Game Thinking

MVP Canvas

TO TURN A PROMISING IDEA into a successful product, it's important to start at the beginning and run experiments that are grounded in clear, testable hypotheses. But how do you generate those hypotheses? And how do you prioritize which ones to test?

Many entrepreneurs will just start building whatever they think might be interesting. Some use the Business Model Canvas (or something similar) to get started (a "canvas" is a one-page worksheet you complete to capture at-a-glance insights and goals). While this helps you think through your whole business, it doesn't help you focus on the most pressing issues involved in testing and validating an idea and building your MVP (minimum viable product).

Meet the MVP Canvas

To help you develop strong, testable hypotheses and run smarter experiments, I've created a stripped-down tool called the MVP Canvas that helps you **frame your current ideas as hypotheses, and generate prioritized assumptions to test**. If you've ever wanted a reliable way to validate ideas quickly, this tool is for you.

Those of you familiar with business model canvases will recognize that I've stripped out marketing, manufactuing, and distribution concerns, to focus entirely on the value of your product to the customer.

Focus on Early Customers

Successful innovations may end up reaching a mainstream audience—but they never start off that way. That's the paradox of innovation: the "typical" people in your market are not the same ones you need to delight when bringing your idea to life.

Here's the punchline: if you're innovating, you need to find and delight a small early market before you target that larger segment. Your odds of succeeding go WAY up when you test your idea with a small group of people who need what you're offering, and will put up with cost, ridicule, and friction to get those needs met.

Finding these high-need, high-value early customers is an iterative process that you can accelerate by writing down clear, testable hypotheses. Ask yourself: ***What group of people will need and want our offering first? What characteristics and behaviors will they have in common?***
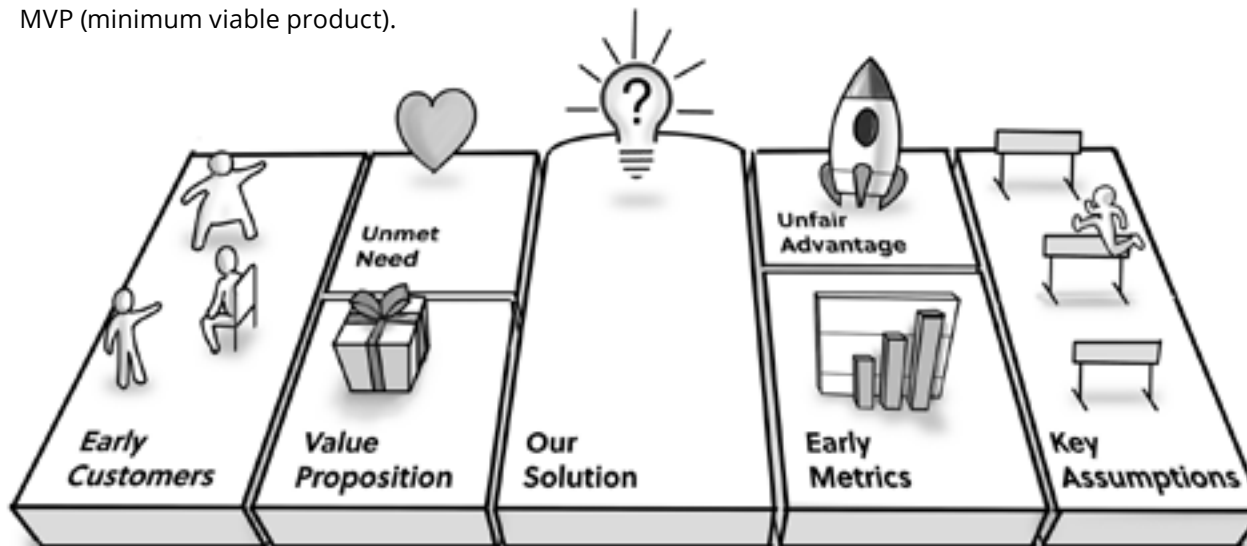
Early Customers · Value Proposition · Our Solution · Early Metrics · Key Assumptions

Now it's your turn. Answer these questions to fill out your MVP canvas.
You answers will be automatically copied into the MVP canvas on the last page of this document.
Be sure to save your answers before quitting.

1. Who will be your first 25–50 passionate early customers? Who has such a strong unmet need that they are already trying to get that need filled?

2. What unmet need will your product meet and fulfill? Don't mention your solution here, only the customer's need.

3. What's your solution that meets this need for these people?

4. What value proposition connects your solution to your early customers' unmet needs?

5. Why you? Why this team? What are your key strengths? What's your unfair advantage (your sweet spot/secret sauce)?

6. What early metrics will you use to measure success—and why?

7. Which assumptions about your project do you most need to test, and why?Which ones would spell DISASTER if they turned out to be false?

To make changes, edit your answers on the previous pages, and this page will update automatically.

EARLY CUSTOMERS	UNMET NEEDS	OUR SOLUTION	UNFAIR ADVANTAGE	HIGH RISK ASSUMPTIONS
	VALUE PROPOSITION		EARLY METRICS	