Harvard University

Summer School

**MGMT S-5415 Faster Product Launches: The Business Model Canvas**

**Draft Syllabus**

**Instructor:**

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**Dates:**

June 21 – August 6, 2021

Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:30pm – 9:30pm

**Online**

What if you could launch a venture with a business model that has already been proven and tested, product features that customers have asked for, and an established funding model? This is the promise of building with the business model canvas. In this course, we model and validate new products from marketing to distribution channels, making them launch-ready before being built. Guided by the methodology, students are able to create a product roadmap; a funding model; a distribution model for the product; marketing channels; and consumer personas. In line with the business model canvas framework, students engage with real-world stakeholders throughout this hands-on course.

**Readings:**

Blank, S. (2013). *The Four Steps to the Epiphany.* (2nd ed.) K & S Ranch.

Blank, S. and Dorf, B. (2012). *The Startup Owner’s Manual.* K & S Ranch

Osterwalder, A. (2010). *Business Model Generation.* John Wiley & Sons.

**Assignments and Grading:**

In week 1, there will be a brief written assignment that will not count towards your final grade. This will help you familiarize yourself with how feedback works in the class. The remaining assignments will be graded as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Value** |
| Individual Assignment 0: Value Proposition | 0 |
| Individual Assignment 1: Applying the Canvas | 5% |
| Individual Assignment 2: Stakeholder Definitions | 15% |
| Team Assignment 1: Discovery Interview Planning | 10% |
| Team Assignment 2: Product Requirements & Draft Business Plan | 5% |
| Team Assignment 3: Completed Business Model Canvas | 10% |
| Team Assignment 4: Final Business Plan | 15% |
| Individual Assignment 3: Blue Ocean Strategy | 5% |
| Weekly Discussion Topics (Individual) | 10% |
| Class and Team Participation | 25% |

**Rubrics for all assignments will be posted in Canvas in the assignment submission folder for each assignment.**

**Team and Class Participation:**

This class meets live twice a week online. Students are expected to attend each session and participate in classroom discussion. Participation can include overall class discussion and small group sessions. It is expected also that students participate fully in team projects. All students will be asked to complete a peer review during the final week of class, reflecting on the participation of each team member. Students are expected to participate actively in project work.

**Assignment Due Dates:**

Assignments must be submitted by the due dates. This is especially important because we will be working in a collaborative environment, with teams and your instructor providing in-person feedback and support to each other. Assignments submitted after the due date will incur a penalty of 10 points for every day they are late past the due date, unless you have secured a waiver for an individual assignment, which can only be granted in case of severe personal emergencies.

**Student Responsibilities:**

In addition to the policies and expectations outlined above, you are expected to adhere to the Harvard Summer School policies on student responsibilities, which you can review here:

<http://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student-responsibilities>

**Disability Services:**

The Summer School is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The Accessibility Office offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities. Please visit http://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/accessibility-services for more information.

**Academic Integrity:**

You are responsible for understanding Harvard Summer School policies on academic integrity (http://www.summer.harvard.edu/resources-policies/resources-support-academic-integrity) and how to use sources responsibly. Not knowing the rules, misunderstanding the rules, running out of time, submitting the wrong draft, or being overwhelmed with multiple demands are not acceptable excuses. There are no excuses for failure to uphold academic integrity. To support your learning about academic citation rules, please visit the Harvard Summer School Tips to Avoid Plagiarism

(http://www.summer.harvard.edu/policies/student-responsibilities), where you'll find links to the Harvard Guide to Using Sources and two free online 15-minute tutorials to test your knowledge of academic citation policy. The tutorials are anonymous open-learning tools.

**Week-by-Week: What We Will Be Doing**

# Phase 1: Defining Your “Hypothesis” Product, Identifying Your Value Proposition

The Business Model Canvas offers organizations the opportunity to validate products before investing too much time in product development, presenting products to the market that have already found their use case, have projected distribution channels, and can be funded. This product validation hinges on the customer discovery process. In this first phase of our course, we will learn about the entire Business Model Canvas process, while beginning our customer discovery. Students will develop a hypothesis -- a product idea that they feel meets an unmet need. We’ll then form teams around several of these, and begin the process of validating these ideas in the market.

We will be using the Blank and Dorf text throughout the class as a reference manual for templates and forms. Please review the book before the first class.

**Week 1 (June 21 – June 27)**

Readings: read Chapter 1 of Blank’s *4 Steps*.

Startup Owner’s Manual, Chapter 1

Also, if you have not already, please read Blank’s Harvard Business Review article, “Why the lean startup changes everything”: [https://hbr.org/2013/05/why-the-lean-start-up-changeseverything.](https://hbr.org/2013/05/why-the-lean-start-up-changes-everything) While this is not a Lean class, this piece is foundational to understanding the framework.

Satell, G. (June 2017). The four types of innovation and the problems they solve. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from: [https://hbr.org/2017/06/the-4-types-of-innovationand-the-problems-they-solve](https://hbr.org/2017/06/the-4-types-of-innovation-and-the-problems-they-solve)

Osterwalder, Chapters 1 and 2

We’ll take a longer look at how the Business Model Canvas came to be. Building on the groundbreaking work of Steve Blank, Osterwalder developed the original Canvas to help organizations efficiently implement the Lean LaunchPad methodology and bring products to market more quickly. We’ll look at the original canvas, some of its current variations, and review Blank’s 4 steps in the context of the canvas. Throughout the class, we will be using Osterwalder’s original canvas as our framework.

**Assignment 0: Define your Value Proposition and proposed**

**Customer Segments (what your product does, and for whom). Share with class in Canvas and present to group if you wish to form a team**

**Due: Sunday, June 27**

**Week 2 (June 28 – July 4)**

Readings: Four Steps, Chapter 3 and Fishbein (link below)

Startup Owner’s Manual, Chapter 3

We’ll start with a Customer Segments overview. Then, we’ll look at the essentials of customer discovery interviews. Fishbein’s guidelines for customer discovery questions will guide our work this week. In lecture, we will learn the essential strategies of an effective customer discovery interview process. We’ll also examine what it means to focus on Most Valued Segments. We will look at how to create an iteration process, as well.

Other key activities for this week:

Forming of project teams. Form teams around specific problems. Review of rubric for Assignment 1. Teams will have up to five members. Finalize your product hypothesis: the problem you think your product will solve.

**Individual Assignment 1: apply the Business Model Canvas to an existing business, and complete the canvas individually for that company, based on your research and observations of their channels, activities, and other canvas factors.**

**Done in-class**

**Week 3 (July 5 – July 11)**

Readings: Four Steps, Chapter 4

Kinni, T. (2016). Four reasons your company may be susceptible to disruption. MIT Sloan Management Review: Retrieved from: [https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/tech-savvy-fourreasons-your-company-may-be-susceptible-to-disruption/](https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/tech-savvy-four-reasons-your-company-may-be-susceptible-to-disruption/)

Osterwalder, Chapter 3

Our focus is learning the core concepts of Interview Planning. We will work together in cross-team groups to plan interviews, including identifying potential customers, making initial contact, and scheduling follow-ups. We will brainstorm together as a class and within teams to develop a plan for each product group to conduct discovery with diverse stakeholders.

**Individual Assignment 2 Due: Outline 1-4 customer/stakeholder segment(s). Then,** [**using**](https://mfishbein.com/the-ultimate-list-of-customer-development-questions/)

[**Fishbein’s guidelines,**](https://mfishbein.com/the-ultimate-list-of-customer-development-questions/) **develop a list of questions for your customer discovery interviews. Questions should be a mix of problem and product questions. Each member of the team will do this individually. Submit your assignment in the Individual Assignment 1 folder *and* share it with your teammates.**

**Due Sunday, July 11**

**Week 4 (July 12 – July 18)**

Readings: Osterwalder, Chapters 4 and 5

This week, teams will conduct customer discovery interviews and brainstorm together on iterations. In class, we will explore the iteration process in greater detail. We will also examine methodologies for analyzing the qualitative data generated during the interview process to inform data-driven decision-making.

**Team** **Assignment 1 Due Sunday, July 18: Submit final list of questions with discovery interview plan. Each member of the team will share their Individual Assignment 1 with the team. As a team:**

* **Discuss the stakeholder definitions and questions proposed by each member of the team.**
* **Decide, as a group, on the 1-3 stakeholder groups on which you will focus for the remainder of the term.**
* **Decide, as a group, on the final list of stakeholder interview questions.**
* **Complete the Interview Plan as a group.**

**Submit in the Canvas folder labeled Team Assignment 1**

# Phases 2 and 3: Customer Discovery -- Interviews and Feedback

We will conduct most of our customer discovery interviews. We will continue outreach as we move through the course.

**Week 5 (July 19– July 25)**

Readings: Francino, Y (2016). An Agile leader’s guide to writing user stories. Retrieved from: <https://techbeacon.com/agile-leaders-guide-writing-user-stories>

Gaikwad, V (2016). An empirical study of writing effective user stories. Retrieved from: https://hollis.harvard.edu/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=TN\_earticle292620&context=PC&vid=HVD2&search\_scope=everything&tab=everything&lang=en\_US

We will explore user stories and their importance. We will learn effective means of building stories based on customer discovery interviews. Teams will continue with interviews as homework. We will also begin to draft our business model canvas with initial hypothetical plan to be revised throughout class, due in a future week.

Readings: Four Steps, Chapter 5

Osterwalder, Chapters 5-8

Startup Owner’s Manual, pp. 147-200

We’ll start to explore the customer creation process. We will learn about:

* Building your initial messaging based on your Value Proposition, user stories, and customer discovery interviews
* Developing your initial channels for both distribution and demand creation
* Establishing partnerships for the express purpose of marketing and customer creation

Blue Ocean Strategy has emerged in recent years as a key complement of the Business Model Canvas. It helps companies focus their key activities, costs, and customer segments based on the Blue Ocean framework’s unique take on differentiation. This week, we’ll explore the Blue Ocean Strategy in depth, then apply it to our own product ideas.

**Team** **Assignment 2, Product Requirements & Draft Business Plan, Due Sunday, July 25.**

**Week 6 (July 26 – August 1)**

Readings: Alexandre, J. et al. (November 2016). The triple layered business model canvas: A tool to design more sustainable business models. Journal of Cleaner Production. Retrieved from: https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezp-

prod1.hul.harvard.edu/science/article/pii/S0959652616307442

Four Steps, Chapter 6

By Week 5, you should have completed discovery interviews and have an understanding of customer needs and how your product solves them. Review of Customer Discovery: What did your discovery process teach you? What iterations are called for in your business model? How does that map to customer creation? Iterate on Business Model Canvas based on your findings. You will also have iteration ideas that need to go into your business model canvas, along with a draft sales, revenue, and business plan based on your initial discovery.

This week, we will learn the core strategies of customer development: outlining customer relationships and channels. We’ll also begin our review of company building. We’ll closely examine the following aspects of the canvas: identifying your key partners, defining your key activities, and sourcing key resources.

**Team** **Assignment 3 due Wednesday, July 28: Complete business model canvas.**

**Individual Assignment 3 Due Sunday, August 1: Blue Ocean Strategy application.**

# Phase 4 and Beyond: Road-mapping Your Product

In our final phase, we will conclude the customer discovery interviews, develop an iteration plan, and analyze our next steps. We’ll connect our company-building activities with what we have learned through customer discovery, and complete our business model canvas.

**Week 7 (August 2 – August 6 )**

This week, we will focus intensively on creating our final deliverables. Lecture will focus on value creation, company-building, and refining the Canvas.

Daxbock, B. (2013). Value co-creation as precondition for the development of a service business model canvas. Studia Universitatis Babes Bolyai - Negotia. Retrieved from: <http://www.ceeol.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/search/viewpdf?id=41338>

Courtney, H. et al (November 2013). Deciding how to decide. Harvard Business Review.

Retrieved from: <https://hbr.org/2013/11/deciding-how-to-decide>

Work on final business plan, case studies of successful companies using the canvas framework.

**Team** **Assignment 4 Due Thursday, Aug 5: Final business plan**

**Final Presentations will take place Monday and Wednesday**