

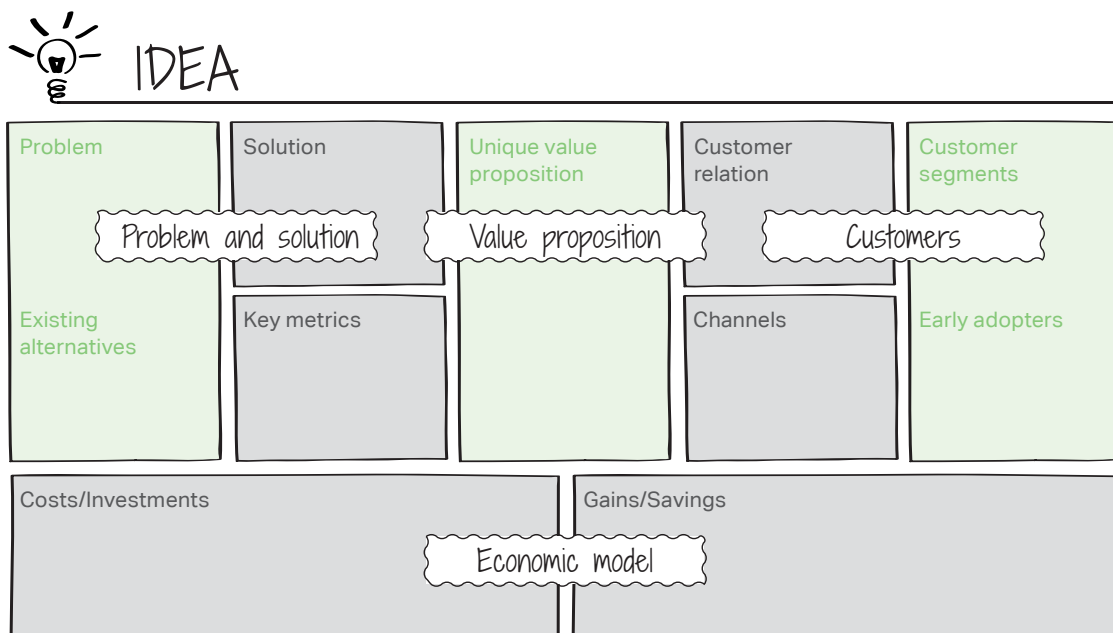
Lean Canvas

This method from the start-up scene was originally designed to help founders systematically present their ideas according to success-driven criteria. Implementing the model into your organization, will enable you to master continuous digital innovation and transformation.

by Richard Hübner

Faced with complex challenges like digitalization, the creation of new business models or other sophisticated developments, companies are in a similar situation to start-ups. There are lots of ideas and opportunities but limited resources regarding time, people and money. Therefore, it is particularly important to find and develop the best ideas from the countless possibilities. Lean canvas is a way of identifying the most relevant and promising ones and gaining a good overview. Our wide-ranging experience from many projects shows the effectiveness of the methodology, as soon as an organization has committed to it.

Let's dive in. The word canvas underlines the clarity of the presentation. With Lean Canvas, a project, an idea or a business model can be described simply on one page (see illustration).



By implementing digital technologies, most ideas are unclear in regard to the precise group of users, the concrete problems or the specific features of the digital solution itself. A closer look at the nine fields of the canvas shows four relevant areas that are crucial for the further development of an idea:

Problem and solution: What are the detailed problems of the users that this solution is intended to solve? How do users solve the problem now? What features of a good solution do we have to consider?

Unique value proposition: What benefits does the solution provide for the user?

Customers: Which customers or user groups will particularly benefit from this idea? Which customer group needs to use the solution first, so that the ideas will be successful at all (early adopters)? How should the customer-supplier relationship be designed? How should customers be reached?

Economic model of benefits and efforts: Elements of cost, efforts and gains or benefits, e. g. time savings?

Use it widely and wisely

For an organization-wide introduction and systematic application, it has been proven successful to stick to the structure of the Lean Canvas method. Focusing on the user groups and early adopters you want to target will be crucial. One of the most important pieces of advice we can share is »Love the problem, not the solution.« Many idea makers are in love with their solution and convinced of their success. However, what is much more important for a good solution is a profound understanding and good resolution of user problems. Take sufficient time to understand the challenges you intend to solve as well as the relevant context or concrete situation the users are in.

Transfer your challenge into a prototype

Once the problem is analyzed in depth, make sure the idea is described properly along the nine Lean Canvas dimensions. The idea generator and their innovation team should not spend more than 45 to 60 minutes on this task at the very beginning. Make sure that at least one colleague inside and one outside the team support the idea before you further process it. Select two to three people from the early adopters circle and invite them for a personal interview. In this test setting, you

will be able to verify your assumptions about the problems. Are these really the challenges people are facing and are existing alternatives to your idea already sufficient enough? If the interview results are still promising, it's time for an aligned strategy and a first prototype designed to incorporate the essential features of the solution. Positive feedback on the prototype will turn your idea into a development project, implemented in the responsible department until it is fully matured.

Principles of the Lean Canvas

To exploit the full power of the Lean Canvas as a supporting model of digital transformation, bear some important principles in mind. No idea is good or bad per se. All ideas are hypotheses that have to be verified or falsified through systematic customer feedback. Ideas are pivoting, so turn and evolve them until they fit (customer needs). Use ideas as starting points for digital innovation projects to be systematically developed along the users' problems. Developing many ideas is key for success and survival in a digitalized world. Working with the Lean Canvas provides executives with the ability to quickly find their way around a new idea, communicate it across the board, and make swift and informed decisions about a large number of digital ideas.

Why use the Lean Canvas method?

- Create a clear presentation for a new idea.
- Motivate people to introduce new ideas.
- Allow systematic decision-making about many ideas at the same time.
- Find the essential features of a solution on one page.
- Avoid investing in costly ideas without any benefit.

Résumé

Experience shows that systematic application of the Lean Canvas leads to a continuous innovation process and future-fit culture in organizations. The canvas supports efficient management and transparent decision-making around innovative ideas while employees are invited to spread ideas by using a simple tool. This way digital innovation can grow efficiently and effectively all over the organization. ●