

Designing Crystal Clear Business Model Canvases



Use this checklist to design great business models or assess your own:

○ Does the level of granularity of your Canvas correspond to your objectives?

Your Canvas should only contain the most important building blocks when your objective is to explain the essence of your business model, also called the blueprint of your strategy. Your Canvas should have much more detail if its objective is to serve as a blueprint for implementation.

○ Is every Building Block in your Canvas connected to one another?

Great Canvases have a story and flow where every building block relates to another. You should not have any “orphan” building blocks in your Canvas that don’t connect to another building block. For example, a revenue stream always needs to come from a related customer segment for a related value proposition. Or a key partner always provides a key resource or activity that contributes to a value proposition. Or, there is no such thing as a customer segment with no specific value proposition.

○ Is every Building Block in your Canvas precise enough?

Make sure every building business model block is self explanatory. For example, writing “products” in revenue streams is unclear. More precise would be “product sales” or “margins on product sales”.

○ Do you make smart use of both images and words to convey your message?

It takes our brain longer to process words than images, because every letter of a word is processed as an individual image. Hence, the use of images allows our brain to process a Canvas much quicker. To avoid ambiguity, the use of an image and a label for a building block is the most effective.

○ Do you make good use of color-coding?

Using color-coding to explain specific aspects of your business model is a quick and easy way to clearly communicate even complex aspects of your business model. For example, you can use color-coding to highlight two very different segments with very different value propositions. Or you could use it to distinguish between your existing model and one you want to build.

○ Does your Canvas distinguish between “as-is” and “to-be”?

Make sure you clearly distinguish between what exists in your business model the “as-is” state and what you want to or plan to build the “to-be” state. Color-coding can help achieve this distinction easily.

○ Does your Canvas distinguish between “knowns/facts” and “unknowns/assumptions”?

When you are designing new business models, make sure you clearly distinguish between what you know (e.g. the demand for a specific value proposition) and what you don’t know (e.g. which channels customers would prefer). You have facts to prove what you know (e.g. pre-orders), but only assumptions about the building blocks you think could work.