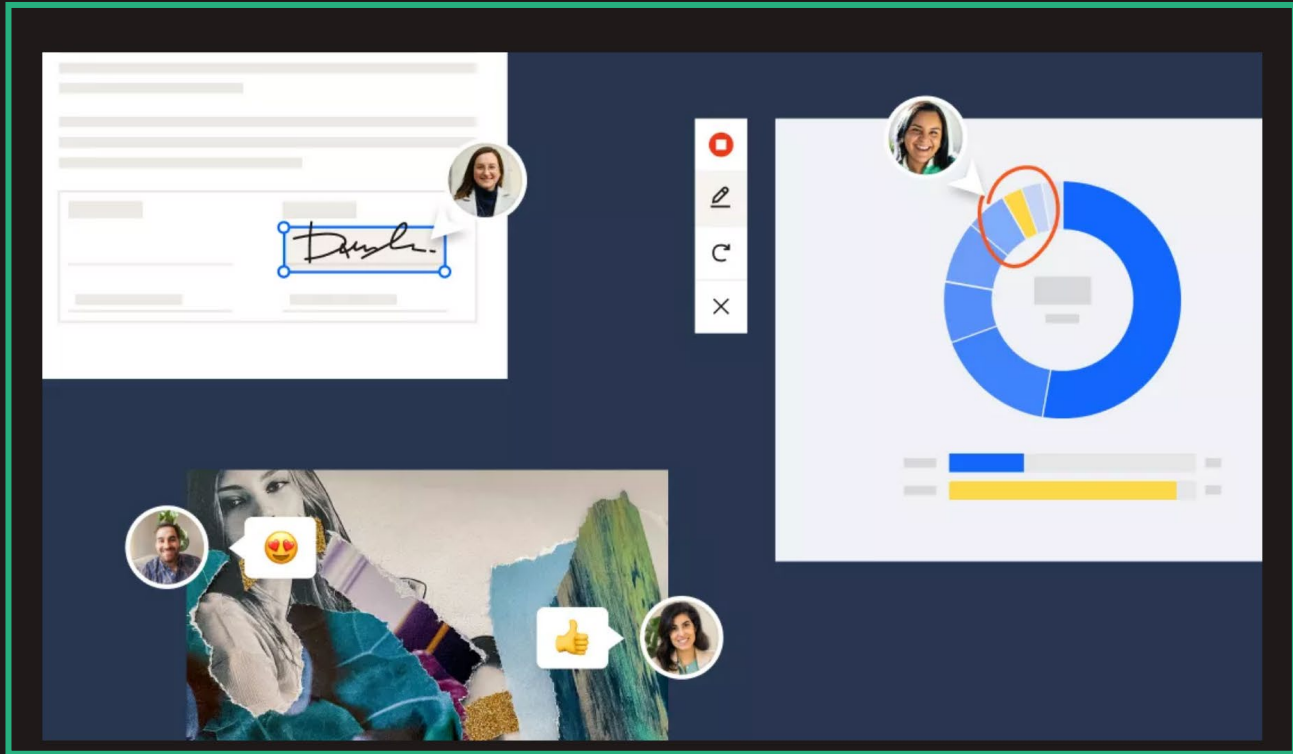
Emotional value promise

Easy to use, reliable, private, and secure. It's no wonder Dropbox is the choice for storing and sharing your most important files.

Find your plan →

Utilitarian value promise

No idea...?



Box on the shelf

To develop our positioning, we'll develop a front, side, and back of our “product box.”

Even though we've been creating digital products, we'll think about them as physical and design the three faces of the box. We'll create:

- The front. A high level product offering, captured as a single sentence, and an empowerment statement, summarizing our capability statements.
- The side. Three or four of our most important capability statements.
- The back. An articulation of how easy our product is to use, and how simple it is to gain value from the product experience.

Box on the shelf

We've already moved from design ideas to capabilities.

Design idea

Recall the top design idea from your 2x2 prioritization activity, and the corresponding goals.

A tool that helps students connect with alumni in order to get feedback on school work and gain tutoring and mentorship.

User goals

- A student wants to get help with their school work
- A student wants to gain confidence in their choices
- A student wants a supportive mentor
- An alumni wants to give back to their university
- An alumni wants to act as a mentor

Key questions

For each goal, ask yourself these questions:

- In order to achieve this goal, what behaviors need to change?
- In order to achieve this goal, what emotions need to change?
- In order to achieve this goal, what actions need to take place?
- In order to achieve this goal, what attitudes need to adjust?

Capabilities

- The ability to find an alumni that matches their interests and passions
- The ability to reach out to an alumni and ask for help
- The ability to explain the types of help they need
- The ability to volunteer to be a mentor
- The ability to learn how to be an effective mentor

Box on the shelf

Now, design the front of the box to focus on product value.

Alumni Connector

Connect with alumni and gain confidence in your academic journey

With Alumni Connector, you can find an alumni mentor so that you can learn about potential career paths and make better academic decisions.

Product name

Utilitarian and emotional value promise

Capabilities that deliver the most value

Box on the shelf

Design the box side to reinforce the most valuable capabilities.

With Alumni Connector, you don't have to go through college alone: get advice and gain confidence through one-on-one mentoring

Alumni Connector helps you find help from a resource that's already experienced similar situations

For mentors, Alumni Connector teaches you to be an effective coach to support students in their academic journey

Capabilities, framed as complete value statements

Box on the shelf

Design the back of the box to describe how the product works.

It's as easy as 1, 2, 3:

*Enter information about your college,
major, and interests*

*Get paired with a mentor who has
similar experiences and a similar
background*

*Gain confidence in your academic and
life decisions*

Really, really simple “How it works”

Box on the shelf

The whole story of value & capabilities:

Alumni Connector

Connect with alumni and gain confidence in your academic journey

With Alumni Connector, you can find an alumni mentor so that you can learn about potential career paths and make better academic decisions.

With Alumni Connector, you don't have to go through college alone: get advice and gain confidence through one-on-one mentoring

Alumni Connector helps you find help from a resource that's already experienced similar situations

For mentors, Alumni Connector teaches you to be an effective coach to support students in their academic journey

It's as easy as 1, 2, 3:

Enter information about your college, major, and interests

Get paired with a mentor who has similar experiences and a similar background

Gain confidence in your academic and life decisions

Tips

Keep the framing succinct, powerful, and user-focused.

Each of the items on the box should be as concise as possible. Think about “shelf appeal” – how much time would someone really spend with a box in a store? How can you optimize for that quick intervention?

When you frame the various statements, always think about the user or customer. What are their wants, needs, and desires?

Summary

Why are we doing this?

As a product comes to life, it's tempting to position the product competitively based on features. But competitiveness based on features ignores the user, and that often ignores value.

Thinking about the way a product is positioned on the shelf forces a consideration of value, and makes that value explicit in plain language.

By defining the box qualities, you are really defining the product qualities; these capabilities start to bring the actual product to life, even if you haven't built it yet.

Thank you!

jkolko@wonderfulnarrative.com