The Value Proposition Canvas

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Value proposition

> A **value proposition** is a feature or service that makes a product attractive to customers.

It sits at the intersection of three things:

- What your **customer wants**
- What **you do well**
- What your **competitors do well**

Your value proposition is what your customer wants that you do well — and, ideally, that your competitors don't. The competitor axis matters more than teams expect; it reappears in minimum-viable-products[1] when deciding what the minimum actually has to include.

The canvas

> A **value proposition canvas** is a visual description of our customer segments and our value propositions to solve those customers' problems.

It has two halves that are meant to be matched against each other:

[1] courses/comp1100/minimum-viable-products.pdf

- the **value map** — our side, what we offer
- the **customer profile** — their side, the jobs, pains and gains

Full detail in the course notes, chapter 4.

Six ways to innovate from a customer profile

Once you have a customer profile, it suggests its own moves:

Strategy	Explanation
Address more jobs?	Can we help customers complete more jobs in their day?
More important jobs?	Can we help customers do something more valuable?
Beyond functional jobs?	Can we help customers create value by fulfilling important social and emotional jobs?
Help more customers?	Can we help more customers by making jobs easier or cheaper?
Do a job better?	Can we help customers achieve a higher quality on existing jobs?

Only five of the six are listed here.

Ground rules for interviewing

Section 4.5 of the course notes, and the most immediately practical page in the course — this is how the customer profile actually gets filled in.

Ground rule	What it means
Adopt a beginner's mindset	Listen with a "fresh pair of ears". Avoid trying to interpret — ask for clarification. Explore things you did not expect.
Listen more than you talk	Listen, don't tell. Do not talk about what you believe. Clarify misunderstandings, but don't try to convince.
Get facts, not opinions	Don't ask "Would you…?" Do ask "When is/was the last time you…?" and "How much did you…?"

Ground rule	What it means
Ask "why" questions	Motivation matters and helps uncover new facts. Ask "Why do you need…?", "Why is this a pain?"
Don't sell	We are not interviewing to sell a solution. Don't explain our solution ("Wouldn't you like…?"). Ask "What are the most painful…?"
Follow up	Ask for contact details, so you can come back with more questions later.
Always open doors at the end	Ask "Who else should I talk to?" **Always.**

The "get facts, not opinions" rule is the one that most changes an interview. "Would you use an app that…?" reliably produces a polite yes that means nothing; "when did you last…?" produces a fact.

Key takeaway

When we interview customers to construct profiles, **we need to listen**. See customer-discovery[2] for what the interviews are feeding, and experimentation[3] for how the answers get turned into evidence.

[2] courses/comp1100/customer-discovery.pdf
[3] courses/comp1100/experimentation.pdf