How to make products people want

**the
lean
product
lifecycle**

Tendayi Viki, Craig Strong
and Sonja Kresojevic

Praise for *The Lean Product Lifecycle*

The world is becoming a highly strung, highly digital marketplace where agility and efficiency is key. Businesses need to adapt traditional methodology to ensure they can maintain competitiveness. *The Lean Product Lifecycle* is an invaluable guide to help you future proof your company, ensuring innovation is at the forefront whilst managing the core business.

Antonia Barton, Marketing and Digital Director, BT Plc

How can corporations innovate faster and better? *The Lean Product Lifecycle* provides a really practical way to do this. The book delivers a clear roadmap for developing and managing products along their lifecycle. This book is a must-have practical guide for corporate innovators.

Thomas Krogh Jensen, CEO, Copenhagen Fintech

The Lean Product Lifecycle is crammed full of practical tools and examples for bringing lean innovation into any company. A must-read.

Des Dearlove and Stuart Crainer, founders, Thinkers50

The path to profitable new products that has invigorated our product development process.

Peter Pascale, Vice President, Product Management, Pearson VUE

The product life cycle model is a key tool for product people. This book does a great job at showing how the model can be applied in a lean way to help companies innovate faster.

Roman Pichler, product management expert

🔍 Tips

When working on your empathy maps, here are some useful tips you can follow.

☐ Use sticky notes, do not write directly on the map.

☐ Create different maps for different customer segments. However, if you use one map, then use different-coloured sticky notes for each customer segment.

☐ Focus on what you learned about the customers and their needs. This is not the time to start brainstorming solutions.

☐ At the end of the session, make sure there is a shared understanding of the empathy maps throughout your team.

3.10 Update the circle

At this point, we need to revisit the customer profile on our value proposition canvas. Remember that all the work we have been doing so far exploring customer needs was triggered by the risky assumptions we identified when we reviewed our value proposition canvas. So, the question we need answer is whether all the lessons we are learning support our assumptions and hypotheses.

☐ *Customer jobs, pains and gains:* As team, we need to review each sticky note on our value proposition canvas. For each sticky note, we need to discuss whether what we learned from customers supports that assumption. Were we correct in making that assumption about customer jobs, pains or gains? Do we need to revise the assumption? Or should we remove it from the canvas altogether?

- *New learnings:* We will also have learned new things about our customers that were not part of our original canvas. These new learnings will need to be added to the canvas as well. Remember to put only one job, pain or gain per sticky note.

- *Make decisions:* The more we get out of the building, the more our value proposition canvas will change. At some point, we will have to make decisions. Do we know enough about customers to start thinking about solutions? Have we found meaningful customer jobs to be done? How strong are the customer pains/gains? How are they currently solving their problems or meeting their needs? Do we think customer may pay for a solution to help with their jobs to be done?

The answers to these questions will inform the decision to stop, pivot or persevere. But once we have a sense that there is a real need that we can serve, it is time to revisit the value map on our value proposition canvas.

3.11 Update the square

As our customer profile has been evolving based on customer learnings, we now need to revisit our value map. It is highly like that we will have to update our value map based on learnings. Remember that our goal is to get to problem-solution fit. This means that we need the features of our product or service to match our customer jobs to be done, pain and gains.

- *Product and services, pains relievers and gain creators.* Given what we now know about customer jobs, pains and gains, do we still have the right product or service in mind? Do we have the right feature set to relieve the pains or create the gains that customers want?

- *Learn then confirm*: Innovators have a tendency to take customers at their word. This is partly because of the confirmation bias we spoke about earlier. It is important to recognise that, even if our revised value map is based on customer learnings, our ideas about solutions are still untested. So, an important principle for all innovators to follow is to *learn then confirm.* In other words, talk to customers then get them to do something.

□ *Identify assumptions:* So, after we finish revising our value map, we must resist the urge to make the leap to building a product. Instead, we have to review the map for risky assumptions. Are we confident that customers would want the solution in the way we are imagining it? Will they be willing to sign up for updates, pre-order, engage in a free-trial or make a purchase?

□ *Early solution testing:* Believe it or not, these questions can be answered without building a product. Furthermore, the questions can be answered, not with interviews, but by running experiments that get customers to do something. We will now turn to a few examples of experiments we can run. Such early solution testing, ensures that we enter the Validate stage of the Lean PLC with clearer ideas about the solution we should be building.

3.12 The landing page

The landing page is a single web page that is used to test our value proposition. You can also use flyers and posters to run similar tests. The goal of the test is to check whether our value proposition resonates with customers. Our landing page simply says what the product does and then asks customers to perform some sort of action that registers their interest.

How to do it

Below are some elements of good landing pages.

□ *Headline*: At the top of the page make sure you have a clear headline of what your product is. It is good at this point to have a name for your product. Although, you can actually use the landing page to test out different product names too! A nice image on the landing page also helps, but this is not absolutely necessary.

Figure 3.5
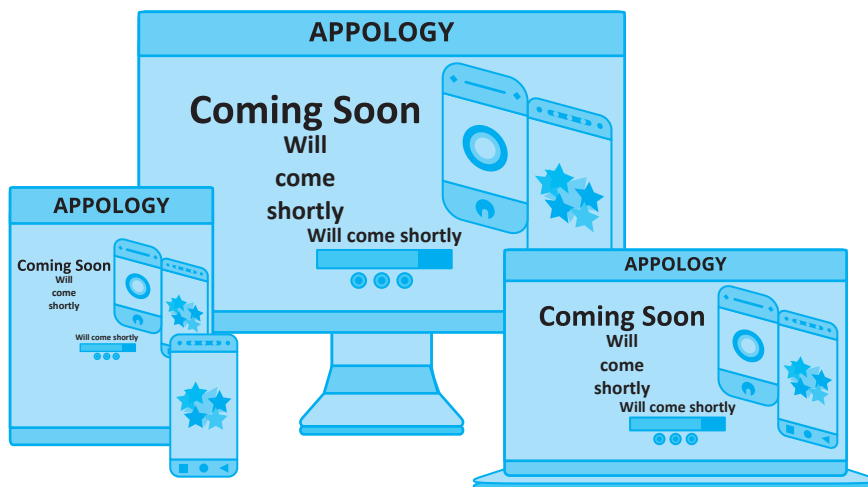
- *Value proposition*: Underneath the headline, you can put a clear value proposition. This is not a description of the features of your product but a statement or promise of the value to be delivered to customers. For example, Lyft once had a landing page with a value proposition statement that simply read, 'Make up to $35/hr driving your own car'.

- *Call to action*: This is the best way to gauge customer interest and intent. After seeing the headline and value proposition, you have to get them to do something. A call to action can be a button that customers can click to sign-up for updates, sign-up for a free trial, pre-order or buy the product. The conversion rates on your call to action is the real data of interest from a landing page. This shows us whether we are thinking of the right solution.

- *A/B testing*: A single landing page can be useful for testing your value proposition, but this process is more powerful when you test different versions of your landing page and compare the results. For example, you can randomly allocate people to see different version of the page with different value propositions or product names and see which one resonates the most.

> ## 🔍 Tips
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> ☐ When describing your value proposition, focus on customer needs or jobs to be done, rather than the features of your product.
>
> ☐ Make sure you have a clear call to action. Also avoid having multiple calls to action as this may confuse customers and muddy your data.
>
> ☐ Make sure you measure the responses of the visitors your site. There is no experimentation without measurement.
>
> ☐ When running A/B tests, focus on one variable at a time. The point here is to keep everything the same and change only the one thing you are interested in testing (e.g. headline or value proposition). If you change too many things, then it becomes difficult to learn what is impacting customer behaviour.
>
> *Optional extra – Test advertising*: The advent of Google and Facebook advertising has provided another for testing value propositions. Similar to landing pages, you can launch an online advertising campaign to test your solution ideas. Using A/B testing, you can measure which value proposition or product name gets the highest click-through rates. Test ads can also be used to test the right channel to reach customers in the future (e.g. Google vs Facebook vs Amazon).

3.13 Comprehension test

The results obtained from a landing page or a test advertising campaign are only meaningful to the extent that people understand the headline or the value proposition. It is possible for an experiment to fail simply because people did not understand the value that was offer. As such, before setting up your landing page or running a test adds, it makes sense to run a comprehension test.

How to do it

This test takes about 15 minutes to complete. All you need to do is to find a sample of early adopters. The test must be run one person at a time:

- ☐ Create the landing page or simply write value proposition statement clearly on a piece of paper.

- ☐ Show the landing page or value proposition statement for a few seconds. Provide enough time for them to read it (e.g. 5–10 seconds).

- ☐ Remove the landing page or value proposition statement and ask the person to tell you what the offering is in their own words.

- ☐ Capture their responses and compare to your own landing page or value proposition statement.

If what people say is similar to your value proposition, then you have a clear offering. However, if people are saying things that are different from your value proposition then you might have to revise your statement to make it clearer.

🔍 Tip

Remember that if you revise your value proposition statement, you have to retest the new statement with customers.

3.14 The explainer video

Another way to ensure that people understand the value proposition is to create an explainer video. This is especially useful when you are thinking of creating a complex product or a product that serves complex needs. A popular example of an explainer video is the one Dropbox created before they had finished building their product. This video illustrated how the product 'worked' and resulted in over 50,000 signups for a product that was yet to be completed!