

PRODUCT AND CUSTOMER

Jobs-to-be-Done

Ulwick · Christensen · Klement · Moesta

PAPER 02 / 02

A Furtherance reference compendium on the intellectual traditions behind organisational design, leadership, execution, and culture.

IN THIS PAPER

The series closes on the sharpest available lens on demand: Jobs-to-be-Done. It reframes why customers buy – not by who they are, but by the progress they are trying to make. The question it answers: what is the customer really “hiring” your product to do?

Ulwick made JTBD quantitative through desired outcomes; Christensen gave it its causal, popular framing; Klement recast the job as the struggle for progress; Moesta built the interview that uncovers it. The camp splits into two schools – noted in the caveat – but shares one move: understand the job, not the customer's attributes.

Anthony Ulwick Outcome-Driven Innovation, 1990s–

Jobs-to-be-Done · the quantitative school

CORE THESIS

Customers buy products to get a **job** done, and they judge success by **desired outcomes**. Innovation should target the outcomes that are **important but underserved**. Outcome-Driven Innovation makes the job measurable and the opportunity predictable.

FRAMEWORK

Element	Meaning
Job-to-be-done	The task or goal the customer is trying to accomplish
Desired outcome statement	A measurable metric of success for the job
Opportunity algorithm	Importance + dissatisfaction □ opportunity
Under- / over-served	Where to innovate, and where not to

METHODOLOGY

Consulting combined with quantitative outcome research.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

Made Jobs-to-be-Done rigorous and quantitative, with a strong claimed hit-rate. The critique: the process is heavy and proprietary.

Clayton Christensen Competing Against Luck, 2016

Jobs-to-be-Done · the causal school

CORE THESIS

Customers “**hire**” a product to make progress in a particular **circumstance** – the job has functional, emotional and social dimensions. Understanding the job predicts what people will buy far better than their demographics or attributes, because it captures **causation**, not just correlation.

FRAMEWORK

Idea	Meaning
Progress in a circumstance	The job is defined by the situation, not the customer type
Functional, emotional, social	Jobs have all three dimensions
Hiring and firing products	Customers hire and fire solutions for the job
Causation over correlation	Attribute data misleads; the job explains

METHODOLOGY

Theory-building through case narrative – famously the “milkshake” study.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

Popularised Jobs-to-be-Done and its causal logic across management. The critique: the framing is more qualitative and looser than Ulwick's, and the two “schools” diverge.

Alan Klement *When Coffee and Kale Compete, 2016*

Jobs-to-be-Done · progress and the four forces

CORE THESIS

A job-to-be-done is the desire for a better self – the **struggle for progress** – not a task. What matters is the **forces** that drive and block a customer's switch from the current way to a new one.

FRAMEWORK

The four forces of progress	Effect on switching
Push of the situation	Dissatisfaction driving change
Pull of the new solution	Attraction toward the new
Anxiety of the new	Fear of the unknown holding back
Habit of the present	Inertia of the current way

METHODOLOGY

A practitioner synthesis emphasising demand and emotional progress; introduced job stories.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

Pushed the “progress-making” interpretation and gave teams job stories. The critique: it is contested within the JTBD community and reads more as philosophy than method.

Bob Moesta *Demand-Side Sales, 2020*

Jobs-to-be-Done · the switch interview

CORE THESIS

Co-creator of the JTBD **switch interview**, Moesta reconstructs the causal **timeline** of a real buying decision – from first thought to purchase – to reveal the forces that made someone switch. Sell by helping customers make progress, not by pushing features.

FRAMEWORK

Idea	What it does
The switch interview	Reconstruct the timeline of a real purchase
The four forces	Diagnose what drove and blocked the switch
The struggling moment	Locate the energy that starts a purchase
Demand-side selling	Help the customer make progress

METHODOLOGY

Practitioner method built from thousands of buying-decision interviews.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

The interviewing technique that operationalises demand-side JTBD. The critique: it is practitioner craft, dependent on interview skill.

A NOTE ON EVIDENCE

A note on the two schools: Jobs-to-be-Done is not one method but two traditions. Ulwick's Outcome-Driven Innovation is quantitative and structured; the Christensen-Klement-Moesta line is causal, qualitative and interview-led. They share a premise but differ in rigour and technique – choose the school that fits the decision, and don't assume “JTBD” means one agreed thing.

Synthesis

Theorist	School	Key idea	Register
Ulwick	Quantitative (ODI)	Desired outcomes; opportunity	Structured / proprietary
Christensen	Causal	Progress in a circumstance	Theory / narrative
Klement	Progress	The four forces; job stories	Practitioner / philosophy
Moesta	Demand-side	The switch interview	Practitioner / method

FOR THE OPERATOR

Jobs-to-be-Done reframes demand around the progress a customer is trying to make – quantified as underserved outcomes (Ulwick), understood causally through the job and its dimensions (Christensen), interpreted as the struggle for progress (Klement), and uncovered through the switch interview and four forces (Moesta). For the operator: stop segmenting by customer attributes and start understanding the job – the progress the customer hires your product to make, and the forces for and against switching. That closes the Product and Customer series.