How to create products and services customers want. Get started with...

Value Proposition Design

strategyzer.com/vpd

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You'll love Value Proposition Design if you've been...

Overwhelmed by the task of true value creation

Sometimes you feel like...
- There should be better tools available to help you create value for your customers and your business.
- You might be pursuing the wrong tasks and you feel insecure about the next steps.
- It's difficult to learn what customers really want.
- The information and data you get from (potential) customers is overwhelming and you don't know how to best organize it.
- It's challenging to go beyond products and features toward a deep understanding of customer value creation.
- You lack the big picture of how all the puzzle pieces fit together.

Frustrated by unproductive meetings and misaligned teams

You have experienced teams that...
- Lacked a shared language and a shared understanding of customer value creation.
- Got bogged down by unproductive meetings with tons of unstructured “blah blah blah” conversations.
- Worked without clear processes and tools.
- Were focused mainly on technologies, products, and features rather than customers.
- Conducted meetings that drained energy and ended without a clear outcome.
- Were misaligned.
Involved in bold shiny projects that blew up

You have seen projects that...

- Were big bold bets that failed and wasted a lot money.
- Put energy into polishing and refining a business plan until it perpetuated the illusion that it could actually work.
- Spent a lot of time building detailed spreadsheets that were completely made up and turned out to be wrong.
- Spent more time developing and debating ideas rather than testing them with customers and stakeholders.
- Let opinions dominate over facts from the field.
- Lacked clear processes and tools to minimize risk.
- Used processes suited for running a business rather than ones for developing new ideas.

Disappointed by the failure of a good idea.

Get "From Failure to Success" poster
Value Proposition Design will help you successfully...

Understand the patterns of value creation

Organize information about what customers want in a simple way that makes the patterns of value creation easily visible. As a result, you will more effectively design value propositions and profitable business models that directly target your customers’ most pressing and important jobs, pains, and gains.

Gain clarity.

Leverage the experience and skills of your team

Equip your team with a shared language to overcome “blah blah blah,” conduct more strategic conversations, run creative exercises, and get aligned. This will lead to more enjoyable meetings that are full of energy and produce actionable outcomes beyond a focus on technology, products, and features toward creating value for your customers and your business.

Get your team aligned.
Avoid wasting time with ideas that won’t work

Relentlessly test the most important hypotheses underlying your business ideas in order to reduce the risk of failure. This will allow you to pursue big bold ideas without having to break the bank. Your processes to shape new ideas will be fit for the task and complement your existing processes that help you run your business.

Minimize the risk of a flop.

Design, test, and deliver what customers want.

Get “From Failure to Success” poster
Our Value Proposition to You

The links you see on the side of every page point to resources in the online companion.

Watch for the Strategyzer logo and follow the link to online exercises, tools/templates, posters, and more.

Note: To gain access to these exclusive online portions of Value Proposition Design, you'll need to prove you own the book. Keep the book near you to help you answer the secret questions and verify your ownership!
The Tools and Process of Value Proposition Design
The heart of *Value Proposition Design* is about applying **Tools** to the messy **Search** for value propositions that customers want and then keeping them aligned with what customers want in **Post search**.

*Value Proposition Design* shows you how to use the **Value Proposition Canvas** to **Design** and **Test** great value propositions in an iterative search for what customers want. Value proposition design is a never-ending process in which you need to **Evolve** your value proposition(s) constantly to keep it relevant to customers.

**Progress**
Manage the messy and nonlinear process of value proposition design and reduce risk by systematically applying adequate tools and processes.

**Evolve**

**Post search**

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*Design Squiggle adapted from Damien Newman, Central*
An Integrated Suite of Tools

The Value Proposition Canvas is the tool at the center of this book. It makes value propositions visible and tangible and thus easier to discuss and manage. It perfectly integrates with the Business Model Canvas and the Environment Map, two tools that are discussed in detail in Business Model Generation, the sister book to this one. Together, they shape the foundation of a suite of business tools.

The Value Proposition Canvas zooms into the details of two of the building blocks of the Business Model Canvas.

*Business Model Generation, Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010.*
The Environment Map helps you understand the context in which you create.

The Business Model Canvas helps you create value for your business.

The Value Proposition Canvas helps you create value for your customer.
Embed your value proposition in a viable business model to capture value for your organization. To do so, you can use the Business Model Canvas, a tool to describe how your organization creates, delivers, and captures value. The Business Model Canvas and Value Proposition Canvas perfectly integrate, with the latter being like a plug-in to the former that allows you to zoom into the details of how you are creating value for customers.

The refresher of the Business Model Canvas on this spread is sufficient to work through this book and create great value propositions. Go to the online resources if you are interested in more or get *Business Model Generation,* the sister publication to this book.

**Customer Segments** are the groups of people and/or organizations a company or organization aims to reach and create value for with a dedicated value proposition.

**Value Propositions** are based on a bundle of products and services that create value for a customer segment.

**Channels** describe how a value proposition is communicated and delivered to a customer segment through communication, distribution, and sales channels.

**Customer Relationships** outline what type of relationship is established and maintained with each customer segment, and they explain how customers are acquired and retained.

**Revenue Streams** result from a value proposition successfully offered to a customer segment. It is how an organization captures value with a price that customers are willing to pay.

**Key Resources** are the most important assets required to offer and deliver the previously described elements.

**Key Activities** are the most important activities an organization needs to perform well.

**Key Partnerships** shows the network of suppliers and partners that bring in external resources and activities.

**Cost Structure** describes all costs incurred to operate a business model.

**Profit** is calculated by subtracting the total of all costs in the cost structure from the total of all revenue streams.
The Business Model Canvas

Described for: 

Designed by: 

Date: 

Version: 

Key Partners

Key Activities

Value Propositions

Customer Relationships

Customer Segments

Key Resources

Channels

Cost Structure

Revenue Streams

Download detailed Business Model Canvas Explanation and the Business Model Canvas.pdf
Value Proposition Design works for...

Are you creating something from scratch on your own or are you part of an existing organization? Some things will be easier and some harder depending on your strategic playground.

A start-up entrepreneur deals with different constraints than a project leader for a new venture within an existing organization. The tools presented in this book apply to both contexts. Depending on your starting point you will execute them in a different way to leverage different strengths and overcome different obstacles.

Main challenges
- Produce proof that your ideas can work on a limited budget.
- Manage involvement of investors (if you scale your ideas).
- Risk running out of money before finding the right value proposition and business model.

Main opportunities
- Use speedy decision making and agility to your advantage.
- Leverage the motivation of ownership as a driver for success.

New Ventures
Individuals or teams setting out to create a great value proposition and business model from scratch.
Established Organizations
Teams within existing companies setting out to improve or invent value propositions and business models

Main opportunities
- Build on existing value propositions and business models.
- Leverage existing assets (sales, channels, brand, etc.).
- Build portfolios of business models and value propositions.

Main challenges
- Get buy-in from top management.
- Get access to existing resources.
- Manage cannibalization.
- Overcome risk aversion.
- Overcome rigid and slow processes.
- Produce big wins to move the needle.
- Manage career risk of innovators.
Use Value Proposition Design to...

invent and improve value propositions. The tools we will study work for managing and renewing value propositions (and business models) just as much as for creating new ones. Put the value proposition and business model to work to create a shared language of value creation in your organization. Use them to continuously invent and improve value propositions that meet customer profiles, which is an undertaking that never ends.

Invent

Invent new value propositions that people want with business models that work.
Improve
Manage, measure, challenge, improve, and renew existing value propositions and business models.
Assess Your Value Proposition Design Skills

Complete our online test and assess whether you have the attitude and skills required to systematically be successful at value proposition design. Take the test before and after working through Value Proposition Design to measure your progress.

Take your skills test online

Entrepreneurial Knowledge

You enjoy trying out new things. You don't see the risk of failing as a threat but an opportunity to learn and progress. You easily navigate between the strategic and the tactical.

Tool Skills

You systematically use the Value Proposition Canvas, Business Model Canvas, and other tools and processes in your search for great value propositions and business models.
Design Thinking Skills
You explore multiple alternatives before picking and refining a particular direction. You are comfortable with the nonlinear and iterative nature of value creation.

Customer Empathy
You relentlessly take a customer perspective and are even better at listening to customers than selling to them.

Experimentation Skills
You systematically seek evidence that supports your ideas and tests your vision. You experiment at the earliest stages to learn what works and what doesn't.
Sell Your Colleagues on Value Proposition Design

worried that we focus too much on products and features instead of creating value for customers.

astonished at how poorly aligned product development, sales, and marketing are when it comes to developing new value propositions.

surprised at how often we make stuff nobody wants, despite our good ideas and good intentions.

I am...

really disappointed by how much we talked about value propositions and business models at our last meeting without really getting tangible results.

blown away by how unclear that last presentation on that new value proposition and business model was.

amazed by how many resources we wasted when that great idea in that last business plan turned out to be a flop because we didn't test it.

concerned that our product development process doesn't use a more customer-focused methodology.

surprised that we invest so much in research and development (R&D), but fail to invest in developing the right value propositions and business models.

not sure if everybody in our team has a shared understanding of what a good value proposition actually is.
So, what if we tried out the Value Proposition Canvas (and Business Model Canvas) in our next project?

Get a slide deck with 10 arguments to use with the Value Proposition and Business Model Canvases.
The Value Proposition Canvas has two sides. With the Customer Profile p.10 you clarify your customer understanding. With the Value Map p.26 you describe how you intend to create value for that customer. You achieve Fit p.40 between the two when one meets the other.
Create Value

The set of value proposition **benefits** that you **design** to attract customers.

**DEF·INI·TION**

**VALUE PROPOSITION**

*Describes the benefits customers can expect from your products and services.*
Observe Customers

The set of customer characteristics that you assume, observe, and verify in the market.
Value Map

The Value (Proposition) Map describes the features of a specific value proposition in your business model in a more structured and detailed way. It breaks your value proposition down into products and services, pain relievers, and gain creators.

Gain Creators describe how your products and services create customer gains.

Pain Relievers describe how your products and services alleviate customer pains.

This is a list of all the Products and Services a value proposition is built around.
**Gains** describe the outcomes customers want to achieve or the concrete benefits they are seeking.

**Pains** describe bad outcomes, risks, and obstacles related to customer jobs.

**Customer Jobs** describe what customers are trying to get done in their work and in their lives, as expressed in their own words.

**Customer Profile**

The Customer (Segment) Profile describes a specific customer segment in your business model in a more structured and detailed way. It breaks the customer down into its jobs, pains, and gains.

You achieve **Fit** when your value map meets your customer profile—when your products and services produce pain relievers and gain creators that match one or more of the jobs, pains, and gains that are important to your customer.
1.1
Customer Profile
Customer Jobs

Jobs describe the things your customers are trying to get done in their work or in their life. A customer job could be the tasks they are trying to perform and complete, the problems they are trying to solve, or the needs they are trying to satisfy. Make sure you take the customer’s perspective when investigating jobs. What you think of as important from your perspective might not be a job customers are actually trying to get done.

Distinguish between three main types of customer jobs to be done and supporting jobs:

**Functional jobs**
When your customers try to perform or complete a specific task or solve a specific problem, for example, mow the lawn, eat healthy as a consumer, write a report, or help clients as a professional.

**Social jobs**
When your customers want to look good or gain power or status. These jobs describe how customers want to be perceived by others, for example, look trendy as a consumer or be perceived as competent as a professional.

**Personal/emotional jobs**
When your customers seek a specific emotional state, such as feeling good or secure, for example, seeking peace of mind regarding one’s investments as a consumer or achieving the feeling of job security at one’s workplace.

**Supporting jobs**
Customers also perform supporting jobs in the context of purchasing and consuming value either as consumers or as professionals. These jobs arise from three different roles:

- **BUYER OF VALUE**: jobs related to buying value, such as comparing offers, deciding which products to buy, standing in a checkout line, completing a purchase, or taking delivery of a product or service.

- **COCREATOR OF VALUE**: jobs related to cocreating value with your organization, such as posting product reviews and feedback or even participating in the design of a product or service.

- **TRANSFERRER OF VALUE**: jobs related to the end of a value proposition’s life cycle, such as canceling a subscription, disposing of a product, transferring it to others, or reselling it.

*The jobs to be done concept was developed independently by several business thinkers including Anthony Ulwick of the consulting firm Strategyn, consultants Rick Pedri and Bob Moesta, and Professor Denise Nitterhouse of DePaul University. It was popularized by Clay Christensen and his consulting firm Innosight and Anthony Ulwick's Strategyn.*
Job context
Customer jobs often depend on the specific context in which they are performed. The context may impose certain constraints or limitations. For example, calling somebody on the fly is different when you are traveling on a train than when you are driving a car. Likewise, going to the movies with your kids is different than going with your partner.

Job importance
It is important to acknowledge that not all jobs have the same importance to your customer. Some matter more in a customer’s work or life because failing to get them done could have serious ramifications. Some are insignificant because the customer cares about other things more. Sometimes a customer will deem a job crucial because it occurs frequently or because it will result in a desired or unwanted outcome.

Download trigger questions to help find customer jobs
Customer Pains

Pains describe anything that annoys your customers before, during, and after trying to get a job done or simply prevents them from getting a job done. Pains also describe risks, that is, potential bad outcomes, related to getting a job done badly or not at all.

Seek to identify three types of customer pains and how severe customers find them:

Undesired outcomes, problems, and characteristics
Pains are functional (e.g., a solution doesn’t work, doesn’t work well, or has negative side effects), social (“I look bad doing this”), emotional (“I feel bad every time I do this”), or ancillary (“It’s annoying to go to the store for this”). This may also involve undesired characteristics customers don’t like (e.g., “Running at the gym is boring,” or “This design is ugly”).

Obstacles
These are things that prevent customers from even getting started with a job or that slow them down (e.g., “I lack the time to get this job done accurately,” or “I can’t afford any of the existing solutions”).

Risks (undesired potential outcomes)
What could go wrong and have important negative consequences (e.g., “I might lose credibility when using this type of solution,” or “A security breach would be disastrous for us”).

Pain severity
A customer pain can be extreme or moderate, similar to how jobs can be important or insignificant to the customer.

Tip: Make pains concrete.
To clearly differentiate jobs, pains, and gains, describe them as concretely as possible. For example, when a customer says “waiting in line was a waste of time,” ask after how many minutes exactly it began to feel like wasted time. That way you can note “wasting more than x minutes standing in line.” When you understand how exactly customers measure pain severity, you can design better pain relievers in your value proposition.
The following list of trigger questions can help you think of different potential customer pains:

- How do your customers define too costly? Takes a lot of time, costs too much money, or requires substantial efforts?
- What makes your customers feel bad? What are their frustrations, annoyances, or things that give them a headache?
- How are current value propositions underperforming for your customers? Which features are they missing? Are there performance issues that annoy them or malfunctions they cite?
- What are the main difficulties and challenges your customers encounter? Do they understand how things work, have difficulties getting certain things done, or resist particular jobs for specific reasons?
- What negative social consequences do your customers encounter or fear? Are they afraid of a loss of face, power, trust, or status?
- What risks do your customers fear? Are they afraid of financial, social, or technical risks, or are they asking themselves what could go wrong?
- What's keeping your customers awake at night? What are their big issues, concerns, and worries?
- What common mistakes do your customers make? Are they using a solution the wrong way?
- What barriers are keeping your customers from adopting a value proposition? Are there upfront investment costs, a steep learning curve, or other obstacles preventing adoption?

Download trigger questions
Customer Gains

Gains describe the outcomes and benefits your customers want. Some gains are required, expected, or desired by customers, and some would surprise them. Gains include functional utility, social gains, positive emotions, and cost savings.

Seek to identify four types of customer gains in terms of outcomes and benefits:

**Required gains**
These are gains without which a solution wouldn’t work. For example, the most basic expectation that we have from a smartphone is that we can make a call with it.

**Expected gains**
These are relatively basic gains that we expect from a solution, even if it could work without them. For example, since Apple launched the iPhone, we expect phones to be well-designed and look good.

**Desired gains**
These are gains that go beyond what we expect from a solution but would love to have if we could. These are usually gains that customers would come up with if you asked them. For example, we desire smartphones to be seamlessly integrated with our other devices.

**Unexpected gains**
These are gains that go beyond customer expectations and desires. They wouldn’t even come up with them if you asked them. Before Apple brought touch screens and the App Store to the mainstream, nobody really thought of them as part of a phone.

**Gain relevance**
A customer gain can feel essential or nice to have. Just like pains can feel extreme or moderate to them.

**Tip: Make gains concrete.**
As with pains, it’s better to describe gains as concretely as possible to clearly differentiate jobs, pains, and gains from one another. Ask how much they’d expect or dream of when a customer indicates “better performance” as a desired gain. That way you can note “would love an increased performance of more than x.” When you understand how exactly customers measure gains (i.e., outcomes and benefits), you can design better gain creators in your value proposition.
The following list of trigger questions can help you think of different potential customer gains:

- Which savings would make your customers happy? Which savings in terms of time, money, and effort would they value?
- What quality levels do they expect, and what would they wish for more or less of?
- How do current value propositions delight your customers? Which specific features do they enjoy? What performance and quality do they expect?
- What would make your customers' jobs or lives easier? Could there be a flatter learning curve, more services, or lower costs of ownership?
- What positive social consequences do your customers desire? What makes them look good? What increases their power or their status?
- What are customers looking for most? Are they searching for good design, guarantees, specific or more features?
- What do customers dream about? What do they aspire to achieve, or what would be a big relief to them?
- How do your customers measure success and failure? How do they gauge performance or cost?
- What would increase your customers' likelihood of adopting a value proposition? Do they desire lower cost, less investment, lower risk, or better quality?

Download trigger questions
Profile of a “Business Book Reader”

We chose to use potential readers of this book to illustrate the customer profile. We deliberately went beyond jobs, pains, and gains merely related to reading books, since we intended to design an innovative and more holistic value proposition for businesspeople in general.

The customer profile sketched out on the right is informed by several interviews we conducted and thousands of interactions we had with workshop participants. However, it is not mandatory to start with preexisting customer knowledge. You may begin exploring ideas by sketching out a profile based on what you believe your potential customers look like. This is an excellent starting point to prepare customer interviews and tests regarding your assumptions about customer jobs, pains, and gains.

Gains are benefits, results, and characteristics that customers require or desire. They are outcomes of jobs or wanted characteristics of a value proposition that help customers get a job done well.

The more tangible and specific you make pains and gains, the better. For example, “examples from my industry” is more concrete than “relevant to my context.” Ask customers how they measure gains and pains. Investigate how they measure success or failure of a job they want to get done.

Make sure you deeply understand your customer. If you have only a few sticky notes on your profile, that probably indicates a lack of customer understanding. Unearth as many jobs, pains, and gains as you can. Search beyond those directly related to your value proposition.
You should know your customers' social and emotional jobs in addition to their functional jobs, which are usually easier to identify.

Make sure you go beyond a superficial understanding of jobs. Why do customers want to "learn new knowledge"? It might be that they want to bring new methods into their organization. Ask "why" several times to get to the most important jobs.

Make sure you don't just consider jobs, pains, and gains related to a value proposition or product in mind. Identify those (e.g., "business books are too long") as well as other extreme pains (e.g., "lack of time" or "get boss's attention").
Ranking Jobs, Pains, and Gains

Although individual customer preferences vary, you need to get a sense of customer priorities. Investigate which jobs the majority consider important or insignificant. Find out which pains they find extreme versus merely moderate. Learn which gains they find essential and which are simply nice to have.

Ranking jobs, pains, and gains is essential in order to design value propositions that address things customers really care about. Of course, it’s difficult to unearth what really matters to customers, but your understanding will improve with every customer interaction and experiment.

It doesn’t matter if you start out with a ranking that is based on what you think is important to your potential customers as long as you strive to test that ranking until it truly reflects priorities from the customer’s perspective.
Step into Your Customers' Shoes

**OBJECTIVE**
Visualize what matters to your customers in a shareable format

**OUTCOME**
One page actionable customer profile

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**How good is your understanding of your customers' jobs, pains, and gains? Map out a customer profile.**

**Instructions**
Map the profile of one of your currently existing customer segments to practice using the customer profile. If you are working on a new idea, sketch out the customer segment you intend to create value for.

1. Download the Customer Profile Canvas.
2. Grab a set of small sticky notes.
3. Map out your customer profile.

---

1. **Select customer segment.**
Select a customer segment that you want to profile.

2. **Identify customer jobs.**
   Ask what tasks your customers are trying to complete. Map out all of their jobs by writing each one on an individual sticky note.

3. **Identify customer pains.**
   What pains do your customers have? Write down as many as you can come up with, including obstacles and risks.

4. **Identify customer gains.**
   What outcomes and benefits do your customers want to achieve? Write down as many gains as you can come up with.

5. **Prioritize jobs, pains, and gains.**
Order jobs, pains, and gains in a column, each with the most important jobs, most extreme pains, and essential gains on top and the moderate pains and nice-to-have gains at the bottom.

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Do this exercise online
# Best Practices for Mapping Jobs, Pains, and Gains

## Common Mistakes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mistake</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mixing several customer segments into one profile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixing jobs and outcomes.</td>
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<td>Focusing on functional jobs only and forgetting social and emotional</td>
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<td>jobs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listing jobs, pains, and gains with your value proposition in mind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying too few jobs, pains, and gains.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being too vague in descriptions of pains and gains.</td>
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## Best Practices

**Make a Value Proposition Canvas for every different customer segment.** If you sell to companies, ask yourself if you have different types of customers within each company (e.g., users, buyers).

**Jobs are the tasks customers are trying to perform, the problems they are trying to solve, or the needs they are trying to satisfy, whereas gains are the concrete outcomes they want to achieve—or avoid and eliminate in the case of pains.**

**Sometimes social or emotional jobs are even more important than the “visible” functional jobs. “Looking good in front of others” might be more important than finding a great technical solution that helps complete the job effectively.**

**When you map your customer, you should proceed like an anthropologist and “forget” what you are offering. For example, a business publisher should not map jobs, pains, and gains merely related to books, because a reader has the choice between business books, consultants, YouTube videos, or even completing an MBA program or training. Go beyond the jobs, pains, and gains you intend or hope to address with your value proposition.**

**A good customer profile is full of sticky notes, because most customers have a lot of pains and expect or desire a lot of gains. Map out all your (potential) customers’ important jobs, extreme pains, and essential gains.**

**Make pains and gains tangible and concrete. Rather than just writing “salary increase” in gains, specify how much of an increase a customer is seeking. Rather than writing “takes too long” in pains, indicate how long “too long” actually is. This will allow you to understand how exactly customers measure success and failure.**
Pains vs. Gains

When you get started with the customer profile, you might simply put the same ideas in pains and gains as opposites of each other. For example, if one of the customers’ jobs to be done is “earn more money,” you might start by adding “salary increase” to gains and “salary decrease” to pains.

Here’s a better way to do it:

- Find out precisely how much more money the customer expects to earn so it feels like a gain and investigate what decrease would feel like a pain.
- In the pains, add the barriers that prevent or make it difficult to get a job done. In our example the pain might be “my employer doesn’t give raises.”
- In the pains, add the risks related to not getting the job done. In our example the pain could be “might not be able to afford my child’s future college tuition.”

Ask “why” several times until you really understand your customers’ jobs to be done.

Another issue when you get started with the customer profile is that you might settle with a superficial understanding of your customer’s jobs. To avoid this, you need to ask yourself why a customer wants to perform a certain job to dig deeper toward the real motivations.

For example, why might a customer want to learn a foreign language? Maybe because the “real” customer job to be done is to improve his CV. Why does he want to improve his CV? Maybe because he wants to earn more money.

Don’t settle until you really understand the underlying jobs to be done that really drive customers.
1.2 Value Map
Products and Services

This is simply a list of what you offer. Think of it as all the items your customers can see in your shop window—metaphorically speaking. It’s an enumeration of all the products and services your value proposition builds on. This bundle of products and services helps your customers complete either functional, social, or emotional jobs or helps them satisfy basic needs. It is crucial to acknowledge that products and services don’t create value alone—only in relationship to a specific customer segment and their jobs, pains, and gains.

Your list of products and services may also include supporting ones that help your customers perform the roles of buyer (those that help customers compare offers, decide, and buy), co-creator (those that help customers co-design value propositions), and transferrer (those that help customers dispose of a product).

Your value proposition is likely to be composed of various types of products and services:

**Physical/tangible**
Goods, such as manufactured products.

**Intangible**
Products such as copyrights or services such as after-sales assistance.

**Digital**
Products such as music downloads or services such as online recommendations.

**Financial**
Products such as investment funds and insurances or services such as the financing of a purchase.

**Relevance**
It is essential to acknowledge that not all products and services have the same relevance to your customers. Some products and services are essential to your value proposition; some are merely nice to have.
Pain Relievers

Pain relievers describe how exactly your products and services alleviate specific customer pains. They explicitly outline how you intend to eliminate or reduce some of the things that annoy your customers before, during, or after they are trying to complete a job or that prevent them from doing so.

Great value propositions focus on pains that matter to customers, in particular extreme pains. You don't need to come up with a pain reliever for every pain you've identified in the customer profile—no value proposition can do this. Great value propositions often focus only on few pains that they alleviate extremely well.

The following list of trigger questions can help you think of different ways your products and services may help your customers alleviate pains.

Ask yourself: Could your products and services...

- produce savings? In terms of time, money, or efforts.
- make your customers feel better? By killing frustrations, annoyances, and other things that give customers a headache.
- fix underperforming solutions? By introducing new features, better performance, or enhanced quality.
- put an end to difficulties and challenges your customers encounter? By making things easier or eliminating obstacles.
- wipe out negative social consequences your customers encounter or fear? In terms of loss of face or lost power, trust, or status.
- eliminate risks your customers fear? In terms of financial, social, technical risks, or things that could potentially go wrong.
- help your customers better sleep at night? By addressing significant issues, diminishing concerns, or eliminating worries.
- limit or eradicate common mistakes customers make? By helping them use a solution the right way.
- eliminate barriers that are keeping your customer from adopting value propositions? Introducing lower or no upfront investment costs, a flatter learning curve, or eliminating other obstacles preventing adoption.

Relevance

A pain reliever can be more or less valuable to the customer. Make sure you differentiate between essential pain relievers and ones that are nice to have. The former relieve extreme issues, often in a radical way, and create a lot of value. The latter merely relieve moderate pains.

Download trigger questions
Gain Creators

Gain creators describe how your products and services create customer gains. They explicitly outline how you intend to produce outcomes and benefits that your customer expects, desires, or would be surprised by, including functional utility, social gains, positive emotions, and cost savings.

As with pain relievers, gain creators don't need to address every gain identified in the customer profile. Focus on those that are relevant to customers and where your products and services can make a difference.

The following list of trigger questions can help you think of different ways your products and services may help your customers obtain required, expected, desired, or unexpected outcomes and benefits.

Ask yourself: Could your products and services...

- create savings that please your customers? In terms of time, money, and effort.
- produce outcomes your customers expect or that exceed their expectations? By offering quality levels, more of something, or less of something.
- outperform current value propositions and delight your customers? Regarding specific features, performance, or quality.
- make your customers' work or life easier? Via better usability, accessibility, more services, or lower cost of ownership.
- create positive social consequences? By making them look good or producing an increase in power or status.
- do something specific that customers are looking for? In terms of good design, guarantees, or specific or more features.
- fulfill a desire customers dream about? By helping them achieve their aspirations or getting relief from a hardship.
- produce positive outcomes matching your customers' success and failure criteria? In terms of better performance or lower cost.

- help make adoption easier? Through lower cost, fewer investments, lower risk, better quality, improved performance, or better design.

Relevance

A gain creator can produce more or less relevant outcomes and benefits for the customer just like we have seen for pain relievers. Make sure you differentiate between essential and nice to have gain creators.

Download trigger questions
Mapping the Value Proposition of Value Proposition Design

Remarkable value propositions focus on jobs, pains, and gains that matter to customers and achieve those exceedingly well. Again, you should not try to address all customer pains and gains. Focus on those that will make a difference for your customer.

It's okay to aggregate several value propositions into one.

"Naked" list of the products and services that your value proposition builds on to target a specific customer segment.

Pain relievers outline how exactly your products and services kill customer pains. Each pain reliever addresses at least one or more pains or gains. Don't add products or services here.
Gain creators highlight how exactly your products and services help customers achieve gains. Each gain creator addresses at least one or more pains or gains. Don't add products or services here.

Formal Map of how we believe the products and services around this book create value for customers.
Map How Your Products and Services Create Value

**Objective**
Describe explicitly how your products and services create value

**Outcome**
1 page map of value creation

**Instructions**
Sketch out the value map of one of your existing value propositions. For example, use one that targets the customer segment you profiled in the previous exercise. It's easier to get started with an existing value proposition. However, if you don't have one yet, sketch out how you intend to create value with a new idea. We will cover the creation of new value propositions more specifically later on in this book.

For now:
1. Grab the customer profile you previously completed.
2. Download the value map.
3. Grab a set of small sticky notes.
4. Map out how you create value for your customers.

Download the Value Map pdf
1. **List products and services.**
   List all the products and services of your existing value proposition.

2. **Outline pain relievers.**
   Outline how your products and services currently help customers alleviate pains by eliminating undesired outcomes, obstacles, or risks. Use one sticky note per pain reliever.

3. **Outline gain creators.**
   Explain how your products and services currently create expected or desired outcomes and benefits for customers. Use one sticky note per gain creator.

4. **Rank by order of importance.**
   Rank products and services, pain relievers, and gain creators according to how essential they are to customers.

_Do this exercise online._
Pain relievers vs. Gain creators
Pain relievers and gain creators both create value for the customer in different ways. The difference is that the former specifically addresses pains in the customer profile, while the latter specifically addresses gains. It is okay if either of them addresses pains and gains at the same time. The main goal of these two areas is to make the customer value creation of your products and services explicit.

What is the difference with the pains and gains in the customer profile?
Pain relievers and gain creators are distinctly different from pains and gains. You have control over the former, whereas you don't have control over the latter. You decide (i.e., design) how you intend to create value by addressing specific jobs, pains, and gains. You don't decide over which jobs, pains, and gains the customer has. And no value proposition addresses all of a customer's jobs, pains, and gains. The best ones address those that matter most to customers and do so extremely well.
Best Practices for Mapping Value Creation

Common Mistakes

- List all your products and services rather than just those targeted at a specific segment.
- Add products and services to the pain reliever and gain creator fields.
- Offer pain relievers and gain creators that have nothing to do with the pains and gains in the customer profile.
- Make the unrealistic attempt to address all customer pains and gains.

Best Practices

- Products and services create value only in relationship to a specific customer segment. List only the bundle of products and services that jointly form a value proposition for a specific customer segment.
- Pain relievers and gain creators are explanations or characteristics that make the value creation of your products and services explicit. Examples include “helps save time” and “well-designed.”
- Remember that products and services don’t create value in absolute terms. It is always relative to customers’ jobs, pains, and gains.
- Realize that great value propositions are about making choices regarding which jobs, pains, and gains to address and which to forgo. No value proposition addresses all of them. If your value map indicates so, it’s probably because you’re not honest about all the jobs, pains, and gains that should be in your customer profile.
1.3
Fit
Fit

You achieve fit when customers get excited about your value proposition, which happens when you address important jobs, alleviate extreme pains, and create essential gains that customers care about. As we will explain throughout this book, fit is hard to find and maintain. Striving for fit is the essence of value proposition design.

Customers expect and desire a lot from products and services, yet they also know they can't have it all. Focus on those gains that matter most to customers and make a difference.

Customers have a lot of pains. No organization can reasonably address all of them. Focus on those headaches that matter most and are insufficiently addressed.
Are you addressing essential customer gains?

Are you addressing extreme customer pains?

Your customers are the judge, jury, and executioner of your value proposition. They will be merciless if you don’t find fit!
Fit?

When we designed the value proposition for this book, we strived to address some of the most important jobs, pains, and gains that potential customers have and that are insufficiently addressed by current business book formats.

Check marks signify that products and services relieve pains or create gains and directly address one of the customers' jobs, pains, or gains.
Xs show which jobs, pains, and gains the value proposition does not address.
Check Your Fit

OBJECTIVE
Verify if you are addressing what matters to customers

OUTCOME
Connection between your products and services and customer jobs, pains, and gains

Do this exercise online

1 Instructions
Bring in the Value Proposition Map and Customer Segment Profile you completed earlier. Go through pain relievers and gain creators one by one, and check to see whether they fit a customer job, pain, or gain. Put a check mark on each one that does.
2 Outcome
If a pain reliever or gain creator doesn't fit anything, it may not be creating customer value. Don't worry if you haven't checked all pains/gains—you can't satisfy them all. Ask yourself, how well does your value proposition really fit your customer?

Download the Value Proposition Canvas pdf
Create Possibilities Quickly with Ad-Libs

**OBJECTIVE**
Quickly shape potential value proposition directions

**OUTCOME**
Alternative prototypes in the form of “pitchable” sentences

Ad-libs are a great way to quickly shape alternative directions for your value proposition. They force you to pinpoint how exactly you are going to create value. Prototype three to five different directions by filling out the blanks in the ad-lib below.

**Our** help(s) **who**
products and services

customer segment

**want to** **by** **and**
jobs to be done

your own verb (e.g., reducing, avoiding)

Tip: Add at the beginning or end of sentence:

your own verb (e.g., increasing, enabling)

**unlike**

**Tip**

Your own verb (e.g., increasing, enabling)

**Competing value proposition**
Our book helps professionals who want to improve or build a business by avoiding making stuff nobody wants and creating clear indicators to measure progress.
Push vs. Pull

The push versus pull debate is a common one. *Push* indicates that you’re starting the design of your value proposition from a technology or innovation you possess, whereas *pull* means you’re beginning with a manifest customer job, pain, or gain. These are two common starting points, many of which we outlined previously p. 88. Consider both as viable options depending on your preferences and context.

Technology Push

Start from an invention, innovation, or (technological) resource for which you develop a value proposition that addresses a customer job, pain, and gain. In simple terms, this is a solution in search of a problem.

Explore value proposition prototypes that are based on your invention, innovation, or technological resource with potentially interested customer segments. Design a dedicated value map for each segment until you find problem-solution fit. Read more about the build, measure, learn cycle on p. 186.

Technology

1. Solution
   (invention, innovation, technology)

   learn

   | build |

   FIND A
   PROBLEM

   jobs, pains, gains

   measure

2. Value
   proposition
   prototype

3. Customer
   insights

Key Partnerships

Key Activities

Key Resources

Cost Structure
Market Pul

Start from a manifest customer job, pain, or gain for which you design a value proposition. In simple terms, this is a problem in search of a solution.

Learn what technologies and other resources are required for each value proposition prototype designed to address manifest customer jobs, pains, and gains. Redesign your value map and adjust resources until you find a viable solution to address customer jobs, pains, and gains. More about the build, measure, learn cycle on p. 186.
Push: Technology in Search of Jobs, Pains, and Gains

1
Design.
Design a value proposition based on the technology outlined in the press excerpt from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) by targeting a customer segment that might be interested in adopting this technology.

"Solar and aeolian sources are great candidates for the electricity generation of the future... However, solar and wind sources' peak availability takes place at times that do not usually correspond to peak demand hours. Therefore, a way must be devised to store and later reuse the energy generated.

EPFL has worked for over ten years on an original storage system: compressed air. The use of a hydraulic piston delivers the best system performance... The obtained high pressure air can be safely stored in bottles without losses until it is necessary to generate new electricity by expanding the gas in the cylinder. One of the advantages of our system is that it does not require rare materials.

2
Ideate.
Come up with an idea for a value proposition using the compressed air energy storage.

3
Segment.
Select a customer segment that could be interested in this value proposition and would be ready to pay for it.

A spin-off has been created to develop this principle and create ‘turnkey’ electrical energy storage and retrieval units. In 2014, a 25 kW unit will be installed at a photovoltaic park in... In the future, there will be 250 kW installed first and 2,500 kW ones afterwards."
**4 Profile.**
Sketch out the customer's profile. Make assumptions about jobs to be done, pains, and gains.

**5 Sketch.**
Refine the value proposition by sketching out how it will kill customer pains and create gains.

**6 Assess.**
Assess the fit between the customer profile and the designed value proposition.

**Tips**
- Add design constraints to technology push exercises. Your organization might not want to address certain customer segments (e.g., B2B, business-to-consumer [B2C], specific regions, etc.). Or you might prefer certain strategic directions, for example, licensing rather than building solutions.
- Follow up on your customer assumptions by researching customers p. 104 and producing evidence p. 172 once you’ve selected a potentially interested segment.

Continued on p. 152
Great value proposition creators master the art of focusing on the jobs, pains, and gains that matter. How will you know which of these jobs, pains, and gains to focus on? Identify high-value jobs by asking if they are important, tangible, unsatisfied, and lucrative.

High-value jobs are characterized by pains and gains that are...

**Important**

When the customer's success or failure to get the job done leads to essential gains or extreme pains, respectively.

- Does failing the job lead to extreme pains?
- Does failing the job lead to missing out on essential gains?

**Tangible**

When the pains or gains related to a job can be felt or experienced immediately or often, not just days or weeks later.

- Can you feel the pain?
- Can you see the gain?
Unsatisfied

When current value propositions don’t help relieve pain or achieve gains in a satisfying way or simply don’t exist.

- Are there unresolved pains?
- Are there unrealized gains?

Lucrative

When many people have the job with related pains and gains or a small number of customers are willing to pay a premium.

- Are there many with this job, pain, or gain?
- Are there few willing to pay a lot?

High-value jobs

Focus on the highest-value jobs and related pains and gains.

Based on initial work by consultancy, Innosight.
Pull: Job Selection

OBJECTIVE
Identify high-value customer jobs that you could focus on

OUTCOME
Ranking of customer jobs from your perspective

This pull exercise starts with the customer.

Imagine your customers are chief information officers (CIOs) and you have to understand which jobs matter most to them. Do this exercise to prioritize their jobs or apply it to one of your own customer profiles.

Tips

- This exercise helps you prioritize jobs from the customer's perspective. It doesn't mean you have to mandatorily address the most important ones in your value proposition; those might be outside your scope. However, make sure your value proposition does address jobs that are highly relevant to customers.
- Great value proposition creators often focus on only a few jobs, pains, and gains, but do that extremely well.
- Complement this exercise with getting customer insights from the field @ p. 106 and experiments that produce evidence Θ p. 216.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Tangible</th>
<th>Unsatisfied</th>
<th>Lucrative</th>
<th>High-value jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>create value for corporation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manage security</td>
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<tr>
<td>manage budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>manage legacy systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>design IT strategy</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Scoring scale:** • (low) to ••••• (high)

- Does failing the job lead to extreme pains?
- Can you feel the pain?
- Are there unresolved pains?
- Are there many with this job, pain, or gain?
- Are there few willing to pay a lot?

Focus on the highest value jobs and related pains and gains.

= 9

= 7

Based on initial work by consultancy, Innosight.
Six Ways to Innovate from the Customer Profile

You’ve mapped your customer profile. What to do from here?
Here are six ways to trigger your next value proposition move.

Can you...

- **Address more jobs?**
  Address a more complete set of jobs, including related and ancillary jobs.
  With the iPhone, Apple not only reinvented the mobile phone but enabled us to store and play music and browse the web on one device.

- **Switch to a more important job?**
  Help customers do a job that is different from what most value propositions currently focus on.
  Hilti, the machine tool manufacturer, understood that construction managers needed to keep schedules to avoid penalties, not only drill holes. Their fleet management solution addressed the former in addition to the latter.

- **Go beyond functional jobs?**
  Look beyond functional jobs and create new value by fulfilling important social and emotional jobs.
  Mini Cooper created a car that became as much a means of transport as a statement of identity.
Help a lot more customers get a job done?

Help more people do a job that was otherwise too complex or too expensive.

Ultra-high-end web data storage and computing power used to be reserved to big companies with huge IT budgets. Amazon.com made it available to companies of any size and budget with Amazon Web Services.

Get a job done incrementally better?

Help customers better do a job by making a series of microimprovements to an existing value proposition.

German engineering and electronics multinational Bosch improved on a wide range of features of its circular saw that really mattered to customers and outperformed competition.

Help a customer get a job done radically better?

This is the stuff of new market creation, when a new value proposition dramatically outperforms older ways of helping a customer get a job done.

The first spreadsheet called VisiCalc not only introduced a new market for such tools but also ushered in a whole new realm of possibilities across industries powered by easy, visual calculations.
Six Techniques to Gain Customer Insights

Understanding the customer's perspective is crucial to designing great value propositions. Here are six techniques that will get you started. Make sure you use a good mix of these techniques to understand your customers deeply.

The Data Detective
Build on existing work with (desk) research. Secondary research reports and customer data you might already have provide a great foundation for getting started. Look also at data outside your industry and study analogs, opposites, or adjacencies.

Difficulty level: ★
Strength: great foundation for further research
Weakness: static data from a different context

p. 108 for more

The Journalist
Talk to (potential) customers as an easy way to gain customer insights. It's a well-established practice. However, customers might tell you one thing in an interview but behave differently in the real world.

Difficulty level: ★★
Strength: quick and cheap to get started with first learnings and insights
Weakness: customers don't always know what they want and actual behavior differs from interview answers

p. 110 for more

The Anthropologist
Observe (potential) customers in the real world to get good insights into how they really behave. Study which jobs they focus on and how they get them done. Note which pains upset them and which gains they aim to achieve.

Difficulty level: ★★★
Strength: data provide unbiased view and allow discovering real-world behavior
Weakness: difficult to gain customer insights related to new ideas

p. 114 for more
The Impersonator

"Be your customer" and actively use products and services. Spend a day or more in your customer’s shoes. Draw from your experience as an (unsatisfied) customer.

Difficulty level: ★★
Strength: firsthand experience of jobs, pains, and gains
Weakness: not always representative of your real customer or possible to apply

The Cocreator

Integrate customers into the process of value creation to learn with them. Work with customers to explore and develop new ideas.

Difficulty level: ★★★★★
Strength: the proximity with customers can help you gain deep insights
Weakness: may not be generalized to all customers and segments

The Scientist

Get customers to participate (knowingly or unknowingly) in an experiment. Learn from the outcome.

Difficulty level: ★★★★
Strength: provides fact-based insights on real-world behavior; works particularly well for new ideas
Weakness: can be hard to apply in existing organizations because of strict (customer) policies and guidelines

* p. 216 for more
The Journalist: Interview Your Customers

OBJECTIVE
Gain a better customer understanding

OUTCOME
First lightly validated customer profile(s)

Talk to customers to gain insights relevant to your context. Use the Value Proposition Canvas to prepare interviews and organize the chaotic mass of information that will be coming at you during the interview process.

1. Create a customer profile.
   Sketch out the jobs, pains, and gains you believe characterize the customer you are targeting. Rank jobs, pains, and gains in order of importance.

2. Create an interview outline.
   Ask yourself what you want to learn. Derive the interview questions from your customer profile. Ask about the most important jobs, pains, and gains.

5. Review the interview.
   Assess if you need to review the interview questions based on what you learned.
**3. Conduct the interview.**
Conduct the interview by following the interview ground rules outlined on the next page.

**4. Capture.**
Map out the jobs, pains, and gains you learned about in the interview on an empty customer profile.

**6. Search for patterns.**
Can you discover similar jobs, pains, and gains? What stands out? What is similar or different among interviewees?

**7. Synthesize.**
Make a separate synthesized customer profile for every customer segment that emerges from all your interviews. Write down your most important insights on sticky notes.

**Tip**
Capture your biggest insights from all the interviews.
Ground Rules for Interviewing

It is an art to conduct good interviews that provide relevant insights for value proposition design. Make sure you focus on unearthing what matters to (potential) customers rather than trying to pitch them solutions. Follow the rules on this spread to conduct great interviews.

Get “Ground Rules for Interviewing” poster

Rule 1
Adopt a beginner’s mind.
Listen with a “fresh pair of ears” and avoid interpretation. Explore unexpected jobs, pains, and gains in particular.

Rule 2
Listen more than you talk.
Your goal is to listen and learn, not to inform, impress, or convince your customer of anything. Avoid wasting time talking about your own beliefs, because it’s at the expense of learning about your customer.

Rule 3
Get facts, not opinions.
Don’t ask, “Would you...?”
Ask, “When is the last time you have...?”

Rule 4
Ask “why” to get real motivations.
Ask, “Why do you need to do...?”
Ask, “Why is ___ important to you?”
Ask, “Why is ___ such a pain?”
Rule 5
The goal of customer insight interviews is not selling (even if a sale is involved); it’s about learning.
Don’t ask, “Would you buy our solution?” Ask “what are your decision criteria when you make a purchase of...?”

Rule 6
Don’t mention solutions (i.e., your prototype value proposition) too early.
Don’t explain, “Our solution does...” Ask, “What are the most important things you are struggling with?”

Rule 7
Follow up.
Get permission to keep your interviewee’s contact information to come back for more questions and answers or testing prototypes.

Rule 8
Always open doors at the end.
Ask, “Who else should I talk to?”

Tips
- Interviews are an excellent starting point to learn from customers, but typically they don’t provide enough or sufficiently reliable insights for making critical decisions. Complement your interviews with other research, just like a good journalist does further research to find the real story behind what people tell. Add real-world observations of customers and experiments that produce hard data to your research mix.
- Conduct interviews in teams of two people. Decide in advance who will lead the interview and who will take notes. Use a recording device (photo, video, or other) if possible, but be aware that interviewees might not answer the same way with a recording device on the table.