



The struggle for impact and appreciation

Getting the most out of the
customer research discipline.

A research report.

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Study Authors



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Executive Summary (I)

Customer researchers have an enormously responsible job. They play a key role in creating product strategy and thus have a significant impact on an organization's success. However, being in a customer researcher position can be a tough job according to our study.

While we started our research to understand how well customer research tools and methods work, we quickly realized that the **key challenges** for people in charge of “finding out what customers need” lie somewhere else. They are rooted in a **lack of understanding** for their profession. And if this would not be enough, the discipline itself presents lots of challenges.

Executive Summary (II)

These challenges are:

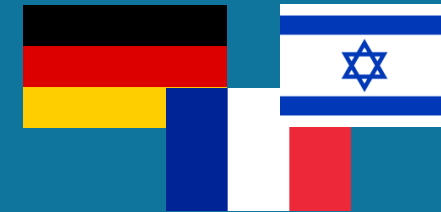
- Dealing with qualitative (soft)/highly ambiguate data and trusting their own conclusions
- Need to use a multitude of methods to narrow down insights
- Specialist status with little opportunity to exchange thoughts with like-minded people
- Need to educate stakeholders, i. e. leaders, customers, and co-workers, about the value of profound, product-agnostic customer research
- Ongoing need to defend their methods or justify their position
- Lack of trust, appreciation, and even respect by stakeholders

Research Objective

Understand satisfaction with current **tools** for
determining **customer needs**.

Study Parameters

- Interviews with professionals in charge of *customer research* for a product area, customer segment/client, or company
- Geographies: 7 x Germany, 1 x France, 1 x Israel
- 45 min. interviews conducted from 11/21 to 01/22
- 7 male, 2 female interviewees
- Job roles/titles: 5 x product manager, 2 x customer researcher, 2 x product management consultant
- Method: remotely conducted interviews, evaluated using The Wheel of Progress®



Study Results

Study Results

- Verbatim comments
- Forces of progress
- Jobs-to-be-done map
- Customer Jobs, Pains & Gains
- Desires for progress

Voices of customer researchers

"Interviews, surveys, focus groups, anything like that, are unreliable, ... rather expensive, time-consuming, and less objective."

"Synthesizing customer research data on my own is annoying."

"The data I gathered in interviews has not been actionable and sharable."

Performing customer research is challenging. I cannot trust my data.

"Data analytics are more driven by marketing and reporting, not by customer insights."

"Customers don't know what they want."

"Despite doing interviews I couldn't extract the customer job."

Voices of customer researchers

“As a product manager you have only limited impact.”

“When I raise a concern about a potential competitive issue, my advice is not taken seriously.”

I don't feel like being trusted.

“Introducing a (customer research) process is an uphill battle.”

Voices of customer researchers

“When there is no product strategy I am getting told by the CPO to „just do it, this is your job.”

“Our leaders think a product roadmap is a strategy.”

“Whenever I realize the company has no plan for building a strategy, I quit the job - always.”

Our organizational leaders don't provide the right level of guidance on strategy development.

“I cannot prioritize when there is no direction.”

“It is difficult when a head of product, CPO, or CEO has a vision in form of a feature list, a goal, or a vision. But these things don't constitute a strategy.”

“When there are no guardrails on strategy development, I cannot move swiftly.”

Voices of customer researchers

“Leaders are a lot like kids in a toy store – all that counts is a nice shiny object.”

“My leaders told me that anyone can conduct customer interviews.”

“I am left alone by my leaders finding resources for my customer research project.”

My stakeholders (org. leaders, customers, co-workers) don't appreciate the customer research function.

“My leadership admitted that we lost a customer because they didn't listen to me.”

“The product idea is more important than finding out customer needs. I then have to search for the right problem for the product. That's very difficult.”

“Our marketers don't think market research is their job.”

Voices of customer researchers

“It’s a challenge to educate an interdisciplinary team on taking the user perspective and argue objectively.”

“Reading about a method is good but it doesn’t provide you with the trick.”

How to learn the customer research traits?

“I don’t have enough opportunities to have exchanges with like-minded people.”

Pushes and habits

What pushes interviewees away from their old solution

Inappropriate, unreliable methods

Dissonance with decision makers for product development, for example opportunism

Lack of appreciation

What are the things that make them stick to their current research methods.

Own, advisory innovation department

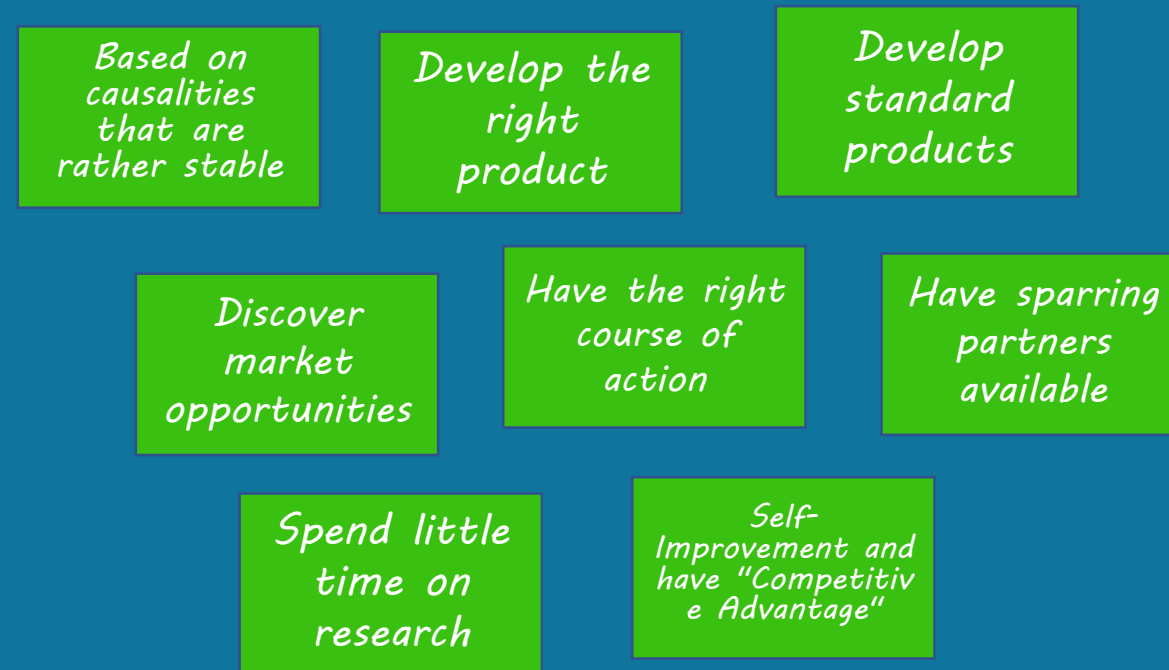
Confidence in your own abilities

Believe that customer interviews are a proven method

Product-related customer research (testing concepts)

Desired Outcomes & Avoidances

What are the desired outcomes a new solution should have



What are the issues that they expected the new solution should not result in.



Pulls and anxieties

What are issues that pull the interviewees to the new solution

Structured approach, distinction between problem and solution

Knowing the primal needs

Ability to test quickly

What were the fears that made them doubt the new solution

Don't trust customer research

JTBD is slow

JTBD not suitable for B2C

Constraints

What are the main constraints that the interviewees encountered, that prevent them of making progress.

*Lack of
resources
granted for
research*

*Lack of
cooperation
within the
organization*

*Not enough
time
granted for
research*

*Fast-
changing
environment*

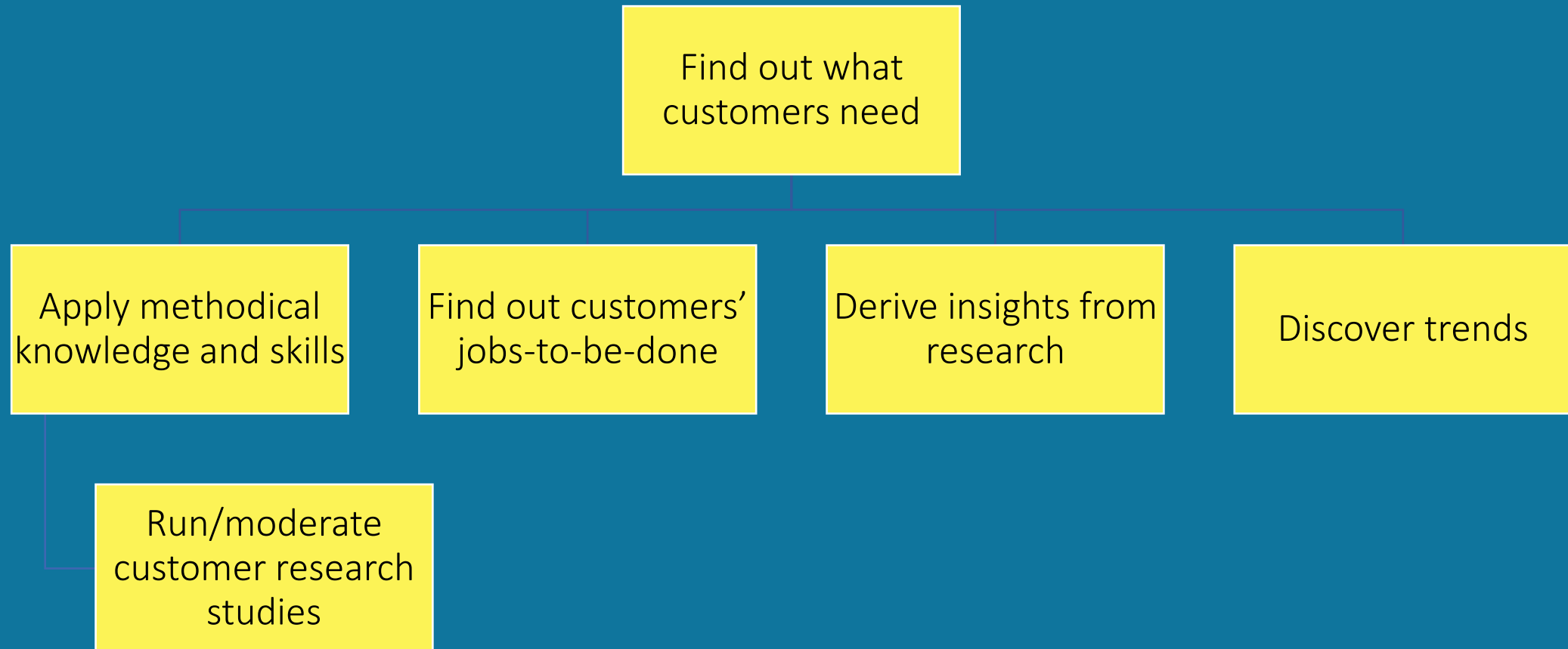
*management
attitude*

Customer Job Map

Become a recognized authority on customer research to my stakeholders.



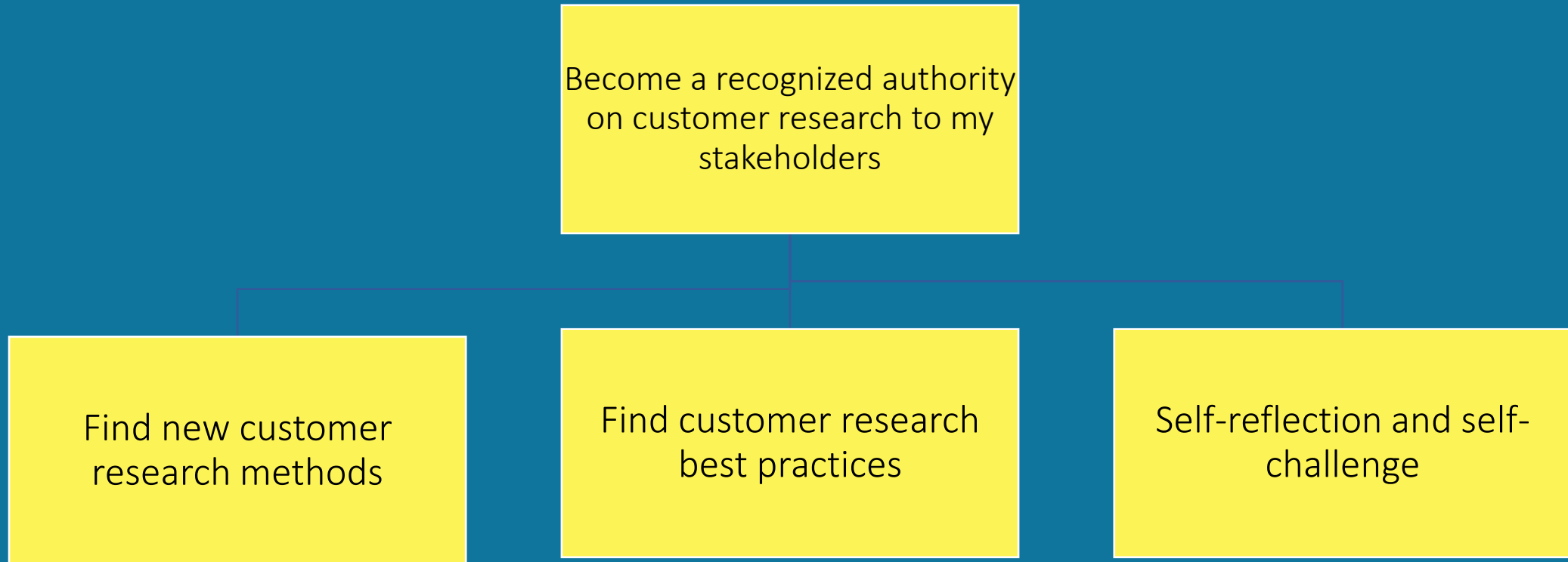
Job Functions



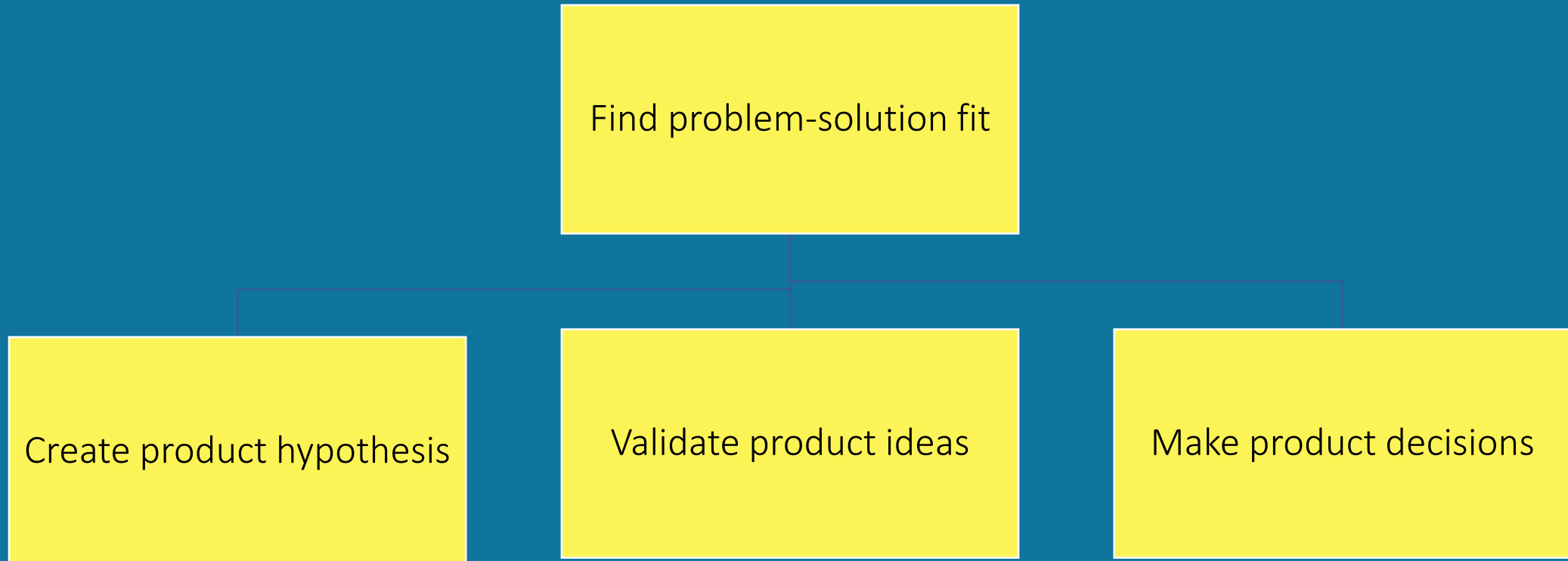
Job Functions



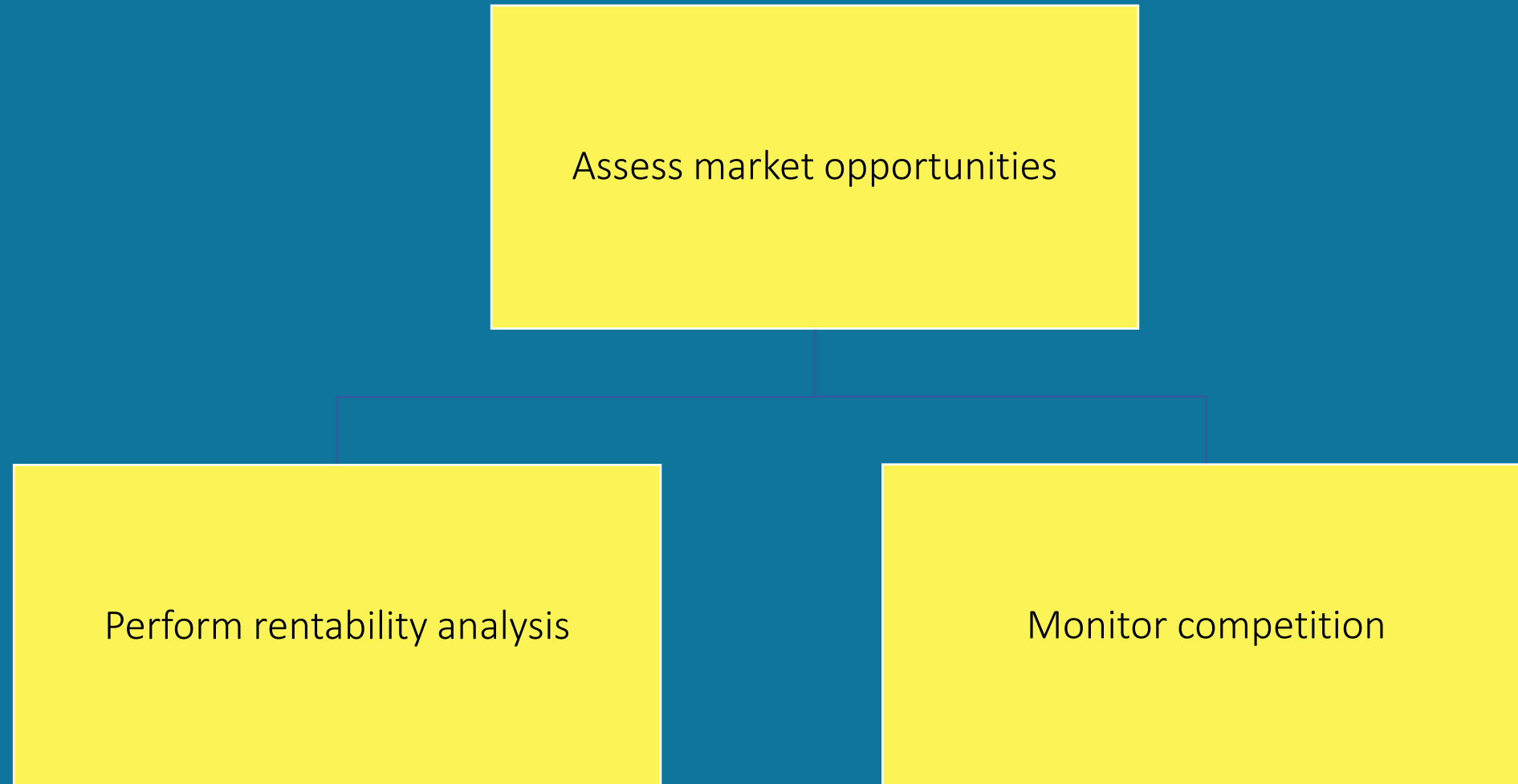
Job Functions



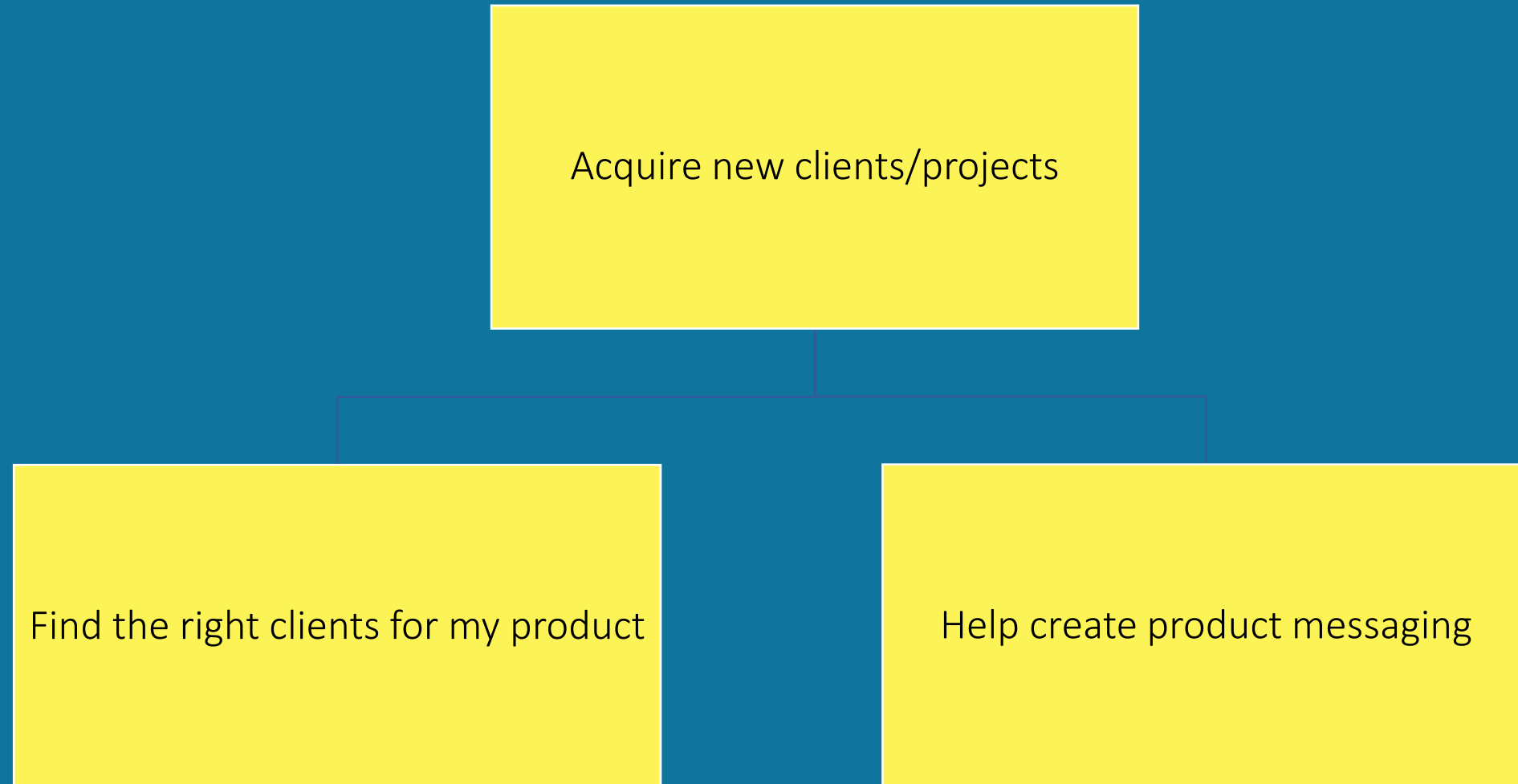
Job Functions



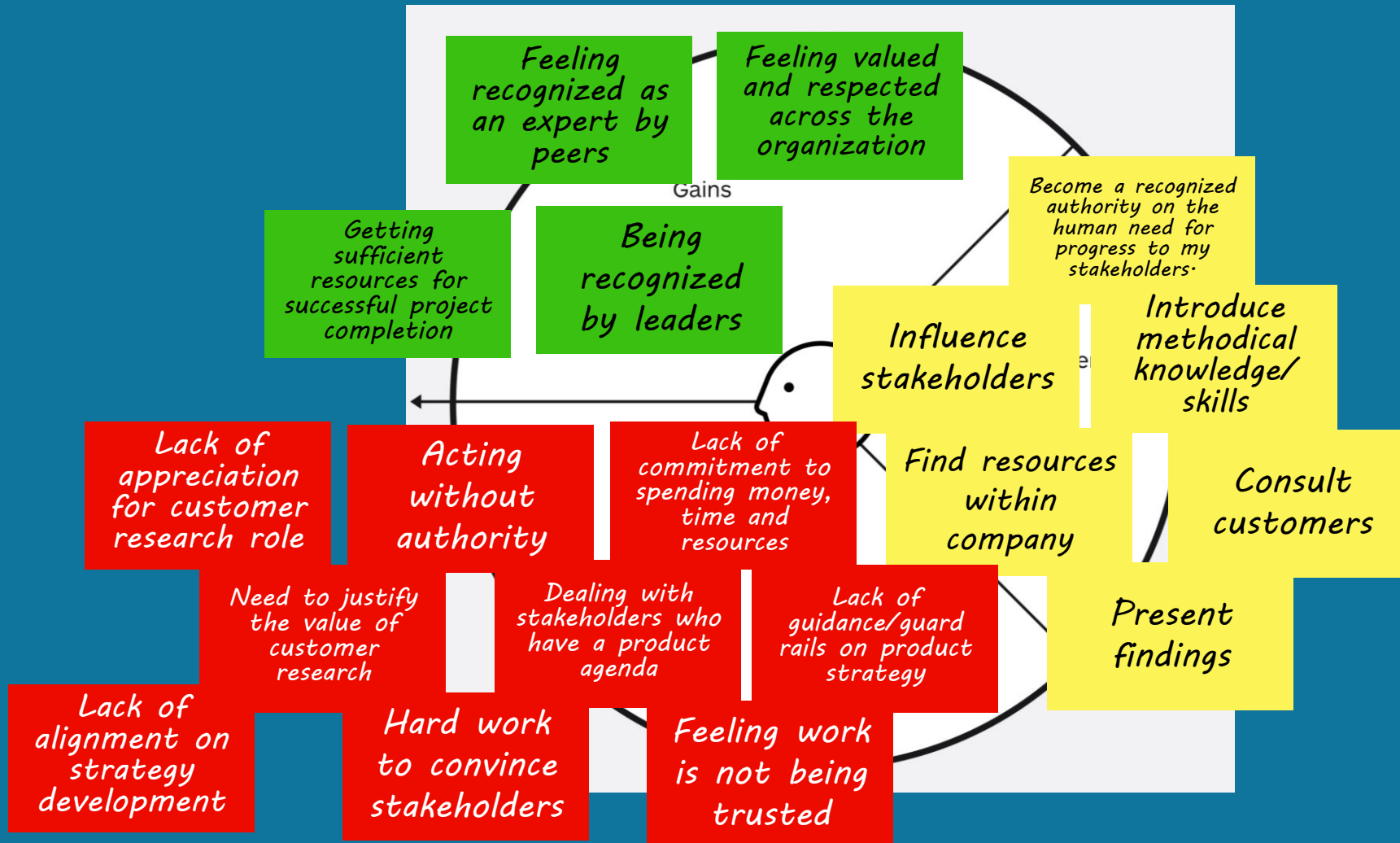
Job Functions



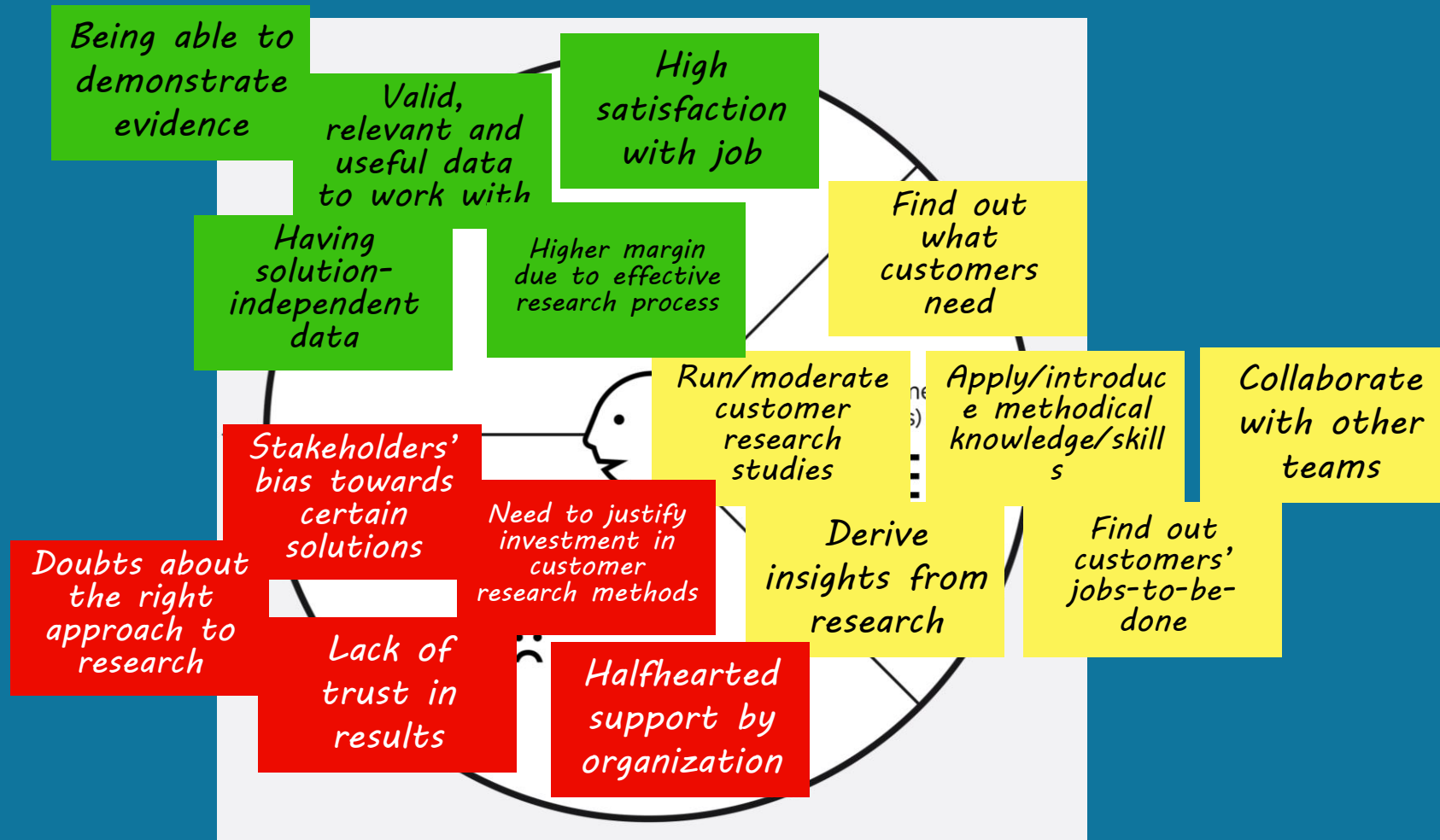
Job Functions



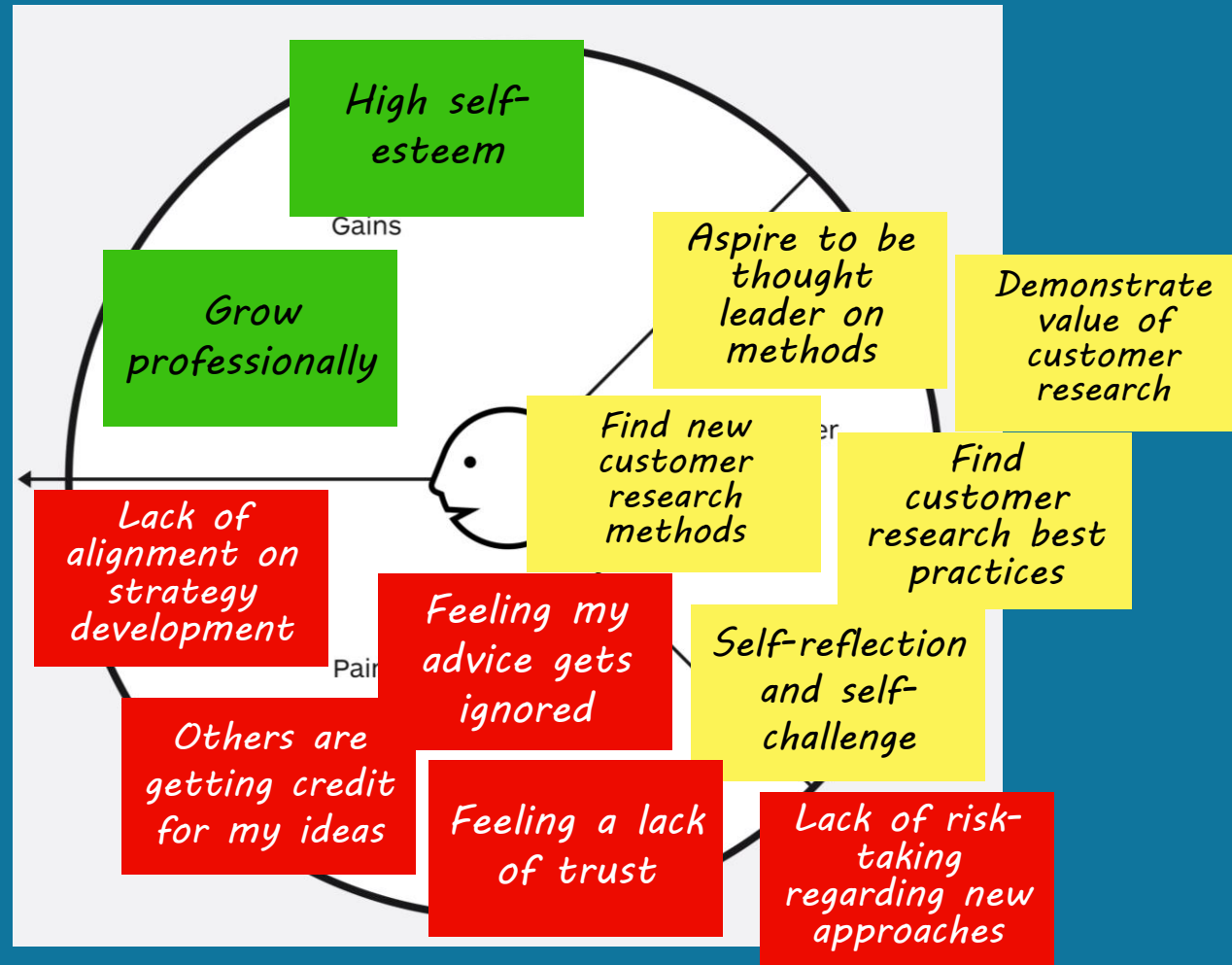
Top Customer Jobs, Pains & Gains



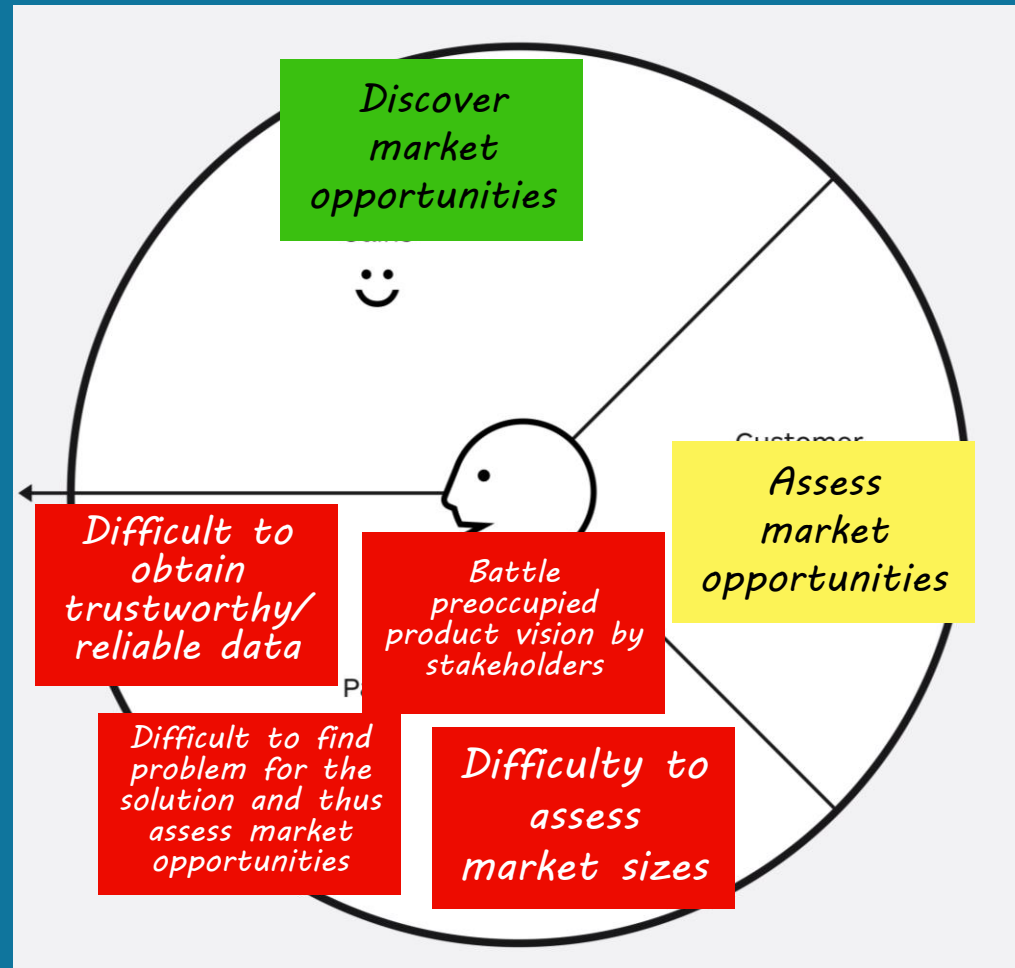
Top Customer Jobs, Pains & Gains



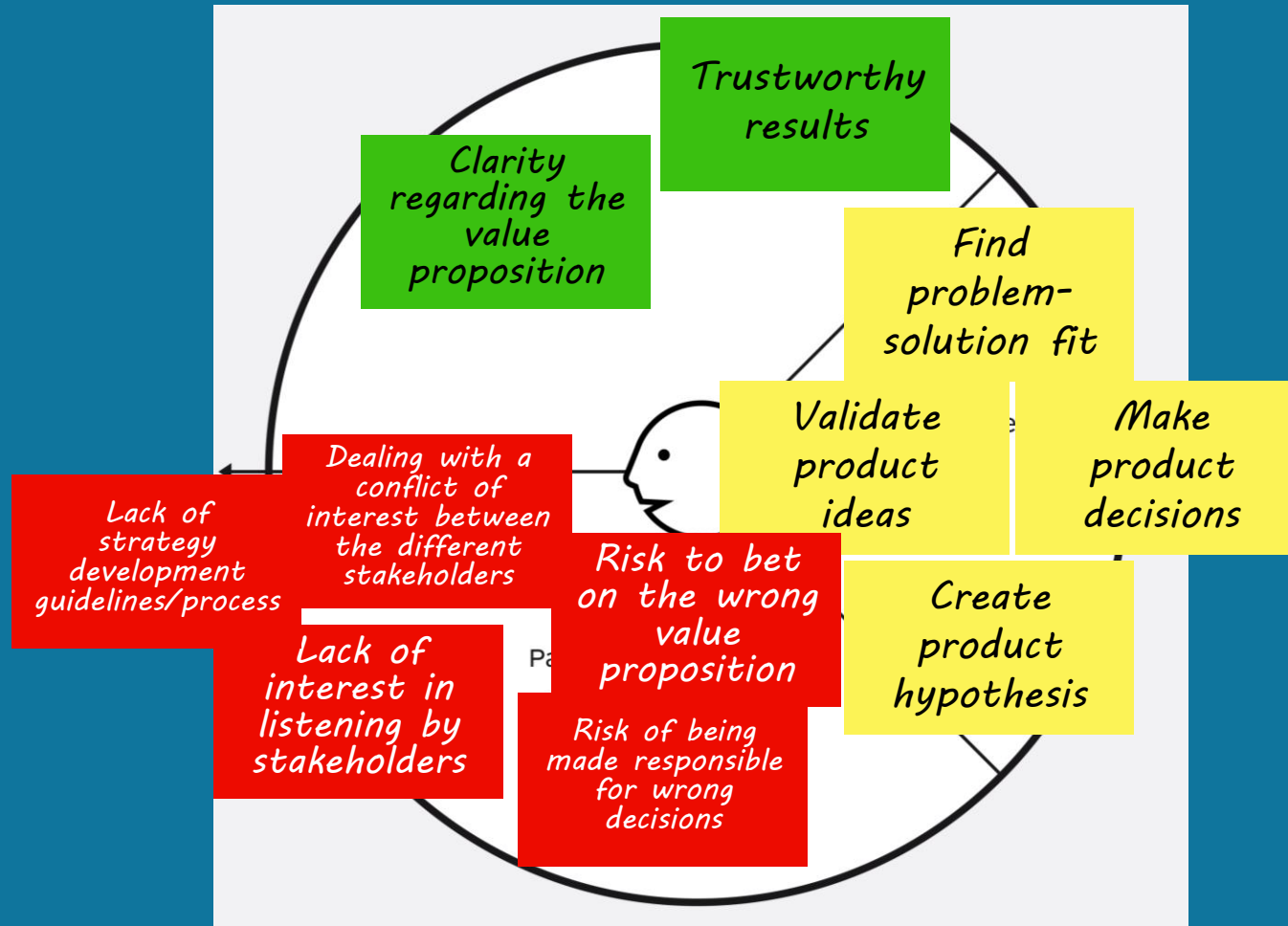
Top Customer Jobs, Pains & Gains



Top Customer Jobs, Pains & Gains



Top Customer Jobs, Pains & Gains



Desired Progress by Customer Researchers

To avoid a misalignment on the product development approach, I would like to have an agreed-upon process in place that specifies customer research as a key element, so that we have the best possible prerequisites for developing products that meet customer needs and give me the sense that my expertise is being used most effectively.

When I feel that our customer research methods generate unreliable data, I want to find approaches that effectively generate valid, relevant, and useful data, so I feel confident defending the data in front of my stakeholders.

Desired Progress by Customer Researchers

When my management pushes for a quick fix, I want assurance that I take the right course of action to deliver better, more precise, compelling results quickly and not expose our organization to the risk of building something based on assumptions.

When I do product-related customer research, I don't want to work with false assumptions so that I can identify market opportunities, and I am not recommending solutions the customer does not need.

Recommendations

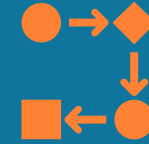
What customer researchers can do



1. Raise awareness for your challenges

- Use this report to start a conversation with your leadership and peers.
- Raise awareness for your pains; pains typical for people tasked with customer research.
- Talk about situations where you perceived a misalignment with your stakeholders.

What customer researchers can do



2. Agree on a customer research process that delivers business impact

- Discuss the business value of customer research.
- Get a perspective from your leadership and peers on the issues at hand and try to see their point of view.
- Develop a set of rules for business practices, e. g. a process that you will follow (internally and externally), that specifies the role of customer research.
- Publish these rules and get commitment from your stakeholders.
- If you deal directly with customer requests, start a conversation with them about intended outcomes and your business practices.



What customer researchers can do

3. Stay up-to-date on customer research best practices

- Reflect on your own methods – what works well, where are opportunities for skills improvement or new methods.
- Actively plan your skills development opportunities by learning from others. E. g. by visiting trade shows, conferences, meetups, and demos.
- Check out advanced methods that solve challenges common to qualitative research, e. g. based on the Jobs to Be Done theory.



What stakeholders can do

1. Communicate your expectations clearly

At the start of a project, get all relevant stakeholders together and create a clear and shared understanding about:

- the project's purpose and the desired business outcome
- how the project aligns with the overall company strategy
- your priority and what that means concerning the assignment of resources
- the expectations you have concerning timeframe and quality of the results



What stakeholders can do

2. Suspend advocating for a specific solution

- We are all biased with solutions we have in mind.
- Hold back on trying to push the team towards your solution idea.
- Appreciate that customer research is about understanding the customer jobs, pains, and gains that determine the desire for new solutions.
- Allow your team to spend appropriate time and resources to focus on understanding customers.



What stakeholders can do

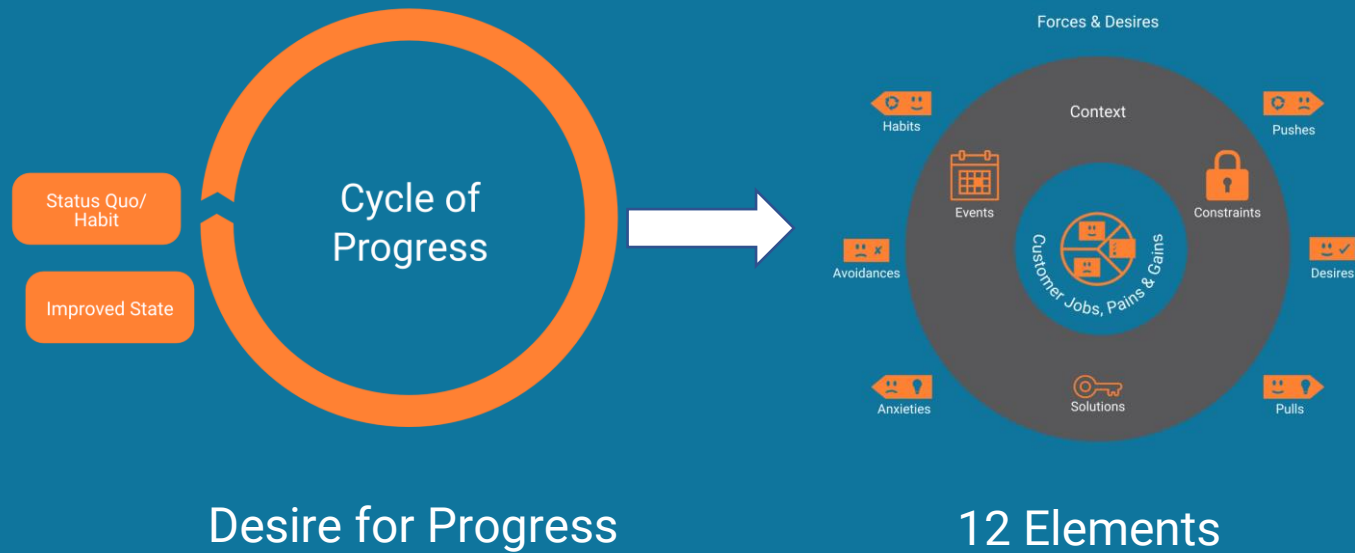
3. Build trust and demonstrate appreciation

- Upfront, communicate your expectations and critical outcomes.
- Let your team do the research and recognize their expertise.
- Formulate questions to create a better understanding, not unconstructive doubting.
- Defer your judgment, listen and learn.
- Value your team's work and commend valuable insights.

How can we help?

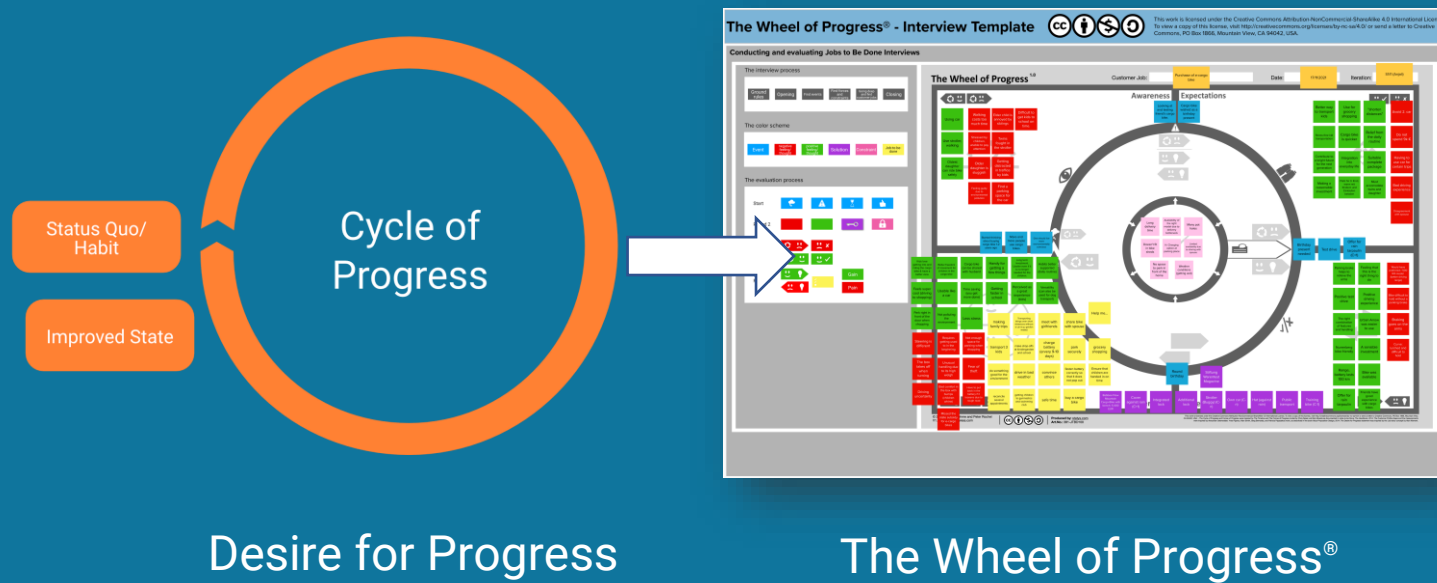
Deliver Ultimate Business Value

A customer research process that takes you straight to **strategy**.



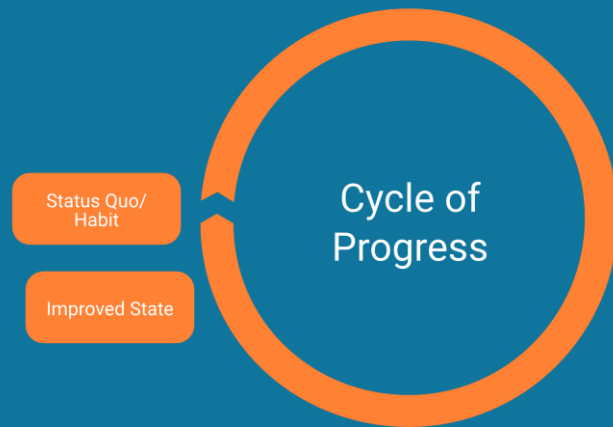
Deliver Ultimate Business Value

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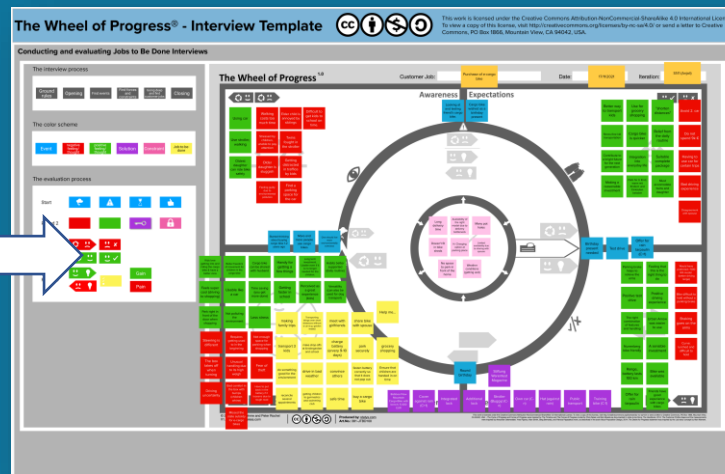


Deliver Ultimate Business Value

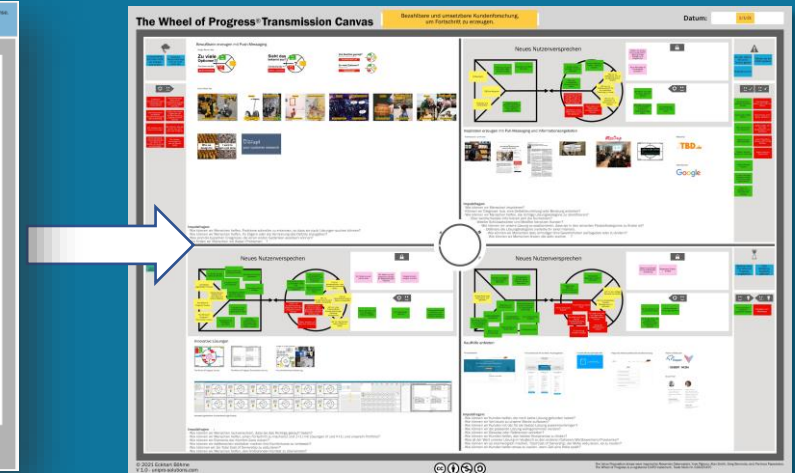
A customer research process that takes you straight to **strategy**.



Desire for Progress



The Wheel of Progress®



Strategic Decisions

Deliver Ultimate Business Impact

A customer research process that takes you straight to **strategy**.



For more information visit <https://unipro-solutions.com/en/methode/>

Study Contact

For questions contact us at info@unipro-solutions.com

Appendix

Project Scope & Hypothesis

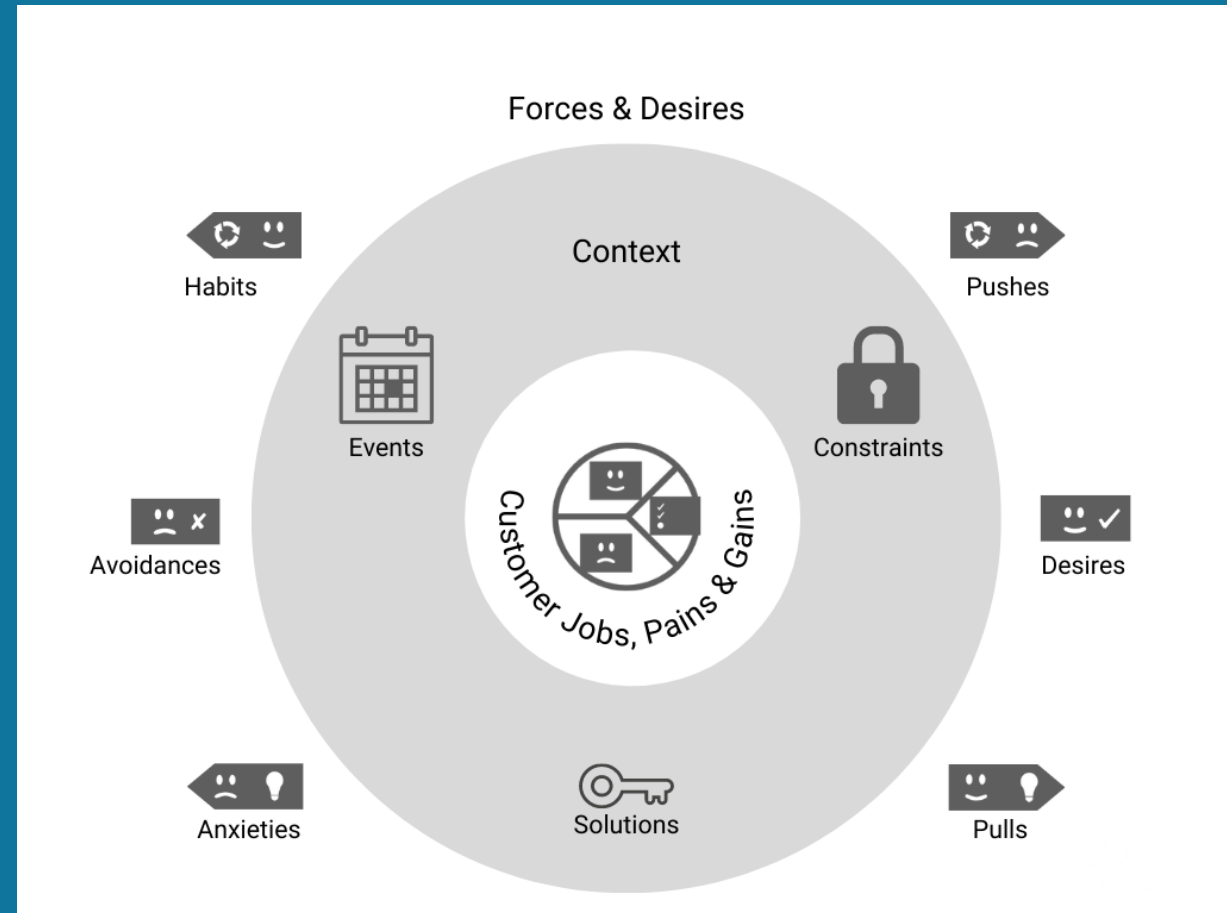
- Project Scope: Interviewing professionals in charge of customer research to understand their challenges and desires related to improving their research practices and motivators for changing to another solution.
- Hypothesis: Customer researcher's main challenge is to find new business opportunities, but they face significant constraints for creating valuable and valid customer insights.

Mental & Data Model

The 12 elements of Customer Progress Design (CPD):

- Customer jobs, pains & gains
- Context
- Forces & Desires

CPD is based on the groundbreaking Jobs to Be Done (JTBD) theory.



Customer Progress Design Method

Customer Progress Design consists of 5 steps



Step 1

Determine projectscope



Step 2

Conduct interviews



Step 3

Generalize elements



Step 4

Prioritize customer jobs



Step 5

Develop an integrated
market development
concept

About us

- Eckhart Boehme is the founder of unipro solutions GmbH & Co. KG and an internationally recognized Jobs to Be Done expert. He developed Customer Progress Design, a method for creating an integrated market development strategy. He also was the initiator and co-developer of The Wheel of Progress® Canvas - a tool for the structured evaluation of Jobs to Be Done interviews. Boehme was technical advisor to the German editions of the Jobs to Be Done "bible" Competing Against Luck by Clayton Christensen et. al. and Eric Ries' The Startup Way.
- Florian Hameister is the Remote Innovation maker. He is an experienced Online Innovation facilitator helping companies clear the fuzzy front end of Innovation and find the right ideas. Florian is a Customer Progress Designer and Co-Author of the book "Online Innovation".