



5 Proven Steps to Discover the Biggest Opportunities to Win with Customers

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introduction

Why do most products fail?

introduction

why do most products fail?

According to studies from Harvard, MIT, Michigan State, and others, 75-90% of products and services fail!

What's the impact on your company's finances and employee morale when products fail?

We conducted research and found that products fail for three main reasons:

1. Many companies simply have a **poor understanding of customer needs**. They either do not get a granular, specific enough understanding, they do not dig below the surface to get to the real issue, or they do not solve a big enough problem.
2. With a lack of clear customer insights, product teams are forced to rely on a hodgepodge of internal opinions, biases, and approaches resulting in **disagreement on priorities**.
3. Due to the first two reasons, there are **breakdowns in communication** among stakeholders leading to scope and focus issues for the product and marketing team.

introduction

what is missing from common approaches to developing products?

Organizations have adopted a variety of approaches to developing products, such as design thinking, customer development, and journey mapping. However, starting with these can result in incomplete or product-centric customer needs or defining a solution prematurely.

What is first needed is a **complete set of prioritized, granular customer needs**. With this in hand, you can identify the biggest market opportunities and align your efforts in a clear and methodical way.



step 1: determine your target customer

Defining your customer is
critical to understanding
their needs

step 1: determine your target customer

what is the market ecosystem for your solution?



Determine for whom you are trying to create value

Companies have many customers. For example, users, buyers, administrators, and distributors are frequently all called “customers.” Of course, they all are important. However, giving them all equal weighting can be a mistake and lead you off course.

When trying to improve product success, **the user is the most important because they are the reason the market and your product exists.** Without them, there is no need for someone to purchase, manage, or distribute your product.

Therefore, the first step to winning with customers is to map out your “market ecosystem” and identify who is your primary target.

EXAMPLE: Market ecosystem for an app that helps patients schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider

Describe your solution

An app to help patients schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider



Market Ecosystem	Definition	Title/responsibilities of who will rely on the value of your solution (as may be applicable)
User	A person using or “hiring” a product or service to get something done.	<i>Patient</i>
Buyer	A person who purchases a product or service to get something done.	<i>Patient</i>
Beneficiary	Someone who benefits from a product or service used to get something done.	<i>Patient</i>
Overseer	Someone who supervises or evaluates something that is performed by others.	<i>N/A</i>
Adjacent Doer	Someone who does something that is related to what a user is doing – perhaps a task that happens before, after, or in tandem with the user.	<i>Physician</i>

EXERCISE: What is the market ecosystem for your solution?

Describe your solution



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step 2: determine
what your
solution helps
your target
customer get
done

Jobs are the functional or emotional tasks, activities, or goals that customers hire products or services to help them get done

step 2: determine what your solution helps your target customer get done

what job is your target customer hiring your solution to do?

Focus on the end, not the means

We recognize that **the only thing that matters when it comes to customer satisfaction and loyalty is the extent to which a product or service helps the customer get something done.** The leading approach to understand this is to define what the customer is trying to do as a job-to-be-done.

By job, we mean a functional or emotional task, activity, or goal.

The value of seeing your customers through the lens of jobs-to-be-done is to ensure we map the journey from the customer's perspective, not how the organization sees it, and identify every step along the way so that we have an end-to-end view of what the customer is trying to do.

Whether you are launching a new product or want to optimize a current one, focusing on the job helps to reframe us from a myopic, product-centric mindset.

“People don't want to buy a quarter-inch drill. They want a quarter-inch hole!”

- Theodore Levitt, Professor at Harvard Business School, 1975



EXAMPLE: Job-to-be-done for an app that helps patients schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider

Here's what to do: Write down the job you think your solution helps the customer get done. Then, use the questions provided to identify and document alternative jobs for which the customer might hire your solution. Skip any questions that do not apply.

Hypothesized job-to-be-done [verb + object of control + context (if needed)]:

Schedule + an appointment + with a healthcare provider

Is the job itself a solution to getting some other job done? What is it?

Is the job defined differently when substitutes solutions are considered? What is it?

Is the job simply a step in getting a bigger job done? What is it?

Is the job done in specific circumstances of interest (where, when, on what/whom, with whom)? What are they?

Job-to-be-done:

Address a health issue

Job-to-be-done:

Schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider over the phone

Job-to-be-done:

Obtain healthcare

Key circumstances in which the job is done:

- In an emergency*
- For ongoing health issues*
- For wellness check-up*

What job(s) must be done before this job to ensure success?

Is the job defined differently when only products from competitors are considered? What is it?

What job(s) must be done after this job to ensure success?

Job(s)-to-be-done before:

- Obtain health insurance*
- Find a healthcare provider*

Job-to-be-done:

No, same job using other online solutions

Job(s)-to-be-done after:

- Visit a healthcare provider*
- Obtain treatment*

EXERCISE: What job is your target customer hiring your solution to do?

Here's what to do: Write down the job you think your solution helps the customer get done. Then, use the questions provided to identify and document alternative jobs for which the customer might hire your solution. Skip any questions that do not apply.

Hypothesized job-to-be-done [verb + object of control + context (if needed)]:

Is the job itself a solution to getting some other job done? What is it?

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Is the job done in specific circumstances of interest (where, when, on what/whom, with whom)? What are they?

Job-to-be-done:

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Key circumstances in which the job is done:

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Is the job defined differently when only products from competitors are considered? What is it?

What job(s) must be done after this job to ensure success?

Job(s)-to-be-done before:

Job-to-be-done:

Job(s)-to-be-done after:

step 3:
deconstruct what
your target
customer is trying
to get done into
steps

A job map outlines what the customer is trying to get done as they execute the job

step 3: deconstruct what your target customer is trying to get done into steps

what are the steps in the job your target customer is trying to get done?



Only functional jobs can be deconstructed into steps. Emotional jobs do not have steps or associated needs.

Peel back the onion and deconstruct the job into steps

Once we've defined the job customers are hiring our product to do, we can break it down into steps that customers **must get done to successfully complete the job**.

We are not creating a process map of what they are doing today. Rather, we are creating a job map of what they are trying to get done. It **represents how customers would ideally get the job done if they could do it perfectly**. Since job maps show the ideal, there are no feedback loops or branches as in a process map.

Like creating an outline when writing an essay, we map the steps of the job to help us gather and organize the customer needs and to ensure we don't miss anything.

Creating a useful job map requires talking to those doing the job.

EXAMPLE: Steps in the job of scheduling an appointment with a healthcare provider

Here’s what to do:

Use the questions provided below to define the steps in the job your solution helps the customer get done. There can be more than one step for each type.

Keep in mind that the actual customer job map would come from customer interviews. Remember, job steps should reflect what the customer is TRYING to get done, NOT necessarily what they are doing.

Other useful hints for mapping steps in a job:

- Consider the various solutions used in getting the job done (sequentially) and then ask what each solution helps the customer to accomplish.
- Consider what a customer does (sequentially) as part of getting the job done and then ask what each action helps the customer to accomplish.
- Define what the “execute” step means for this job and then work backwards and forwards from there using the questions provided.

Type of Step	Questions	Job Steps [verb + object of control + context (if needed)]
Define	What must be defined/known to ensure the job is successfully executed? What must be selected or planned to ensure success?	<i>Determine when to see a healthcare provider</i>
Locate	What must be located, gathered, accessed, or retrieved as part of getting this job done? Physical inputs? Information or options?	<i>Gather information needed to schedule an appointment</i>
Prepare	What must be prepared, set up, examined, evaluated, organized, or compared to get the job done? A physical environment? Physical inputs? Information or options?	<i>Determine if a healthcare provider is available to schedule an appointment</i>
Confirm	What actions must be taken to ensure everything is ready before executing the job? What validation is required before proceeding? What decisions must be made based on prior steps?	<i>Determine when a healthcare provider has appointment times available</i>
Execute	What is at the heart of executing the job – what tasks/steps must get done? What must be accomplished?	<i>Choose an appointment time with a healthcare provider</i>
Monitor	What must be monitored or verified while the job is being executed? What must be monitored or tracked on an ongoing basis to ensure continued success?	<i>Verify an appointment has been scheduled</i>
Modify	What modifications may be made to ensure overall job success – what updates or adjustments? What must be maintained over time?	<i>Change a scheduled appointment with a healthcare provider</i>
Resolve	What types of trouble-shooting might be required as the job is executed? What problems might need to be resolved?	<i>Ensure a preferred healthcare provider is available for a scheduled appointment</i>
Conclude	What must be done to conclude or finish the job? What must be done to consider the job complete or at a steady state?	<i>Remember the details of a scheduled appointment</i>

Source: The Customer-Centered Innovation Map, Harvard Business Review, May 2008

EXERCISE: What are the steps in the job your solution helps the target customer get done?

Here’s what to do:

Use the questions provided below to define the steps in the job your solution helps the customer get done. There can be more than one step for each type.

Keep in mind that the actual customer job map would come from customer interviews. Remember, job steps should reflect what the customer is TRYING to get done, NOT necessarily what they are doing.

Other useful hints for mapping steps in a job:

- Consider the various solutions used in getting the job done (sequentially) and then ask what each solution helps the customer to accomplish.
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Confirm	What actions must be taken to ensure everything is ready before executing the job? What validation is required before proceeding? What decisions must be made based on prior steps?	
Execute	What is at the heart of executing the job – what tasks/steps must get done? What must be accomplished?	
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Modify	What modifications may be made to ensure overall job success – what updates or adjustments? What must be maintained over time?	
Resolve	What types of trouble-shooting might be required as the job is executed? What problems might need to be resolved?	
Conclude	What must be done to conclude or finish the job? What must be done to consider the job complete or at a steady state?	

Source: The Customer-Centered Innovation Map, Harvard Business Review, May 2008

step 4: gather your target customers' needs

Needs are the customers'
measures of success in
getting the steps of a job
done

step 4: gather your target customers' needs

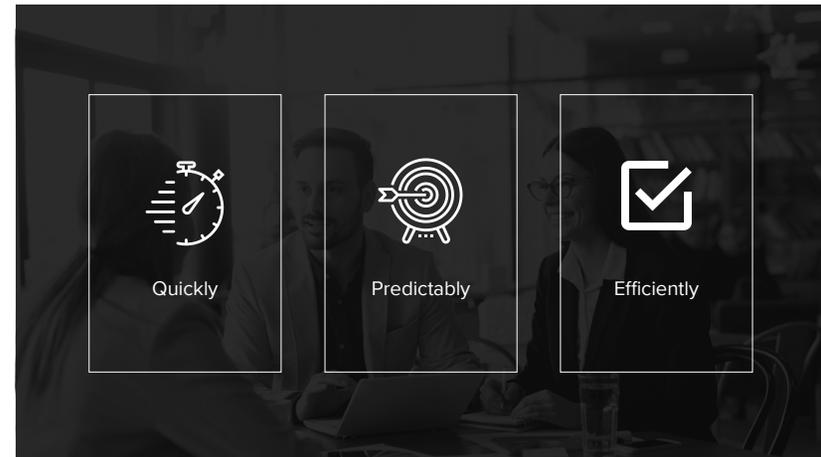
what are the needs of your target customer?

Needs are the customers' measures of success in getting the steps of a job done

Customers want to resolve the steps of a job **quickly**, **predictably**, and **efficiently** to successfully complete the job. As a result, they have measures of success, or needs, they are trying to satisfy – typically about **50-100** for a job.

This structure guides customer interviews and ensures all the needs associated with each step of the job are captured.

Furthermore, because the needs are associated with a job, and not a solution, they **remain constant over time** for as long as customers are still doing the job.



The success of every product is dependent on how well it addresses the customers' needs.

EXAMPLE: Needs in the job of scheduling an appointment with a healthcare provider

Here’s what to do:

Use the questions provided to identify and document several needs that customers have when getting the job your solution helps them get done. You can think of the needs for the job as a whole or for individual steps in the job from the prior exercise.

Document needs using the spaces provided. Keep in mind that actual needs would come from customer interviews.

Questions to uncover needs:

- What are you trying to get done in this step? What do you have to figure out when doing this step?
- What problems are you trying to avoid as a result of doing this step?
- What solutions are you using to help get this step done? What does it allow you to accomplish?
- If you could wave a magic wand and change whatever you wanted when doing this step, what aspects or practices would you reduce or eliminate? Increase or put in place? Why?

A CUSTOMER NEED HAS...

[verb + object of control + context (if needed)]

Determine...

Determine when you are available to schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider

Ensure...

Ensure you are available for a chosen appointment time with a healthcare provider

Obtain...

Obtain health insurance information needed to schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider

Provide...

Provide health insurance information to schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider

Avoid...

Avoid having to schedule an appointment with a healthcare provider farther into the future than is desired

Minimize...

Minimize the time it takes to connect with a healthcare provider to schedule an appointment

Identify...

Identify the days/times your preferred healthcare provider is available for an appointment

Assess...

Assess if a scheduled appointment time with a healthcare provider is still desirable

EXERCISE: What are the needs in the job your solution helps the target customer get done?

Here's what to do:

Use the questions provided to identify and document several needs that customers have when getting the job your solution helps them get done. You can think of the needs for the job as a whole or for individual steps in the job from the prior exercise.

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Questions to uncover needs:

- What are you trying to get done in this step? What do you have to figure out when doing this step?
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A CUSTOMER NEED HAS...

[verb + object of control + context (if needed)]

Determine...

Ensure...

Obtain...

Provide...

Avoid...

Minimize...

Identify...

Assess...

step 5: prioritize your target customers' needs

Generate a heat map of
market opportunity

step 5: prioritize your target customers' needs

where does opportunity exist in your market?

Improve product success with a heat map of market opportunity

By surveying a broader group of target customers, we can identify which needs are currently the most important and least satisfied.

Needs that are red or dark orange are the biggest market opportunities that should be addressed through improved messaging and positioning, prioritization of the product roadmap, and creation of new solutions.

Needs that are green are typically table stakes that, if ignored, can lead to product failure.

With this map as your guide, improving product success just became a whole lot easier.



A heat map is a visual of market opportunity that can be used to drive results.

Who We Are



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As former product managers, we understand what inputs are needed to improve product success. Through a repeatable and sustainable approach focused on identifying and prioritizing customer needs, we help our clients find opportunities for innovation and growth.



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For guidance on your heat map, [contact us](#) to schedule a call