

Notice that the interview, and therefore the map, may identify more than one product feature. In this particular case the map identifies two product features that are important to this consumer: nonfat and calcium. Note also that one feature may lead to more than one consequence, and that some consequences may be positive (or benefits), while others may be negative (or disadvantages), which in turn can lead to greater or lesser attainment of valued end states.

One of the most difficult aspects of mapping a laddering interview is making sure that each and every relationship is valid and an accurate representation of the statements made by the consumer. The arrows in the map represent clear, identifiable links between a feature and a consequence or a consequence and a valued end state. Unless the link is readily apparent from the laddering interview, it should not be mapped—*these relationships should never be assumed by the interviewer.*

Part 1

In this section you will find the transcript of a hypothetical laddering interview related to the product category of cell phones and service.

Interviewer: Why did you purchase this particular cell phone and service?

Consumer: The main reason was because of the instant messaging capability, but I also really like the funky colors of the changeable faceplates.

Interviewer: Why is the instant messaging capability important to you?

Consumer: Because it means that I can chat with my friends on IM anywhere and anytime. I spend more time talking with my friends on IM these days than I do on verbal phone calls. Unfortunately, having the instant messaging capability also means that I pay a lot more per month—that's the downside of the instant messaging feature.

Interviewer: Why is being able to chat with your friends on IM important to you?

Consumer: I really love that feeling of connection with other people; that's really important in my life.

Interviewer: You said earlier that the instant messaging feature means that you have to pay more per month for the service. Is this important to you?

Consumer: Of course!

Interviewer: Why?

Consumer: It makes me feel bad about myself when I spend more than I know I should on something.