



**Have good
ideas.
Turn them into
strengths.**

Bridging the gap between idea and project

Only the implementation of good ideas leads to really good, successful innovations. But ideas often have to mature in order to become really good. In many organizations this maturing process is left to the initiative of individuals or even to chance. But it also works systematically



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management



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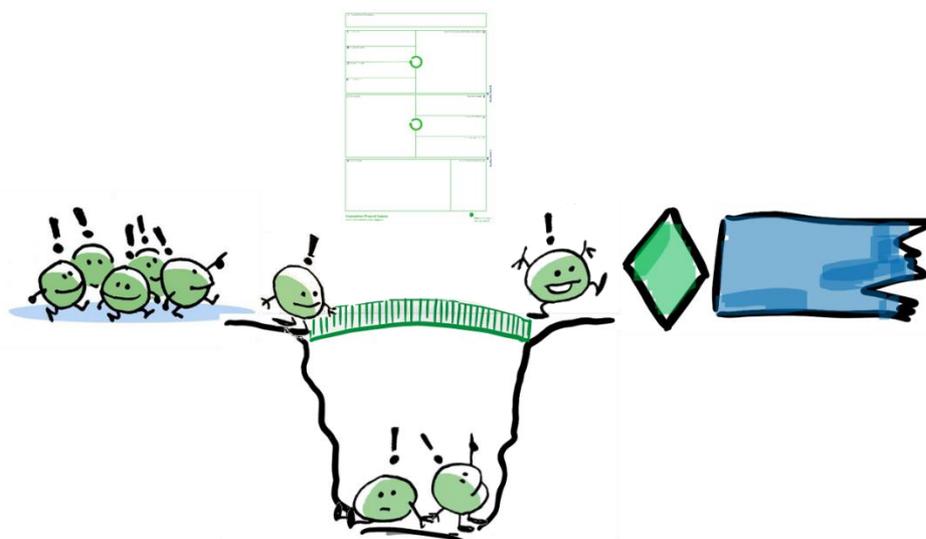
The gap in the process landscape

In many companies, both the brainstorming and the implementation of new product projects (e.g. in a Stage-Gate® process) are well organized. However, there is often a gap between these two processes, not least due to a lack of responsibility for this process step.

As a result, we observe the following shortcomings:

- good ideas often wait months until they are taken up (in order to be implemented later on with high time pressure). In a study conducted by Deutsches Institut für Betriebswirtschaft GmbH, it was found that on average an idea "waits" 70 days for a decision and then another 30 days elapse before a project is started if a positive decision is made. On average, companies lose more than 3 months until an idea is pursued further. 3 months, which can be made up during the project only with substantial additional expenditure.
- ingenious ideas are not recognized, because nobody cares about peeling out the convincing idea core and lets the idea mature. We often experience that innovative ideas fail at the first gate because too many questions cannot be answered for the gatekeepers. Even the idea submitter often do not know yet what kind of service the idea will eventually turn into.
- immature ideas are converted one-to-one into project orders and no longer questioned within the framework of the "implementation project". Of course, a mediocre idea can only lead to a mediocre new product at most.
- especially ideas with a high degree of innovation are interpreted very differently by project members. It often takes months for a project team to gain a uniform understanding of exactly what the objective of the innovation project or the value proposition for the customer is. Since the team members serve different goals, this project phase is often very inefficient and longer than necessary.

The Innovation Project Canvas is a new tool to bridge this process-related gap between ideas and projects and to eliminate these shortcomings.





What makes an idea strong?

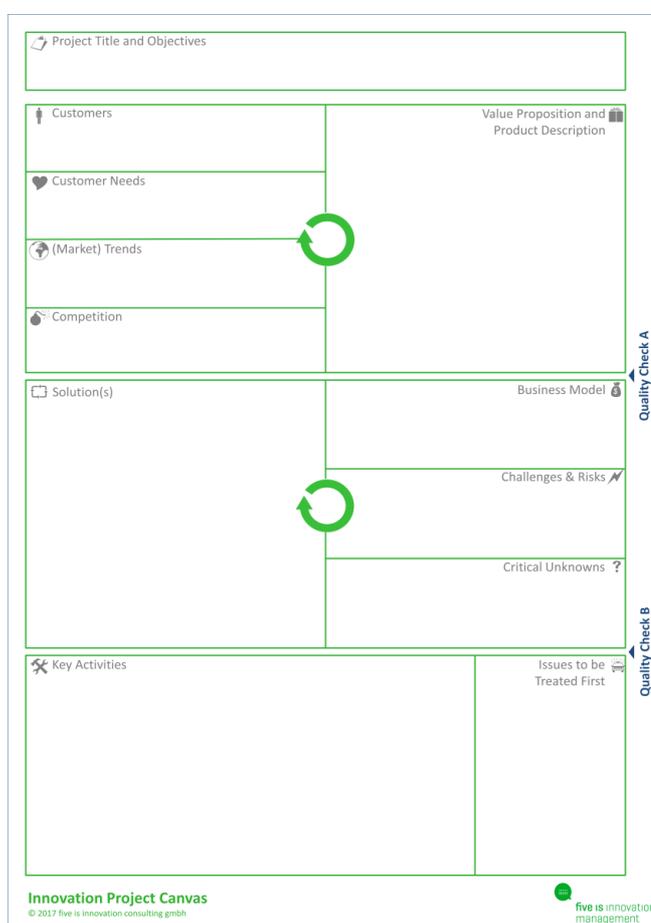
In our experience, a successful innovation project must have clarified the following three aspects at an early stage:

- **Desirability:** How does the future product provide the customer with a perceptible and desirable benefit?
- **Viability:** Is the concept based on a profitable business model?
- **Feasibility:** How do we as an organization manage to successfully implement the concept?

The Innovation Project Canvas is a tool for project teams, innovation managers and lateral thinkers to work through these three aspects early in the innovation process using a systematic approach. After one day of work, an idea becomes a sustainable and thoughtful concept, which helps managers to make better decisions.

The procedure is divided into three phases:

- In **phase 1** of the Innovation Project Canvas, the team identifies and further segments the target group of the idea. The reflection of the needs and problems of the segmented target group and the analysis of their current solution offers enable the development of a convincing value proposition.
- Subsequently, the quality of the value proposition is checked with the help of the affect scale (**Quality Check A**): Is the offer really convincing from the customer's point of view or should the team go into a revision loop again? (Desirability Check)
- In **Phase 2**, solutions and new business models for the product or service are developed. The team also identifies significant risks and critical knowledge gaps for the implementation of the idea.
- In a second **quality check (B)**, the team checks whether the business model is convincing in terms of investment attractiveness (viability check).
- Subsequently, core activities are planned in **phase 3**. Based on the principles of agile development, those critical elements are identified which could bring the project down. An optional, subsequent feasibility check prepares the handover to the organization for further implementation.





Orientation towards target customers and their needs right from the start

For decades, we have known from innovation research that customer benefit orientation is by far the greatest success factor in new product development: "A differentiated product that delivers unique benefits and a compelling value proposition to the customer or user is the number one driver of new-product profitability" (Cooper 2011).

The development of a convincing value proposition forms the core of the first phase of the Innovation Project Canvas. Inspired by findings on target customers, their needs, relevant (market) trends and competition, project teams begin to develop a convincing offer for users, buyers and other stakeholders of the future product.

The key question is: What do we offer and why is it attractive for buyers and users?

Value proposition can address both conscious and unconscious customer needs. These needs can be divided into two categories:

- get an additional (new) benefit (Gain Creators)
- today's problems / difficulties / pain reduce or eliminate (Pain Relievers)

The value promise defines which concrete needs are to be satisfied by our solution. This also determines what should not be the focus of the solution.

If a distinction is made between buyer and user, it may be necessary to define a value proposition for both. If an idea envisages several value creation partners, value propositions should also be defined for these partners.

The value proposition per se does not yet contain any considerations on the type or form of the offer (product, service, etc.). However, without having to solve these technically, the offer should also be roughly described in the course of the development of the value proposition:

- What does our offer look like with which we create benefits for our customers and satisfy their needs?
- What elements does the offer include?

An offer becomes particularly attractive for the customer if there are no comparable offers on the market. Therefore, when defining the value proposition and describing the service, positioning and differentiation from the competition must also be considered.

Team Dynamics in Working with the Innovation Project Canvas

In the Innovation Project Canvas, the core of an idea and the orientation of the later innovation project are jointly developed by a team in a one-day workshop. Working with sticky notes on a physical canvas is very low-threshold and allows everyone to actively participate in the design process.

Interdisciplinarity is an important prerequisite for thinking openly and not too early to find a solution. At the same time, it also requires those people who will later have to play a decisive role in the innovation project. Working on the Innovation Project Canvas forces the team to agree on a common understanding of the idea and thus on a common orientation of the project. If people important for the project are left out, this can lead to much more complex loops and resistance later on.

By working together, the idea becomes the idea of each individual team member. The enthusiasm for the topic grows with the intensity of the occupation.



The benefits of the Innovation Project Canvas

In the early phase of implementing an idea, the Innovation Project Canvas method brings all key members of the future innovation project in front of a blank canvas to create a common understanding of the project goal and content. The canvas provides 12 "thinking fields". Team members from different disciplines describe their understanding of the idea along these 12 fields. The team recognizes different perspectives and develops a common understanding within the framework of the process.

Working with the Innovation Project Canvas quickly reveals the actual attractiveness and potential of an idea. Once the team has approached a uniform understanding of the idea, it is further scrutinized with regard to attractiveness for the target customer and potential. If the idea does not yet convince completely, it is kneaded and massaged: the team changes aspects of the original idea (e.g. the target group), drops them (e.g. secondary benefits) or invents something new (e.g. a different yield mechanism). This process goes through several iterations until an inspiring value proposition for the target customer and an attractive business model for the company are found. The idea has matured in just one day of joint work and is ready to convince further stakeholders! Rainer Boesch, Global Expert R&D Controlling at Ivoclar Vivadent, sums up the benefits with the following statement: "With the Innovation Project Canvas, we achieved a result at the start of the project that would have taken us weeks otherwise".

The joint development of an attractive value proposition and a profitable business model increases the commitment of the individual team members. The interdisciplinary team "invents" the idea new together and lets it mature into a concept. The team members recognize their respective contributions in the development process, jointly become the originators of the product concept and develop a personal interest in leading the project to success.

The Innovation Project Canvas is easy to understand and is an excellent way to communicate a product/service idea and the goals and challenges of the project to be launched to the decision makers.

To learn more about the Innovation Project Canvas please visit the webpage www.innovationprojectcanvas.com

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Peter is a practiced hand at devising tailored methodologies for idea generation. He is also expert at optimizing innovation systems. A Certified Management Consultant and lecturer in innovation management at the University of Applied Sciences - Vorarlberg, Peter has over 15 years of high-level consulting experience. Peter's passion is nurturing good ideas and guiding them to their realization. As a thinker, he's a bit of a maverick whose unique insights can lead to bold, effective solutions.

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