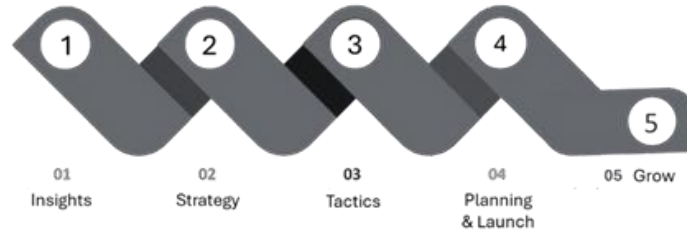


The 5-step hands-on method



Market your B2B Innovation & Grow your company



Cheapest, yet most comprehensive method for innovators and start-ups to secure their innovation and grow their business.

Innovation defined by:



VLAIO (Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship) defines innovation as the process of developing and implementing products, services, or processes that are new to the sector, present real challenges, and bring sustainable economic growth and competitive advantage to the company (source VLAIO.be)

Key characteristics of VLAIO's definition:

- Uniqueness: The innovation must be novel not just for your company, but for the entire sector.
- Substantial challenge: There should be meaningful technological or business complexity—simple incremental tweaks don't qualify
- R&D requirement: At least for some support schemes (like development or starter subsidies), the project must involve research, prototyping, testing, or proof-of-business activities
- Economic potential: The project should offer scalable growth, such as creating jobs (e.g. at least five FTEs within five years) and delivering real impact



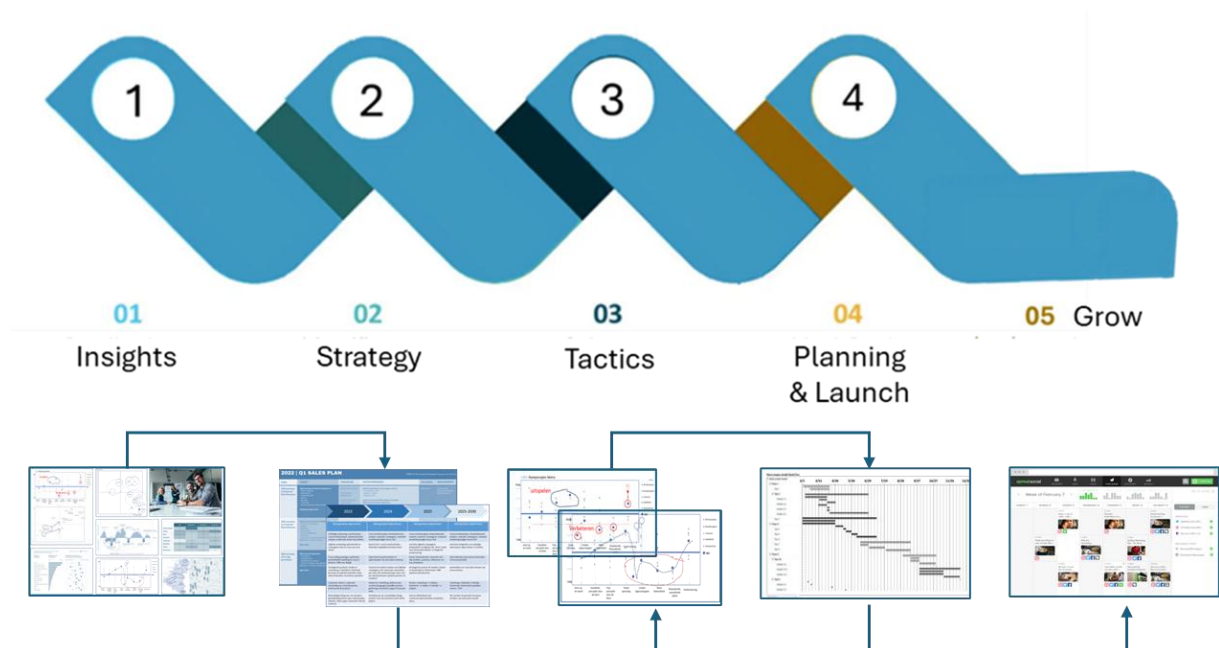
The European Union (EU) defines innovation broadly as the creation and implementation of new or significantly improved products, processes, services, business models, or marketing methods that add value—whether economic, social, or environmental. This is outlined in various EU frameworks, including Horizon Europe and the Oslo Manual (co-published with the OECD), which guide EU innovation policy and funding. The EU key criteria are Novelty: The innovation must be new or significantly improved compared to existing solutions. This could be new to the market, new to the firm, or new to the world.

- Value creation: Innovation must result in tangible benefits: increased productivity, competitiveness, sustainability, or improved quality of life.
- Implementation: It's not just about ideas. It must be put into practice. An idea that remains on paper isn't considered innovation until it's used.
- Impact orientation: the EU often links innovation with broader policy goals such as green transition, digital transformation, resilience, or inclusion. The types of innovation considered are :
- Product innovation, new or improved goods/services. Process innovation, new methods in production or delivery. Organizational innovation, new business practices or workplace organization.
- Marketing innovation, new branding, promotion, or pricing strategies. (Source: European Commission – Horizon Europe Programme)

“Most innovations don’t fail on the product — they fail on the marketing.”

This is a workbook. A hands-on method. You get tips & tricks but also a method, exercises, canvasses and a planning tool allowing you to put into practice what you have learned and decided. Follow the steps and you’ll be far more efficient in launching your Business-to-Business (B2B) innovation, attracting your first customers and grow from there, infiltrate and expand in opportune market-segments and outthink & outmanoeuvre competitors.

This step-by-step method with exercises is immediately applicable, delivering both quick wins and lasting results. Along the way, you’ll become more efficient in strategy and tactics and have more results with less sales costs. This method works very well in combination with work sessions. You prepare the exercises. They’re finalised in work sessions.



In 5-steps: from insights to implementation. Hands-on. Ready to use.
Quick & sustainable results.

	Innovation defined by VLAIO & EU	Author	Index	How this workbook works	Preface
Insights	Info, tips & tricks	Exercises	Canvas		
Strategy	Info, tips & tricks	Exercises	Canvas		
Tactics	Info, tips & tricks	CAP5 toolbox	Exercises	Canvas	
Planning & Launch	Info, tips & tricks	Marketing & Sales planner	Go-To-Market (Launch) Planner	Sales & Marketing tasks Planner	
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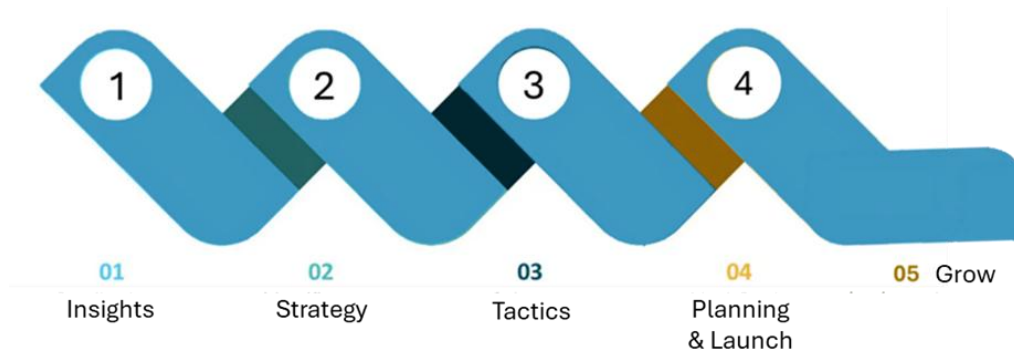
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CAP5 five steps; hands-on approach, years of results, long-term savings

How this workbook works

This is a workbook! It takes you through the necessary steps to be more successful in launching an innovative product or service and grow your customer base.

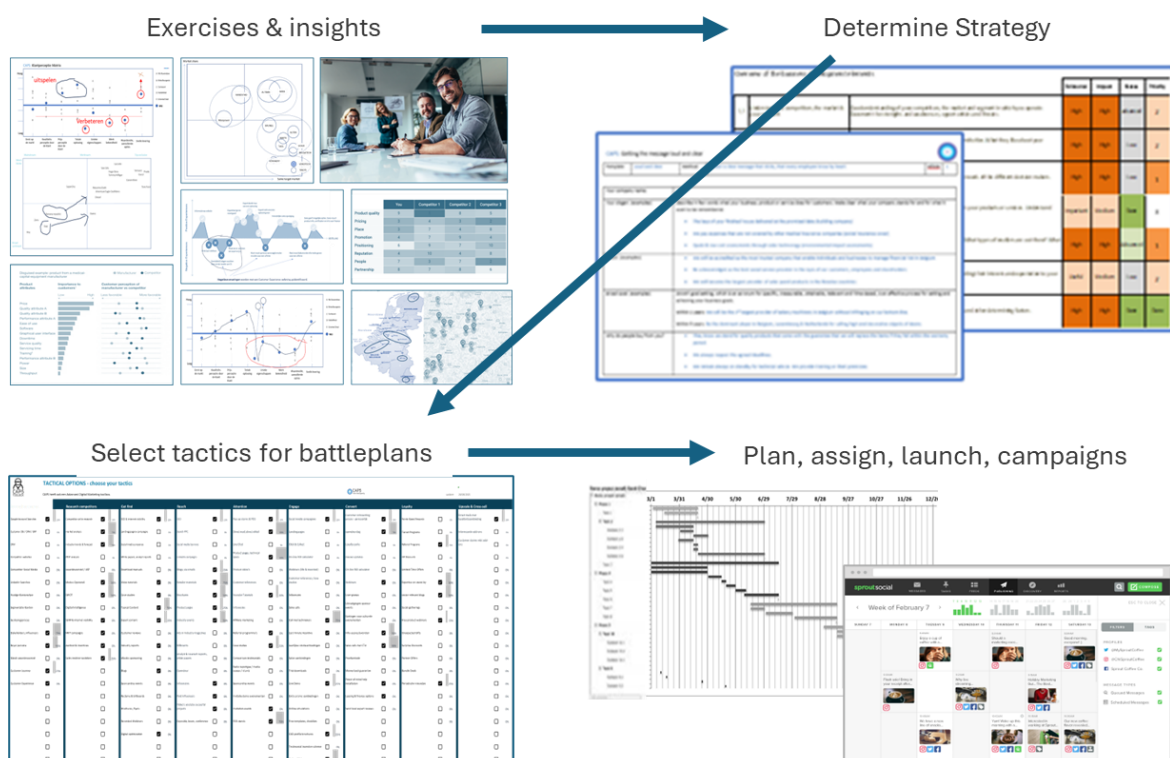
The workbook is structured into 5 consecutive steps:



Every step starts with general information. Every step has exercises. Step 1 and 2 also have a canvas where we consolidate the insights and strategy. In step 3 we will use the toolbox where you can select the tactics. In step 4 we translate these objectives into actions using planners. Here you can also assign the roles and responsibilities for those involved.

Everything in this workbook is based on best-practices from marketing and sales. The planner is based on project management principles. The customer journey exercise use a basic workflow (process-management) principle. It's not difficult. It's logic and intuitive.

By the end of the 5 steps you have a clear strategy, according tactics and a detailed planning that is ready to be used.



Exercises for Innovators - overview

Free to download on [CAP5.net/innovation](https://www.CAP5.net/innovation)

Laatste update: 20/08/2025

Insights	Exercise title	Relevant?	Deadline	Who	Format
1	1 Market segment & niche analysis	☐			template
	2 Your most opportune market segment analysis	☐			template
	3 Competitors Analysis - Direct Rivals	☐			template
	4 Competitors Analysis - Indirect Rivals	☐			template
	5 Competitors positioning, value proposition & mode of operation	☐			template
	6 Direct & Indirect Competitor positioning: Matrix	☐			template
	7 Overview of partners, resellers & distributors (competitors)	☐			template
	8 SWOT analysis: exploit strengths, disguise weaknesses	☐			template
	9 Pains & Gains analysis, per decision maker profile	☐			template
	10 Low hanging fruit, select your first target customers	☐			template
	11 Preferred Clients shortlist, early & medium term	☐			template
	12 Target audience profiling: Buyer persona's	☐			template
	13 Decision makers and decision process mapping	☐			template
	14 Relevant trends that could disrupt your innovation	☐			template
Strategy	Exercise title				
2	1 Value Proposition Aid	☐			template
	2 USP, Value Proposition, slogan, elevator pitch	☐			template
	3 Strategic positioning - choose market segment & target companies	☐			template
	4 Price strategy at launch - versus top 3 rivals	☐			template
	5 Price strategy matrix - after launch, phase I	☐			template
	6 Partner & resellers opportunities	☐			template
	7 Checklist for Brand materials needed	☐			template
	8 Upscale & cross-sell opportunities	☐			template
	9 Corporate goal and objectives Y1, Y3, Y5	☐			template
Tactics	Exercise title				
3	1 Choose tactics from CAP5 Toolbox - general	☐			CAP5 toolbox
	2 Sales tactics to outfox - Top 3 main rivals	☐			template
	3 Tactics to lure your for first customers	☐			template
Planning & Launch	Exercise title				
4	1 Identify main benchmarks	☐			CAP5 planner
	2 Identify actions & campaigns per objectives	☐			CAP5 planner
	3 Determine deadlines & priorities	☐			CAP5 planner
	4 Assign roles & responsibilities (IKO?)	☐			CAP5 planner
	5 Checklist for Brand Building materials needed	☐			CAP5 planner
	6 Customer Journey	☐			Template
	7 Customer touchpoints	☐			Template

Download all exercises, canvasses and planners on www.CAP5.net. It's totally free. Everything can be modified. You choose what's relevant and what's not.

Preface

You developed an innovation: a product, a service, or a smarter way of doing things. Now it's time to promote it, attract customers, sell and grow. This workbook is your step-by-step guide allowing you to promote your innovation effectively and at little cost.

The very basics, what is innovation?

What is an innovation? Is a product an innovation when it brings meaningful improvements; like making it faster, easier to use, more sustainable, or more valuable to the user. Is a new method for doing things an innovation? New forms of process or organizational approaches and methods an innovation? Innovation doesn't always mean something completely new, it can also be a better way of doing something.

There are different sorts of innovation according to different sources:

- Product Innovation: Creating a new product or improving an existing one.
- Service Innovation: Offering a new or better way to deliver a service.
- Process Innovation: Changing how something is made or done to make it faster, cheaper, or better.
- Business Model Innovation: Finding new ways to make money or deliver value (like subscriptions instead of one-time sales).
- Marketing Innovation: Promoting a product in a creative or more effective way.
- Organizational Innovation: Changing how a company is structured or how people work together.
- Social Innovation: Solving social or environmental problems in new ways.
- Technological Innovation: Using new technology to improve something or create something new.
- Sustainable Innovation: Making things more eco-friendly or energy-efficient.
- Open Innovation: Working with others outside your company (like customers or partners) to create something new.

You've developed a new, cool product or a smart way to solve a problem. Or, you have found ways to make something better. — that's great! But people won't just find it on their own. You need to promote it. That means letting the right people know your innovation exists and why it's useful. That's where marketing comes in.

Why is marketing for innovation slightly different than general marketing?

The difference between B2B marketing and the marketing of new, innovative products differ on both the strategy and the tactical level. Launching an innovative product or service is almost always about getting your first customers on-board and then use them to attract more customers and, cleverly, enter into different market-segments and grow your customer base.

Promoting innovative solutions is much harder than promoting established solutions. In general, customers prefer familiar solutions over new ones. You will have to overcome resistance and untangle the risk perception. You will have to deliver a peace-of-mind solution with all the support they need to get it working and keeping it working.

It's crowded in almost every sector. Launching an innovation is no small task. Actually, it's really hard work. For young companies and startups, the challenge often lies not just in building a great product or service but in proving to the world that what you've built matters. You must demonstrate your relevance, trustworthiness and added-value to those who don't yet know you. Your success will depend on convincing the decision makers that they can trust that your solution and your organisation can, better than the others, solve their specific need or problem and make their ambitions possible.



Has B2B marketing changed over the last years?

The principles has not changed; B2B marketing has to get the attentions from the target audience and convince them you have the solution that they need. Sales will make a tailored offer and get them to sign.

But marketing itself has changed considerably and keeps on changing. Lately, the traditional digital marketing and social media tools have eroded. Everybody is fighting for attention from the target audience. Lately, much through digital channels and social media. Ultimately, you want to get an exclusive moment with your potential buyers. A moment that you have his or her full attention. Digitally or face-to-face. A moment you can pitch your value proposition in line with what they are looking for. New, exiting technology can help us.

There is also lot more focus on buyer-profiling, understanding behaviourism and the decision-making-processes. Marketing communications and campaigns directed at a wide audience have rarely impact. We want to make it personal and still scalable. We'll have a buyer & decision-maker persona approach at the heart of our communications.

Are there are new tools on the market that within reach for start-ups and SMEs?

Digital avatars: imagine you want to make a video where a person explains something, but you don't want to film yourself or hire an actor. That's where digital avatars come in. Digital avatars are computer-generated characters that can speak, move, and look like real people like yourself. You can pick different voices, languages, and styles, plus add backgrounds, images, or music to make your video more interesting. Avatars are cheap to make. All you have to do is to record a script for a few minutes and to make a number of facial expressions. Once you create an avatar, you can reuse it to record other videos. All you have to do now is to type in a text and you're avatar will read it. Some avatars have become so realistic that you can't see the difference anymore between digital and real. Speaking into the camera is not for everybody. Avatars can do it for you.

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are more and more used to give your target audience an immersive experience. For demonstrating your innovation, AR and VR could be the answer. It's hard as a sales person to get your foot into the door by potential customers especially if you're a start-up. It's much easier to ask people if they love to experience your innovation in virtual reality. It will cost to make it, it will save you many sales costs afterwards.

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO). Instead on searching the internet for information more and more professionals are asking generative AI systems (like ChatGPT, CoPilot or Gemini) for answers and suggestions. Today, brands are shifting from traditional SEO to GEO by optimizing content to be featured in AI-generated answers via specialized metadata and structured cues.

The Customer Journey & Customer Experience. The time and cost for getting a new client on board is often staggering high. For B2B customers, there could be over 20 communications and interactions prior a sale. Hence, it is important to make marketing and sales effective and productive, attracting continuous interest from your preferred potential customers and achieving a high conversion ratio. That is why the Customer Journey and the Customer Experience exercise is so useful (see step 4).

A smart, online validation process. The validation process is where you evaluate if the interested person has the credentials to speak for his or her company, if he or she is sincere, if this company has the means to pay, if the company is likely to buy. Most digital marketing agencies will sell you leads. It's not leads you want. What you need are validated leads; leads that have a high probability to buy your innovation. Sales people are expensive. You don't want them to travel and spend time on leads that are unlikely to buy.

Visual storytelling is the oldest form of communication and still the holy grail. The era of visual storytelling will explode with the new AI possibilities. Visual storytelling is powerful because it allow you to demonstrate your innovation to anybody at any time. People don't want to read text about an innovation. They want to see it working in a setting that is pertinent / recognisable / fitting to them.

CRM and integrated tools. CRM (Customer Relationship Management) tools are around for over 2 decades. They are software systems that help businesses log and follow-through all interactions with current and potential customers. It makes that admin, invoicing, customer service, marketing and sales work better together. You have basic CRM systems that are limited but free of charge. Modern CRMs are adding features that make low-cost marketing campaigns much easier for start-ups and SMEs. Many now include built-in email and SMS marketing tools, so you can design, send, and track campaigns directly without paying for separate software. Even if you just start up and you just a few staff; CRM is the way to go.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now in reach for start-ups and SMEs. Many marketeers use AI to generate blogs, content and visuals. Unfortunately, that AI content & visuals flooded further the already flooded internet. Content was one of the important criteria that search engines (Google, Bing, ..) would use to give you more or less visibility on the internet. More content would place you higher. But because everybody was dumping content to get higher on the ladder, search engines have developed smarter criteria:

Relevance & Intent Matching

- **Search intent fit.** Does your content match what users expect when they search that query? (Informational, transactional, navigational, or commercial investigation)
- **Keyword relevance.** Main keywords naturally placed in the title, headings, intro, and throughout content.
- **Semantic coverage.** Use related terms and entities, not just the main keyword.

Tip: Use intent-specific CTAs and structured sections that fully answer the query in one place.

E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness)

- **Experience.** First-hand knowledge, real-world examples, data, or case studies.
- **Expertise.** Author credentials or relevant background.
- **Authoritativeness.** Links from reputable sources, citations.
- **Trustworthiness.** Transparent sources, no misleading claims, clear contact info.
- **Added value tip.** Add author bios, industry certifications, or proof of results (screenshots, data).

Tip: Add author bios, industry certifications, or proof of results (screenshots, data).

Content Depth & Originality

- **Comprehensiveness.** Cover the topic fully, addressing common questions, objections, and subtopics.
- **Original insight.** Include unique perspectives, analysis, or research, not just a rewrite of top-ranking pages.

- **Freshness.** Up-to-date information, especially for trends, prices, or news.

Tip: Insert comparison tables, expert quotes, or original graphics.

Structure & Readability

- **Clear headings.** Use H1, H2, H3 headers for hierarchy.
- **Readability.** Short paragraphs, bullet points, numbered lists.
- **Visual aids.** Images, videos, infographics.
- Added value tip: Include FAQ sections that target “People also ask” queries.

Technical SEO Signals

- **Meta tags.** Optimized title tag and meta description with main keyword.
- **Internal linking.** Contextual links to related content.
- **Page speed & mobile-friendliness.** Fast loading and good mobile UX.
- **Schema markup.** Structured data for rich snippets.

Tip: Add How To video, FAQ, backlinks to e.g. renowned organisations

User Engagement Metrics

- **Click-through rate (CTR).** Attractive titles and descriptions.
- **Time on page.** Keep readers engaged with multimedia and related links.
- **Low bounce rate.** Deliver what the headline promises.



Why is optimising & synchronising the salesfunnel the key challenge for both marketing and sales?

Research shows that it takes often more than 20 interactions (mails, calls, meetings) between the first contact and the payment. That is especially true for innovative or technical products and services. That’s why it’s crucial to prepare valuable content and call-to-actions (CTA) in advance and align it with the different stages of your sales funnel.

In B2B, prospects do their own research, compare options, and move at their own pace. Your task is to anticipate their questions, doubts, and needs at every stage and provide the right information at the right time. If you push too hard or fail to address their concerns, they may drop out of the funnel and choose a competitor.

Another challenge is building and maintaining trust throughout the journey. In technical B2B, deals are sometimes high-stakes en long-term commitments. Every touchpoint, whether a whitepaper, demo, webinar, or meeting, must reinforce credibility and reliability. One weak or inconsistent interaction can undo months of effort. There are two CAP5 exercises we use to map this out in detail.

The image below illustrates the sales funnel. Every interaction a potential customer has with your company is called a touchpoint. The challenge is to guide prospects through the sales funnel by providing the information they need, offering an incentive and reassurance at each stage.



Buyer Persona; the art of profiling so you can personalise on a bigger scale

Marketing and sales results depends largely on being able to explain to your target audience that they can trust you to solve their problem and that you're the best suited to do this. Generic content (very broad audience) that doesn't appeal to anyone in particular is useless and counter-productive. You need to be specific, show you know their specific challenges and you know what it takes to solve their issues.

There is an exercise that will help us doing that: "The Buyer Persona". A Buyer Persona is like a made-up character that represents a real group of customers who might want to buy your product or service. It's based on real facts like what people do, what they like, what problems they have, where they look for information and how they make decisions. Information you can use to fine-tune your value proposition and pitch. Buyer persona's improves the effectiveness of your calls-to-action (CTAs). If you know what motivates each type of customer, you can frame your calls-to-action in a way that triggers action. For example, a cost-conscious buyer may respond better to "See how much you can save," while a tech-savvy early adopter may be drawn to "Get early access to new features." This level of alignment between message and mindset significantly improves response rates and customer satisfaction. Moreover, profiling and personas enable personalization at scale. There is a free Buyer Persona exercise to download on: www.CAP5.net/exercises. To make buyer personas involves gathering insights about your ideal customers so you can better understand, target, and communicate with them.



Good to know, tips for innovators

Stop selling products or services. Sell peace-of-mind, trustworthy solutions that won't let the customer down. Demonstrate your target audience that you're the best to solve their problem or make their ambitions possible. Tell them you understand their problems and they can trust you to get it done. Make sure you speak their language and they sense you understand their challenges, pains and needs.

Involving potential target customers early in the development phase is recommended. You have a better guarantee your product or service will fit real needs of your target companies and companies are prepared to buy it! Involving or engaging potential customers during the development or testing phase have several advantages: you'll reduce the risk of building something nobody will buy because there are better alternatives. It will also save you time and money. Involving and engaging would-be customers will help us to attract our first customers. And that's often the hardest thing.

Most innovations are developed by technical or scientific minds where logic and rational thinking prevails. In contrast, marketing and sales professionals operate in a world driven by social behaviour, emotional influence, storytelling and cultural or societal norms. It's a different mindset. You need both staff-profiles to be successful.

Selling is all about value propositions, is it?

Actually, for a large part it is. A value proposition is a sharp, simple explanation of what problem they have and how you can solve it. But, you'll have to convince them that you're the right choice.

A strong value proposition is one of the most critical tools in B2B sales because buyers are rarely persuaded by generic promises. Unlike consumer markets, B2B decisions usually involve multiple stakeholders, longer buying cycles, and higher risks. Buyers want to know not just what your product does, but how it solves their unique business challenges, reduces risks, and creates measurable value.

You should adapt your value proposition to the specific prospect's needs, especially as you move deeper into the sales funnel. While you can start with a core proposition that highlights your general strengths, customizing it to show direct relevance for the buyer's situation. This will increase your chances of success. This doesn't mean reinventing your entire value proposition each time, but rather aligning your message with the prospect's priorities, such as cost reduction, efficiency gains, compliance, or innovation leadership. I suggest to make value

propositions per typical decision-maker profile. So a value proposition for a Finance Director is different than that for an IT or Legal Director.

The challenge is also the timing; when a company looks for solutions, they'll have to find you the moment they search. They must think; "aha, looks like they have the solution". You have to go back to the drawing board if people can't "get your value proposition in 10 seconds across. Your value proposition must stick with your target audience and relevant to their pains and need. It should be easy to memorize and it's easy for them to repeat. After seeing your value proposition, the target customers should sense "we can trust them to solve our problems". Do not underestimate the difficulty of getting your value proposition right.

Here are some examples:

To a Finance Director (focus: cost, ROI, risk reduction): "Our solution helps you cut operational costs by 10% within the first year, while giving you a automated dashboard with the main cost-drivers". "By reducing errors and manual work, we lower compliance risks and free up resources for strategic initiatives".

To an IT Director (focus: security, integration, efficiency): "Our platform has real-time dashboards showing the data transmissions in real-time so you can avoid the manual routine monitoring tasks". "Our platform allows you to pin-point immediately the data-transmission issues outside the parameters that you can allocate". "Our platform integrates seamlessly with your existing systems and reduces IT complexity. It minimizes downtime, strengthens cybersecurity, and automates routine tasks, giving your team more time to focus on strategic projects."

To a CEO (focus: growth, competitiveness, strategic advantage): "Our solution helps you to monitor the various strategic campaigns allowing you to enable faster decision-making and assess the impact on certain decisions." "It strengthens your competitive position by driving efficiency across departments while ensuring compliance and resilience. This means your organization can scale confidently, adapt quickly, and lead in your market."

What we need to know to craft a value proposition?

Which of these apply to your innovation? Every value-proposition has a value-added feature at its core. Here are the option.

1. Increased Productivity

- Do more with less
- Automate manual tasks
- Save time or reduce complexity
- Help employees work smarter, not harder
- Less (operational, service, systems, machinery, ..) down-time

2. Cost Reduction

- Make it cheaper to run your business
- Lower operating costs (energy, materials, people)
- Replace expensive legacy systems or out-of-date machines
- Reduce waste or errors

3. Risk Reduction / Compliance

- Avoid disasters, mistakes, or fines
- Improve safety, security, or legal compliance
- Reduce data loss, downtime, or liability
- Anticipate and manage uncertainties
- Comply with sector and national rules and regulations

4. Speed & Time-to-Market

- Get results faster
- Shorten project cycles
- Speed up decision-making
- Launch quicker than competitors

5. Revenue Growth / New Business

- Help them grow
- Open new markets
- Unlock new sales channels or revenue models
- Enable upselling or cross-selling

6. Better Quality or Performance

- Do it better than before
- Higher precision, reliability, or consistency
- Eliminate defects or rework
- Improve results or user experience

7. Enable New Capabilities / Possibilities

- Do things that weren't possible before
- Innovate workflows
- Solve previously unsolvable problems
- Enable real-time insights or new business models

8. Reputation & Customer Satisfaction

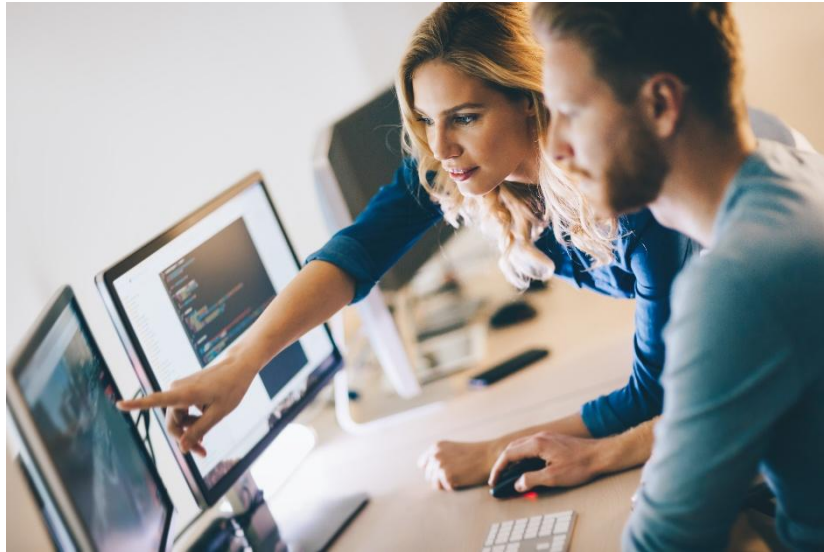
- Make your client look good
- Improve user or customer experience
- Support sustainability, ecological & ethical brand image
- Reduce complaints or churn. Avoid reputational damage.

Some examples of general value statements:

- AgriTech (AI-based crop monitoring drone): "Boost yields by 30%, our AI drone identifies early signs of crop stress and soil issues before they cost you your harvest."
- Mobility / Transport (Shared e-scooter system): "Get across the city in 5 minutes for less than a coffee—our smart e-scooters reduce traffic, CO₂ and your commute time."
- FoodTech (Plant-based protein with meat texture): "Love meat but want a cleaner conscience? Our plant-based steak cuts like the real thing—with 90% fewer emissions and 0 compromise on taste."
- Cybersecurity (Zero-trust network protection for SMEs): "You want full network protection for your growing business without the need for IT staff".
- IoT Smart Home (Voice-activated energy-saving system): "Cut your home energy bill by 30%. Our system learns your habits and automates lighting and heating when you're not using them."

What are touchpoints and how you should time them?

Customer touchpoints are the moments when a customer interacts with your brand; before, during or after a purchase. These interactions can be direct (like speaking with a sales rep), digital (like browsing your website), or indirect (like reading online reviews).

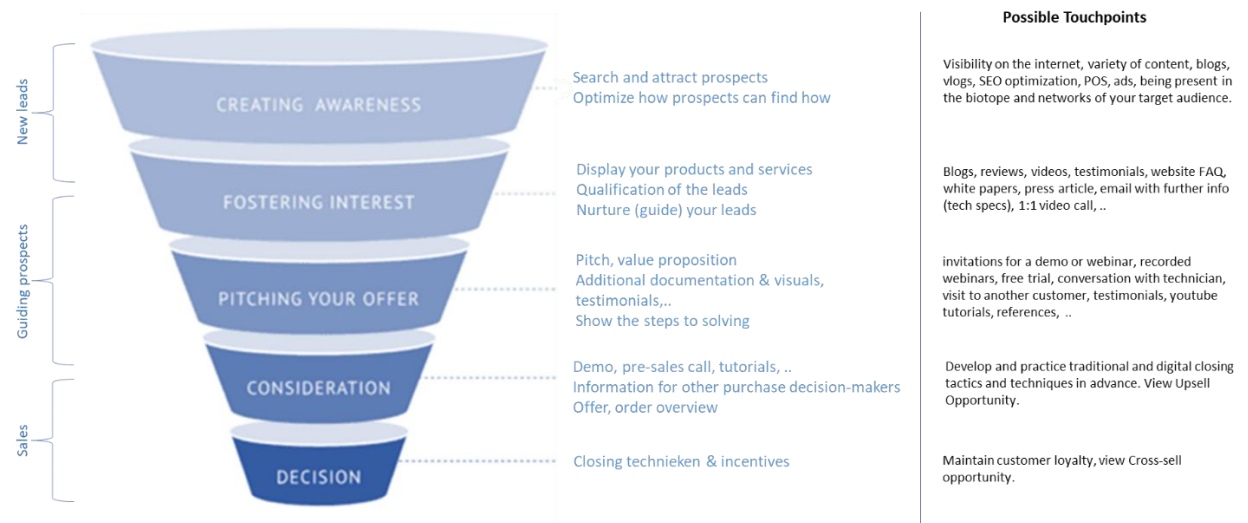


We know that B2B decisions involves many communications and interactions. One negative ‘touchpoint-experience’ can ruin everything. In marketing and sales, the main quest is to guide an interested person towards the decision phase.

Types of Customer Touchpoints

- Pre-purchase: social media, website visits, youtube video's, reviews, fact sheets, webinars, sales-calls, offer, ..
- During purchase: checkout experience, customer support, product pages, ..
- Post-purchase: follow-up emails, loyalty programs, invitations, ..
- Customer service: help desk, live chat, return process, maintenance booking, ..

Timing the touchpoints and call-to-actions is key. Map the Customer Journey (the history from the first touchpoint to the last). It's the trajectory of succeeding interactions that the (potential) customer has with your company. The CAP5 exercise will ask you to identify key stages: creating awareness, fostering interest, pitching your offer, consideration, decision.



In the digital world we can track when visitors come to our website, read our blogs and click on something. You should review the touchpoints; too many touchpoints can feel spammy; too few can lose momentum. Ensure each interaction adds value whether it's useful information, dedicated support or a reward or incentive. Personalize and Contextualize. Don't just send messages. Make them relevant to where the customer is in their journey. All it takes to make the customer journey is to simulate how interested customers go from step to step. Better, ask people you know to play for a interested, potential customer and watch them go through searching for information and asking for help. It sounds like a lot of work but it isn't.

What's is the difference between direct and indirect competitors?

You will have to decide on how to market your solution in between the products and services of your direct and indirect competitors. Direct B2B competitors offer similar products or services to the same target customers, solving the same problem in a comparable way. Indirect competitors address the same customer need or problem but with different solutions.

Here are a few examples to explain the difference:

Smart Water-Saving System. A direct competitor is by definition another company offering a similar smart water-monitoring device, perhaps with a slightly different app interface or pricing model. The competitors has a comparable product, solving the same problem for the same type of customers. An indirect Competitor is the plumber installing spray-nozzles that uses less water.

Imagine a company that sells industrial cleaning machines to food processing plants. Their direct competitors are other manufacturers that also sell industrial cleaning machines with comparable features and pricing. Their indirect competitors could be companies offering outsourced cleaning services or innovative chemical cleaning solutions that reduce the need for heavy machinery. While indirect competitors offer different products, they are still solving the same underlying problem of hygiene compliance.

What is the job of a marketer and what is the job of sales?

Marketing and sales, while closely connected, serve different roles. Often, both jobs overlap. In start-up companies, the innovators typically do it all.

Marketing: Getting noticed. Building Trust. Shaping Perception. Tell the story.

At its core, marketing for an innovation is about earning customer trust and shaping how people perceive your brand. It's not just about promoting products. It's about creating a consistent, professional image that resonates with your target audience. Good marketing builds awareness, credibility, and emotional connection. In turn, this lays the foundation for trust albeit subconsciously through how your brand is perceived. Through messaging, storytelling, branding, and content, marketing answers the fundamental questions in a customer's mind:

- Do they have a solution that might fit my need and/or solve my problem?
- Can I trust this innovation of this company?
- Are they financially solid. Will they still be around in a few years?
- Do they understand my business and how I operate?
- Are they credible, reliable, and will they be there when I need them?

Another, often overlooked job of marketing is the first part of the validation process. The validation process is just checking of the person that shows interest is the right person working for the right company. Basically, you want that sales get these leads that are likely to buy. Sales cost too much money to waste time on leads that probably will not buy. The validation process is simple with some internet & LinkedIn search actions and AI prompts' that will allow information of the interested person and company to surface.

You can validate leads cost-effectively by closely observing how prospects interact with their content and offers. For example, tracking whether leads click on specific content pieces such as: product demos, case studies, or comparison guides. This reveals both their level of interest and where they are in the buying journey. Similarly, serving indicative price ranges or cost calculators helps filter serious prospects from casual visitors, since those who engage further after seeing prices are more likely to be genuinely considering a purchase.

Sales: Personalizing the Solution to Fit Customer Needs

When trust and interest are established and the lead (interested person) seems solid and eager sales should take over. The role of sales is to bridge the gap between customer interest and him or her saying 'yes'. Sales will listen to the customer's specific needs and might adapt the offering slightly to get the prospect to buy. Sales will also map out who plays a role in the decision process and which people influence the final decision of the potential customer. Research has shown that sales often only have one contact inside the target company. However, these people have often insufficient arguments to convince the other decision-makers.

Customer perception is everything

When you're a start-up or entering a new market segment, people know nothing about you. Their first impression is formed within just a few seconds entirely based on perception. First impressions create long-lasting judgements. That's where brand management comes in; making sure everything looks professional and consistent. How your brand and solution is perceived matters more in the early stages than what it technically does. Innovation often means introducing something unfamiliar, disruptive, or ahead of its time. In such cases, customer trust and perception become your biggest assets, .. or your greatest barriers.

To convince an engineer that your innovation adds value and offers new opportunities is sometimes easier than convincing a purchase or procurement manager to take a risk. I have learned that technical people find it hard to grasp that most B2B purchase decisions are not purely logical, but rather emotional and driven by personal risk, trust, personal ambitions and relationships. This is important to understand so I'll elaborate below.

Despite the common belief that B2B decisions are made rationally:

- Personal risk plays a huge role: A wrong decision can damage someone's reputation or career.
- Trust in the vendor often outweighs slight differences in features or price.
- Brand reputation gives people a bias in decision making.
- Emotions like fear of failure or desire for recognition influence choices.

Group dynamics and internal politics shape how decisions with regards to innovative products or services are finalized. With innovations, there is a – largely unconscious – thinking process:

- Do I believe this will work for me?
- Will it make me look better?
- Will it strengthen my position in the company?
- Does this align with my ambitions?
- Is the risk worth it?

This is why every decision about adopting an innovative product is influenced by a mix of psychological, emotional, and rational factors:

- Psychological: fear of change, loss aversion, desire to stay in control
- Emotional: trust, excitement, anxiety, scepticism
- Rational: ROI, efficiency gains, competitive advantage, proof of concept
- You cannot push an innovative idea through logic alone. You need to connect emotionally and guide your audience through the unknown with clarity and care.

Why is influencing all the decision-makers so important?

Because one decision maker saying no can stop the sale. And in B2B procurement processes you might end up having to convince multiple, different decision makers.

Psychological decision-making, especially when it comes to adopting B2B innovative products, is often driven as much by reducing perceived risk as by highlighting potential benefits. These doubts, if left unaddressed, can paralyze decision-making. But if you dismantle concerns one-by-one, you lower the buyer's emotional resistance. Replacing fear of the unknown with a step-by-step reassurance can be well predicted when you understand the buyer's mind. Each individual concern acts like a barrier in the customer's mental decision path. Addressing these concerns in a deliberate order such as functionality, ease of use, 7/7 support, durability, back-up system, and lower total cost of ownership (e.g. how much it cost you to buy and use per month) can shift the brain from loss aversion (fear of wasting money or time) to opportunity recognition. For example, showing proof that the product is simple to set up removes fear of complexity; adding testimonials reduces uncertainty about effectiveness; and offering money-back guarantees reduces financial risk. As these blockers are removed, the psychological load lightens, making the decision feel safer and more rational. We can prepare this "process of convincing" through customer-journey and customer-perception exercises. It's quite easy and takes little time in return to lasting results! We then prepare communications and factsheets for each of these profiles. Factsheets that we can use over and over again. All in all, it takes a few days but it's a huge cost-saver later on and it will positively improve your conversion rate (the percentage of interested companies that decide they'll buy your innovation).



1. INSIGHTS

It all starts with market and competitor insights! You cannot design intelligent strategies and impactful tactics if you do not have the right knowledge at hand.

Insights (information and knowledge) such as valuable information on your target markets, competitors, ideal customer profiles, .. are essential before you choose your strategy & tactics. Insights make sure your campaigns stick better with your target audience. They will also make your sales more effective and it will save you considerable money. Insights are absolutely essential to market and grow your innovation.

Example of some of the CAP5 exercises – free to download from www.CAP5.net.



Market insights tell you what customers care about, what they're struggling with and how and where they talk about those issues. Effective messaging entirely depends on insight knowledge; it's about expressing benefits of your innovation in a language your audience relates to. For example, a marketing campaign for noise-cancelling headphones might talk about "finding calm in a chaotic world" or "stay very focused despite the disturbances around you" rather than "30 dB noise reduction."

What is market and competitor analysis?

A market analysis gives you a picture of the broader context in which you operate. It shows, among other things, the different segments, the economic environment, the trends and the sector expectations, the challenges for the coming years. Market analysis is very useful and it should help you determine your direction and which specific market-sectors are relevant. At the end of step 2 you'll find a market analysis exercise you can download.

A competitor analysis is searching who your direct and indirect competitors are. You analyse their products, their strengths, weaknesses, their approach and modus operandi and which offers do they bring in what sectors? It is also important to map competitors according to specific pains and needs of target customers. The better you understand your competitors, their strengths and shortcomings the more likely you'll succeed.

By understanding what competitors offer: products, services, pricing, customer experience, you can identify areas where your brand can stand out. This is called differentiation. It's essential in saturated markets where companies have many choices. Studying competitors also helps uncover value proposition gaps. For example, you may find that competitors are targeting the same problems while there are other opportunities that have been left untapped. These insights allow you to adjust your strategy to exploit weaknesses or address unmet needs, thereby gaining a competitive advantage.

Analysing the threat from direct competitors

These are companies that offer the same services or products to the same target group in the same geographical area. The internet gives us a lot of useful information. Finding a list of your competitors' on the internet has become difficult. And yet there is still a lot of information to be found for the digital sleuth; keyword/keyphrase searches, software licenses & DNS ownership searches, website info, blogs, LinkedIn connections, .. Again, AI prompts come in very handy. AI prompts (artificial intelligence searches) is easy and it will give you surprising good insights. There are companies providing AI intelligence at a cost on other companies.

Understand the threat of substitute products (indirect competitors)

Indirect competitors are companies that offer solutions for the same needs but with different products or services. You must also map these out. These are competitors too! People look more often for solutions when they have a problem, pain or challenge. Or they look for products they know and they get to see other solutions too. You might have a challenge when target customers can solve their pain or need by paying less for an alternative solution. How are you going to position and profile yourself against this? Why is your solution still better than these alternatives?

Listening & understanding your target audience

Insights are the basis of any effective strategy because they provide an understanding of the real needs, motivations, fears, and behaviours of your target audience. Without insights, strategy and tactics becomes guesswork. By listening to target customers even in the early stages of the product or service development you understand better what truly matters to your targeted customers. Listening to your target audience is crucial because they are the ones who will ultimately decide whether your product, service, or brand succeeds. Dare to pitch your ideas and concepts to potential customers. Ask them if they would consider this as a true solution for their pains, needs or ambitions. Get feedback on the features, what matters and what not.

A few years ago we developed an ingenious large tent (16 x 6 meter) that could be transformed into modern classrooms, medical aid and secure emergency & storage shelters. It could be built in a matter of days and has the same technical quality of modern classrooms. Our whole market approach was to sell these tents only to

learn that the interested organisations and authorities don't buy temporary accommodations but they lease them. These buyers wanted a peace-of-mind solution where the seller has to be delivered, installed, make it operational and pick it up after the lease. Unless we could offer this they would stick to furnished containers that cost 3 times more. We could and should have known this earlier on.

Many innovators and start-ups make the mistake of not involving their audience early. By involving them early it creates a feedback loop that reduces risk. You avoid building in a vacuum. Understand that the lead time between interest and getting paid in B2B purchases averages 8 months (there are big differences here). You cannot go back to the drawing board when you planned to make your launch. Yet, it happens often.



Where do your target audience search for information to solve their problems?

Research show that most searches for information start on the internet. A 'search' is triggered when a person or company has a specific need / pain to solve. The problem can be acute or anticipated. It can also be a fear for risk or disruption. Understanding what sorts of pains and needs a sector or market-niche have is very important for your website design, your communications, keywords (to rank higher by google or other search engines, ..), tactics and campaigns. An important challenge for marketing is being visible in the search-biotopes of their target people. That can be on-line but can also be on fairs, sector-news, expert-influencers, .. In less-competitive markets such as agriculture, people speak to other people in the sector "How have you dealt with this problem?". Well, you might - for example – get farmers together on demo-days to show your innovation, the impact (before and after).

Industry-specific websites and publications is for many sectors a good place to feature: Think of trade magazines, research firms, and sector-focused blogs. These are seen as credible and relevant. This could be a valuable media to announce your launch, get visibility and tell about your innovation. People love to hear from innovation initiatives in their sector. Often, you have to write the article yourself (they'll edit it anyway) and attach good quality pictures (there is another gain; on your website you than make backlinks to your articles which boost your SEO rankings). Send you article about your innovation also to newspapers, magazines and digital news-sites love hosting 'news' on innovations especially when there is a novelty and human impact attached to your innovation.

Webinars, conferences, and virtual events: B2B buyers value deep knowledge. Especially technical and academic people. Events offer peer exchange, insights from experts, and previews of innovative solutions. I often look for previously recorded webinars to understand more about a technical solution. It's basically an interactive presentation whereby somebody presents their solution / technology or innovation, show a few slides and then is open for questions. And because its recorded you can delete or add sections later.

Vendor websites and product comparison platforms: Procurement people often check your website for more information, technical details, references, visuals and/or video's. This help them compare solutions. I will not go into digital optimization but you can download my free “marketing handboek voor KMO leiders” where I explain many of the internet and digital elementaries.

How to identify opportune market segments and niches

You cannot be attractive to everyone. You will have to choose carefully in which market-niches you want to launch your innovation. Here is the golden rule: for innovation and start-ups, focus on low-hanging fruit. Low-hanging fruit refers to those consumers who are the easiest to persuade. Well established companies sometimes lose sight of 'low hanging fruit'. This is your opportunity as a start-up with little budget; you start with the most reachable, willing, and eager potential customers. Those who have a pain for which you have an excellent solution. Customers that can see benefits of your solution immediately. It's the way to gain early traction (your first customers) and build confidence before generating generating momentum in the same market-niche and before tackling harder-to-reach customers with more complex needs.

Expect a reaction from your competitors if you are intruding into an existing niche. You'll have to anticipate the possible reaction from well-established players that owe large shares of the market-sector. These well-established competitors typically respond quickly to protect their market share. They can do this through price drops, aggressive marketing, exclusive deals, or product enhancements. What they also do is getting their sales people to discredit you and your innovation. The advise here is to go in quietly. Targeting a small segment often overlooked by the dominant players. Avoid direct confrontation. Don't wake up the giants. Focus on getting your first customers because you need their references to get traction and momentum.



What do you need to know about your target audience?

Your target audience refers to the specific group of people from specific companies in specific sectors you want to reach. This can be the end-users of your product or service but it can also be resellers, decision-makers or influencers. Without in depth knowledge of your target audience you probably make assumptions and make value propositions that are not connecting with their specific needs.

Understanding your target audience also helps you in choosing your ideal customers. All your communications and initiatives should be geared to your ideal customers. Your ideal B2B customers should have early-adopters; ideal companies that have an urgent need to find a solution for the problem you can solve. Ideal customers also have the money and the culture/willingness. By narrowing your efforts to this group, you avoid spreading your limited resources too thin. For marketers, understanding your target audience lets you refine not just what you

sell, but how you deliver it: the right channels, the right messaging, the options, pricing, .. Finally, in competitive markets, consumers expect personalization and relevance. The better your understanding of your target audience, the more you can be relevant and customer-centric in your communications.

*Insights; without this knowledge is like trying to hit a target with your eyes closed.
You might get lucky, but chances are you'll miss.*

What types of competitive advantage can you discover through competitor analysis?

The possible competitive advantages:

- Price advantage: offering better value or more flexible pricing.
- Product/technology advantage: superior features, quality, future ready, innovation.
- Customer experience advantage: smoother onboarding, faster support, or better relationships.
- Brand/reputation advantage: stronger trust, credibility, or industry recognition.
- Distribution/sales advantage: wider reach, stronger channels, or unique partnerships.
- Operational efficiency: lower costs, faster delivery, or scalability.
- Niche focus: serving a specific customer segment better than broad competitors.

Price advantage. Pricing comparisons for B2B product or services are not easy as few B2B companies advertise their tariffs and every company uses different incentives, price-reduction tactics that are not listed online. Pricing is almost always a deciding factor. You will have to make estimations whereby you compare price-to-value of your innovation to these of competitors. Also, estimate the return-on-investment (ROI) and Total-Cost-of-Ownership (TCO). Your product or service might be more expensive to buy but cheaper to operate or generating quicker extra revenue than the others. But you can also identify that providing different payment options (leasing, monthly instalments, rental) might swing some potential customers in your direction. My experience is that innovators often over-estimate the value of their solution. Ideal, you should ask some target people or end-users what they think would be the best buy.

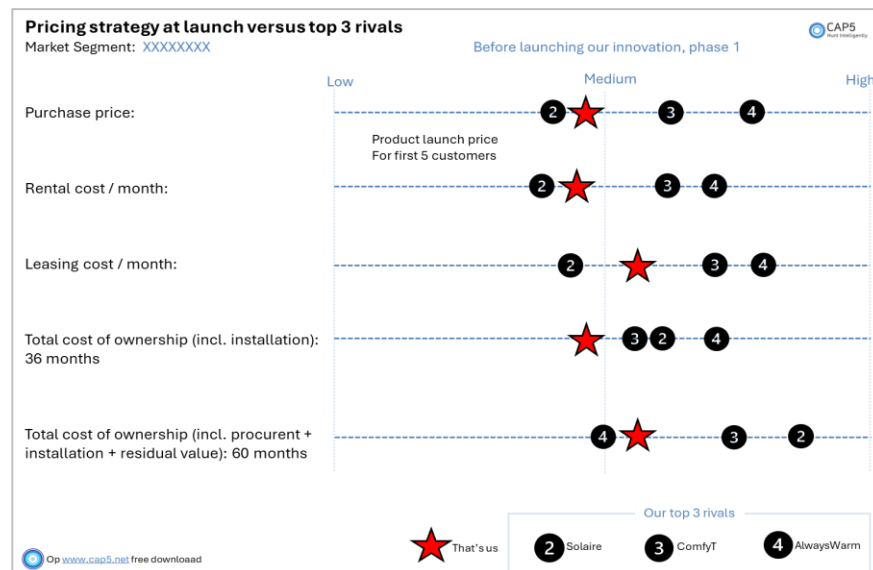
In some sectors is the **delivery time** an important opportunity for start-ups and SMEs. Many complex, more technological advantaged products come – at times - with long waiting times. Could you make fast deliveries? This could well be your main strategy to get onto the market as a start-up.

For a B2B startup, one of the greatest opportunities is the ability to **deliver tailored solutions** that solve the specific challenges of each client. Unlike large, established competitors that rely on standardized products and services, a startup can for instance position its offering as a complete peace-of-mind package going beyond the product itself to include customization, seamless installation and employee training. This flexibility not only differentiates you but will be appreciated by many company that want a say towards the final product or service.

Brand perception is what people belief, or opinions and feelings towards a certain brand. Think about Coca Cola which cultivates feelings of happiness and unity. A B2B example is IBM – “No one gets fired for buying IBM”. Smart, taking away any fear of making a wrong decision for which they can be held accountable. Hilti is a very strong brand among builders. Hilti is known for high-end drills, fastening systems, and laser tools. Contractors often say: “Hilti never breaks.” Builders show off they’re using Hilti so ‘they’re very professional’. Hilti has become a status symbol. Brand perception strongly shapes decision-making especially in B2B markets where trust and credibility weigh heavily. Buyers often lean toward well-known brands because they feel safer choosing an established name with proven reliability. However, big brands also have weaknesses: they may be associated with slow service, rigid processes, high costs, or a lack of personalization. As a startup or SME you will have to tactically outplay their weaknesses. You can do this by being more responsive, transparent and customer-focused. You can highlight flexibility, personal care and commitment and promise contingency plans. What’s

important is that you'll have to decide what brand you want to build from day one. Before launching your innovation. Everything marketing and sales do or show must correspond with that image, belief and feeling you want people to have seeing your brand.

Other areas you might want differentiate: your innovation's versatility, modularity, user experience. The key is to look at where you can outperform your rivals. Per rival, you might want to opt for a different strategy.



Why and how you should consider market trends in your strategy for innovation?

Market trends are shifting patterns in customer behaviour, technology, culture, compliance requirements or economics. Trends means that you choose market-segments over others. Innovators mostly understand and follow what's happening in their sector and what to expect in the coming years. My message is to take probable future requirements into your development. Make a product or service that can evolve or be upgraded easily. It is crucial to integrate safety, environmental, and regulatory compliance considerations expected to be enforced in the coming years from the earliest design stages.

Your target B2B customers follow trends too. You'll hear your target customers say things like 'next year there is that new technology so we wait'. You want to know about this other technology because you prepare to counter such claims: 'yes, that technology is interesting but it's still in early stages of development and according to experts it will not be available on the market for almost 4 years'. Or, 'When this comes on the market probably next year or so it will initially be very expensive. Experts reckon that prices will only drop after many years'.

Why is customer behaviour analysis essential for product positioning?

Product positioning is about defining how your product should be perceived in the mind of the consumer. To do this effectively, you need to understand how customers behave; how they think, decide, value, when and where they buy, and what drives their decisions. Customer behaviour analysis provides these critical insights. Without understanding behaviour, marketers can only guess what customers wants and you might highlight features customers don't care about, or overlook others that truly matter. For example, if data shows that customers are heavily influenced by peer reviews, then showcasing social proof becomes a key part of your positioning strategy. Behavioural insights also tell you what kind of messaging works. Are customers driven by price, quality, innovation, or emotional connection? Do they compare multiple products before buying or do they buy conservatory (always choosing the same preferred suppliers)?

Getting customer knowledge can be done free and largely online. Read customer reviews on platforms like Google, Amazon, or industry-specific sites to understand motivations, frustrations, and decision-making factors.

Use competitor websites and LinkedIn to see how similar businesses attract and engage their customers. And, ask AI to give you summaries on your competitors or competitor products or services.

Intimate knowledge, getting under the skin of your target audience

In B2B, psychological and emotional connections are just as important as rational arguments, even for innovative products or services. What works well for innovative products or service is to make your prospects and customers to look smart, forward-looking visionaries. You appeal to their professional pride and identity.

Empathy embedded in marketing campaigns could be an extra element that sets you apart. Empathy is triggered when customers sense that you genuinely understand their needs. Humans are wired to seek connection and security, especially in decision-making. This emotional recognition builds an immediate sense of trust because it signals that your company is not just selling, but actually listening and committed to keeping promises. Over time, this perceived understanding deepens into loyalty. Psychologically, people are more likely to stay with brands that reduce uncertainty, make them feel understood and adapt to their evolving needs



How can insights into customer pain points shape your value proposition?

Customer pain points are the problems, frustrations, unmet needs and ambitions of your audience experiences. When you understand these deeply, you can craft a value proposition that directly addresses what matters most to them. A good value proposition describe what your product does and it explains in one or a few words what it solves and what it means for the customer. For example, if small business owners frequently complain about accounting being time-consuming and confusing. Then a software brand that says “We simplify your finances in minutes” speaks directly to that pain point. This is far more compelling than a generic statement like “We offer cloud-based accounting tools.” Understanding pain points also helps you to promote your innovation focussed and better.

How can tracking your competitors’ pricing strategies help your business?

Pricing is one of the determining aspects of your marketing strategy. Customers compare prices all the time. They look at the pricing to evaluate value. The value is not the real value but the perceived value; how much

worth the buyer believes it has for them. Perception is shaped by branding, trust, reputation, emotions, presentation, storytelling, and comparisons with alternatives. A simple example to explain this further; the price for Perrier, Evian or Fiji Water is much higher because these brands create a perception of purity, luxury, and status. Customers are not paying for the actual water itself but for what they believe it represents: health, exclusivity and premium lifestyle. Tracking your competitors' pricing helps you understand the benchmarks in your industry and informs whether you should match, undercut, or price above your rivals. If the price of your competitors or alternative solutions is consistently lower than you'll have to highlight the extra return-on-investment. Alternatively, propose a rental or lease option whereby you can prove that the rental cost is substantially lower than the cost of not having your innovative solution. Anyway, make it look like choosing for your solution is making a wise judgement. If you find that customers are very price-sensitive and competitors are winning on affordability, you might want to consider a light version; a budget-friendly tier. Especially when there are tenders that have to be submitted. You need to be shortlisted and invited to pitch and showcase your innovation because you'll have their undivided attention to explain why your solution makes more sense than the others. You will have to offer unique value if you do not want to be caught up in bidding rounds where customers push you to keep lowering the sales-price. That's something important to consider. If you're a start-up with a new innovation the most important thing is getting your first, credible customers. You could make important price concessions to lure your first customers. But lowering prices erode your margins and damage your brand. By knowing exactly where your competitors stand, you can differentiate based on benefits rather than simply trying to be the cheapest.

In what ways can understanding your competitors' strengths and weaknesses determine your sales and marketing strategy?

Knowing what your competitors do well allows you to understand what customers may already value and what you need to match or beat to make them switch to your innovation. You will have to counter-weight each of the strengths (or the cumuli) of your competitors. If a competitor is known for speed, you might emphasize your products reliability and its capacity to operate continuously with little maintenance and therefore the customer will have more output and lower costs by the end of the month. At the same time, competitor weaknesses reveal opportunities. You can exploit customer reviews & complains about e.g. poor support or hidden fees. This helps shift the conversation from a feature-by-feature comparison to a broader story about trust, care, or value. One key source is online reviews and feedback platforms to find grievances against a product or service (AI will consolidate the feedback). Reading these reviews helps you spot patterns in complaints such as slow onboarding, lack of integration, or poor customer service. Another rich source is forums such as Reddit, LinkedIn groups or industry-specific communities where professionals discuss the tools and vendors they use. Often, B2B buyers are candid in these spaces. They are sharing why they switched providers or what disappointed them. Customer case studies and testimonials on competitor websites also hold valuable clues. While these are designed to highlight strengths, they often reveal limitations indirectly such as workarounds, integrations needed, or support required to make the solution viable. You can read between the lines to identify where the competitor is lacking agility or where customers had to compromise.



Insights – example of some of the exercises

These exercise templates can be download for free from www.CAP5.net. It's important to make the exercise yours. Only do the exercises that are relevant to you. All exercises can be modified. My suggestion is that everybody in the team prepares the exercise first and you then come together in a worksession to complete the exercises. We'll consolidate the findings later in a canvas.

[illegible]

Your most opportune market segments analysis					
Market segment:					
Market opportunity and demand analysis (where you can best succeed, find new customer, the target groups or niches are more profitable than traditional considerations plus to support your innovation or "new" market segments or niches)					
Market Strengths / Weaknesses	What is your core price compared with other than the above?	Do you have a unique or extra value or the opportunity to go global?	Can you create a unique value for your most profitable ones?	Can you create a value for your customer?	Is it difficult to enter or to dominate these markets segment?
Market Challenges / Opportunities	What is your core innovation and the value?	What is your core value and the need to create a problem or opportunity?	Can you create a value for your customer and the market?	Can you create a value for your customer?	Is it difficult to enter or to dominate these markets segment?

	Week 1: Preparation	Week 2: on	Week 3: on
Review and summarise			
Group work to create a video, poster or flow chart on the topic			
Final preparation for the presentation			
Presentation rehearsal			
Final presentation			
Feedback and reflection			
Final assessment			

[illegible]

Main competitor positioning, value proposition & mode of operation				
Main Rival:				
Is your value proposition differentiated? Is your Value Proposition different from yours? Number of competitors Number of competitors in your industry and in your segment?	How much competition is there in your market in your segment?	What others do they want? What are their needs?	What value does their unique proposition offer? Their target?	What is your business model? How do you make your money?
How do you deliver your value proposition? How do you manage your supply chain?	What is your business model? How do you make your money?	What is their value proposition?	What is their value proposition?	What is their business model? How do they make their money?
How do you manage your supply chain?		What is their business model? How do they make their money?		
How do you manage your supply chain?		What is their business model? How do they make their money?		

The image displays two BCG Matrix diagrams side-by-side, illustrating different competitive strategies for a company named 'Mein Unternehmen'.

Left Diagram: Direct Competitor Positioning

- Y-axis:** Scale of sales in million products/units.
- X-axis:** Relative to the main product, price costs.
- Quadrants:**
 - Top-Left (Question Marks):** Contains 'Product 1' (small circle) and 'Product 2' (medium circle).
 - Top-Right (Stars):** Contains 'Product 1' (small circle) and 'Product 2' (large circle).
 - Bottom-Left (Cash Cows):** Contains 'Product 1' (large circle).
 - Bottom-Right (Question Marks):** Contains 'Product 1' (small circle) and 'Product 2' (medium circle).
- Annotations:**
 - Top-Left: 'Our company has the advantage in this segment'.
 - Top-Right: 'Our company has the advantage in this segment'.
 - Bottom-Left: 'Our company has the advantage in this segment'.
 - Bottom-Right: 'Our company has the advantage in this segment'.

Right Diagram: Indirect Competitor Positioning

- Y-axis:** Scale of sales in million products/units.
- X-axis:** Relative to the main product, price costs.
- Quadrants:**
 - Top-Left (Question Marks):** Contains 'Product 1' (small circle) and 'Product 2' (medium circle).
 - Top-Right (Stars):** Contains 'Product 1' (small circle) and 'Product 2' (large circle).
 - Bottom-Left (Cash Cows):** Contains 'Product 1' (large circle).
 - Bottom-Right (Question Marks):** Contains 'Product 1' (small circle) and 'Product 2' (medium circle).
- Annotations:**
 - Top-Left: 'Our company has the advantage in this segment'.
 - Top-Right: 'Our company has the advantage in this segment'.
 - Bottom-Left: 'Our company has the advantage in this segment'.
 - Bottom-Right: 'Our company has the advantage in this segment'.

Overview of partners, resellers & distributors of rivals

Partner	Partner / Reseller / Distributor	Region	Role of Partner	Relationship (years)	Relationship description
Partner 1					
Partner 2					
Partner 3					
Partner 4					
Partner 5					
Partner 6					
Partner 7					
Partner 8					
Partner 9					
Partner 10					

[illegible]

What partners & resellers want?

	What do you think your partners/resellers want from you?	What do you think your partners/resellers want from you?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

What main factors will drive your business?

	What do you think will drive your business?
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

SWOT analysis: exploit strengths, disguise shortcomings

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats

Pain & Gain analysis, per decision maker profile

	Decision maker profile	Pain	Gain	Decision maker profile	Pain	Gain
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

Low hanging fruit strategy: select your first target customers

Target customer	How do you know they are a target customer?	How do you know they are a target customer?	How do you know they are a target customer?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Preferred Clients shortlist, early & medium term

	Early & medium term	Medium term	Long term
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Target Audience profiling

Target Audience: [Image of a woman]

Target Audience	Target Audience	Target Audience

Decision-makers in typical decision process

Decision maker	Decision maker	Decision maker	Decision maker	Decision maker

Smart strategy & tactics are built on smart insights.

2. STRATEGY

In this chapter we'll focus on strategy. What we learn from the exercise of the previous chapter 'insights' will be essential for determining the right strategy.

Strategy is the big plan of a company. It shows the overall direction the company wants to go and what it wants to achieve in the long run. The strategy includes the company's main (high-level) goals and objectives. The strategy is determined by the founders and/or executives of the company.

A marketing & sales strategy (part of the corporate strategy) for a new innovative product or service clarifies which customers, sectors and regions you want to focus on. The strategy should outline how to bring the product to market and scale it. This covers pricing, positioning, promotional strategies, and sales channels. The marketing & sales strategy should list the broader company objectives, such as product updates & releases, revenue targets, growth rate & targets, brand positioning, or long-term innovation plans.



STRATEGY	TACTICS
• Long-term plan	• Short-term actions
• Clear Goals	• Clear deliverables
• Focus on What & Why	• Focus on How & Who
• Modus of operation, positioning, core-business, priorities	• Adaptable. Can change any time

Which strategic options B2B Startups have to make?

I have listed a number of options you might want to consider.

Development options:

- **Co-Development Agreements:** Work closely with another company or customer to co-create a solution that fits both your interests. It can accelerate development, reduce costs, and ensure product-market fit early on.
- **Academic & Research Partnerships:** Collaborate with universities, applied research centers, or PhD teams to access deep expertise, infrastructure, or EU funding streams. Example: Institutions like KU Leuven, UCLouvain and Imec frequently work with startups to co-develop or validate new technologies.
- **Government Grants or Subsidies:** Belgium and the EU offer several startup funding options (e.g. VLAIO in Flanders, Innoviris in Brussels) to support innovation, development, or internationalization.

Positioning & Branding Strategies:

Positioning is about clearly defining the unique value your product offers and who it's for. Startups and SMEs must resist the urge to appeal to everyone. Instead, they should focus on a specific audience segment and highlight what makes them different and better than competitors. This sharpens messaging, helps marketing efforts become more efficient, and makes it easier for customers to understand your value.

Co-development

Why innovators could consider co-development or engaging target customers from the start? Co-creation is when other companies or strategic partners participate in the development (e.g. research & development, beta testing, advisory panels, pilot programs, shared-demo, ..). Going for co-development is a strategic decision. It has several benefits for innovators.

Co-developers feel a personal stake in the product's success. This sense of ownership motivates them to become enthusiastic advocates and vocal champions. Their authentic enthusiasm and willingness to share their experiences is useful to harness in marketing and sales communications. Word-of-mouth recommendations works and is the cheapest way to promote your innovation.

By **engaging early adopters in development**, you're effectively testing the real demand and viability of your product in a controlled, low-risk environment. When early adopters respond positively and provide constructive feedback, it validates your value proposition and boosts confidence for future customers, investors, and partners. Also important is that, if significant issues arise, you can address them during the development stage.

Co-development with respectable partners. Many innovations are university-research spin-offs. The fact that the university was involved gives your innovation more weight, more credibility. It will make it easier to attract government funding. It will help you to convince prospects you're solid and the innovation has been sufficiently tested.

Sales & distribution options:

Startups can choose between different options to sell or distribute their B2B innovations.

- **You sell via your own sales team.**

Your own sales and marketing team will sell directly to the end-users or final customers. You have full control over messaging and customer relationships when you work solely through your own sales team

You sell through others.

- **Distributors or Wholesale Networks:** One option is to partner with intermediaries who already have established sales channels, logistics capabilities,. They have in specific regions direct access to your target audience. Think about it, most companies work with different distributors depending on the country, region, or market segment. That's why many startups work with resellers. You can scale up without big investments, it's easier, it's cheaper but you'll lose profit-margin.
- **Referral Partners or Affiliates:** Individuals or companies who refer leads (interested people) in exchange for commission or incentives. They give you leads and they will get paid money for lead or when their contacts sign a contract or buy your products or services. 'Referral partners' is very common in Anglo-Saxon countries.

You sell your innovation as part of larger solutions.

- **Value-Added Resellers (VARs):** Partners that sell your product but they bundled it with additional services they provide: e.g., installation, maintenance, customization, training. Think about companies that sell airco's, elevators, .. and VARs will do the installation and maintenance.
- **OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer):** Your innovation is embedded into another company's product offering. This is very common for the automotive, medical devices, electronics & software sector. If you manufacture OEM medical components or devices, you typically don't sell directly to end-users (patients or hospitals). Instead, you supply to companies that integrate your components into their own branded products.

- **White-Label Partners:** Other companies sell your product under their own brand, making it a useful option for fast scaling without heavy brand-building investment. This approach gives you immediate access to their established customer base and reputation while you stay focused on production and innovation.
- **System Integrators or Consulting Firms:** They recommend your innovation as part of larger project Example: Process management software. They consultants use your software in their consulting assignments. The Process Software allows them to analyse and make the operational flow more efficiently, improve cross-divisional collaboration and as a blue-print for business-to-IT alignment. The consulting firm will probably invoice their customer for the cost of your software license.

To make the right choices isn't easy. It's even more difficult when it comes to some of the options whereby you have to partner. These things tend to get complicated when roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and product-ownership need to be determined. In Belgium, there are mentor networks for start-ups and SMEs (small and medium companies) with ambitions. I have had valuable help from VLAIO (www.vlaio.be) in the past. They're free and they are the leading organisation when it comes to innovation in Flandres, Belgium.

- **VLAIO Business Coaches (Flanders):** The Flemish government provides access to business advisors and innovation coaches. These mentors help with subsidy applications, business planning, and connecting with experts through VLAIO's network.
- In Wallonia, the **SPW Économie, Emploi, Recherche** (Service Public de Wallonie – Économie, Emploi, Recherche) supports businesses, entrepreneurs, and researchers through funding, guidance, and policy programs aimed at stimulating innovation, economic development, and employment.
- **Start it @KBC:** This is one of Belgium's largest startup accelerators. Startups in the program receive mentoring from a network of entrepreneurs and business experts. Mentors guide them on product-market fit, go-to-market strategies, fundraising, and scaling.
- **Impulse.Brussels / hub.brussels** (Brussels Capital Region) : Offers mentoring for startups through growth and export coaches. They help navigate local funding, export strategy, and sector-specific challenges.
- **EIT Digital** and **EIT Health Mentoring:** These EU-backed innovation programs offer mentorship to deep-tech and health-tech startups, including market validation, IP strategy, and European scaling.
- **The Birdhouse Accelerator:** Provides hands-on mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs and corporate leaders. Known for its structured coaching and personal involvement of mentors.
- **BAN Vlaanderen** (Business Angels Network): Many angel investors act as informal mentors when they invest. BAN Vlaanderen facilitates these connections and sometimes provides matching services between startups and seasoned business minds.



How to determine your Pricing Strategy?

Choosing the right pricing strategy is crucial when you launch a new product or service or when you enter a new market. In the section ‘insights’ you should have done the exercise on competitors price positioning.



You must have a clear understanding of all direct and indirect costs associated with the product or service. This includes production, materials, logistics, packaging, software or license costs, labour, overhead and marketing & sales. If you’re a start-up, you’ll have to estimate these costs. The most common error I notice constantly is that labour-time is under-estimated. Labour, your staff or external experts have to be paid. And labour-costs are steep in Europe.

If you will price your innovation based on competitors pricing than you will have to check if there is still a profit margin. If you count all costs to make one unit, add a profit margin on top and use this figure to market your innovation than you might not be competitive enough to win over customers. In the table below you’ll find different options. In start-up modus, I would suggest to get an aggressive pricing strategy until you have a number of successful implementations / projects that you’re allowed to show.

Strategy	Description	Best For	Example Use Case
Penetration Pricing	Start with low prices to quickly gain market share	Competitive markets with established players	Slack launched with low prices to grow fast
Skimming Pricing	Begin with high prices, then lower them gradually	Innovative or niche products	GoPro used this to target early adopters
Premium Pricing	Set prices above market average to signal high quality	Luxury or high-value offerings	Tesla positioned itself as a premium brand
Value-Based Pricing	Price based on perceived customer value rather than cost	Products with strong differentiation	Ideal for SaaS or tech startups
Freemium Model	Offer basic services for free, charge for premium features	Digital products and platforms	Common in software and app markets
Dynamic Pricing	Adjust prices in real-time based on demand, competition, or availability	Travel, e-commerce, or tech sectors	Startup airlines use this for ticket pricing

A pricing strategy used by some companies is the “**razor-and-blades**” model (named after selling cheap razors but expensive blades). Companies deliberately keep the initial product price low. Sometimes even below the production cost. It’s a tactic that locks customers into their ecosystem. Once the product is in use, customers must purchase complementary items, consumables, or spare parts to keep it working and these come with higher margins. A classic example are cheap printers but with costly ink cartridges. The entry point feels

affordable, but the long-term revenue comes from continuous replenishments. The biggest risk of this model is that customers start to feel trapped or exploited, which can damage trust, the brand and long-term loyalty. That's why companies often ask for Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) because they do not want to feel trapped.

A tiered model is another common price strategy: basically you offer e.g., three options: a low-cost entry-level option attracts first-time buyers and lowers adoption barriers, a medium-priced version attracts the most anticipated buyers. A premium option, positioned at the top, captures higher margins from customers seeking advanced features, exclusivity, or maximum performance.

A common strategy for new brands with innovative products or services is a combination that combines **a penetration pricing element** (slightly lower entry price to reduce barriers and attract first adopters) **with tiered or modular pricing** (basic, medium and high-end version) to maximize revenue from those willing to pay more. This mix allows the company to build traction, gather testimonials, and prove the innovation's worth, while keeping flexibility to increase prices as credibility, demand, and market position grow.

What is the value of a corporate strategy for your organization?

A clear corporate strategy defines the overall direction and priorities of an organization. It serves as a guiding framework for decision-making at all levels, ensuring that departments and teams work toward the same long-term objectives. Without a strategy, companies risk fragmented efforts, internal confusion, and misaligned resource allocation. Corporate strategy conveys what drives long-term success. While tactics and campaigns may shift quickly, a well-defined strategy keeps the company focused and resilient.

What are corporate objectives and why you need them?

The company strategy is where the company wants to go and wants to achieve. It's a vision. It's a statement of ambitions and goals. These goals are translated into corporate objectives. A corporate objective is a clear, detailed statement what you want to achieve in a period of time; within 9 months, by the end of the year, ..

Corporate goals should follow the SMART principle;

- **S – Specific:** The goal should be clear and well-defined. Everyone should understand exactly what is expected.
- **M – Measurable:** There must be a way to track progress and success. This could be numbers, percentages, or milestones.
- **A – Achievable:** The goal should be realistic based on available resources, skills, and time.
- **R – Relevant:** The goal must align with the company's vision, mission, and strategic priorities.
- **T – Time-bound:** Every goal needs a clear deadline or timeframe.

Here is an example:

"Have 60 paying customers for our new SaaS platform within the first 9 months after launch."

- **Specific:** Focuses on customer acquisition.
- **Measurable:** 60 customers.
- **Achievable:** Ambitious but realistic for early-stage growth.
- **Relevant:** Growing the customer base is key for start-ups.

Measuring progress ensures that strategy is working or not. Without metrics, it's impossible to know if the organization is moving in the right direction, whether the strategy is working at all and whether the objectives are realistic.

How does corporate success influence the organizational culture?

People often prefer to work for successful companies because it gives them a sense of pride, status and personal value. Being part of a winning team boosts their self-esteem. It is rewarding to be associated with an innovation, brand or business that is respected, growing, and admired by others. When companies go well, there is often more energy. Even if the workload is heavier, the emotional payoff of being part of something meaningful and admired can outweigh the effort. People are more willing to push themselves when they believe the outcome is worth it.

Companies with ambition need dedicated and motivated people. Talented employees want to feel part of a successful organization, and they need to see that their contribution truly matters. High achievers are rare, difficult to attract, and even harder to retain if you don't actively invest in employee involvement and empowerment. Employee involvement means creating regular moments of connection. An example; gathering staff once a month on a Friday afternoon to share feedback, celebrate successes, and discuss upcoming challenges. Employee empowerment goes a step further: giving people a voice, encouraging recommendations, and as a founder or leader, listening attentively and showing genuine concern. When employees feel valued, supported, and trusted, they are more engaged, productive, creative, and loyal. A positive workplace culture leads people to go the extra mile, collaborate effectively, and continuously improve. Research consistently shows that such environments reduce turnover, lower absenteeism, and ultimately improve customer satisfaction and deliver better customer service.

Why chasing early-adopters in the early stages?

Early adopters are buyers that are known to embrace innovation more easily. Early-adopters fall – mostly - into three powerful groups: **those with an urgent need** who are willing to try new solutions because existing options fail to solve their critical problems; **those who recognize the competitive edge an innovation** can give them the edge to move fast to outpace rivals; and **those who see innovation as a way to enhance their brand, reputation, or personal status** by being associated with progress and innovation. For the first group, the innovation is a lifeline; for the second, it's a weapon for advantage; and for the third, it's a signal of leadership and prestige.

Early adopters play a critical role in your Go-to-Market strategy (launching your innovation and attracting investors). They help validate the innovation, provide valuable feedback, and generate the buzz you want to use in your strategy. Engaging early adopters will help you to convince others and reduces uncertainty for later customers. Engaging early adopters also helps build a community around the innovation and creating social proof that your innovation is sound.

Psychologically, early adopters are driven by curiosity, status, and a desire to be ahead of the curve. They enjoy being seen as pioneers who discover and use new technologies before the mainstream. They often have a higher tolerance for risk and uncertainty because they value the experience and potential advantages of innovation more than the security of proven solutions. For them, adopting early satisfies needs for novelty, self-expression, and influence: they like to shape trends, share discoveries with peers, and sometimes gain recognition as thought leaders or insiders. This mix of intrinsic motivation (curiosity, excitement) and extrinsic motivation (status, influence) makes them far more open to experimenting with new products than later, more cautious buyers.

You can download the exercise templates for free at www.CAP5.net. Make sure to adapt them to your own situation. Only use the exercises that are relevant and feel free to modify them as needed. My recommendation is that each team member first prepares the exercise individually, and then you come together in a work session to complete them collectively. Here are some examples.

[illegible]

Pricing strategy versus top 3 rivals

Market Segment: XXXXXXXX

Pricing strategy after launch

	Higher price	Medium	Low
HIGH	Price Premium	Premium Product, Premium Price	
MEDIUM		Average	
LOW			Cheap & Low quality

Upselling & Cross-selling opportunities

		Product / Service:	Product / Service:	Product / Service:
UP SELLING Same product / same customer/relationship	Can we offer an upgrade option when customer decides?			
	What?:			
CROSS-SELLING Different products/services from previous purchase	Can we encourage the customer to buy additional, complementary products or services alongside their current purchase?			
	What?:			

 www.open.ac.uk/learn/digital-marketing/level-4/learning-outcomes/10

2023	2024	2025	2025-2030
Main objectives	Main objectives	Main objectives	Main objectives
Complete overview/Market analysis, competitor analysis, customer base analysis, research niches & profiles Digital marketing optimization and campaigns best-in-class in our industry. Offer cross-sell/wedding packages, attractive Upselling for top 20 customers, offer 50% discount Find strategic partners in Luxembourg, France and Germany. Involvement & visibility in digital marketing. Setting up Sales & Resellers incentives. Corporate video's; corporate storytelling our story & passion, testimonials & products Monthly blog about a product, easy product access direct website, white paper expected ROI on our purchase.	Computer analysis, customer base analysis, evaluation campaigns, evaluation marketing budget versus ROI SEO checking, Exploring social media (marketing possibility) Sales funnel/synchronization and optimization. Now also online sales. Helping partners & resellers with digital campaigns, one showcase website per country, one restaurant per country, 50/20 per country (possibly website partners & resellers) Influencer marketing, webinars per country/language, partner/partner gateway, technical support per country.	Computer analysis, customer base analysis, evaluation campaigns, evaluation marketing budget versus ROI Targeted digital campaigns target audience through digital ads. Direct mails to existing customers. Social proof/positioning First international commission with all resellers, partners, influencers and top 20 customers. Find strategic partners & resellers in Austria and Switzerland. Introducing CRM system. Revenue Luxembourg: +2 million, Germany: +5 million, France: +3 million Internal library of communication materials, templates, scripts	Computer analysis, customer base analysis, evaluation campaigns, evaluation marketing budget versus ROI Vertical integrations to provide complete solution in-house Winning an international award (innovation or sustainability) Reaching Top Sales people from competitors. Luxembourg, Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland. Annual revenue +12% We will become the largest European distributor of sustainable wood

Some canvasses have been adopted by organisations to compile the key information into one or a few A4 formats. The ‘Business model’ canvas is such a commonly used format. The ‘Business Innovation Canvas’ is probably better suited for start-ups and marketing innovations but this canvas should be combined with other CAP5 exercises to ensure you have a comprehensive, detailed strategic and go-to-market plan.

[illegible]

The business Innovation Canvas

Key Resources Defines the "must have" resources for this business model to succeed These can include key people, processes, equipment, capital, etc. Does not include "should have" or "nice to have" resources E.g. Amazon's key assets Distribution centers E-commerce website Efficient fulfillment systems (business processes)	Metric that Matters The metric that matters is the one metric that best answers the question: "Is the relevant assumption in my business model valid or not?" This metric will change depending on what stage your business model is in but it always one metric that provides focus for your team. E.g. During stage 1 of customer discovery the metric could be customer plan on a scale of 0-10. During stage 2 of problem solution fit the metric could be number of signed LOIs. Stage 3 could be cost of customer acquisition. Stage 4 metrics are unique to your company's ability to scale	Brand Promise – The Why A clearly articulated and compelling emotional purpose for why this business/product/service exists. E.g. Amazon's "To be earth's most customer-centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online."		Customer Relationships Customer relationships describe what your relationship with customers looks like after the initial value proposition is delivered. Often this describes how you intend to support customers and/or continue to build your brand and awareness to foster loyalty and trust. E.g. Amazon's customer relationships 24/7 Customer Support	Customer Segment These are the people who have a problem that you understand better than they do that you can potentially solve with your value proposition. These are specific profiles of people who all share the same job to be done and who experience pain and want gains related to that job. E.g. Amazon's customer segment (one of them) College students
Key Partners Lists the partnerships that are essential to making the business plan work These can include key suppliers, financing partners, contractors, sales & marketing providers, etc. E.g. Amazon's key partners Authors Independent re-sellers	Unfair Advantage Unfair advantage is the one or two elements that make you uniquely suited to build this business better than anyone else could. These can include patents/trademarks, network relationships, deep domain/functional expertise, unique experience, etc. E.g. Amazon's unfair advantage Exceptional customer service Fulfillment efficiency	Products & Services These are the products and/or services you are selling. E.g. Amazon's value proposition E.g. Amazon's products and services Amazon.com website Amazon Prime shipping and other services	Gain Creators Gain Creators: Value created by your product/service above and beyond merely solving the problem. E.g. Find and discover anything you might want to buy online	Channels Channels describe the modes you will use to deliver your value proposition to customers. Several channels may exist for one value proposition These can include sales channels, installation channels, distribution networks, etc. E.g. Amazon's channels E.g. Amazon.com Fulfillment: UPS / FedEx / USPS	Gains Gains: Those desired customer benefits that go above and beyond the core utility of getting the job done. E.g. Fast delivery
			Pain Killers Pain Killer: The main attribute of your product/service that solves a customer's pre-existing pain. E.g. The lowest possible prices.		Pains Pains: The pain caused by having to struggle with existing solutions when getting the job done. E.g. High cost of textbooks
Cost Structure Cost structure outlines your estimate of what it will cost to build this business model at scale The cost structure must include both startup and ongoing costs in order to give a full picture of the capital required. Ongoing costs should be modeled at scale to avoid over penalizing the cost assumptions. E.g. Amazon's cost structure Marketing Costs Fulfillment Cost			Revenue Streams Revenue Streams defines how you intend to receive payment from customers for delivery of your value proposition E.g. Amazon's revenue streams Online purchases Prime subscriptions		

3. TACTICS

There are as many brand, marketing en sales-tactics as there are different sports. The art is to choose the combination of tactics that will work best for you.

For every corporate objective you should choose tactics. For every tactics we'll later choose the actions we want to take to make these tactics work.

In this section, you'll find practical suggestions and you will find an overview of the most common tactics in the CAP5 Toolbox. It's up to you to select the tactics that best support your specific objectives. The good news is that most of them can be done at no or little cost.



STRATEGY	TACTICS
• Long-term plan	• Short-term actions
• Clear Goals	• Clear deliverables
• Focus on What & Why	• Focus on How & Who
• Modus of operation, positioning, core-business, priorities	• Adaptable. Can change any time
• Determine your tactics	• Results will lead to goals

To market an innovative product or service is a tall order. Promoting innovative solutions is much harder than promoting established solutions. Most customers prefer familiar solutions over new ones. You will have to overcome resistance and untangle the risk perception. You'll have to find the gaps or opportunities that are overlooked by others, you have to explore where you can make an important difference, where your innovation is attractive enough for potential customers to switch to your solution.

Tactics are the specific, practical actions you take to get to your objectives. They are short-term, adjustable decisions. Tactics can be marketing actions, all sorts of campaigns, sales actions, payment facilities, membership & loyalty programs, discounts, regional resellers, strategic partners, product demos or pilot trials, all-in-one leasing with maintenance, ...

A company can choose from a great many of marketing and sales tactics. Over the years, I have documented (and tested most) the most common tactics. I have listed these tactics in lists allowing you to choose your tactics easier and quicker. (You can download these lists on wwwCAP5.net).

Tactics is not about money, it's about the smart moves.

"We knew the market gaps — and we've filled them."

How to get your very first customer(s) for your innovation?

Winning your first customer(s) for an innovative product is one of the toughest step but also most critical step. The approach often recommended is to involve potential customers early in the development phase.

- People tend to support what they help create.
- Early adopters enjoy shaping something new and being part of the process.

- Early users can identify gaps, prioritize features, and uncover blind spots, helping you reach product-market fit faster.

Start by deciding who you want to involve. Aim for technical or end-users from companies in your target sector, especially those known as early adopters of new technologies. In addition, try to see if you can get other people involved; sector experts & influencers, industry journalists, local business leaders, VOKA, .. people that can help in building credibility, spreading awareness, and promoting your innovation.

You can create involvement in several ways. For example, by inviting potential users to product demos or testing sessions. Webinars and short self-made YouTube videos are also effective tools to showcase your innovation. Another approach is to ask for feedback directly from sector experts or targeted end-users. For example: “Dear Mr. Jefferson, we are developing a scanning tool to detect and identify fungi and moulds. As a health inspector in the agricultural sector, your expertise would be very valuable to us. Attached you will find a one-pager outlining our product and its capabilities. Could you kindly let us know if there are additional needs or features that would be useful for you and your colleagues?”

Who to choose as your first customer? Aim for a company experiencing the biggest problem your innovative product or service can solve, ideally located relatively close to you. Proximity matters because you want to provide hands-on support, quickly resolve any issues, and ensure a smooth implementation. Physical presence on the ground is often essential. Avoid companies that are part of larger organizations or international-chains as branches and franchisers usually require approval from headquarters. Also, many larger companies work with pre-approved suppliers, a process that can take up many months or years before you get shortlisted.

Things that help to convince your first customers;

- Launch a reasonably priced “light” version of your product that can be upgraded later.
- Offer a pilot project.
- Provide a money-back guarantee or risk-free trial.
- Deliver full technical support on-site until the solution is fully operational.

If you have to lure customers away from competitors than target their weakest customers first. Outmanoeuvre them by being better where they’re weakest. Seek out your competitors unhappy or low-priority customers. Go after them. But make sure they belong to your target-customer groups. But, you will have to understand that these people/companies have been let down in the past and are more sceptic now. You’ll have to overcome this barrier by providing a full “peace-of-mind, smooth, non-disruptive transition and dedicated support and possibly with guarantees such as money-back. Here’s are other options you might consider:

Low-Risk Entry Offers:

- Free Pilot or Proof-of-Concept (POC): Let them try the solution for a short, well-defined period, with clear KPIs to prove value.
- Money-Back Guarantee: Removes risk for cautious decision-makers.
- Pay-on-Results: They only pay if you hit agreed metrics (e.g., uptime, cost savings, leads generated).
- Fixed price per month options.

Early Adopter Privileges

- Founders’ Circle: First customers get lifetime discounts, early access to new features, and direct influence on product roadmap.
- Locked-In Pricing: Guarantee today’s price for several years if they sign early.
- VIP Support: Priority access to senior engineers or founders for troubleshooting and optimization.

Tangible Business Benefits

- Free Migration or Integration: Handle the painful part of switching from their old system at no cost.
- Staff Training Included: Provide hands-on onboarding so they’re productive from day one.

- **Productivity Audit:** Offer a free analysis that quantifies their inefficiencies, showing how your solution saves time/money.

Strategic Marketing Incentives

- **Joint PR & Case Study:** Offer to feature them in press releases, videos, and conference talks. Hence giving them visibility as innovators.
- **Co-Branding Opportunities:** Let them be the exclusive launch partner in their industry for a limited time.
- **Industry Awards Nomination:** Submit your early customers (and your collaboration) for tech awards.

Financial Sweeteners

- **Deferred Payment Terms:** Start using now, pay in 90–180 days.
- **Equity-for-Usage Swap:** Rare but powerful, give a small equity stake in exchange for being your first live customer.
- **Trade Credit or Barter:** Exchange your solution for services/products they provide.

Psychological Trust Builders

- **Access to founders:** Let them speak directly to the CEO, CTO. People are sensitive to prestige.
- **Transparency Dashboard:** Give them live visibility into your progress and performance.
- **Exclusive Insights:** Share industry data you gather through your tech—making your product double as a decision-making tool.



How to attract more customers using your first customers?

Innovation is about selling trust; “Our product is solid, we can solve your problem!”. But people want proof. Companies will ask “What have you done in our sector that is operational now”. Or “show us the results from your first customers”.

You’re not a brand yet. You’re just another name with another pitch. That’s where the people and companies that have been involved in the development phase comes in. You will do a lot of storytelling:

- **Tell your story:** Explain why you felt a solution was needed, based on frustrations, problems, or challenging experiences you witnessed. The most compelling way to do this is through a short video, ideally 45–55 seconds.

- **Highlight development achievements:** Use visuals to showcase your team and the progress made. Share key feedback and suggestions received at the end of each development phase to demonstrate continuous improvement.
- **Give your first users / customers enough incentives** so you can ask a testimonial. Ask if you can share pictures and video's online. Can you get them to commit a joint case-study? Maybe they allow you to host their logo on your website. Would your first customers be willing to hold a demonstration on his or her premisses for you to film?
- **Quantify the potential gains of your innovation** (cost savings, lower risks, more productive, more possibilities, ...) and make little video's and stories on your website & social media.

What we actually do as a marketer is to develop communications to show that the development was done professionally with sufficient testing and sector-experts input or validation. The team (driven and passionate experts) behind the innovation should be perceived as sound and credible. We make various communications demonstrating "it's working and it does what's promised". It's storytelling. Don't sell products! Share stories. Make a statement like the excellent HG slogan: "HG does what it promises!". We tease with call-to-actions to get people to engage with us.

Before we can sell, we first need to enter the biotope of our target customers. This means we have to know where they look for information, which media channels they follow, what and who influences their decisions. Trade magazines, both print and online, are particularly effective. Expert reviews are invaluable for start-ups and innovation. Being featured or mentioned in these channels provides targeted visibility and builds credibility, earn trust from potential customers, partners, and investors by showing they are taken seriously in their field of expertise. These publications also reach a highly relevant audience, making them more effective than general advertising. Remember, you're selling an innovative product or service which sector newspapers love to publish and sector experts love to (positively) comment on.

- Harness Social Proof and Testimonials

Your first customers are living proof that your innovation works and delivers value. Collecting and showcasing their testimonials, reviews, and success stories builds trust for new prospects. People tend to trust peer recommendations far more than traditional advertising. Especially when dealing with new or unfamiliar innovation. Use various formats: written testimonials, video interviews, case studies, or social media shout-outs to highlight real benefits and experiences. Authentic stories from early users help potential customers relate, reducing scepticism and uncertainty about the innovation. Moreover, share these stories widely across your marketing channels: website, blogs, social media and sales presentations. This amplifies your credibility and paints a vivid picture of how your product or service can make a difference.

- Encourage Referrals Through Incentives

Referral programs reward customers, networkers and influencers for giving you good leads. This can be prospect contact details or making an introduction for you. Incentives can be discounts, exclusive features, early access to updates, or even monetary rewards. The key is to make the referral process simple and rewarding, both for the referrer and the new customer. This tactic leverages the existing trust between your early customers and their networks making it easier to reach and convince new prospects who are hard to contact otherwise.

- Involve Early Customers in Co-Creation and Feedback

Engaging your first users in the product development or marketing process not only improves your offering but also turns them into passionate brand ambassadors. When customers feel their feedback is valued and see their suggestions implemented, they develop a personal stake in your success. This emotional connection encourages them to share their enthusiasm within their networks naturally. Co-creation can take many forms, including beta testing groups, user advisory panels, or crowdsourced content campaigns. Highlighting their involvement publicly further legitimizes your innovation and invites curiosity from new customers.

- Create Community and Foster Engagement

Building a community around your innovation encourages interaction and loyalty. Your first customers can act as leaders or influencers within these communities, sharing tips, answering questions and generating buzz. Online forums, social media groups, or user events create spaces where potential customers can observe and engage with enthusiastic early adopters. This peer-to-peer support reduces barriers to trial and adoption. A vibrant community signals that your innovation has momentum and a growing base of satisfied users, making new customers more confident to join in.

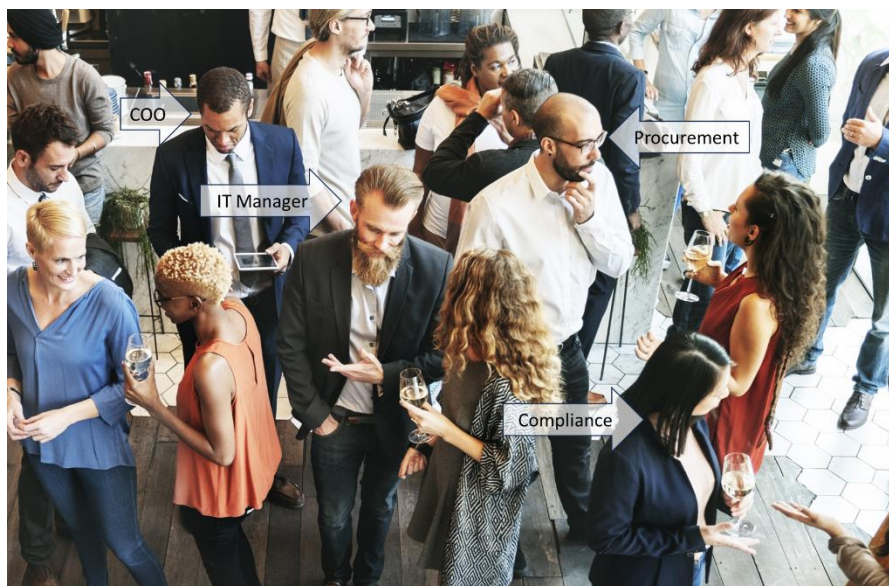
- Leverage Case Studies and Demonstrations

Detailed case studies that highlight how your first customers use your product and the noteworthy results they achieve offer concrete proof of its value. These stories are powerful tools for both sales conversations and marketing campaigns. Live or recorded demonstrations of early users solving real problems or realizing benefits show prospects exactly what to expect. Seeing practical applications and tangible outcomes from peers not only builds trust but also shortens the sales cycle and increases the likelihood that prospects will try your product.

Influencing the different decision makers

In many B2B sales processes, the focus often narrows to just one main contact — the person who initially responds or shows interest. While this contact may be valuable, they are rarely the only person involved in making the final decision. Most organizations use a buying committee where multiple stakeholders influence or approve a purchase. By relying solely on one contact, sales risk missing out on the broader decision-making dynamics that ultimately determine whether a deal goes through. Expanding outreach to other relevant decision-makers increases the chances of gaining buy-in hence more success to sell.

In this workbook I did pointed out the need for reaching the various decision makers individually. I explained that we can do this with Buyer Persona or ‘job-position typical’ profiling. I want to expand on this as this is so often overlooked by companies. **Probably the biggest shortfall start-ups and small and medium business make is to narrow their target people to one profile** (often the end-user). An example is to pitch your IT solution only to IT people. Here is the challenge; how is your target IT’er going to convince the other decision makers? **That’s where case-studies and fact sheets could come in.** Make sure they’re professional looking and beautiful. Your contact can go up to the other decision makers and hands over your beautiful designed fact-sheet. All your contact has to do is to say “Hi, have a look at this. That’s what companies are using these days to solve “....”. It takes about two days to make these factsheets but you’ll win so much time afterwards and we’ll have less down-town in the warehouse.



- **Executive Decision Makers:** CEOs, Managing Directors. They look for strategic outcomes, return on investment, competitive advantage, innovation, and alignment with company goals. They'll look for quick summaries, KPIs, business impact, and confidence & capacity of the solution provider (you and your team of developers).
- **Department Managers and Team Leads: admin, fin, warehouse, production managers.** they evaluate how the product or service solves specific operational challenges. They want practical insights, implementation details, how long will it take, what will it take, any disruptions, team impact, and time/resource savings after implementation.
- **Technical Evaluators and Specialists:** Who: Engineers, IT specialists, product managers, analysts. They'll assess technical feasibility, integration, compatibility, and security. They want detailed explanations, technical specs, setup process, and measurable results.
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- **Potential Channel Partners or Resellers:** Distributors, resellers, Value-Added Reseller (VAR are companies that purchases products, typically from manufacturers, and then enhances them by adding services or features before reselling them to end-users). They want to see references and proven success and demand before committing to a partnership. They're sensitive to market potential, profit margins, incentives and sales bonus, ease of resale, customer satisfaction, and revenue impact.

I advise you to prepare factsheets for the following profiles that are commonly involved in the B2B decision process (especially relevant when new products or services are complex, pricey or impact the overall operations. Right from the start you should have separate communications in line with the roles of people in a company. Tip: your website should host a factsheet online for each of these profiles.

How to create an early buzz when you have a little budget?

When you launch an innovation, creating a buzz is crucial because without it your product risks disappearing in the woods. In today's crowded market, even the most groundbreaking solution can go unnoticed. **A buzz grabs attention, sparks curiosity, and gets your target audience talking.** It also give you visuals you can use for promotion & awareness. One message alone seldom delivers results. To create real momentum, you need to build towards a "buzz" moment that you must capture in pictures and video. That's why your buzz campaign must go beyond visibility: it needs to spark genuine 'aha' moment; turning attention into real interest in your innovation. To generate real engagement, you need to come up with something that stands out: a unique angle, valuable content, or a compelling teaser that sparks curiosity and motivates people to take action.

Boosting your presence to a pre-determined target audience can be done by Paid Ads (digital advertising). They can amplify your message and ensure it reaches the right audience. But this cost money and impact is far from guaranteed. On platforms like Google and social media, most ads are ignored, overlooked, or fail to reach the intended audience. LinkedIn is generally the better option for B2B ads (Because LinkedIn offers precise targeting of professionals and decision-makers in a business context). Here are some other, out-of-the-box ideas:

Live Problem-Solving Demos: Record an interactive demo where your product solves a real, pressing problem for a client. You can record in real time but that's risky. Stream it live on social media such as LinkedIn or sector-specific platforms this turns your launch into an event and generates excitement.

Challenge or Competition: Launch a challenge for companies in your target sector to solve a specific problem using your product. Offer a prize. Show the winner on social media. It engages prospects and gives them hands-on experience. It equally boost your SEO rankings.

Joint Partner stunt-actions: Collaborate with other businesses or industry influencers for a co-hosted event, a joint-webinar or cross-promotions. Imagine you're a startup that developed smart sensors for cold storage monitoring in the food industry. Instead of just promoting your product alone, you partner with a refrigeration maintenance company. Together, you make a small video that benefits both. Or you run a joint webinar: "How to Cut Food Waste and Energy Costs in Cold Storage." These actions get attention from your target audience. Also, you will also have, albeit indirectly, have access to their customer base.

Creative Physical Touchpoints: Send creative eye-catchers such as miniature prototype, interactive sample or "problem-solving visual maps" that get their attention and attract them to visit your website or better, join one of your webinars, events, online demo's, .. We have used 3D printed maquettes that got us attention on gatherings. When done nicely, maquettes has the advantage that they don't end up in a draw easily but could remain on the director's desk for a couple of weeks.

Story-Driven Case Studies: Turn early adopters' success stories into short, cinematic videos or infographics. Highlight unexpected results or visual before-and-after comparisons.

Humour or Provocative Messaging: Use playful, bold, or slightly provocative messaging in content or campaigns to make your innovation memorable. My experience is that this works well for IT target groups. IT people tend to have a common sense of dark-humour that bonds them.

Experiential Events: Instead of a standard webinar, create an immersive experience such as virtual reality demonstrations, interactive workshops, or pop-up installations at industry events.

But here is my favourite. **An eye-catching event that challenges your innovation** in a real or staged scenario is a great promotional tactic. Here is a real-case example; what was once a reputed retirement home became a half-empty (large) building with a reputation of being old and outdated. We decided to brand this site also as a revalidation facility that allow elder people to recover and revalidate after a hospital intervention. We knew that there is quite some demand for this and that it's likely that elders stay afterwards. We needed an eye-catching event that would resonate by the regional doctors, paramedics and other social workers. Those that refer elders after a hospital intervention. We got five 80+ people to cycle to the top of the Mont Ventoux. The idea came from one of the elders that always dreamt (bucket list) cycling to the top of this iconic mountain in France but never got it done. We placed 5 home trainers in a hall and projected a 'real-scene trajectory' on a large screen. This was made possible by an innovation of a start-up company. Multiple sponsors gave us cycling banners and shirts. Family, friend and other residents came to support. We had two physiotherapists on standby to give massages. Local newspapers and the regional TV channel were invited and came. Even the mayor and some of the board of the municipality was present. The video was hosted on websites and social media and got 7k+ viewers. The result was that the retirement home got new residents, the retirement home brand was uplifted and the start-up innovation had a real-case video to could be showed to other interested parties. Total cost: 3500 euro. Return-on-investment after 6 months: factor 8. Dare to think out-of-the-box.

Another example of a startup that successfully used a playful challenge to promote their innovation is 'Slack' in its early days. To introduce their 'team-communication' tool, they launched the "Slack Wall of Love" where users were encouraged to share their funniest, quirkiest, or most creative ways they used Slack to improve employee collaboration. Teams posted screenshots, jokes, and anecdotes about replacing endless email chains with daft Slack messages. This not only gamified the adoption experience but also showcased real user benefits in a light-hearted way. The campaign created a sense of community among early users who loved seeing how other teams worked while at the same time spreading Slack's core value proposition in an authentic, user-driven manner.

Examples of compelling teasers for digital campaigns.

You send invitations through various channels that reach your target audience. I give you more examples as these campaigns are valuable for start-ups and SMEs with ambitions.

Efficiency & Cost Savings

- "Most manufacturers waste 12% of their budget without noticing. Find out where the money goes."

- “Cut your onboarding time in half. See how HR directors are changing the approach.”
- “What would saving 20 minutes per employee per day mean for your bottom line? Calculate now.”

Competitor Comparison & Benchmarks

- “Why 3 of your competitors already switched to [solution] and what it means for you.”
- Why more and more companies in Flanders are switching to the ‘Safe Energy’ app.
- “The top 10 security breaches in SMEs recorded last year. Hear an expert explaining what can be done”

Risk & Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

- “The compliance regulation most CFOs ignore until it’s too late. We give three easy steps to get it done!”
- “90% of cyberattacks could have been prevented with this one step. Do you have it in place?”

Exclusivity & Insider Knowledge

- “Only 50 seats for executives in Supply Chain brief: “AI impact the coming years in the supply chain” by Prof. Van Themse.
- Our sensors will prevent us from operational bottlenecks. Click here to see how the sensors are used in cold-chain multi-modal transport.
- “Invitation-only demo: Watch our recorded webinar. See how [product] is reshaping the logistics workflows in air transport in 2025.”

Here are some other initiatives that can be done with little budget or media expert skills:

- **Have an official opening.** Get people together that look like your target audience. Make the setting (location) look professional. Get a respected industry expert to cut the red ribbon. Get a few one-liner statements from the founders and developers. Make a short video. Host this on several social media sites (Linkedin, Instagram, Facebook, X, ..) and ask your friends and contacts to share this further. Host this video on your website to (SEO & SERP ranking).
- **Collect statements, one-liners and very short video’s from ‘Sector-expert-influencers’.** Sector-expert-influencers’ is a phenomenon that has become popular in some Anglo-countries and gains on popularity in other countries. These are people with sector and product knowledge to make short video’s on innovation and product reviews. Certainly to be considered for the official launch of your innovation. Either you host their statements on your website or communications or, better, you host a short video on your social media. You can simply record this with your mobile phone.
- **Newspapers, magazines and news sites love hosting ‘news’ on innovations** especially when there is a novelty and human impact attached to your innovation. Write an article, attach pictures and send it one-week before the launch to regional news sites.
- **Webinars** can be done for free. If it is your first time than record a webinar you have with friendly people you know asking questions. I suggest to make short webinar of 20 minutes whereby different aspects of your innovation are discussed. Especially technical and academic people. Recorded webinars where many questions are answered and clarified work well.
- Here is another of my favourites: **funny, engaging short video** about a people’s challenge where you innovation is central to the quest. Humour creates emotional connection, lowers resistance to new ideas, and encourages viewers to tag others or repost. Hence, expanding your reach organically. Even in B2B, decision-makers are people first, and people love to laugh, especially when the humour is witty and relevant to their work or pain points.

Why is visual storytelling probably your best ally in marketing tactics?

Humans are biologically and culturally wired for storytelling. From early cave paintings to bedtime stories, our brains have evolved to process and retain information more effectively when it's wrapped in a narrative. Stories activate multiple areas of the brain also those responsible for emotions, visuals, and even motor activity. Because of this deep-rooted human preference, visual storytelling has become central to modern communication tactics. Visuals make stories faster to grasp, more immersive, and easier to share especially in the digital world of today. People can grasp your innovation better when they can see it working. Also, people remember stories better and longer.

Risk perception; one of the biggest barriers to overcome when you market innovation

Customers tend to perceive innovations with higher risks. That is understandable given that new products often have teething problems; bugs, integration issues, shortcomings, don't perform as well in real-environments, .. Marketing strategies must address these perceived risks explicitly. The tactics you might employ are: free trials, money-back guarantees, rapid support promise, or endorsements from trusted experts can reassure sceptical buyers. Risk communication is especially important in complex or high-investment innovations.

Reaching and influencing all decision makers in a company

In this workbook I did pointed out already the need for reaching the various decision makers individually. I explained that we can do this with Buyer Persona or typical profiling. I want to expand on this as this is so often overlooked by companies. Probably the biggest shortfall start-ups and small and medium business make is to narrow their target people to one profile (often the end-user). An example is to pitch your IT solution only to IT people. Here is the challenge; how is your target IT'er going to convince the other decision makers? That's where case-studies and fact sheets come in. Make sure they're professional looking and beautiful. Your contact can go up to the other decision makers and hands over your beautiful designed fact-sheet. All your contact has to do is to say "Hi, have a look at this. That's what companies are using these days to solve "...". It takes about two days to make these factsheets but you'll win so much time afterwards and you'll have better results (higher conversion rates).

You probably will need to prepare factsheets for the following profiles that are commonly involved in the B2B decision process (especially relevant when new products or services are complex, pricey or impact the overall operations. Right from the start you should have separate communications in line with the roles of people in a company. Tip: your website should host a factsheet online for each of these profiles.

- **Executive Decision Makers:** CEOs, Managing Directors. They look for strategic outcomes, return on investment, competitive advantage, innovation, and alignment with company goals. They'll look for quick summaries, KPIs, business impact, and confidence & capacity of the solution provider (you and your team of developers).
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Influencer marketing, celebrity marketing & product placing

People are overloaded with advertising. Influencer marketing is an interesting alternative as it gains on popularity. Engaging with sector influencers and respected voices in your industry is a powerful way to gain both visibility and credibility. You can use an influencer to recommend your brand, product or service. In B2C, that's common practice. In B2B, people sense this as hidden advertising. There is another way of using influencers. Influencer marketing is often used to reinforce the reputation of a brand. Influencers (and networkers) can reach people you would otherwise have found difficult to reach. I am a fan of influencer B2B marketing myself. Especially when it comes to sector experts. Experts have an already established audience and trust among their followers. Case studies and product reviews by Influencers works well. For example: make a video with an influencer who tries out your product together with your engineer. The engineer talks about the thought process behind the development and answers questions. These sort of video's help your sales team too. According to an online review, 86% of B2B companies indicate that influencer marketing gives good results. 65% of B2B companies claim that they co-strengthen their brand reputation through influencer marketing. 70% of B2B companies are focusing more and more on influencer marketing every year (source: science direct, 2023).

Celebrity marketing works often better than expected. People get excited about celebrities. Celebrities a certainly a medium to attract crowds. Celebrity people are usual expensive to hire but local celebrities could possibly be persuaded for a quick act such as cutting the red ribbon of a successful project.

Product placement is a marketing strategy where branded products or services are intentionally shown into media such as films, TV shows, music videos or even video games. If you're a start-up and you have an innovation, why not asking a TV producer if they can do something with it in a series-episode. Asking doesn't cost anything. Note that it takes on average between 6 and 10 months to seeing it on television but you can share clips of the filming on set of your innovation on social media immediately.

Traditional methods to attract attention such as folders, brochures and give-away office items seldom make a dent. Sending your sales people on the road with hard-selling techniques generally doesn't work well in Europe and might harm your brand in the longer run. What does work is to show – if possible in a real-live setting - you have expertise and the capacity to solve problems and get things done. That they can trust you you'll make sure it keeps on working. To explain in simple steps how you'll install it or what has to be done to make it operational. Visual storytelling, including the new technological possibilities such a virtual demo's & reality, is the start-ups and SME best (marketing and sales) friend.



What is the role of social media tactics in promoting marketing innovation?

To reach a B2B target audience, the choice of professional social media platforms depends on who you want to engage (C-level, managers, technical staff, buyers).

LinkedIn – The #1 B2B Platform. Best for: decision-makers, managers, professionals, and recruiters across almost every sector. Target profiles:

- CEOs / Founders → strategic buyers and budget owners.
- CFOs / Finance Directors → value, ROI, compliance.
- CIOs / CTOs / IT Directors → tech adoption, digital transformation.
- HR Directors / Talent Managers → HR tech, training, retention.
- Operations & Supply Chain Managers → efficiency, logistics, industry solutions.

LinkedIn has people listed with their title, speciality and company name. Hence ads can be sent to a targeted audience detailed on industry, role, company size, geography, expertise, skills, ...

X (formerly Twitter). Best for: reaching thought leaders, journalists, policymakers, and influencers in specific industries. Target profiles:

- Industry Analysts & Influencers → they amplify credibility.
- Policy & Regulatory Professionals → especially in finance, health, energy, tech.
- Sector Experts who drive discussions on trends.

X is great for quick engagement, hashtags for niche topics, building authority by joining conversations.

YouTube. Best for: anybody looking to see the product or service. For decision-makers and technical staff who research solutions or find guidance. Target profiles:

- Every B2B professional seeking to learn more about your product or service
- Engineers, Developers, IT Pros → product demos, tutorials, webinars.
- Managers & Directors → explainer videos, ROI stories, use cases.

People like video's and there a great medium to explain products, solutions, innovation, research and development.

Facebook (Selective B2B Use). Best for: reaching smaller and local business. Target profiles:

- SME Owners (who may not be active on LinkedIn).
- Local distributors, resellers, franchise managers.

Niche & Sector-Specific Platforms

- GitHub / Stack Overflow. For developers & tech buyers.
- ResearchGate. For Scientists & R&D professionals.
- Behance / Dribbble. For designers & creative industries.

For innovative B2B products, social media can amplify your messages, stories and value-proposition. Or you can take the pay-advertising options on social media so that your pre-defined target audience can see your ad's or teasers. But it is not that simple and it certainly takes clever tactics to get the attention of senior managers.

On social media platforms, you can pay for impressions. What impressions actually mean is an ad or piece of content that will pop-up on someone's screen when you're on the internet or social media. It doesn't matter if they noticed it, read it, or engaged with it. For example, if your LinkedIn update appears in someone's feed while they're scrolling, that counts as an impression, even if they didn't stop to look. Impressions alone will not work. You could have 10,000 impressions on a blog or campaign but zero leads. Digital marketing tend to work – in general – better for consumer products (B2C) than for B2B products.

Most digital agencies offer leads. A leads is when someone shows active interest in your product or service, such as by clicking, signing up, or filling out a contact form. After the first contact, the challenge is to get your person to engage more. What we'll try to do is, in a controlled manner, guide him or her to a decision point.

Social media could well be a medium to attract companies in a defined location. Example; you want to invite farmers to witness the new AI smart drone weed killer. Social media (together with industry online channels and local newspapers) would a great to attract farmers on your demo days. Innovations do well on social media.

Good to know: many professionals do not host their professional profile on social media channels. Mainly because they don't want to get targeted by marketers. But many are on social media under a different or private name. Social media can target people based on their interests. Example: "I wanted to connect with doctors and paramedics but quickly discovered that reaching them directly through social media didn't go anywhere. Then I posted invitations to an information evening on 'The legal consequences of euthanasia for elderly patients.' The session was recorded. While most of the attendees turned out to be head-nurses and paramedics rather than doctors. Later, many doctors watched the presentation online. This approach gave us the opportunity to get the message across that the new elderly and revalidation centre was managed professionally. It helped to stay top of mind by doctors, the main referrers of patients.

Reaching and engaging with target people is what all marketers do for a living. However, there are strict regulations in place. Mailing people directly is not allowed. You have to get the permission first from the person before you can add them on your mail distribution list. And every communication should have a link allowing receivers of your mails to unsubscribe easily. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applies in Europe and has strict rules regarding data protection, with potentially significant financial penalties for non-compliance. Under the GDPR, "prior consent" means obtaining explicit permission from individuals before collecting and processing their personal data. This consent must be freely given, specific, informed, and unambiguous, requiring a clear affirmative action from the user.



Get started with Audiences on LinkedIn



Who is your audience

Use professional characteristics to define your audience

Reach key buyers and decision makers



61 million senior level influencers and 65 million decision-makers are on LinkedIn.



Review a few member profiles for inspiration, paying special attention to endorsed skills, current and past positions and seniority levels.



Consider combining function or interests with **seniority** or use lookalike audiences.



For more focused targeting use skills, member traits or **job title** targeting.

Consider targeting your customer contacts, key companies, website visitors or those who engaged with past ads

Increase consideration from a precise audience



Help your brand or business stand out with those most interested in your product or service.



Bring your customer data over to LinkedIn using one of our **data integration partners**.



Upload a list of contacts or companies to reach key buyers, influencers and decision makers.



Create an audience from those **who visited your website** or **engaged** with your Video Ads or Lead Gen Forms.

Include people who influence the purchase

Influence the influencers



34% of young millennials (19-25) and 41% of older millennials (26-35) **have decision-making responsibilities**.



Consider targeting Senior individual contributors (ICs). Increasingly, ICs **have a large say in buying decisions**.



Utilize **interest targeting** or **groups targeting** to reach members with unique professional interests or expertise in areas relevant to your brand or product.



To **reach senior ICs** with lots of experience, target them by choosing Senior and combine that with the Years of Experience.

Expand your scope further by targeting audiences similar to your existing customers

Directly reach prospects similar to your existing customers, prospects or website visitors



Using **lookalike audiences** can expand reach by 25-45%+*.



Build an audience from **current customers**, low funnel website visitors, or leads vetted by sales.



Use an uploaded list or website audience and create a lookalike audience which will identify those who **look like your current customers**.

*When compared to a matched audience alone

Checklist for finalizing a strategy

- ✓ Validate your audience size is over 50k. A minimum of 300 members is required to launch a campaign.
- ✓ Have a plan for experimenting, A/B testing, and optimization.
- ✓ Leverage our targeting capabilities off-platform via **LinkedIn Audience Network**.

Tips & tricks



When launching, **start broad** and then narrow down your audience with Insights from campaign demographics.



Check that your target audience is **over 50,000**. If your audience gets too small, you'll have to bid higher and spend more to reach & drive conversions.



Turn on **Audience Expansion** if your audience is less than 50k.



Experiment and **A/B test** the same ad creative with different audiences.



If running global campaigns, **segment by region** to maximize daily pacing.



To expand your audience use 'or'. To narrow your audience use 'and'.



Use the **search bar** to find targeting attributes that match what you're looking for.

<https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/success/product-tutorial-videos/how-to-setup-your-target-audience-tutorial>

It's very difficult to get to demo or pitch your innovation.

Getting decision-makers to agree to a live demo or in-person pitch is often difficult because of time constraints, competing priorities, and the natural hesitation toward unproven innovations. Short demo videos, virtual reality, and augmented reality provide a powerful way to overcome these barriers. A concise, visual demonstration can immediately communicate the value and functionality of your innovation without requiring long explanations or scheduling a meeting.

Moreover, these digital formats can be shared through email, social platforms, or during online events reaching a much wider audience with less effort/costs. VR and AR add an extra layer of immersion, allowing prospects to experience your product or service as if it were real, which builds trust and excitement.

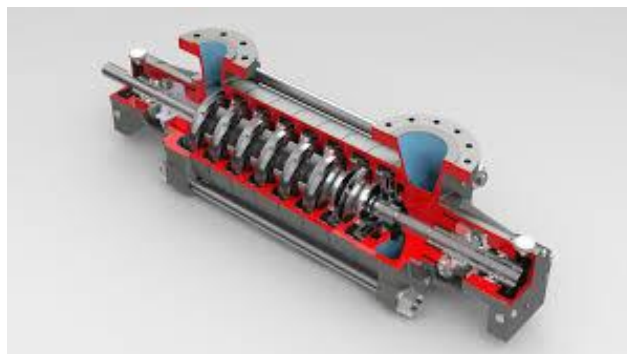
The below 4 examples can be done with a low budget. Or, you can do it yourself (as long as it looks professional)

- Explainer videos – short, clear videos that explain how a product or service works.
- Demo videos – showcasing the product in action, often highlighting key features.
- Promo videos – used to grab attention and generate excitement.
- How-to videos – practical demonstrations that also serve as marketing material.

When it comes to demo's, there is something more popular; the '**virtual showrooms**'. It's a digital 3D environment. Virtual showrooms are created as digital spaces where customers can move around and interact with products as if they were physically present. They give interactive experiences so users can often zoom in on products, view them from different angles. The automotive sector start using this technology more and more for their upmarket range of cars. Virtual showrooms reduce the need for physical showrooms, samples, and travel, leading to significant cost savings for businesses. Customers can access virtual showrooms from anywhere with an internet connection, expanding the potential customer base. I did find companies offering this service for a 10-15K budget. That's a lot of money for a start-up or SME but it will substantially lower your sales costs.



2D/3D animation and 3D technical animation can be a very powerful way to promote a new B2B innovation. Unlike static images or text descriptions, a 3D animation can show complex technology in action, making it easier for decision-makers to understand the mechanics, benefits, and applications. It allows you to demonstrate processes that would be impossible or too costly to showcase in real life, such as inside machinery, production flows, or technical systems. 30-60 seconds 3D animations cost a few thousand euro's.



The investment can be justified when selling high-value B2B innovations, since a clear, professional animation often shortens sales cycles and convinces stakeholders more effectively than brochures or slides.

Virtual reality (VR) is an even more advantaged technology. It allows to demo your product by offering customers to engage with products interactively in a digital real-like setting. Sales people can give their audience a virtually “experience” a product before making a purchase. As a sales person, it’s hard to get your foot into the door of bigger companies. Especially if you’re a start-up or smaller company. But you’ll open many doors if you could say “I got a VR headset with me. Would you like to see in 5 minutes what our innovation is capable off?”. From the information I find on the internet is the cost to make an VR experience steep, starting from a minimum of 20K going up to 6 digits. That’s excluding the cost of the headsets.



An alternative is **offering demo’s or allowing for trial periods** lower barriers so your potential customers can better evaluate and become familiar with your product. What it does it to lower the perception of risk. Risk is one of the main factors in decision making. Free trials is an excellent tactics to get your first customers signed. But free trials are time-consuming, hence expensive.

How to identify and infiltrate opportune niche markets?

A B2B market segment is a group of businesses that have similar needs or characteristics and buy products or services from other businesses. For example, if a company makes software for hospitals, its market segment might be healthcare providers. A B2B market niche is a smaller, more specific part of that segment. It’s like zooming in. In this case, a niche will be e.g. software for small dental clinics.

Choosing the right market-segments/niches is key. What makes a market-niche market worth considering? An opportune niche for a new, innovative product or service typically meets one of these criteria:

- **Opportunity:** There are important gaps where your innovation can make a tangible difference and where the competitors leave you space to enter.
- **Urgency of Need:** a lucrative group of potential customers actively are seeking a solution for a pressing pain or challenge, a solution you can solve well.
- **Underserved or Overlooked:** Existing competitors ignore or poorly serve a lucrative niche giving you a gap to exploit.
- **Strong demand:** The market segment has a strong demand and you know you can overclass some of the existing solutions or competitors.
- **No important barriers.** Within Europe rarely an issue but exports outside Europe is a different challenge.

How to pitch your innovation against established products, services or companies?

When you're new, small and under-resourced you'll have to be clever. It would not be wise to take the established players head-on. Instead, you will have to come up with some smart tactics that your rivals don't see coming. Guerrilla-tactics work in marketing as well. There are several options. You can frame your solution as solving a problem no one else addresses, or a problem your competitors are solving insufficiently or poorly. To do that you'll have to identify 'pain-points' or 'possibility-points' where you can demonstrate you're ahead of the others and your solution makes an important difference. Don't go wide. Go deep. Do your research (exercises insights) and pin the customer-buy-types, niches, regions where competitors are weak. Examples:

Redefine the customer's pain in a way that makes your innovation unique, better and is the obvious choice. Highlight what the big players are ignoring, overcomplicating, or overcharging for. Example. Instead of "We're like X, but better," say "Here's what really matters. The industry thinks automation is the solution. We can show you that smarter human-AI collaboration is more effective and cost less." More examples: Healthcare Tech sector. Instead of "The future is more data. Track everything." Say "Data without meaning only overwhelms doctors and patients. Our system provides a list of the possible causes so doctors can see the probability of the causes." Another example: Cybersecurity sector. Instead of "Industry framing: 'Buy more firewalls and monitoring tools.'" Say "More tools don't equal more safety. They create blind spots. Our platform unifies protection into one clear dashboard, reducing risks and costs at the same time."

Highlight the advantage of being small but still agile and fully customer committed: "Our team only takes on 3 projects at the time but we're fully committed until it's fully operational and the customer is happy before we take on a new client".

Speed & Responsiveness: when your competitors are big but have longer waiting times. "We implement in days, not weeks. We'll help you through the implementation and our engineers are on stand-by from day one." "We have come up with a dynamic staff approach allowing us to start the project within three weeks as compared to 6 months waiting by the others".

Customization: Larger companies are at times perceived as arrogant. You have to choose their standard products or service and if they allow tailoring it would be very expensive. In certain sectors this is prevalent. You can sell customization; "Our solution fully adapted to your specific problem". "We'll help you to make sure it fits your requirements from the start." We developed our solution so it's modular and customers can choose their options. You do not want to be taken hostage by the rigid systems from the big players". Customers don't want to get locked into rigid systems; they want to stay in control, being able to overwrite the system and rather have a person calling the shots in some situations. These messages resonate well with operation people.

Position your offer as agile, modular, and future-ready; a solution that adapts instead of locking customers into a rigid straightjacket. Subtly highlight the difference: you don't want something that becomes obsolete in three years, you want a system that evolves with you. With our approach, you can start small and add modules as you grow. When new technologies emerge, you don't have to start over, you simply upgrade. For example, when the next generation of energy batteries arrives, all it takes is a simple switch. Our products have been designed to last 10 years allowing upgrades to be made easy.

Leverage emotional drivers such as keeping ownership. "Take back control from the big guys, legacy vendors, ...". That will resonate by companies that feel taken hostage, to a certain extent, by suppliers (examples ERP, automated machines that need expensive interventions for every bottleneck or modification). Position your offer as agile, modular, reversible and easy to scale up when needed. Convey in subtle messages why big is a liability for their needs. "You want to change something, you can't. For everything you have to go to the big companies where you're only a ticket in the waiting queue. This is where you can make a difference." Many small and medium companies will be sensitive to this message.

True listening: Which we don't do enough. Large competitors usually rely on scale, automation, and standardized processes. Their sales reps are often more like account managers: polite, scripted but rarely deeply engaged. An emphatic salesperson at a smaller firm can get more done particular with smaller and

medium-sized companies. Ask a company what specifically are their challenges and the pain and frustration. You conclude with: “I understand your pain. I’ll speak to our engineers and ask what they suggest. Can I come back in a week and explain/show what can be done to solve this?”

Tell the founder’s story: Why you built this product. “We came together because the same problem kept driving us crazy. Time after time, it created friction, wasted resources, and put us in difficult situations. Yet nothing on the market offered a real solution. Instead of waiting for someone else to fix it. We decided to take matters into our own hands. About three years ago, we started developing what has now become our innovation: a tool designed to eliminate that frustration once and for all. It wasn’t easy, we tested it in the real world, failed, and rebuilt it. Every step brought us closer to something that truly works. Today, our innovation is mature and we’re proud to share it with others who face the same struggles we once did.” People remember stories better than numbers!

Tell the “we understand the needs in your sector” story: We have met with a number of companies in your sector to understand what’s really needed. We learned that most companies have similar problems but still every company has their specific needs. About 80% have the same challenge. About 20% is company-specific. So we designed exactly that; an innovation that addresses the 80% of the common problems and the possibility to adapt the 20% to each individual context. You could explain “that the standard installation is easy and straightforward and the 20% adaptation is done between the engineers on both sides and should not take more than 2 days”.

Other messages that I experienced that work well:

- “We’ve been around a long time but we used to work in different companies. We came together because we wanted to develop a real solution for”
- “We’re a new brand but when we add up our years of expertise than we have more than 25 years of expertise in ‘..’”
- “More and more companies are talking to us because what’s on the market doesn’t solve entirely their problems”.
- Your concerns and need for support is not just a ticket in our helpdesk. We’ll help you all the way to find a solution and we keep on standby ever after. You can count on us.

Why you have to demonstrate your financial and longer-term reliability as a start-up?

As a start-up or young company you will have to **demonstrate your financial solidity and longevity** because potential customers worry whether your company still be around to support, maintain, and update the product in the coming years. You will not be shortlisted when they sense you’re not solid enough as a company. To build credibility, you can highlight the backing you have from trusted bankers, investors or accelerators, showcase early paying customers or pilot projects, show your innovation was tested by credible people, indicate that all is conform to the latest rules & regulations, .. Publishing testimonials, case studies, certifications, and affiliations with respected industry bodies can strengthen the perception that you’re solid & trustworthy. Additionally, a clear founders’ story with relevant expertise, a roadmap for future growth, and even partnerships with established players all help signal that you’re not just a risky newcomer, but a promising and reliable “new kid on the block” who deserves attention and trust.

The value of Networkers

Building a strong network is one of the most underestimated factors in successfully promoting a start-up or innovation project. While many founders focus primarily on product development or funding, it is often the networkers and promoters such as VLAIO who connect you with key-players in the market. These are people with sector-knowledge who naturally connect with others, open doors to opportunities, and spread your story in circles you might not reach on your own.

Unlike traditional advertising, word-of-mouth carries authenticity: a potential partner, customer, or investor is more likely to listen when the recommendation comes from someone they know and respect. For a start-up with little brand recognition, this borrowed credibility can accelerate trust-building dramatically. Getting in front of your targeted prospects can take months. A networker might get it done within days. But, networkers put their credibility on the line so you'll have to convince them firstly.

Networking is actually quiet hard work. Networkers operate on a principle of reciprocity: they give and take. They provide ongoing help, advice, and support, often freely, because their value comes from connecting the right people and facilitating meaningful interactions. In return, they may request introductions, visibility, or the opportunity to bring key players together around a table. This exchange creates a mutually beneficial cycle: the start-up or innovation project gains access to resources, insights, and opportunities it would otherwise struggle to reach, while the networker strengthens their own connections and influence. Over time, this dynamic builds trust, credibility, and momentum for everyone involved, turning relationships into a powerful engine for growth. As a start-up, leverage your connections, and leverage their connections in order to open doors and make valuable introductions. The new technology (p53, p54) is certainly going to help considerably.



The CAP5 toolbox, choose your tactics from a list.



The CAP5 toolbox helps you to select the right tactics for each objective, campaign or digital marketing. It's best to combine several complementary tactics — a single, one-off action rarely makes a real difference. Tactics are the concrete, short-term methods you deploy to achieve your objectives. Unlike broad strategies, they are practical and actionable, made up of clear steps.

The large number of possible tactics may seem overwhelming at first, but you only need to select the ones that truly work for you. For some businesses, just a few focused tactics will be enough, while others may need to apply a broader mix. In B2B, buying decisions usually involve multiple stakeholders: decision makers, influencers, and end-users. That's why it's important to align your chosen tactics with the different needs and requirements of each of these profiles. You'll find different lists on www.CAP5.net allowing you to make your selections. They are free to download.

TACTICAL OPTIONS - choose your tactics

CAPS heeft ook een Advanced Digital Marketing toolbox.

Research customers	Research competitors	Get find	Reach	Attention	Engage	Convert	Loyalty	Upscale & Cross-sell
Google keyword Searches	Competitor online research	SEO & internet visibility	SEO	Pop up stores & POS	Social media campaigns	Customer onboarding process - personalized	Points-Based Rewards	Direct mail met Realtime Landing
Customer DB / CRM / ERP	Market analysis	Sendingspagina campaigns	Search PPC	Direct mail, direct email	Landing pages	Sponsoring	Tiered Programs	Interessante add-ons
CRM	Industry trends & forecast	Social media presence	Social media banners	Live Chat	Click & Collect	Loyalty perks	Referral Programs	Customer stories mini add-on
Competitor websites	PEST analysis	White papers, analyst reports	LinkedIn campaigns	Product pages, technical specs	On-line ROI calculator	Review updates	Gift Discounts	
Competitor Social Media	warddecorator / USP	Download manuals	Blogs, via emails	Product video's	Webinars (live & recorded)	On-line ROI calculator	Limited-Time Offers	
LinkedIn Searches	Modus Operandi	Video tutorials	Regular materials	Customer references	Customer references, Case studies	Webinars	Expertise on-stand-by	
Huidige klantanalyse	SWOT	Case studies	Brochures	YouTube Tutorials	Influencers	User groups	Sector relevant blogs	
Segmentatie klanten	Digital intelligence	Topical Content	Product pages	Influencers	Sales calls	Uitnodigingen sponsor events	Social gatherings	
belevingsproces	SEO & internet visibility	Expert content	Industry events	Affiliate marketing	Call met techniciërs	Workshops voor culturele evenementen	Free product webinars	
Stakeholders, influencers	MKT campaigns	Customer reviews	Ads in industry magazines	Referral programma's	Last minute incentive	Info-essays/worden	Unexpected Gifts	
Buyer persona	Ambod & incentives	Industry reports	Billboards	Case studies	Surveys	Sales calls met CTA	Surprise Discounts	
Match warddecorator	Sales trechter tactieken	eBooks sponsoring	Analyst & research reports, white papers	Comparison testimonials	Salon aanbedingen	Proefperiode	Partner Offers	
Customer Journey		Blogs	Opener	Radio reports / media scoop / starts	Trial downloads	Money back guarantee	Bundel Deals	
Customer Experience		Sponsorship events	Interviews	Sponsorship events	Live Demo	Peace-of-mind help installation	Periodische nieuwsbrieven	
		Referrals & billboards	Printed & research successful projects	Website demo evenementen	Extra promo aanbedingen	Lending & finance options		
		Brochures, flyers	Product & research successful projects	Invitation events	Online simulations	Send local expert reviews		
		Recorded Webinars	Exposits, leuren, conference	POS stands	Free templates, checklists			
		Digital optimisation			CRM profile brochures			
					Online Q&A			

Research	Prepare	Campaigns	Optimize
Current customer analysis	Keyword, SERP ranking, SEO	Campaign matrix	Right time, right place matrix
Customer behaviour analysis	Technical optimization Website	Target audience focus & scope	Schedule channel placement
Customer decision processes	Linking, Indexing	Creative content campaigns	Personalized experience
Target audience research	User Experience (UX)	Campaign landing pages	Launch
Preferred communication channels	Tracking, url encoding & pixel	Pre-campaign testing, A/B testing	Monitoring
Customer Journey	Content development	Graphical content	Evaluation versus metrics
Customer relationship & loyalty	Lead follow-up process	Storytelling & creative formats	Retargeting
Customer experience	Sales funnel	Cross-media campaigns	Benchmarking
Influencers & Communities	CRM link development	User experience events	CRM exchange data
Competitor analysis	Blogs	Personalized campaigns	
Market analysis & niche opportunities		Media stunts	
Industry trends analysis			

Research	Prepare	Campaigns	Optimize
Huidige klantanalyse	Keyword, SERP ranking, SEO	Campaign matrix, objectieven	Right time, right place matrix
Klanten aanbevelingsanalyse	Technische optimalisatie Website	Doelgroep focus, tekenen, meet impact	Plannen van tijd en mediakanalen
Belevingsproces in kaart brengen	Linking, Indexing	Creative en academische content	Webster gepersonaliseerde impact
Doelgroep onderzoek	User Experience (UX)	Campaign landing pages aanpakken	Monitoring
Doelgroep communicatiekanalen	Tracking, url encoding & pixel	Pre-campaign testing, A/B testing	Evaluation versus metrics
Customer Journey	Content ontwikkeling voor doelgroepen	Graphical content	Retargeting
Klant relatie en loyaliteit versterken	Lead follow-up proces uitwerken	Storytelling & creatieve formats	Benchmarking
Huidige klanten ambassadeurs maken	Verkoopfase connecteren met content	Visuele Storytelling, korte video's	CRM exchange data
Klant belevens	CRM link ontwikkeling	Cross-media campagnes opzetten	
Beïnvloeders en doelgroep gemeenschappen	Blogs	Doelgroep belevens evenementen	
Analysen competitie	Waardevoorstel per doelgroep	Gespecialiseerde, gepersonaliseerde campagnes	
Market analyse & niche opportunities	Pitch	Media stunts	
Industrie trends, forecast	Buyer persona	Canoeer campagnes	

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Tactics – exercises - examples

You can download the exercise templates for free at www.CAP5.net. Make sure to adapt them to your own situation. Only use the exercises that are relevant and feel free to modify them as needed. My recommendation is that each team member first prepares the exercise individually, and then you come together in a work session to complete them collectively. Here are some examples.

Sales Tactics to outfox top 3 rivals – unique offers

[illegible]

Op www.cupS.net free downloaded

Go-to-Market, determine content and CTAs



Op www.cambridge.org free downloaded

Content per stage of sales funnel

		Assessment / Assessment	Intervene	Outsourcing	Compliance / Analysis	No response / Ignored
Environmet	Eigen-gemakke content					
	Externe content: Curated of sample life					
Wet- en draagbare instrument	Eigen-gemakke content					
	Externe content: Curated of sample life					
Technische info	Eigen-gemakke content					
	Externe content: Curated of sample life					
Wetenschappelijke documenten	Eigen-gemakke content					
	Externe content: Curated of sample life					
Geavanceerde productiesystemen & producten en diensten, toegankelijk te worden (open...)	Eigen-gemakke content					
	Externe content: Curated of sample life					
Getuigenissen	Eigen-gemakke content					
	Externe content: Curated of sample life					
Virtuele storytelling	Eigen-gemakke content					
	Externe content: Curated of sample life					
Conversie triggers & incentive to buy	Eigen-gemakke content					
	Externe content: Curated of sample life					

Op www.csp5.net free download

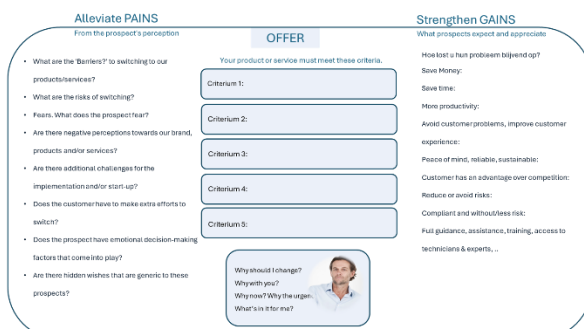
Sales Tactics to outfox top 3 rivals – Special launch offers

- [illegible]

[illegible]

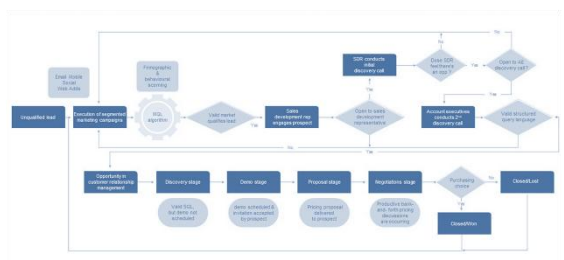
Op www.cup5.net free download

Exercise to mould your offer & criteria



Op www.scribd.com free download

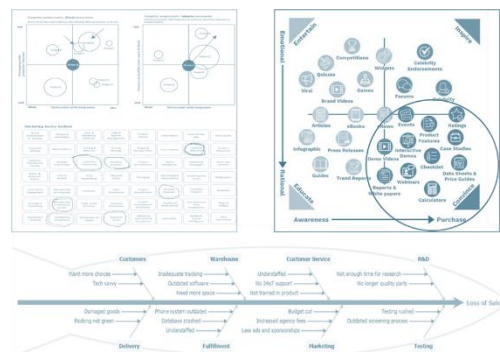
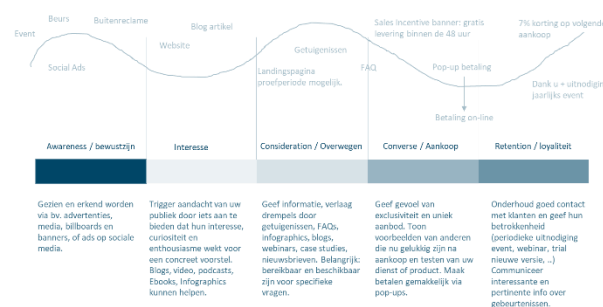
Sales & Marketing process flow, from lead to decision



 www.ccap5.org free download

CAP5: Communicatiemomenten met klant

Voorbeeld van mogelijke touchpoints voor een middelgrote KMO. Elk van deze touchpoints moet herzien worden op klantvriendelijkheid, consistentie en intuïtief navigeren. Zet u in de schoenen van een prospect. Probeer zelf eens alle interacties uit. Evalueer elke interactie op duidelijkheid, juiste inhoud, consistentie en gebruiksvriendelijkheid.



4. PLANNING & LAUNCH

How do you translate your objectives and tactics into a plan of execution?

We use planners. They are simple, logic and intuitive. It's at the heart of most project planning methods. Remember, we have determined objectives. We have chosen tactics for each of these objectives. With these planners we will identify the main actions we will have to take. We will prioritize these actions. We then allocate these actions to somebody (roles & responsibility). We'll do everything in one format so it stays consistent. We use the Gantt format; a format everybody understands, gives instantly clarity, easy to modify and which we can use to monitor and evaluate the progress.

There are many planning tools on the market. But, you can perfectly start with the CAP5 planner (Excel). It has advantages too; its free (download on www.CAP5.net) and you can change/adapt/expand it as you like. The CAP5 planner uses the same basic principles as a project planner or the project methods such as Prince II.

A planner brings everything together:

- What do you want to achieve: corporate objectives?
- How do you want to achieve this (tactically)?
- What activities and campaigns are you planning to work towards these objectives?
- List the tactics below the objectives. Determine the actions to take.
- What has high priority? What can wait?
- What benchmarks and deadlines in the year do you want to pursue?
- How long will you be working on these activities and campaigns?
- Who takes action, who approves, who helps, who needs to stay informed and (optional) how much budget and resources have been allocated?

These Gantt planners are logic and intuitively and need little explanation. The most important advice I can give you is to undertake these exercises with your key-staff. It's a great and valuable team-building exercise. If staff have been consulted/involved then they will take more ownership. They will be more committed. The planner is not only an agenda, it provides focus and should be your reference to track progress. It could also be used for evaluation of staff, internal communications and feedback to investors and business stakeholders.

Do I need a Go-To-market plan for launching my innovation?

In marketing, the detailed plan you make to launch an innovative product or service is also called a go-to-market (GTM) plan. A GTM plan focuses specifically on how to bring a particular product or service to the market. It covers everything you have to do for the launch of your innovation. It also determines who you're targeting, what message you'll use, through which channels, and how you'll convert interest into sales. The Go-To-Market is making sure everything is ready before you press the 'launch' button.

The CAP5 method does the same as a Go-To-market plan. It uses the same format. The CAP5 method covers also the longer term strategic marketing and sales objectives and implementation plans. You will find a separate planner for the launch on www.CAP5.net for you to download for free.

Marketing checklist: select the items you want to prepare before the official launch of the innovation.

- Clear Positioning & Messaging: a concise value proposition, tagline, and story that explain what problem you solve and why you're different.
- Press & Media Kit: press release, founder story, product visuals (photos, demo video, infographics), and company fact sheet.
- Website / Landing Page: polished, SEO-friendly, mobile-ready, with clear CTAs (sign-up, trial, contact).
- Demo / Pilot Material: live demo at the opening shared on social media, recorded video of testing, early test-case studies to showcase real-world use.
- Social Media Content Plan: teaser posts, launch-day announcements, and shareable visuals.
- Testimonials & Endorsements: early user reviews from befriended credible people, expert quotes, or industry partner mentions.
- Launch Event / Webinar: live or virtual event to demonstrate the product and engage prospects.
- Email Campaign: announcement mailer to your list (and partner lists if possible) even if you have not many 'leads' and contact yet.
- Paid & Organic Promotion: targeted ads, influencer mentions, or guest articles to boost visibility. Most suggestions I made in this workbook can be done for free. Paid ads are not and if you have a new B2B product or service on the market paid ads are not likely to give you a return-on-investment. But because it is innovation a buzz in the target group digital biotope could give name recognition.
- Follow-up Plan: system for capturing leads, nurturing interest, and turning launch buzz into sales.

It is very important to prepare your launch well in advance and to have all your media-actions ready and tested on forehand. First impressions last long so you would like to get it right and pro the first time around.



Marketing & Sales Action and Campaign Planner

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CAPS Marketing Annual Overview

Marketing | Taxation | External | Deadline | Contingency

Last update

Milestone Description	januari	februari	maart	april	mei	juni	juli	augustus	september	oktober	november	december
Brand & Corporate ID												
Company presentation video, Pdf en brochure	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■										
Corp-ID design, visueelheid existing stuff		■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■									
look & feel website, logo's & templates		■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■									
Markt & Competitor analysis												
Analyses			■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■								
Strategic, tactische per sector / niche			■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■								
Digitale optimalisatie												
SSEO volledige evaluatie		■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■									
Website optimalisatie		■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■									
Nieuw bereikende brochures online				■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■							
3 Twitter-accounts media & website				■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■							
Kortere video van website				■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■							
Ontwerpen ads & campagnes												
Digital ads		■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■								
Direct mails, format & mailing beheer			■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■								
Summer offermail				■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■							
Newcom offermail					■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■						
Lancering Seasonal campaigns						■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■					
Lancering Digitale campagnes			■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■				■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■			
Activiteiten												
Jarlijkse rapportage				■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■							
Quarterly webinars reportage, blogposts					■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■						
Pers Stunt							■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ ■				

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Brand Development; your dress to the world

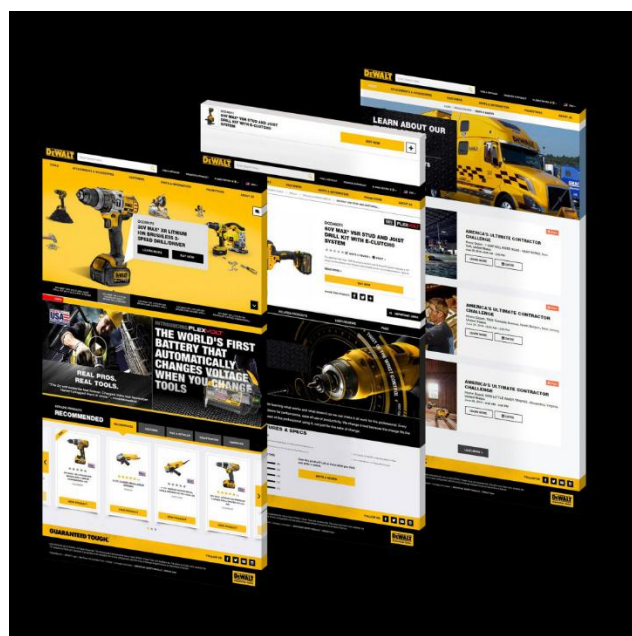
Brand development is essential for any startup and even more so when both you and your innovation are new to the market. Branding development is more than a logo, colours, letterheads and brochures: it's about shaping how customers perceive your company and your solution from the very first interaction, and reinforcing that perception every time thereafter. Brand building is all about perception. Perception influences B2B buyer decisions.

Research shows that the first seconds matter most. Prospects instantly form an impression the moment they land on your website, open your presentation, or watch your product demo. If your design feels sloppy, inconsistent, or amateurish, they will unconsciously project that onto your solution. In contrast, a clean, consistent, and professional brand identity signals reliability, competence, and professionalism. This is especially critical in B2B where strong branding reduces perceived risk and builds confidence. Consistency is a core principle in brand marketing for start-ups. Every touchpoint, whether it's a LinkedIn post, your website, a sales brochure, or even your email signature should reflect the same tone, style, and level of professionalism. When design, language, and messaging are consistent, it reassures prospects that you are organized, structured, and reliable. Every post, slide, email or pitch is a small building block of trust. Design plays a huge role in building trust. A professional-looking brand identity makes prospects feel safer to engage with you and safer to recommend you to others. Even staff prefer to work for a brand with a professional appearance.

- Consistency: every message, touchpoint, design, and tone of voice should align with your core identity.
- Differentiation: make it obvious why you're not just "another product." Whether it's the design, mission, or personality, passion, personal convictions.
- Authenticity: your brand promise must reflect who you really are. Inauthenticity is easily spotted and damages reputation.
- Visibility: A brand has to be seen to be remembered.

Focusing on building your brand from the very beginning is essential. We all like to design our first logo, choose our own web design, make our own social pages. My advice, take your Business Canvas (you should have made it after step 2, Strategy) to a Brand Identity Designer. You should look professional right from the start. Once you're into business it's hard to change logo and design. If you want to cut on costs, take time to look at other company's success stories.

Example. The tool market was saturated. A few big names controlled the market. Black & Decker was the cheap brand for the ad-hoc household little tasks. Black & Decker had a struggling professional tool line and launched



in the 90s DeWalt. It was positioned in the professional but still affordable marketing segment. Today, 16% of every electrical tool sold in the US is a DeWalt.

What should I focus on Brand building when I'm starting-up?

In a crowded market, a strong and consistent brand makes you instantly recognizable, builds trust, and helps customers choose you over bigger or more established competitors. In other words, you will have to look professional in everything you do. For start-ups, here is a list of possible branding items:

- **Visual Identity:** Logo: Primary logo + simplified versions (icon, favicon), colour palette: A small set of primary and secondary brand colours, typography: fonts for headings, body text, digital and print, Imagery style: Guidelines for photos, illustrations, icons
- **Branded Templates:** pitch deck / investor deck template / Fact sheets different profiles
- **Social media templates** (e.g., for LinkedIn, Instagram): presentation deck/ slide templates, proposal standard layout, company invoice and Email signature.
- **Digital Presence:** Website: consistent design and tone; includes branding visuals, favicon: small icon for browser tab (usually your logo mark), landing pages: Branded, focused pages for campaigns
- **Print and Offline Branding:** business cards (even if used digitally), letterhead / branded documents, product packaging (if applicable)
- **Brand guidelines (Style Guide):** a simple internal document that outlines how to use the logo, colours, fonts, dos and don'ts, sample messages or taglines

How can you promote un-sexy goods or innovations?

Not all innovations, goods or service have that sexy appeal. Nobody buys a forklift because it's sexy. They buy it because it moves mountains of stuff. Instead of polishing the product, start glorifying the problem it solves or the pain it prevents. The key is to shift the story away from the product itself and towards the value, trust, and problem-solving it delivers.

Unsexy products often has a critical role to play. So find the hidden drama. You can centre your communications on "no operational bottlenecks because backup systems are in place", or "disasters avoided because we have a contingency back-up system". A CEO told me: "Nobody noticed our software. That's because are solution made that the factory didn't shut down." That quote is actually a quiet triumph that your software probably prevented a disaster but because everything ran smoothly no one noticed. That's the paradox of success in reliability: invisibility. But invisibility doesn't have to mean obscurity.

- **Make the invisible visible.** Show pictures where it went awfully wrong. Pictures of catastrophic failures. Stories from costly shutdowns that could have been prevented easily with your innovation. Stories of liability when products showed failures or flaws or preventable risks where the company is held accountable for. Visualize the Invisible. If they can't see it, they won't believe it. Show how your solutions avoid risks. Use free tools like Canva or Powtoon to show infographics how your software works behind the scenes.
- **Make It Relatable.** "Our software is like a smoke detector. You don't notice it until you really need it."
- **Explain the gains and peace of mind** you get with your solutions; "For 15 euro a day we know that we get early warning signs of our machines before they go into the red zone and stop the production altogether".
- **Shift the Story from Product to Impact.** Even if the product itself looks dull, the problems it solves are often far from boring. Don't market the object but market the pain it eliminates or the value it creates. For example, selling a new type of industrial filter is not exciting but the fact that it saves factories much money in downtime and prevents environmental fines is. Air Filtration Systems. Instead of showcasing the machine itself, focus on the impact: "Our system brings in fresh air so our medical staff don't go home tired and with headaches after a day in the operating room" or "reduces harmful particles in the emergency rooms" or "protecting patients and staff from higher risks of infections."

- **Highlight the reliability.** In many industries, consistency and reliability are more persuasive than flashy innovation. Market your goods as “the thing nobody ever has to think about, because it never fails.”

Customer journey, customer experience and touchpoints for higher conversion

Understanding the customer journey is essential for any business. It's the complete path a potential buyer takes from realizing they have a problem, to searching for solutions to discovering your solution, comparing alternatives, looking for additional information and making a purchase. Mapping this journey means stepping into your customer's shoes and viewing the world through their eyes. If a customer lands on your website but cannot find the information he or she is looking for, doesn't grab the value of your innovation, if the process of asking for a demo is difficult, or if they look for technical answers and find none, they may drop out immediately. On the other hand, when each step of their journey feels easy to find, clear, and valuable, they gain more confidence in your innovation and brand.

What we do for understanding touchpoints is watching and listening to them. You're a start-up and you don't have customer yet? Ask your friends to play for a customer and watch them searching you on the internet, your website or landing page, what they think of your slogan, value proposition, ... actually, anything and everything. Do not go on the defence. Just take notes. A second thing to do is to check if you have a call-to-action at each of these touchpoints. The purpose of a call-to-action is to guide your audience toward taking a specific next step that moves them closer to engagement, conversion, or purchase. Here are some good call-to actions:

- Start Your Free Trial
- Request a Demo and test it yourself
- Talk to our Expert and ask all you questions
- See our Plans & Pricing
- Watch our virtual Demo
- Reserve Your Spot on our next Webinar
- Find here the technical specs

This customer journey exercise is so critical because every bottleneck or friction in the customer journey might lose you customers. Watching colleagues to simulate testing all your internet and service is a great team-building exercise. You'll see the gaps, shortcomings and you'll discuss who does what and when.



5. GROW

Grow your business and create momentum using existing customers

Leveraging your first customer cases and making a story out of it is one of the most powerful ways to accelerate growth. People naturally trust the experiences of other people more than ads, articles, or sales pitches. For companies, they want to know about your earlier successful projects or installations.

Well-crafted stories that your target audience can relate to always resonate. It builds credibility, trust, emotional connection and social proof. The smartest move for start-ups and innovations is to turn your first successful projects, installations, or collaborations into multiple communication formats: case studies, videos, posts, and presentations. In that way you get the most out of it. **Every time, depending on your prospect, you'll have to tell them what you did by the first customers is also relevant and valuable to them.**

The challenge is to create visuals and videos at a **low cost without sacrificing quality**. While today's smartphones and free software make it possible to produce almost anything, the result still needs to look professional. This is where bringing in experts pays off. Many people can take a picture but only a few can capture one that truly stands out. The same goes for video. A handful of strong visuals and videos is sometimes all you need to get your marketing and sales going. AI image generating is impressive and very realistic these days and it's free. AI opens a lot new opportunities for a start-ups and SMEs.

Making a short video is often your best value for money. Here is a simple story-line. In a short video, you show people that look like your target people. You show a painful situation your target audience recognise and find important. Then you show your innovation at work and why the usual problems are gone, how the stress falls away and how people seems relieved. Basically, you highlight the "before and after", one of the most basic, but effective ways to get your message across.

Another useful content is **case studies**. A case study is a real-life story that shows how a customer used a product or service to solve a problem or achieve a goal. It usually includes a simple story-line: the customer was struggling, how they found and used your solution and how it solved their problems & pain. It's like a success story that helps other people see the value of the product by showing it in action with real results.

Customer testimonials are one of the strongest tools in B2B marketing because they are perceived as credible and provide social proof. Prospects tend to trust the experience of their peers more than any marketing claim. A well-placed testimonial reassures buyers that your product or service has already delivered measurable value to companies like theirs. To make testimonials work, ensure they are specific and relatable. A message such as "great service" has little value. Better is "With their solution, we reduced downtime by 20% and cut costs by €70,000 in the first year".

You could consider **Webinars**. Especially when your innovation is technical or when it does have an impact on the operations. Webinars are a low-cost tool for innovation and B2B SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) because they combine education, interaction, and promotion in a single format. All you need is a laptop, internet connection, and a good, controllable format. You can record webinars which is much safer than live-webinars where somebody can disrupt the session. Webinars have one other important benefit, it boost your ranking on search engines such as Google en Bing.

Social proof works well when your product or service is new to the market. People tend to trust a product or service more when they see others using it because of a psychological principle called 'social proof'. It created a shortcut in our brains that judges what's safe, popular and in-demand. Social proof is a great tactic because innovative products or services are naturally perceived as uncertain. Example: "More and more companies are switching to our app to cut down on wasted energy and reduce their monthly energy costs substantially." Another example: "Every month, more and more farmers ask us to help them to eliminate energy-waste to tackle their high electricity bills every month".

Hands-on worksession with results ready to deploy

Worksessions is where we bring our findings of the exercises together, were we'll discuss these findings and were we'll finalise these findings and determine the conclusions. "The great advantage of holding work sessions with key players is that everyone gets aligned, findings are consolidated, and roles, responsibilities, and timelines are clarified—so the entire team moves forward with focus and commitment." It is a teambuilding effort that allow the stakeholders to give input and where the modus-operandi gets clarified.

The CAP5 method: **The cheapest, yet most comprehensive method for innovators and start-ups to secure their innovation and grow their business. Let me know how I can help you: (Bart) +32 488 663 284**



Preparing exercises individually at home before coming together in workshops is highly efficient because it ensures that everyone arrives with initial thoughts, ideas, and solutions already formed, saving valuable group time for deeper discussion, refinement, and alignment. This approach allows each team member to contribute meaningfully without the pressure of having to think on the spot while the workshop setting then becomes a space for collaboration, debate, and consensus-building. As a result, the process **combines the best of individual focus and group synergy**, leading to faster progress, broader input, and stronger team alignment on shared goals.



How can we support your enterprise?

VLAIO, or Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship, acts as a key innovation partner for companies in Flanders, offering support and guidance for their innovation and growth ambitions. VLAIO is more than just a funding agency; it's a comprehensive partner that helps companies navigate the complexities of innovation, grow their businesses, and contribute to a more sustainable and competitive economy, according to VLAIO.

1. Support and Guidance:

- VLAIO offers a wide range of support services, including subsidies, advice, and networking opportunities, tailored to the specific needs of innovative startups and SMEs.
- They aim to be the go-to resource for companies seeking information and assistance with their innovation projects.

2. Focus on Growth and Future-Proofing:

- VLAIO's objectives include increasing the awareness of companies about their services, profiling themselves as a solution-oriented partner, and supporting companies in accessing European programs for innovation.
- They strive to help companies become more competitive, grow, and create new jobs through innovation.

3. Innovation as a Key Driver:

- VLAIO recognizes innovation as a crucial factor for entrepreneurial success and the development of new products, services, and business models.
- They understand that innovation is not just about generating new ideas but also about putting them into action and building successful businesses.

Other useful partners for innovation, entrepreneurial support and international growth

Belgium has agencies, organizations and partners fragmented over the various regions on a national level.

Federal & National level

- **Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA)** – supports companies with internationalisation.
- **Credendo** – public credit insurer, useful for exports and international projects.
- **SME Instrument / European Innovation Council** (via NCP Belgium) – EU-level programs with Belgian contact points.
- **Be Angels** – national network of business angels investing in start-ups across Belgium.

Flanders

- **VLAIO** (Agentschap Innoveren & Ondernemen) – the main Flemish agency for innovation funding, subsidies, start-up support and growth projects.
- **Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship (Flanders Investment & Trade / FIT)** – supports internationalisation and scaling abroad.
- **PMV (Participatie Maatschappij Vlaanderen)** – public investment company with loans, guarantees, and equity for entrepreneurs.
- **Imec** – world-class research & incubation for digital and nanotech start-ups (with imec.istart as accelerator).
- **Flanders DC (District of Creativity)** – supports creative industries and entrepreneurs.

Brussels Capital Region

- **hub.brussels**: the regional agency for entrepreneurship and business support, including internationalisation.
- **Innoviris**: regional institute for research and innovation funding in Brussels.
- **Finance&invest.brussels**: public fund offering capital and loans for entrepreneurs and start-ups in Brussels.

Wallonia

- **Wallonie Entreprendre (WE)**: the central body for financing, supporting and coaching entrepreneurs and innovators in Wallonia.
- **SpW Research** (Service Public de Wallonie Recherche) – subsidies for R&D and innovation projects.
- **Digital Wallonia** – regional strategy and hub for digital transformation and start-ups.
- **Invests (public investment funds)** – e.g. Meusinvest, Noshag, SRIW.

Networks & Partners across Belgium

- **Start it @KBC** – largest start-up accelerator in Belgium.
- **Netwerk Ondernemen / Réseau Entreprendre** – mentoring for entrepreneurs by entrepreneurs.
- **Agoria** – federation for the technology industry, supporting innovation.
- **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN Belgium)** – EU-backed, helps SMEs innovate and grow internationally.
- **Banque Carrefour des Entreprises** (more administrative, but key for starting up officially).



I'm the author, Bart Peeters. Over the past 3 decades, I assisted / lead more than 30 start-ups, SMEs, and international companies in achieving growth and delivering results. As an advisor or director. Through experience and ongoing studies I've learned what truly works.

I studied Marketing & Business Administration, Strategic Marketing & Organisational Development. I did research into Buyer behaviour, profiling and decision-making processes. I'm also a post-grad certified Digital Marketer.

Since 2014, I've been developing and refining the CAP5 methodology; a proven five-step approach that takes you from insights to implementation. Much it homework. Then, we discuss and compile the decisions in a worksession. My style is pragmatic and hands-on, built on the capacity-building approach: I equip entrepreneurs and business leaders with the knowledge, skills and method to quickly gain knowledge and expertise to master Sales and Marketing.



Download here a .pdf version of this workbook and the exercise, toolbox and planners. Here you can also download (Dutch) my handbook on marketing for SMEs. It's totally free. No catch, no strings attached.

Download on www.CAP5.net the free handboek "betaalbare marketing voor Vlaamse KMO's"

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Meer klanten, nieuwe niches, outsmart concurrenten

Bekwaam in marketing op één dag?

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Bart Peeters, 3^{de} Uitgave

Secure Your Innovation in Just 5 steps

Hands-On, Effective, Immediately Deployable

Everything you need to know—and do—to market your innovation and attract your first customers.

This is a **hands-on workbook** that walks you step by step through creating an intelligent marketing & sales roadmap for innovative products or services. It doesn't just give you knowledge and insights — it helps you design a clear, actionable plan to successfully launch and grow your innovation.

You'll also **get free access to the CAP5 Exercises, Toolbox, and Planners**; hands-on tools that help you move from strategy to execution. They'll show you exactly where and how to market your innovation, set measurable goals, and turn them into clear actions with defined roles and responsibilities.

Strategy isn't money, it's making the right moves



Research shows that many start-ups and innovations fail not because of their product, but because they aren't promoted effectively. This workbook gives you everything you need to market your solution professionally and strategically.