

PRODUCTIZATION OF A WEB SERVICE

PREPD Presentation Tool

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Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
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Yrittäjyys

SAMELI MÄKELÄ:
Productization of a Web Service
PREPD Presentation Tool

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Tämä opinnäytetyö kuvaa kehitysprosessia, jossa graafisen suunnittelun automatisoivaa, esitysmateriaalien tekoon tarkoitettua tietokoneohjelmistoa kehitetään ajatuksesta kohti olemassaolevaa tuotetta. Tuotetta ei prosessin aikana syntynyt, mutta kertyi tietoa liikeidean tuotteistamisesta. Opinnäytetyö kuvaa prosesseja, joilla ideaa kehitettiin eteenpäin, mikä meni suunnittelussa hyvin ja miksi projekti lopulta epäonnistui.

Työllä ei ollut asiakasta, mutta konseptia kehittänyt ryhmämme otti osaa Sanoma Oy:n syksyllä 2013 järjestämään Startup Acceleratoriin jossa kehitettiin uusia liiketoimintaideoita media-alalle hyödynnettäväksi. Tärkeimmät kehitystyökalut olivat Business Model Canvas ja Guy Kawasakin kirja Reality Check, jotka esitellään opinnäytetyössä. Opinnäytetyö on kirjoitettu englanniksi.

Asiasanat: presentaatio, tietotekniikka, ohjelmisto, liikeidean tuotteistaminen

ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
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PREPD Presentation Tool

Bachelor's thesis 34 pages, appendices 2 pages
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This thesis describes the development process of a presentation tool software from an idea towards an actual product. The main idea of the software is to automate the graphical design of making a presentation. The product was not created during the process but we gathered a lot of information about productization. This thesis describes the processes we used to develop the idea, what went well with the development, and why the project eventually failed.

The thesis had no customer but our team participated in Startup Accelerator that was organized by Sanoma media corporation with the idea. The accelerator program was held in fall 2013. The most important development tools were Business Model Canvas and Reality Check, a startup entrepreneurship book by Guy Kawasaki. Both tools are introduced in the thesis in detail. The thesis is written in English.

Key words: presentation, software, productization, computer technology

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SPECIAL VOCABULARY

BMC	Business Model Canvas
FPO	For-profit organization
MVP	Minimum viable product
NPO	Non-profit organization
webinar	Seminar conducted over the Internet

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes the process of developing a presentation web service from an idea into *minimum viable product* (MVP). MVP is a term coined and popularized by Eric Ries in his book *The Lean Startup* (2011). It means a product that has the minimal amount of features but it still has all the core functionality that the business needs to be viable (Paper, 2014). Generally, MVPs are meant to be built quickly to test a certain feature and then decide whether to implement it into the business (Paper, 2014).

First I explain the *why* of the concept, based on the Golden Circle presented in *Start with Why* by Simon Sinek (2009). According to Sinek, businesses with a strong sense of why they exist tend to succeed better than other companies. The concept of Golden Circle is explained in more detail in chapter 2.

In chapter 3 I explain *Business Model Canvas*. It is a tool for developing an idea into a business concept. Chapter 4 is a reference to Guy Kawasaki's book *Reality Check* that goes through the process of creating a company in great detail. Kawasaki is an entrepreneurship "guru" who has worked at Google and Apple, for example.

Chapter 5 is an analysis of the business concept development process. The chapter also includes my thoughts on what will happen in the future with the concept of the web-based presentation software tool.

Originally the presentation web service was going to be a service that would combine presentation material and sound design. My initial impression is that only few people think how their presentations sound. During the analyzation process there were so many pitfalls that I noticed that the idea was very challenging to implement. The concept was challenging to explain to other people and I did not find good ways to showcase what extra benefit sound design would bring to presentations.

1.1. Developer team

During the fall 2013 I participated in a startup accelerator program organized by Sanoma, a major Finnish media company. There I formed a team with three other participants. Together we defined the Business Model Canvas for the presentation software that we named Prepd. The business model canvas is explained in more in chapter 3. Our concept did not succeed in Sanoma Accelerator and the team broke after we were eliminated from the competition. My analysis of the failure in this particular accelerator program is in chapter 5.

The three other team members came from diverse backgrounds, which was helpful during the process because we could discuss development ideas from many different perspectives.

Yifei Zhang – Chinese exchange student in Tampere University of Technology. Specializing in production economy.

Lauranne Mannaerts – Belgian exchange student in Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Specializing in graphical design and animation.

Janne Weander – Finnish student studying in University of Cambridge, UK. Specializing in business administration.

2. DEVELOPING THE IDEA

2.1. Inception of the idea

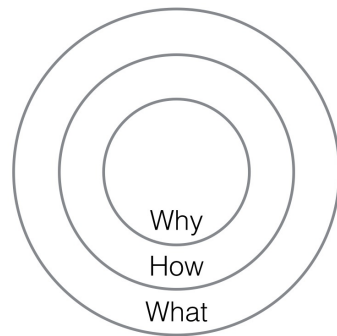
In May 2013 I was having a conversation over a pint with my friend who works as a CEO in a business consulting company. He talked about how there is something missing in the business domain: only few people put effort in their presentation material. The content is there but business people necessarily do not see graphical design important part of their presentations.

Great graphical design can help express the message of a presentation better than just speech or speech with mediocre graphical presentation material (Kawasaki 2008, 209–210). In the business domain, sales is the most essential action there is. If the company does not sell, soon it will not exist. Most presentations in the business domain focus on sales and that means it is vital to give good presentations.

The conversation with my friend incepted the idea about a simple yet professional presentation tool into my mind, and I started to develop it further into a possible business venture. In fall 2013 I took part in Sanoma Accelerator and there our team developed this idea further. During the Accelerator we decided the name, Prepd. The concept did not finish in the Top 10 of business ideas in Accelerator, but for us that did not mean it was without business potential. Probably Sanoma was not the right partner for it.

This chapter goes through Simon Sinek's *Start with Why* theory and defines the problem hypothesis.

2.1.1. Golden circle



PICTURE 1. The Golden Circle (Sinek 2009)

Simon Sinek's book *Start with Why* declares that the basis for successful and lasting business is making the *why* crystal clear: why the business should exist in the first place, what extra value it will give to the world, in what the company and the people in there believe. After that it is easier to focus on creating the business model and finally the MVP. Traditionally companies start from *what* and might never think about their *why*. Successful companies of the 21st century start from the *why*, e.g. Apple does so. (Sinek 2009, 39)

2.2. Problem hypothesis

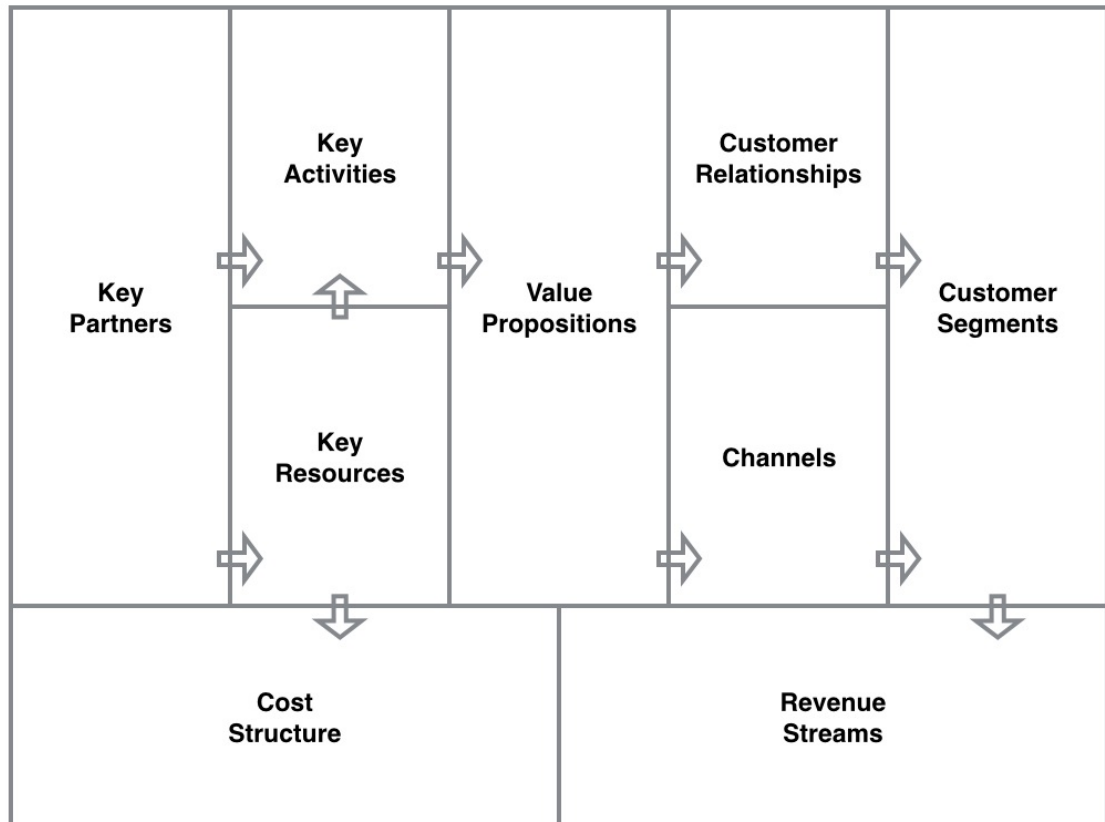
During the fall 2013 I participated in a startup accelerator program by Sanoma Commerce, where people are looking for new business opportunities. The method to keep all the teams together and advancing about the same pace was by having weekly webinars with changing subjects.

The speakers speak about interesting things but one can see that they either are not used to holding webinars or they lack the skills to make their presentations interesting. Every one of the presentations was based on a generic PowerPoint theme and riddled with bullet points, making reading more difficult. These people are top class professionals, hired by Sanoma, a media company with net sales of over €2.3 billion in 2012 (Sanoma Fact-sheet, 2013). Considering the resources the company has, the results are not convincing.

The *why* the world needs high quality presentations is crystal clear for me: I have studied business administration for three years and often come across presentations that are uninspiring. The content is interesting but the presentation does not capture the full attention of the audience. If the speaker has strong charisma, it helps keeping the presentation more interesting. But I believe that with good presentation material many more people could give great presentations. Interestingly, Sinek declares that if the speaker has a strong sense of *why*, the charisma will come through in the speech (2009, 134). Apparently strong passion for the subject gathers other people's attention.

The *why* of Prepd is also about saving the most precious resource – time – without making compromises in the quality of presentations. Time is the most precious resource because wasted time cannot be bought back.

3. BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS



PICTURE 2. Business Model Canvas (based on Osterwalter et al 2009).

Business Model Canvas contains nine different blocks that together create the business model (Osterwalder et al 2009, 42). My interpretation is the *Value Propositions* block in the middle is the most important, because it is the main factor why people buy products. Together the nine blocks cover the company's four most important operating segments: customers, supply, infrastructure, and economic capability (Osterwalder et al 2010, 15). The arrows represent the flows of value and resources.

In this chapter I introduce Business Model Canvas and how our team used it to define Prepd. The business idea participated in Sanoma Accelerator program and our team collaborated to make a Business Model Canvas to figure out the service's structure. Here is the Business Model Canvas version 1.0 of Prepd. The sketch version is in appendix 1, though it's name still is "Presentation Plus" on that.

3.1. Customer segments

A customer segment means that group who is a potential customer for the service. A company can have multiple customer segments but usually it may need to have varied sales and marketing approach for each segment. (Osterwalder et al 2010, 20)

There are two major and one minor customer segments for the presentation service. First, there are for-profit companies and government clients that bring in the majority of revenue. The second group consists of non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and startup scene associations. For clarity, let us call these groups as for-profit organizations (FPOs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs).

The minor customer segment is occasional users who are ready to pay for a service like Prepd, just as they pay for example MS Office. This includes small business ventures, students, researchers, etc. This segment is so varied that there is no point in marketing the MVP for them but focus on the major groups.

3.2. Customer relationships

Customer relationships can be shallow or very deep, for example some companies involve the customers in creating the products. In general, a customer relationship describes how the company keeps in contact with the customer. (Osterwalder et al 2010, 28)

The FPOs are the major source of revenue and so they are treated as the most important group for Prepd. They need high-quality presentation material for different kinds of seminars and staff training courses. The high-quality material will improve the effectiveness of these learning situations and eventually lead to better income. Prepd can automate many tasks needed in making these presentations.

The NPOs are not so much customers but partners because they do not produce much revenue. They receive material for their presentations for cheaper or maybe even free,

depending on the occasion. In return, Prepd gets visibility and an environment where to develop and iterate new graphical presentation solutions. Providing support for NPOs also serves as a great platform for active company responsibility to society.

3.3. Channels

The customer can contact the company through channels. In the best case the customer is so devoted to the company that it is easy to make additional sales – but then the channels must work well from the customer’s point of view. Channels can be direct or indirect: the company’s own sales department, own stores, and own web stores are direct channels. Retailers and partner stores are examples of indirect channels. (Osterwalder et al 2010, 26–27)

Deciding the proper channels is one of the biggest business challenges and the right answers are usually found only through iterative experimentation. To first get publicity for Prepd, it is important to offer the service for free to groups who cannot afford expensive services but would benefit from them greatly: the startup scene and their pitching events.

The most important function of the marketing channels is to create hype and turn the service into a phenomenon in the business domain. This can also be achieved through educational institutions but the startup scene has larger media coverage and thus Prepd would get faster, more aggressive media attention.

3.4. Value propositions

The most important section of Business Model Canvas is the value proposition: why anyone should buy the product and what extra value it brings to the customer. The extra value can be something completely new or some old services combined in an unforeseen way. The core of value is helping the customer to solve their problem. The value can be either qualitative or quantitative: the defining factor could be for example new-

ness, performance, customizability, design, brand, price or availability. (Osterwalder et al 2010, 22–25)

Prepd helps the customer create a visually beautiful presentation without the need for graphical design skills. The presentation layouts are designed by professionals of their fields instead of the customer trying to act like an expert in graphics and typography at the same time.

3.5. Key activities

Key activities help the company create value from the resources it has available. Key activities are essential in delivering the customer that extra value the customer pays for. Key activities can be divided into three main activities: production, problem-solving, and platform. A shoemaker's key activity is production while a consult's key activity is solving the customer's problem. (Osterwalder et al 2010, 36–37)

Prepd is one of those services that cannot thrive without professional design and coding team. If the customers feel they do not get clear benefit from using the service, soon there is no business to do. There is a strong need to hire a people with creative minds and high-level technical skills.

Marketing is essential, and traditional approach of offering a free sample to future customers might be useful. Probably for the first few iterations of the business model, a free sample presentation in exchange for feedback would prove to be beneficial. A major question to be resolved is the possible freemium model, where customers could use some elements for free (e.g. a simple, browser-based presentation building tool) but would have to subscribe for advanced services.

3.6. Key resources

Creating extra value requires industry-specific resources. These resources could be for example skilled coders, coal, or capital. (Osterwalder et al 2010, 34–35)

The team plays the key role in making the service a successful enterprise. People need to be looking for new challenges but not be too fixated into designing too "artsy" layouts. After all, most of the text going through the Prepd conversion is meant for marketing. Creativity, though, is required from all employees to get attention for the service.

Another key resource in the startup phase is venture capital, because the company needs resources like office space, computers, software, etc. The MVP cannot be created without investors because graphics designers and great coders know their value. And they are needed for creating the software.

3.7. Key partners

Key partners help the company to make business. Usually the partners have resources and skills the company does not have and together they can create a product that they could not make just by themselves. For example, a shoe factory might have a partner company to sell the shoes to the end user because the partner company already has the store network and it has much more knowledge of retail than the shoe factory itself. (Osterwalder 2010, 38–39)

In order to receive media attention, Prepd must collaborate with startup events and educational institutions. They provide a chance to develop and iterate the concept with low risk. Pitching events are a great place to showcase the value of excellent presentations. Also art and IT students can be hired to occasionally work for the company to design new layouts and iterate new features.

3.8. Cost structure

Producing a service has costs. Defining the company's cost structure helps it define where it could make its business more cost-effective. The cost structure is also the basis for funding requests because it helps the investors see how the company's business is built. (Osterwalder et al 2010, 40)

There are only a few major costs in running an enterprise like Prepd. Office space, equipment and staff. Most of the work is coding, layout design and marketing the product. If the staff believes in the company's idea, they might be able to work for free at start and help building the customer base. Provision-based salary is an option, too.

3.9. Revenue streams

Revenue streams keep the company running. Unlike other block on Business Model Canvas, revenue streams is the only one that produces income. Other blocks help define the costs of doing business. The customer segments produce revenue by buying the products the company offers. (Osterwalder et al 2010, 30)

Prepd's revenue comes from the big customers, for example governments and Fortune 500 companies. They look for usability in the software and Prepd's ease of use would answer the need. In the best case Prepd could replace PowerPoint as the *de facto* presentation tool in major companies.

One thing to consider is the pricing model: maybe it should be a combination of pay-per-presentation and subscription fees. If the customer only needs a presentation sometimes, it is useless to pay for a constant subscription. Still, frequent customers would find subscription-based pricing model more satisfying. The bottom line – pricing is one of those things one cannot decide purely on paper, without testing different pricing models in practice.

4. GUY KAWASAKI'S REALITY CHECK

Business Model Canvas is a great tool but still a mere tool. Analyzing the business idea through another framework is a part of good scientific method. To do this, I read and adapted *Reality Check* (Kawasaki, 2008).

Guy Kawasaki has a long history with Silicon Valley, working at Google business unit of Motorola since 2013 and as the chief evangelist of Apple in the 80's and 90's (Kawasaki 2014). An evangelist is a person who believes in the product so much that they voluntarily sell and market it – Evangelism comes from Greek and means "bringing the good news" (Kawasaki 2008, 187). Kawasaki also has written many books about starting a business venture (Kawasaki, 2014).

Based on Reality Check, this is my analysis of how to make Prepd a viable business.

4.1. Starting

"All the best things I did at Apple came from (a) not having money, and (b) not having done it before, ever." – Steve Wozniak (Kawasaki 2008, 5)

Starting is both the hardest and easiest part of building an enterprise. Hardest, because you know nothing. And easiest, because you believe in doing the impossible. As Kawasaki writes, entrepreneurship always is hard work (2008, 13). Kawasaki writes about the top ten realities of startups (2008, 12–14):

- *True believers go nuts at the slightest provocation:* The best people care way too much of your company. They do everything they can to make it succeed.
- *Good people need big projects:* In order to recruit people who care too much, the project must be worth doing. It has to make a dent in the universe.
- *Startups are freak-catchers:* Startups need their oddballs, because the people need to believe they can change the world.

- *Good code takes time*: Rome was not built in a day. Creating great software takes time. So startups need time to provide results.
- *Everybody has to rebuild*: 1.0 version of Rome was not the final version. There will be problems no one could foresee, so correcting errors is part of the process.
- *Fearless leaders are often terrified*: The most promising ideas are also the most terrifying. They challenge the status quo so bravely that their executors fear them.
- *It's always hard work*: According to Steve Ballmer, Microsoft CEO, the secret to Microsoft's success has been "hard, hard, hard, hard, hard, work." There are no shortcuts to fame and success. Only work will do.
- *It's not going to get better – it already is*: When success is just looming in the horizon, people think about how great it will feel. Then, after getting the success, they usually think how great those early days were better. It is best to enjoy today.
- *Truth is the only currency*: The more people are warned about risks of startups, the more they have the will to invest in them. So it is better to tell the truth that most likely this startup will fail as many others do.
- *Competition starts at \$100 million*: If the product has a market, someone else is working there, too. So there is no need to start competing with another company before hitting the \$100 million revenue barrier – if the product is worthwhile, there is enough market share for everyone.

Starting a company requires taking a leap of faith, though accepting that the most likely result is failure. Considering Prepd, this also is very true because the basic idea was shot down in Sanoma Accelerator. This means other people did not think that it is worth doing. Still, I believe in the simplicity of the idea and want to look more into it.

A mantra is a sentence of 3–4 words that define the reason for the product to exist: like Federal Express' mantra is "Peace of mind" and Nike's "authentic athletic performance" (Kawasaki 2008, 23–24). A mantra helps people realize what the product is about because it is short and simple. I think the mantra for Prepd should be "your presentation,

prepared.” Prepd helps to reduce the stress of making a great presentation, and it also saves the user’s time.

4.2. Raising money

After starting comes the project of gathering funding. Kawasaki writes from Silicon Valley venture capitalists’ point of view. I believe it differs from the Finnish funding procedure in scale. Kawasaki describes the American funders as people who do not care to invest in anything that will not produce \$100 million annual revenue in five years’ time (2008, 27).

There are five characteristics that spark investors’ interest.

- *Realness*: the product has a meaning, i.e. it ”makes a dent in the universe.”
- *Traction*: the product is generating revenue already, or at least there are serious customer references that say they will buy the product when available.
- *Cleanliness*: there are no IPO lawsuits waiting or disgruntled founders who own 25 percent of the stock.
- *Forthrightness*: if there are problems in sight, e.g. difficult shareholders or un-cleared IPO, it is best to disclose them in the beginning.
- *Enemies*: if you claim that there are no competition, you show that you are clueless – rather tell why your product has the unfair advantage in the market. (Kawasaki 2008, 28–29)

Based on Kawasaki’s theses, the pitch for Prepd would sound like this: Prepd has a meaning; it helps people to produce visually brilliant presentations without spending time on learning the fundamentals of visual design. It offers simplicity in the world of complexity. Before the software can be shipped, Prepd could be a service where people post their presentation material and our company makes it look good. This would bring both revenue and customers, making the product look more viable in the investors’ eyes.

According to Kawasaki, the executive summary is the most important document a starting entrepreneur has to write. The summary is sent to potential investors after introduc-

tion in order to get a meeting. An effective executive summary has nine components (2008, 33–34):

- *Problem*. What pressing and important problem are you solving or opportunity are you addressing?
- *Solution*. How are you solving this problem or tapping this opportunity?
- *Business model*. Who are your customers and how will you make money?
- *Underlying magic*. What makes your company special?
- *Marketing and sales strategy*. What is your go-to-market strategy?
- *Competition*. Whom do you compete with? What can you do that they can't? What can they do that you can't?
- *Projections*. What are your financial projections for the next three years? What are the key assumptions and metrics to achieve these projections?
- *Team*. Who is on your team? Why are they special?
- *Status and time line*. Where are you now and what are the major, close milestones?

In the meeting with the investors one needs to pitch the product. Because the product is a presentation software, the pitch has to be better than usual. Kawasaki has composed a rule of thumb for great pitches: 10/20/30 (2008, 36). It stands for 10 slides that cover the whole topic, 20 minutes reserved for the pitch, and a 30-point font to make the slides readable enough for the audience (Kawasaki 2008, 37–38).

4.3. Planning

Business plans can take months to write. Unfortunately this does not mean that they would be any better than a business plan made in only a couple days. William Bygrave of Babson College made a study comparing different startups and their business plans. Long, carefully written plans did not bring any more success than those fast drafts whose main purpose was to help start executing fast. Bygrave's message to entrepreneurs is "just do it." (Kawasaki 2008, 78)

The business plan is a working document and not nearly as important as the executive summary in getting investors' interest. Investors make their gut-decisions based on the pitch, so business plan should focus on solidifying the company's objectives (what), strategies (how), and tactics (when, where, who). Only one person should write the document to make it coherent. Less pages means that more people actually read the business plan. Financial projections should focus on key metrics and never exceed one page. (Kawasaki 2008, 79–80)

Most importantly, "write deliberate – act emergent." It is better to give the prediction your best shot but also be able to change your plans when you gather new information about the product and the market. Startups need to adapt all the time. (Kawasaki 2008, 80)

4.4. Executing

After planning and funding comes the time to execute. Here are a few of the most important things needed in the art of execution, according to Kawasaki (2008, 93–95):

- *Create something worth executing*: It is a lot easier to stay motivated when your product is great rather than just a piece of nonsense. Choose to work on something that will change the world, your world at the very least.
- *Set goals*: The goals have to be measurable, achievable, and relevant. Measurable goals can be achieved. Achievability is important to keep good spirits in the team. Relevance keeps the business going forward.
- *Reward the achievers*: Rewarding makes the achievers feel their work matters and are happy to continue good work. The underachievers understand that the company takes execution seriously and maybe work harder on the next set of goals.
- *Establish a culture of execution*: "Execution is not an event. [...] Rather, it is a way of life." The managers need to lead by example, achieving the set goals and taking care of unanswered e-mails and phone calls.

Personally, I question the reward system (at least the model Kawasaki presents). According to Daniel Pink, who has researched motivation and its "fuel" for years, has written a lot about how in some environments bonuses and rewards are demoralizing instead of performance-boosting (Pink 2011). Otherwise Kawasaki has a legitimate point in his list, because the best way to feel the company is progressing is through goals that are close enough to each other and can be achieved.

4.5. Innovating

"Innovation is what creates wealth. Innovation had better create wealth because it's so damn hard to do." (Kawasaki 2008, 119)

Innovation takes time, so I do not yet have a full idea what Prepd will be. Instead, I take note on Kawasaki's guide to innovation (2008, 119–12). Kawasaki's ideas on innovating represent the core of startups: Build your MVP, do not care if the first version is not the most beautiful thing ever, do not think that people are stupid, and ignore those who say your idea is not worth doing.

Toyota is the biggest car manufacturer in the world. The key attributes of their products are simplicity and high quality. Toyota knows these shortfalls of innovation well and they are worth listing (Kawasaki 2008, 123–124):

- *Shortcutting*. It is dangerous to jump to conclusions without properly examining the reasons behind the problem.
- *Blind spots*. People have assumptions and biases that they might not even acknowledge. An open mind and opinions from different people are needed.
- *NIH (Not Invented Here)*. Other people's solutions might not look good because we did not invent them ourselves – this is a wrong assumption.
- *Satisficing*. It is easy to settle for a compromise when it looks like a familiar solution. But then we miss truly innovative solutions.
- *Downgrading*. No one likes to fail when the goals are set, and then it is easy to downgrade them to meet the situation.

- *Complicating*. People have a tendency to do more and add more. At the same time things complicate, for example does the software need all those features?
- *Stifling*. Finding excuses to give up is natural to people but giving up never leads to success in the business domain.

Ideas need the tipping point to spread – but they also need the sticking point to stay longer than a couple months. There are six principles that link sticky ideas. Not all of them are needed in every sticky idea but they have a pattern. The principles are called SUCCES that stands for *simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, and story*. (Kawasaki 2008, 131)

A perfect example of SUCCES – John F. Kennedy’s plan to put man on the moon – had all these qualities. ”Man on the moon” was a single, clear mission whose goal was easily measured. In the 60’s the idea sounded like pure science fiction but because the speaker was the president of the U.S., he had credibility to inspire the whole nation. (Ibid.)

The SUCCES of Prepd checks with some of the principles. The mission of Prepd was simple; making great-looking presentations as easy as writing. The unexpected was that in the era of maximizing it would have been an antithesis to software filled with features. Automatic graphical design was a concrete description. Credibility was lacking because our team did not have previous success stories to prove our professionalism – the project would have needed a public figure who showed their belief in Prepd and its mission. The emotional response to changing the way presentations are made should have been positive – who would not love more easiness in their lives? The story was not spectacular because it was about four people who thought they had a great idea but could not convince other people about its greatness well enough.

4.6. Marketing

Marketing is one of the most difficult areas in business because the right things to do are always case-specific. Nonetheless, it has to be done in order to get customers. It is hard to list the right things to do, but in the era of the Internet there are some universal pitfalls of marketing that should be avoided (Kawasaki 2008, 155–158):

- *Enforced, immediate registration.* People want to try before ”buying” and immediate registration is annoying in this sense.
- *Impossibly long URLs.* Long URLs might get line breaks added when shared, and that annoys the users.
- *Windows that do not generate URLs.* Interesting things get shared – unless they do not have an URL to share.
- *Lack of a search function.* It is difficult to find that interesting article if it cannot be searched.
- *Lack of ways to share an experience.* People want to share interesting experience and they want to do it as easily as possible.
- *Lack of feeds and e-mail lists.* If people want to follow the company, it should be made easy. Nowadays social media has a big role in making following easy.
- *User names that cannot contain the @ character.* An e-mail address is easy to use as a username because everyone remembers their own address.
- *Frictionful commenting.* Comments should not be moderated because it creates a picture about a company that is hypocritical.
- *Unreadable confirmation (CAPTCHA) codes.* Too often the codes are so difficult to read that people have to try many times to get them correct.
- *E-mails without signatures.* It gives a professional image if your e-mails have your contact information automatically in the signature.

Prepd is the name our team chose during the accelerator program. Choosing the name is always a difficult process because changing it later takes a lot of time and resources. For example every commercial should then mention something like ”we were known as ___ before but now remember our new name.”

Kawasaki lists some naming tips in his book. The name Prepd has surprisingly many attributes Kawasaki considers important (2008, 159–161):

- *Embody verb potential.* Nowadays people "google" and "blog" – They also could "prep" their presentations.
- *Sound different.* Strange names are remembered better, though the name has to be easily pronounced.
- *Embody logic.* Pokémon means a pocket monster, so the product is in the name.
- *Avoid the commonplace and generic.* Web search engines help people find information about your product but they cannot do that if the product's name is something very generic like *Water*.
- *Avoid the trendy.* Trends come and go, the best example of this is the "dot-com" naming trend in the early 00's. Kawasaki writes that his own company was *garage.com* which did not survive long.

I think one of the most important attributes is to have a logical name. Out of ten people at least half should have known what Prepd is about by just telling them the name. Unfortunately our team did not test that. Apple is an example of a brand that defies logic (there is not much in common with fruits and computer technology) but it is an exception.

The highest form of marketing is branding. A good brand markets itself in a way a million roadside signs could never do. Kawasaki writes about some points worth considering (2008, 162–164):

- *Seize the high ground:* Focus on the good things the product will bring to the customers. Do not brag about your competition in public, because nobody cares.
- *Create one message:* Volvo cannot equal both safety and sexiness, so in the same way Prepd can have only one core message. The core of Prepd is saving time without compromising professional look.
- *Speak English:* Jargon is dangerous because not everybody understands it. Communication must be simple and effective.

- *Take the opposite test*: Many companies claim that their products are easy, secure, and scalable. It is no use to describe the product in the same way everybody else does with their own. Be original.
- *Cascade the message*: Check that everyone in your own company understands the core message. Then the whole team operates on the same wavelength.
- *Examine the bounce-back*: Ask the customers what they think your core message is. "It's not so much what you say as much as what people hear."
- *Focus on PR, not advertising*: Best marketing is when your product is so great that people suggest other people to use it too. Spending advertising budget on big media coverage is not effective to build a sustainable brand.
- *Strive for humanness*: The best brands identify with individuals. People talk about "my iPod" or "my Harley-Davidson" but they do not often talk about "my Windows."

The most important lesson in marketing is to do one thing well and choose that one thing very wisely (Kawasaki 2008, 176).

4.7. Beguiling

To beguile is to succeed in business. Beguiling has a bad ring to it, but eventually it is about influencing other people. If people are treated with respect, they usually treat you back in the same way. Here is the psychology of beguiling (Kawasaki 2008, 243–244):

- *Reciprocation*: People give back to you the kind of treatment that they have received from you.
- *Scarcity*: People will try to seize the opportunities that you offer them that are rare or dwindling in availability.
- *Authority*: People will be most persuaded by you when they see you as having knowledge and credibility on the topic.
- *Commitment*: People will feel a need to comply with your request if it is consistent with what they have publicly committed themselves to in your presence.

- *Liking*: People prefer to say yes to your request to the degree that they know and like you.
- *Consensus*: People will be likely to say yes to your request if you give them evidence that people just like them have been saying yes to it.

Another important thing to beguile about is creating a community around Prepd. It is something worth building a community around, which Kawasaki thinks is essential (2008, 251). The community can provide important feedback through criticism and add value to the product, if it is an open system (Kawasaki 2008, 252). A community makes loyal customers – who have to be served as such.

Aside the product and community, customer service is the thing that has big impact to the company's success. In Finland customer service is too often the necessary evil, e.g. some companies make customers feel that they are a nuisance. For me, providing quality customer service has always been priority number one. Still, most companies invest much more in sales and marketing – even though providing great customer service is not particularly expensive (Kawasaki 2008, 257).

Influencing, building a community, and providing great customer service are the three essentials for a company that wants to succeed. They can only be built by trial and error, not design beforehand. Still, it is good to acknowledge what one has to do after delivering the first version of the product.

4.8. Competition

According to Kawasaki, if the company does not have competition, it does not have a market (2008, 285). Prepd has serious competition. PowerPoint by Microsoft, Keynote by Apple, and Prezi are all software to create presentation material. Their logic for doing that is completely different but that does not mean that they are not competing for the same customers. Their brand visibility is huge and excluding Prezi, formed in a matter of decades. They have a serious head start.

There also is *Slidebean*, a startup that has a very similar approach to presentation making as Prepd. Slidebean takes your notes and turns them into presentation (by just choosing the theme), and you can add pictures from 500px photo database or use your own. (Anderson 2014)

Slidebean sounds so similar to the core idea of Prepd that maybe it is time to readjust Prepd to "your one-stop shop for making great presentations." This means tutorials on how to create interesting text content for presentations and speaking tips. Slidebean deserves some scouting and spotting the weak spots in their concept to make Prepd better than it – or at least pivotally different. Still, Slidebean shows that the idea of simple presentation software is so interesting that someone has invested in it.

5. REFLECTIONS

5.1. Business Model Canvas vs. Guy Kawasaki – what I have learned

Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a quick tool for designing your business idea. It helped with Prepd to think about different possible customer segments and what value Prepd would give to them.

Kawasaki's Reality Check goes much more into detail of making a company successful, offering views on different aspects of entrepreneurship from innovating to driving your competition insane. The book is almost 500 pages long and there are many details. Kawasaki has a long history of creating success in companies like Google and Apple, so I believe he has great insight into the world of business.

Kawasaki's book helped me restore faith in Prepd. After Sanoma Accelerator it felt that Prepd might be a dull idea because our team received a lot of criticism when we pitched it. Kawasaki reminded that if someone has been successful with their business ideas in the past, it does not automatically mean that they would have a magical insight into the future. Prepd could be ahead the curve, a phenomenon of the future.

This chapter looks into what went well with Prepd project, what went wrong, and what I will do differently if I decide to continue developing the concept into an actual business. There is also a description of features Prepd should have if it was developed now.

5.2. What was achieved

Originally Prepd was my idea about a presentation service or software that would include sound design elements. During the accelerator process our team developed the idea into a more simple concept that was easier to explain to other people. The problem of making presentation material was acknowledged by many people whom we talked with.

If I continue developing the Prepd concept, I have good notes on what features it should have. We discussed about the concept from different views and thought about who the first users would be. The product has a simple mantra, that acknowledges the problem and our idea how it could be solved.

Our graphics expert designed a "how-to-use-Prepd" layout that gives a simple and fast overview how we thought Prepd's customer experience should look like. The layout picture is in appendix 2.

5.3. What should have been done differently

Most of all, I wish I had read Kawasaki's *Reality Check* by the time Sanoma Accelerator started. It was very useful in thinking about ways of how Prepd should be advertised and pitched to other people. I think our team's biggest failure in the accelerator process was not the product itself but how we pitched it to other teams.

None of us was naturally a presenter and we were not able to develop our skills during the process. Probably this created a vicious circle because we were pitching a tool for presentation but we were not convincing presenters ourselves. This gave the impression that we did not have credibility. I think our presentations could have benefited from the actual product hugely.

Sanoma might not have been the best partner to make Prepd because it is a media company focusing on sales and journalistic content. Its mission is not to produce presentations but rather news about interesting presentations. The startup accelerator did not have any limitations of what the business idea could be about, though.

If I decide to continue developing Prepd in the future, I have a few major things that have to be done. The team needs a great presentator with a strong passion for performing in public. Then there would not be the problem with pitching the product with credibility.

My initial feeling was that many people could not believe that Prepd could be done because graphical design is traditionally made manually. This means we would need at least one professional coder who could convince that automatic graphical design is possible for the coding part. And naturally there should be an expert in visual arts who could tell people about how graphics has rules like the golden ratio that is the cornerstone of photography. I am not a graphics expert but I believe there are more rules that can be exploited and duplicated in an automatic computer process.

5.4. Future of Prepd

Though Prepd is a service, it is heavily based on the MVP version of the software in the first stage. The software works as a webpage, where the user writes the content into a textbox and then chooses the theme. After generating the presentation, the user can choose to share it (e.g. in SlideShare) or download it as a PowerPoint/Keynote file.

There are two major different approaches into writing the text. One is a graphical user interface, similar to PowerPoint. The other is to integrate a bit of coding approach into Prepd, where the user can choose style attributes by marking them with symbols in the text. Maybe both approaches can be included because most people are so used to GUI that everything else feels scary.

On the other hand, some people might feel that being able to design the layout just by writing is more streamlined than contemporary options and helps keeping the workflow while creating presentations.

The third approach could be a fully automatic version where layout is designed out of just a chunk of text, based on calculations and theories of visually interesting pictures. The rest of the features can be decided by using the lean method and iteration cycles.

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APPENDIX.

Appendix 1. Business Model Canvas for Prepd.

<p>Key Partners</p> <p>sponsoring pitching events and competitions</p> <p>partners provide suggestion-based marketing</p> <p>universities provide workforce and prototyping opportunities</p>	<p>Key Activities</p> <p>marketing (free samples against feedback)</p> <p>getting professional staff</p> <p>staff with creative mind and great technical skills</p> <p>freemium vs premium?</p>	<p>Value Propositions</p> <p>enhanced presentation experience</p> <p>get core message through better</p> <p>save time by letting professionals do your presentation</p>	<p>Customer Relationships</p> <p>Fortune500 companies and governments are the big buyers</p> <p>NPOs, startup scene, educational institutions give publicity, favors, reputation, prototyping opportunities</p>	<p>Customer Segments</p> <p>Non-profit organizations</p> <p>Fortune500 companies</p> <p>governments</p> <p>startup scene</p> <p>universities and schools</p>
	<p>Key Resources</p> <p>the professional staff is essential, they look for challenge</p> <p>brand building</p> <p>investor capital</p>		<p>Channels</p> <p>startup scenes</p> <p>business seminars</p> <p>word-of-mouth</p> <p>creating hype, make it a phenomenon</p>	
<p>Cost Structure</p> <p>professional staff</p> <p>efficient leadership</p> <p>database maintenance</p> <p>R&D</p> <p>marketing</p>		<p>Presentation Plus</p> <p>28 Sep 2013</p>	<p>Revenue Streams</p> <p>easiness</p> <p>professional touch</p> <p>now customers DIY</p> <p>buy one presentation or a subscription</p> <p>usability</p>	

Appendix 2. Prepd Customer Experience Path.

