IGNITE!

Explorative research method

How to approach research at We Are Builders?

WE ARE BUILDERS

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Introduction

This document contains an overview of the We Are Builders Explorative research method. The framework for the research guide is designed based on the Lean Canvas and creative techniques with the goal to translate knowledge to insights in a structured way. The framework is based on the theory of known and unknown knowledge, where knowledge exploration is stimulated. The goal of this explorative research method is to create a holistic understanding of opportunities. A holistic understanding means that the research touches equally upon the desirability, feasibility and viability aspects of a spark.

This way of researching stimulates a team to share insights to explore if there are knowns or unknown yet to be discovered via the use of research canvasses.

This research explores viability with market research, desirability by indicating the users and their scenarios, and feasibility via skill and company analysis. The goal of this research method is to create overview of what is known and what is yet to discover. In this context, the canvasses function as a visual reflection of a to-do list, and a way to explore in order to create a focussed understanding of opportunities around a spark.

The explorative research guide is especially useful when some research is already done, but not in a structured way and a clear value proposition lacks.

Next to being an overview of tools and methods, this document also functions as a facilitator guide. Every step of the method will come with facilitator instructions on how to plan, prepare and facilitate team meetings.

Explorative research

How?

This research method relies heavily on communication and team interaction. Therefore, the research method consists of four phases that combine physical meetings and individual research. This

1 - TEAM ALIGNMENT MEETING
The research starts with a team alignment meeting. This meeting is organized when a **spark** is indicated as potentially interesting. The team alignment meeting has the goal to kick off the project and agree on the research direction. This is supported by the use of the knowledge dump canvas and research direction canvas. These canvasses stimulate team members to write down everything they know and allows them to share their thoughts in a visual manner with the other team members. To create team alignment on the goal of the project the meeting must be attended by all team members involved in researching the specific spark.

2 - DOING RESEARCH
When a research direction is chosen, the team moves to the second phase: doing research. In this phase research is divided in **desirability research, feasibility research and viability research**. Each pillar of research is supported by two canvases that form the blueprint of what aspects need to be addressed per pillar. The canvases can be seen as a visual representation of a to-do list per pillar. When findings are put in the form of a canvas, it represents at what part knowledge is already acquired and what is yet unknown. Making it visual also allows a team member to easily share his findings with others. Doing research is executed individually, this

allows every team member to take up the part that is close to their expertise.

Doing research takes on average **one week** and can include desk research, interviews, observations, visiting the research site and many other research techniques. At the end of research, the facilitator plans a focus alignment meeting.

3- FOCUS ALIGNMENT MEETING
During the focus alignment meeting the team **combines research insights** by presenting the filled in canvases to each other and discuss how to combine the found information. This meeting combines all research efforts into a shared Value Proposition Canvas (Osterwalder et al. 2014) and lean canvas. The lean canvas forms the conclusion of the research since it forces the team to link all information gathered in the research pillars to one solid concept.

4 - FOCUS COMMUNICATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH
The final step, focus communication, is about storytelling and forms the basis of a product prototype to test the value proposition. The focus communication should be a concise story about **what** is going to be delivered, **why** and for **who**. This communication can be done in the form of a presentation or research document. This presentation is the last part of research and allows the team to reflect on the potential of the spark in a holistic way: is the spark interesting enough to build a prototype to test the value proposition? If so, the spark moves out of the research phase into the prototyping phase.
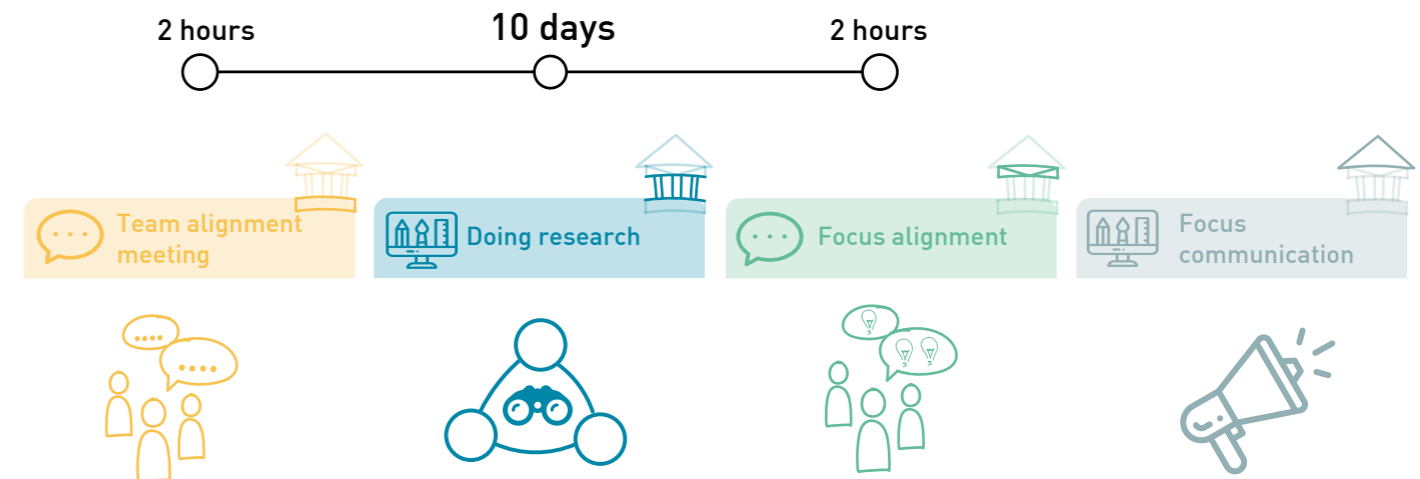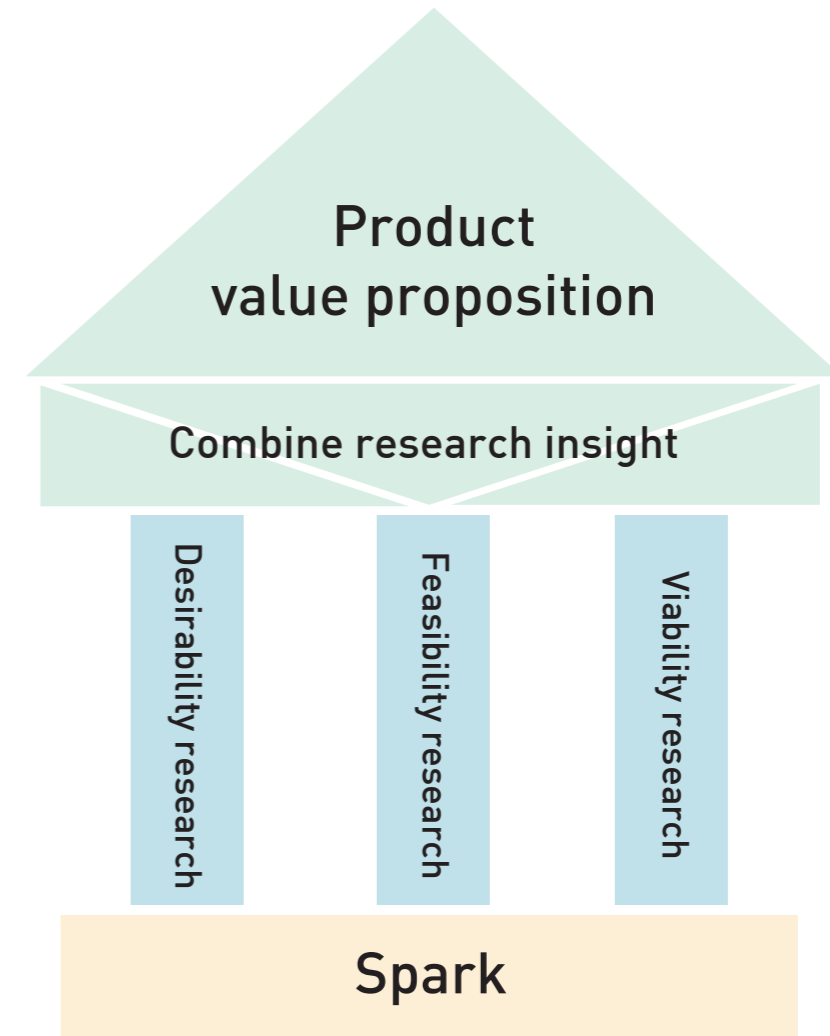
Work with canvasses

The research makes use of canvases. Canvases are useful to frame knowledge and make information visual. Visual information is more easy to understand and allows people to share their knowledge in a clear way. Since explorative research is about broadening your perspective and creating a solid and holistic understanding of the context of a spark, it is important that all data gathered throughout the process is easily understandable for all stakeholders. By using canvases, the team will know what information they are looking at and allow them to present information in a structured way.

The goal of the canvases is to make visual what information is already there and what spots are left blank, and therefore show knowledge that is still lacking.

Explorative research makes use of 10 canvases in 3 steps:

Team alignment meeting
- Knowledge dump canvas
- Research direction canvas

Doing research
- Persona canvas
- Scenario map
- Company DNA
- Skill analysis
- Market analysis
- Competitor overview

Focus alignment meeting
- Value Proposition canvas
- Lean Canvas

Knowledge dump

The purpose of this knowledge map is to write down everything you know about the spark. It is not yet important if it is feasible, validated or actionable. This is the step where you write out what you know and what you want to achieve. With this step, quantity is over quality.

Context
A short market description, what does the market look like? Who are stakeholders? How would you describe the market? What trends are related to this spark?

User
Who is the end user? What do they do? What are their problems now? How do they feel? What channels do they use to gather knowledge? What is typical about them? Maybe a quote?

Problem
What is the main problem in this context? What is the main problem for the end user? Can you think of sub-problems? What problem are you trying to solve?

Value
What are you going to deliver? What value will you deliver with your product or service? What is the purpose of this project? What change do you want to achieve in the market? What is your vision?

Research direction

Stakeholders   **Potential solutions**   **Problems**

For _____ we create _____ to solve _____

Persona name | function/role

Age:
Education:
Typical (work)week

Goals
Characteristics
Frustrations
Story

Unique selling point(s)

What can we deliver? In how many times?
What is unique about our offer? What new innovation fit with us?

Company DNA

Purpose   Positioning

What is the brand's believe? Why? What do you want to add to the current market?

What does the company offer to whom? What product specifications are you capable to make?

Market analysis

How would you describe the market? What is the market's 'name'?

Trends   Growth factors

Drivers   Innovations

Scenario map

Persona   Description

Steps:
Details:
Emotions:
Opportunities:

Skill analysis

Strengths   Weaknesses   Team and resources

What can we make?   Time indications

In a year
In a month
In a day

Competitor overview

Generic competition

Product category competition

Product Form Competition

Lean canvas

The Value Proposition Canvas

Value Proposition   Customer Segment

Gain Creators   Gains

Products & Services   Customer Job(s)

Pain Relievers   Pains

Title: Team: Date:
Version:

Problem	Solution	Value proposition	Unfair advantage	Customer segment
List your top 1-3 problems	Outline a possible solution for each problem	What is single, clear, manner that states why you are different and worth paying attention to	Something about you or your product that can't easily be copied	List your target customers and users
Existing alternatives	**Key metrics**	**High level concept**	**Channels**	
List how these problems are solved today	List the numbers that show if your business is doing well	List your analogy of your concept? What is the overarching concept?	List your paths towards your customers	

Cost structure	Revenue streams
List your fixed and variable costs	List your sources of revenue

We Are Builders   Explorative research guide

Team alignment meeting

Why?

The team alignment meeting starts with the spark. To align all stakeholders the spark is presented by the initiator of the research or the person that introduced the spark. Afterwards, the knowledge dump canvas is used to uncover the context and align stakeholder on vision of the product. This step is used to create shared understanding of each others individual vision on the context of the product and to create a shared focus in research.

How?

Explorative research starts with a spark or research direction chosen by the startup studio. This can be a specific product idea, a market of interest or vision direction that feels interesting. **When a 'spark' is identified as 'to be researched' by the studio, the researcher creates a new project folder on [platform].** The research folder needs a name, description and icon. Team members needs to be onboarded by linking sending them an invite to the project folder. This project folder at first includes the team alignment meeting downloads, digital canvasses and the ability to send a team alignment meeting invite.

The team alignment meeting kicks off the project and must be attended by all team members. The meeting starts with a short presentation (10 minutes), made by the initiator of the spark. This can be an entrepreneur in residence, a startup studio employee or external entrepreneur. After this presentation there is time for questions and discussion. It is not yet the goal to go in depth on the topic, but to ask for clarification about the presentation.

After the presentation, all attendees fill in the **knowledge dump canvas individually**. It is important to make this an individual assignment to let everybody write down how they see the context of the spark. This will make the context more diverse and allow team members to learn from each other. This takes on average 10 minutes.

Each team member presents their context described on the knowledge dump canvas. The others listen and can ask questions, point out what they think is a good insight or interesting direction, and add up if something (outside of their own canvas) pops their mind. Pay attention to each knowledge dump canvas equally and stimulate people to add on each others ideas. **It is important that ideas, visions and insights are written down for further steps! Ideally on post-its.** Stimulate people to make it visual or at least readable from a distance.

As a facilitator, try to steer the discussion by pointing out if specific users, stakeholders, problems or solutions. These will be used in the next canvas, the research direction canvas. When a specific user type, stakeholder, problem or solution is pointed out in the discussion, you can write it on a post it and save it for the next step, the research direction canvas.

The research direction canvas functions as a research frame. By linking stakeholders, problems and solutions, clear research directions - or directions - are listed and afterwards chosen. **This is a team process and builds on the discussion after the knowledge dump canvas.**

As a facilitator, point the team towards the already mentioned stakeholders, solutions and problems in the knowledge dump discussion. Also try to nudge the team to reviewing their knowledge dump canvas to see if there are more stakeholders, solutions or problem that aren't addressed yet.

This research direction(s), will be uploaded to the platform as a conclusion to the team alignment meeting. **After the statement is written down, the team must divide roles for further research.** These roles are:

Desirability: research what the user base looks like and what stakeholders are involved. Also go into detail about persona scenarios.

Feasibility: research what can be made by the studio and team unique selling points.

Viability: research what the market looks like. This includes trends, competitors and market drivers.

When roles are divided. The researcher updates the project on the platform and the research moves towards the research framing phase.

Knowledge dump

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Value
What are you going to deliver? What value will you deliver with your product or service? What is the purpose of this project? What change do you want to achieve in the market? What is your vision?

Research direction

Stakeholders · Potential solutions · Problems

For _____ we create _____ to solve _____

D
Desirability
What is desired by users?

F
Feasibility
What does the market potential look like?

V
Viability
What can we build?

Knowledge dump canvas

Why?

The purpose of this knowledge map is to write down everything you know about the spark. It is not yet important if it is feasible, validated or actionable. This is the step where you write out what you know and what you want to achieve.

When written down, share your vision on the spark with the team, listen to each others point of view and try to understand how rich the subject is. This stage is about diverging, gathering knowledge and learn from each other.

How?

1) Context: Describe the market. What trends are related to this spark? What is a unique aspect of the market? Try to be specific!

2) User: Who is the end user? What do they do? What are their problems now? How do they feel? What channels do they use to gather knowledge? What is typical about them? Maybe a quote?

3) Problem: What is the main problem in this context? What is the main problem for the end user? Can you think of sub-problems? What problem are you trying to solve?

4) Value: What value are you going to deliver? What is the purpose of this project? What change do you want to achieve in the market? What is your vision? What product or service are you going to deliver?

5) Share your canvas with the team, point out what you think is interesting or worrying (what might be a show stopper for the idea)

Tip!
With this step, quantity is over quality! Write down everything that is potentially interesting

Knowledge dump

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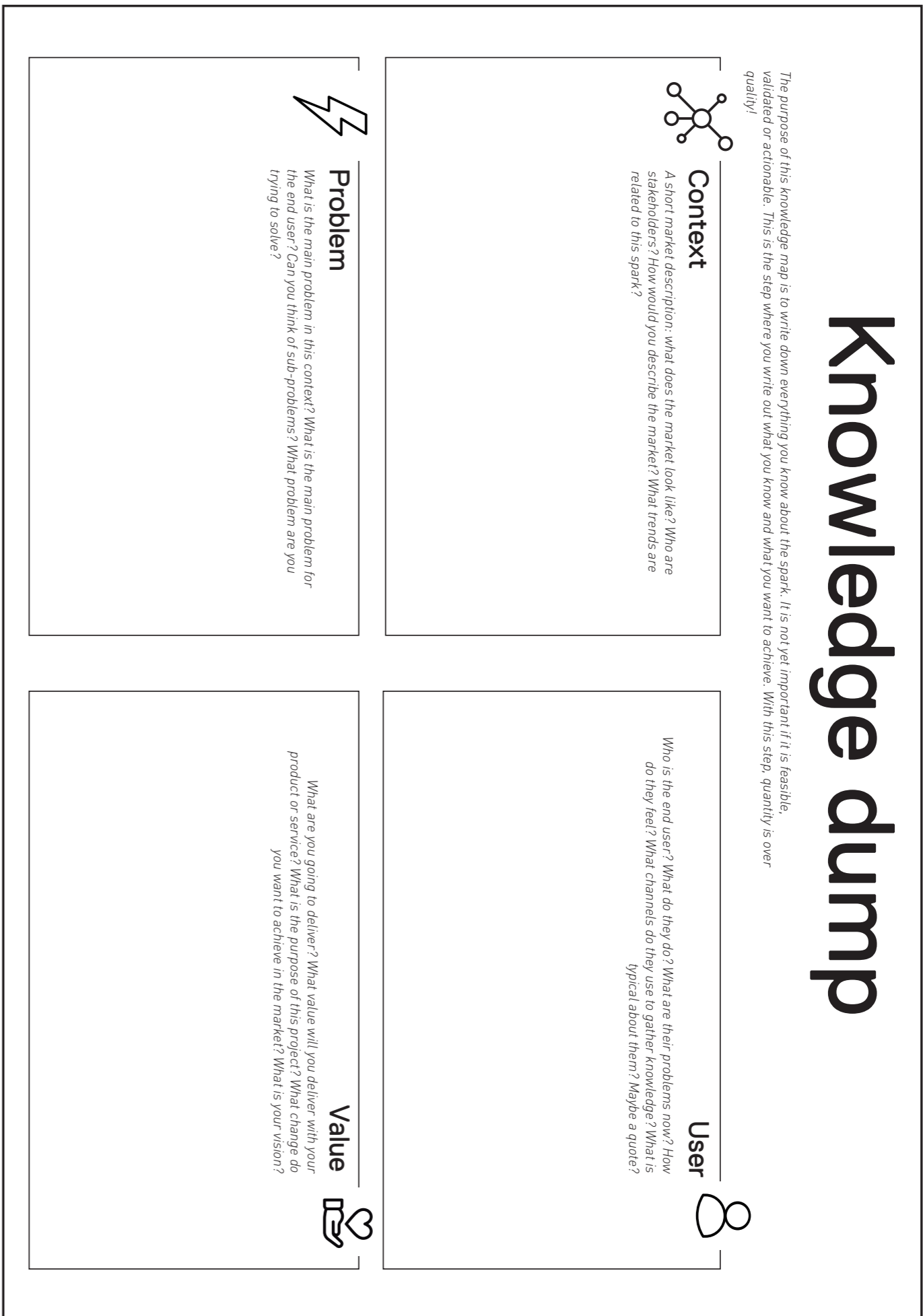
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Value
What are you going to deliver? What value will you deliver with your product or service? What is the purpose of this project? What change do you want to achieve in the market? What is your vision?

Research direction

Why?

The goal of this step is to list all possible directions for research, divided by user, problem and solution. Writing down research directions will help the team to discuss and prioritize opportunities and choose a research direction. When listed, the team can evaluate the research directions and choose which of them reflects the focus for research of the spark the best.

By listing possible research directions, the teams filters further what they see as the most interesting direction to base the product on.

How?

1) Look back at the knowledge dump canvasses and list the most interesting or crucial stakeholders, problems and values.

2) With the crucial aspects of your project in mind, list specific and diverse target groups, solutions and problems.

3) Think about different perspectives of the solutions, different stakeholder and sub-problems you want to solve. And discuss this with the team, therefore the goal is to prioritize the most important stakeholders, problems to solve and values to deliver.

4) Now it is time to define a research direction. These research directions represent what you want to research in what context. Every vision statement links a specific user base to his problem and the solution you propose. Try to be specific, some users or stakeholders might benefit from different solutions or have different problems.

The research directions are written in the form of a statement:

for [stakeholder], we deliver [solution] to solve [problem]

The specific wording of this statement can differ, but a statement must always address a stakeholder, solution and problem. Otherwise research will lose its focus and therefore also value.

Research direction

For — we create — to solve

Stakeholders

Potential solutions

Problems

Doing research

Why?

Executing research can be overwhelming and hard to capture in a solid story. To make research easier and more structured, the explorative research guide makes use of three research pillars, with two research canvases per pillar. The canvases are designed to be guidelines and indicators of what information can be useful for research. **Doing research is an individual activity that** **covers on average one or two weeks in between the team alignment meeting and focus alignment meeting.** The goal of the research is to frame all knowledge in a visual manner, to be able to communicate all insights to the team in an understandable way.

How?

At the end of the team alignment session the team has divided research roles. These roles include:

Desirability research
Desirability research focuses on the end-user, customer and their context. It is important to map out what people are involved within the context of a spark and create a deep understanding about them. With deep understanding is meant that you don't only know who your stakeholders are, but also understand what moves them, what are motivators, daily frustrations and opportunities within that user segment. The person executing the desirability research ideally has experience in executing user research. This since it can require combining information from different sources (desk research, interviews, blogs, observations) and it requires a level of creativity to create fruitful persona's for future development. The desirability research can be concluded by filling in one or multiple persona canvas(es) and scenario map(s).

Feasibility research
Feasibility research focuses on company strengths and possibilities. It is important to map out what can be produced, by who and within what time frame. What is the unique advantage of the team? What are we good at? What do we still need to learn? The person who executes the feasibility research must have a good understanding of the company and its qualities. Feasibility research can be concluded by filling in the company DNA canvas and skill analysis canvas.

Viability research
Viability research focuses on creating a concise market understanding. This includes trend research, innovation research and a clear overview of competition on multiple levels: generic competition, product category competition and product from competition. The goal of viability research is to understand the market and to discover if there is a market gap that can be filled.

Desirability
What is desired by users?

Goal: understand customer segment and customer stories

Tools:
- Persona canvas
- Scenario map

Feasibility
What does the market potential look like?

Goal: what influences the market, what are already existing alternatives

Tools:
- Company DNA
- Skill canvas

Viability
What can we build?

Goal: explore existing alternatives, competitors and market influences

Tools:
- Market analysis
- Competitor overview

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Persona canvas

Why?

Personas are fictional characters, which you create based upon your research in order to represent the different stakeholder types that might use your service, product, site, or brand in a similar way. Creating personas will help you to understand your users' needs, experiences, behaviours and goals. Creating personas can help you step out of yourself. It can help you to recognise that different people have different needs and expectations, and it can also help you to identify with the user you're designing for.

How?

1) List what kind of users you can already identify? Is your buyer also your user? Is there a middle man involved? Is the end user one person? Or multiple? Choose the most interesting ones to base your user research on.

2) Collect data. Collect as much knowledge about the users as possible. Perform high-quality user research of actual users in your target user group. The goal is to empathize with your users.

3) Form a hypothesis. Based upon your initial research, you will form a general idea of the various users within the focus area of the project, including the ways users differ from one another. Preform a second round of research to validate or change the hypothesis.

4) Describe the personas. The purpose of working with personas is to be able to develop solutions, products and services based upon the needs and goals of your users. Be sure to describe personas in a such way so as to express enough understanding and empathy to understand the users. This can be done by including user's education, lifestyle, interest goals and limitations. Try to make the persona a realistic character by describing personal details and giving it a name.

5) Make ongoing adjustments. You should revise the scenarios and personas on a regular basis. New information and new aspects may affect the scenario. Sometimes you would need to rewrite the existing persona descriptions, add new personas, or eliminate outdated personas.

Tip!
Be creative! The more 'real' a persona seems to be, the better you can use the personas in later stages

D

Desirability
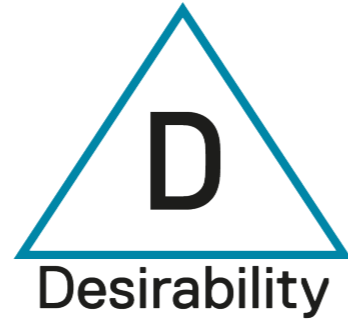
Persona name | function/role

Age:
Education:

Adverbs

Describing

Persona

Place a quote that's representative of the persona here

" "

Goals

Frustrations

Typical (work)week

f.e.: work at the office

Characteristics

f.e.: emotional

rational

Story

[Short bio about persona's private & working life. Can include: study, employer, attitude towards work & life, likes/dislikes, talent, values, ambitions, family situation, home, hobbies – anything that helps to get an idea of the persona's background and personality]

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Scenario map

D — Desirability

Why?

To understand how a user behaves, a scenario map can help to map out what a journey of a stakeholder looks like on a specific point in time. You can give each of your personas life by creating scenarios that feature them in the role of a user. Making scenarios will help you in creating a detailed understanding of what activities a user is involved in and what keeps him busy in a specific context.

Scenarios help you to step into the shoes of the user and will help you to make detailed decisions throughout the process.

How?

1) Prepare situations or scenarios for your personas. You should describe a number of specific situations that could trigger use of the product or service you are designing. Scenarios usually start by placing the persona in a specific context with a problem they want to or have to solve. This fits in the upper part of the scenario map: the 'persona' and 'description'

2) Research how a specific scenario occurs. This can be done by reading blogs, watching videos, or calling stakeholders about their experience. Try to make detailed scenarios and touch upon the all possible levels. Describe the procedure and its details under 'steps' and 'details'.

3) Afterwards, try to get to a deeper understanding of the situation. How is the persona feeling during a specific
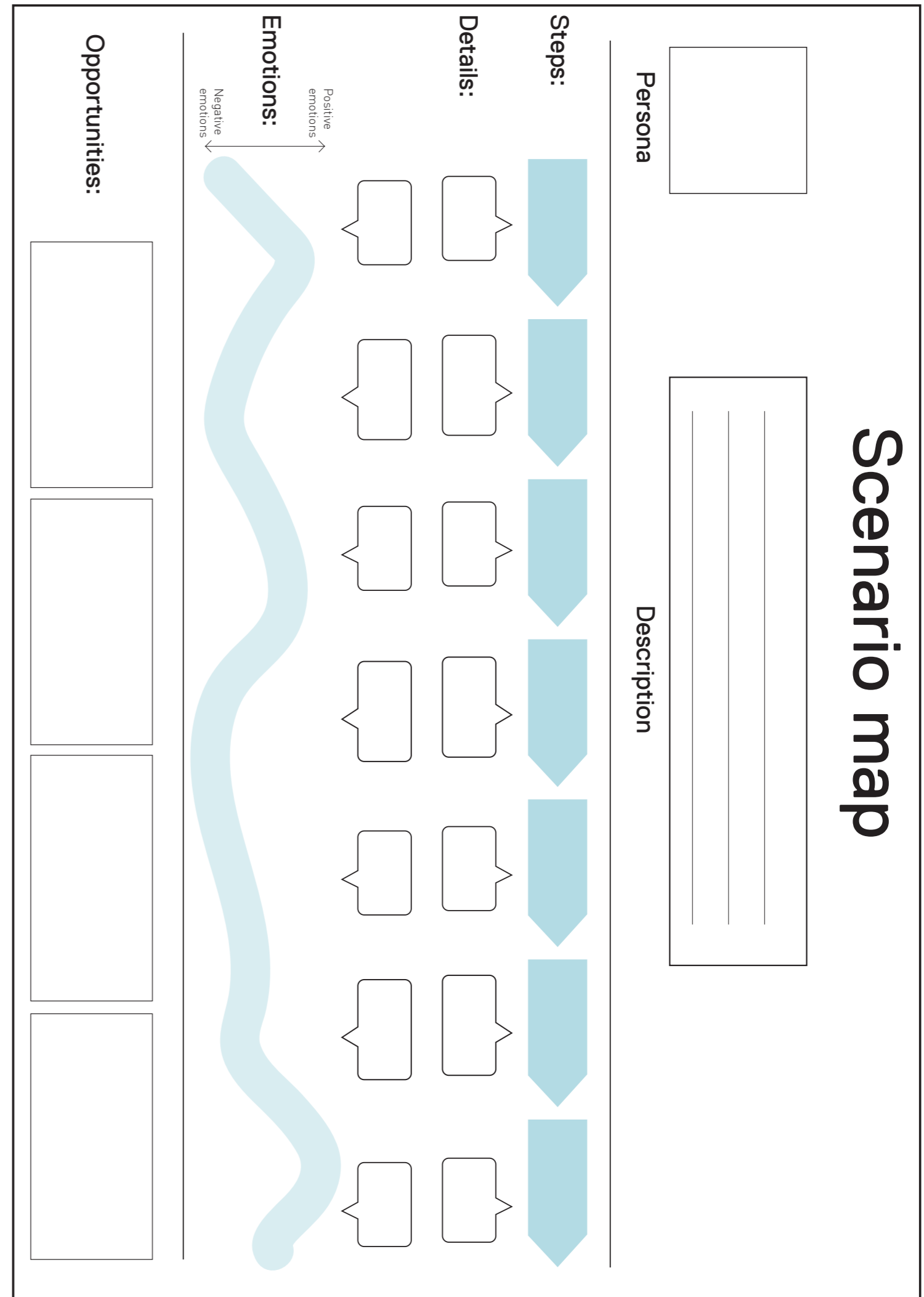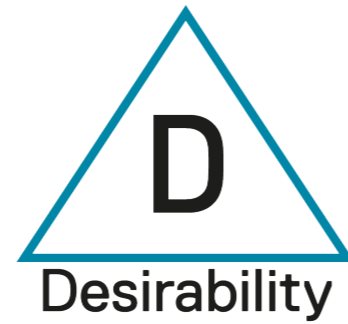
step? What is he or she thinking? Map an emotion line at 'emotions' and write down persona thoughts in the text boxes above.

4) review the scenario map: can you spot opportunities? What can be done better in this situation? What would benefit the user? Write these insights at 'opportunities'.

5) Obtain acceptance from the team by actively involving team members in the personas and scenarios by asking about their opinion or let them participate in the making of personas or specific scenarios.

Tip!
Sometimes you would need to rewrite the existing scenario descriptions, add new scenarios, or eliminate outdated scenarios.

Scenario map

Persona

Description

Steps:

Details:

Emotions:
Positive emotions
Negative emotions

Opportunities:

Company DNA

F
Feasibility

Why?

Purpose
The purpose is the company's believe. Like as Nike's purpose statement: 'if you have a body, you're an athlete.' The company purpose represents the core reason of existence and deeper belief. It is defined with the intent of being inspirational and engaging. The company purpose is defined as the most important element for an organization and should be the start of every action (Sinek, 2009).

Positioning
The position reflect what a company offer to whom. The positioning is the strategy to make a company occupy a distinct and credible position in the mind of a customer or stakeholder. Positioning of a brand includes choosing the right customer group and what to offer to that particular group of customers. It is really important to position your company in a clear and accessible way so it is easily understandable for customers and stakeholders.

How?

1) Try to think of why you started this project. What is your believe? Why do you think this research started and what can you remember about the purpose of the spark? Fill in the canvas as much as possible.

2) The full team now functions as the 'company'. What do you stand for? You can for example interview other team members and ask them why they started this project or why they want to innovate in this market.

3) Form a positioning statement and purpose. A positioning statement should be specific and clear and unique. Therefore you can think of creative wording, or a specific way of talking that is distinctive for your team.

4) When you have filled in the canvas, ask other team members or externals to reflect on it. Do they agree? Do they understand what you want to achieve with the company DNA? You can adjust the company DNA if needed.
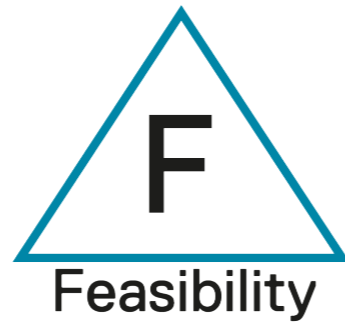
Tip!
Since the brand DNA must be distinctive, show it to the viability researcher and evaluate together if the brand DNA is distinctive enough in comparison to competitors.

Purpose

What is the brand's believe? Why? What do you want to add to the current market?

Company DNA

What does the company offer to whom? What product specifications are you capable to make?

Positioning

Unique selling point(s)

What can we deliver? In how many time?

What is unique about our offer? What new innovation fit with us?

Skill analysis

Why?

To have a realistic understanding of what can be made by your team, you reflect on your skills at the skill analysis canvas. The purpose of this canvas is to describe in detail what you and your team can make. This canvas should be a realistic representation of the team composition, so try to be critical! This will be used to evaluate HOW you are going to deliver what value to who.

How?

1) Start with the upper right corner. Who is part of the team? What are their roles? Think of what unique quality they add to the product or service, what resources do you have at hand? Work towards the upper left corner where you list the strengths and weaknesses of the team as a whole.

2) The bottom part of the canvas is about what you can deliver. What is your expertise? It is important to be specific, since what your qualities and skills will form the end product.

3) For early phases of innovation, time can be of importance in delivering value. Think about what you can deliver in a day, a month or a year. Think of communication materials, software, partners, a prototype? A movie? Written content?

F

Feasibility

Skill analysis

Strengths

Weaknesses

Describe the skills your company has. Try to be detailed in what you can deliver, how many time developing specific parts take (on average), and what costs are connected to those efforts.
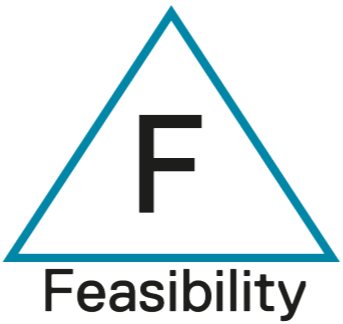
What can we make?

From a technical perspective: what can you deliver? Where is you core expertise? In what markets did you move before? What is your business model?

Team and resources

Describe your team composition and resources

Time indications

What can you produce in a day? A month? A year? Try to be specific!

In a year

In a month

In a day

Market analysis

Why?

The market analysis canvas helps you to look further than only competitors and pushes you to first understand what specific market you are moving in. Creating this market understanding will help you to later on define a clear market positioning for your product based on research and understanding of not only your contribution to the market, but the full market.

How?

1) Start by describing the market you are researching. Can you describe it in one or two words? Or does it need more explanation? You can look back at how you described the markted in the team alignment meeting as a reference.

2) What are trend that influence the market? This can be macro or micro trends. Describe if they occur locally or globally and who is affected by this trend. You can also imagine how it will influence your product specifications.

3) Growth factors and market drivers are about money and influence. What companies are willing to invest in this market or your product? What does this say about the product? What parties can be tactic partners to strengthen your market positioning? Drivers are about bigger tendencies that drive the market. Is the market for example driven by financial success, or environmental impact?

4) Finally, describe what future innovations can be market changers. Think about how electricity changed the car industry, or how AI changed search engines. What are new innovations or technologies that will make your company unique?

5) Evaluate the canvas. Is your team able to create a unique position in this market? What strengths work in your advantage, what weakness do we need to lift, do we need more team members, who might you need? Also point out what market tendencies you think are most interesting to follow.

Tip!
This information might not fit in the canvas. You can make use of a slide deck if needed.

Market analysis

How would you describe the market? What is the market's 'name'?

Trends
Do you see tendencies that stear the market over time? Are these trends moving the market up or down?

Drivers
What drives this market? What is the value of moving in this market? Is the market driven by economic motivations? Environmental? Political?

Growth factors
What are biggest companies that lead the market now? What topic are currently most interesting to invest in?

Innovations
What innovation will change this market? What innovations do you think are interesting to research how they can add to this market? In what way?

Competitor overview

Why?

Creating a comprehensive understanding of competition will make it easier to understand what service or product is still lacking, for you to design. At this point, it is important to talk to the desirability researcher. What value are users or stakeholders looking for? Are there other products in the market already delivering this value? This can be done in the exact same way as you have imagined (product form competition) like Pepsi and Coca Cola are competing. But it is also important to loo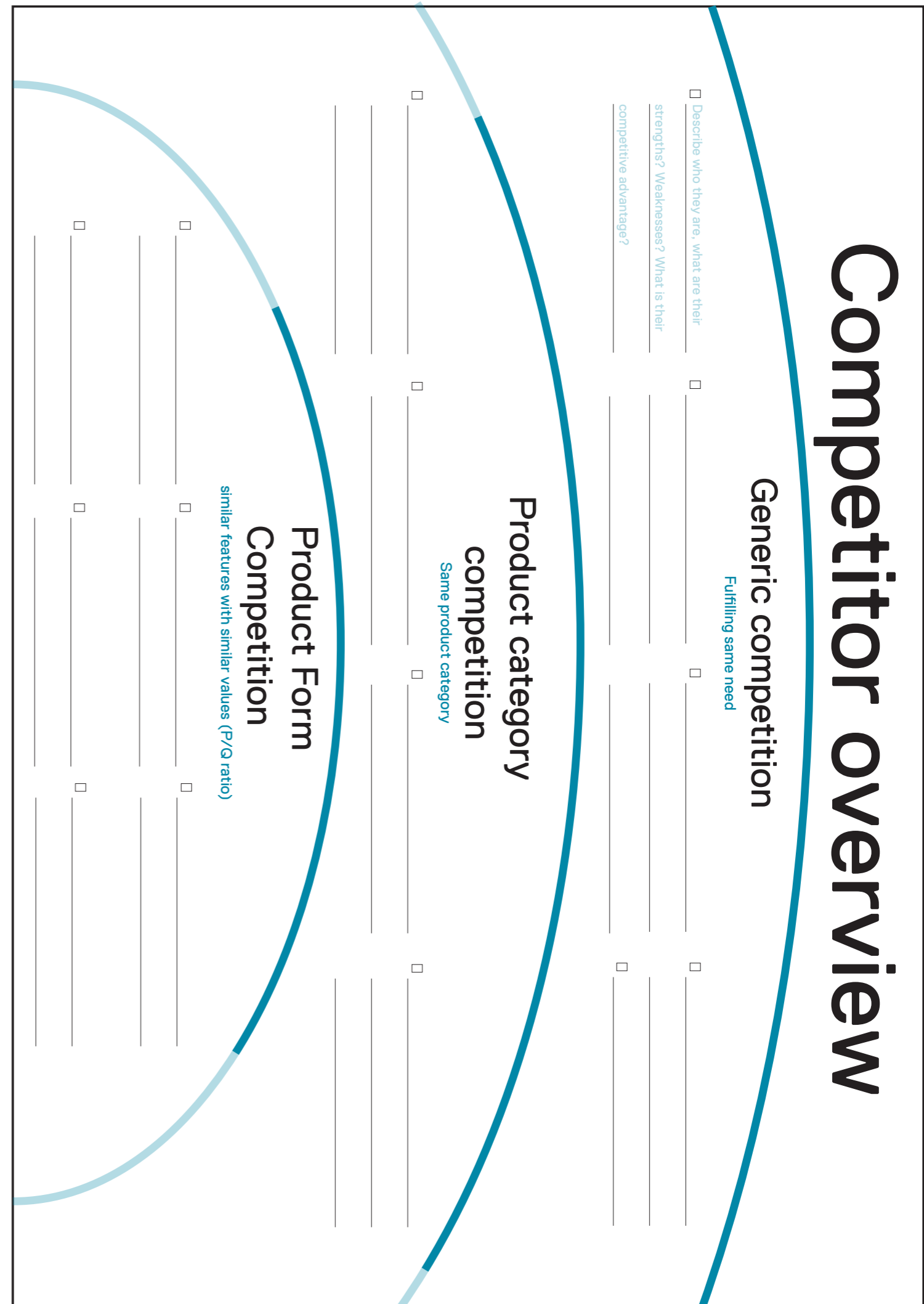k at more general competition, like Coca Cola is competing with all other soft drinks. On a third and more general level, Coca Cola is also competing with all thirst quenchers like water or apple juice, since they fulfill the same need, in a different way.

How?

1) Look back at your market canvas, what market are you moving in?

2) It is easy to start in the middle of your canvas, where you describe your direct competition in the product form category. This category describes comparable product or services within a comparable price range.

3) The second shell describes products or services with the same vision, but not the same form. These competitors fulfill the same needs, in a different way. Try to describe with every competitor how they are similar and how they are different. What does this say about them, and about you?

4) The outer shell describes general competition that only relate to you on vision or goal. This can also feature companies in other markets. Describe how you relate to these companies and what about their vision or mission is inspiring. By describing this, you will get closer to what value you actually want to deliver.

Tip!
Align your described value or competition with the feasibility and desirability researchers. Can they add information? Is your vision alike? After these reflections, you can adjust the canvas accordingly.

We Are Builders

Competitor overview

Generic competition
Fulfilling same need

Product category competition
Same product category

Product Form Competition
similar features with similar values (P/Q ratio)

Describe who they are, what are their strengths? Weaknesses? What is their competitive advantage?

Focus alignment meeting

Why?

To translate the canvases with knowledge (and blank spaces) to insights, the third step of the explorative research guide is the focus alignment meeting. The whole team attends this meeting and it starts with sharing the filled in canvases per team member in an open discussion. The focus alignment meeting allows all team members to understand the insights from the other pillars of research and allows them to add knowledge where they can. Afterwards, the team members fill in the Value Proposition Map and Lean Canvas plotting all knowledge towards creating a value proposition and business plan. This is done in a collaborative manner to stimulate discussion.

The facilitator helps the team to create a concise and clear filled in Lean Canvas by helping them make decisions and point out if a discussions goes off topic.

How?

During the focus alignment meeting the team combines research insights by presenting the filled in canvases. When sharing your research outcomes, it is important to acknowledge per canvas:

- **What are your biggest insights (both positive and negative)?**
- **What information are you still missing?**

Write the insights and missing information on a post-it, since these are used lateron. By discussing all insights per canvas, every team member contributes to a better understanding of the topic and knowledge level of the team. By presenting and discussing the done research, the team works towards a shared understanding of the topic and allows them to move away from their 'own' pillar and create a holistic understanding of the topic. After presenting the research done in every pillar, the following questions must be answered together:

[DxF] - How can we build the desired value?
[FxV] - How can we deliver a product that fits market demand?
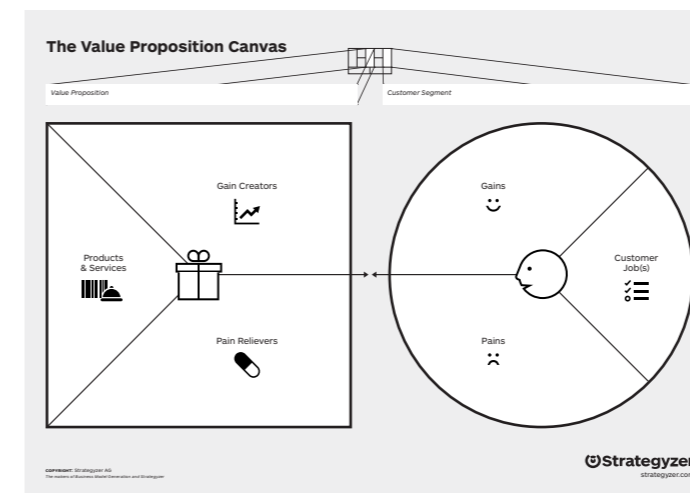**[DxV] - How can we match market trends with the demanded user value?**

Write the answers, sub answers and insights of this discussion on a post-it, these can be used to fill in the value proposition and lean canvas. These canvases are used to create overview of the findings and forces the team to choose and be specific on what value they want to deliver, to who and in what way.

As a facilitator, it is recommended to draw both the value proposition canvas and lean canvas on a whiteboard or wall. Try to stimulate the team to fill in the value proposition and lean canvas with as much information as possible.

Ideally you put every insight or piece of information on a post-it to make the canvas dynamic and allow the team to change something if needed.

Facilitator role
During meetings, the facilitator functions as a 'research opportunity spotter'. This means that as soon as one of the team members mentions that something is unknown, or that something needs more research, the researcher writes this topic on a post-it. At the end of the session, these post-its are clustered and prioritized by the team members, this allows the team to write a follow up research plan to sharpen the created value proposition and business plan.

The Value Proposition Canvas

Lean canvas

Value proposition

Why?

The Value Proposition Canvas (Osterwalder et al. 2014) helps you design products and services that customers really want because it gets you to focus on what matters most to them. The Value Proposition helps you to distil your idea into a one-page visual map. You now have a clear picture of how you intend to create value for your customers and are ready to move forward towards filling in the Lean Canvas.

How?

1) Right side: it's important to view the Value Proposition Canvas as two distinct elements or building blocks. On the right hand side of the canvas (the circle) is the 'Customer Profile'. This circle contains only things that can be observed about a customer segment. All of these things are outside of your direct control.

2) Left side: On the left hand side of the canvas (the square) is the 'Value Map'. This square contains the things that you will design into your value proposition to address the jobs, pains, and gains of the target customer segment. These are the things that are within your realm of control.

3) Deciding: It's unrealistic to believe that you can satisfy all of these things for your customers. Further, trying to do so is time wasted in a unfocused effort to do everything and as result you end not doing any one of those things very well. Instead it's important to recognize that the best value propositions are focused primarily on resolving only those jobs, pains, and gains that are highest priority to customers. You must make deliberate tradeoffs as to which jobs, pains, and gains you will address and which you will forgo. Then seek to perform very well on those specific elements that you choose to address.

Tip!
If there are multiple stakeholders involved, it is realistic that multiple Customer Profiles need to be filled in, then you simply multiply the round part of the value proposition.
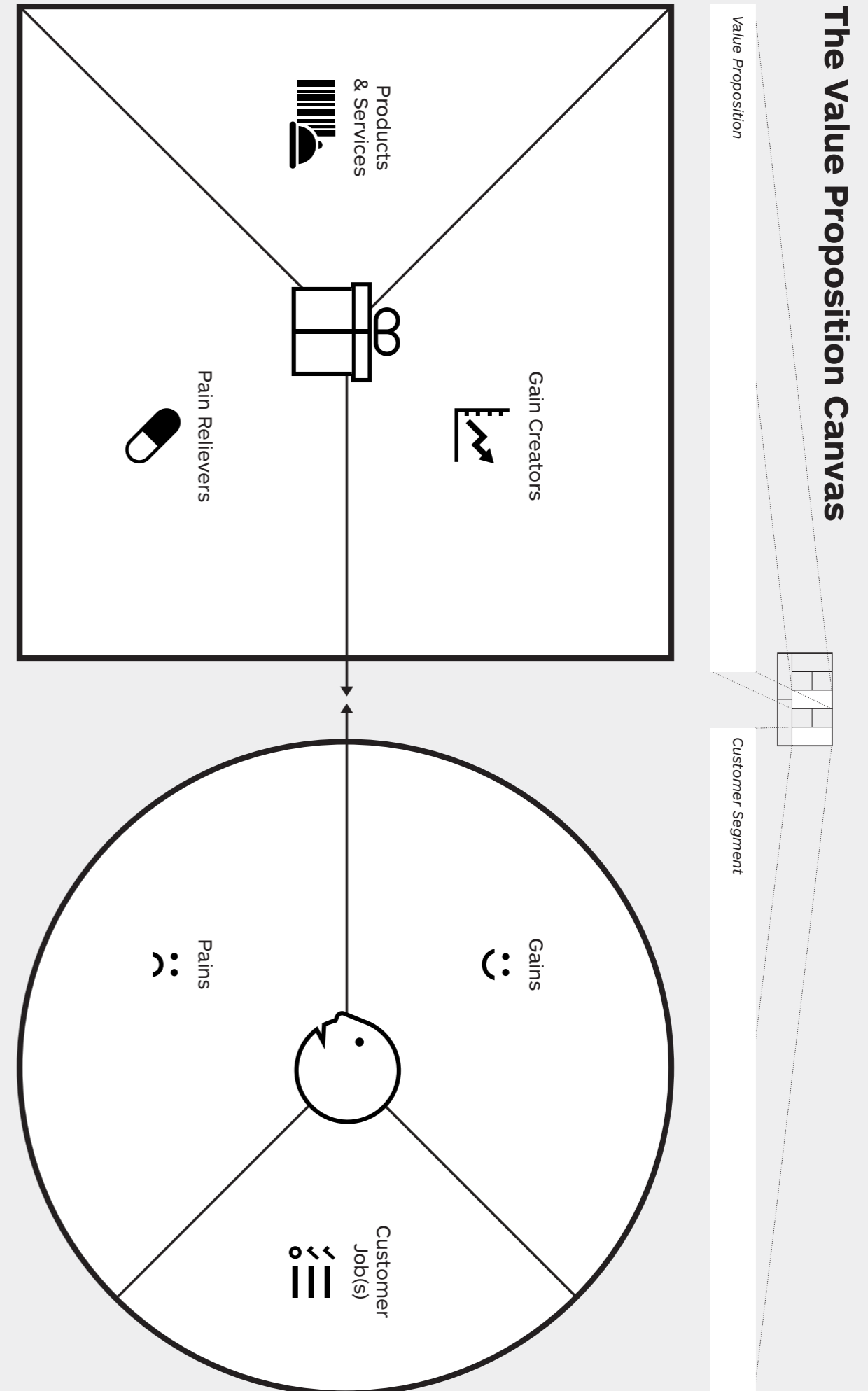
Tips!

Try to think beyond the specific jobs, pains, and gains that you hope to address with your value proposition. Look for the deeper motivations that customers have. If done correct, this is already done in the persona canvases.

It's important to push yourself beyond the obvious functional jobs to understand the social and emotional jobs that are driving customers. For example customers might be trying to impress their boss or co-workers, their friends, or maybe a family member (e.g. driving a specific car or wearing certain clothing). Or perhaps they will feel better about themselves after performing a specific job (e.g. having a healthy diet or spending time with someone else). The pains associated with social or emotional jobs are often more deeply felt by customers and the gains are usually more ferociously sought after.

The Value Proposition Canvas

Value Proposition

Products & Services

Pain Relievers

Gain Creators

Customer Segment

Gains

Pains

Customer Job(s)

@Strategyzer
strategyzer.com

Lean canvas

Why?

The goal of sketching a Lean Canvas (Maurya n.d.) is deconstructing an idea so that you see it more clearly. With the explorative research you and your team executed, you already have a detailed and holistic understanding of the market, your user and your capabilities. In a team session the complete team maps out their findings to create a business plan via the Lean Canvas.

The lean canvas allows team to create a solid story in a visual way. By drawing a big Lean Canvas and make use of post-its, teams can co-create their business plan and discuss if the business is worth investing in.

How?

When filling in the lean canvas, remind the team that they already have done this research in the 'doing research' step. Use the information on those canvases to fill in the lean canvas. In every box of the Lean Canvas, a reminder to an earlier filled in canvas is written. Use this information!

1) Start with the customer and their problem. If done properly, the team just agreed on the most important stakeholders and their problem for the product or service with filling in the Value Proposition map. At the lean canvas, you can map out multiple stakeholders and problems if needed, do this for example by using different color post-its per stakeholder story.

2) The value proposition can be copied from the value proposition map, and edited for a specific stakeholder. This value proposition should be clear and specific, to make the lean canvas focussed.

3) After describing the value you are going to deliver to your customer, you describe the solution you are going to build. This is where all research plays an important role. What can be build? Is this matching market need? And is is satisfying user demand? The solution can be similar to the initial spark, but try to be critical. Can you maybe think of valuable changes, or additions that will make the solution even more valuable for stakeholders?

Linking the customer to the problem and the value proposition forms the hardest part of filling in the Lean Canvas and can go hand in hand with a lot of discussion. As a facilitator, try to address all research equally and force the team to only rely on what they KNOW, not what they ASSUME. If decisions are made based on assumptions: write them down as to-do's for further research.

4) Think about how you can reach this customers (channels), how you are going to make money (revenue streams) and what your business will cost you (cost structure). This information forms the basis of a prototype embodiment.

5) Together with all team members, fill in all boxes of the Lean Canvas.

6) It is important to reflect during and after filling in the lean canvas. Is this a solid story? Can we build a prototype to test this? How should this prototype look like? What channels are we going to use to test our value proposition?

As a facilitator or meeting leader it is very important to notice what boxes are easy to fill and what boxes lead to discussions or unclarity. This might be an indication that more research is required.

Lean canvas

Title:

Team:

Date:

Version:

Problem
List your top 1-3 problems

Tip: look back at the market analysis and persona canvas

Solution
Outline a possible solution for each problem

Tip: look back at the value proposition canvas

Value proposition
What is single, clear message that states why you are different and worth paying attention to

Tip: look back at the value proposition canvas

Unfair advantage
Something about you or your product/it that can't easily be copied

Tip: look back at the company DNA canvas

Customer segment
List your target customers and users

Tip: look back at the persona canvas

Existing alternatives
List how these problems are solved today

Tip: look back at the skill analysis and market analysis canvas

Key metrics
List key numbers that show if your business is doing well

Tip: look back at the research direction canvas

High level concept
What is an analogy of your concept? What is the overarching goal?

Tip: look back at the persona canvas, what is a place your stated customer is moving?

Channels
List the paths towards your customers

Cost structure
List your fixed and variable costs

Tip: look back at the competitor canvas

Tip: look back at the skill analysis canvas

Revenue streams
List your sources of revenue

Tip: look back at the value proposition canvas, what revenue model is fitting the value proposition?

Lean Canvas source: Maurya, A. (n.d.) Lean Canvas. Retrieved from https://leanstack.com/leancanvas

Focus communication and further research

Why?

When research is finished, the team needs to communicate the found business model and value proposition with internal and external stakeholders. To communicate this, the canvases form the basis of storytelling. Focus communication forms the basis of a product prototype to test the value proposition.

How?

The focus communication should be a concise story about **what** is going to be delivered, **why** and for **who**. This communication can be done in the form of a presentation or research document. This presentation is the last part of research and allows the team to reflect on the potential of the spark in a holistic way: is the spark interesting enough to build a prototype to test the value proposition?

This presentation can be formed around the canvases used throughout the research. Where for example the persona canvas represents the target group of the test, the value proposition represents the assumption that needs to be tested and a scenario shows at what moment the product will add value. The prototype or test scenario is made by the team. Think of channels how you are going to reach your target group and what you want to show them.

At this point, research translates into execution and therefore exploration stops and validation starts. Help from a growth hacker or experienced tester can be useful to create quantifiable results and testable scenarios.

Sources