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JOBS

WHAT CUSTOMERS ARE TRYING TO GET DONE

IN THE LATE 1990S, Stephen led one of the world's first smartphone development projects. His team at Psion PLC combined the innards of the Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), which Psion had originally invented in the 1980s, with telephony components from Motorola to create a device with a long list of features. The team was incredibly excited about all of the things the new device could do. You could even send a fax from your phone! But customers were confused, the technical complexity was overwhelming, and the device was quite costly.

Around the same time, a Canadian company called Research in Motion was taking a different approach, focusing on a simple hierarchy of jobs that people wanted to get done with a smartphone. Their product—the Blackberry—did far fewer things and was much less stylish. But it dominated the field for the next seven years—an eon in that industry.

The key to the Blackberry's success wasn't great technology or clever advertisements. It wasn't about getting the priorities of the

Throwing in everything but the kitchen sink—then adding the kitchen sink—makes your product bloated, not better.

customer right; Stephen's team had been diligent about asking people what they wanted ("Maps!" "Games!"). Rather, the Research in Motion effort triumphed because it looked at customers the right way, focusing on a single critical job to be done: keeping in touch through e-mail.

Jobs help you to focus on what really matters, rather than trying to add on cool features that muddle the customer experience and make the product less compelling. It is a concept that Stephen really wished he had known about when he designed that device.

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL LEARN:
- Why to focus on jobs over past purchase behavior.
- How to win on both the functional and emotional levels.
- How understanding jobs can lead to the better design of products, services, and business models.

USING JOBS TO REDEFINE MARKETS AND CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

When thinking about how to launch a new product or bring in new customers, too many companies focus on what people are currently buying. They use existing purchase data to define their markets quite narrowly. They begin to think of themselves as booksellers and PC companies. Then when sales dip or management makes aggressive growth demands, they end up asking the wrong questions. How can we sell more books? How can we build a better PC? This tunnel-visioned approach to market definition creates a very small solution space, and it can blind companies to threats from untraditional sources.

Customers' jobs exist independently from what people are buying, making it essential to see the world from the customer's perspective rather than from the vantage of a company that happens to be selling something. As the late Harvard Business School Professor Theodore Levitt famously told his students, "People don't want to buy a quarter-inch drill. They want a quarter-inch hole."

Snapchat gives us a good example of a company that has eschewed industry trends in favor of a customer-centric perspective. Snapchat is particularly interesting because it shows how a company is attracting the notoriously fickle millennial demographic to steal market share in the social media/mobile messaging sphere—an

arena that's barely old enough to be disrupted. To a casual observer familiar with the general direction of the industry, Snapchat shouldn't be successful. While Facebook is focusing on delivering enhanced search functionality that allows you to find fond memories among old posts, the ephemeral nature of Snapchat's messages makes that impossible. Instagram continues to add new filters and photo editing capabilities, but Snapchat offers just a handful of filters and tools that are on par with the earliest versions of Microsoft Paint. Twitter opened a world where you can follow the musings of virtually anyone, yet Snapchat restricts you to the posts of added friends and a few preselected organizations.

Despite its apparent inferiority, Snapchat has already grown to reach 6 billion video views per day (just trailing Facebook's 8 billion), and it has a valuation of $16 billion.[1] So what explains Snapchat's success? Rather than cramming its app with all of the features of its closest competitors, Snapchat has focused on satisfying a handful of emotional jobs that are important to its target users. Other social media apps have been criticized for creating an atmosphere of yearning in which users are bombarded with images of fun adventures and expensive vacations. Instead, Snapchat offers a way to document something closer to real life, allowing users to share moments and feelings without an expectation that their posts will be glamorous or that they'll look their best. Framed in this light, the lack of a "Like" button, the inability to search old photos, and the lack of ways to enhance what you're sharing all become advantages rather than drawbacks. Importantly for the company's target demographic, Snapchat also lets users feel like they're part of a chosen community that they helped build. With a younger user base and the ability to share with only selected friends, Snapchat offers a way for millennials to engage with a platform that isn't shared with their parents, extended family members, and employers. Snapchat isn't for everyone, and it doesn't try to be. Instead, its founders resisted the temptation to copy the

competition, building an app that helps an identifiable user base satisfy a handful of important jobs really well.

WINNING ON THE FUNCTIONAL AND EMOTIONAL LEVELS

Customers have jobs that are both functional and emotional in nature, and companies need to design offerings that win on both levels. First consider the functional jobs. Although these can be more straightforward to satisfy than emotional ones, many companies get so excited about adding new functionality that they overlook the underlying jobs. In general, satisfying a customer's functional jobs requires pulling three levers: focusing on real jobs, satisfying those jobs for particular customers or occasions, and designing solutions that prioritize jobs over features.

Critically, it is important to satisfy real jobs. Although this sounds simple, too many companies start with a new idea and then hope that people will realize its inherent appeal. The end result is often a product that solves low-priority jobs or jobs that people don't really have. Reading glasses, for example, were a great idea. Yet for several hundred years after their invention in the thirteenth century, there was virtually no demand for them. Because there was little need to read things up close, most farsighted people didn't even realize they were farsighted. It wasn't until the mid-fifteenth century, when Gutenberg's printing press catalyzed the widespread printing of books, that people began seeking out a way to ease the strain as they tried to read.[2] Once reading books became a high-priority job, demand for curing farsightedness soared.

Jobs are different from success criteria or metrics that determine whether a job has been achieved. Brookwood, an independent school for young children in Massachusetts that we've worked with, used to advertise itself to prospective parents as a "commu-

nity of exuberant learners." That phrasing was evocative, but unfortunately it placed a lot of emphasis on the idea of community. Finding a community for their children was not a job many parents rated as important, and there were many other ways to accomplish that objective such as soccer teams and neighborhood organizations. Community was, however, a means of determining whether children felt comfortable learning and were valued for their individual personalities and talents, not just for their test scores. As part of its rebranding efforts, Brookwood has reframed its messaging around real jobs to be done in order to drive an increase in applications.

Propositions also need to be designed with particular customers and occasions in mind. Designing for some theoretical average user can undermine the potential gains you may get from understanding distinct types of customers' jobs to be done. When we introduce the Jobs concept to new audiences, we sometimes run a mock focus group, pretending that we're working for an ice cream company. At first, we tell people we need to sell more ice cream. They usually think about customers on average and respond that we need more flavors, more sales outlets, fewer calories, and lower prices. That's not very practical, nor does it respond directly to jobs to be done. So we then ask people a different question: Thinking about the last time that you had ice cream, why did you do that, and if you hadn't had ice cream, what would you have done otherwise? The answers are *completely* different. People were celebrating an occasion, and they decided to have ice cream to spend more time together after dinner. They were trying to cool down at the beach, and ice cream competed against water. They were taking a stroll and saw a new shop, and they wanted a new experience rather than just following an old routine. Focusing on particular people in specific contexts creates far richer and more useful detail than thinking about things on average.

Once you have identified a few high-priority jobs, it is important to make sure that you satisfy those jobs well. Companies often spread their resources too thinly, adding extra features that sound good in advertisements. Yet those features rarely drive decision making. Microsoft can boast that upgrading to Excel 2007 increased the limit on unique colors per workbook from 56 to 4.3 billion, but will that really matter? Even worse, the payoff from new features is often short-lived, inasmuch as features generally prove easy for competitors to replicate. Why couldn't Excel boast a template that helps people balance their checkbooks? That's a job that, according to our research, a significant proportion of banking customers accomplish using Excel, but in a currently awkward and error-prone way.

Focusing on features makes you lose sight of important jobs. As the mobility trend further embedded itself in the PC world, Blackberry rushed to get on the tablet train. It quickly got out the PlayBook, which had a touch screen and an icon-based display. It boasted a great list of features and was actually quite slick in a number of ways. On the other hand, the PlayBook failed to take advantage of the company's biggest strength: It launched without native e-mail support! In doing so, the PlayBook glossed over key mobile communication jobs just so that Blackberry could have a competing tablet in the marketplace.

As much as companies may struggle with functional jobs, they typically get more attention than emotional jobs. Emotional jobs tend to be neglected in business, especially outside the realm of consumer packaged goods such as food and cleaning products. Emotional jobs can be difficult to articulate, and solution-oriented managers have a hard time dwelling on how their products can satisfy emotional jobs. Enterprise software companies, for instance, are fond of saying how their worlds are intensely rational, and then they struggle to explain why great products are never broadly adopted or

why companies stick with long-term vendors even though their of-
ferings are outmoded. As competitors find ways to satisfy the same
functional jobs at a lower price point, emotional elements can pro-
vide a vital way to differentiate your product.

Sennheiser, Bose, and JBL have figured out how to make
high-quality audio products. When Apple paid $3.2 billion to buy
Beats Electronics in 2014, countless critics and music enthusiasts
came out ranting about the inferior quality of Beats' headphones.[3]
But despite competing against technically superior products, Beats
had a 40% market share four years after entering the market. So why
are people so excited about Beats? The company hits on emotional
jobs. Put simply, the $300 price tag for a set of Beats headphones is
the cost of a seat at the lunchroom's cool table. From the beginning,
Beats focused on getting its headphones into as many music videos,
locker rooms, and runway shoots as possible, ensuring that they
were associated with celebrity glamor and status. Going a step fur-
ther, Beats offers a wealth of limited editions for movies and sports
leagues, creating more opportunities for users to stand out and ex-
press themselves. Although the headphones have to perform at a
certain functional threshold, their ability to satisfy emotional jobs
allows them to command a premium in the market. Much like
Beats, companies with products that excel along emotional dimen-
sions can stand out even as the competition becomes more and
more commoditized.

USING JOBS TO DESIGN BETTER SOLUTIONS

Doing research to uncover customers' jobs to be done will undoubt-
edly leave you with a long list of jobs. Much like the problem of
adding too many features, attempting to satisfy too many jobs leaves
you with a complicated, expensive, one-size-fits-none product. You

THE JOBS TO BE DONE DIFFERENCE

Today's marketers are bombarded with directives about what to look for when gathering customer insights. Sorting through all the jargon can be almost as challenging as actually designing a new product. Here's a quick look at how jobs are fundamentally different

Jobs are...

- The underlying tasks that customers are trying to get done
- Customer demands that are specific to discrete customer types and occasions
- Actionable statements that guide the design of new solutions

Jobs are not...
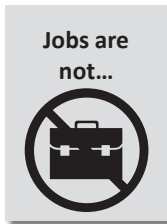
- **Needs – customer articulations of what they would like to see in a new product**

    Jobs are real representations of what customers are trying to get done, even if customers cannot articulate what they want or do not understand the range of possibilities for a breakthrough innovation

- **Need states – occasion-based statements about what customers want and how they want to get it**

    While the Jobs framework also takes an occasion-based lens, the focus is on fundamental tasks. The framework allows for tailored solutions that can satisfy multiple jobs, including in ways that customers have not yet thought about

- **Outcomes – measurable goals that customers are seeking to meet**

    While customer-created success criteria are useful, jobs are more fundamental. Because customers are notoriously bad at stipulating the emotional outcomes they want to achieve and providing outcome-driven guidance on products that do not yet exist, it is more useful to understand what those customers are trying to get done

- **Attributes – features that add value to a new solution**

    Jobs are not simply easily replicable features that can be used to promote a product. They address underlying customer concerns, allowing for a broader solution space in which new offerings can take a wider variety of forms

Figure 1-1

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end up with the fax-sending smartphone described at the start of this chapter. Designing a breakthrough product requires making difficult decisions and trade-offs. At its core, your new solution will need to focus on satisfying a handful of key jobs. The sweet spot lies with jobs that are important yet undersatisfied in the eyes of the customer. These jobs will act as your North Star, guiding the rest of the decisions you make when designing the new offering. Then, at a lower level, you can focus on satisfying secondary jobs that allow you to differentiate your product further, as well as on table-stakes jobs that have to be accomplished by any product in the class.

To see how this works in practice, let's journey to the small town of Ipswich, Massachusetts. Sitting about 30 miles northeast of Boston, Ipswich is a coastal community with a rich colonial history. The town was founded in 1634, and many of the homes are quite old. In fact, the town boasts more homes built before 1725 than any other place in the United States.[4] First Ipswich Bank, much like its competitors in the area, offers the standard range of fixed-rate, adjustable-rate, and jumbo mortgages for the owners of such houses. While all of the banks in the area are rolling out innovative solutions, such as mobile banking options, their mortgage products are hardly exciting. Most banks fail to recognize that the customer's job is not to complete a mortgage transaction but to move into a new home. That is the real North Star for the customer's journey, and understanding this reveals many aspects that are undershot by existing offerings. First Ipswich seems to get this. For those buying a home built before 1750, the bank offers a unique mortgage that allows customers to add on to the initial loan amount to cover the additional renovation expenses that commonly arise when dealing with old houses. If you find out that you have to install new plumbing, for example, you can roll that cost into your mortgage rather than having to take out a second mortgage for the effort. That is Jobs-based thinking at work.

THIS CHAPTER IN PRACTICE—
USING JOBS TO APPEAL TO NEW CUSTOMERS

Yowzit had concerns about its website. This South African Internet start-up, which runs a leading site for customers to rate and review a wide range of services, was doing well but not experiencing exponential growth. Management wanted to connect with customers in an intuitive way, driving further traffic and longer visits to the site. As the company's Managing Director Pramod Mohanlal put it, "We knew that we were addressing a part of an important job, but we needed to understand more deeply what context we could fit into."

The company started talking in-depth to its users. It didn't ask initially for specific ideas for improvement but rather tried to understand key jobs in certain contexts. When were the last three times you used the site? Why did you do that? If you hadn't used the site, what would you have done? How did using the site make you feel? What feelings were important to you then? How did the site's use fit into the broader set of things you were trying to accomplish?

Using this approach, the company thought up new tools for its customers to use and figured out how to position the site in a Jobs-focused way. In addition to promoting functional benefits, such as tools focused on just-in-time ways to improve a night out, the company created ways to satisfy emotional jobs, including new branding around self-expression. It also added new features such as video reviews that enabled in-the-moment expressiveness, particularly for users who felt uncomfortable writing on the fly. The company has used these insights not only to drive much greater traffic but also to drive entry into new spheres such as rating public services. Mohanlal explained: "Thinking about jobs made us recognize that we were playing at the edge of a huge market, and we've vastly expanded our potential by keying into what really motivates behavior."

Many companies try to innovate by looking backward. They fo-

cus on what they are already selling or doing and on how their customers currently behave. By focusing on jobs, you look deeper—at what really drives behavior. This perspective can totally change the innovation landscape, and it ensures that ideas connect with customers' true motivations rather than with what they happen to be doing today. A Jobs approach sets you up to win both today and into the future.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Focusing on Jobs to be done, rather than on past customer purchase behavior, allows you to define a broader solution space with more opportunities for innovation.

Designing a product that satisfies functional jobs in a superior way is a necessary first step. If you also appeal to customers' emotional needs, whether your customer is an individual consumer or a large corporation, you can make your product a breakthrough success. This requires designing offerings for specific customers on specific occasions.

Be wary of getting into feature wars with your competitors. Features are easy to copy, and adding too many can ultimately make for a frustrating user experience. Similarly, focus on satisfying high-priority jobs, looking first to the jobs that are both important and undersatisfied in the eyes of the customer.