

Microspeak: ladder up

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20170117-00

January 17, 2017



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Some time ago, I encountered a new piece of Microsoft jargon. Let's try to figure it out together.

For our team presentation, we developed a theme that ties together all of the features we are working on, and how it *laddered up* to something bigger than the features themselves.

I went searching through other documents looking for the phrase “ladder up” in an attempt to triangulate the meaning. Here are some more citations.

These requirements are documented and *ladder up* to each other so teams understand how the work is connected.

I think it's important because it's actually these tiny issues that *ladder up* to my perception about various products.

Risk: The organization's strategy keeps changing.

Impact: Trying to align experimentation to supply decision at a specific timeline cannot succeed.

Action: Form our own vision of how to ladder up.

At left are some of the more common pivots we looked at in the data. Things like role, organization type, platform, and technology use. We found the segments *laddered up* to three main categories identified here.

The list of potential needs will include the twelve needs currently identified (and which can be *laddered up* to the four meta needs of “information”, “enrichment”, etc.).

Confused yet? Here are some more.

Company X organizes all social conversations with subject code tags, which *laddered up* to branded campaigns and offerings.

“Fast” features can be *laddered up* to a strong emotional benefit which taps into a need.

Okay, so there appear to be three general categories of usage.

One sense of *ladder up* is that of multiple things building upon each other and reinforcing each other, usually building toward a common goal.

Another sense of *ladder up* is that of organizing a collection of items into a small number of groups.

The third category is the ones that I can't make any sense of. ("Form our own vision of how to ladder up." "... laddered up to branded campaigns and offerings.")

One of my colleagues spent time in marketing and said that the phrase *ladder up* was used a lot to describe how various campaigns all contributed to a common goal.

So at least in marketing, the *ladder up* sense is that of building and reinforcement.

It's not clear how the "organizing into a small number of groups" sense is related to that. Maybe it's just a coincidence, and the two uses developed independently. Or maybe people heard the phrase *ladder up* in a marketing presentation and decided to start using it themselves without really understanding what it means.

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