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## Executive Book Summaries®

# Competing Against Luck

## The Story of Innovation and Customer Choice

### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Can innovation be more than a game of hit and miss? Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen has the answer. After years of research, Christensen and his co-authors (Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon and David S. Duncan) of *Competing Against Luck*, have come to one critical conclusion: Our long-held maxim — that understanding the customer is the crux of innovation — is wrong.

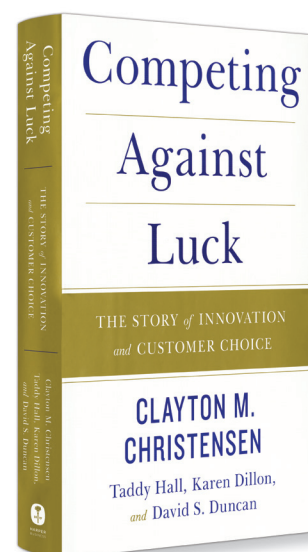
Customers don't buy products or services; they "hire" them to do a job. Understanding customers does not drive innovation success, he argues. Understanding customer jobs does. The "Jobs to Be Done" approach can be seen in some of the world's most respected companies and fast-growing startups, but this book is not about celebrating these successes — it's about predicting new ones.

Christensen, Hall, Dillon and Duncan contend that by understanding what causes customers to "hire" a product or service, any business can improve its innovation track record, creating products that customers not only want to hire but that they'll pay premium prices to bring into their lives. Jobs theory offers new hope for growth to companies frustrated by their hit-and-miss efforts.

*Competing Against Luck* carefully lays out the authors' provocative framework, providing a comprehensive explanation of the theory and why it is predictive, how to use it in the real world and, most importantly, how not to squander the insights it provides.

### IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- An exciting new conceptual framework for products and innovation.
- Why it makes more sense to focus on progress rather than products.
- The pitfalls of relying on traditional consumer data.
- How to understand and apply the Theory of Jobs to your organization.



by Clayton M. Christensen,  
Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon and  
David S. Duncan

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# THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: COMPETING AGAINST LUCK

by Clayton M. Christensen, Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon and David S. Duncan

**The authors:** Clayton M. Christensen is a Harvard Business School professor and world-renowned innovation strategy and growth expert. Thinkers50 named him 2013's most influential living management thinker in the world. Taddy Hall is a principal at the Cambridge Group and leader of the Nielsen Breakthrough Innovation Project. Karen Dillon is the former editor of *Harvard Business Review*, and she co-authored *How Will You Measure Your Life?* with Christensen. David S. Duncan is a senior partner at Innosight and a leading thinker and advisor on innovation strategy and growth.

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## Why You Should Hire This Book

Innovation processes in many companies are structured and disciplined, and the talent applying them is highly skilled. There are careful stage-gates, rapid iterations, and checks and balances built into most organizations' innovation processes. Risks are carefully calculated and mitigated. From the outside, it looks like companies have mastered an awfully precise, scientific process.

But for most of them, innovation is still hit or miss. They should be improving, but they are not. And worst of all, all this activity gives the *illusion* of progress without actually causing it. Companies are spending exponentially more to achieve only modest incremental innovations while completely missing the mark on the breakthrough innovations critical to long-term, sustainable growth.

Here is the fundamental problem: The masses and masses of data that companies accumulate are not organized in a way that enables them to reliably predict which ideas will succeed. It's seductive to believe that we can see important patterns and cross-references in our data sets, but that doesn't mean one thing actually caused the other. As Nate Silver, author of *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail — But Some Don't*, points out, "ice cream sales and forest fires are correlated because both occur more often in the summer heat. But there is no causation; you don't light a patch of the Montana brush on fire when you buy a pint of Häagen-Dazs."

Correlation does not reveal the one thing that matters most in innovation — the causality behind why you might purchase a particular solution. A better question to ask is "What job did you hire that product to do?"

When we buy a product, we essentially "hire" something to get a job done. If it does the job well, when we are confronted with the same job, we hire that same product again. And if the product does a crummy job, we "fire" it and look around for something else we might hire to solve the problem.

The foundation of this thinking is the Theory of Jobs to Be Done, which focuses on deeply understanding your customers' struggle for progress and then creating the right solution and attendant set of experiences to ensure you solve your customers' jobs well, every time. Jobs Theory can move companies beyond hoping that correlation is enough to understand the causal mechanism of successful innovation.

We have the ability to make innovation a reliable engine for growth, an engine based on a clear understanding of causality, rather than simply casting seeds in the hopes of one day harvesting some fruit.

If you build your foundation on the pursuit of understanding your customers' jobs, your strategy will no longer need to rely on luck. In fact, you'll be *competing against luck* when others are still counting on it. ●

## SECTION I: AN INTRODUCTION TO JOBS THEORY

### The Milkshake Dilemma

In the mid-1990s, two consultants from Detroit, Bob Moesta and his partner at the time, Rick Pedi, were working on a project for a fast-food chain: how to sell more milkshakes. The chain had spent months studying



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the problem in incredible detail. It had brought in customers that fit the profile of the quintessential milkshake consumer and peppered them with questions: “Can you tell us how we can improve our milkshakes so you’d buy more of them? Do you want it cheaper? Chunkier? Chewier? Chocolatier?” The chain tried many things in response to the customer feedback, innovations specifically intended to satisfy the highest number of potential milkshake buyers.

After all the marketers’ efforts, there was no change in sales of the chain’s milkshake category. So the question was posed in a totally different way: “I wonder what job arises in people’s lives that causes them to come to this restaurant to ‘hire’ a milkshake?”

Armed with that perspective, the team found itself standing in a restaurant for 18 hours one day, watching people: What time did people buy these milkshakes? What were they wearing? Were they alone? Did they buy other food with it? Did they drink it in the restaurant or drive off with it?

It turned out that a surprising number of milkshakes were sold before 9:00 a.m. to people who came into the fast-food restaurant alone. It was almost always the only thing they bought. They didn’t stop to drink it there; they got into their cars and drove off with it.

It soon became clear that the early-morning customers all had the same job to do: They had a long and boring ride to work. They needed something to keep the commute interesting. They weren’t really hungry yet, but they knew that in a couple of hours, they’d face a midmorning stomach rumbling.

As the team put all these answers together and looked at the diverse profiles of these people, another thing became clear: What these milkshake buyers had in common had nothing to do with their individual demographics. Rather, they all shared a common job they needed to get done in the morning, “Help me stay awake and occupied while I make my morning commute more fun.” They had the answer!

Alas, it wasn’t that simple. Turns out that plenty of milkshakes are purchased in the afternoon and evening, outside of the context of a commute. In those circumstances, the same customers could hire a milkshake for a completely different job. In that moment, the milkshake isn’t competing against a banana or a Snickers bar or a doughnut, like the morning milkshake is. It’s competing against parents’ stopping at the toy store or finding time for a game of catch later on.

Think about how different that job is from the commuter’s job — and how different the competition is for getting those jobs done. Imagine our fast-food restaurant

inviting a parent to give feedback in one of its customer surveys, asking the question posed earlier: “How can we improve this milkshake so you buy more of them?” What is that dad going to tell them? Is it the same thing that the morning commuter would say?

The morning job needs a more viscous milkshake, which takes a long time to suck up during the long, boring commute. You might add in chunks of fruit, or even bits of chocolate would offer a little “surprise” in each sip of the straw and help keep the commute interesting. In the afternoon, you’re the same person but in very different circumstances. Maybe the afternoon milkshake should come in half sizes so it can be finished more quickly and not induce so much guilt in parents.

You have to understand the job the customer is trying to do in a specific circumstance. If the company simply tried to average all the responses of the parents and the commuters, it would come up with a one-size-fits-none product that doesn’t do either of the jobs well.

And therein lies the “aha.” People hired milkshakes for two very different jobs during the day, in two very different circumstances. This implies there is likely not just one solution for the fast-food chain seeking to sell more milkshakes. There are two. A one-size-fits-all solution would work for neither. ●

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## Progress, Not Products

There is a simple but powerful insight at the core of *The Theory of Jobs*: Customers don’t buy products or services; they pull them into their lives to make progress. This progress is called the “job” they are trying to get done, and in this metaphor the customers “hire” products or services to solve these jobs. We need to take a step back and unpack the elements to develop a complete theory of jobs.

**Progress.** A “job” is defined as the *progress that a person is trying to make in a particular circumstance*. This definition of a job is not simply a new way of categorizing customers or their problems. It’s key to understanding *why* they make the choices they make. The choice of the word “progress” is deliberate. It represents *movement* toward a goal or aspiration. A job is always a process to make progress; it’s rarely a discrete event. A job is not necessarily just a “problem” that arises, though one form the progress can take is the resolution of a specific problem and the struggle it entails.

**Circumstance.** Second, the idea of a “circumstance” is intrinsic to the definition of a job. A job can only be defined — and a successful solution created — relative to the specific context in which it arises. The circumstance

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is fundamental to defining the job (and finding a solution for it), because the nature of the progress desired will always be strongly influenced by the circumstance.

### **Functional, Social and Emotional Complexity.**

Finally, a job has an inherent complexity to it: It not only has functional dimensions, but it has social and emotional dimensions, too. In many innovations, the focus is often entirely on the functional or practical need. But in reality, consumers' social and emotional needs can far outweigh any functional desires.

A well-defined job offers a kind of innovation blueprint. This is very different from the traditional marketing concept of "needs" because it entails a much higher degree of specificity about what you're solving for. Needs are ever present, and that makes them necessarily more generic. Needs are analogous to trends — directionally useful but totally insufficient for defining exactly what will cause a customer to choose one product or service over another. Jobs take into account a far more complex picture.

Jobs insights are fragile — they're more like stories than statistics. When we deconstruct coherent customer episodes into binary bits, such as "male/female," "large company/small company," "new customer/existing customer," we destroy meaning in the process. Jobs Theory is not primarily focused on "who" did something, or "what" they did — but on "why." Understanding jobs is about clustering insights into a coherent picture, rather than segmenting down to finer and finer slices.

### **Shifting Competitive Landscape**

For innovators, understanding the job is to understand what consumers care most about in that moment of trying to make progress. Jobs Theory enables innovators to make the myriad, detailed tradeoffs in terms of which benefits are essential and which are extraneous to a new offering. Understanding the circumstance-specific hiring criteria triggers a whole series of important insights, perhaps most notably that the competitive field is likely completely different from what you might have imagined.

For example, when a smoker takes a cigarette break, on one level he's simply seeking the nicotine his body craves. That's the functional dimension. But that's not all that's going on. He's hiring cigarettes for the emotional benefit of calming him down, relaxing him. And if he works in a typical office building, he's forced to go outside to a designated smoking area. But that choice is social, too — he can take a break from work and hang around with his buddies.

From this perspective, people hire Facebook for many of the same reasons. They log onto Facebook during the

middle of the workday to take a break from work, relax for a few minutes while thinking about other things, and convene around a virtual water cooler with far-flung friends. In some ways, Facebook is actually competing with cigarettes to be hired for the same Job to Be Done. Which the smoker chooses will depend on the circumstances of his struggle in that particular moment. From a Jobs Theory perspective, the competition is seldom limited to products that the market chooses to lump into the same category.

The competitive landscape shifts to something new, maybe uncomfortably new, but one with fresh potential when you see competition through a Jobs to Be Done lens. ●

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## **Jobs in the Wild**

Jobs Theory transforms how you define the business you're in, the size and shape of the market in which you compete and who your competitors are. This enables you to see customers where there were none, ideas for solutions where there were only problems, and opportunity where you least expect it.

Because Jobs Theory uncovers the cause of why consumers make the choices they do, it's useful in a wide range of industries and organizations — from the simplest consumer packaged goods to complex business-to-business solutions. In every case, uncovering why customers make choices allows organizations to better create solutions that get hired.

For example, nothing sounds less innovative than a cheese company rolling out yet another type of cheese. But Sargento cleared \$50 million in its first year with its prepackaged ultrathin slices, driving enormous category growth and exceeding \$150 million in year two. Why did this product thrive, when the vast majority of the other 3,400 consumer packaged goods launched in the same year didn't even survive their first 12 months in the market? Sargento's ultrathin sliced cheese was solving a job consumers were struggling with: "How can I enjoy all of the delicious cheese experience that I love on my daily sandwich without the calories, fat and guilt that come with it?" Jobs Theory, explains Rod Hogan, vice president of New Business Development at Sargento, "forces you to define the offering in the context of a very specific consumer struggle. And that is neither easy nor natural for most large companies."

With a deep understanding of this theory, organizations have the ability to fundamentally change the way they innovate and grow. A product that has been designed specifically to fulfill a well-understood Job to Be Done

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allows you to crawl into the skin of your customer and see the world through her eyes. It says to the customer, “We get you.”

But uncovering an unsatisfactorily resolved job is only the first step. Your organization has to build the right set of experiences in how customers find, purchase and use your product or service — and integrate all the corresponding processes to ensure that those experiences are consistently delivered. When you are solving a customer’s job, your products essentially become services. What matters is not the bundle of product attributes you rope together, but the experiences you enable to help your customers make the progress they want to make. ●

### SECTION II: THE HARD WORK — AND PAYOFF — OF APPLYING JOBS THEORY

## Job Hunting

So where are all these jobs just waiting to be discovered — and how do you find them? The solution lies not in the tools you’re using but what you are looking for and how you piece your observations together.

Here are five ways to uncover jobs that might be right in front of you if you know what you’re looking for:

**1. Finding a job close to home.** In the context of a data-obsessed world, it might be a surprise that some of the world’s greatest innovators have succeeded with little more than their own intuition about a Job to Be Done to guide their efforts. Sony’s breakthrough Walkman cassette player was temporarily put on hold when market research indicated that consumers would never buy a tape player that didn’t have the capacity to record and that customers would be irritated by the use of earphones. But founder Akio Morita ignored his marketing department’s warning, trusting his own gut instead. The Walkman went on to sell over 330 million units and created a worldwide culture of personal music devices.

**2. Competing with nothing.** You can learn as much about a Job to Be Done from people who aren’t hiring any product or service as you can from those who are. This is called “nonconsumption,” when consumers can’t find any solution that actually satisfies their job and they opt to do nothing instead.

**3. Workarounds and compensating behaviors.** Whenever you see a compensating behavior, pay very close attention, because it’s likely a clue that there is an innovation opportunity waiting to be seized — one on which customers would place a high value. But you won’t

even see these anomalies — compensating behavior and cobbled-together workarounds — if you’re not *fully immersed in the context of their struggle*.

**4. Look for what people don’t want to do.** Harvard Business School alum Rick Krieger and some partners decided to start QuickMedx, the forerunner of CVS Minute-Clinics, after Krieger spent a frustrating few hours waiting in an emergency room for his son to get a strep-throat test. CVS Minute-Clinic can see walk-in patients instantly, and nurse practitioners can prescribe medicines for routine ailments, such as conjunctivitis, ear infections and strep throat. Because most people don’t want to go to the doctor if they don’t have to, there are now more than 1,000 MinuteClinic locations inside CVS pharmacy stores in 33 states.

**5. Unusual uses.** You can learn a lot by observing how your customers use your products, especially when they use them in a way that is different from what your company has envisioned. NyQuil had been on the market for decades as a cold remedy, but it turned out that some consumers were knocking back a couple of spoonfuls to help them sleep, even when they weren’t sick. Hence, ZzzQuil was born, offering consumers the good night’s rest they wanted without the other active ingredients they didn’t need.

Where was the stroke of genius in all these success stories? What they have in common is the search for cause. With a theory to predict what will cause what to happen, breakthrough innovations do not require getting lucky. ●

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## How to Hear What Your Customers Don’t Say

Consumers can’t always articulate what they want. And even when they do, their actions may tell a different story. So if what consumers say is unreliable, can’t you just look at the data instead? Well, data is prone to misinterpretation.

The moment a consumer brings a purchase into his or her home or business, that product is still waiting to be hired again — this is called the “Little Hire.” If a product really solves the job, there will be many moments of consumption. It will be hired again and again. But too often the data companies gather reflects only the Big Hire, not whether it meets customers’ Jobs to Be Done in reality.

No matter how new or revolutionary your product idea may be, the circumstances of struggle already exist. Consequently, in order to hire your new solution, by definition customers must fire some current compensating behavior

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or suboptimal solution — including firing the solution of doing nothing at all.

A customer's decision-making process about what to fire and hire has begun long before she enters a store — and it's complicated. There are always two opposing forces battling for dominance in that moment of choice, and they both play a significant role.

### **The forces compelling change to a new solution:**

First of all, the push of the situation — the frustration or problem that a customer is trying to solve — has to be substantial enough to cause her to want to take action. Secondly, the pull of an enticing new product or service to solve that problem has to be pretty strong, too.

**The forces opposing change:** There are two unseen yet incredibly powerful forces at play at the same time that many companies ignore completely: the forces holding a customer back. First, “habits of the present” weigh heavily on consumers. “I’m used to doing it this way.” Or living with the problem. “I don’t love it, but I’m at least comfortable with how I deal with it now.” And potentially even more powerful than the habits of the present is, second, the “anxiety of choosing something new.” “What if it’s not better?”

Think of it this way: the job has to have sufficient magnitude to cause people to change their behavior — “I’m struggling and I want a better solution than I can currently find” — but the pull of the new has to be much greater than the sum of the inertia of the old and the anxieties about the new.

### **Building Customer Stories**

So how can you begin to map out these competing forces to get to the crux of your customers' jobs? Your customers may not be able to tell you what they want, but they can tell you about their struggles. What are they really trying to accomplish and why isn't what they're doing now working? What is causing their desire for something new?

One simple way to think about these questions is through storyboarding. Talk to consumers as if you're capturing their struggle in order to storyboard it later. Pixar has this down to a science: As you piece together your customers' struggle, you can literally sketch out their story: Once upon a time . . . Every day . . . One day . . . Because of that, we did this . . . Because of this, we did that . . . Finally I did . . .

You're building their story, because through that you can begin to understand how the competing forces and context of the job play out for them. The key to getting

hired is to understand the narrative of the customer's life in such rich detail that you are able to design a solution that far exceeds anything the customer themselves could have found words to request. In hindsight, breakthrough insights might seem obvious, but they rarely are. In fact, they're fundamentally contrarian: You see something that others have missed. ●

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## Building Your Résumé

Jobs are complex and multifaceted. But a deep understanding of a job provides a sort of decoder to the complexity — a job spec, if you will. Whereas the job itself is the framing of the circumstance from the perspective of the consumer with the Job to Be Done as he or she confronts a struggle to make progress, the job spec is from the innovator's point of view: “What do I need to design, develop and deliver in my new product offering so that it solves the consumer's job well?”

Identifying and understanding the Job to Be Done is only the first step in creating products that you can be sure customers want to hire. Products that they'll actually pay premium prices for. That involves not only understanding the job but also the right set of experiences for purchase and use of that product, and then integrating those experiences into a company's processes. All three layers — Uncovering the Job, Creating the Desired Experiences and Integrating around the Job — are critical. When a company understands and responds to all three layers of the job depicted here, it will have solved a job in a way that competitors can't easily copy.

The value of creating the right set of experiences in a circumstance-specific job is clearly not universally understood. Few people relish the experience of renting a car, for example. One company that clearly understands the stakes is Uber. Uber has been successful because it's perfectly nailed a Job to Be Done. Yes, Uber can often offer a nice car to take you from point A to point B, but that's not where it's built its competitive advantage. The experiences that come with hiring Uber to solve customers' Jobs to Be Done are better than the existing alternatives. That's the secret to its success.

Everything about the experience of being a customer — including the emotional and social dimensions — has been thought through. Who wants to have to outmaneuver other poor schlubs on the same street corner who are trying to hail a cab? You don't want to either pay for a car service to wait outside your meeting or be at its mercy when you're finally ready to call it to come back and get

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you. With Uber, you simply push a few buttons on your mobile phone and you know that in three minutes or seven minutes a specific driver will arrive to pick you up. Now you can relax and just wait. You don't have to worry if you have enough cash in your wallet or fear that if you swipe your credit card in that taxi machine, you'll get a call from your bank wondering if you've recently made purchases in some state you've never even been to.

Organizations that focus on making the product itself better and better are missing what may be the most powerful causal mechanism of all — what are the experiences that customers seek in not only purchasing, but also in using this product? If you don't know the answer to that question, you're probably not going to be hired. ●

### SECTION III: THE JOBS TO BE DONE ORGANIZATION

## Integrating Around a Job

Organizations typically structure themselves around function or business unit or geography — but successful growth companies optimize around the job. Competitive advantage is conferred through an organization's unique processes: the ways it integrates across functions to perform the customer's job.

When you think of the word “process,” you might instantly conjure images of a manufacturing assembly line or a bureaucratic standard. But processes touch everything about the way an organization transforms its resources into value: The patterns of interaction, coordination, communication and decision making through which they accomplish these transformations are processes. Product development, procurement, market research, budgeting, employee development and compensation, and resource allocation are all accomplished through processes.

Helping customers have a delightful experience using your product is made up of processes. What information do we need to have in order to decide what to do next? Who is responsible for each step? What do we prioritize over other things?

Resources, generally speaking, are fungible. They can be bought and sold. Products can, often, be easily copied. But it is through integrating processes to get the job done that companies can create the ideal experiences and confer competitive advantage.

## Organizing Around the Job

Through a jobs lens, what matters more than who reports to whom is how different parts of the organization

interact to systematically deliver the offering that perfectly performs customers' Jobs to Be Done. When managers are focused on the customer's Job to Be Done, they not only have a very clear compass heading for their innovation efforts, but they also have a vital organizing principle for their internal structure.

This is not a subtle distinction. We have managers in charge of every major function or set of activities. We have executives in charge of product lines. But in most cases, nobody is in charge of understanding — and ensuring that the company is delivering on — the job of a customer. It's only through predictable, repeatable processes that organizations can fully integrate around a customer's Job to Be Done. ●

## Keeping Your Eye on the Job

The day a product becomes real and hits the market, everything changes for managers. There's so much pressure to grow that it's possible to lose sight of why customers hired you in the first place. Even great companies can veer off course in nailing the job for their customers — and focus on nailing a job for themselves. In our research and experience, that happens because companies fall into believing three fallacies about the data they generate about their products:

**1. The fallacy of active versus passive data.** Much of the information needed to make decisions about solving for a job is found in the context of the struggle. That is called “passive data” because it has no voice or clear structure or champion or agenda. Passive data, by itself, doesn't tell us what is going on in the world because the Job to Be Done doesn't change much. Passive data is just unfiltered context. It's always present, but it isn't loud.

As soon as a Job to Be Done becomes a commercial product, the context-rich view of the job begins to recede as the active data of operations replaces and displaces the passive data of innovation. Product sales generate data about products. Customers' purchases generate data about customers themselves. Investments in people, facilities and technology generate data on their productivity, returns and value. As data about operations broadcasts itself loudly and clearly, it's all too easy for managers to start managing the numbers instead of the job.

**2. The fallacy of surface growth.** When a company makes big investments in developing relationships with customers, natural incentives arise to find ways to sell more products to existing customers. The marginal cost of selling more products to existing customers is very small

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— and the profit is oh so alluring. This is called “surface growth.” Companies see products all around them made by other companies and decide to copy or acquire them. But in doing so, companies often end up trying to create many products for many customers — and lose focus on the job that brought them success in the first place.

**3. The fallacy of conforming data.** Data has an annoying way of conforming itself to support whatever point of view we want it to support. In fact, Nate Silver, a well-known statistician and founder of the *New York Times* political blog FiveThirtyEight (acquired by ESPN in 2013), noted, “The most calamitous failures of prediction usually have a lot in common. We focus on those signals that tell a story about the world as we would like it to be, not how it really is.” We don’t realize this, we don’t mean for it to happen, but it is an unfortunate frailty of the human brain. ●

### The Jobs-Focused Organization

Having a jobs-focused organization, CEOs report, leads to four categories of clear benefit:

- Enable distributed decision making with clarity of purpose — employees throughout the organization are empowered to make good jobs-focused decisions and to be autonomous and innovative.
- Align resources against what matters most — and free resources from what does not.
- Inspire people and unify your culture in service of what they care about most.
- Measure what matters most — customer progress, employee contributions and incentives.

Most companies have a mission statement — and if they’re lucky, employees will have memorized it well enough to recite it chapter and verse. There’s nothing wrong with having a mission statement. But on their own, they aren’t enough to provide guidance in daily decision making.

But a clear job spec does. For example, Unilever has managed to turn the oldest “health” soap brand in the world, Lifebuoy, into one of the company’s fastest growing brands in the past few years by nesting a job under the mission of helping children in emerging markets live to the age of five. You can’t innovate to the broad goal of helping children live, but you can innovate around the very specific circumstances of that struggle.

Experts tell us that it takes 30 seconds of vigorous washing with soap and hot water to eliminate germs

— but in the circumstances that Unilever was innovating into, that was not likely to happen. In India, for example, nearly 400,000 children under the age of five die in a year from diarrheal disease. Yet mothers and children in parts of India, and other emerging market countries, don’t routinely wash their hands.

So Unilever created a series of products that helps consumers make the progress they were struggling to make — in their particular circumstances. Color-changing soap was created to ensure that children scrubbed for long enough to kill germs. The soap changes color when they’ve reached 10 seconds — all that is required to kill germs with Unilever’s special formula — (and makes it more fun for kids to stick with it long enough to matter). The mission of saving children’s lives was powerful, but it was only with the specificity of what job consumers were trying to do that Unilever was able to energize its oldest soap brand. The more you understand about the job, the better you will connect to it internally.

A clearly defined job spec that everyone understands can serve as a focal point for employees to make the right decisions without being told specifically what to do each time. Jobs Theory provides a language of integration, whereby marketers, engineers, salespeople and customer service employees can communicate with each other rather than talk past one another.

If you know what truly causes innovation to succeed, your efforts don’t have to be left to fate. We’ve allowed ourselves to believe that luck is essential for far too long. There are whole industries, such as venture capital, that are currently organized around the belief that innovation is essentially a game of playing the odds.

But it’s time to topple that tired paradigm. You can put your time, energy and resources into creating products and services that you can predict, in advance, customers will be eager to hire. Leave relying on luck to the other guys. ●

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**Webinar: *How to Create Urgency & Growth in a Nanosecond Culture* by Jason Jennings.** Jennings offers prescriptions for creating teams that consistently grow revenues and profits through a purpose of doing well by doing good, guiding principles to make fast decisions, a laser focus on exceeding customer expectations, and practices that support transparency and accountability.