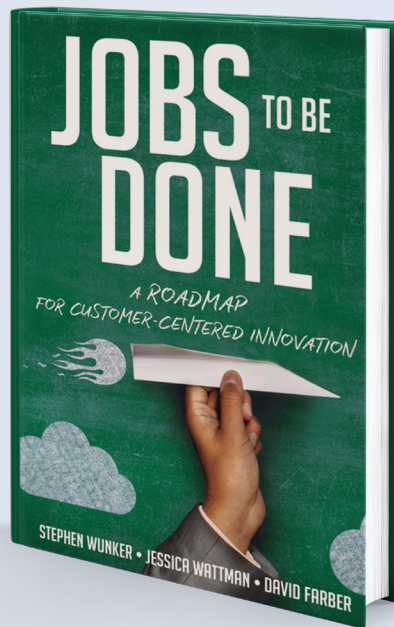


BOOK SNAPS™

Zooming In On Your Next Read



Jobs to Be Done

A Roadmap for Customer-Centered Innovation

By Stephen Wunker, Jessica Wattman,
and David Farber

Stephen Wunker worked with Christensen for years, led development of one of the first smartphones, and now runs New Markets Advisors. He has written for Forbes, Harvard Business Review, and The Financial Times.

Jessica Wattman is the consultancy's Director of Social Innovation.

David Farber is a Manager at the Boston-based firm.

Who Is Your Future Self?

In their book, *Jobs to Be Done: A Roadmap for Customer-Centered Innovation*, Stephen Wunker, Jessica Wattman, and David Farber attempt to give readers a roadmap that will help them “consistently uncover new opportunities and generate new ideas” for their companies. They have experience helping companies do just that by using their Jobs to Be Done approach whereby companies focus on the jobs that consumers need performed and how the company can provide a means by which to accomplish these jobs. The authors believe that too little company time is spent truly trying to understand the needs of consumers. They believe that many product failures can be avoided by using their systemic way to approach innovation.

Understanding Jobs to Be Done: Finding High Potential Avenues for Growth

Wunker, Wattman, and Farber break their book into two main sections, the first one covering how to find opportunities for growth. They begin this section with a discussion of the importance of understanding why people perform the actions they do. They want to look for the emotional, psychological, and practical reasons that drive behavior. This is important for both business to consumer products as well as for business to business products. Traditionally, marketers focus on what solutions people use. The authors claim this is not as effective as trying to understand what jobs people are trying to do. This is because it is easier to predict what products and services will be used when the jobs to be performed are understood. This mindset change switches the focus from the “what” of consumer behavior to the “why”, and it happens when companies focus on job drivers. A job driver is “the underlying context that makes certain jobs more or less important.”

When considering new products, the authors claim, companies focus too much on what customers are currently buying. This can lead to tunnel-vision. The jobs people need done are independent of what they are buying. Therefore, *Jobs to Be Done* is a more customer-centered approach.

These jobs that customers have are both functional and emotional. To satisfy functional jobs, companies need to focus on actual jobs to be done; they need to focus on particular people and particular situations, and they need solutions that focus on jobs rather than on features. Once a company has found some high

priority jobs, they then need to make sure that they satisfy those jobs well. This requires companies to avoid adding too many features that sound good but that do not affect decision making. The authors believe that companies pay less attention to emotional jobs than they do functional jobs. This can be problematic because competitors may find cheaper ways to complete functional jobs. When this happens, differentiation can happen when a company is able to better satisfy emotional jobs.

Not all jobs are of equal importance. Job drivers are the elements that make particular jobs more or less important. These drivers consist of attitudes, background, and circumstances. Attitudes refer to personality traits that affect decisions. Background refers to the situation that affects decisions, and circumstances refer to the short-term factors that people take into consideration. These drivers can help companies with segmentation because it can occur along the lines of Jobs to Be Done rather than by customer type.

Wunker, Wattman, and Farber then go on to discuss success criteria. These criteria “are invaluable in telling innovators how to make their ideas into hits.” The most successful companies are those that are able to satisfy the right jobs and the right pain points. The more companies try to compete asymmetrically, “by winning along previously unconsidered dimensions of performance,” the harder it can be to measure success. It is important, they posit, that products help consumers in the ways that matter to them, but sometimes trade-offs will need to be made in areas that matter less in order to make the product satisfactory for the company as well.

There are two types of obstacles companies face with new products. The first obstacles are obstacles of adoption. A lack of knowledge is an obstacle to adoption that occurs when customers don’t know that they need the product. Another is referred to as behavior change requirement which refers to the difficulty inherent in getting customers to change their behavior. Another impediment can be that multiple decision makers are often involved, and they are not always closely connected. Other obstacles include high cost, high risk, and an unfamiliar category whereby the product is so original that the customer does not really understand what it is.

In addition to obstacles to adoption, there are also obstacles to use which are reasons customers stop using a product or service. These include limited supporting infrastructure, pain points induced by use, and an untargeted offering. In addition, a product may be cool and innovative, but it may not actually be better than other products and services.

The authors then move on to pricing. They recommend value-based pricing that is based on how well a product satisfies the jobs customers need done. With this type of pricing, attention can also be given to the emotional jobs a product or service satisfies. An additional benefit to value-based pricing is that prices can change to reflect surges or other situations that make a product or service more valuable.

Obviously a product must be both useful to the customer and

worthwhile to the organization creating it. Therefore the authors created a five step test to evaluate the viability of ideas. This process looks at attracting new customers by determining if customers can leave their current situation and whether new customers will need to be recruited. It also looks at whether add-ons or repurchases are possible. Next it looks at keeping customers by determining whether the product satisfies jobs in a unique way from competitors and if it is difficult to replicate, and finally it looks at growing the business by determining whether the profit model will change as more customers are attracted and whether the infrastructure currently in place will be satisfactory as the business scales.

Wunker, Wattman, and Farber believe that companies often fail to understand what it is that customers actually want, and as such, they have faulty views of what their industries actually sell. This also leads them to miss opportunities which leaves them vulnerable to disruptions. Unfortunately, according to the authors, companies focus narrowly on their traditional competitors, and their innovations keep them on the same narrow path they are already on. When companies focus on Jobs to Be Done, they consider their competitors to be “any offerings that satisfy the same jobs.”

Similarly, the authors make the claim that many companies believe they are the first to be providing a product or service. This often isn’t the case. Rather, it is likely that the company falls into one of three traps. The first is defining what the product does so narrowly that there is a superficial appearance that they are the only ones meeting a need. Second, they are doing something unique in their market, but they have not realized that it is being done in other markets. A third group refers to companies that do have new ideas. These companies face risk, and they need to discern why others are not capitalizing on this opportunity and whether or not they have the resources to overcome these factors. When considering competitors, companies must determine what their advantages are “in delivering against key jobs and success criteria,” what flexibility they have to adjust their plans, and what their rival’s impact will be on marketplace perceptions.

Using Jobs to Be Done to Build Great Ideas: Making Success Repeatable

After discussing their roadmap to successful product innovation in the first section, Wunker, Wattman, and Farber go on to discuss how to make this success repeatable. They believe that innovation projects often do not succeed because the company lacks a strategic compass heading; it does not help move the company in the direction they want to go. Other products fail because there was not enough investment made in understanding the customer.

To help maximize the opportunity for success, companies should create a specific strategy that explains in detail how the company will outperform competition. In this statement, the company should provide the definition of what a win would be, a decision as to how and with whom they will win, a determination of the company’s competitive advantages, a statement showing how they will “defeat specific and articulable challenges,” and show



When determining who to research, companies should focus on existing customers, competitor's customers, and those who do not consume the type of product at all."

the development of growth options and capabilities for the future. These strategies should challenge conventional wisdom. They recommend creating a skeleton business plan that asks the questions that will need to be answered. This should include questions pertaining to market, offerings, solution adoptions, competition, capabilities, and the business model.

Research is clearly needed throughout the process, and the authors describe the importance of not simply relying on Big Data. Big Data, unfortunately, can fail to provide information about why customers make decisions and how they use products. It also fails to explain the emotional relationships customers have with products and unconventional ways products may be used. Therefore, the authors espouse the importance of primary research. There are numerous research methods available. They believe the best plan involves a mix of methods that balances breadth and cost and time. The best method will be determined by the type of insights needed. When determining who to research, companies should focus on existing customers, competitor's customers, and those who do not consume the type of product at all.

Wunker, Wattman, and Farber provide insight into how companies can better generate ideas. They believe that many times brainstorming sessions are destined to fail because of how they are conducted. One reason is the difficulties that people have coming up with new ideas while simultaneously critiquing those of others. Second, people have a tendency to focus on the first ideas they hear, limiting the scope of other thoughts they may come up with. Luckily the authors have some suggestions for overcoming these problems. One is to be clear from the beginning why the brainstorming session is happening and how ideas will be evaluated and considered. It is also important to give participants time to silently think about ideas before sharing them. Small groups can then be formed to build on some of these ideas. It is important to also be clear, at the end of the session, about next steps so participants know their time was well-spent and their ideas will be considered.

Reframing Perspective

Wunker, Wattman, and Farber then go on to discuss the importance of seeking out opportunities to change one's perspective about proposed solutions and challenges. This can be done by bringing ideas to people outside of the select field. These people can provide insight as to whether the idea is truly unique, and they can also suggest alterations that are prevalent in their field that the company never considered. Finally, explaining the idea to an outsider can help the company determine if they are able to clearly articulate their idea. In order to institutionalize

the bringing in of new perspectives, companies can develop an open innovation program that provides channels for reaching out to others. Secondly, they can be open to discussion with people from diverse perspectives.

There are two sources of bias that can affect innovators. These can arise from both the availability of information and the confidence of that information. People tend to overvalue their information and to place the greatest value on both the first and latest information they come across. In regards to confidence, individuals tend to be more confident in information about concepts they have already decided upon. They also tend to place more confidence in information that supports their beliefs and ignore information that conflicts with their beliefs.

The final aspect of innovation that the authors discuss is experimentation. The authors recommend running fast and inexpensive experiments that can provide them with key answers that can help in decision-making. Companies may shy away from experiments because they prize answers over questions, but this does not negate the importance of the information to be gleaned from experiments. These can be performed in the earlier stages of development. They can test how interested customers are in the products. All of this requires careful planning to ensure the validity of results as well as their usefulness.

Stephen Wunker, Jessica Wattman, and David Farber provide a clear path that businesses and other organizations can use to create innovative and successful solutions to the jobs that people need performed. They provide ample reasons as to why businesses are better served by focusing on jobs to be done rather than product features. Focusing on jobs helps a business be more customer-centered. Interspersed throughout the book are successful ways companies have managed to carry out the tasks described in the book. These examples make the processes more understandable and the solutions more clear. There is a helpful afterward as well as an appendix that describe in a more detailed manner how one technology company and one charity was able to use these techniques to help people better perform the jobs they needed done. This book accompanies companies from the beginning stages of idea generation. Central to their approach is a mandate for clear research and a deep understanding of consumers.

Book Snaps™ is a publication of Soundview Executive Book Summaries® ©2022 Soundview, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited.