

TEI 057: TEI 057: Applying the Jobs to be Done Framework
Host: Chad McAllister, PhD
Guest: Chris Spiek

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Chad: Hi, this is Chad, your host and founder of Product Innovation Educators where I help product managers become product masters.

The lean startup approach has brought a lot of visibility to the importance of getting out of your office and interacting with actual customers. I know, not an old concept. And you do that so you can understand the details of their problems related to the solutions or product you envision as a product manager and innovator. However, the frequent question is, "How do we actually get that done?" which leads to other questions like, who do we talk with, what do we ask them, what information is the most important? The practical answers to all of these questions is in a framework called Jobs to be Done. Now when used properly, it can position product managers to greatly increase the success of the products they develop because the products are solving a real job the customer has in a way that the customers recognizes as being most valuable to them. That's really powerful.

To learn about this framework, I went to the source, the person who runs the website jobstobedone.org which has the blessing of Clayton Christensen who originally formulated this framework. This person is Chris Spiek. Chris is a software programmer who discovered the Jobs to be Done framework and used it to create successful software products customers really did love. He has also been a founder and cofounded his current company, the Rewired Group, which is a firm based in Michigan that creates improved products and new products for their clients. We talked about a lot of great free resources in the interview and to get them, go to the show notes at theeverydayinnovator.com/057. Enjoy the interview.

Chad: Hi, Chris. Thanks for joining me and talking about the Jobs to be Done framework.

Chris: Hey, Chad. Thanks for having me. It's good to be here.

Chad: I'm glad you are. Your background is originally in software development. What took you from doing that and getting into product management?

Chris: Yes, so I'm going to say it a little bit tongue-in-cheek but the reality of it is a lot of pain. So a lot of difficult software projects, a lot of struggling with scope creep, a lot of just hard conversations with clients over the years. So at the time that I was doing software development, I started off as a developer, worked my way up through a little startup to become one of the managers, one of the partners and took on the job of doing a lot of the sales, scoping a lot of the projects on the way in and then kind of handing these things off to project managers and things like that.

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What ended up happening was I found myself pretty much playing the role of a product manager for companies who wanted custom software developed that they didn't really have in-house product management functions.

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And what that led to was I'd have clients that would get on the track of really just wanting more and more features packed into whatever software we were developing for them. I always was trying to make them as successful as I could while also keeping an eye on budgets and timelines and keeping projects profitable and all that sort of thing. And time and time again, I found myself in situations where I was having arguments and conducting negotiations with clients basically saying, "I understand what your objective is and I hear you wanting to add all these features and I hear you saying things like, 'If we can't add these things, it's not even worth launching and the competitors just added that and if we don't have it, were not even in the game,'" and things like that.

I would always try to push back and say, "Look, let's stick to the game plan. We knew what we were doing, where we're going in. Let's iterate, we'll test and then we'll make some decisions later." I kept getting killed at these negotiations and then the scope creep would just get out of control project after project. What I ended up figuring out was I needed a better way to understand consumer motivation. So a lot of these products were things like e-commerce and content management and that sort of thing.

What I decided was, unless I have a really, really good grasp on what the end user or what the consumer was trying to accomplish, I wasn't going to be very good at these negotiations and I wasn't going to be very good at making my customers successful either because even though they're hiring me as kind of the technical software person, they needed a lot of help in the product management sort of consumer insight space. So I doubled down. I learned as much as I could about things like personas and big data and all that sort of thing to try to get educated. I tried to apply those things with not a whole lot of success.

Around that same time, I took on a new client. His name was Bob Moesta and we ended up doing a lot of projects over the years together and as it turns out, Bob was one of the creators of this Jobs to be Done framework alongside Clay Christensen. Time after time, Bob would come to me with these weird product specs and I would always say, "Okay, I can help you think about this and help you kind of shape this up." And he would say, "No, no, no. Develop this and we'll be fine." And eventually I had to go back to him and say, "Look, everything you bring to me to develop is a little bit different than everyone else." And it's always kind of like wildly successful. What's the trick? What's going on here? How are you arriving at these insights?

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And we never really used the words jobs to be done at that time. We just talked about customers and talked about how they switched to new products and that sort of thing but over the years, he ended up teaching me the methods that he would use to arrive at these insights that would lead him to develop successful products and websites and e-commerce stores and things like that.

[06:02]

And at that point, I basically decided if I was going to be successful, I needed to go deep on this stuff and really, really, really learn it. So Bob and I ended up starting the Rewired Group in 2008, 2009. I exited the software company and basically said, "Let's take this to the next level." And at that time, there were some people talking about Jobs to be Done. It wasn't incredibly mainstream. I'd say it's still not mainstream but Bob and I, with Clay Christensen's blessing, took on the task of doing whatever we can to teach people about Jobs to be Done, to refine it as a framework and to push it forward. Does that answer your question?

Chad: It does and I want to go back to how you described the pain of being that software developer. I was trying not to laugh. The laugh was in sympathy because -- and I'm sure so many of the everyday innovators that are listening have been in that same spot too. We know the craft of developing the product but we're having frustrations with the clients and trying to actually meet their needs and the other stakeholders involved. When I was in that position, I went down the path of learning more about project management because that's the first thing I found in the world that might offer some insights and that helped.

And we just stumbled -- and there wasn't anything that really led to this. I was just a person that was wired to kind of do user observations. I liked sitting in with customers and watching what they do and informally do ethnographic research. We were doing agile stuff in the '90s before people were actually talking about that sort of thing and bringing customers in and co-developing with them, right? And that sort of thing worked quite a bit but it was only rather recently that I came across some more powerful frameworks like Jobs to be Done and so I'm glad we're diving into that.

I thought it was interesting on your bio, you say, "You develop great products that people want to buy using Jobs to be Done." I like that because it creates curiosity I'm sure people go, "Jobs to be what?" So when you get asked that question, what do you tell them this is about?

Chris: Yes, it does create curiosity. You said a couple of important things. I love the laugh because it's one of the things that you and I could both look back on those times and be like, "Man, we were really dying back there with those projects." But it's good to be able to look back and laugh at it now. So people always think it's a task management tool first off like things to be done, things to check off. What I always tell people is it's a way of thinking about why we

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purchase the things that we purchase in our lives. And so at a very high level, it's simply a way of saying, if someone is going to purchase something new that they've never used before, we call it a switch, how do we gain an understanding of why they made that decision?

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And a lot of times I say we because when you're learning the framework, we always want to jump to how do I apply it to whatever I'm working on? But oftentimes I push people to say, "If I can teach you a couple of tools that we use with Jobs to be Done, can you turn it inwards and think about maybe the last few products that you've purchased? And really understand how you were motivated and what the thought process was and how your opinions changed over time as you sort of approached that point in time where you made the decision." It's really useful as you start to learn Jobs to be Done but at its core and at a very high level, that's simply all it is. It's a framework for thinking about how we make the decisions that we make.

Chad: Right. And I tie it always back to what's the real value that the product is offering to customers. My simple example is, if my job is I have a hole I need dug, the product I go buy is a shovel but I don't buy a shovel just because I'm enamored with the shovel. I'm buying it for a specific job which is to dig the hole.

Chris: That's exactly it. So to go one level deeper from the general description, what we always say is it's the situation that you're in along with the progress that you're trying to make in your life that defines value. So it's, like you say, we always want to -- not always. We often find ourselves in a trap of I want to look through the products' eyes at the customer. Why would he love the shovel? How could I make him love the shovel more? What if we made it a different color? What if we made it out of a lightweight material?

We think of all these things about the shovel, Jobs to be Done prompts us to change the perspective and say what's going on in his life that he needs the hole in his backyard? If that's what he's trying to accomplish and that's the situation that he's in, what constraints is he working with. How is he actually thinking about this project or progress in his life and how is he defining value and defining progress?

I'm just going to continue with your metaphor because I really, really like it. What you end up figuring out is that the shovel at Home Depot or Lowe's is not competing with all the other shovels on the shelf. The shovel is going to compete with, you know what? I'll get my brother-in-law to come over on Saturday. Maybe he'll bring the shovel with him and we can dig the hole together. Maybe I'll hire a guy on Angie's list and he can come over and dig it. I don't even need to be here. What we find is when we understand what we call situational context and the progress that we're trying to make, competition changes completely. And that's really always

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what we're after is getting the understanding of how the customer defines value and what the project that we're working on really, really competes with in the consumer's mind.

Chad: Absolutely. And it's interesting I've had a similar conversation a few times the last several weeks about so many products are now commodities and the typical positioning of your sales for high-end product is you talk about how your features are superior than everyone else's.

[12:05]

And in reality, everyone else can add those features and they probably have them, and we're moving to commodities in a lot of places. But if you instead deeply understand your customer's problem and you can then frame your solution in terms of how it best meets their problem, you're setting yourself apart from all the other competitors. You're moving out of that commodity space in being a true problem solver. To me it seems like the Jobs to be Done framework gets us there really quickly. I don't know what you think about that.

Chris: Yeah. I think it's absolutely right. It's one of those signals where anytime you're staring at the matrix of features that you've built about your product and it's like -- how many rows can we check versus how many rows can the competition check? I think it's a great time to lift your head out of that and say, how do we talk to a couple of customers to really figure out what's going on and what's causing them to even start shopping for what we're offering?

One of the biggest eye openers that happened for me is just how few things can customers hold in their mind when they make a decision especially when it gets to these really, really complex purchases. As the product developer, we always want to think like, "Man, they're doing really diligent research and they're comparing us head to head. Man, we added this couple of features and we're just going to knock the socks off the competition."

When you talk to the customer, it's like they're thinking of their lives and their needs and like at most one to three aspects of your product and they've linked those things together and they're ready to make a decision and move forward. But the idea that there are people holding all these comparisons in their mind and all these different features, I've worked kind of from the simplest \$1 consumer packaged goods food products all the way up to the most complicated enterprise software or corporate sales and it's all the same. People make a decision. They have one or two things in their mind and they run with it. So I think what you've highlighted on the commodity head-to-head competition space is really important.

Chad: And I think the other aspect of that is as product managers, we often get it wrong, right? There's a great connection -- I've been paying a little bit more attention to comedians in the last year and their craft. Comedians talk about -- the killer joke of standup comedians, the killer joke that I expected to just win the audience over landed flat. As comedians, they go out and they test their material all the time in small venues before they take it to the big stage, right?

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Because it's hard for them to actually know what's going to work and what's not. And I think as product managers, maybe on a good day, we get 50% of it right in terms of really understanding what the customer's problem is, what the key points are they thinking about, how they think about value and those things. So we need to be talking to them.

[15:00]

So we probably should talk about how this actually gets done then. How do we identify the job and how do we go through that discovery process. Can you walk us through an example of actually using the Jobs to be Done framework?

Chris: Yeah, absolutely. I guess one of my favorite stories is what we think of as kind of a classic in the Jobs to be Done world is one of the first applications was for the Snickers bar. I get an interesting reaction when I tell the story because I think a lot of people want -- we've done work with great companies like Basecamp and great tech companies. A lot of people want to hear those stories. But I often find it's great to tell a story that hits everyone. Most of us have had a Snickers bar, right? So a lot of times you can relate to something like this.

So this is like early '90s. The Snickers bar was head to head with Milky Way, another Mars product and they were in a situation at the time where one of these products was going to be delisted. Essentially, anyone who has worked in CPG knows the retailers have control of a lot of this or influence over a lot of this. If you have two products that are very similar and they're turning it about the same rate, a lot of times a retailer is going to come to you and say, find something else to put up there and let's see if we can get it to turn faster, because these things are very, very similar. When you look at Snickers and Milky Way, same form factor, same size, label is almost identical, right? A little bit of green and one a little bit of blue and red in the other, same size, almost looks identical on the shelf, and this was the situation that Mars was in.

At the time, Bob actually, my partner Bob Moesta, actually had a friend who was working on the Snickers team at Mars called Bob out and basically as a consultant said, "Hey, this is the situation we're in. We were on the Snickers team and we need to beat up on Milky Way or we're going to be delisted." Bob had a scratching moment of like, "You guys are in the same company. This is really how things work?" The guy said, "Yeah, we got to make this thing fly." So Bob got all of the downloads of the advertising at the time, how these things are manufactured on the line, incredibly simple. Snickers at the time still had peanuts. Milky Way was still mostly nougat. But when you looked at the cross-sections of them, these things were very, very similar, kind of like next to each other on almost identical lines in the factory, very, very similar.

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So Bob took in all the data, looked at all the sales reports and that sort of thing and basically said, "I have no idea how these things differentiate from one another. I don't know how to help Snickers." So he had flown to New Jersey where Mars was at the time and his friend said, "Fly home for the weekend. If anything comes to you, let me know. If not, it's been fun catching up." So Bob went to the airport, was walking into kind of the newspaper stand to grab something, and the guy in front of him bought a Snickers bar.

[18:02]

So Bob grabbed whatever he was buying from the newspaper stand, followed this guy to his gate, sat down kind of one seat away and said, "Hey, I just got to ask, I don't mean to interrupt. What's going on? I saw you bought a Snickers bar. Can you tell me what's happening?" And the guy told a story of "I've been here all week. It's Friday. I'm flying home. I've got a heap of work to get done here at the gate and then on the plane. If I don't get it done, I've got to work over the weekend. I can't spend time with my family. The situation is really I wanted to go to the restaurant in the terminal and grab a sandwich and a beer to kind of fill myself up, but I don't have the time. And when I walk in the newspaper stand the thing that I saw was a Snickers. It's got a little bit of peanut in it. My energy is kind of falling through the floor. I think it's going to give me just enough of a pep to kind of get my work done."

This is the infancy of Jobs to be Done because he didn't know any demographic information about this guy. His age, his financial status, anything like that. It's simply someone in a situation trying to get something done who had picked this product to do it and who had some constraints around him, right? So Bob went back to the newspaper stand time and time again and saw people buy Snickers. Eventually, he ended up talking to the guy that ran the newspaper saying, "Yeah, I sell a lot of Snickers bars. I can't tell you why I don't sell a lot of Milky Way but that's the way things are."

So Bob gets home. Eventually, find some people who had eaten Milky Ways recently and these people all told a very different story than the Snickers bar stories. The story around the Milky Way was something happened. I need a little bit of time for me. When that happens, if I can't have a glass of wine, I'm at work, I'm sitting in my office, I can't grab the Ben & Jerry's pint and go through that whole thing. I can't have a slice of cake. This is like my little indulgence and it's a 5-minute, 7-minute break in the day where I can regroup. It's usually coming from some place negative like bring me back to zero or bring me a little bit positive but it's all me time.

This was the understanding of, okay, we have products that are very similar, look exactly the same on the shelf, almost identical ingredients that never compete with each other. It was the first instance where you say, okay, the way that it played out was they reordered some of the layers of ingredients then turned Snickers into something that has more peanuts and actually now when you bite into a Snickers bar you can tell, it breaks off in your mouth, you chew it like

it's food. It actually hits your stomach like it's food and it gives you that sensation that you've eaten something. If you contrast it with the Milky Way, it melts in your mouth. The next time you eat one, you'll kind of feel this. You actually kind of drink the Milky Way after you've chewed it for a little because it liquefies. It has that coding effect in your mouth. So they steered Snickers to be more food-like. They changed the advertising to be Snickers satisfies. And now this most recent ad which is you're not you when you're hungry and turn Snickers into the highest selling candy bar of all time.

[21:23]

But it's back to the shovel story that you're talking about is they all look the same on the shelf or we're trying to differentiate themselves on the shelf. When it comes back to the user or to the consumer, if we can understand where they are and really what they're trying to get done, we can match the product to their sense of progress and sometimes really knock it out of the park.

I guess the one thing that I want to highlight about the method is we talk to people who have made a purchase. For a lot of people who are listening to this that have products that they're working on, that will be easy because you'll say, I'm running a product. I want to talk to people who have signed up over the last six months and get the story of them coming in. For other people they'll be working on what they think is a new product and then you have to find ancillary things. Imagine what you're competing with and start to do interviews around that.

But the important aspect is I have to have somebody who has made a decision because I want to understand when did you start thinking about this? I want the car ride to the airport where he's thinking, man, I really need to get this work done because I really miss my family and if I have to be locked up in my office all weekend, it's not going to have, okay, the restaurant is out. I want to know what we call shape up the job and create a list of requirements because it's that list of requirements going into the decision that really fuels all this great insight.

Chad: And in talking to people who have actually made that decision, purchasing decision, one is are you talking to people that made a decision like in the Snickers example of product you're thinking about trying to advance in some way and prove in the marketplace? Or are you also talking to people who bought the competitor's products and finding out why they did that?

Chris: I always recommend both. So what this really ends up boiling down to usually is just the amount of work that you're willing to take on. So what we usually advocate is for any situation, if you scope the project correctly and you talk to ten consumers, 9 times out of 10, you're going to get the jobs and understand what's going on in the space. So if you have competitors, if you have people that you can identify that are "firing" your product, which in the case of Snickers

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would be like you used to eat a lot of Snickers bars. You had kind of a habit. Now you stopped eating Snickers bar like the job probably didn't go away but what did you switch to?

I'd almost want to say like let's talk to ten of each of those people. Let's talk to ten people that hired us, find out what was going on there, ten people that "fired" us and then let's get some people who are maybe leaving us and going to competition or even never used our product but are hiring the competition to kind of understand what the differences are.

[24:19]

Chad: In doing that, do you find that there are segments among those people you talk to? What I'm thinking about is I would expect to uncover some people that were in a very -- they would answer your questions kind of in a cluster different than everyone else and so that they are thinking about the products we have differently and there would be a different segment to address in the marketplace.

Chris: Yeah, absolutely. So what we look for are situational similarities. So the segments that come out of a Jobs to be Done study we actually call Job. So if we talk to ten people, we'll normally get three, four, five jobs out of that research. And what we'll find is that out of ten, three or four people will have situations that are all very similar. So what we want to find is where do the situations overlap at a meaningful level and then define that as a job. So they all started in a similar place. They all struggled with the same sort of information and they all had a similar progress that they were trying to make. Usually, with any product we'll find, it's being hired for a number of different jobs or different types of progress. Does that make sense?

Chad: It does. And then just to connect the dots, your examples really illustrates as well that you conduct the interviews to really understand the job, the reason why the people bought their product in the first place or maybe bought the competitors product. And then you took that information to impact the design of the product. In the case of the Snickers, maybe more peanuts and how the food -- the candy, I'm not sure what the nuggets, the stuff inside the Snickers really is although I do eat them. You reformulated that product to better deliver on a job people were expecting, right?

Chris: Exactly.

Chad: And so this is really a pre-design process, right?

Chris: The way that we think about it is I almost think of these people as the consumers are the innovators. We've birthed the product and put it out into the market and these people have figured out how to take what we've created, pull it into their own lives and further their own lives. And what I want to understand is if the guy at the airport was doing that, we might not have had that in tent going in when we were developing the product, but now that I know that,

how do I size that opportunity and how do I say, okay, if this is what it's being used for, now I know who my competition is, it's obviously not Milky Way. I'm competing with the sandwich, a Coke, a power bar, a Red Bull -- wasn't Red Bull at the time but it is now. How do I craft the product so I can take share away from those guys and be hired more in this situation?

[27:18]

Like you said, it gets back into -- it's product design, right? What's the right level of peanut? What's the right melting point of the nougat so that it stays food but it's not too hard to bite through? It's all those sorts of things where once I understand the situation that they're in, how do I design the outcome that they want? Because once again when it gets to food, it's got to hit the stomach. It's got to send the signal to the brain to say, yeah, you're geared up. You've got the fuel. You're not starving. You can do your work. And once you understand that, you can start prototyping and testing.

I always get back to like I don't know how to design and I don't know how to prototype and test unless I have the situation because when you peel away the situational context and when you peel away the progress, what you end up with is which one do you like? So you get the people and it's like try the Snickers bar and try the Milky Way and they'll say, "Oh, I like the Milky Way a lot better than the Snickers." "Okay, well, why?" "Well, it's softer and it seems a little bit sweeter." And the next person will tell you they like Snickers. Well, the problem is it's completely void of context. So as I test and as I prototype, I can change levels and I can do all these things but I don't know what the desired outcome is. I don't know what they're trying to do so it becomes circular and scary.

Chad: Yeah, absolutely. From a software development perspective which I know a little bit about but not as much as you for sure, it's like walking into a room that's just completely blank and you know you're supposed to develop features. I think that's where most software developers are today versus having a tool like this, which jobs will be done where you're walking in a room and there's all the scaffolding in place. It's already there to help inform your design and what the features need to be because now you understand the context of what the customer actually needs to accomplish.

Chris: Absolutely. That's very well said.

Chad: I'm not sure if it was a great metaphor but the scaffolding notion came to mind so I was running with it.

Chris: Yeah, I really like it.

Chad: As you're talking about Snickers, let's maybe think about a Clay Christensen video. Have you seen him talk about the milkshake?

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Chris: Yeah. They call Bob the "milkshake man" so absolutely, I've seen it.

Chad: It's great. What we're talking about is he did a study. I think it was for Burger King actually. Does that sound right?

Chris: Yeah, McDonald's.

Chad: Was it McDonald's? Okay. Fast food restaurant and they wanted to find out why they were selling milkshakes in the morning and what was going on. I actually interviewed people as they went through the drive-thru after they bought their milkshake about what they did and what job they were trying to satisfy. And we won't go into the details because it matches the Snickers example really well.

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But in the show notes, if you want to see that, I'll put a link in there. The show notes will be at theeverydayinnovator.com/057 and you'll find that link to Christensen talking about the Job to be Done for the milkshake.

So in this framework we have other tools. One of them is called the Four Forces. Can you walk us through what that tool is and why it's important?

Chris: Yeah. The Four Forces essentially describes -- we think about it as a consumer is trying to make progress in their lives, we say running in place is making no progress. I'm just going to continue to do what I'm doing right now. It's on the left side of the diagram. If you cross the diagram and go to the right, you have new behavior. I've bought something that I've never purchased before. I've tried something new. We always study the forces that are acting on consumers as they cross over.

What we find is that there's always something going on in your life that you're struggling with. We call that the push. So it's completely void of a solution or void of a product but it's something that's like that hole in the backyard has got to get dug. I don't know how I'm going to do it. I don't know what's going to happen to make that happen, but at some point that's going to have to happen. And then if you move to the right, we have what we call pull or magnetism of the solution. So you have somebody that's trying to make progress and you add to that a product like a shovel. And that shovel will draw the customer towards it with things like price and features and promises of what it can deliver, all that sort of thing.

So now we have two forces acting on a consumer that should propel them forward. To add to that, we have two forces that act against the consumer. So one is what we call anxiety which is can I operate the shovel? Are the promises that the shovel is making, are they viable? They're saying that it's strong and they're saying that it can dig the hole. Will it deliver on these promises? What if the shovel doesn't work? Can I return it? All these anxieties that bubble up.

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And then the last one that acts against the consumer is the habit of the present. Maybe the hole doesn't really need to get dug. I've lived without a hole for a long time. I can put it off till later. There's always this habit. What I always tell people is the one thing is we always focus as product developers on the top portion of the diagram which is the push and the pull. What we feel is if I can outshine my competition, I can add features, I can increase that pull force, I'll get everyone to switch to my product. What experience has taught us is that the success as a product manager and a product developer lives on the bottom because every feature that we add creates anxiety. It's another thing to make the consumer say, "I don't know if I know how to work that feature. I don't know if they're going to deliver on that." It's just more kind of gunk in the system.

[33:01]

If you can find a way to relieve the anxiety, to understand the story of the person trying to make the decision and say, here's how you're thinking about it. Here's what you're anxious about. We're going to be there to take that anxiety away. It's where all the money is made in my opinion.

So when it comes down to the usefulness of the tool, I think it's a good mechanism to have a conversation about a person's story, what was the push? What was pushing them to make progress? Why not just keep the backyard the way it is? Why dig the hole? What was pulling them towards the new solution? What was the magnetism that they latch onto? What were they anxious about? What do we need to unhinge in them to help them make this progress?

Chad: You know, as you talk through that, the notion of the minimal viable product MVP and lean methodologies really came to mind. And the way that we got connected was through Ash Maurya who wrote the Running Lean book. I was paying attention to what he was doing and then he mentioned that he was investigating the Jobs to be Done framework, how that kind of ties into things.

This is why I think this framework is so very important for the listeners and I hope everyone dives into this a little bit more and learns about it is because now the conversation has moved across companies whether you're a startup or established enterprise to how do we find out information about our customers earlier before we actually start developing products? What are our assumptions? What are those hypotheses? How do we test those and get information? The standard lean startup running lean sort of approach.

The Jobs to be Done framework fits so well into that as a framework for thinking about what questions do you need to ask? Who do you ask them to? And how do you get down the road on really understanding -- I'll go back to my scaffolding metaphor again -- the scaffolding, the framework that you need to understand so you can design a product that actually solves their

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problem? Can you just comment on that? I'm sure you've seen these interactions and people that are looking into lean startup type philosophies and then come across Jobs to be Done?

Chris: Yeah. I think you described a lot of it really well. Ash and I connected. It had to be a little bit over a year ago and it played out exactly how you described. We do a one-day workshop on Jobs to be Done or we do have a couple of live interviews. We talk through the tools. The intent is that you leave that day being able to go apply it to your product, right? At the same time, Ash was doing his running lean workshops kind of walking step by step through how to create the MVP, how to run all the tests. He has kind of the roadmap for the startup, right? We ended up coming together. We've only done one. We're talking about doing the next one. But we did a workshop that was two days, one day of running lean and the next day of Jobs to be Done.

[35:59]

What we found was the people have the step-by-step instructions on how to create the MVP and go through the lean process. And within that, there is a bullet point that says, get out of the office. Go talk to the customers. And I see Jobs to be Done almost as that bullet point.

Chad: Exactly. And I think that's important. This is the big hole that needs to be filled because everyone running into lean approaches going, "Okay, I know I need to do that. What questions do I actually ask? Who do I ask them to? What is it I'm trying to find out?"

Chris: Yep, absolutely. I think there are a lot of methods out there that kind of -- like you alluded to before, ethnographic research, something like that, I think Jobs is very well suited for that lean methodology. Just get us close to that customer as you possibly can.

Chad: Right. And I like the picture you put together for the Four Forces. We're trying to create satisfaction for the customer to solve their problem and at the same time reduce the anxiety. And as product managers, hopefully we're figuring this out, the adding complexity to our products complicates our life, complicates the organization's life and does not help the customer. We want to remove the anxiety and just solve the problem that they're after finding the solution to.

Chris: Absolutely. Those are very good.

Chad: For the Four Forces, do you have a diagram I can add to the show notes so listeners can see what that looks like?

Chris: Absolutely. It's hard to do on the podcast because I'm kind of flying in mid air but we'll put the image up there and they can pull it up.

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Chad: Yeah, that would be great. So you have a link you can give me and I'll put it. So listeners can go back to the show notes of theeverydayinnovator.com/057. We'll have that there for you to make it easy. And I asked you to bring an innovation quote to share with us. What did you put together?

Chris: So Bob Moesta, this is a couple of years ago, came up with this. And he said this kind of in passing. It's kind of stuck. What he said was the struggling moment is the seed of innovation. I think it's definitely my favorite innovation quote. I think it's very controversial. So I think within product development there are people or ideas around we just need to come up with the next big thing. We just need to dazzle them with technological breakthroughs and efficiencies and things like that.

What Bob is really saying is if we can understand where people are struggling, what they're trying to get done and understand those situations, that really creates opportunities for innovation. It's not guessing what the consumer wants. It's really studying what are they trying to accomplish? What are they using now to accomplish that and where are they still struggling? Where is there that opportunity where if we were to give them the ability to do things cheaper, faster, better, there's that built up struggle in the consumer that will just be unleashed or resolved. So it's by far one of my favorite quotes.

[39:19]

Chad: I love that. As I've often said to listeners, certainly developing a product is challenging. But in general we have pretty good processes for that. We can figure out how to get most things developed. Not that it's easy but we can get through that. But it's coming up with the right idea that actually solves a real problem that creates value and does so in a way that beats the competitor solutions that makes all the difference. And I like how that struggling moment captures that aspect of innovation that that's where we really need to start.

Thanks for sharing Bob's quote and telling us about it.

Chris: Absolutely. And I completely agree. We have more technical capability than we'll ever be capitalized on. It's really matching what we can build to what people are trying to get done. For me that's the crux of the issue.

Chad: Yeah, our big issue and this is where lean startup came from. Eric's experience of developing a product that got launched and all we heard were crickets that no one purchased the product. Every company has been there and the industry stats on this are not good. Some are on the order of about one and ten, market launches actually becomes a success. The issue is we need to solve real problems in a way that provide real value. That's just where we are.

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I think this Jobs to be Done framework offers so much concrete steps to helping us move in the right direction. How can listeners find out more about applying Jobs to be Done and the work that you're doing?

Chris: Yes. So we run a website called jobstobedone.org. That should act as kind of like the home base. So in there we have a podcast. You can also find the podcast on iTunes but it's on jobstobedone.org. We have an online course. If you go to jobstobedone.org, you can click the Learn button and we'll have information about upcoming face-to-face workshops as well as the online course that they can take.

I highly recommend starting by studying some of the interviews. It's almost like you don't want to listen so much to the actual technique. You want to think about why are we asking the questions that we're asking? We tend to not ask a whole lot of product questions. We ask a lot of questions about the story leading up to the purchase because it's really what we're all about understanding. What was going on in the person's life before they made that purchase?

So within our podcast, we have a couple of live interviews. One of them is about a person buying a mattress. I highly recommend that. Also, Bob did an interview with Horace Dediu from Critical Path about a car that Horace purchased. We'll put the link in the show notes for that as well but that has gotten a lot of great reviews and he really gets the motivational -- get into Horace's struggle. So I'll recommend that as well.

[42:15]

Chad: Excellent. And those are wonderful resources because everyday innovators, I'm sure you're thinking about how do I actually construct the interview then to get those information and being able to hear those in the podcast and how that was done is really valuable. I appreciate you sharing those free resources with us and I will make sure they get into the show notes.

Chris: Absolutely. So the last thing I'll add is we can figure out technically how to do this but I'll share my email address if you want to put that in the show notes, any questions that your listeners have about this is the product I'm working on. How would I put together the project? Who should I talk to? That sort of thing. I do this all day long so I'm happy to answer any questions or jump on the phone for half an hour and talk through what they're working on. I'm just more than happy to offer that up.

Chad: Okay. Chris, what's easier for you? Sometimes publishing an email publicly can lead to some problems. I'm certainly glad to do if you want or would you rather people connect with you through your LinkedIn profile?

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Chris: Yeah, LinkedIn is -- so we can do the LinkedIn and I'm also pretty active on Twitter, chriscbs on Twitter as well.

Chad: Excellent. Good. So if you want to follow up with Chris specifically with any questions, the show notes will have his LinkedIn profile and that Twitter too.

Chris, I so much appreciate you sharing the information about Jobs to be Done framework and providing those links to the resources for us. Listeners, you can find all those details at the show notes.

Chris, thanks for your time.

Chris: Thanks so much. It's been a lot of fun.

Chad: Thank you for listening. The best gift you can give me is telling other product managers and innovators about this podcast. It always means the world to me when you do. And I really appreciate you doing that. And you'll find all the notes from this discussion with Chris including the links to several viable resources at theeverydayinnovator.com/057. Please check it out. Keep innovating.