INTRODUCTION


3. My son Spencer was a really good pitcher in our town’s Little League. I can still see his big hands wrapped around the ball, his composure when a tough batter was at the plate, the way he’d regroup after each pitch with renewed focus. He was unflappable in some very big moments. Someplace there is data that will tell you the number of games he won and lost, how many balls and strikes he threw, and so on. But none of that will ever tell you why. Data is not the phenomenon. It represents the phenomenon, but not very well.

4. During the 1950s, the US Air Force realized that pilots were having trouble controlling their planes. As recounted by Todd Rose, director of the Mind, Brain, and Education program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, in *The End of Average*, the Air Force first assumed the problem was poor training or pilot error. But it turned out that wasn’t the problem at all. The cockpits had a design flaw: they had been built around the “average” pilot in the 1920s.
Since it was obvious that Americans had gotten bigger since then, the Air Force decided to update their measurements of the “average pilot.” That involved measuring more than four thousand pilots of nearly a dozen dimensions of size related to how they’d fit into a cockpit. If those cockpits could be redesigned to fit the average pilot in the 1950s, the problem should be solved, the Air Force concluded.

So how many pilots actually fell into the definition of average after this enormous undertaking? None, Rose reports. Every single pilot had what Rose called a “jagged profile.” Some had long legs, while others had long arms. The height never corresponded with the same chest or head size. And so on. The revised cockpits designed for everyone actually fit no one. When the Air Force finally swept aside the baseline assumptions, the adjustable seat was born. There’s no such thing as “average” in the real world. And innovating toward “average” is doomed to fail. Rose, Todd. *The End of Average: How We Succeed in a World That Values Sameness.* New York: HarperCollins, 2015.

5. Throughout the book, we use the Theory of Jobs to Be Done and Jobs Theory interchangeably. They mean the same thing.
• Disruption, a theory of competitive response to an innovation, provides valuable insights to managers seeking to navigate threats and opportunities. But it leaves unanswered the critical question of how a company should innovate to consistently grow. It does not provide guidance on specifically where to look for new opportunities, or specifically what products and services you should create that customers will want to buy.

• This book introduces the Theory of Jobs to Be Done to answer these questions and provide clear guidance for companies looking to grow through innovation. At its heart, Jobs Theory explains why customers pull certain products and services into their lives: they do this to resolve highly important, unsatisfied jobs that arise. And this, in turn, explains why some innovations are successful and others are not.

• Jobs Theory not only provides a powerful guide for innovation, but also frames competition in a way that allows for real differentiation and long-term competitive advantage, provides a common language for organizations to understand customer behavior, and even enables leaders to articulate their company’s purpose with greater precision.
NOTES


2. A preponderance of evidence has since revealed the adverse effects of trans fats (something my daughter and I were admittedly unaware of at the time). Jobs Theory helps you understand why your customers make the choices that they make—not whether you should offer a solution to their job. Cigarettes, for example, could be hired to satisfy an array of jobs, but are not good for the health of the customer. Ethical choices are, of course, equally important to get right.

3. Maybe “tasteless” is a bit unfair. My family recently spent a long weekend in Bar Harbor, Maine—one of the lobster capitals of the world. At every corner there seems to be another lobster shack of some sort. As seafood lovers, we thought this was heaven! We sat down at one lobster shack and I spotted “lobster burgers” on the menu. Now, I love hamburgers. And I love lobsters. So I thought two-in-one was neat. But when they handed me my lobster burger, it was simply a lobster tail in a bun. No dressing. No tartar sauce. No butter. When I took a bite, I had a surprising revelation: the lobster itself had absolutely no taste! The reason it usually tastes so
good is that ordering lobster gives you license to drown it in butter.
It’s the butter that tastes good, not the lobster. This experience
made me think: how many other “substrates” was I eating, unaware
that they themselves had absolutely no taste! I realized all of these
things—the substrates—are essentially platforms upon which you
build wonderful flavors and textures. So perhaps the industry is cut
the wrong way! You could sell substrates, but then profitably sell
“augmentation” stock as well.

4. The American Heart Association currently recommends buying soft,
trans fat–free spreads instead of regular butter or stick margarine.
• While many in the business world associate the word “theory” with something purely academic or abstract, nothing could be further from the truth. Theories that explain causality are among the most important and practical tools business leaders can have.

• The field of innovation is in need of better theory, especially for the foundational question “What causes a customer to purchase and use a particular product or service?”

• Jobs Theory answers this question by asserting that customers purchase and use (or “hire” in our jobs metaphor) products and services to satisfy jobs that arise in their lives. A job is defined as the progress that a customer desires to make in a particular circumstance.

• This definition is specific and important: Fully understanding a customer’s job requires understanding the progress a customer is trying to make in particular circumstances and understanding all of its functional, social, and emotional dimensions—as well as the tradeoffs the customer is willing to make.

• Once you understand the customer’s Job to Be Done, it brings into sharp relief the true competition you face to be hired. This provides critical information for how to innovate to make your solution more attractive than any competitor’s.
QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS

• Do you understand the real reason *why* your customers choose your products or services? Or why they choose something else instead?

• How do your products or services help your customers to make progress in their lives? In which circumstances are they trying to make that progress? What are the functional, emotional, and social dimensions of this progress?

• What is competing with your products and services to address these jobs? Are there competitors outside of those included in the traditional view of your industry?
1. Some meaningful progress has been made in understanding what it takes to systematize innovation in large organizations. My co-author David Duncan and his colleague Scott Anthony, managing partner at Innosight, have described in detail the foundational components and operations of any well-functioning innovation system, what they refer to as a “Growth Factory.” Their work has guided the efforts of some of the most successful Fortune 100 companies as they’ve built their global innovation capabilities. Other writers have also contributed to our understanding of how to systematize innovation, most notably Vijay Govindarajan at the Tuck School of Business. The Theory of Jobs, however, is focused on a different question: “What causes a customer to purchase and use a particular product or service?” It’s critical to have a theory to answer this question to ensure that the innovation system you establish is pointed in the right direction and works on innovations that have the best chance of success. Anthony, Scott D., and David S. Duncan. Building a Growth Factory. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012.

2. This was the case for Airbnb in the early years. In recent years, Airbnb has identified other jobs at the higher end of the market—and is successfully competing there, too.
3. There’s a tool, called “discovery-driven planning,” that can help companies test whether their strategy to respond to the job they’ve identified will be fruitful before they sink too many resources into any one path. It forces them to articulate what assumptions need to be proved true in order for the strategy to succeed. The academics who created this process, Ian MacMillan and Rita McGrath, called it discovery-driven planning, but it might be easier to think about it as “What has to prove true for this to work?” Companies seldom think about whether to pursue new opportunities by asking this question. Instead, they often unintentionally stack the deck for failure from the beginning. They make decisions to go ahead with an investment based on what initial projections suggest will happen, but then they never actually test whether those initial projections are accurate. So, they often find themselves far down the road, adjusting projections and assumptions to fit what is actually happening rather than testing and making thoughtful choices before they get too far in.

In almost every case of a project failing, mistakes were made in one or more of the critical assumptions upon which the projections and decisions were based. But the company didn’t realize that until they were too far down the road. Money, time, and energy had already been assigned to the project; the company is 100 percent committed; and the team is now on the line to make it work. Nobody
wants to go back to management and say, “You know those assumptions we made? Turns out they weren’t so accurate after all. . . .”

Projects end up getting approved on the basis of incorrect guesses, as opposed to which project is actually most likely to work out.
CHAPTER 3 TAKEAWAYS

- Organizations that lack clarity on what the real jobs their customers hire them to do can fall into the trap of providing one-size-fits-all solutions that ultimately satisfy no one.

- Deeply understanding jobs opens up new avenues for growth and innovation by bringing into focus distinct “jobs-based” segments—including groups of “nonconsumers” for which an acceptable solution does not currently exist. They choose to hire nothing, rather than something that does the job poorly. Nonconsumption has the potential to provide a very, very big opportunity.

- Seeing your customers through a jobs lens highlights the real competition you face, which often extends well beyond your traditional rivals.

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS

- What jobs are *your* customers hiring your products and services to get done?

- Are there segments with distinct jobs that you are inadequately serving with a one-size-fits-none solution?
• Are your products—or competitors’—overshooting what customers are actually willing to pay for?

• What experiences do customers seek in order to make progress—and what obstacles must be removed for them to be successful?

• What does your understanding of your customers’ Jobs to Be Done reveal about the real competition you are facing?

NOTES

1. I have served on the board of trustees of SNHU in the past and on the FranklinCovey board since 2004.

• Jobs Theory provides a clear guide for successful innovation because it enables a full, comprehensive insight into all the information you need to create solutions that perfectly nail the job.

• There are many ways to develop a deep understanding of the job, including traditional market research techniques. While it’s helpful to develop a “job hunting” strategy, what matters most is not the specific techniques you use, but the questions you ask in applying them and how you piece the resulting information together.

• A valuable source of jobs insights is your own life. Our lives are very articulate and our own experiences offer fertile ground for uncovering Jobs to Be Done. Some of the most successful innovations in history have derived from the experiences and introspection of individuals.

• While most companies spend the bulk of their market research efforts trying to better understand their current customers, important insights about jobs can often be gathered by studying people who are not buying your products—or anyone else’s—a group we call nonconsumers.

• If you observe people employing a workaround or “compensating behavior” to get a job done, pay close attention. It’s
usually a clue that you have stumbled on to a high-potential innovation opportunity, because the job is so important and they are so frustrated that they are literally inventing their own solution.

• Closely studying how customers use your products often yields important insights into the jobs, especially if they are using them in unusual and unexpected ways.

• Most companies focus disproportionately on the functional dimensions of their customers’ jobs; but you should pay equally close attention to uncovering the emotional and social dimensions, as addressing all three dimensions is critical to your solution nailing the job.

**QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS**

• What are the important, unsatisfied jobs in your own life, and in the lives of those closest to you? Flesh out the circumstances of these jobs, and the functional, emotional, and social dimensions of the progress you are trying to make—what innovation opportunities do these suggest?

• If you are a consumer of your own company’s products, what jobs do you use them to get done? Where do you see them falling short of perfectly nailing your jobs, and why?
• Who is not consuming your products today? How do their jobs differ from those of your current customers? What’s getting in the way of these nonconsumers using your products to solve their jobs?

• Go into the field and observe customers using your products. In what circumstances do they use them? What are the functional, emotional, and social dimensions of the progress they are trying to make? Are they using them in unexpected ways? If so, what does this reveal about the nature of their jobs?
1. In *Disrupting Class*, which I wrote with my colleagues Michael Horn and Curtis Johnson, we assert that going to school isn’t a job. The job in every student’s life is “I want to feel successful every day.” And, frankly, most schools are not designed to do that job well. In fact, kids often come home at the end of a school day feeling intellectually beat up—that they have failed. Students can hire school to get the job done, but there are lots of competitors they could hire. If a student isn’t feeling successful, for example, he could fire school and hire a gang instead. She could get some kind of unskilled job to earn money and buy a car to feel successful. These are the “Snickers” and “doughnuts” that compete against school and they are very tempting to students for whom school is not doing the job. Christensen, Clayton M., Michael B. Horn, and Curtis W. Johnson. *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008.

By contrast, I’m fascinated by the approach that Khan Academy is designing into its offerings. Much of the Khan Academy’s material is organized so you *cannot* fail. When a student gets stuck on a problem, there are resources easily available to help her understand the concept better. If the student gets frustrated and wants to skip to the next problem, she can’t. She can’t advance to the next challenge
until she understands the current problem. Further resources and hints are available with a click of the mouse, enabling the student to overcome the challenge and feel like a success.

2. I like to think of this as a kind of “fracking” for jobs. In oil drilling, fracking allows companies to become far more productive in their attempts to find oil. Before fracking technology was available, companies had to pick and choose where to drill. If a vein did not yield oil, they simply moved on. They could have been very close to oil, but if their particular vein did not directly reach into a source, the vein was unsuccessful. With fracking, companies are able to drill very, very deep, but then are able to expand their search horizontally once they’re down there when fracturing fluid is pumped at high pressures into the hole to find and widen cracks. This enables far more productive oil drilling. “Fracking” for jobs will do the same.

3. Intermountain Healthcare is a not-for-profit on whose board of trustees I voluntarily serve.

4. The ripple effect of Kimberly-Clark’s incontinence products and P&G’s diapers in China is enormous. Think of how the lives of family, friends, and colleagues around those who actually use the products are improved, too.
• Deeply understanding a customer’s real Job to Be Done can be challenging in practice. Customers are often unable to articulate what they want; even when they do describe what they want, their actions often tell a completely different story.

• Seemingly objective data about customer behavior is often misleading, as it focuses exclusively on the Big Hire (when the customer actually buys a product) and neglects the Little Hire (when the customer actually uses it). The Big Hire might suggest that a product has solved a customer’s job, but only a consistent series of Little Hires can confirm it.

• Before a customer hires any new product, you have to understand what he’ll need to fire in order to hire yours. Companies don’t think about this enough. Something always needs to get fired.

• Hearing what a customer can’t say requires careful observation of and interactions with customers, all carried out while maintaining a “beginner’s mind.” This mindset helps you to avoid ingoing assumptions that could prematurely filter out critical information.

• Developing a full understanding of the job can be done by assembling a kind of storyboard that describes in rich detail the customer’s circumstances, moments of struggle, imperfect experiences, and corresponding frustrations.
• As part of your storyboard, it’s critically important to understand the forces that compel change to a new solution, including the “push” of the unsatisfied job itself and the “pull” of the new solution.
• It is also critical to understand the forces opposing any change, including the inertia caused by current habits and the anxiety about the new.
• If the forces opposing change are strong, you can often innovate the experiences you provide in a way that mitigates them, for example by creating experiences that minimize the anxiety of moving to something new.

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS

• What evidence do you have that you’ve clearly understood your customers’ jobs? Do your customers’ actions correspond to what they tell you they want? Do you have evidence that your customers make the Little Hire and the Big Hire?
• Can you tell a complete story about how your customers go from a circumstance of struggle, to firing their current solution, and ultimately hiring yours (both the Big and the Little Hires)? Where are there gaps in your storyboard and how can you fill them in?
What are the forces that impede potential customers from hiring your product? How could you innovate the experiences surrounding your product to overcome these forces?
NOTES


2. You can listen to the original, unedited mattress interview on Bob Moesta’s website: Jobstobedone.org.

3. It is worth noting how our Theory of Jobs relates to another popular idea related to customer-centric innovation, that of “design thinking.” This label is commonly applied to a broad set of ideas and practices, but at its heart it refers to a problem-solving methodology that emphasizes deep empathy with the customer, divergent thinking, and rapid iteration of solutions. A central element of design thinking is to prioritize users’ experiences over product attributes, and on this important point we find common ground. Because Jobs Theory provides a causal explanation for why customers will embrace some innovations and not others, as well as a language for understanding deeply the insights about customers that really matter, it is complementary to, and completely compatible with, design thinking. The language and thought process of jobs provides a powerful set of tools for developing the deep customer insights required by design thinking, and for inspiring solutions that customers will actually want to purchase and use.
• After you’ve fully understood a customer’s job, the next step is to develop a solution that perfectly solves it. And because a job has a richness and complexity to it, your solution must, too. The specific details of the job, and the corresponding details of your solution, are critically important to ensure a successful innovation.

• You can capture the relevant details of the job in a job spec, which includes the functional, emotional, and social dimensions that define the desired progress; the tradeoffs the customer is willing to make; the full set of competing solutions that must be beaten; and the obstacles and anxieties that must be overcome. The job spec becomes the blueprint that translates all the richness and complexity of the job into an actionable guide for innovation.

• Complete solutions to jobs must include not only your core product or service, but also carefully designed experiences of purchase and use that overcome any obstacles a customer might face in hiring your solution and firing another. This means that ultimately all successful solutions to jobs can be thought of as services, even for product companies.
• If you can successfully nail the job, over time you can transform your company’s brand into a purpose brand, one that customers automatically associate with the successful resolution of their most important jobs. A purpose brand provides a clear guide to the outside world as to what your company represents and a clear guide to your employees that can guide their decisions and behavior.

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS

• What are the most critical details that must be included in the job spec for your target job? Do you understand the obstacles that get in customers’ way? Do your current solutions address all these details?

• What are the experiences of purchase and use that your customers currently have? How well do these align with the requirements of their complete job spec? Where are there opportunities to improve them?
1. Source: *PowerReviews*, a provider of ratings, reviews, and question-and-answer technology to more than one thousand brands and retailers

2. I recently read an account of a local restaurateur who rued the great reviews he initially got on Yelp because they drove higher-end foodies to his restaurant in search of discovering a hidden gem. His restaurant was, he pointed out, a *decent* local place. But somehow foodies, who he never intended to attract in the first place, ended up disappointed and wrote bad reviews.

• As we’ve said in the last chapter, the key to successful innovation is to create and deliver the set of experiences corresponding to your customer’s job spec. To do this consistently, a company needs to develop and integrate the right set of processes that deliver these experiences. Doing so can yield a powerful source of competitive advantage that is very difficult for others to copy.

• Despite the value of developing a set of processes integrated around the customer’s job, it does not come naturally to most companies. Processes abound in all companies, of course, but in most cases they are aimed at improving efficiency or achieving a narrow outcome within a specific function. Delivering a complete set of experiences to nail the job usually requires that new processes be deliberately defined, and new mechanisms put in place to coordinate functions that are usually siloed.

• A powerful lever to drive job-centric process development and integration is to measure and manage to new metrics aligned with nailing the customer’s job. Managers should ask what elements of the experience are the most critical to the customer, and define metrics that track performance against them.
• Most organizations do not have one person who is the “steward” ensuring the company consistently delivers against the customer’s job. Traditional organizational structures and siloes do have value and are likely to endure, and large-scale reorgs are not usually practical. Therefore, the best way to move toward a more jobs-centric organization is to carefully set up and integrate the right processes, measure the right things, and over time embed jobs centricty in the culture.

• How you solve for a customer’s job will inevitably change over time; you need to build in flexibility to your processes, to allow them to continuously adapt and improve the experiences you deliver.

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS

• How does your organization ensure that the customer’s job guides all critical decisions related to product development, marketing, and customer service?

• Do the different functions that are part of your customer’s experience (for example, your product, service, marketing, sales, after-sale service) all support nailing your customer’s job in a coordinated, integrated way, or are they in conflict?
• What new processes could you define to ensure more integrated delivery of the experiences required by your customers’ jobs?

• What elements of the end-to-end experience are most critical to perfectly solving your customer’s job? What metrics could you define to track performance against these elements?
NOTES

1. Regarded as one of the most influential management books of all time, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* by Edgar Schein transforms the abstract concept of culture into a tool that can be used to better shape the dynamics of organization and change. Schein, Edgar H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.


3. A 2010 Bain & Company study of fifty-seven major reorganizations found that fewer than one-third produced any meaningful improvement in performance. Some actually destroyed value.

The origin story of most companies typically involves an entrepreneur identifying an important job that does not have an existing satisfactory solution, and developing a creative way to solve it.

As a company grows up, however, it’s very common for it to lose focus on the job that sparked its existence in the first place. Despite the best intentions and a century of marketing wisdom, companies start to act as if their business is defined by the products and services they sell (“quarter-inch drills”) instead of the jobs that they solve (“quarter-inch holes”).

While there are many drivers of this drift away from the true north of the customer’s job, foremost among them is the tendency of managers to fall prey to the Three Fallacies of Innovation Data:

- **The Fallacy of Active Data Versus Passive Data:** Instead of staying cognizant of and focused on the type of data that characterizes the rich complexity of the job (passive data), growing companies start to generate operations-related data (active data), which can seduce managers with its apparent objectivity and rigor but which tends to organize itself around products and customer characteristics, rather than Jobs to Be Done.
- *The Fallacy of Surface Growth*: As companies make big investments in customer relationships, they focus their energies on driving growth through selling additional products to those customers or solving a broader set of their jobs, what we call surface growth—as opposed to staying focused on solving the core job better.

- *The Fallacy of Conforming Data*: Managers focus on generating data that conforms to their preexisting business models.

- Awareness of these fallacies is the first step toward preventing them from taking over innovation in a company, but doing so on an ongoing basis requires constant vigilance and intervention.

**Questions for Leaders**

- How connected are your innovation efforts to the core jobs your company was started to solve?

- How would your people characterize the fundamental business you are in? Would they describe it in terms of solving an important job in their customers’ lives, or in terms of the products and services you offer?

- What data drives your innovation and investment decisions? How closely connected is this data to your customers’ jobs?

- Are you falling prey to the Fallacy of Surface Growth, that is,
are you overly focused on driving growth through selling new products to existing customers without an understanding of the progress customers are trying to make in their lives?

- What data is gathered and presented to make important innovation and investment decisions? What mechanisms do you have in place to ensure that this data reveals what you need to see, rather than what is comforting to believe?

- How are you ensuring that your customers’ Job to Be Done has a voice in your decision making and resource allocation activities?

2. The entire time I was an MBA student at Harvard Business School, I never heard the quarter-inch hole or selling customers the wrong things mentioned. Not when I was a student, not even after that when I was working at Boston Consulting Group, and not even during my doctoral studies. I only inadvertently heard someone refer to the whole analogy much later in my career—and rued not learning it sooner. How could something so profound become so obscure?

3. I had a great exchange of ideas with the gentleman who visited me that day. Even though he freely shared his story with me, I have chosen to protect his identity here. But the publicly available facts about V8 speak for themselves.


5. By analogy, look at our health care system. My cardiologist never calls me because the data about my heart doesn’t change. I’m happy
to say it’s healthy. There’s no active data to respond to. But that
illustrates why we have a system that only treats sickness—it’s not a
“health” care system; it’s a “sick” care system. They’re not the same
thing. When we get sick, all of a sudden the data about us that the
doctors see kicks into high gear and the system organizes around
making that data look better. But that’s not the same thing as keep-
ing us healthy in the first place. This is the same thing that managers
do—they respond to changes in data, but don’t pay attention to the
passive data that is steeped in the context of the most important
thing the manager should be focusing on: the customer’s jobs.

6. Many economists assume a rational actor in their models, because
people have access to all needed information and thus can act ratio-
nally. But in reality, we rely on the information that is created by the
situation that we are in—as Nobel Prize winners Herbert A. Simon
and James G. March explore in their explanation of “bounded ratio-
nality.” Bounded rationality is the idea that in decision making, the
rationality of individuals is limited by the information they have, the
cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time
they have to make a decision.

7. A good example of this is the power-tool line DeWalt, which had
earned its reputation through its stellar radial arm saw. It was the
best in the industry—and it helped establish DeWalt as a brand
you could trust. But after Black & Decker acquired it in the 1960s, DeWalt spread into new areas. It seemed to me that Black & Decker just went up and down the aisles of the hardware store to see what everybody else was making—drills and clamps, and so on—and thought, Oh, we can do that, too. It will create new revenue. DeWalt then found ways to outsource the manufacturing of these new products so they could be produced inexpensively. But trying to steal revenue from your competitors by taking them on with lower-quality imitations is not a growth plan to count on. That’s why we call it surface growth. You can copy ideas you already see on the shelves but none of this is based on a clear understanding of jobs—and it’s far, far less likely to succeed.


10. I know firsthand the limits of what data tells us. Our son Michael graduated from Harvard Business School as a Baker Scholar, the highest academic honor given to MBA students. If you look at the data about him while he was at HBS, it would probably list the courses he took, the grades he got, and his attendance record.
But what it wouldn’t record is that he was the “education representative” for his section of the class. It was his responsibility to cultivate a culture of learning and supporting each other within the section. It was, I believe, a truly great section, in part because of what Michael did as its leader. I think it was the most powerful lesson he learned at HBS, how to inspire people by creating the right culture. But there’s no data to reflect that. That data is all embedded in the context.

This reminds me of a moving speech by Bobby Kennedy:

“Our Gross National Product, now, is over 800 billion dollars a year. . . . Yet the Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country. It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans.”

• Understanding the most important jobs your company solves for customers can be translated into a rallying cry that aligns individuals across the organization behind a common purpose and functions as an enduring innovation North Star.

• In contrast to the usually generic nature of most companies’ mission statements, a well-crafted statement of the jobs a company exists to solve can be both inspiring and practical.

• An organization explicitly focused on a clearly defined job enjoys four key benefits:

  • *Distributed decision making:* Employees throughout the organization are empowered to make good decisions that align with the job, and to be autonomous and innovative.

  • *Resource optimization:* The jobs focus shines a light on which resources are aligned against what matters most and which are not, and enables them to be rebalanced accordingly.

  • *Inspiration:* Solving a customer’s job is inherently inspiring to individuals in an organization, as it enables them to see how their work enables real people to make progress in their lives.

  • *Better measurement:* With a focus on the job, people will naturally seek to measure and manage to more customer-centric metrics.
• Finding the right way to articulate the job your company is in business to solve—and driving this deeply into your culture—can be difficult and takes real work, but the benefits are worth it.

QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS

• What are the most important jobs—or the most important job—your organization exists to solve?

• How broadly understood are these jobs across your organization? Are they reflected in your mission statement or other key company communications?

• Do your leaders consistently communicate the centrality of these jobs?

• How could you embed these jobs in all your leadership communications, your corporate communications, and your culture?

NOTES

1. I have previously served on the editorial advisory board of Deseret News.


4. We know of at least five authors who have published books named *Hidden in Plain Sight*. They are Jan Chipchase and Simon Steinhardt, Erich Joachimsthaler, Andrew H. Thomas, and Peter J. Wal- lison. We thank them, and undoubtedly others, with this marvelous phrase that we shamelessly borrow in this chapter.