



3 Principles for Better B2B Messaging

How to create solution-focused messaging that puts customer needs first



B2B Messaging: There's Little Margin for Error

In today's competitive B2B technology marketplace, it's not enough to have great products and solutions. The way you message them needs to hit all the right notes.

Customers don't have time to navigate messaging that isn't clear. They shouldn't need to work hard to figure out if and how your offering solves their problem. In a [recent Forrester report](#), 59% of global B2B buyers said that much of the vendor content they receive is useless. Buyers want content that is credible and helpful—and gets to the point quickly.

Why Is Messaging So Hard?

In defense of marketers, B2B messaging isn't easy. Today's products and solutions are becoming more complex and feature-rich, with product families nested within solution categories, cross-platform integrations to explain, and an ecosystem of partner solutions to promote.

With so much detail to communicate, it can be easy to lose sight of the customer perspective. And with lots of cooks in the kitchen, from product marketers to engineers, the writing can go sideways: Data sheets end up stuffed with lists of technical features. Copy is riddled with confusing jargon. Webpages are confusing to navigate. This all adds up to a suboptimal experience for your customers.

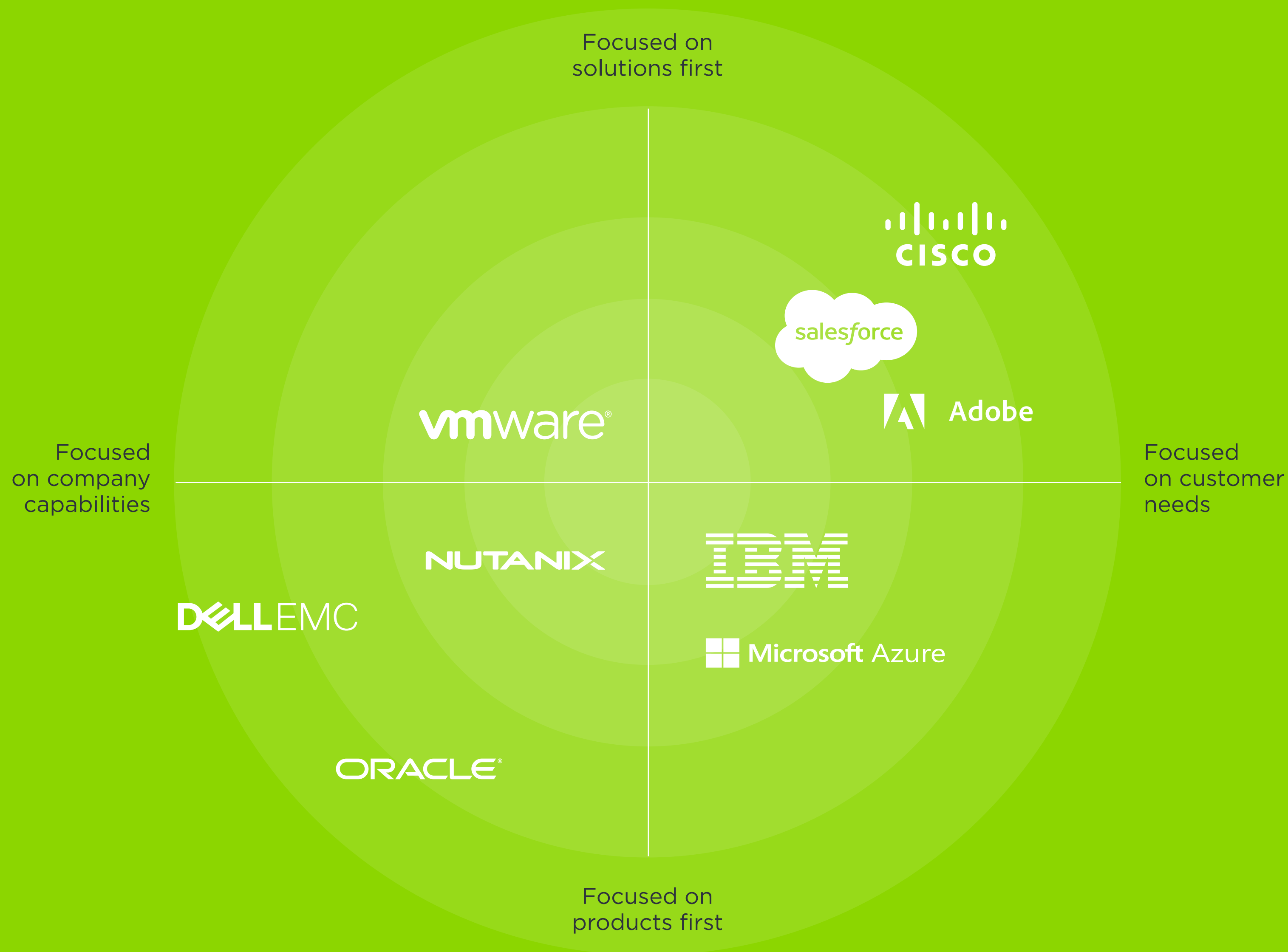
Best Practices and Inspiration for Better Messaging

In spite of these challenges, lots of B2B brands excel at product messaging, and you can draw lessons from their approach. [This ebook explores three principles for better B2B product messaging and shares examples from leading brands.](#)

Whether you're a product marketer or a content strategist, read on to find insights on how to craft customer-focused copy, avoid common mistakes, and organize key messages in a way that engages your customers.



3 Principles: What B2B Leaders Get Right About Messaging



As shown in the graphic, Tendo evaluated how several leading B2B enterprise tech companies talk about their software-as-a-service (SaaS) offerings. In our evaluation, companies with the clearest and most compelling messaging (Cisco, Salesforce, and Adobe) do the following:

1. Prioritize solution-focused messaging.

Content is organized first by customer solutions and with clear explanations on how a product, solution, or service solves for a specific pain point or use case.

2. Minimize company-focused information bias.

Messaging emphasizes customer needs over company capabilities and product features, and avoids overly technical or internal language.

3. Create a consistent and engaging content experience.

Digital content guides users from a broad need to a solution, then to more specific user needs, and finally to individual products. Effective messaging works together within and between webpages.

Let's explore these messaging best practices in more detail.

1

Prioritize Solution-Focused Messaging

Put your customers, not your products, first. Whether you call your offering a product or a solution, messaging should be framed around its value to the customer. That's "solution-focused messaging" in a nutshell. Customers should be able to quickly understand what the offering can do for them and why they should care about it.

Before you dive into details about your "speeds and feeds," your messaging should first address customer needs and pain points in an authentic and compelling way. Open the conversation on your webpages and content assets by talking about them, not you.

Reference Your Buyer Personas

To craft customer-centric and solution-focused messaging, you first need high-quality research on your buyer group or each of your audience segments. Then, you can develop content-actionable personas that give you insights into their pain points, questions, top tasks, and objections at each stage of their buyer's journey.

Too often personas are thin on vivid details and the "voice of the customer" that can shape messaging. So, make sure to humanize your personas as much as possible.

3 Tips for Compelling Key Messages

Once you understand your customer careabouts and preferences, you can develop far more resonant key messages. Follow these tips to capture and maintain their attention:

- **Speak their language.** Your messaging should reflect how customers talk and think about their challenges and solutions, rather than how your product engineers or developers interpret their needs.
- **Solve their problem.** In clear and compelling prose, explain how your product or solution solves the customer's challenge and makes their work easier. When listing your differentiators and competitive advantages, be sure to frame them in terms of customer benefits.
- **Map messages to their journey.** To maintain a strong customer focus, develop messaging that addresses their questions and top tasks at each stage of the buyer's journey. For example, top-of-funnel content can be more values-based, whereas lower-funnel content might go into more product detail.

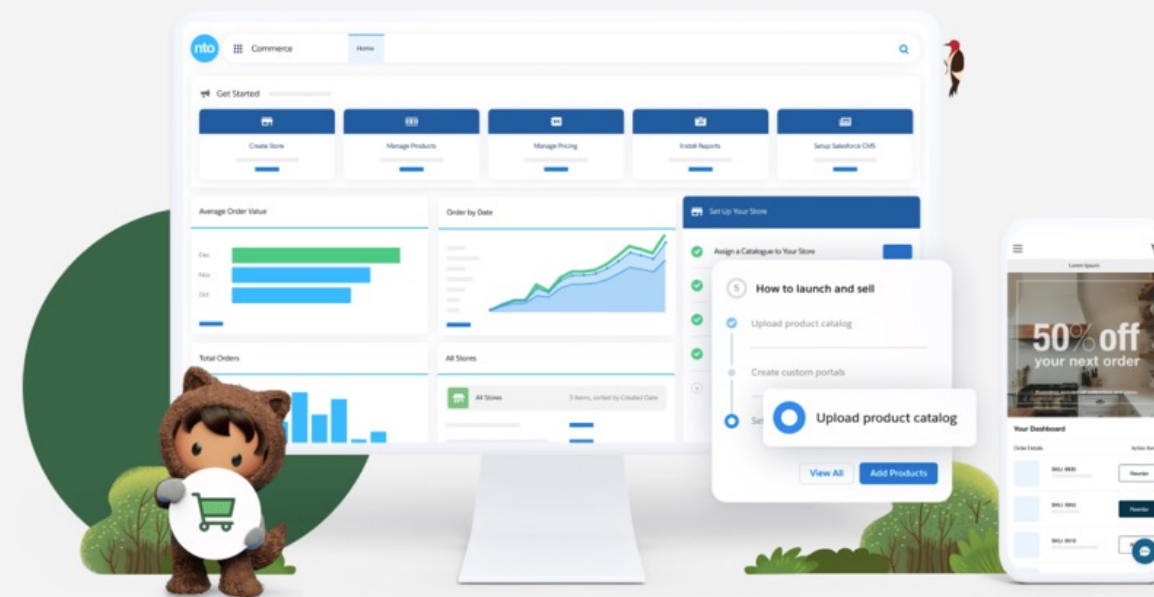
1

How Salesforce Leverages Solution-Focused Messaging

Make online buying easy and generate revenue fast with B2B Commerce.

See how Salesforce B2B Commerce offers buyers the seamless, self-service experience of online shopping with all the B2B functionality they demand.

WATCH DEMO

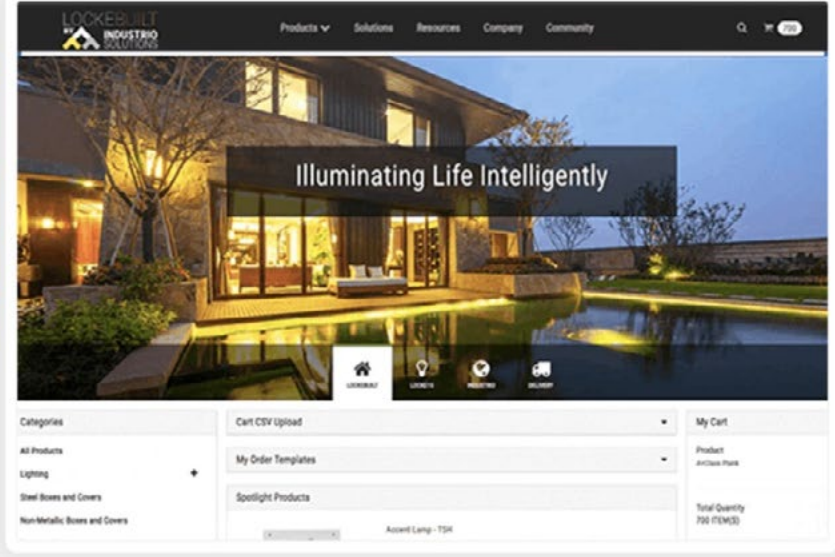


Customer-focused content example: This webpage is focused on the customer, describing how [Salesforce Commerce Cloud](#) can solve their problems and help them grow their businesses.

LAUNCH QUICKLY BOOST ONLINE REVENUE ENGAGE MORE CUSTOMERS TAILOR TO INDUSTRIES

BOOST ONLINE REVENUE

Maximize your online growth with easy-to-use commerce features tailored to B2B customers.



Offer simple self-service online buying.
Give your customers the same easy, consumer-like shopping experiences they enjoy in their personal life – anytime, anywhere, on any device.

Solve B2B commerce complexities.
Simplify online buying with features specifically designed for B2B, including fast reorders, account hierarchies, contract pricing, custom catalogs, and more.

Lower your cost to serve.
Equip your customers with self-service tools and guided experiences, so you can reallocate both time and money to other growth opportunities.

Empower your sales teams.
Give your sales team the time and insights it needs to develop winning strategies by eliminating manual tasks and accessing real-time customer data.

Solution-focused messaging example: Every Salesforce product feature is recast as a positive customer benefit or outcome.

2

Minimize Company-Focused Information Bias

B2B messaging can easily lapse into a list of product features and company capabilities. At the same time, messaging can also be plagued with internal-facing language and too much technical detail. In a [Forrester report](#) on customer-focused B2B messaging, 88% of marketers said their homepages focused mostly on their own companies and products, not customer needs.

How to Identify Information Bias

Evaluate existing or draft messaging with these questions in mind:

- Which terms are you currently using to describe the product or solution? Are they internal and company-focused, unfiltered from your engineering or product teams straight to marketing? Or have they been translated into customer-friendly language that focuses on their needs?
- What is your buyers' level of existing knowledge and terminology? Do buyers already understand how the solution works or do they need basic education?
- Does your copy overwhelm readers with technical details?

The answers to these questions can help you create more solution-focused messaging. If you've discovered technically dense or company-focused language, take these steps:

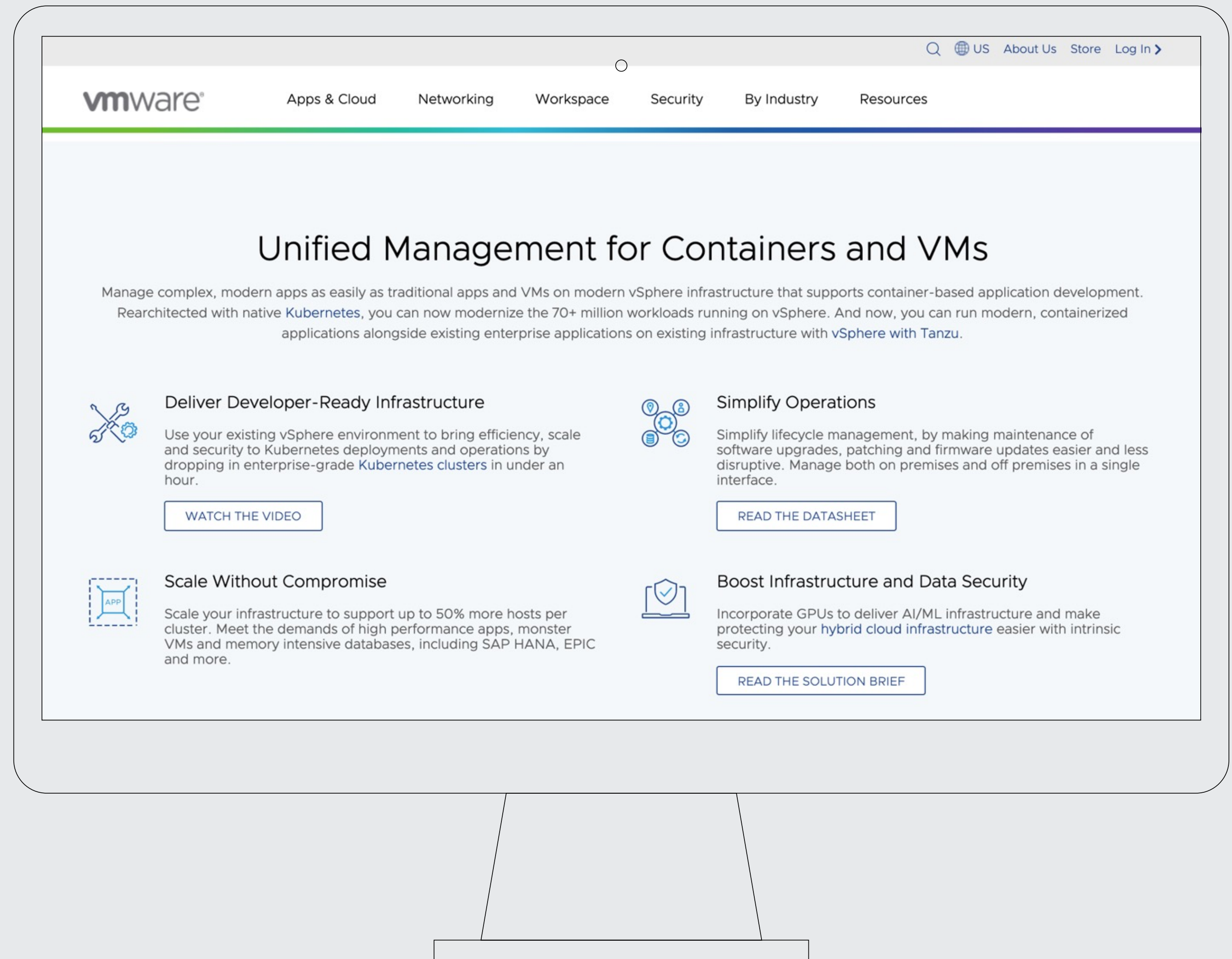
- **Convert features to benefits.** If you have a list of product features or technical specifications, consider recasting each of them as a customer benefit and incorporating into your key messages and web copy.
- **Right-size your level of detail.** Trim copy that dives into too much technical detail for your target audience. Convey the right amount of detail appropriate to the buyer's journey stage and audience needs. For example, a VP decision maker might require only high-level, solution-focused content at the consideration stage, while a manager at the decision stage might require far more product detail.
- **Pay attention to the bottom of funnel.** An imperative for B2B marketers is to maintain customer-focused messaging, even with evaluation- and decision-stage content that delves deeper into product features and differentiators.

2

How VMware Describes Technical Product Features

Here's an example of how a brand avoids company-centric copy and conveys technical information in an understandable way:

- In describing the advantages of its [vSphere](#) server virtualization software product, VMware threads the line, translating product features into customer benefits and delivering the right amount of technical detail for awareness- and consideration-stage content. Copy reflects a keen understanding of its IT audience's pain points and existing knowledge of virtualization software.
- Messaging is highly technical yet avoids jargon and maintains a direct and concise style with active, parallel verbs.



3

Create an Engaging, Customer-Focused Content Experience

Effective product messaging requires more than just individual sentences and headlines that hit the mark. Copy blocks, webpages, content assets, and information architecture must all work together to shape the content experience for your buyers.

Content experience can be defined as the sum total of the interactions someone has with your digital content and the impression it leaves them.

An important aspect of content experience is that it should be progressive and connected. Your product messaging and webpages should guide buyers from a broad need to a solution, to more specific user needs, and then to individual products, modules, or features.

Organize Information Architecture (IA) Around Customer Needs

Customer-centric product messaging comes alive on your website when it is supported by a customer-centric IA. That means structuring your content and webpages around how buyers think about their challenges and solutions.

To give buyers a better content experience, consider organizing and labeling your webpages by solution (customer-centric), rather than by product (company-centric).

SHOULD YOU CALL IT A PRODUCT OR SOLUTION?

B2B websites commonly reference both products and solutions. What's the difference, and how can you determine which term is appropriate for your offering? In short, there are no ironclad rules for products vs. solutions, but here are some brief definitions.

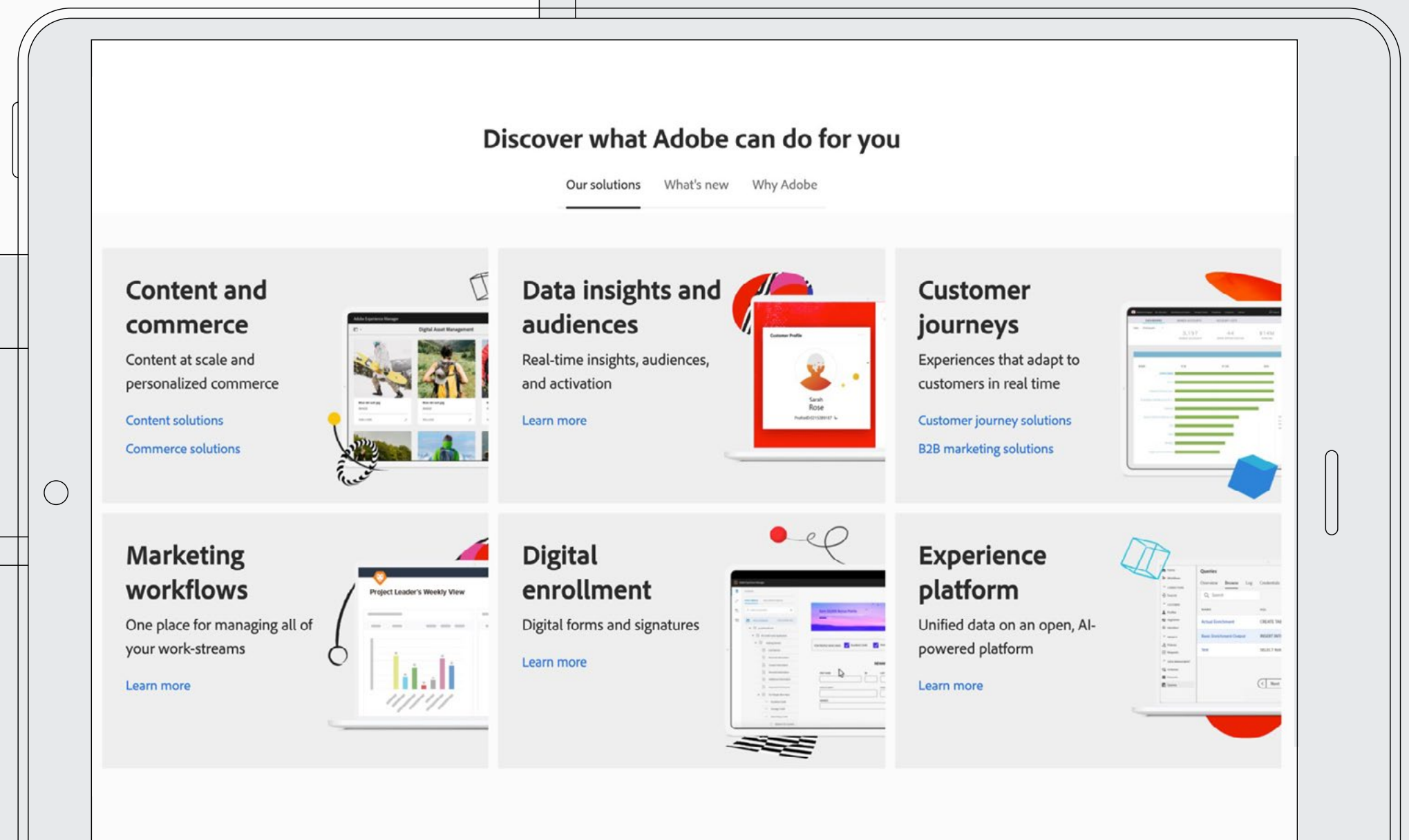
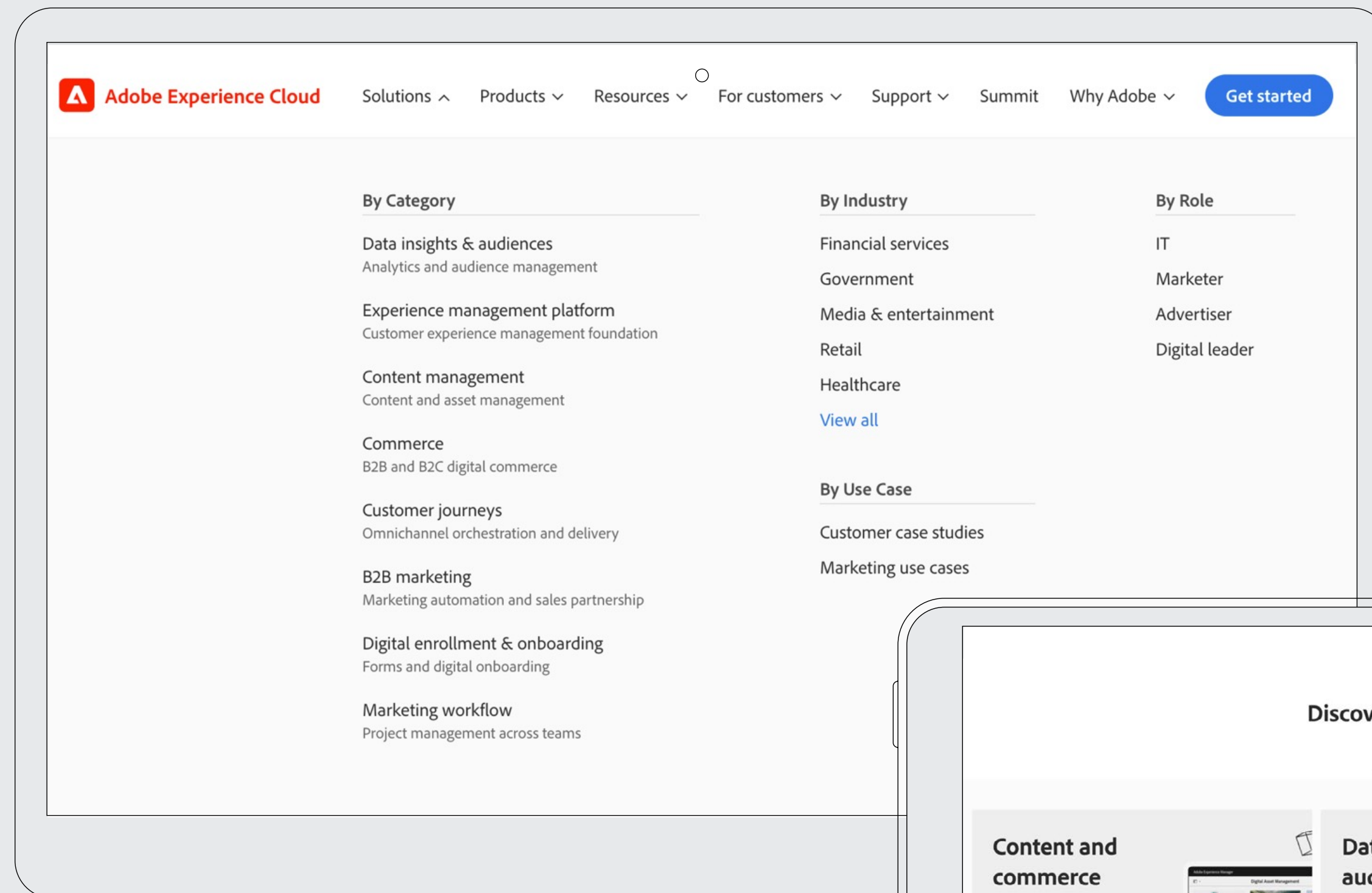
- **Solution:** A solution describes everything the customer needs to solve a specific problem. This often takes the form of a combination, or bundle, of products (hardware and software), services, and even consultative elements.
- **Product:** Standalone hardware or software offerings are often labeled as products, as opposed to a combination or category of products and services packaged as a solution.

3

How Adobe Organizes Webpages

Here's an example of an optimized content experience that makes it easier to understand Adobe's offerings:

- Product and solution webpages for [Adobe Experience Cloud](#) are organized by topic, industry, and role, rather than by product name.
- This IA progressively guides users from a broad need in the primary navigation menu (B2B marketing) to a solution (customer journeys), to more specific user needs (personalization) to individual products (Adobe Target).

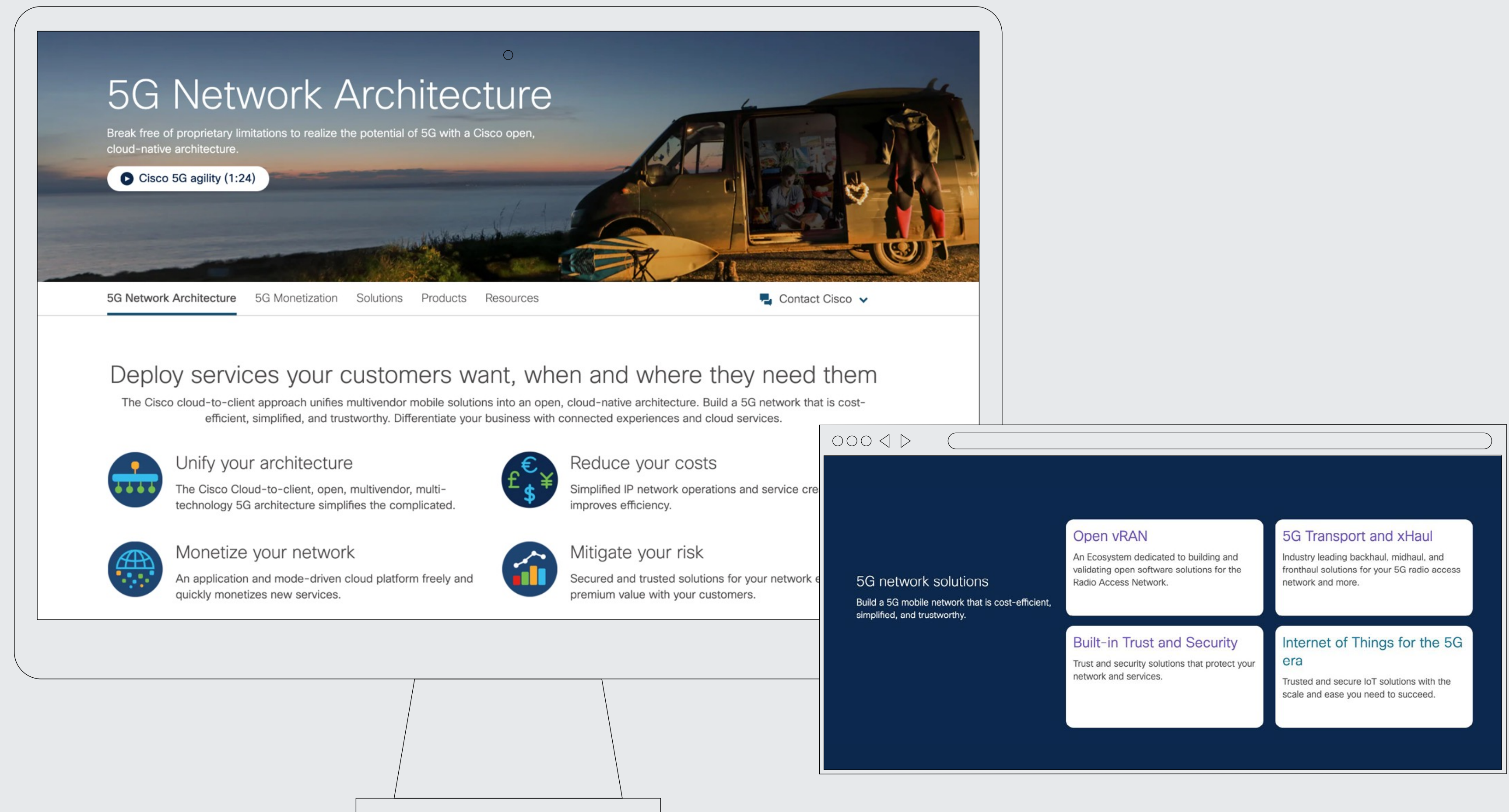


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How Cisco Transitions from Solutions to Products

Individual webpages should deliver a progressive content experience with a smooth, logical flow of information presented as they scroll. To achieve this, develop a content model for each individual webpage to establish the priority and hierarchy of messages and content elements on the page.

- The [Cisco 5G Network Architecture page](#) is one example of a “solutions” overview webpage. Its compelling content explains the benefits of an innovative technology approach. It then transitions into how a company’s products and services can deliver those benefits, with links to individual product pages.
- The page begins with a clearly articulated value proposition for Cisco’s 5G network solutions, focused on the needs of telecommunications service providers.





Parting Thought: Maintain Messaging Consistency Across Teams

Once your company has defined key messages for an offering—a collaborative effort between product, marketing, customer success, and other teams—it is critical to record them in a thorough internal messaging guide or framework. This will ensure that messaging remains consistent across channels and through personal communication. All your teams will be on the same page—and focused on your customer.

Remember that messaging consistency is imperative. Sales emails should carry the same key messages as webpages and data sheets. Maintaining that consistency falls on marketing leaders. Once you develop a messaging framework and personas, evangelize and advocate for their active use across teams. Key messages will take hold among customers only when they are reinforced at every touchpoint, from sales calls and emails to high-value content assets and web pages.

Consistency and customer-centric product messaging will pay dividends for your organization. Prospects will better understand how your solution solves their problem. When they're ready to contact sales, they'll be engaged, informed, and on the fast track to a purchase decision.



Tendo Communications is a content agency trusted by world-class B2B brands.

We can assist your company with core message development, persona profiles, content modeling, and content creation. To learn more about how we can help, contact us at inquiries@tendocom.com or visit Tendocom.com.



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