

HOW TO PROVIDE VALUE AND DELIGHT IN MAINFRAME DEVELOPMENT WITH THE KANO MODEL



Even though we have been developing software on the mainframe platform for decades we still have ways to learn and improve. We continually face the problem of meeting user needs with the resources we have on hand. This forces us to be careful about what we choose to do—we must look at whether we are focusing on the right things. While there are basic expectations that must be met, are we providing things that excite and delight? That is, the things that make users feel connected and generate passion. Users that feel a connection with your applications can obtain greater value from them.

How to provide things that excite while still delivering on basic needs is difficult to manage, but there are tools to help. For one the [Kano model](#) created by Japanese educator, lecturer, writer, and consultant in the field of quality management, [Dr. Noriaki Kano](#). He sought to resolve these issues with a prioritization framework. The framework focuses on the three patterns of customer expectations versus the investments organizations make to delight their customers and do what it takes to positively impact [customer satisfaction](#).

He observed three basic patterns that you can use to look at the features you provide, and plotted them in a [chart](#):

- **Basic Expectation:** These are the basic things you expect the product will do. These things are not mentioned or promised anywhere, but if missed could create a very frustrated customer. These missed expectations can open doors for competitors. You will need to continuously look at which features have become basic expectations; these change over time. You also need to see if you are missing a feature which has become a basic expectation. For investment you

should look at adding these new basic expectations but look very closely at any improvements to these features. Enhancing a basic expectation will not get you, and your users, the payoff that you could get by putting your efforts elsewhere.

- **Performance Payoff Features:** Kano describes these types of features as “one-dimensional” because of the linear correlation between the amount you invest with the amount of user satisfaction they generate. When you invest more, you get more payoff. *However, just because you can add a feature does not mean that you should.* Product teams need to be careful to not just keep on adding on new features that do not create delight for the users. For investment, know that the effort you put into these features will be met with a proportional payoff, but you will not be making significant noticeable improvements.
- **Excitement Generators:** These are the innovations and surprise elements included in the product—the features that add to your unique value proposition. If absent, excitement generators don’t create dissatisfaction, but when present they create a more than proportional amount of value. These are the things that set your application apart from the competition and make a difference for the users. For investment, you need to make sure that the effort you put into these features has a greater payoff.

Converting to a Kano model can be difficult, but if managed properly you will see the benefits. We recommend that you do the following

- Change your point of view to focusing on user problems to be solved rather than on features. By focusing on the problem, you can produce better solutions rather than starting with a solution in search of a problem.
- Realize that innovation is not invention. You will not be creating anything new; it will be built on what already exists.
- Focus on adding value which was not there before by examining the product experience to find sources of delighters.
- Understand that today’s delighters will become basic expectations tomorrow.

Making investment decisions is always difficult but having a framework like the Kano model can provide clarity to make the process easier and more transparent.