



CREATE FOUNDATIONS

POWERED BY CREATE BIRMINGHAM

THE EVOLUTION OF YOUR CUSTOMER AND YOUR PRODUCT

CREATE FOUNDATIONS: The Evolution of Your Customer and Your Product

1. Your Solution Now

Get Creative

(50 minutes)

Remember, the problems your customers are currently facing are different (even if slightly) than the ones you were solving for them prior to this major change. As such, you need to find ways to shift your solution to meet those changing needs.

The Solution

Your solution is what you are offering to address your customer’s problem—your product or service. It is the concrete thing itself, the item that you’d see listed on a receipt or invoice – a hat, whole bean coffee, an app, a yoga class, consulting services. It also includes the various components – or features – of what that solution includes.

You may be finding that the solution you typically offer your customer is now problematic. For example, a haircut or massage is difficult to deliver without personal contact. **If there was ever a time for entrepreneurial thinking, this is it.**

ASK YOURSELF:

- What can I offer my customer to solve their problem?
- What new opportunities are available to me due to this unexpected change?
- How can I shift my thinking about what my business offers to see new ways forward?

Journal Box...

The Benefit

While the solution describes what your customer is buying, the benefit explains why your solution matters to your customer. The benefit describes how your product or service solves your customer’s problem, makes your customer feel, or enhances their wellbeing.

ASK YOURSELF:

- What can I do for my customer to make things easier? What can I take away?
- How am I solving the problem?

- What draws the customer to my product or service?
- What motivates the customer to buy? How will the customer's life be different?

Journal Box...

Typically, the benefit is not a physical attribute; it's intangible. The benefit you provide your customers will usually stem from giving them MORE of something (i.e. Time, Relief, Acceptance, Comfort) OR giving them LESS of something (i.e. Stress, Conflict, Hassle, Uncertainty).

The Advantage

With so many businesses struggling right now, it's important for you to articulate your venture's **advantage**—the thing that sets you apart. Likely your new advantage looks a little different than your previous one. You don't need to have a long list of advantages at this time; focus on one or two. What is going to make you succeed during this time?

ASK YOURSELF:

- What do I have that others do not?
- What am I best at?
- Why is my new solution better than what others are offering?
- What am I bringing to the table that will help me succeed?

Journal Box...

The solution and benefit together create value for your customer. When you add in your advantage you've got the beginnings of a **value proposition**— the value you promise to deliver to your customer or why they should to do business with you.

Think of 2-3 ways your venture can solve your customers problem. What are the pros and cons to each approach? List out the benefits this solution gives your customer.

2. Distributing Your Product or Service

Reimagining Delivery and Distribution

(15 minutes)

Now that you have a pretty good idea of your customer's new problem and how you will solve it, how will your product or service get to the customer?

Distribution does not include your marketing efforts, but it does include all the steps after your customer decides they want to buy. Where do they go to get it? In this new world, the old ways of distributing your product or service are probably not working as well as they did—especially if you had a physical shop. You need to act quickly to get to market a different way.

As always, remember to keep your customer at the center of your decisions. **The way you choose to sell your product or service needs to make sense for the customer.** Look at your *Day in the Life* of your customer and ask yourself “What is the best way to get what I’m selling into their hands?”

What are your options for getting your product or service to your customers?

What do you need to put in place to make this happen?

Which option makes the most sense for you and for your customer?

Fill out the Distribution Process template for your business. What does your process look like? What are the steps in the process (after marketing) to get your product or service to your customer?

3. Shifting Your Message

People Over Profit

(15 minutes)

The Message

When planning your new marketing strategies, keep your customer's evolving problems in mind. Your **message** conveys the main idea you want to communicate to your customer about your solution to their problem. Now that you've shifted how your business is responding to your customer's new needs, your message needs to shift with it.

ASK YOURSELF:

- Why would someone care?
- How am I solving their problem?
- What does a customer need to know? What's most important?
- What sets me apart from the alternatives (the competition)?
- Why would they choose me over someone else?
- How will my message deepen my customer's trust?

Journal Box...

Messaging should be used consistently, communicating the same information even if in **different ways**. Just like mixed signals can ruin a personal relationship, mixed messages to your customer can ruin a business relationship. This might seem tricky to make your old messaging and new messaging consistent.

How can you demonstrate that this new way is merely a continuation or extension of what you've always been?

In the space below, write down your venture's message in 10 words or less. Remember to focus on the benefit you provide your customer.

TIP: Customer + Problem + Benefit = Message

How do you think this message will be received? Does it address your customer's deepest needs?

Marketing Your Message

Customers must encounter your message in a variety of ways. Just as your message needs to shift, your strategies will also need to readjust to the new situation. In shifting your marketing, make sure the strategies and tactics you choose make sense for your customer and meet them where they are. They shouldn't have to look hard or long to find out how you're helping them.

How will your marketing strategies shift? How will you reach out to customers under the new constraints?

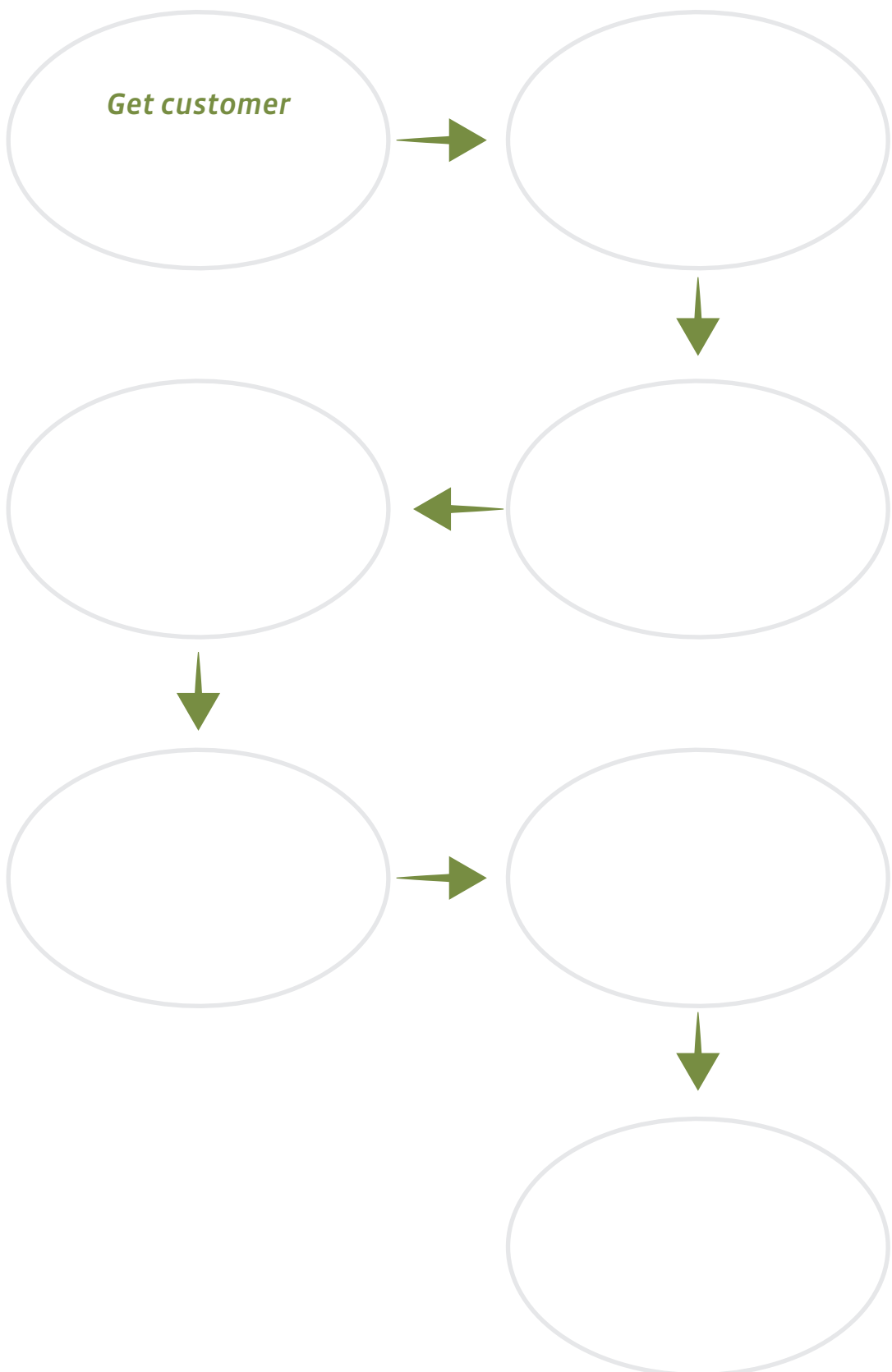
Where in your customer's day will they see your message? Why do the strategies you chose make sense for your customer?

Creating a Communications Plan

In the busyness of executing the work, marketing often gets lost. Drafting a communications plan can help ensure that the message gets out in a timely and targeted manner— especially during critical times.

Using the Communications Plan template. Spend a few minutes thinking about:

- WHEN will you get the message out?
- HOW will you get it out there?
- To WHOM will the message be targeted?
- WHY do you need to engage them? What are your goals?
- WHAT is your key message?
- WHO on your team is responsible to do it?



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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