

FOSTERING

HUMAN

CONNECTIONS

IN THE

DIGITAL

ERA



SPRING 2026 CONFERENCE

APRIL 20-22 • SANTA CLARA, CA

ASPIRE TO INNOVATE

Splicing Briefing, CAB, and Event DNA into a Loyalty and Innovation Engine

THREE WHALES OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT



EACH FORMAT HAS STRENGTHS AND LIMITS



Executive Briefing



Advisory Board



Tradeshow Event

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING



Strength:

- White-glove experience
- Tailored agenda
- NDA content possible

Limits:

- Sales-optimized
- Limited insights gathering
- One account at a time

ADVISORY BOARD



Strength:

- Deep strategic dialog
- Aligned discovery goals
- Relationship building

Limits:

- Small customer sample
- Narrow range of topics
- Politeness bias (members protect the relationship)

TRADESHOW EVENT



Strength:

- Massive attendance
- Large range of topics
- High community energy

Limits:

- One-way (mostly)
- Shallow insights
- Low signal/noise ratio

WHAT CAN BE FORGED FROM THE BEST ELEMENTS?



Let me tell you a story...

COMPANY IN NEED OF CHANGE (CASE STUDY)

Context:

- Applications controller market leader. Key product (security & load-balancing appliance) used by 47 of Global 50 companies.
- Rapid emergence of Cloud Computing. Customers moving Apps from owned Datacenters to Hyper-scalers.
- New CEO, replacing 2/3 of CxOs in 1 year.

Challenges:

- Re-ignite product innovation. Build right solutions for Cloud era.
- Reset Customer perception of “no longer relevant”. At scale.

Favorable:

- The CEO was impressed with EBC program evolution. Approved dedicating HQ top floor for new Customer Engagement Center.

WAVEZURE GO



COMPASS

SPLICING THE DNA STRANDS...

Executive Briefing



- White-glove experience
- Tailored agenda
- NDA content possible

Advisory Board



- Deep strategic dialog
- Aligned discovery goals
- Relationship building

Tradeshow Event



- Huge client base
- Large range of topics
- High community energy



SPLICING THE DNA STRANDS... INTO THE “ASPIRE”

Executive Briefing



- **Upscale environment**
- **Client**-tailored agenda
- **New** NDA content

Advisory Board



- **Actionable insights**
- **Shared success** goals
- **Earning trust**

Tradeshow Event



- **Critical mass** of clients
- Key **portfolio priorities**
- High energy, **excitement**

UPSCALE ENVIRONMENT



New HQ tower in downtown Seattle



Gorgeous new CEC on the top floor (won 2 ABPM/GACEP awards)



Breathtaking views

NEW NDA CONTENT

48 topics and demos built specifically for Aspire
31 required an NDA to discuss

Three-tier time horizon:



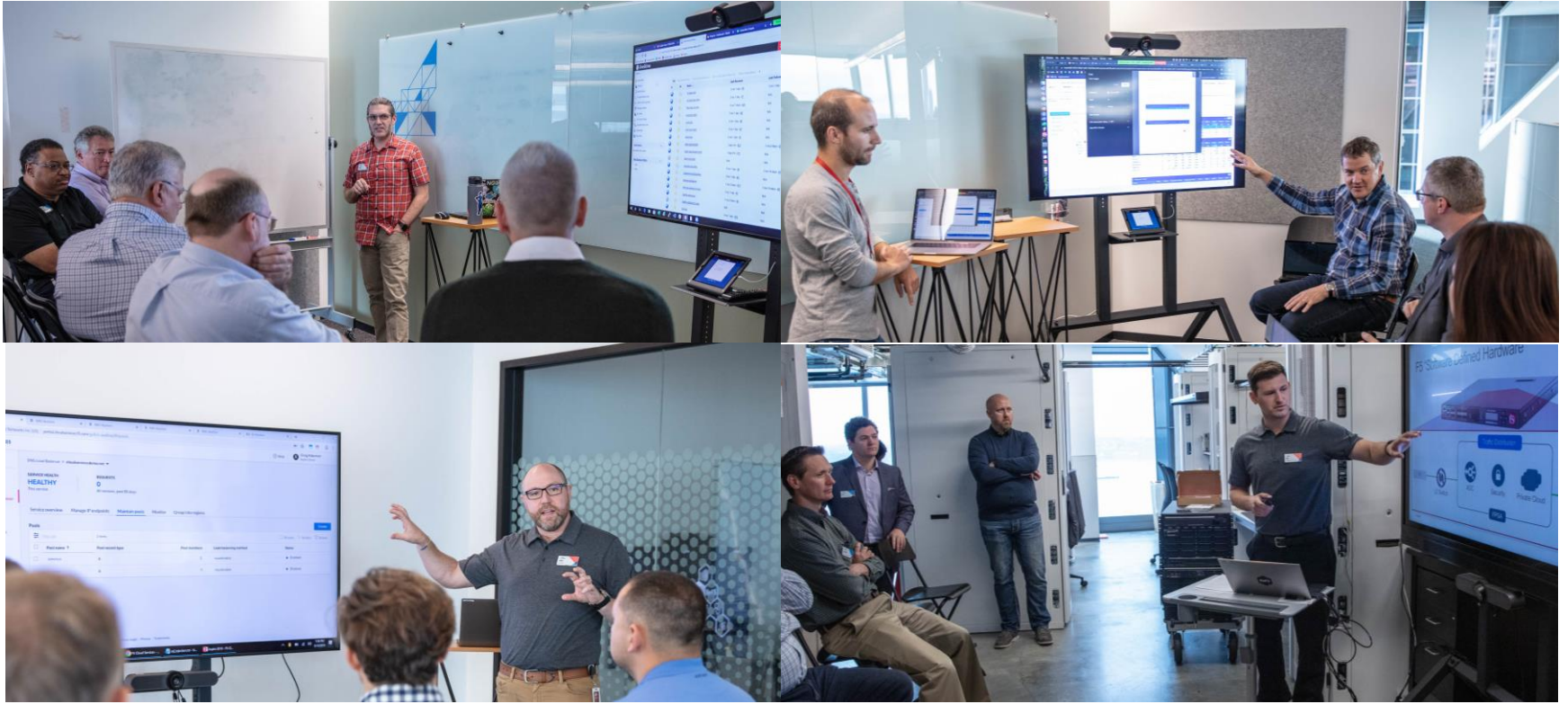
Outcome-focused naming scheme:

“Applications Delivery Platform (Multi-Cloud Demo)”



“Your Apps: Fast, Available, and Secure – in Any Cloud”

DEMO STATIONS IN PRODUCT TEAM SPACES



Customers ← “behind the curtain” access. Direct customer input → engineers.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

53 Ambassadors captured verbatim quotes, live sentiment ratings, and product tags in every session.

A purpose-built Qualtrics form for Ambassador to tag sentiment, importance, and functional area.

Every night: themes grouped, editorial synthesis written, and delivered to CEO and directs.



SESSION CONTEXT (AUTO-FILLED)

Account / Session / Ambassador / Date

PRE-POPULATED FROM SCHEDULING SYSTEM

Account: Southwest Airlines

Session: Automate App Deployment

Ambassador: J. Hernandez

Date: Sep 3, 2019

INSIGHT CAPTURE (AMBASSADOR FILLS IN)

Headline *

Short, high-level description of the insight (one line)

Customers need automation to keep pace with agile dev teams

Caption *

Brief summary providing context for the headline

Customer described a growing gap between their network ops team and developer velocity. Manual configuration creates risk if key personnel leave.

Verbatim customer quote *

Record exactly what the customer said, in their words

"Automation is a big gap. We rely on one person to do all the configuration, and if he leaves, we are in a lurch."

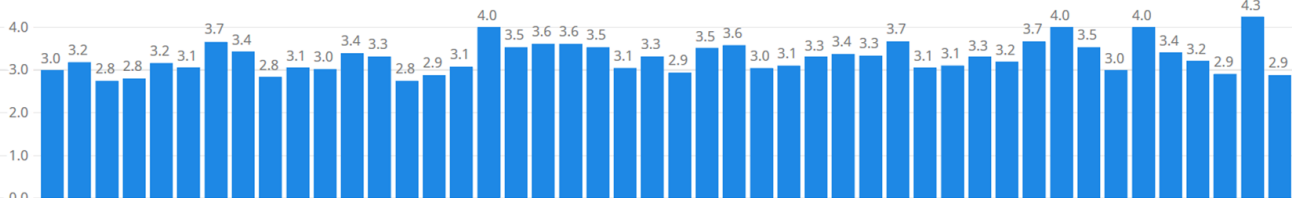
Sentiment *

- Rant — strong dissatisfaction, emotional
- Negative** — dissatisfied or frustrated
- Neutral — informational, no clear sentiment
- Positive — satisfied or encouraged
- Rave — strong enthusiasm, unsolicited praise

REAL-TIME VISIBILITY AT SCALE

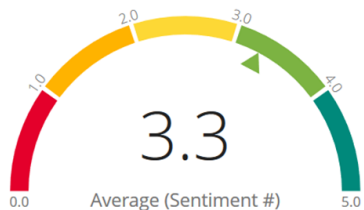
Filters ... Survey Metadata - End Date: All Time ... AccountName: All ... Hide Filters

Sentiment by Customer

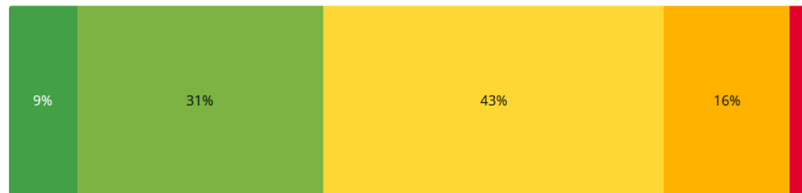


(Actual customer names redacted)

Average Sentiment 1,407 Responses



Breakdown by Sentiment



● Rave ● Positive ● Neutral ● Negative ● Rant

From signal to action

- Four accounts arrived ready to leave.
- Live signals triggered agenda changes.
- Meeting temperature shifted red → green.
- \$8M annual revenue retained.
- Post-event: Roadmap and pricing decisions.

ASPIRE 2019 – BY THE NUMBERS

3

calendar weeks

13

event days

Up to 10

parallel tracks / day

4

global theaters

Aug 26 – Sep 13,
2019

BFSI SYMPOSIUM

30 clients · 27 companies · 2 days

PARTNER DAYS

157 attendees · Sept 12–13

NGINX.CONF SYNERGY

4 additional accounts

CEC GRAND OPENING

48th floor · new HQ center

2 GACEP AWARDS

World-Class Center · Innovative CX

78

customer accounts

NA · EMEA · APCJ · LATAM

90

partner accounts

dedicated 2-day track

550+

customer and partner attendees

12 C-level · 43 VP and above · 47 Directors

\$8M

annual revenue retained

4 at-risk accounts

~5%

of annual bookings in the room

~9% in North America

48

topics built for Aspire

purpose-built content catalog

31

topics under NDA

of 48 - the draw for executives

Executive commitment

Personal session appearances across 3 weeks

CEO × 9 CPO × 18 CCO × 17 CSO × 13 CTO × 10 CMO × 8

Not just attendance – leading customer sessions

250+

people to deliver it

5 functions: Marketing · SE
Sales · Engineering · BD

1,407

insight nuggets captured

53 trained Ambassadors

THE 250+ PEOPLE BEHIND ASPIRE

7 Work-streams

Content and demos

Customer insights

Demo infrastructure

Demand gen and account nominations

Event logistics

Brand and Comms

Governance & exec alignment



CORE TEAM

7 workstream owners



BRIEFING COORDINATORS

Logistics and day-of support



CHAMPIONS

Technical SEs/SAs
Designed agendas



AMBASSADORS

Ethnographic listeners



SPEAKERS AND CONTENT

48 topics · 482 sessions

ASPIRE HALO EFFECT

Participating employees vs. company peers · Pulse survey Sept 2019 · n=180 vs. n=4,055 N/A

+5%

Belonging

+5%

Behaviors

+4%

Continuous improvement

+4%

Leadership

+4%

Integrity

GOVERNANCE: WHAT KEPT 250+ PEOPLE ALIGNED

WEEKLY

Core team: 7 workstream owners

Done · Doing · Blocked

Weekly pulse across all 7 workstreams. Blocks surfaced immediately and routed to the right tier.

Why this cadence worked

Shared visibility kept 9 people moving as one unit. Blocks were flagged and addressed collectively.

MONTHLY

The "Small Council"

CPO · CTO · CMO · CSO

One hour, monthly. C-suite principals who could unblock what no project manager could.

How the council was formed

We visited the CEO's former company to learn the format firsthand. Then we made it our own.

QUARTERLY

CEO + full leadership team

30–45 min review quarterly

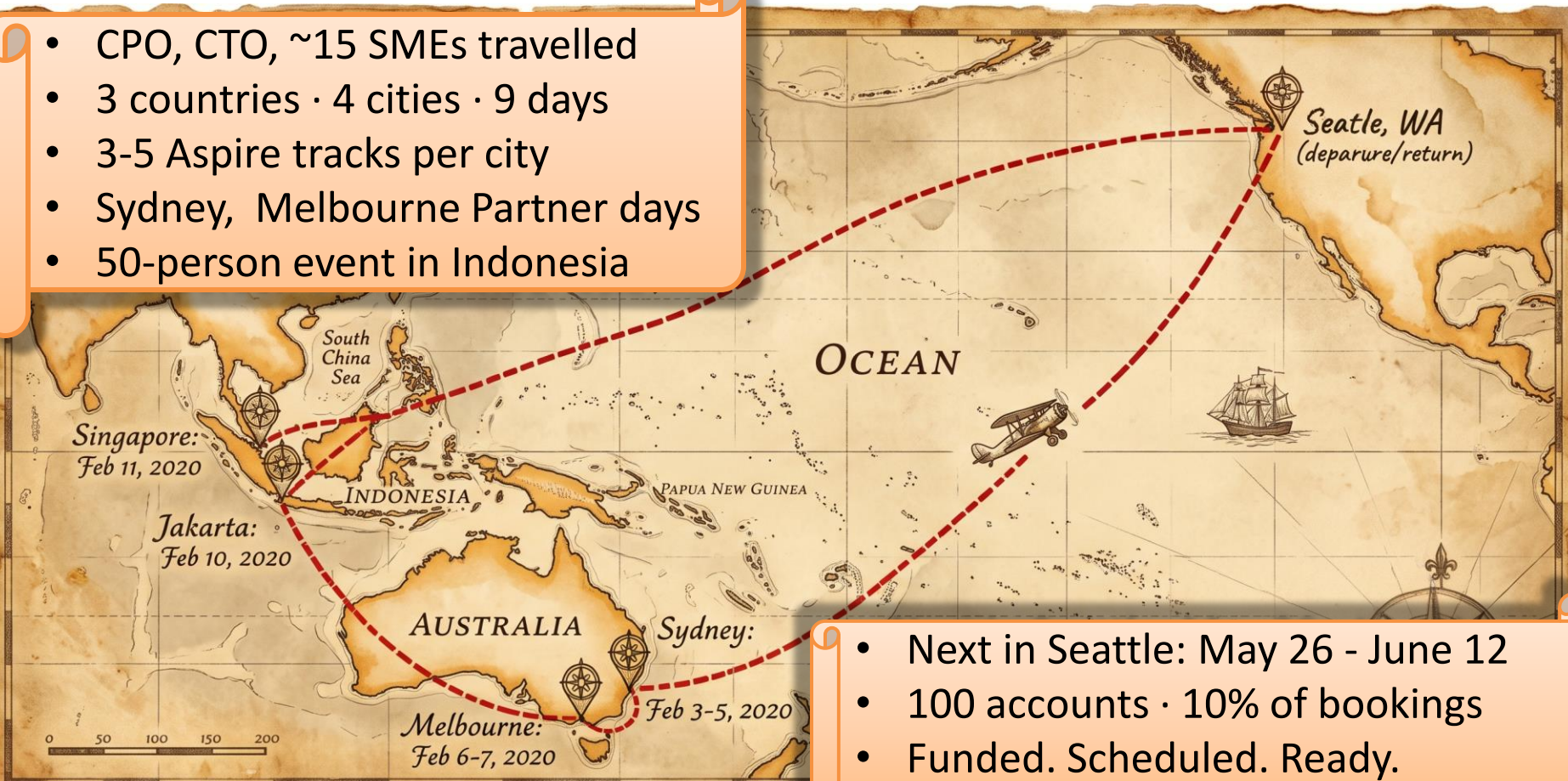
Strategic alignment and final escalation path. The reason 48 demos got built on time.

True CEO sponsorship

It was the structural condition that made Marketing, Engineering, and Sales operate as one team.

ASPIRE MODEL TRAVELED TO ASIA: FEB 3-11, 2020

- CPO, CTO, ~15 SMEs travelled
- 3 countries · 4 cities · 9 days
- 3-5 Aspire tracks per city
- Sydney, Melbourne Partner days
- 50-person event in Indonesia



- Next in Seattle: May 26 - June 12
- 100 accounts · 10% of bookings
- Funded. Scheduled. Ready.

AND THEN THE WORLD STOPPED



- EBC and events moved online, reaching 3-5x more people. Engagement was shallower.
- Sales leaders: *"Aspire can't be virtualized. Worth the wait until we can do it in person."*
- Dmitry left in 2021. Aspire never returned.
- No other company has run this model since.
- **Your turn.**

Q&A

Thank you!

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DMITRY'S 20+ YEARS IN CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

