

Getting Results from Jobs-to-be-Done Interviews

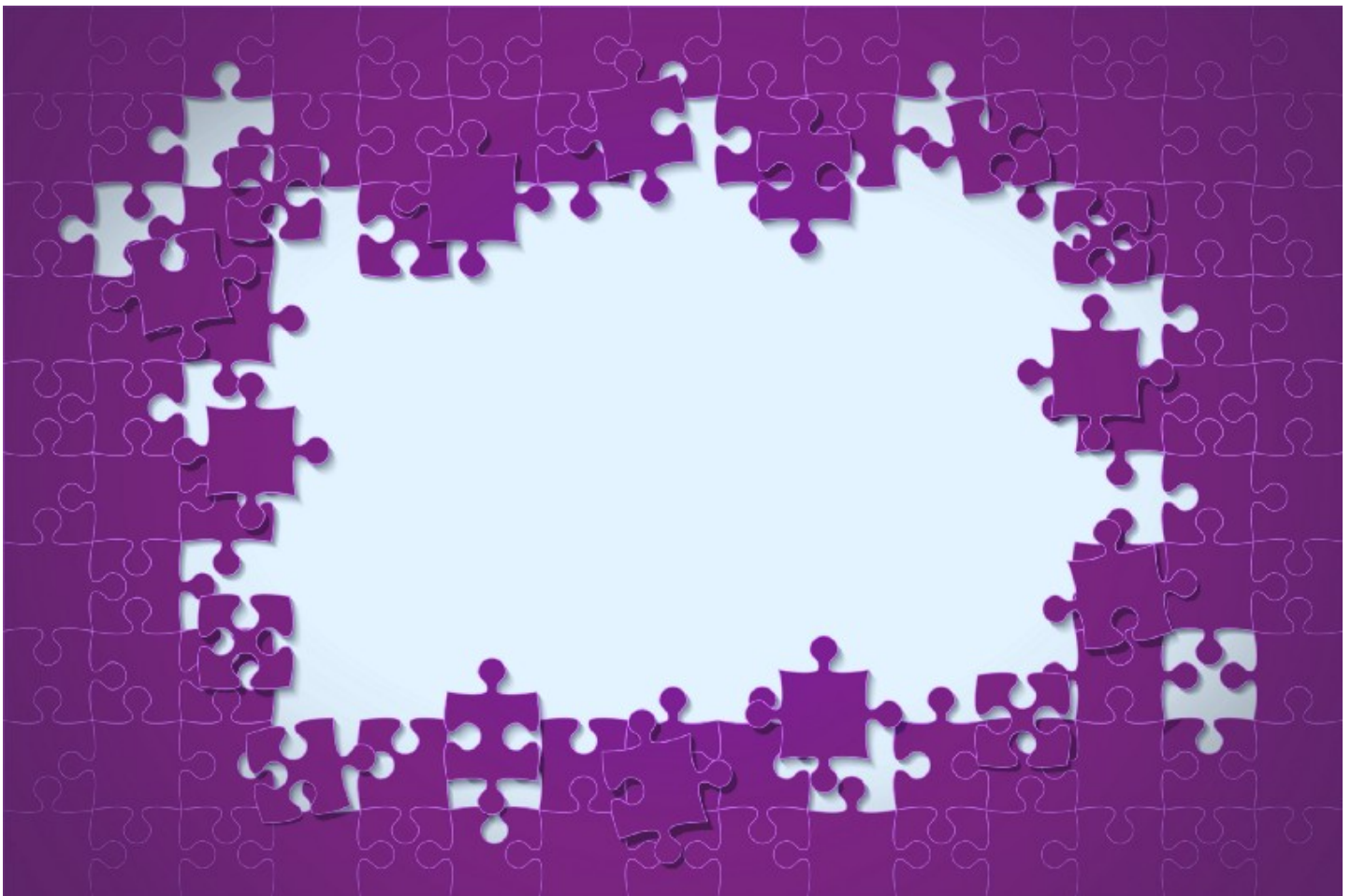


Michael A. Boysen

Getting Results from Jobs-to-be-Done Interviews

Gaining a deep understanding of the customer's job-to-be-done requires unique methods and interviewing skills. The approach revealed here delivers proven results.

Jobs-to-be-Done Theory is integral to successful product planning – the ability to conceptualize a product or service that will win in the marketplace **BEFORE it is approved for development/design**. Applied correctly, it results in predictable innovation, as products and services are certain to address unmet customer needs.



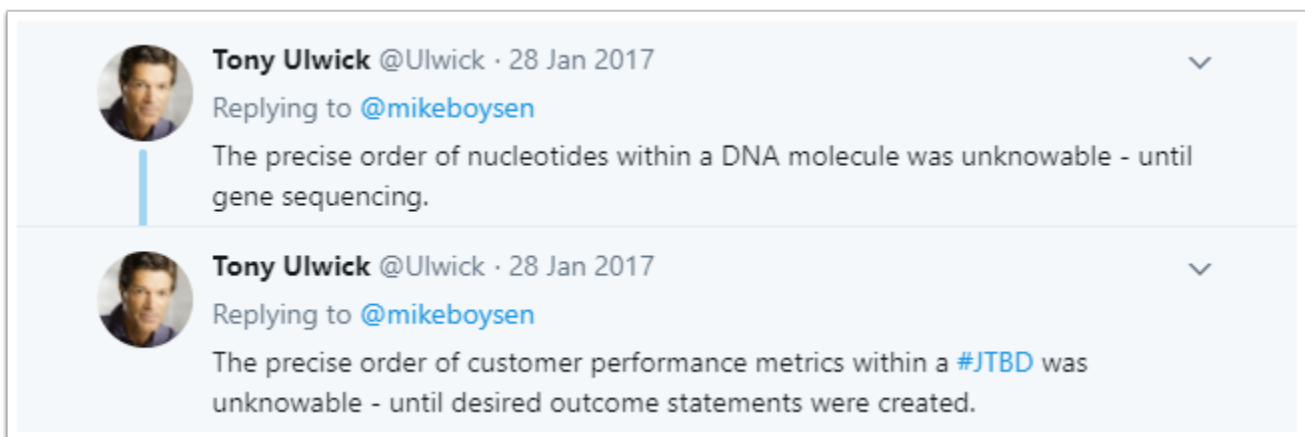
Jobs-to-be-Done Interviews solve the puzzle of understanding customer needs

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Before a company can determine which needs are unmet, it must first uncover all the customers' needs. Most companies struggle in this effort and in many cases company managers can't even agree on what a "need" is. Fortunately, customer needs can be effectively defined and successfully captured through qualitative Jobs-to-be-Done interviews.

Jobs-to-be-Done interviews have a specific goal – to gain a deep understanding of the job the customer is trying to get done. Consequently, when conducting these interviews, the focus should **not** be on the buying process, the day of purchase, customer behavior or the product. Instead, the focus should be solely on understanding the core functional job the customer is trying to get done.

I'm a practitioner of Outcome-Driven Innovation® (ODI), a methodology that predates JTBD Theory, and was integral in the development of the theory's [core tenets](#). The research methods included in the ODI process enable a researcher to gain a deep understanding of the customer's job-to-be-done because they seek to uncover the metrics that customers use to measure success (or dare I say "progress") when trying to get a job done. These uniquely defined needs are called customer desired outcomes.



Desired outcomes are the building blocks of predictable innovation

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Understanding the job-to-be-done at a deep level is like assembling the pieces of a puzzle. When all the pieces come together, you have a complete and granular understanding of the customer's job-to-be-done. As is the case when assembling a puzzle, there is a most efficient way to gain a deep understanding of a job-to-be-done.

When assembling a puzzle, it is best to start with the frame/borders. With the frame in place you know where you are bounded. You know the playing field and you know that all the pieces are going to fit somewhere inside the frame. Next, you group together pieces that contain similar colors/patterns as you know they are going to be closely related and fit together. Lastly, you fill in all the remaining pieces.

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Jobs-to-be-Done interviews solve the customer needs puzzle in three simple steps



The way we study a job-to-be-done for our clients can be described in three steps.

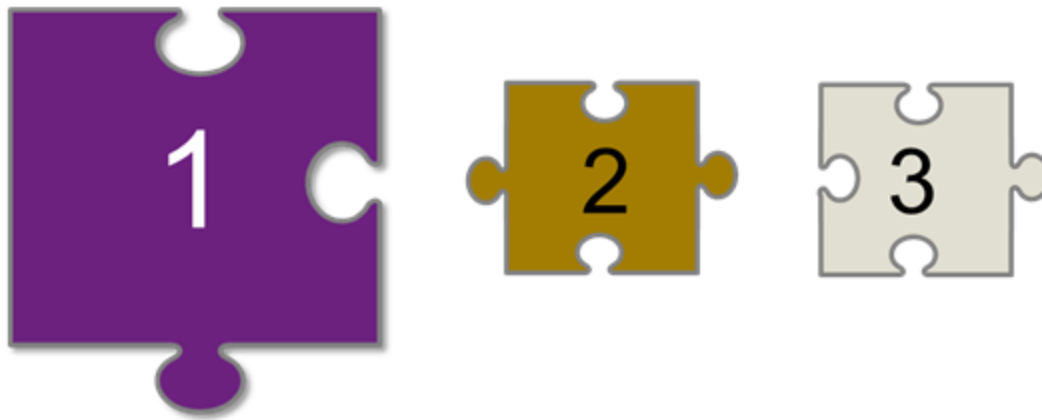
1. We first define the market we are studying as a group of people and the job they are trying to get done (create the frame).
2. Next, we create a job map (group together like pieces). The job map breaks down the core job into the steps that comprise the core job.
3. Lastly, we uncover the customer's outcomes (needs) for each step in the job (fill in all the pieces).

This article explains all three steps in detail.

Note: if a client wants to discover and/or enter new markets, then we begin the process with a market discovery and selection phase. This is not covered in this article.

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Frame the Market as a Job-to-be-Done



Identify the Job Executor

Companies have many customers and stakeholders. Unlike the B2C world, where things *seem* more clear cut, creating solutions for companies can be daunting. With all of the influencers, decision-makers, buying groups, end users, operators, installers and others, who do you interview?

Using ODI, JTBD interviews focus on three types of customers:

End users – These are the people who use a product or service to get the core functional job done. The end user can provide you with the performance metrics (desired outcomes) that you need in order to understand how to design better products and services. These metrics are the inputs you need to help end users get their jobs done better, more predictably, and more efficiently.

If the goal of the initiative is to create a product that gets the job done better, then the end user is the right customer to target.

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People on the product lifecycle support team — These are the people who install, set up, store, transport, maintain, repair, clean, upgrade, and dispose of products. These are what we call *consumption chain jobs* because they relate directly to a solution (and its consumption). Not all of these jobs are relevant in every situation, but the people that perform these jobs can help you find ways to improve the overall customer experience.

If the goal of the initiative is to simplify the execution of the consumption chain jobs, then the people on the support team are the right customers to target.

Purchase Decision Makers — These are the people responsible for seeking out and evaluating alternative offerings, and then deciding which to buy. These are the people to talk to when you need to understand how to improve the buying process, and also to understand the financial metrics used to make the buying decision.

If the goal of the initiative is to sell more of what you have to the purchase decision maker, then defining a go-to-market strategy for the purchase decision maker is the right choice.

Which job is the job executor trying to perform?

Before we begin to identify possible jobs, and learn how to find them as you conduct interviews, I'd like to briefly talk about how and why we recommend that a "job" statement is constructed in a certain way. People buy products and services to get a core "job" done. That job — which we call the core functional job — is the unit of analysis when executing the ODI process.

This job becomes the focal point around which all customer needs are defined, and around which value creation should be centered. Therefore, a "job statement" needs to be defined at the right level of abstraction, and stated using a consistent structure and syntax.

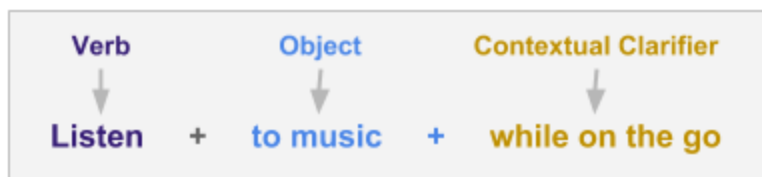
Strategyn has been testing this for decades to develop and validate this structure.

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Job statements possess a number of unique characteristics (the details are covered in other writings):

1. A job-to-be-done is stable and does not change quickly or substantially over time. The key benefit is that it is stable throughout the development and launch cycle.
2. A job-to-be-done has no geographical boundaries.
3. A job statement is solution agnostic.
4. A job-to-be-done is a process.
5. A core functional job can be studied using Six Sigma principles.

Job Statement



To be successful, it's critical that the core functional job be defined properly. Having said that, you don't need to get it perfect the first time; you'll be able to validate it later as you conduct your interviews. To understand what job executors are trying to get done, you need to:

Ask the right question — most products only get part of a job done. In the continual pursuit of growth, we need to discover the entire job the customer is trying to accomplish; because that is how we can find growth opportunities. **It's not helpful to ask** a customer "What job did you hire that product to do?" because this most likely won't identify the entire job. Instead, ask them...

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- “When using that product, what are you ultimately trying to get done or accomplish?”
- “Are you using multiple products?”
- “What are you trying to accomplish as you cobble together multiple products and services?”
- “What is the final output you’re seeking?”

Listen for action verbs, the object of the action and the contextual clarifier.

Take the customer’s perspective – when defining the core functional job, think about it from the customer’s perspective, not the company’s perspective. Just like above, too often the company’s solution perspective is far too limiting.

For example, a company that supplies herbicides to farmers may conclude that growers are trying to “kill weeds,” while the growers might say they are trying to “prevent weeds from impacting crop yields.” It’s not about what the company is providing, it’s about what the customer is trying to accomplish.

Don’t overcomplicate it – A functional job statement should not be multilayered and complex. A well defined statement is one-dimensional and simple.

Don’t include emotional jobs and other needs in the statement – when defining the core functional job, make sure it’s defined as a functional job, and not a hybrid functional/emotional/social job. A functional job does not have social and emotional dimensions; these are stated as separate job statements. Do not include vague language that can be misinterpreted in a job statement. We generally see this when *needs* are incorporated into the statement.

- **Invalid:** stay awake and occupied while I make my morning commute more fun.
- **Valid:** Stay awake during my morning commute.

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Define the job, not the situation – Do not define the core functional job as a situation a customer finds themselves in. Instead, define the job around what the customer decides to do (get done) in that situation. You might be looking for something to do while waiting in line at the doctor’s office. However, looking for something to do is not the job, it’s the situation.

You might decide to “stay up-to-date on current events” or “create a grocery list” while waiting. Those are jobs.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of common verbs that can be used to “listen for” and to “construct” job statements:

Achieve	Allow	Confirm	Coordinate
Correct	Create	Demonstrate	Detect
Determine	Develop	Discover	Ensure
Experience	Find	Fix	Get
Help	Identify	Improve	Keep
Learn	Locate	Maintain	Make
Obtain	Plan	Prepare	Prevent
Protect	Provide	Relieve	Remember
Remove	Share	Stay	Stop
Teach	Understand	Update	Verify

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Define the Market

We define a “market” as a group of people + the core functional job they are trying to get done. For example, music enthusiasts who are trying to listen to music constitute a market.



Since we know that people hire products and services to help them get jobs done, it would follow that we need to know which groups of people we want to target (e.g. music enthusiasts) and what job they are trying to get done (listen to music). This is a solution-agnostic and thereby stable view of a market over time. Regardless of the solution, there will always be a group of people who wish to listen to music.

Customers are loyal to the job-to-be-done, not to the solutions they use

By viewing the market the way we do, we have a stable lens through which to monitor the performance of the market well into the future, using the same set of metrics. When we use the lens of a product, we introduced undue variability into how the market is defined, and measured. Too often, end users are left with the task of comparing features across many solutions, that don't match perfectly, or are simply irrelevant to them.

Worse, they can never be forward-looking.

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Music Enthusiasts are loyal to the job



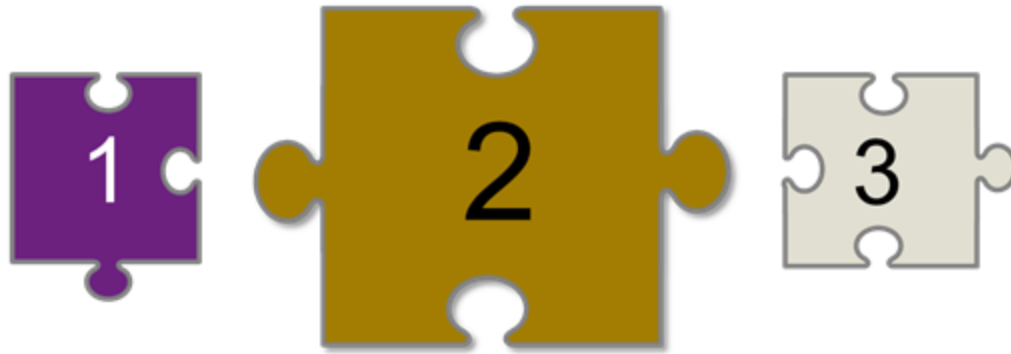
By using the job-to-be-done as the unit of analysis, we can monitor how well customers view current and emerging solutions against a common and persistent set of understandable criteria.

Pro Tip: Look for jobs in which a single executor performs all of the steps. When multiple executors (or teams) are introduced, that generally means these are part of the consumption chain. This is a critical component in finding the right level of abstraction

Now that we have the market defined, it's time to decompose it...

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Map the Market as a Process



We treat Jobs-to-be-Done as processes. It provides a clear path for innovators to understand how to make progress toward the goal of addressing the entire market with a solution; not just part of the market. Since most products only get one step done, it becomes clear to see which steps are adjacent, and how all of the steps line up with a provider's existing capabilities.

Now that we know what the job is, we need to break it down it into steps by...

Understanding the characteristics of a job

Instead of a process map, we create a "job map." Your job is to elicit the steps through a series of interviews. It's critical to the process for the following reasons:

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- It identifies where the **job begins** and where the **job ends**, revealing gaps in current solutions.
- It identifies the **optimal logical flow** for processes enabling it. Many processes become inefficient and iterative when an input needed early in the process is not available until later in the process. This optimal flow can often be revealing all by itself.
- It defines the **competitive landscape**. Understanding the complete job often reveals non-traditional competitors.
- It establishes a **long-term roadmap** for product/portfolio development. It paves the way to getting the entire job done on a single platform (or offering).
- It guides the capture of **desired outcome statements** associated with the core functional job. This is why it is created before we capture them.



Universal Job Map to Guide Jobs-to-be-Done Interviews

Use the Universal Job Map as a guide; but note that a core functional job can have from 10–20 steps. It depends on the job. Your job is to define and validate these steps with job executors.

Pro Tip: Go into your first interview with a straw man job map that can be shared. It helps to have something to react to. A little bit of preliminary research here goes a long way

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Ask the Right Questions

Keep the following things in mind as you conduct your interviews:

- A good job map describes what the customer is trying to accomplish, not how they are accomplishing it (or the solution they are using).
- A completed job map represents the ideal flow for the job.
- A job map is not a customer journey map. It doesn't describe the consumption of an offering: i.e., the purchase process, configuration, upgrading, maintaining, etc.
- A job step statement applies universally no matter which customer is executing the job, or the product they are using to help them get the job done.
- A job step is solution-free, and stable over time.
- A job step "statement" is structured exactly the same way as the core functional job statement.

To begin, ask the recruit to walk you through their process:

“What is the first thing you do as you begin performing the job?”

It's critical to understand that they will talk in solution terms. So it's important to probe.

What are you trying to accomplish when you do that?

You can also ask:

What do you need to plan for, or what decisions do you need to make before you begin the job?

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Once you've established where they start, you can continue to make your inquiries about subsequent job stages:

- [LOCATE] “What steps do you take to locate and gather the needed inputs?”
- [PREPARE] “What steps do you take to prepare or organize those inputs?”
- [CONFIRM] “What steps do you take to confirm you are ready to execute the job?”
- [EXECUTE] “What steps do you take to execute the core functional job?”
- [MONITOR] “What steps do you take to monitor or verify the execution step is executed effectively?” “What do you track as you perform the job?”
- [MODIFY] “What steps do you take to make modifications to the execution when something goes wrong?”
- [CONCLUDE] “What steps do you take to properly complete the job, or prepare for the next job cycle?”

Pro Tip: Start your interview by discussing the **execute** step, working from the middle out. This provides the anchor for your interview, which you can refer back to

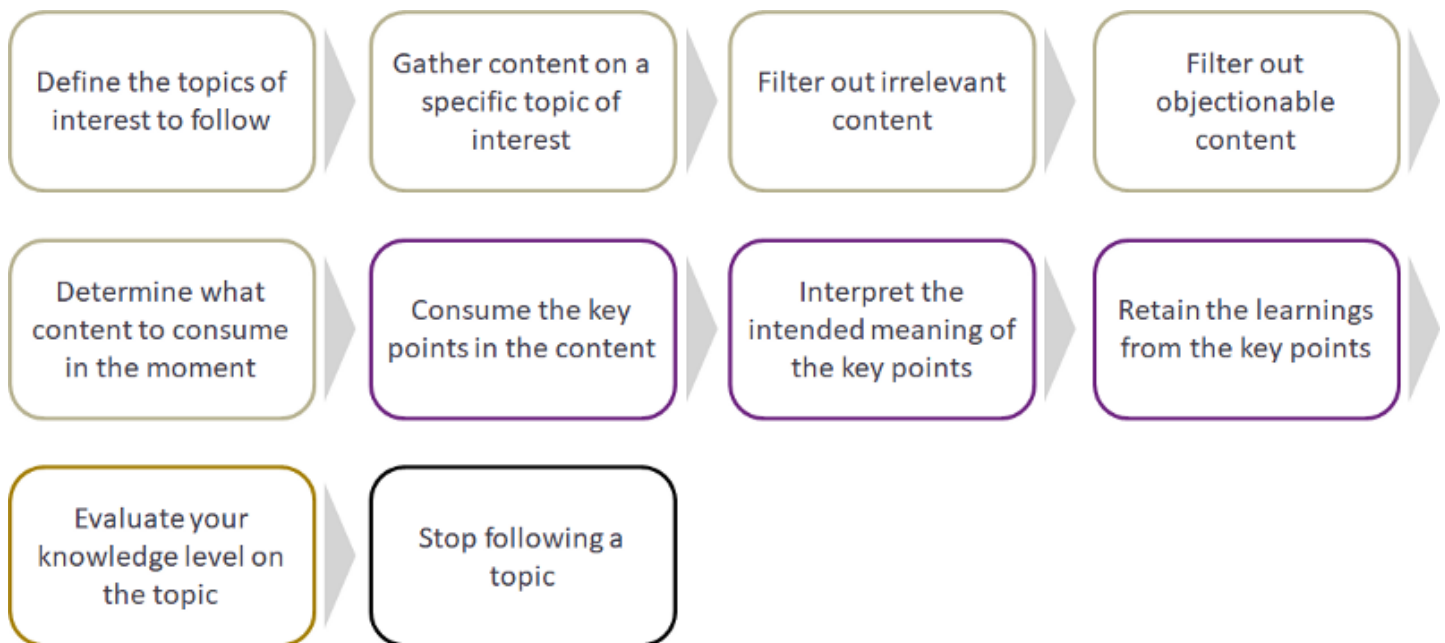
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Finalize the Job Map

When the preceding iterative process is completed, it's always a good time to socialize it with the stakeholders who want to provide better offerings to these customers. Their approval and agreement is critical before moving forward.

While it's fine to work with a simple outline – or list – when building the steps, once finalized it makes sense to lay it out visually. Job maps are generally linear – the happy path in journey-speak – so visual representations will not have decision trees or loop-backs like a process map will. Again, this is the *ideal*/logical flow and not a process that might have numerous constraints and/or decisions.

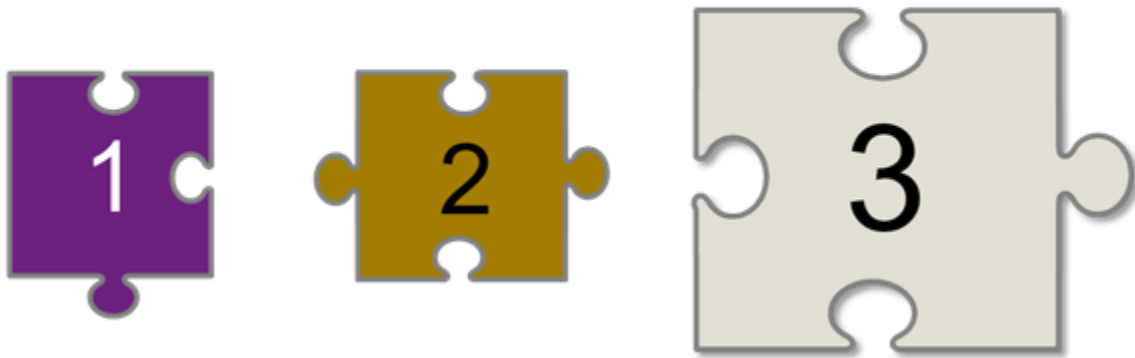
Here's an example job map:



Business Professionals + Stay Informed on a Topic of Interest

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Create Market Success Measures



How do Customers Measure Success?

Given that we use a completely unique view of what a market is, we've had to create our own measures of success. We call them ***desired outcome statements*** and they have a set of characteristics you need to know. They are not expressions of pain, or delight, or gains, or struggles since that would only represent one individual – and a single *state* of the need. They are designed to be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive in order to describe *perfect execution of the job*.

Our approach has been exhaustively tested over the years, and trust me, any variations you might come up with have most likely been proven to cause problems. So, keep the following characteristics in mind:

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- **They are stable over time:** It's hard to hit a moving target. If you've worked on projects/products where the requirements *evolved* you've probably noticed this. If *needs* are always changing, or being described differently, then innovation will always be a guessing game. Since the customer's core functional job to be done is stable over time, then the performance metrics attached to that job must also be stable over time.
- **They reveal how customers measure value:** If the perfect set of need statements elaborates the metrics that customer use to measure success when getting the job done, then customer value can also be measured. Creating that value then becomes more predictable.
- **They enable the accurate evaluation of all competing solutions:** The ultimate set of customer needs would enable a company to accurately assess how much better or worse one solution is over another (old, current and emerging).
- **They guide the creation of new products and services:** The perfect needs statements are measurable and controllable by executors, and therefore actionable.
- **They prevent misunderstanding:** They should be clear, concise, accurate and stated in a way this is not misunderstood, misinterpreted or misused. They are not ambiguous
- **They explain all the causal factors that contribute to failure:** As I mentioned above, you need to uncover *all* of the factors customers *could* use to measure success. Why? Because there is no average customer.
- **They are discoverable through research:** They should be easily obtainable in a consistent format. Keeping them simple makes them easier to capture
- **They will enable to discovery of unmet needs:** Performance metrics are *stateless*. However, they must be structured in such a way that customers can prioritize them.

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- **They will not contribute to process variability:** The statements must be structured consistently so customers do not interpret them differently when asked to prioritize them
- **They will unify and inform the organization:** One set of desired outcomes would inform the entire downstream organization (R&D, M&S, Marketing, etc.) so all capabilities are working in concert.

What is the Structure of a Desired Outcome Statement?

Desired outcomes have a formulaic and grammatical structure that supports the characteristics outlined above. Outputs in this structure are what you are trying to capture during your JTBD interviews.

This structure, and many variations thereof, has been heavily tested over the years. More details around each of these will be available soon in the ODI Community of Practice. Each statement has a...

Direction of improvement — improvement is not static, it requires progress along some dimension. Based on years of research and testing, we always use the word *minimize* for a variety of reasons. In a nutshell, job executors are always trying to eliminate time, avoid problems, and eliminate inefficiencies.

A predictive metric — we use two metrics: time and likelihood. A lot of thought and testing has gone into this over the years. Other words tend to get solutiony, and make it more challenging for survey respondents. Simple is better.

- Minimize the time it takes to (do something)
- Minimize the likelihood that (something causes an undesirable result)
- Minimize the likelihood of (something undesirable happening)

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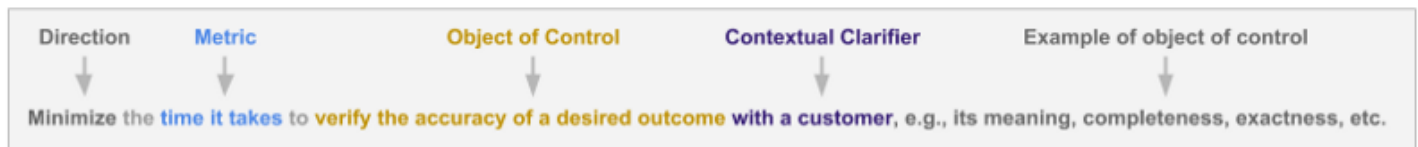
An object of control – this explains precisely what the customer is trying get done faster, more predictably, or with higher throughput / output.

A contextual clarifier – this identifies the conditions or circumstances a customer may be encountering. While it can often be left out, it helps to ensure the outcome statement is not misinterpreted.

- Object of control + [when]
- Object of control + [for what purpose]
- Object of control + [to what end]

Examples (optional) – the perfect desired outcome statement shouldn't need examples. However, there are situations where some words have to be more clearly interpretable by survey respondents.

Desired Outcome Statement



Rules for constructing a valid desired outcome statement

Over the years a set of rules has evolved for creating proper desired outcomes statements; and they continue to evolve. More details around each of these will be available soon in the ODI Community of Practice.

Make sure the statements are in the required structure/format – this provides consistency from outcome to outcome.

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Make sure the statements are unambiguous – if the outcome can be interpreted differently by different people, then the value of the outcome is reduced

Make sure the statements possess the required characteristics

- It must describe how the customer is measuring success
- It must be measurable and controllable
- It must be stable over time
- It must be predictive of successful execution of the job
- It must describe what the customer is trying to get done, not what they are doing
- It must not reference technology or solutions

Ask the Right Questions

Minimize the likelihood of capturing an outcome statement that does not comply with all of the rules!

The good news is that you have a map to guide your discussion. It has a logical flow, so it makes a lot of sense to follow the map from beginning to end as you try to elicit desired outcomes statements. As each step is discussed, you should be listening for insights into what they are trying to achieve, or avoid; and then translate those into the proper format.

Guide them through the map asking “what do you do next, and what are you trying to achieve, or avoid?” Much like a process, the result of a job is going to be an input into a subsequent step.

Avoid discussing product features that your respondent wants to see in the next version of a product. Instead, have them focus on the following questions:

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1. **What makes [job step] time consuming?** – this will lead to outcomes that begin with “minimize the time it takes to.”
2. **What are you trying to achieve when [job step]?**
3. **What are you trying to avoid when [job step]?** – this will result in outcomes that begin with “minimize the likelihood.”
4. **What makes [job step] unpredictable?** – or you you can use words like inefficient, challenging, wasteful, or inconvenient.
5. **When trying to [job step] what makes [solution A] more attractive than [solution B]?** – your goal here is not have a discussion about solutions, but to uncover desired outcomes based on an advantage or disadvantage perceived by the respondent.

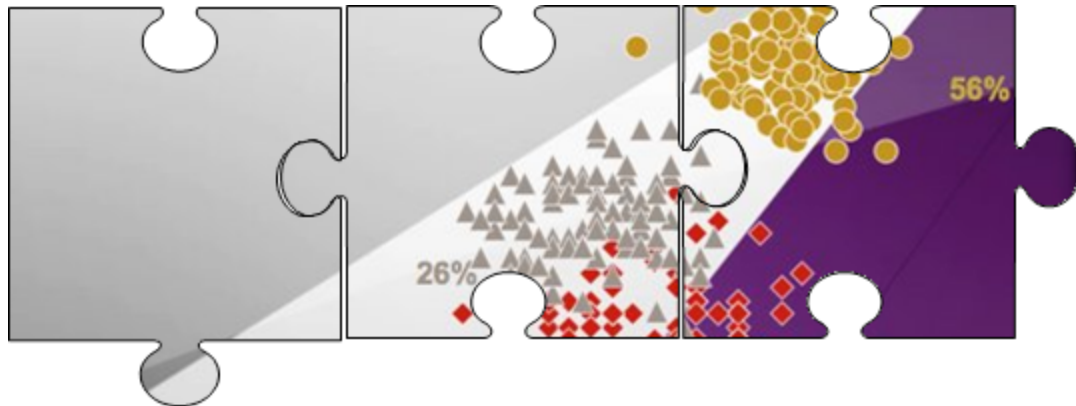
Pro Tip: If a respondent expresses a vague need, ask them to describe how they define this term. It’s likely that you will need to chunk this down into a number of more discrete desired outcomes.

Pro Tip: During the discussion, many different types of needs may surface. While discussing the core functional job, the respondent may reveal a related job, an emotional job or an outcome related to a consumption chain job. Capture these and then move the discussion back to the core job.

That was pretty straight forward, wasn’t it?

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Your done with the interviews, now what?



Each stage of the ODI process has a purpose that feeds into the next stage. Hopefully, you noticed that in the discussion of job maps as well. Our qualitative interviews are designed solely to build a customer value model that can be prioritized through surveys to reveal **otherwise *hidden* opportunities**.

Now you have the basic knowledge you need to begin building customer value models with Jobs-to-be-Done interviews that will set you apart from the crowded world of innovators, designers and marketers.

Your decision should be easy: go out and begin conducting JTBD interviews that build an actionable model that you can use for years to come.

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ADDENDUM

A Framework of Questions for Jobs-to-be-Done Interviews

JTBD interview questions for the Outcome-driven Innovation method for building discussion guides to build a qualitative data model for a job

Opening Comment

Don't worry about fancy, specialized tools. Open a Google Doc and use a numbered list to create your job map. That's what I do. You're probably going to change it as you think about it and collaborate with others, so make it easy on yourself. Just do it!

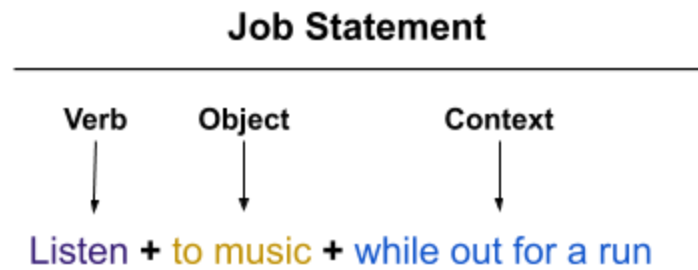
Same holds true for outcomes. There is no reason you need a fancy tool or database. Use the same Google Doc.

If you need a visual map, insert an inline Google Drawing; but don't waste your time until you've finalized your map.

Structure of the “Job Statement”

In order to promote consistency, and a stable view of the market, a universal standard has been developed for describing a **job-to-be-done**. Using this standard, we'll use the following example of a job statement throughout the document to make it more readable, and hopefully more understandable.

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I selected a core job which also has a *context*. You don't have to do this. However, I considered the fact that a music enthusiast who wants to listen to music while out for a run has complexities that other contexts don't. This means there is a likelihood that further hidden segmentation centered-on unmet needs can be discovered through quantitative analysis.

Common verbs associated with jobs are:

Achieve	Allow	Confirm	Coordinate
Correct	Create	Demonstrate	Detect
Determine	Develop	Discover	Ensure
Experience	Find	Fix	Get
Help	Identify	Improve	Keep
Learn	Locate	Maintain	Make
Obtain	Plan	Prepare	Prevent
Protect	Provide	Relieve	Remember
Remove	Share	Stay	Stop
Teach	Understand	Update	Verify

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Discover the job executor

Before you begin looking for jobs, you need to narrow your focus to a **single job executor** (think of this as the end user.) In this case, a “music enthusiast.” It could just as easily be an orthopedic surgeon.

UPDATE: In fact, you can start with the job and may find that there are many ways to describe the job executor. Electricians cut wood in a straight line, as do carpenters, roofers, plumbers, etc. These are all different *trades*, and therefore we name the job executor *Tradesmen*. When getting breakfast on the go, we can generally describe this group as *Commuters*, when studying people who are commuting to work in the morning.

Discover the job

Once we know that we’ll be studying music enthusiasts, we can begin by identifying the job they are trying to get done. We can hypothesize that they want to **listen to music**. But, that could be somewhat broad. By asking more questions we can begin to understand some of the contexts in which they listen to music. We can start by asking them a question:

What products and services do you currently use to “List to music while out for a run? [list the solutions]

1. Solution 1
2. Solution 2
3. Solution 3
4. ...
5. Solution n

We can list these solutions to help us build our base of information

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Discover why each solution is hired

If we follow up and ask a few more questions we might learn that some music enthusiasts hook a smartphone into their vehicle's audio system to get more options, while others may tell you they need something they can take with them while out on a run.

- What are you trying to accomplish by using each product/service?
- What goals or objectives does each product/service help you to accomplish?
- What problems does each product/service help you to prevent or resolve?
- **When** do you select one solution over another?

For the remainder of this study, we will use a context...

“Music enthusiasts who want to listen to music **while out on a run**”

I thought carefully about this and asked if there were circumstances that might occur while *out for a run* that could drive further segmentation (described later). If I hadn't come to that conclusion, I would probably have left out the context and used a broader set of outcomes.

Note: In the case where no product yet exists, the core job should be used without a context. It's most likely that segments describing a circumstance will best be uncovered through a quantitative analysis of unmet needs, using the model you are about to build.

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Discover why each product/service might be hired

- What would the ideal product/service help you to accomplish when **out for a run?**
- What else are you trying to accomplish before, during, or after using the current product/service you use?
- What other responsibilities do you have before, during, or after using the current product/service you use?
- What other products/services would you like to be offered before, during, or after using the current products/services you use?
- What would each allow you to accomplish?

Discover other jobs of customers

- What are you trying to accomplish when **listening to music while out for a run?**
- What tasks and/or activities?
- As it relates to **listening to music while out for a run**, what are your goals and objectives?
- As it relates to **listening to music while out for a run**, what problems are you trying to prevent or resolve?
- As it relates to **listening to music while out for a run**, what are you trying to determine or decide?

Getting Results from Jobs-to-be-Done Interviews

Discover experience jobs of customers

Experience “jobs” are important to consider in the world of service innovation, where many times people are trying to get more than simply a functional job done; they want to have an experience **while doing so**. We can all think of many such examples. This should not be confused with *customer experience*. Customer experience must take into account functional and emotional jobs, and the related needs. The experience of *consumption* simply is not enough when striving to achieve the perfect *customer* experience. Therefore, we view these as they relate to functional jobs first.

- What experiences are you seeking when **listening to music while out for a run**?
- What are you trying to experience, discover, appreciate, and so on, by using product/service that help you to **listen to music while out for a run**?
- What would the ideal solution help you to experience, discover, appreciate, and so on?

Note: Experience jobs are not mapped; they are stated. You can then score them for importance and satisfaction as you would outcomes on the core job.

Common verbs associated with experience jobs are:

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Discover emotional jobs

These are similar to “be goals” in that they are feelings or perceptions that result from getting the core functional job done successfully. You want to avoid framing your investigation purely around emotion, since there is no discrete path to the solution space.

- If you had the ideal solution for **listening to music while out for a run**, how would that make you feel, or how would you be perceived?
- What feelings or perceptions would be avoided?

A common break-down might be grouped like this:

- I want to feel...
- I want to avoid feeling...
- I want to be perceived as...
- I want to avoid being perceived as...

Discover new and emerging jobs

What new jobs will you need to accomplish as a result of a particular discovery, legal or regulatory change, or technology development?

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Consumption Jobs

While capturing jobs, it may be useful to understand relevant consumption jobs. Not all will be relevant to a core job. There is also a difference between **product** consumption chain jobs and **service** consumption chain jobs.

Discover the job map

One of the main purposes of JTBD interviews is to decompose the job into logical steps. These steps are not activities or procedures; they are things that must be accomplished along the way to getting the job done. There are simple tests below to help you to exclude any hint of solutions. Since we are focusing on the core job-to-be-done, we want this map to be stable over time.

We'll use the example job of “**Listen to Music while out for a run**” throughout.

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Validate the Job Steps with each Question

Example: Listen to music *while out for a run*

- **Valid step:** gather the desired music
- **Invalid step:** Download MP3 files **[solution]**

Does the step apply universally for any customer executing the job, or does it depend on how a particular customer does the job?

- **Valid step:** Order the music for listening
- **Invalid step:** Click the column header in Amazon's recently added files **[solution]**

Define the Execution Step

The execution step describes the job as we normally think about it. In this case, running isn't the job to be done, listening to music at some point during the run is the job. We separate this out because music enthusiasts who listen to music while out on a run will have specific needs *while listening to music*.

What are the most central tasks that must be accomplished when listening to music while out for a run?

Define Pre-execution Steps

Prior to listening to music while out on a run, there are things that must be accomplished. These could be done prior to beginning the run, or perhaps while running. We break these out into discrete steps so we can put *needs* into the appropriate context.

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- What needs to be happen before **listening to music while out for a run** can be successfully carried out?
- What needs to be defined or planned before **listening to music while out for a run**?
- What needs to be located or gathered before **listening to music while out for a run**?
- What needs to be prepared or set up before **listening to music while out for a run**?
- What needs to be confirmed before **listening to music while out for a run**?

Define Post-execution Steps

There are other steps that are distinct from listening. For example, we may be monitoring whether the correct music is playing, or perhaps if the audio quality of the music is sufficient. We may also need to monitor the volume of the music.

These indicators could lead a runner who is listening to music to make adjustments - change the song, increase the volume, etc. - to ensure they achieve the desired listening experience. We don't all have the same needs, nor do we *listen to music while out on a run* in the same circumstances (e.g., high winds vs. calm, rain vs. sunny, etc.). But we're all still listening to music, while out for a run.

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- What must happen after **listening to music while out for a run** to ensure that **listening to music while out for a run** is successfully carried out?
- What must be monitored or verified after **listening to music while out for a run** to ensure that **listening to music while out for a run** is successfully performed?
- What must be modified or adjusted after **listening to music while out for a run**?
- What must be done to properly conclude **listening to music while out for a run** or prepare for the next time you **listen to music while out for a run**?

Alternate Questions

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- [Define, Plan, Select, Determine] What needs to be defined or planned up front to ensure success in **listening to music while out for a run**?
- [Located, Gather, Access, Retrieve] What inputs or resources need to be located to ensure success in **listening to music while out for a run**?
- [Prepare, Set up, Organize, Examine] What needs to be prepared to ensure success in **listening to music while out for a run**?
- [Confirm, Validate, Prioritize, Decide] What needs to be confirmed before **listening to music while out for a run**?
- [Execute, Perform, Transact, Administer] What must a **music enthusiast** do to execute the core purpose of **listening to music while out for a run** successfully?
- [Monitor, Verify, Track, Check] What must be monitored to ensure that **listening to music while out for a run** gets done successfully?
- [Resolve, Troubleshoot, Restore, Fix] What problems related to **listening to music while out for a run** done must be resolved on occasion?
- [Modify, Upgrade, Adjust, Maintain] What modifications are necessary to ensure success in **listening to music while out for a run**?
- [Conclude, Store, Finish, Close] What must **music enthusiasts** do to successfully conclude **listening to music while out for a run**?

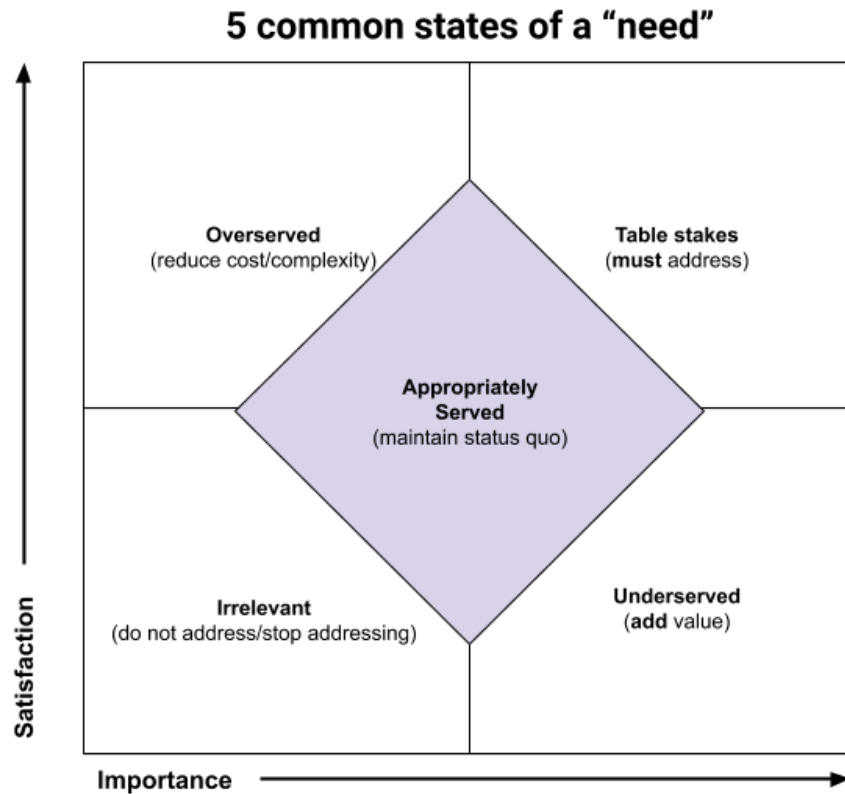
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Discover the desired outcomes

Also known as *customer performance metrics* or *customer needs*, these are the statements we collect from Jobs-to-be-done interviews using the Outcome-driven Innovation® framework. They are not the same as *pain points*. They are **metrics** (stable over time) which can have a number of *states* depending on *who* is responding, *when* they are responding (with the current solution they are using), and what circumstance they may find themselves in:

- ...**underserved** (very important and very unsatisfied)
- ...**overserved** (very unimportant and very satisfied)
- ...**irrelevant** (very unimportant and very unsatisfied)
- ...**appropriately served** (somewhat important and somewhat satisfied)
- ...**table stakes** (very important and very satisfied)

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It's important to remember that we are capturing a comprehensively exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and stable set of desired outcome statements across the entire job map. You might find 50-150 of these for a core job to be done. **In this state, they are unquantified and simply *describe* what perfect execution of the core job would look like.**

Translate what you hear to "desired outcome statements"

As you ask your questions...

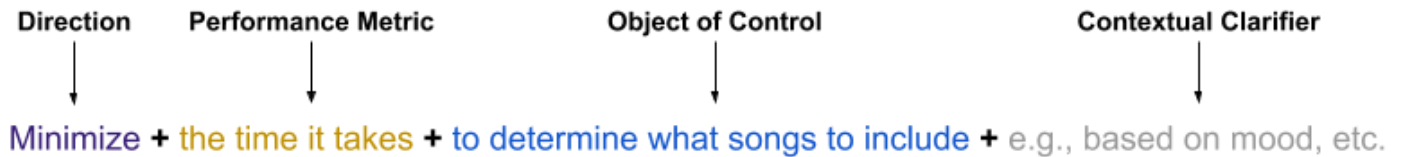
You hear....

"I wish it were easier to find songs that fit my mood"

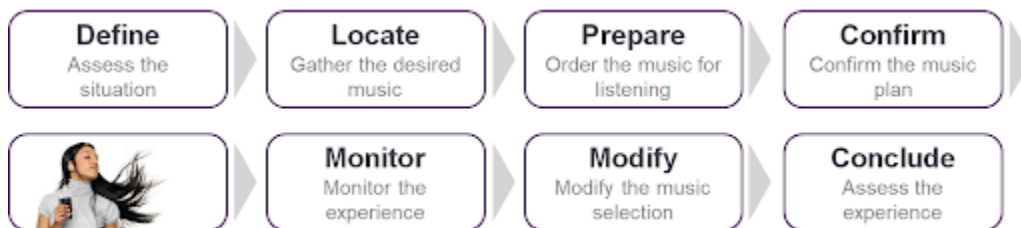
You translate this to...

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Desired Outcome Statement



Ask the following questions for each step in the Job Map



We're trying to do two things: First, eliminate time required in getting the job step done, and second, eliminate variability and waste from the job step. None of these questions lead to a discussion about a product. You're simply discussing the steps in a **core** job.

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- What do you do first when **gathering the desired music**? What do you do next?
- What makes **gathering the desired music** time-consuming or slow? What makes it cumbersome or inconvenient?
- What makes **gathering the desired music** problematic or challenging? What causes it to be inconsistent or to go off track?
- What makes **gathering the desired music** unpredictable?
- What makes **gathering the desired music** wasteful?
- What makes **gathering the desired music** inefficient?
- What makes **gathering the desired music** ineffective or the output of poor quality? What would the ideal result look like?
- What solutions (products, services, etc.) do you use in this process step? What makes [SOLUTION] better than [ANOTHER SOLUTION] in this process step? What makes [SOLUTION] worse than [ANOTHER SOLUTION] in this process step?

Other probes...

- If you don't plan the job well, what could go wrong?
- If you don't do [a step] well, what could go wrong?
- Is there any circumstance or situation that could cause you not to perform a step? Or perform it well? What is that? [Complexity]
- Over time, what changes have you made to the way you get the step done, and why?
- What improvements/changes have you made to get the job done faster? What do you avoid now that you didn't or couldn't in the past when getting the job done?

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- Tell me about your worst experience when trying to get the job done, what went wrong?
- What changes have you made to avoid problems you've faced in the past?
- Are there times when you use different solutions to get the job done? Why is that?
- What could go wrong if you don't keep track of the success of the job or step?
- Are there times where something went off-track, and you weren't able to recover, why not? How about times when you did recover, how did you do that?
- What things do you do after a job to make sure you're more successful, or have a better experience the next time you try to get the job done?

Some Desired Outcome Best Practices

1. When satisfying an outcome that “minimizes the time it takes to...” then it's unnecessary to develop an outcome that avoids a related problem
2. **Time** and **Likelihood** are the only two units of measure used on core jobs
 - This is based on years of testing in surveys and avoids overloading respondents in long surveys with continually changing measures.
 - Measures like “number” or “amount” or “frequency” are more closely related to consumption jobs, which are solution-specific
3. Minimize the use of double negatives when “minimizing the likelihood of/that...”
4. “Increase” is no longer used after extensive testing.
 - There are no upper bounds to increase. Minimize is bounded to zero.
5. Minimize the likelihood is problem avoidance

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- Avoiding waste
- Avoiding errors
- See Lean's [7 Deadly Wastes](#)

6. Desired outcomes in a Job Map **must be MECE**

- Mutually exclusive
- Collectively exhaustive
- *Example:* If you satisfy an outcome that minimizes the time...make sure another outcome with minimize the likelihood isn't also satisfied before including it

7. Do not use **adjectives** or **adverbs** in our outcome statements (or your jobs statements!)

8. Do not forget to provide examples (e.g.), especially when there is a word in the outcome statement that could be interpreted differently by different people

9. However, the perfect outcome does not need examples

10. Use “minimize the likelihood of getting something wrong” and not “minimize the risk of getting something wrong”

11. A desired outcome **must be measurable and controllable** in the design of the system

- Job executors must be able to control the outcome through action or solution selection

12. Desired outcomes from one step should feed the outcomes from subsequent steps; where practicable

13. Do not include outcomes which would force a selection of another solution just for that step.

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14. If any particular step begins to accumulate more than 10 outcomes, it's time to consider break the step into two steps
 - The exception could be a single execute step, where we tend to see the most outcomes
 - Conversely, if you can only pull out 2-3 outcomes, you might consider whether the step can be folded into another (which would like require a step name change)
15. If you have a step that crafts outcomes for performance evaluation, you should have a monitoring step that evaluates performance using outcomes that measure those same criteria
 - But, just because you have evaluation metrics doesn't mean you need to have a step that develops those measures...it depends on job

Finding complexity & circumstance

In order to understand why one group might have different unmet needs than others, it's important to find circumstances where the step (or job) didn't go as planned. Have the person you interview think of a time when they struggled more than normal. Ask them what lessons they've learned over the years, and what they avoided by adapting their approach.

These **complexity factors** are extremely important when analyzing the hidden market segments that emerge when the metrics are prioritized and grouped around shared and distinct sets of unmet needs.

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- Think of a time when **gathering the desired music** didn't turn out as planned? Why do you think that was?
 - What was different about this time than other times?
 - Did you do something differently? Did you do it prior to entering the context (out for a run)?
 - Did something around you have an impact?
 - Have you changed the solution/method you use? How and why did that help?
- What have you done over time to **gather the desired music** more quickly? Why did you feel you had to do it? How did that help?
- How have you changed the way you **gathered the desired music** to avoid problems you've experienced in the past? What were those problems?

Complexity factors should be **described in terms of a range**. For example:

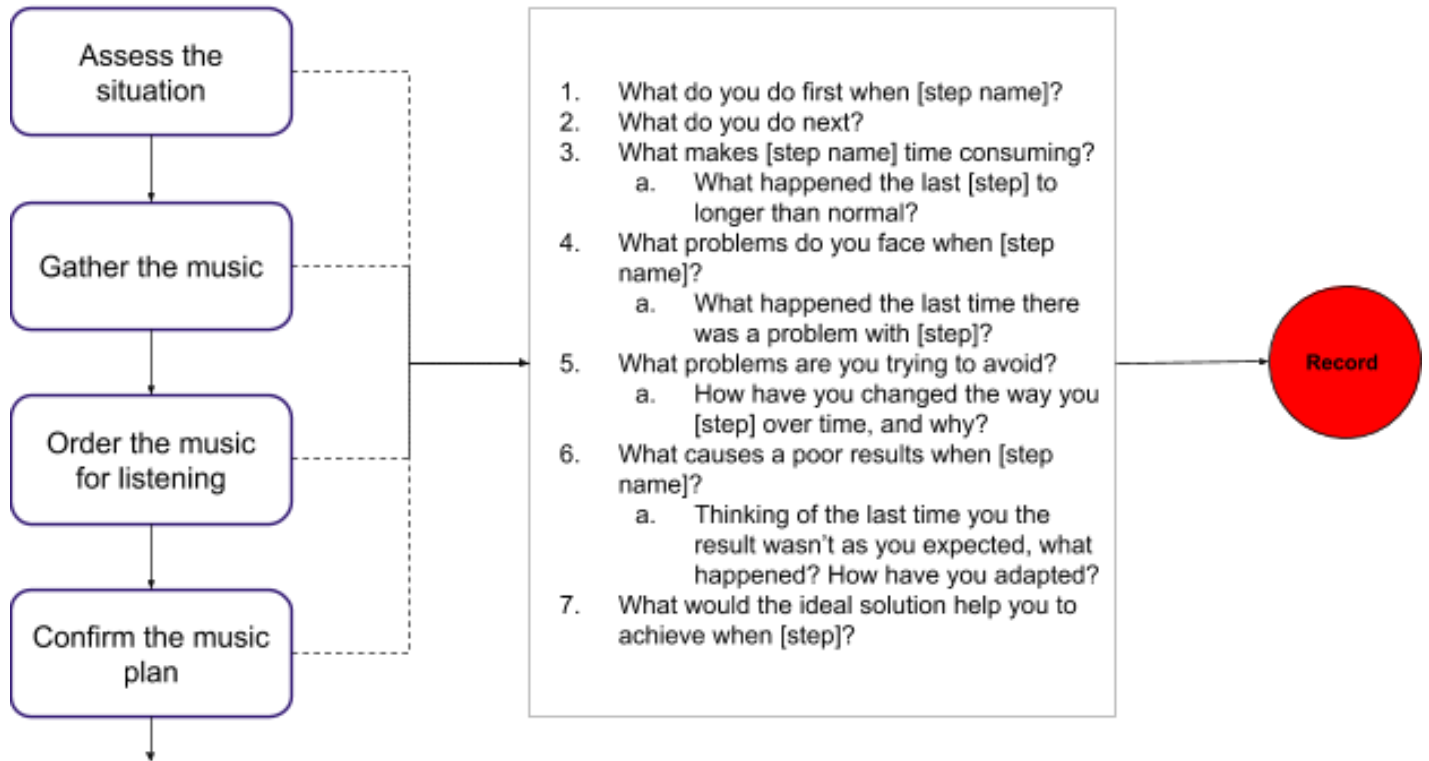
1. Wind condition (low vs. high)
2. Precipitation (low vs. high)
3. Etc.

These will be hugely important after segmenting the market around unmet needs because you won't be able to do so with demographics, firmographics or psychographics.

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The Basic Outcome Playbook

(yes, it can really be this simple)

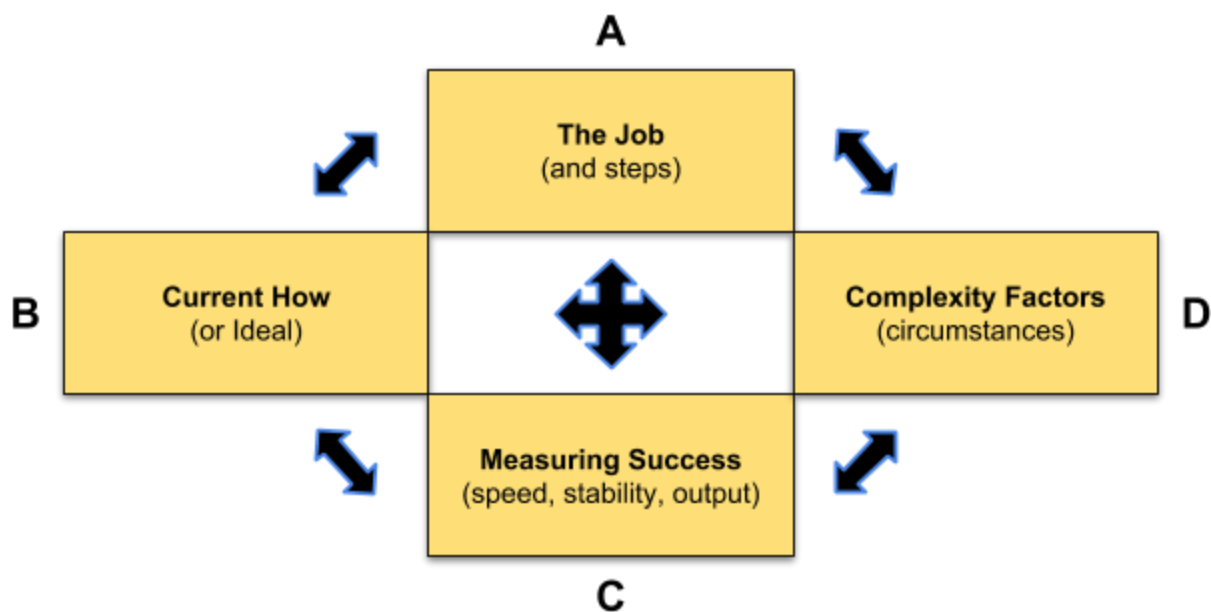


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Dynamically building questions (optional)

A method from the lean world for creating dynamic and unique question combinations (before, or during interviews)

While using a job map and a standard set of questions will generally generate good results in identifying outcomes for a job-to-be-done, it is often helpful to craft unique sets of questions in order to attack the problem from different angles, or add dimensions that make the respondent think more carefully, or stimulate their thoughts as questions get boring and repetitive. We should always be looking for different ways to trigger a thought as we perform our jobs-to-be-done interviews.



This is a basic framework with four pillars. There are 14 possible combinations of these pillars in constructing questions. In conjunction with job steps, current solutions, and uncovered circumstances, this can generate hundreds of different ways to elicit information from those being interviewed for jobs-to-be-done.

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You can use this to aid in the development of a discussion guide, and you can also use it to construct questions on the fly as the conversation unfolds.

Using the Pillars	
A. Understand the Job Steps and their objectives	B. Understand how they are getting the job done today, or the ideal for tomorrow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uncover job steps ○ Use jobs steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uncover how in question ○ Use how in question
C. Understand how they measure success	D. Understand the circumstances or situations that cause certain job executors to struggle more than others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use three pillars (speed, stability, output) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Determine circumstances ○ Use circumstances you capture

Build a Table of Statements to construct JTBD interview questions on the fly

Create a simple worksheet or discussion guide that allows you to organize the category information you are collection to use as inputs to further question framing, or to use later to document solutions and complexity factors.

A	B	C	D
Listening to music while out for a run	JOB (how) Walkman MP3 Player IPhone	Faster More quickly In less time	When is it more difficult to listen to music while running than others
Assessing the situation		More predictable Fewer errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When it's raining ● When it's windy ● When it's noisy ● When your sweaty ● When you're bouncing
Gathering the desired music	STEP (how) Pandora Tunein Amazon	More frequently Higher quality	
Putting the music into a sequence			

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A dynamic list of potential questions

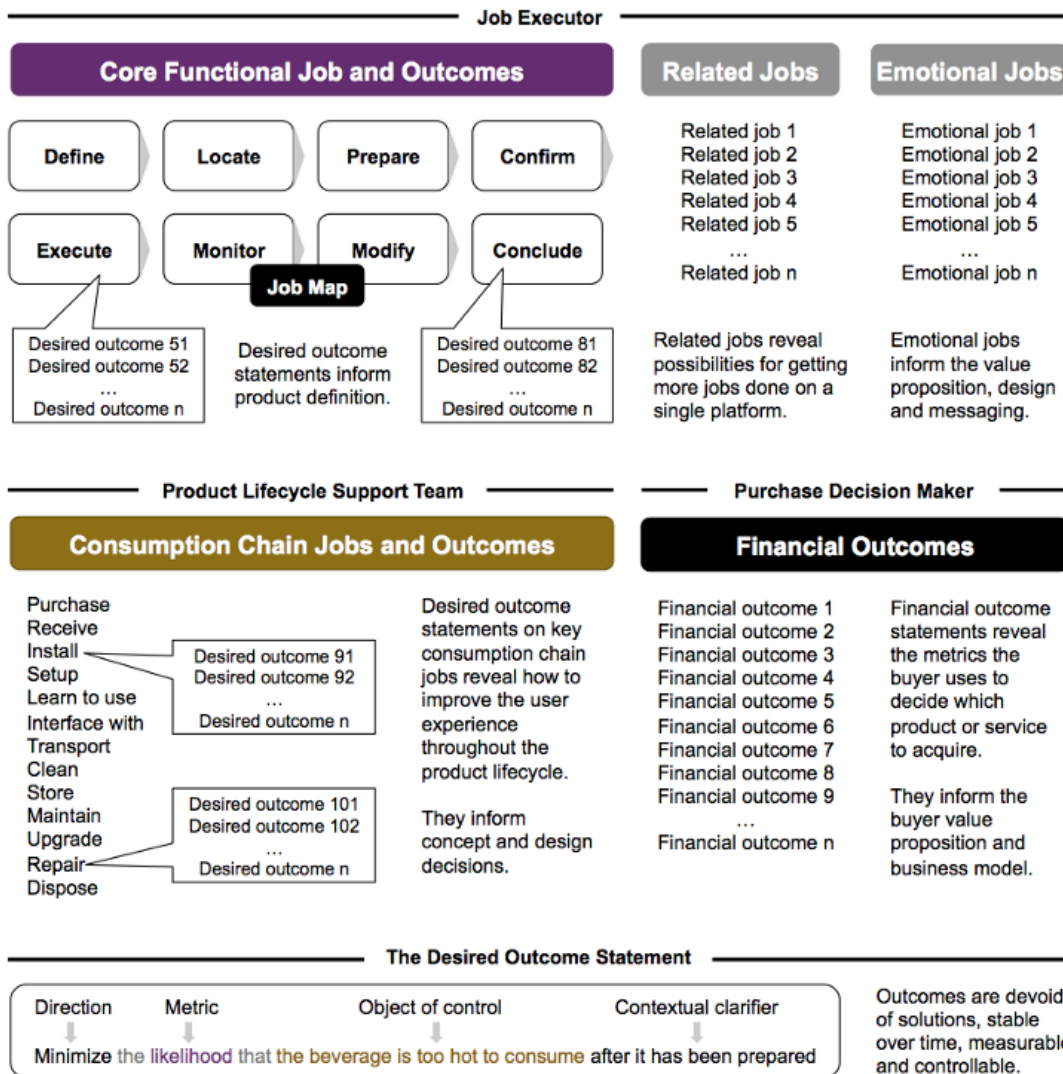
The following table offers some basic examples on how you can pair the pillars to generate questions for your discussion guide and/or come up with questions on the fly.

#	Combination	Examples
1	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are you trying to accomplish when gathering the desired music
2	AB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you walk me through how you currently gather the desired music when using Pandora?
3	AC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the connection between gathering the desired music and how you measure success? Could it be faster? More reliable?
4	AD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think of a time when you struggled to gather the desired music in the past? What was different about that time compared to others?
5	ABC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you're gathering the desired music on the Amazon Music Player, how do you know when your successful? How could the ideal solution help you be more successful?
6	ABD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would the ideal solution help you gather the desired music when you're out for a run out for a run in the rain? Why?
7	ADC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When gathering the desired music, what problems would you like to avoid when it's raining?
8	ABCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What adjustments have you made in the past when gathering the desired music in a way that avoids the problems you experienced when it was raining?
9	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you walk me through how you gather the desired music today?
10	BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you're using your iPhone, what slows you down? Why is that a problem? When you're using Pandora, what kind of problems do you run into? Why are the important to resolve?
11	BD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does your iPhone help you to avoid problems when out for a run in the rain?
12	BCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you're using your iPhone, how well does it help you get things done faster when you're out for a run in the rain?
13	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it generally important for you to get tasks done quickly? Do you have any common, or not so common, problems that you like to avoid?
14	CD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there times when the situation you're in makes it harder to get things done quickly than at other times? How does that impact you? Are there times when the situation you're faced with makes it hard to avoid certain problems?

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The Ultimate Objective

Our objective is to build a qualitative data model that describes the job (and related jobs) in such a way that we know both its purpose, and how job executors measure success. Without showing a completed model, Strategyn's Jobs-to-be-Done "Needs Framework" describes all of the different types of information and their relationships.



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To help you get there, we've developed this [Jobs-to-be-Done Canvas](#) as a starting point to help get your hypotheses down on paper (like to Medium article above).




Jobs-To-Be-Done Canvas™
Powered by Outcome-Driven Innovation®
v1.0

Job Executor e.g., the end user

Core Functional Job-to-be-Done Verb + Object of the verb + Contextual clarifier

CONSUMPTION JOBS	1. DEFINE	2. LOCATE	3. PREPARE	4. CONFIRM
<p>Executor <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Acquire/Purchase <input type="checkbox"/> Receive <input type="checkbox"/> Install <input type="checkbox"/> Setup <input type="checkbox"/> Learn <input type="checkbox"/> Use / Interface with <input type="checkbox"/> Store <input type="checkbox"/> Move <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain <input type="checkbox"/> Repair <input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade <input type="checkbox"/> Replace <input type="checkbox"/> Dispose <p>What technology or product assumptions are you making? Or are you considering an altogether new product?</p> <p>Which of these jobs must be executed to support product consumption? Who is responsible for execution?</p>	<p>Plan, Select, Determine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>What aspects of getting the job done must the customer define upfront to proceed?</p>	<p>Gather, Access, Retrieve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>What inputs or items must be located - tangible/intangible - to do the job?</p>	<p>Setup, Organize, Examine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>How must the customer prepare the inputs and environment to do the job?</p>	<p>Validate, Prioritize, Decide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>What must the customer verify before proceeding to ensure success?</p>
	5. EXECUTE	6. MONITOR	7. MODIFY	8. CONCLUDE
	<p>Perform, Transact, Administer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>What must customers do to execute the job successfully?</p>	<p>Verify, Track, Check</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>What must the customer monitor to ensure the job is successfully executed?</p>	<p>Update, Adjust, Maintain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>What might the customer need to alter for the job to be completed successfully?</p>	<p>Store, Finish, Close</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>What must the customer do to finish the job?</p>
RELATED JOBS	DESIRED OUTCOMES			
<p>What other functional jobs is the executor trying to get done before, during, or after executing the core job?</p>	<p>Overserved (reduce cost/complexity)</p> <p>What outcomes do you hypothesize are not important yet highly satisfied? These are opportunities for cost reduction.</p>	<p>(For core and consumption jobs)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <p>Appropriately Served (maintain status quo)</p> </div> <p>Outcome = Direction + Metric + Object of Control + Contextual Clarifier</p>		<p>Table Stakes (must address)</p> <p>What outcomes do you hypothesize are very important and also very satisfied? These must continue to be satisfied.</p>
EMOTIONAL JOBS	<p>What outcomes do you hypothesize are neither important or satisfied? These needs should not be considered.</p> <p>Irrelevant (do not address / stop addressing)</p>	<p>(For core and consumption jobs)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <p>Appropriately Served (maintain status quo)</p> </div> <p>Outcome = Direction + Metric + Object of Control + Contextual Clarifier</p>		<p>What outcomes do you hypothesize are very important and not well satisfied? These are opportunities to add value.</p> <p>Underserved (add value)</p>



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DEVELOPED BY: Tony Ulwick and Mike Boysen of Strategyn, LLC. More information can be found at jobs-to-be-done.com and strategyn.com.

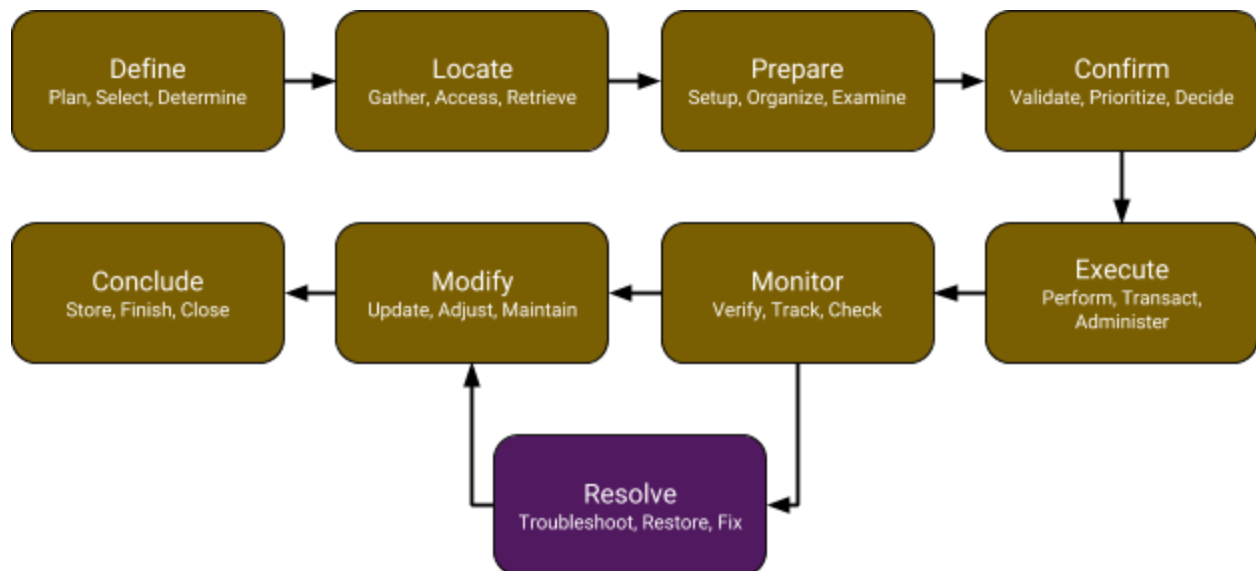
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Universal Maps (and examples)

One of the most powerful tools used in jobs to be done interviews is the Universal Job Map. It's a great strawman to begin your conversations with job executors. Any one of the steps could be broken down into multiple steps, depending on what you're hearing in your interviews.

Universal Job Map (for Products)

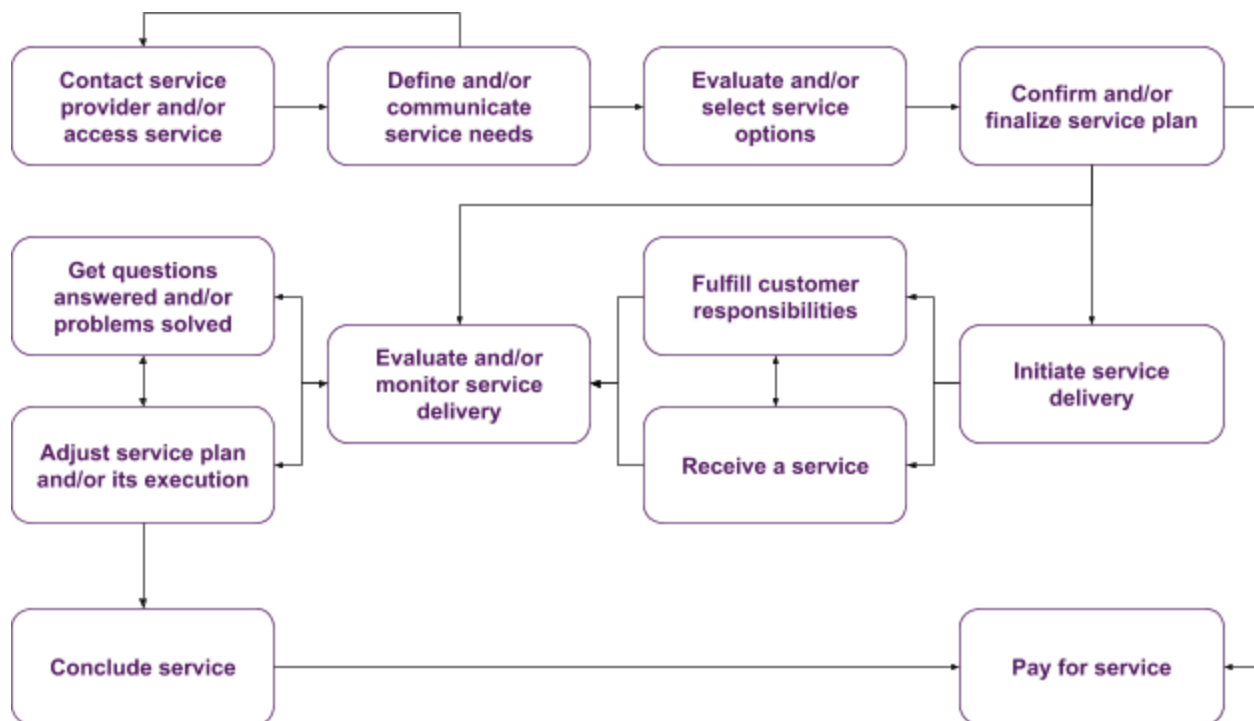
For product innovation, the universal job map has 8 stages (the 9th is aligned to services). Following this map provides simplicity, and consistency to the qualitative interviewing process.



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Universal Job Map (Obtain a Service)

Services are a bit different. This is a universal map for **obtaining a service** and highlights all of the things that are typically considered by those that hire services.



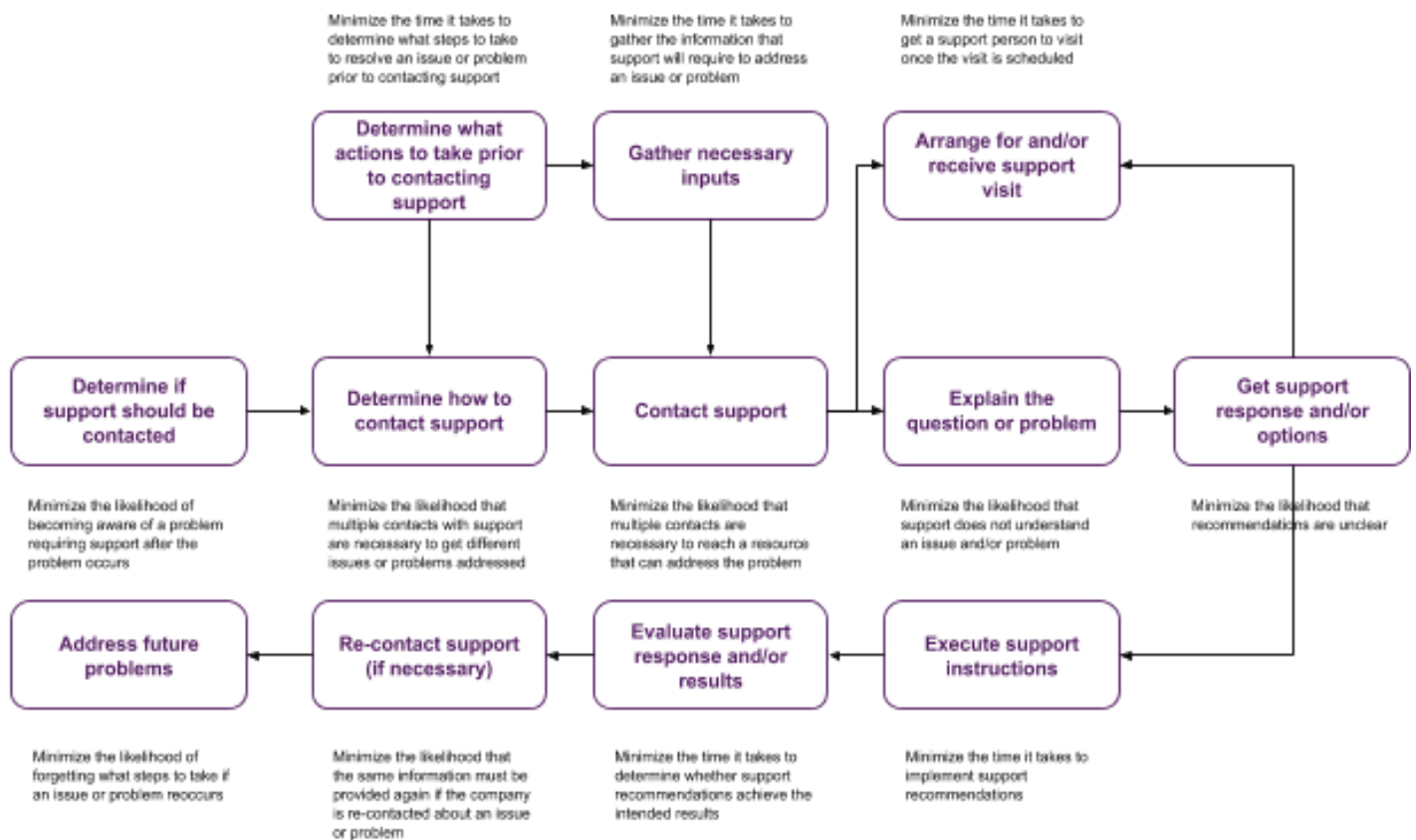
Source: Service Innovation (Bettencourt)

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Example: Obtain Product Support

This is a specific example showing how the universal map for obtaining a service turns into a job map for obtaining product support (which is a service).

With example outcomes...

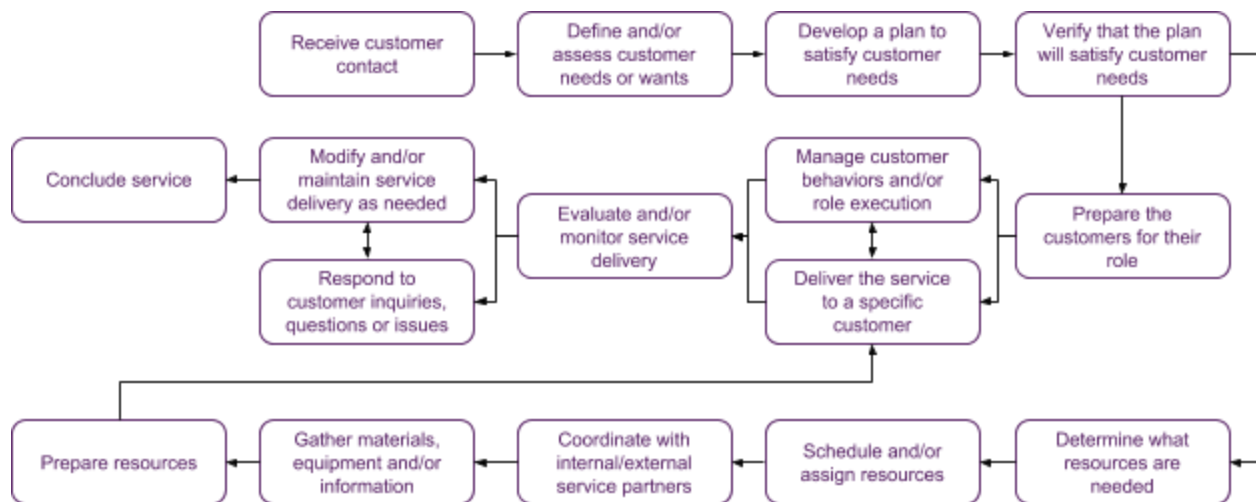


Source: Service Innovation (Bettencourt)

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Universal Job Map (Provide a Service)

On the other side of the coin, a provider has the job of providing a service. Since the goal of the provider should be to provide an exceptional customer experience, this job should line up closely with the customer's job of obtaining the service. However, the job executors for the provider will also have needs when they try to accomplish that goal.



Source: Service Innovation (Bettencourt)

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Sources

The original inspiration for this guide comes from the popular [Job Mapping Guidelines](#) deck I've been sharing for a few years. The rest of it comes from the **true pioneers of Jobs-to-be-Done** (*see below*). I'll also add my colleague Eric Eskey for showing me a better format this and also some better questions. And then there is the late Peter Scholtes, who wrote one of my favorite books of all time.

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