The Jobs to Be Done Framework

Chapter 3: Clients

Jobs to Be Done is an interview-and-analysis technique that seeks to uncover the "jobs" that people "hire" products and services to do in their lives. Developed at Harvard Business School and taught to Phil and me by one of the co-developers, it's been the most effective client-research tool we've ever used, leading to growth year after year.

Here's how you can use it in your own business.

STEP 1

Begin with clear questions that you need answered, such as:

- Why do people **hire** my product or service?
- Why do people **fire** my product or service?
- How are people **struggling** with my product or service?
- Where are my **opportunities** to improve my product or service?

STEP 2

Identify people in each of the relevant buying stages, such as:

- those who expressed interest **but didn't buy** your product/service
- those who **did buy** your product/service
- those who **bought and are actively using** the product/service
- those who **bought but aren't actively using** the product/service
- those who **bought but then later returned** your product/service

You could also look for people at various stages such as:

- **within one month of buying** your product or service (This can help you understand why they "hired" it in the first place.)
- **within one month of returning** your product or leaving your service (This can help you understand why they "fired" it.)
- **midway through** the use of your product or service (This can help you understand what they're struggling with. It can also highlight what they're hoping you can improve.)

STEP 3

Once you've identified your groups, conduct structured interviews.

To understand the point of sale, ask:

- When did you buy the product?
- Where were you?
- What time of day was it? (daytime/ nighttime?)
- Was anyone else with you at the time?
- How did you buy the product?

To find their first thought about purchasing, ask:

- When did you first start looking for something to solve your problem?
- Where were you?
- Were you with someone? What did they say?
- What triggered you to think about this?

To discover what else they considered when weighing their options, ask:

- Tell me about how you looked for a product to solve your problem.
- What kind of solutions did you try? Or not try? Why or why not?

To uncover the emotions associated with the purchase, ask:

- What was the conversation like when you talked about buying the product with your <spouse/friend/parents>?
- Before you bought, did you imagine what life would be like with the product? Where were you when you were thinking this?
- Did you have any anxiety about buying? Did you hear something about the product that made you nervous? What was it? Why did it make you nervous?

Of course, these are sample questions that should be modified based on whether you're interviewing someone hiring your program, firing your program, or in the midst of experiencing your program.

In the case of hiring or firing, what's most important initially is that the interview accesses their memory of events surrounding the action. That's why we start by asking about "when," even though we already know exactly when they purchased or dropped out.

From there you might ask, "And where were you when you did this? Were you with anyone? Do you remember what the weather was like?" Again, you're not necessarily interested in the specific details but in activating their memory and exploring events adjacent to the action.

This helps uncover the emotional forces in their decision-making. These are forces that people usually don't mention because they seem unrelated or uninteresting. However, they provide the best insights for product refinement and/or improved marketing and advertising.

Once the interviews—which you've recorded so you can go back to them again—are completed, it's time to organize what you heard into two popular Jobs to Be Done organizational frameworks: the Timeline and the Forces. These two frameworks help you contextualize the answers you heard. You can then turn the answers into useful stories that help you understand what your clients and prospects are thinking and feeling when they interact with you and your products/services.

STEP 4

The Timeline helps you understand clients' decision-making, giving you a sense for the thoughts and events that brought them to hiring, using, or firing what you've created.

TIMELINE

Adapted from jobstobedone.org

FIRST THOUGHT	EVENT ONE	EVENT TWO	BUY NOW
What I have might not be working anymore	I've had enough. This needs to get solved	If I don't get this solved by a certain time, it's not going to be good	I've paid money. There is no going back. I've committed.

PASSIVE LOOKING	ACTIVE LOOKING	DECIDING	CONSUMING (YAY OR NAY)
I'm not putting in any real energy, but I start noticing options	I'm investing energy and time into finding a solution	I've narrowed my options to two or three. I undertand my criteria.	I've used it for a while and I understand if it does the job or not.

Once you've collected your interviews, organize their answers into individual timelines as follows.

FIRST THOUGHT	EVENT ONE	EVENT TWO	BUY NOW

PASSIVE LOOKING	ACTIVE LOOKING	DECIDING	CONSUMING (YAY OR NAY)

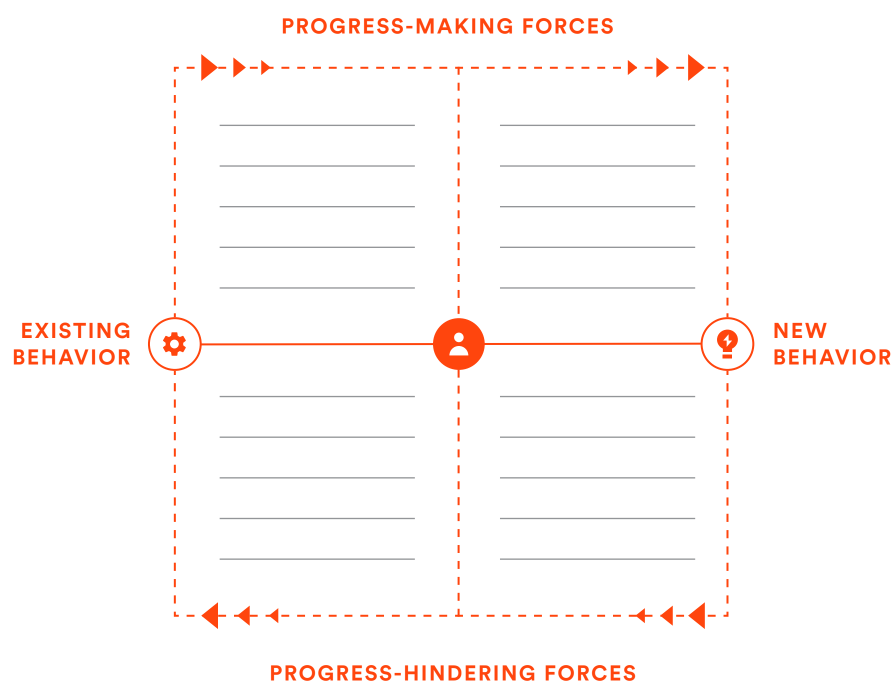
STEP 5

The Forces helps you map out the feelings that lead a customer toward hiring or firing your thing vs. the forces that lead them away from hiring or firing your thing.

THE FORCES

Adapted from jobstobedone.org

Once you've collected your interviews, map out the individual forces that helped to make their decisions as follows:



STEP 6

Look for common themes among your Timeline and Forces diagrams.

- What nudged people to make their decision?
- Who did they see as “the competition”?
- Which anxieties did they have to overcome to purchase?
- How did what they thought they were buying match up to what they actually got?

STEP 7

Ask yourself new questions.

- How can I talk about my business in a way that resonates more with how my customers talk about their needs, challenges, and concerns?
- How can I reach out to people in places I’ve never considered before?
- How can I see my customers’ trajectory and anticipate where they’re heading?

These activities and worksheets are taken from the book Change Maker: Turn your passion for health and fitness into a powerful purpose and a wildly successful career by John Berardi, PhD.

Check it out at: www.changemakeracademy.com/book