



THE JOBS TO BE DONE FRAMEWORK FOR BUSINESS

What motivates customers and employees.

– What are the principles and purpose of the jobs theory? How strong is the demand for this approach from modern consulting agencies and businesses?

PEOPLE CONSTANTLY “HIRE” CERTAIN SOLUTIONS TO MAKE PROGRESS, BUT ALSO QUICKLY “FIRE” THOSE THAT DO NOT MEET THEIR EXPECTATIONS AND REPLACE THEM WITH THOSE THAT DO THE “JOB” BETTER

– The principles underlying the theory are used by marketing and consulting agencies; experienced marketing specialists in corporations also apply certain elements of this theory. The theory can potentially be relevant for all levels, from strategic, where we determine the directions for business development, to the launches of new projects and analysis of current technological processes, or even in personal communication with an opponent.

Whatever people do, they always strive for progress in life, consciously or subconsciously trying to change a certain situation for the better. The jobs theory makes it possible to deconstruct this need, to determine what forces affect people when they make decisions. It's good to understand what drives our customers, partners, colleagues, or department managers. Our researchers prepare questions following a particular structure; when communicating with customers and observing the situation in the company, we identify everyone's Jobs to Be Done, which are often very well hidden.

People constantly “hire” certain solutions to make progress, but also quickly “fire” those that do not meet their expectations and replace them with those that do the “job” better. It does not matter whether you serve a particular customer or offer services to corporations – in any case you address people. Each engineer also strives to make progress in his or her workplace, and their decisions can be influenced by the jobs theory.

History of the jobs theory

It goes back more than 70 years, with numerous scientific publications behind each idea. The current theory was formulated by Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen, but the entire evolutionary path of the concept can be traced in Alan Klement's book *When Coffee and Kale Compete*.

– Are there actual business cases where the principles of the jobs theory have proven relevant? And what did you achieve by applying it?

– Let me cite two examples from my experience – positive and negative. Before starting practical work in service design, I worked at a financial company. We were developing a financial tool that was completely new to the market. Orders began to flood in from customers, usually at the level of business leaders. But when we were designing the product, we did not give much thought to our customers’ accountants, who are always eager to show off their skills. Customers’ accountants were not always able to figure out by themselves how to apply the new tool correctly, and began to spread negative feedback in the background. Fortunately, we were quick to remedy the situation by creating a solution that helped accountants get to grips with the product, but I think its reputation had been tarnished. By the way, this was the starting point for my in-depth study of the jobs theory: on an emotional and social level, things turned out to be not as simple as I used to think.

A CAREFUL AND THOUGHTFUL ADOPTION OF THE JOBS THEORY WILL ENABLE YOUR COMPANY TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE CONTINUOUS INNOVATION ENGINE, SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION, PROVIDE A “NORTH STAR” FOR EMPLOYEES AND FOSTER A NATURAL URGE TO CARE ABOUT CUSTOMERS

Now we are working on a project for an industrial company that supplies equipment to the construction market. Equipment used at a construction site is expensive, and frequent failures result from incorrect operation; training could improve the culture of equipment operation, but workers have no conscious motivation to learn. Using the jobs theory, we have been conducting research to understand what might motivate workers. It turns out that many of them work on a complex schedule, leaving them little time to spend with their families; for some, the priority is to improve living conditions, while others care for career growth. A deep understanding of the employees’ actual life motivations enables us to design effective communications and tailor the new product’s features and attributes to make it relevant to, and consistent with, people’s needs.

– In your opinion, how relevant is the jobs theory to industrial production?

– William Edwards Deming, a US professor and management consultant, said, “The consumer is the most important part of the production line.” The continuous improvement of your current product is very important, but it is not everything. For instance, manufacturers of vacuum tubes increased the capacity of their products each year, and their customers were happy. But when transistor radios appeared, the happy customers immediately forgot about vacuum tubes. Transistors turned out to be more efficient and cheaper, and were used more widely – a solution that performed the customer’s job better became available.

Another good example is the Finnish Nokia, which used to be the leader in the mobile phone market, but for a long time refused to believe that one day the screen will be used as a keyboard, and that consumers would switch to smartphones en masse. All the products made by Kodak became irrelevant as they relied on film technology. The irony is that the company itself developed digital imaging technology but was late to launch the new product. Any production corporation should always stay nimble, as the innovation process never rests. Breakthrough innovations can come from anywhere, either within your business segment or from where you least expect them. The customer does not hesitate to switch to a solution that performs the required job better.

We should always study the needs of our customers carefully, and even more so in the B2B segment, where many more stakeholders are impacted by each customer. Industrial corporations operate in the same competitive market environment, the only difference is that change cycles are slightly longer: for example, updates to pipe production technology do not come as often as new models of smartphones. Large-scale production is a more conservative industry, but, like all business segments, it is exposed to a constant threat of disruptive innovations from the outside.

The importance of the jobs theory for industrial enterprises can hardly be overestimated – any innovation in production is accompanied by changes not only to the product, but also to business processes and the business model itself. While a product can be easily copied, it is virtually impossible to copy business processes or corporate culture. That is why Toyota does not shy away from inviting Japanese and US competitors to visit its car factories. The essence of a product or service is in the production process and culture, and the jobs theory helps us understand the needs of our customers and fine-tune all business processes.

Key takeaways from the jobs theory

- Customer needs may change very quickly, we are all guided by best practice, and we instantly raise the bar as soon as we come across a better level of service elsewhere.

- Businesses should understand that people do not buy a product or service as such, every purchase is just a way to make progress in life – this is obvious, but often overlooked by corporations.
- It is important not only to evaluate the functionality of a product but also to consider the social and emotional aspects of perception, to understand the “jobs” in different areas that customers have in mind when “hiring” your products and services.
- Your business may face competition not only from existing players but also from new entrants; you need to keep abreast of innovation and use a wider lens.
- When making a decision, a person is influenced by progress drivers: the desire to escape from the current situation and the appealing image of the future, but at the same time fears, doubts and habits hold the process back. Inaction caused by doubt also competes against your new product or service.
- The customer’s job changes its attributes depending on the context; in different situations, he or she chooses different ways to address the relevant task. The same product will require different technology solutions in different contexts.

– The jobs theory is primarily related to product and service innovation and targets developers of new products. To what extent do you think it is applicable to setting up a business?

OF COURSE, THE JOBS THEORY IS NOT A REMEDY FOR ANY AND ALL PROBLEMS, BUT IT IS AN EFFECTIVE PRISM THAT ALLOWS YOU TO LOOK AT THE SITUATION FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE

– Relationships within the team and interactions between managers and subordinates are critical for a company’s seamless growth. Each particular employee’s goals need to be aligned with the company’s goals, or otherwise people won’t have the necessary motivation to work. If a manager applies the jobs theory when analysing employees’ motivating factors, he or she will be able to build a dialogue in a much better and more effective way. Basically, we don’t separate employees from business customers: if employees are dissatisfied, customers won’t be satisfied either. You can create an illusion of well-being, but the employees’ dissatisfaction will still show and affect the customers. Happy employees, whose goals are aligned with those of the business, are true champions of customer focus and defend the company’s interests at all times. Talented managers understand this and intuitively take into account the employees’ needs, but with the jobs theory they can explore the team in a structured and conscious way, and understand what drives everyone.

Of course, the jobs theory is not a remedy for any and all problems, but it is an effective prism that allows you to look at the situation from a different angle. If we have not undertaken a high-quality study of our customers’ needs, then our products will not be of a very high quality either. Using the jobs theory, we can design the most thorough and true-to-life foundation for all our solutions. We can avoid mistakes and build the most effective communication with customers, partners, managers and colleagues within the team.