Jobs to be Done

Highlight the human need you're trying to fulfill.

A *job to be done* (JTBD) is a revolutionary concept that guides you toward innovation and helps you move beyond the norm of only improving current solutions. A JTBD is not a product, service, or a specific solution; it's the higher purpose for which customers buy products, services, and solutions.

For instance, most people would say they buy a lawnmower to "cut the grass," and this is true. But if a lawnmower company examines the higher purpose of cutting the grass, say, "keep the grass low and beautiful at all times," then it might forgo some efforts to make better lawnmowers in lieu of developing a genetically engineered grass seed that never needs to be cut.

This is the power of the JTBD concept and technique: It helps the innovator understand that customers don't buy products and services; they hire various solutions at various times to get a wide array of jobs done. You may need light survey design and sampling help from a statistician to apply this technique, but for the most part, it requires no expert assistance.

Background

Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen and coauthors articulated the JTBD concept in a *Sloan Management Review* article (Spring 2007) as follows: "Most companies segment their markets by customer demographics or product characteristics and differentiate their offerings by adding features and functions. But the consumer has a different view of the marketplace. He simply has a job to be done and is seeking to 'hire' the best product or service to do it."

Therefore, if you understand the jobs your customers want done, you gain new market insights and create viable growth strategies. Sometimes a good solution for a JTBD, or a family of JTBDs, does not exist; when this is the case, you have a great opportunity to innovate.

Jobs to be Done Breakdown

There are two different types of JTBDs:

1. *Main jobs to be done,* which describe the tasks that customers want to achieve.
2. *Related jobs to be done*, which customers want to accomplish in conjunction with the main jobs to be done.

    Then, within each of these two types of JTBDs, there are:

- *Functional job aspects*—the practical and objective customer requirements.
- *Emotional job aspects*—the subjective customer requirements related to feelings and perceptions.

    Finally, emotional job aspects are further broken down into:

- *Personal dimension*—how the customer feels about the solution.
- *Social dimension*—how the customer believes he or she is perceived by others while using the solution.
- See Exhibit 1.1 for a visual representation of the different types of jobs to be done and breakdown into aspects and dimensions.

Let's develop an example. Say the main JTBD is to clean one's teeth and gums. Then related jobs might be to create lasting fresh breath, whiten one's teeth, and even achieve such other grooming objectives as a clean face and/or neat eyebrows.

We can break the main and related JTBDs into their functional and emotional aspects. One wants to remove foreign particles from one's teeth, along with any bacteria and associated odor. These are some functional aspects of the JTBD. A customer also wants his or her teeth and gum
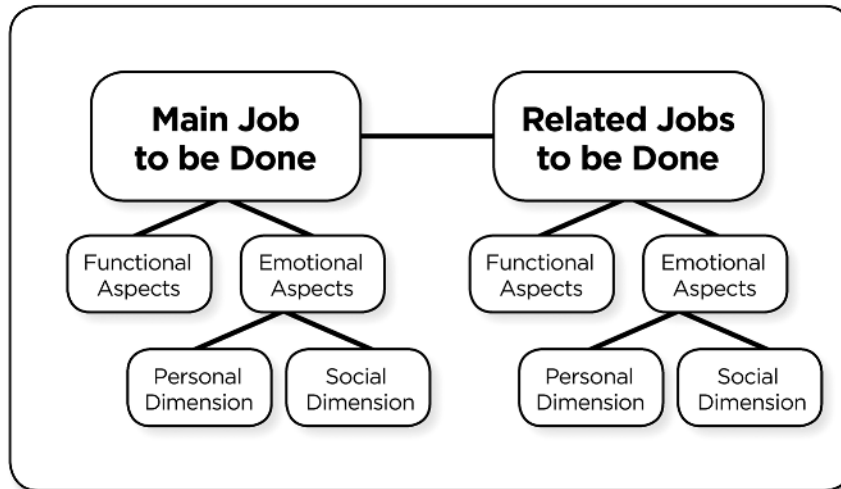
EXHIBIT 1.1 Jobs to be Done Breakdown.

cleaning experience to be pleasant. It should feel good, not painful. It should make the customer feel good about him- or herself (personal dimension), as well as help him or her be perceived as a person who has clean teeth, healthy gums, and fresh breath.

The better a solution can fulfill all of these job levels and layers, the better chance it has in the marketplace. Also, the better the solution either achieves or nicely dovetails with related JTBDs, the better chance of success it has. In short, the JTBD concept is a guide for thinking beyond to make your current solutions, and your competitors' solutions, obsolete.

You can tell when a company thinks in terms of JTBDs because the result not only fulfills a need, but is often quite innovative. Consider the recent developments in self-cleaning glass for cars and high-rise buildings, or in car paint that *heals itself* and, thereby, removes the need to paint over scratches. While you could think of *painting scratches* as a JTBD, it really isn't. Painting scratches is actually a solution for accomplishing the JTBD called *maintain a blemish-free vehicle*.

Consider the examples of new solutions for old JTBDs in Exhibit 1.2. Then, ask not how you can make your current products and services better, but instead, ask how you can fulfill your customers' JTBDs in unexpected and more effective ways.

Jobs to be Done	Old Solution	New Solution
Ingest medicine	Pills and shots	Skin patches
Make many products for mass market	Many craftsman	Production line
Execute rote legal functions	Lawyers	legalzoom.com
Detect enemy at night	Flares	Night vision
Keep windows clean	Clean with squeegee	Self-cleaning glass
Clean teeth	Manual brushing	Automated with sound waves
Search for information	Library	Internet

EXHIBIT 1.2   New Solutions for Old Jobs.

The Triune Brain

Metaphorically speaking, our brains have three parts as per the *triune brain model*: reptilian, emotional, and intellectual. The reptilian part is related to our basic survival and biological needs; we eat when we're hungry, and we either fight or flee when we are threatened. The emotional (or paleomammalian) part of our brain, directed by the limbic system, guides many or most decisions we make in life. The intellectual (or neomammalian) part, guided by the neocortex, is the logical, methodical, and analytical part of the brain.

Psychologists have discovered that when these three parts are in conflict, the reptilian takes precedent over the other two. When there is a conflict between the emotional and intellectual parts, the emotional part wins over. This is why people often make poor, emotionally based decisions, and then find an intellectual alibi to justify themselves.

So what is the implication for companies that want to innovate? One, make solutions that appeal to all three parts of the brain—especially the emotional and intellectual since only a small set of solutions are truly a matter of life or death (reptilian). Apple does a good job of this. Its products are functionally sound (intellectual)—plus, they're cool and stylish (emotional). Although we know one iPod user who returned the product six times due to functional challenges, the customer was willing to tolerate this because the product was so emotionally appealing.

But there's another interesting implication. If your industry is mainly focused on the functional aspects of the JTBD, then differentiate yourself

with the emotional aspect. Make the surgical instrument look really cool with an appealing design and shape that fits the hand better. Or, start to emphasize the functional aspects of your products in industries that are typically driven by image and emotion. Many Body Shop products, for example, are organic (noncarcinogenic), and they improve the quality of one's skin (anti-aging properties)—blending function with emotion.

This is the story of innovation in a nutshell: While some companies went about making better pills, or becoming better law firms, or making their flares better and brighter, others went about breaking the mold. No new solution automatically or instantly makes an old solution obsolete, but change does happen as a result of finding new ways to fulfill the jobs customers need to get done.

If you remember anything about jobs to be done, remember this: they are completely neutral of the solutions you create (your products and services). While a customer JTBD remains fairly stable over time, your products and services should change at strategic intervals as you strive to provide ever-increasing value.

Steps

1. Identify a Focus Market

Markets can be identified by considering any one of the following organic growth strategies: core growth, disruptive growth, related job growth, and new job growth.

Core growth is the act of meeting unmet outcome expectations associated with a job that customers want to achieve. For example, customers want to pour juice into a cup with greater ease (desired outcome expectation) and without the risk of spilling (undesired outcome expectation). So the juice bottle is redesigned to have an indentation for easy gripping. This is the easiest way to innovate for most companies because it entails perfecting the current paradigm. (See Technique 3, Outcome Expectations, for more on this).

Related job growth is the next easiest way to innovate and entails bundling solutions that achieve the outcome expectations of more than one

main or related JTBD. Starbucks is an example of a solution that addresses many jobs, such as *drink caffeinated beverages*, *drink healthy alternative beverages*, *carry on business conversations*, *surf the Internet*, or *study and read books in a relaxing environment*.

The key is to focus on *adjacency*: I want coffee, but I also want to read a book and get on the Internet, or socialize with my friends. Or, I want a car to rent so I can get from here to there, but I also want easy directions so I also get a GPS in the car.

New job growth is the product of evolving technology and change, and it's more difficult to achieve than core or related job growth. It entails expanding the solution space to accomplish different JTBDs. Candle companies that existed for decades, for instance, had to look for new applications after the advent of the lightbulb. So they made products that were appealing to those who wanted to decorate their homes or to create a romantic environment for dinner. The JTBD was no longer to illuminate.

Some medical companies are migrating their technologies from use by humans to new jobs for animals, especially after patents expire. Another example might be an organization well-versed in emergency response processes expanding itself to get into the ambulance business.

Disruptive growth focuses on what the literature and innovation experts call *nonconsumption*. Certain solutions are available to certain classes of people, but not all or more people. Remember when going to a dentist's office was the only way to get your teeth whitened? But now the job of whitening teeth can be sufficiently accomplished by anyone nearly anywhere due to such disruptive, over-the-counter products as Crest Whitestrips (which became a $300 million product within two years for Procter & Gamble).

There are four drivers of nonconsumption: price, time, skill, and access to the technology or solution. The Whitestrips example fits all four criteria. Prior to Whitestrips, it was too expensive to whiten one's teeth. It took too much time. Individuals didn't have access to the needed technology, and they didn't have the skills to apply that technology at home.

This is the most difficult growth strategy to enact because it entails cannibalizing what you and others in your industry do. Other examples of disruptive growth are home pregnancy tests, online stock trading, and self-administered medical monitoring and treatment devices.

> Core and disruptive growth strategies are focused on existing JTBDs, while related and new job growth strategies are focused on new JTBDs. Also, core and related growth strategies are about serving existing customers, while new and disruptive growth strategies are about adding and serving new customers.

2. Identify Jobs Customers Are Trying to Get Done

You want to study customers and find out what they are trying to accomplish—especially under circumstances that leave them with insufficient solutions relative to available processes and technologies. What jobs have ad hoc solutions or no good solutions? When you see customers piecing together solutions themselves, these are great clues for innovation.

Several methods exist to help an innovator study customers and the way they use solutions to get their jobs done. Ethnography (Technique 5) and cultural archetype research are especially useful in this regard. Other techniques include observation, interviews, customer complaints, and focus groups.

> Sometimes jobs to be done are not as straightforward as one might think. For instance, a fast-food provider found that its customers were buying flavored milkshakes when faced with a long, boring commute in traffic; they were not only looking for convenient, non-messy nourishment in the morning, but they also wanted to make their commute more interesting by entertaining themselves with a breakfast that took a while to consume.

3. Categorize the Jobs to be Done

Jobs can be main jobs or related jobs. Some jobs are parents of other jobs. If a person wants to self-actualize, for instance, this job could be the parent to any number of lower-order jobs having to do with a person's physical, mental, social, emotional, financial, and spiritual well-being.

There is no one way or standardized, commonly used scheme for categorizing JTBDs—so our best advice is to use a scheme that makes sense for you and your industry. In the retail sales industry, for instance, many

main JTBDs are related to how you make people feel (emotional aspects) rather than what a product or service actually does (functional aspects). Many non-customer-facing jobs in the engineering industry are functional rather than emotional in nature. But recall earlier that we discussed the potential value of focusing on either functional or emotional aspects *in contrast with* industry norms.

We also mentioned earlier that jobs have functional and emotional aspects (and personal and social dimensions). One JTBD is to *organize and manage music for personal use.* An important functional aspect of this job is to *listen to the music.* A related emotional/personal job is to *organize and manage music in a way that feels good;* a related emotional/social job is to *share songs with friends.* Related jobs might be to *download songs from the Internet, make playlists, discard unwanted songs,* and *pass the time.*
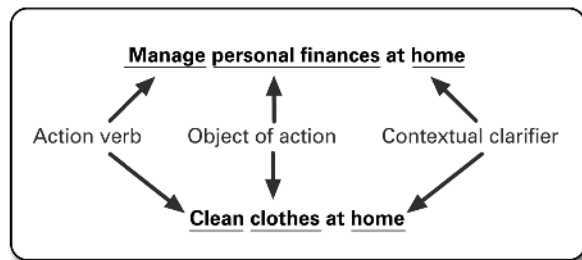
4. Create Job Statements

EXHIBIT 1.3 Structure of a Job Statement (Downloadable).

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The *job statement* is used to describe a JTBD. Key components of a job statement are an action verb, the object of the action, and clarification of the context in which the job is performed. *Manage personal finances at home* is a job statement. So is *clean clothes at home,* as shown in Exhibit 1.3. *Listen to music while jogging* is also an example of a job statement.

5. Prioritize the JTBD Opportunities

There are hundreds of jobs that customers are trying to get done in every market. Which one of these offers the best opportunities for you? Which ones provide opportunities to create uncontested market space? In most situations, the jobs that customers want to get done for which no good solutions exist are the ones that provide the greatest opportunity for innovation.

Prioritizing JTBDs is a function of how *important* they are, how *satisfied* customers are with existing solutions, the general potential for developing new (or more ideal) solutions, and the specific potential of the provider for creating new solutions that better meet Outcome Expectations (see Technique 3). As shown in Exhibit 1.4, the importance-satisfaction dimensions establish priority from the customers' perspective. But we also consider new solution potential from the provider's perspective.

You can use different assessment and rating schemes to determine which JTBDs should be a priority for innovation. One way to measure the importance of a job is by asking customers based on a Likert Scale (degree of importance to them), using sound *sampling* techniques. A Likert Scale can also work for assessing the level of satisfaction customers have with current solutions.
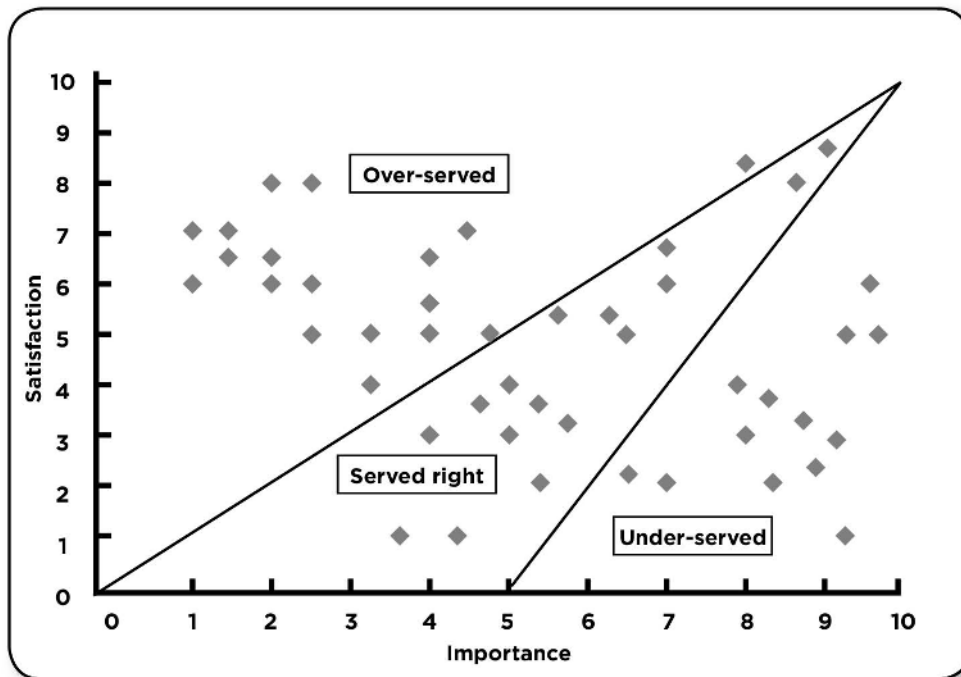

EXHIBIT 1.4   JTBD Prioritization (Downloadable).

In any case, under-served JTBDs are generally ripe for a core growth innovation strategy (make the existing solution better); over-served items are ripe for a disruptive innovation strategy (remake the solution so it becomes available to those who can't afford the existing solution). When your assessment shows opportunities in the middle that are served right, you should focus on related jobs to be done.

Sometimes innovation is as simple as finding a new JTBD that your existing solution meets. Post-it Notes, for example, were developed by a 3M scientist looking for a new and better adhesive compound. The scientist didn't quite reach his goal because his adhesive was weak. Ten years later, another 3M scientist led the way in applying the adhesive for jobs that fit the solution perfectly.

Resources

For more on the Jobs to be Done concept and technique, see:

Christensen, C. M., S. D. Anthony, G. Berstell, and D. Nitterhouse. "Finding the Right Job for Your Product." *MIT Sloan Management Review* (Spring 2007): 2–11.

Christensen, C. M., and M. E. Raynor. *The Innovator's Solution: Using Good Theory to Solve the Dilemmas of Growth*. Watertown, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2003.

Ulwick, A. *What Customers Want: Using Outcome-Driven Innovation to Create Breakthrough Products and Services*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005.

Ulwick, A., and L. A. Bettencourt. "Giving Customers a Fair Hearing." *Sloan Management Review* 49, no. 3 (2008): 62–68.