

MORE THAN CME: UNCOVERING THE DEEP VALUE OF LOCAL ECHO COMMUNITIES

The Northeast Florida Echo Society is a locally organized, not-for-profit society dedicated to advancing echocardiography education and professional development across the region. Its founding mission rests on two complementary goals: providing high-quality, accessible education to sonographers and cardiologists at all career stages, and cultivating a sense of community and professional belonging within the field. As the society has grown, understanding what members and attendees truly value has become essential to sustaining and expanding its impact. The Customer Value Interviewing (CVI) process provided a structured methodology to uncover these insights.

CUSTOMER SELECTION AND INTERVIEW DESIGN

Two laddering interviews were conducted with a cardiologist and a cardiovascular sonographer — the two primary professional communities the society serves. This pairing was intentional, as their perspectives on value, while often aligned, are shaped by meaningfully different professional contexts and career trajectories. Both participants had been involved with



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the society in multiple capacities, providing the depth of experience necessary to articulate not just surface-level preferences but underlying motivations and goals.

THE COMBINED VALUE HIERARCHY

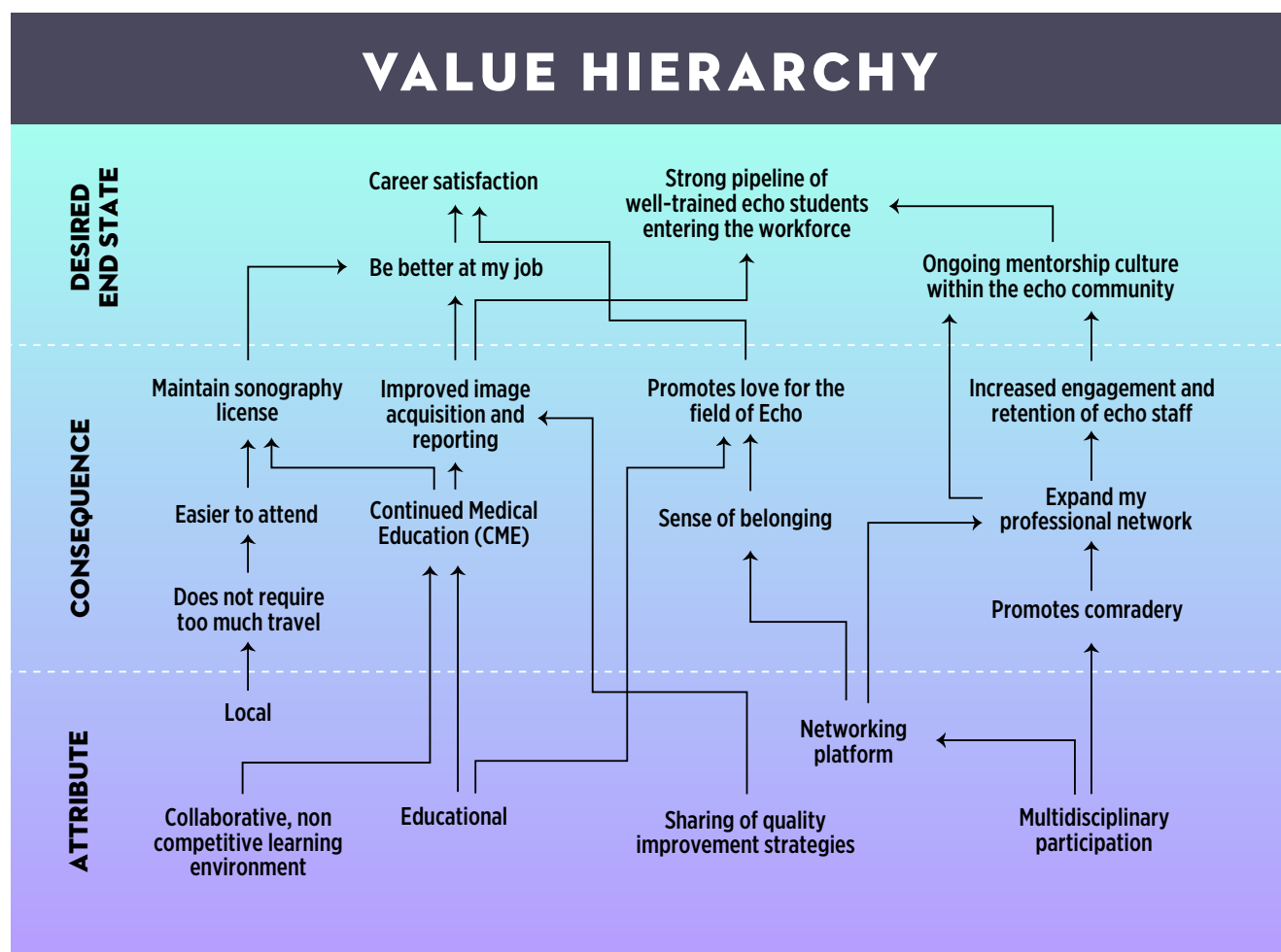
The combined value hierarchy identifies six core attributes of the Northeast Florida Echo Society that customers identified as foundational to their participation. Probing each attribute upward revealed a rich set of personal and professional consequences — the intermediate outcomes that form the most diagnostically useful layer of the hierarchy. The laddering

process revealed that all six attributes and their associated consequences ultimately converge on a few desired end states, all of which are directly aligned with the society's founding mission.

The hierarchy is distinguished by a pattern of both branching and merging that reveals the interconnected nature of the society's value proposition. The attribute of "Local" branched into two distinct consequences: it simultaneously makes meetings easier to attend and eliminates the burden of excessive travel — one logistical, the other economic. The attribute of "Multidisciplinary Participation" similarly branched: for the

cardiologist, it laddered toward professional network expansion; for the sonographer, it laddered more powerfully toward sense of belonging and comradery. Preserving these branches illuminates how the same structural feature creates meaningfully different value depending on professional context.

The merging structure of the hierarchy is perhaps its most revealing feature. Multiple distinct consequences converge on a smaller number of higher-level outcomes, which ultimately merge at the desired end states. For example, improved image acquisition and reporting, CME, and sense



of belonging all contribute — through different mechanisms — to the end state of career satisfaction. This convergence confirms that the society's value is coherent: its various attributes do not produce scattered outcomes, but reinforce and amplify each other along shared pathways. Similarly, consequences related to staff engagement and love for the field of echo both ladder upward to a strong pipeline of well-trained practitioners and an ongoing mentorship culture, reflecting that the society's generative value is produced not just by educational content, but by the motivational and cultural environment it creates.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

The hierarchy reveals that the society's value is deeply personal and professional — not merely logistical. Members do not primarily attend because meetings are convenient or CME is offered; they attend because those features create consequences — growth, belonging, competency, connection — that contribute to outcomes they care deeply about: career satisfaction, professional identity, and the long-term health of the echo field. This distinction has direct implications for how the society is positioned, communicated, and designed.

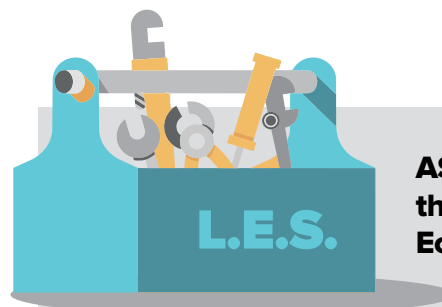
The hierarchy also underscores the importance of the society's collaborative, non-competitive culture — an ambient characteristic that is easy to underestimate in planning but critical to the experience members value. This culture is not a product of any single program; it must be actively protected as the society grows. Both participants independently

expressed a desire to see the society contribute to the preparation of the next generation of echo practitioners, positioning it as having a generative mission beyond individual benefit. Programming specifically designed to support students, early-career sonographers, and imaging fellows would directly serve this end state.

CONCLUSION

The Northeast Florida Echo Society's value hierarchy — structured around six core attributes, nine intermediate consequences, and four desired end states — confirms that the society is doing meaningful and resonant work. The society succeeds when it is simultaneously practical (local, accessible, CME-

eligible), educational (improving clinical skills and image quality), connective (building networks, comradery, and belonging), and generative (mentoring the next generation and strengthening the echo community). These are not competing demands — the hierarchy shows they are deeply integrated, each reinforcing the others along converging pathways toward shared desired end states. This alignment between what customers articulated and what the society was designed to deliver validates its founding vision and provides a clear roadmap for continued development.



ASE is Proud to Announce the Launch of Our Local Echo Society (LES) Toolkit!

In collaboration with 10 LES leaders from across the country,

ASE crafted this resource guide that includes the logistical components of forming a LES, ideas for building and engaging a membership base, and tips for hosting events, meetings, and conferences. Supplemental materials are also included and easy to customize to your LES needs.

Whether you're planning to establish a LES of your own or would like ideas on how to enhance your current offerings, this toolkit is a great place to start! In 2025, ASE created an [online LES directory](#), began promoting LES events on our website, and started an online forum for ASE members who lead their LES. At the 2026 Scientific Sessions, ASE will be hosting our first-ever Local Echo Society Jeopardy with teams from across the United States.

ASE looks forward to continuing its collaboration with Local Echo Societies in the future. Please contact [Caroline Ward](#) if you have any questions or would like to learn more about this initiative.