1 Jobs to be done

▲ *Addressed Needs*   🔦 *Potential of the Idea*   ⚡ *Problems*
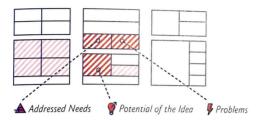
WHAT AND WHY?

The Jobs to be Done method is based on a framework by the American economist Clayton M. Christensen who teaches at the Harvard Business School. It helps us to find out why users decide in favor of a specific product. We examine the circumstances surrounding the decision from a functional, emotional and social point of view and ask what »job« the product is supposed to do; hence the name of the framework.

In traditional surveys, the users are often asked why thy bought a specific product. This question often leads to generic answers, which cannot really inspire us. Jobs to be Done helps us to proceed in a smarter way. When we know the »job« of the product, we can more easily determine who our real competitors are and how a new solution for the user problem could look like.

Christensen gives the example of a fast-food chain that sells milk shakes. According to research, a huge part of the milk shakes is sold early in the morning. In interviews with the customers Christensen found out that many of them were commuters for whom the milk shake was supposed to do several »jobs.« First, it was used as a satiating replacement for breakfast. For many of the customers, it also served as a diversion during the boring drive to work. From a functional point of view it was thus important that the milk shake fitted the cup holder in the car and was easily to consume.

This point of view suddenly revealed other competing products than the milk shakes of other company, e.g. bananas, chocolate bards or bagels, as these products do a similar »job« for the users.

Netflix CEO Reed Hastings shares this point of view. According to him, his service does not compete with Sky Go, Amazon Prime or Watchever but with a visit to the restaurant, work, hobbies or a wine party with friends.[1]

We use Christensen's Jobs to be Done framework in a slightly modified form in order to find new ideas or to further develop existing ideas. Based on our how-might-me question[2], we formulate job statements and begin with our brainstorming (method 1).

MODUS OPERANDI

1__We set up our team space
We need a team space suitable for brainstorming, a how-might-we question (that we created at the end of the EXPLORE module) and the type descriptions of our user group (or a persona if we created one with the EXPLORE method 5.2). Preparation is exactly the same as with brainstorming.

2__We rephrase our might-we-question as a job statement
We focus on the »job« that has to be done from the perspective of our user group. Let us consider the dating app Tinder as an example, which saw the light of day in 2009. If we had developed it at the time, our how-might-me question might have been, »How can we enable singles to find a matching partner?« A job statement consists of object, context and action. We express the statement from the perspective of our users. In the Tinder example, it would read as follows: to find (action)—a partner (object)—online (context).
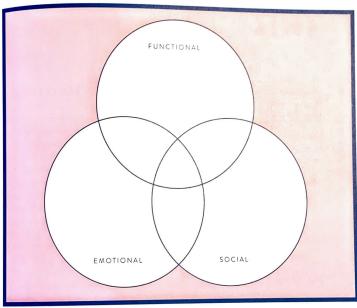
3__We conduct a brainstorming for the components of the job statement
The section on method 1, »Brainstorming«, explains in detail how we can do this.

4__We arrange our brainstorming ideas in the Jobs to be Done framework
We cluster our ideas according to the categories »functional«, »emotional« and »social«. For this we use Template 7.3.3 where we paste our sticky notes.
Functional ideas are those that describe a function. Social ideas imply social interaction. Emotional ideas affect the emotional state of the users. We divide our idea into these categories. If an idea applies to two or all three categories, we place it in the respective intersection.

Template 7.3.3: digital-innovation-playbook.com/templates/create

HOW DOES IT FEEL?

The process will feel familiar if we have already developed a how-might-we question. The job statement might look redundant given the already existing how-might-we question, but the change of perspective can inspire us to develop new ideas. We use the Jobs to be Done method when our previous ideas do not seem sufficient.

GOOD TO KNOW

The Jobs to be Done framework is heavily focused on marketing and lends itself very well to analyzing existing products and identifying real competitive products, but we use it instead for gathering ideas. If you want to know more about Clayton Christensen and Jobs to be Done, we recommend his book *The Innovator's Dilemma*[1].

1 Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Causes Great Firms to Fail*, Brighton 1997.