

Jobs To Be Done

When...

(situation)

I want to...

(motivation)

So I can...

(expectation)

Imagine your life as a business and yourself as CEO.

Like most CEOs, you spend every day making important decisions about how to run your business more effectively. But unlike most CEOs, you are solely responsible for hiring and firing. Did you wake up with a rumbling tummy? You need to make a hiring decision: do you employ your dependable, trustworthy stalwart of Marmite on toast? Do you pick the ruthless efficiency of a Huel Bar? Or do you recruit an Eggs Benedict to make sure your rumbling is vanquished in style?

All three candidates will get the job done, but working out which will best get the job done requires a more specific understanding of the job itself. Is your aim to quell the rumbling as quickly and efficiently as possible? Then the Huel Bar is the best option. Is the goal to ease into the day with a simple pleasure? Then Marmite on toast is your go-to-guy. Is this a weekend vacancy? Then Eggs Benedict is the candidate you should employ. The better you understand the nature of the job - and the more precisely you define the job description - the more likely it is you will be able to make the best 'hire'.

This is the essence of the "Jobs To Be Done" theory developed by Clayton Christensen (of "Disruptive Innovation" fame), Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon and David S. Duncan. Their theory was developed in response to the apparent paradox that although businesses know more than ever about their customers, the products and services they develop are no better at meeting those customers' needs. This either means that businesses are gathering the wrong data about their customers, or that they are looking at the data in the wrong way. Or both.

Clayton Christensen and his colleagues argued that the problem is twofold. Firstly, companies gather so much data on their customers that it has become difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. Secondly, most of these data are used to identify correlations between people's demographic or psychological profiles and the products and brands they tend to use. Clayton Christensen believed these correlations ultimately point organisations in the wrong direction; people don't use branded

products and services simply because they happen to be of a certain age, gender or predisposition. Instead, "Jobs To Be Done" theory argues that we "hire" products, services and brands with a specific "job" in mind. The theory is built on the idea that successful innovations (and, by implication, successful brands) help people to solve specific problems, while addressing anxieties and habits that might be holding them back.

A "Job To Be Done" (or "JTBD") is a deceptively simple shorthand for ensuring you develop a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances in which your product, service or brand is used. It goes beyond the functional to consider the emotional, social and even sensory goals of the user (as my breakfast example illustrates). And the theory defines a "good" product, service, experience or brand as one that solves problems that had previously been met through inadequate solutions (or not solution at all).

There are myriad ways to apply JTBD thinking and I won't attempt to cover all of them. In basic terms, JTBDs can be a quick and useful way to make sure you're designing an experience that is empathetic to your customer's point of view, by explicitly stating their situation, motivation and expectation. This can be as simple as using a template like the example below to clarify the JTBD that a product, service or brand is designed to accomplish: A more involved approach to JTBDs adds a layer



of information to the situation, motivation and expectation fields above. The result is a 'JTBD canvas', which can be used to prod at a problem from a wider range of angles:

The who

These often begin by understanding the target audience: who will be carrying out the job? Are they acting alone or are other people involved? What's the context or situation in which they will be acting? What motivators will spur them on? What inhibitors will hold them back? And how important do they consider the job to be?

The job

What does this audience expect to achieve, in terms of functional, emotional, social and sensory outcomes? Are there any related Jobs To Be Done that will affect these outcomes? And what is the 'before' state?

The ideal solution

Based on the stated outcomes, what features would the ideal solution comprise? Are these 'Must Be', 'Performance' or 'Attractive' features (for more on this, I wrote an earlier article on the Kano Model)?

Existing solutions

How well do the available products, services and solutions meet the expected outcomes? Identifying areas of over-delivery can be as useful as identifying undermet needs, since this might allow for simpler, less costly solutions to be developed. It's helpful here to identify whether the audience are substituting existing solutions with their own workarounds. It's also worth understanding how commonly the JTBD simply remains unfulfilled.

JTBD Canvas					
Who		Job			
User	Job Statement	Related Jobs			
Influencers	Functional: from	Emotional: from	Social: from	Sensory: from	
Situation	Functional: to	Emotional: to	Social: to	Sensory: to	
Motivators	Ideal solution			Existing solutions	
Inhibitors	Must Be features	Performance features	Attractive features	Exceeding	Meeting
Job Importance				Under-performing	Substitutes / Workarounds
				Non-fulfilment	

JTBD canvases tend to be more relevant for innovation planning than brand strategy, although they can be very helpful for portfolio strategy; each pillar in your portfolio strategy can be defined through a JTBD and prioritised by assessing the size of the job and the gap between expectations and existing solutions.

Like any popular strategy tool, JTBDs are widely used and abused. I've often seen the term "JTBD" used as a fancy heading for marketers' to-do lists (e.g. "reinforce our taste credentials"), which is a shame because it encourages the view that "JTBD" is just another pointless acronym invented by bored marketers as a way to make what we do sound bigger or more important than it really is.

Taken seriously, JTBDs can have profound implications for how organisations work. Clayton Christensen and his colleagues envisioned a future where businesses are organised by JTBD instead of product group. Personally, I find this to be the most stimulating and radical aspect of the theory. Most of the businesses I've worked with are organised by "solution": retail banks are split by product group (saving versus lending versus insurance) and grocery brands are split by aisle (chilled, frozen, baked goods, etc.). These are answers without questions and all too easily create products, services and solutions that are divorced from the jobs they are supposed to solve.

Imagine instead a business organised by JTBD: what are the biggest customer challenges it exists to solve, and how can it organise itself to meet those challenges better than anybody else? Framed this way, JTBDs have the potential to bridge the gap between the promise of 'brand purpose' and the reality of how businesses are organised, managed and measured.

To my mind, that's exciting stuff.