

WINNING WITH SUPPLIERS

DVP from the Customer Perspective

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A growing number of suppliers are focused on listening to, and working with customers. Sending out surveys no longer cuts it. Hiring a consultant once in a while to understand customer trends no longer cuts it. Spending more resources on ‘value pricing rather than value creation’ no longer cuts it. Today’s world requires a systemic and continuous approach to listening to customers that speeds a supplier’s ability to understand how they help their customers today and what can be done to help them more in the future. That’s what Differential Value Proposition (DVP) is about.

A number of papers have been published about DVP from the supplier’s perspective. The purpose of this paper is to inform the customer side of the supplier-customer interaction to answer this question, “should you as a customer engage in DVP with your supplier”? Before moving into what DVP is about here is what is meant by engage, what your supplier will be asking for from you. Your supplier will ask to spend 1½ hours with you, and perhaps others within your organization. They will have a structured way to listen to you about how they help your business and how they can help solve more challenges in the future. After the initial interaction, the supplier will provide you and others on your team with comprehensive notes from the session. Within a reasonable time, the supplier will let you know what they can do to help your business and what they cannot do. They will share execution progress and then have another conversation in a year or so to see if you are getting business results.

Here are the benefits to you:

- Getting the supplier’s organization aligned and thinking about the business from your perspective yields better decisions on product/service resource tradeoffs that matter to you.
- You may learn new perspectives from the supplier about how their products/services benefit your organization.
- Reinforces to the supplier organization what is valuable to you and therefore ensures their organization continues to maintain that asset.
- Establishes a metric to measure progress.
- Provides clarity on what the supplier is going to do, and, as importantly not do, thereby helping you to fill in gaps where necessary.
- Helps create a sense of timing and accountability on both sides for executing initiatives.
- Yields a scorecard of initiative actions that can be used to better demonstrate progress on both sides.

➤ STEPPING BACK: ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT FOR DVP

A 2012 study by the ISBM (Institute for the Study of Business Markets) sums up the context for DVP as shown in Figure 1. The ISBM is a collection of the leading thought leaders, from both industry and academia for non-consumer oriented business markets (otherwise known as Business-to-Business or B2B). The Number 1 trend is to: "More effectively quantify and communicate value created for customers...develop approaches to better understand what customers really need... find, sense, identify and assess new opportunities for organic growth." All critical to the success of any B2B organization.

The ISBM looks at the Supplier-Customer relationship through the lens of the Supplier. But what if you asked Customers the same question? This is where Valkre's DVP methodology comes to the forefront. When you pose a similar question to Customers about what is most important to them about suppliers you get two likely responses:

1. We want suppliers to ensure their products and services help us solve business challenges today
 2. We need suppliers to be investing in products and services that will help us solve future business challenges

The agendas of customer and supplier are similar: they both want products and services that solve real challenges today and smart investments to satisfy future challenges. This agenda is not new since the same could have and was said 20 years ago. So, what is new?

The answer: **SPEED!**

The speed of collaboration between customer and supplier necessary to stay ahead of competitive solutions in the technology fueled global market must improve dramatically. New approaches and tools are needed. That is the purpose of DVP. With the supplier's request to conduct DVP with you they are asking you to engage in an effort to speed up the pace of getting the two organizations onto the same page and getting to the business of solving challenges realizing benefits faster.

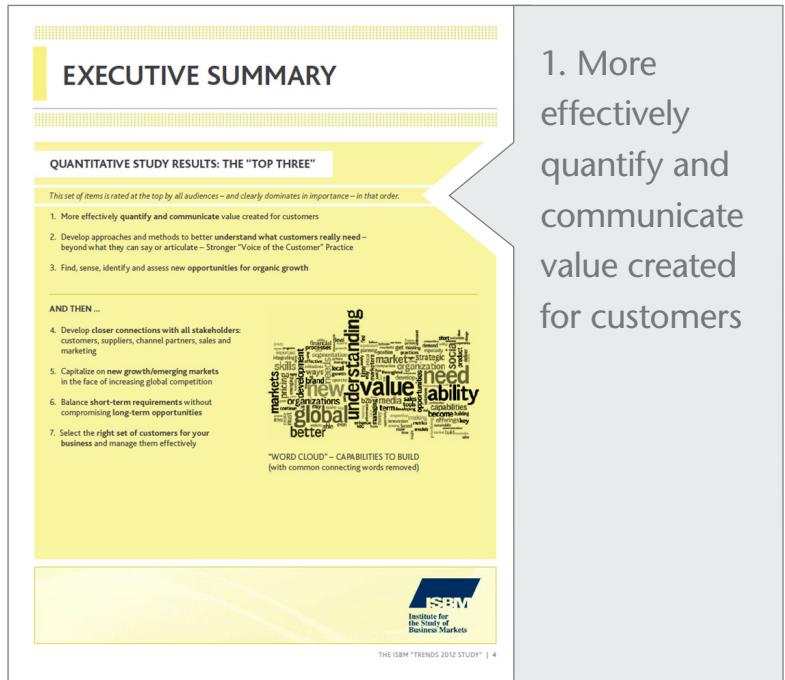


Figure 1: ISBM Study

› DVP: THE RIGHT ANSWERS FASTER

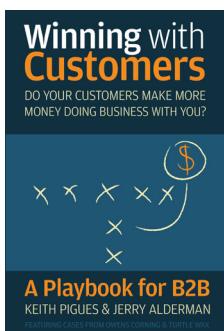
Think for a moment about the decisions and investments you make to deliver products and services, all of which you hope add value and generates a return:

- What do my sales people do and how many should we have?
- Do we deploy customer service professionals who are capable of solving logistics problems?
- Should we invest in dedicated customer service or use an efficient pool? Do we invest in training our customers so that they can use our products and services better?
- Do we make the investments and take the risk of introducing a new service our customers seem to want?
- Should we build that new warehouse closer to our customers' market?
- Should we work with the government to help push a policy agenda?
- Should we build a new website that is easier to use?
- Are we confident about the new product development pipeline?

The list of questions sometimes seems endless. What are the appropriate priorities? These are difficult decisions! Every one of them is an investment decision. Investments take money and resources, and the supply of both is not endless. So we have to prioritize. The real question is: Are we prioritizing correctly?

It is at this point that DVP enters. DVP comes from the point of view that as a supplier, I have a job to do, and that job is to help you solve problems, today and in the future. The supplier wants to know because it is their job and they would like to grow. You would like to know since you picked them and you need help solving problems so you can make money.

We need an approach that we can deploy with speed. We need to use the approach to get to the right answers faster. DVP is the system that leverages tools to help customers and their suppliers speed up the pace of understanding the answer to this simple questions: "Are you helping me solve business challenges today and are you investing to help me in the future?"



Winning With Customers

In 2010 we wrote a book called *Winning with Customers*. The book is a collection of lessons learned working with customers and their suppliers to uncover how a supplier and customer win together in the marketplace. We developed a system that embodies these lessons learned called DVP (Differential Value Proposition). As the title suggests, *Winning with Customers* is written from

the supplier point-of-view. This paper turns the tables and addresses the same material but from your perspective, the Customer. Hence the title *Winning With Suppliers*.

The paper's purpose is to provide you with the same information about DVP as your suppliers so that when they ask you to engage in DVP you will know what they are talking about.

The DVP Journey from your supplier's perspective has three elements: Internal Alignment, Customer Understanding and Promise Management as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2: DVP Journey

➤ INTERNAL ALIGNMENT

The purpose of this phase is to align the supplier organization on how they help your business, ie: what is their value proposition to you, how is it differentiated from alternatives you have, and how does that really impact your business in dollars and cents. Seems reasonably straight forward, but it never is. Everyone seems to have a different point of view. One group will believe it is all about logistics, another suggests services carry the day, a loud voice suggests it is all about the product. Think about this for a moment. Are you better off if the organization serving you fully understands the value levers that benefit your business? You do not want that organization of 10,000 people wrestling themselves to a standstill over something that does not even matter to your business. Therefore the first step in the DVP process is to get the entire supplier organization on the same page.

The Internal Alignment picture they will develop looks like Figure 3. It works this way:

What are the things that the supplier does better than others that help you (the customer).

For you this is important. Maybe this supplier is valuable because their training makes your sales force more effective and you win two more customers per year. Or, this supplier is important because their product is more reliable and therefore increases uptime from 85% to 92%, or because of their repair service you are able to get repaired

Discovery Interview: Sample Customer: Sample Location Our Perspective			
OUR PERSPECTIVE	WHAT WE DO DIFFERENTLY	SPECIFICALLY	HOW IT HELPS YOU
10% Digital Knowledge	Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better throughput speed to meet your production needs Our machines are designed to have quick test and recovery times thereby supporting faster production flow. Easier and quicker change over times Our machines are designed to allow for quicker changeovers times thereby limiting downtime during maintenance. Unique probe design The design quality of our detection probes yields higher mean time between failure and lower downtime to repair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating Costs Productivity
25% Service Offering	Technical Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing support: Technical Service & Solution engineering Our highly educated technical service team is more familiar with your business than alternatives. 3 key members with a target of 6...flexible scaling. Pre-sale support: Expert Control & Application engineers Our application engineers design the right solution to fit your specific needs, ensures fewer startup problems. Provides confidence, reduces risk, improves start up time productivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productivity
30% Technical Support	Service Offering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair Turnaround Time We have 3 regional repair facilities to offer quicker repair turn around times and offer parts on hire to ensure downtime is reduced at your plant and reduce your spare part inventory. Equipment Management Equipment and logistics management: taking care of customer owned equipment held on our premises either before or post sale when customer is not using. Delivering Creative Solutions We work closely with our customers to understand their needs. This is driven by the confidence in our people...they get it done right and when needed. Example: Gryo System for 30 inch cart. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating Costs Productivity
35% Products	Digital Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote connectivity and analysis Investing to create full R&D capability. Currently providing failure prediction analytics on a baseline of limited production equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productivity

Figure 3: Internal DVP Hypothesis

equipment in 2 days rather than 2 weeks and therefore carry fewer spares. Each of these differentiators are worth money to you. How do you measure that, how do you manage and improve? To do that we use a simple metric we call the DVP%.

$$\text{DVP\%} = \frac{\text{Do you make more money with this supplier vs. the next best alternative?}}{\text{Amount of business you do together}}$$

For example, if you add up all the things a supplier does for you relative to your next best alternatives, maybe you arrive at a number of \$200,000 of improved operating income. What that means is that if you stopped doing business with this supplier tomorrow your operating income would be \$200,000 lower. Assume now that you are buying \$2 million from this supplier.. The DVP% turns this into a metric that can be tracked and used to monitor improvement. \$200,000 divided by \$2 million is a DVP% of 10% (how much better off you are divided by how much business you do together). If your total purchases are \$10 million and each of your chosen suppliers had a DVP% of 10% then combined they would be contributing \$1 million to your operating income. That will get your CFO's attention. On the other hand, assume you are a much bigger business and your purchases from this supplier are \$20 million. That same \$200,000 now divided by \$20 million yields a DVP% of 1%...now that is pretty skinny, close to 0%. 0% would suggest it does not really matter who you buy from; one supplier looks the same as the other.

DVP% is always headed to zero. That is the nature of the world. If one supplier is doing something that is valuable and better than others and getting paid for it, someone will eventually come along to copy the valuable product/service and offer it for less. This dynamic constantly pulls DVP towards 0%. As the DVP% goes to zero it does not necessarily mean you, the customer, have retained all the benefits. It does not happen because that new supplier just made the valuable product/service available to ten of your competitors and you are forced to pass along the benefit savings to your customers. And so the world goes. The secret is to work to solve challenges with your supplier partners to push DVP% up, "right answers faster," and take advantage of situations to make money because they don't last forever. With DVP we would like to understand together where we are now and what are we working on to push DVP up, or at least what are we doing to maintain the advantages we have built since yesterday's advantage is tomorrow's commodity.

During the Internal Alignment stage of DVP your supplier works to drive a common internal understanding of this story: are they helping your business? Doing so causes them to think from your perspective, the outside-in customer perspective.

Summary of how this helps you, the customer

- Getting the supplier organization aligned and thinking about the business from your perspective yields better decisions on product/service resource tradeoffs that matter to you.
- You may learn new perspectives from the supplier about how their products/services were intended to be beneficial.

› UNDERSTANDING YOUR CUSTOMER

Your supplier is supposed to be on your team! You picked them. They are not your competitor; your competitors are every other supplier-customer combination in the field trying to outsell you. Picking a supplier and then not working with them in a substantive way is like choosing someone for your sports team and not telling them the plays. Think of DVP between customer and supplier as a never-ending journey. It goes on and on. DVP brings structure and depth to tighten the connections and gain speed. But like any new play, the speed may not be there at first.

Here's how it works: Your supplier has gone through the Internal Alignment work and will share that with you. They will then spend 1 to 1½ hours with you to understand your perspective. During this time there are not many rules other than the supplier is absolutely not to Sell, Solve or Defend. They had their chance, now the goal is to understand your perspective.

Regarding attendance, most of us know what works well. When the session involves your senior executives keep the numbers small (one or two) as executives generally have a strong point-of-view and will dominate the conversation. As you come down the chain of command two or three of your colleagues in the room works well, but no more than three or so since there is not enough time for everyone to talk. If more than three or four stakeholders need to be involved then have additional sessions.

Who should attend? Think about this with your business hat on. If your supplier impacts your business in such a way as to help your sales and marketing organization sell, then get your sales and marketing team involved. Perhaps they will come up with ideas with the supplier to improve, or the supplier will come up with ideas on their own to improve. Likewise, if they impact your operations and maintenance organizations then get them involved. Words of advice: for sessions beyond those with executives, try to isolate along functional department lines.

This is a good time to mention who attends and facilitates the DVP session from the supplier's side. A good rule to follow is to expect someone other than your account manager to lead the DVP session. There is critical value having a different set of ears listen and process your input from an independent mindset. We do like the account manager to attend DVP sessions as they will be on the hook for follow-up. Being in the room when opportunities that require follow-up are raised, goes along ways to getting the account manager on board. So from the supplier side, you might expect around three people: a good facilitator (maybe marketing), your account manager, and someone who ensures good notes are captured.

› THE DVP SESSION

The DVP session starts with a simple agenda shown below in Figure 4: What is working well today, how can we improve, and measure progress together.

Next, the supplier team will share their internal point-of-view on how they think they help your business relative to your

 Discovery Interview: Sample Customer: Sample Location Objective: Establish a Process to Win Together
Agenda:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Understand how we help you make more money today2. Identify how we can help you make more money in the future3. Introduce a metric to measure our progress together
Figure 4: DVP Agenda with Customers

alternatives as we discussed earlier and as shown in Figure 3. Some people feel this is selling or meant to bias the conversation. Our perspective is different. You chose a supplier because you thought they could help your business and have a differentiated value proposition. It was never intended to be a secret. So here it is from their perspective. The Internal Hypothesis gives you something to react to. Starting with a clean sheet of paper takes too long. Remember the supplier's job is not to sell, defend or solve areas where you see the picture as being different. Their job is to listen and clarify where you do not understand their point of view and then provide your own.

Discovery Interview: Sample Customer: Sample Location					
1. How do we help you make more money?					
OUR PERSPECTIVE	YOUR PERSPECTIVE	ATTRIBUTES	SCORE	WHAT WE DO DIFFERENTLY TO HELP TODAY	HOW THIS HELPS
10% Digital Knowledge		Products			
25% Service Offering		Technical Support			
30% Technical Support		Service Offering			
35% Products		Digital Knowledge			
		Other			
		Other			

Figure 5: DVP Session: "How is the supplier helping your business today?"

Discovery Interview: Sample Customer, Sample Location				
2. How can we help you make more money?				
INCREMENTAL OPPORTUNITY	ATTRIBUTES	SCORE	WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP	HOW THIS CAN HELP
	Products			
	Technical Support			
	Service Offering			
	Digital Knowledge			
	Other			
	Other			

Figure 6: DVP Session: "How can the supplier help your business in the future?"

How is the supplier helping your business today?

The first thing you might notice in Figure 5 is the absence of survey-type questions. This page is meant to facilitate a conversation on how you think the supplier currently helps your business.

On the far left are stacked bars. The first bar depicts the Supplier Internal Hypothesis. The blank one is meant to be filled out with your perspective. The bars each add up to 100 points, serve as a visual representation of the conversation and remind everyone of the tradeoffs being made. When we look at the supplier Internal Hypothesis stacked bar it represents the investments a supplier makes which they believe are helping you to solve business challenges relative to your other alternatives. Is that the same stacked bar you would have drawn given your knowledge of how the supplier actually helps you? Maybe there is agreement. Maybe the attributes are similar, but weighted much differently. Maybe some of the attributes are wrong and there are others the Supplier team is not considering. And so the conversation starts...what is the number one thing this supplier does to help your business?

On the right, we have boxes to take notes on “what is it that the supplier does to help your business” and “how does this help your business.” Altogether it might go something like this: “We think your sales force is your greatest strength, they represent 40% of the total differentiated value, because they are very skilled at working with our sales and marketing organization to create solutions in the market, which yield three to four new customers per year for our business.”

How can the supplier help your business in the future?

As the conversation progresses, focus shifts toward opportunities. The flow of the next page shown, in Figure 6, is the same as the previous, with one difference: we are now discussing the future. The question we always like to ask here is: “if I handed you, the customer, \$1 million and you could only spend it on the supplier’s business and on opportunities that would help your business, how would you spend and prioritize the \$1 million budget?” The idea is that you understand where the biggest opportunities reside that if acted upon, would help your business to improve or make you more money. For example, “you can’t figure out the remote monitoring feature of your Pressure-Temperature monitoring equipment, therefore if it was your money you would improve the user interface as a first priority, by doing so it will eliminate the need for 25 field visits per year.” Some of the opportunities may be large and require a couple years to complete, while some may be significant, but attainable in a year. Others may be repairs to existing products or services that fail to meet their intended benefit to your business. Opportunities may relate the following, or anything else that represents an investment.

- **People:** more sales support
- **Services:** shorten the repair parts cycle time
- **Product:** we need an alternative fuel engine

Measure progress together

The goal of the page shown in Figure 7 is to back up the story you just provided the supplier in the previous two sections with some economics. Sometimes we get push-back on this part: “it is too hard...isn’t the rich qualitative detail enough?” Our answer is ‘yes’, qualitative detail is good. But try taking any qualitative story you are contemplating and pitch it to your CFO and see how it goes. Guaranteed the first questions you will get before any money is allocated are “will anyone buy this” and “can you make money?”

Discovery Interview: Sample Customer: Sample Location
3. Measure our progress together

Our perspective on how we help you

HOW WE HELP	KEY ASSUMPTIONS	VALUE
Easy to do business with	Purchasing resource reduction (0.50) × Annual cost per employee (\$54,000.00)	\$27,000
New Customers Won	No. of new customers (10.00) × Avg. Order per Customer (\$50,000.00) × Operating margin per customer (25%)	\$125,000

Can we quantify how we help you TODAY?

HOW WE HELP	KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Can we quantify how we help you in the FUTURE?

HOW WE CAN HELP	KEY ASSUMPTIONS

If not, how would you estimate our differential impact today?

If not, how would you estimate the size of our opportunity to improve?

The figure shows two horizontal scales with arrows pointing to the right. Each scale has four tick marks labeled 'Commodity', 'Marginal', 'Noticeable', and 'Partner'. The first scale is labeled 'If not, how would you estimate our differential impact today?'. The second scale is labeled 'If not, how would you estimate the size of our opportunity to improve?'. Both scales have numerical values '0' and '5%' at their ends.

Figure 7: DVP Session, “Measure Our Progress Together”

There is a CFO in all of our lives. Understanding the economics behind the story helps justify a supplier's investment in your success. Here is how this part of the conversation will go.

At the top of the page are a few calculations prepared internally by the supplier to help drive discussion. In the middle of the page is a space to take notes on your perspective about the economics behind the story you just told about what helps you and how the supplier can help in the future. For example... if you requested that some equipment needs to be easier to use to reduce the amount of rework to be done...the question is how much rework will be saved? 25 days worth? What is a day worth to you?

This conversation directly impacts the CFO's question and takes supplier/customer relationships to new levels. As a customer, this helps you to solve problems which yield bottom line improvement...making what you are likely to buy. The supplier needs to decide if they can make money on the investments made in customer success. If either side is not working, then change is not going to happen.

Now, if the numbers are not available during the DVP Session — that's ok! If you know the numbers exist providing access to them after the meeting is a great next step. If there are no numbers to be had, a scale is provided at the bottom of the page to assess the economics behind your perspective. What we like to do with this kind of scale is establish directionally whether the customer-supplier relationship is healthy from an economic point of view and if the path forward is going to have a significant impact on your profitability.

The most important aspect of DVP is guiding the next decision, not the last decision.

We should all care less about past decisions than those upcoming. So to this end, even if you are not comfortable sharing quantitative detail on how a supplier is helping you today for fear that the information will be used against your business, do take the time to be as quantitative as possible on how solving tomorrow's business challenges are going to help your business. We already talked about the CFO in all of our lives. If you want to improve the likelihood that resources will be directed toward those future challenges, then get to the numbers. The beauty of numbers is they have a magical way of breaking through the rhetoric.

The first thing you should expect after the session is to receive high quality documented notes summarized using the DVP framework. If you are part of a larger organization you should expect to see the aggregated view of your company. This should happen within a week or so after the DVP session. Beyond that it is into execution.

Summary of how this helps you, the customer

- Reinforces to the supplier organization what is valuable to you therefore ensuring the supplier organization continues to maintain that asset
- Potentially establishes a metric to measure progress

➤ PROMISE MANAGEMENT

The goal is to keep the promises that are made to customers.

DVP supplies the structure and gets to the actionable detail. In order to make reasoned promises to you/customers there has to be a set of data that creates understanding: we need to change our product, it is going to cost this much, and here is how it will help you, the customers, does this make sense? We need to change our approach to service, it will require these changes, and here is how it is going to help you. In business you have to find leverage. Your supplier cannot make the above statements for each and every customer; you can't have 200 approaches to service or 200 product variations. Businesses go broke doing such things. Or even if you are a large customer, the supplier cannot react to 50 different voices in your organization. There has to be a way to consolidate the voice — the action details — and prioritize based on business impact. Through DVP, a supplier can find the leverage points whether it is the common thread across 200 customers or the 200 people within a customer. Now decisions can be made.

Initiative Report: 1/3/2013				
List				
INITIATIVE	STATUS	OWNER	PROMISED DATE	LATEST NEWS
NOT APPROVED				
Ease of use feature reviews	⌚Not Approved	Jay Ablian		
Viscosity range for NPI	⌚Not Approved	Jerry Alderman		Under evaluation. Waiting for engineering testing results before putting action plan into place for 2013.
IN PROGRESS				
Identify RM&D reqs with customers	⌚Target: 3/31/2013	Michael Cardinale	3/31/2013	Customers were engaged 2 months ago and we are adding additional resources to this effort to accelerate NPI proposals to ops committee. Skunkworks team led by Cardinale will commence work once funding approved.
Obtain legal approval to release certification	⌚Target: 12/31/2012	Michael Cardinale	12/31/2012	Legal reviewing final draft of certification letter, waiting for approval before sending to OEM
COMPLETED				
Local service team skills review	⌚Completed: 12/12/2012	Jerry Alderman	12/31/2012	Skills review with support team over past 4 weeks identified significant service capability gaps. Engineering met with SLT today to present service realignment proposal and gain resource approval

Figure 8: Execution Scorecard

Figure 8 shows an execution scorecard used in the DVP system. You and your suppliers may already have execution scorecards that are used and the DVP effort is incorporated into them. In any case, getting into an execution rhythm that systematically connects those who are doing the work is critical and key to speed.

The next aspect of Promise Management is accountability. When you work with your supplier do you clearly understand what they are going to do, what they cannot do, and those items that require further understanding before committing capital or change? Do you understand who is accountable for providing updates on status and when completion milestones are to be achieved? On your side, do you have the right people assigned to work with the supplier to make it happen? Collectively we need a way to ensure information is flowing back and forth — customer to supplier to customer — in such a way as to promote completion of work and speed. We want people to be held accountable and to understand whose job it is to make it happen. The DVP system provides the tools necessary to create accountability.

Summary of how this helps you, the customer

- Provides clarity on what the supplier is going to do and as importantly not do, thereby helping you to fill in gaps where necessary
- Helps create a sense of timing and accountability on both sides for executing initiatives
- Yields a scorecard of initiative actions that can be used to better demonstrate progress on both sides

About the Author



Jerry Alderman, CEO

more to drive speed of customer understanding and growth. His passion has led to the creation of Valkre and cloud-based

Jerry Alderman is an entrepreneur, founder, and chief executive officer of Valkre Solutions, Inc. Alderman is a passionate believer that technology, data and analytics need to be used

software Render, which is transforming the way companies sell and innovate with their customers.

Prior to founding Valkre, Inc., Jerry was a senior vice president for Exogen. During his tenure dating to 2001, he led and developed his innovative approach to building corporate competitive advantage through using and executing on unique, deep customer insights. Jerry started his business career at Boise Corporation where he spent 12 years learning and experiencing the unique challenges of B2B companies.

Before starting his business career, Jerry served six years on nuclear submarines as a Naval Officer through the Admiral Rickover program. Alderman is the author of two books, *Winning with Customers* and *Beyond Six-Sigma*, has degrees in Nuclear and Civil Engineering and his MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. Alderman is a sought after speaker on the topic Customer Value Management.

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Valkre Solutions, Inc.

Valkre is a Chicago-based software company founded in 2008. Our purpose is to improve the speed of collaboration between suppliers and customers in Business-to-Business (B2B) markets. Valkre has created a breakthrough Customer Value Management system that has been built with GE and other leading B2B companies. The journey involved two significant endeavors: First, the innovation of a world class methodology called Differential Value Proposition (DVP), establishing the process necessary to achieve Customer Value Management. Second, the building of Render, cloud-based software that enables a company to own a cost effective Customer Value Management system that is sustainable and scalable. The speed driven by Render and DVP helps suppliers and customers stay ahead of competitive offerings by aligning on value and innovation needs. The result is increased profitable growth.

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