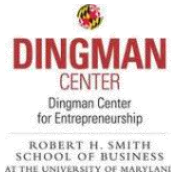




ACADEMY FOR  
INNOVATION &  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND  
OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY COMMERCIALIZATION

## UMD I-Corps Course Syllabus

**Days and Times:** March 2-March 21, 2016  
**Kick-off workshop:** March 2, 2016  
**Office Hours:** March 11, March 18/21

### Workshop Expectations

1. Each team should conduct 15-20 interviews over the 2 week workshop session.

### Pre-class Assignment

Review the customer segment/ value proposition canvas below and prepare TWO slides (template will be provided):

#1: Your customer segment/value proposition mad lib

#2: Your initial customer segment/value proposition canvas. A copy of the slide template is in an attached file.

# Value Proposition Customer Segment Mad Lib

\_\_\_\_\_

*Customer Segment: Which people? Be specific!*



\_\_\_\_\_ need a way to \_\_\_\_\_  
*Solve this problem*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ in a way that \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Verb (reduces, increases, etc.)* \_\_\_\_\_ *a specific Customer Pain or Gain*

(unlike \_\_\_\_\_ )

Extra Credit: How are you different than the competition?

Customer Segments 	Value Propositions 
<b>Who are your most important customers?</b>	<b>What customer problems are you helping to solve?</b>
<b>These should include</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>End Users</b></li> <li>• <b>Decision Makers</b></li> <li>• <b>Payers</b></li> </ul>	<b>What customer needs are you satisfying?</b>
<b>Note:</b> These should be identifiable people/titles/job functions – not a building (e.g., hospital), organization (e.g., _____)	<b>Note:</b> Do not list product/service features! What problem(s) or need(s) are you solving?

## **Course Description**

Customer Discovery is an iterative process of physically getting out of the building to interview potential customers and stakeholders to understand their problems and pain points in the market and in society. These interviews, or experiments, lead to real-world learnings and insights that validate or invalidate key components of the business model, often leading to pivots.

This course will provide teams with real-world, hands-on learning experience with customer discovery and successfully transferring knowledge into products and processes that benefit society. The entire team will engage with industry. You and your team will spend your time talking to and learning from customers, partners and competitors, and learning how to deal with the chaos and uncertainty of commercializing innovations and creating ventures.

This course is about getting out of the building. It is not about the lectures. You will be spending a significant amount of time outside the building, talking to customers and testing your hypotheses about what they want in products and services. We will spend our limited class time on what you learned from talking to customers, not what you already knew coming into the course

## **Class Culture**

We have limited time and we push, challenge, and question you in the hope you will quickly learn. We will be direct, open, and tough – just like the real world. We hope you can recognize that these comments aren't personal, but part of the process. We also expect you to question us, challenge our point of view if you disagree, and engage in a real dialog with the teaching team. This approach may seem harsh or abrupt, but it is all part of our wanting you to learn to challenge yourselves quickly and objectively, and to appreciate that as entrepreneurs, you need to learn and evolve faster than you ever imagined possible.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

### ***Kick-off Workshop***

Your team will attend the opening workshop where you will be introduced to the I-Corps approach, the teaching team and your peers. You will learn the business model development and customer development process, and we will prepare you to get out of the building to interview customers.

### ***Mandatory Office Hours***

During the 2 weeks following the workshop, teams will be required to sign-up for weekly office hours with a member of the teaching team. Office hours will be conducted in-person. Teams that are working with OTC on their MII funding applications should arrange for an OTC representative to accompany them to office hours.

## Additional Resources

1) These short videos from Steve Blank provide helpful tips and examples for preparing for your customer interviews:

1. [Pre-Planning Pt. 1](#) (4:55)
2. [Interviews Pt. 1](#) (5:40)
3. [Interviews Pt. 2](#) (3:49)
4. [Asking the Right Question](#) (2:37)
5. [Assuming you know what the customer wants](#) (1:56)
6. [Understanding the Problem \(the right way\)](#) (3:22)
7. [Customers Lie](#) (2:37)
8. [The Distracted Customer](#) (3:12)
9. [Engaging the Customer](#) (3:37)
10. [Customer Empathy](#) (2:25)
11. [The User, the Buyer & the Saboteur](#)
12. [Death by Demo 1](#) (2:18)
13. [Death by Demo 2](#) (1:45)

2) For a more detailed explanation of Customer Development and the Lean Startup, here are some short videos of Steve Blank from the Kaufmann Founders School.

<http://www.entrepreneurship.org/Founders-School/The-Lean-Approach/Getting-Out-of-the-Building-Customer-Development.aspx>

<http://www.entrepreneurship.org/Founders-School/The-Lean-Approach/Customer-Development-Data.aspx>

<http://www.entrepreneurship.org/Founders-School/The-Lean-Approach/Minimum-Viable-Product.aspx>

3) Want more Steve Blank? Sign up for the free Udacity Course – How to Build a Startup (<https://www.udacity.com/course/ep245>) and watch the following lectures:

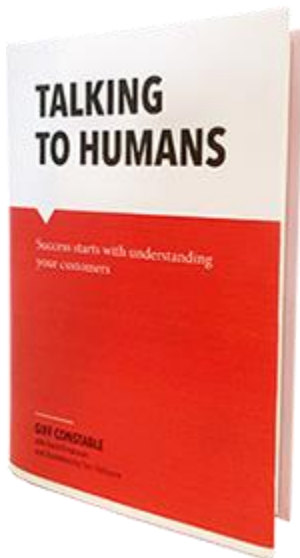
- Lesson 2: *Value Proposition*
- Lesson 3: *Customer Segments*

4) There are no textbooks required for this workshop, but we recommend these helpful references. The Osterwalder books have free e-version previews, and the Constable book has a full free e-version.



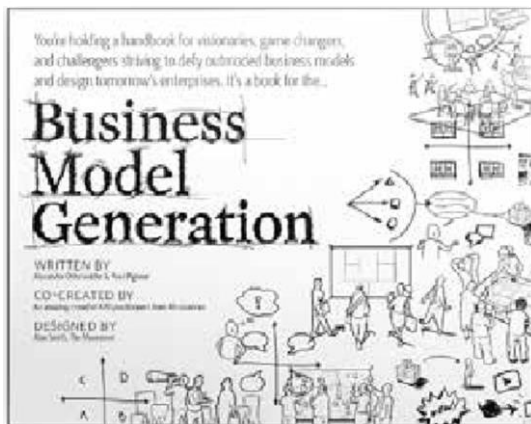
Value Proposition and Design by Alex Osterwalder, Yves Pigneur, Greg Bernarda, and Alan Smith.

A free download of the first chapter of the book is available at [https://strategyzer.com/value-proposition-design?\\_ga=1.152090042.2059273423.1389715841](https://strategyzer.com/value-proposition-design?_ga=1.152090042.2059273423.1389715841)

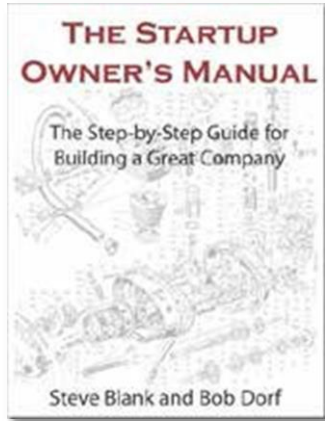


Talking to Humans by Giff Constable

A free download of the of the book is available at <http://www.talkingtohumans.com/>



*Business Model Generation*, Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur – A free download of the first chapter of the book is available at <http://businessmodelgeneration.com/book>



*The Startup Owner's Manual,*  
Steve Blank and Bob Dorf

# UMD/MII I-Corps Course Schedule at a Glance

**Day 1 – March 2, 2016**

Time	Session
9:00 – 9:15 am	<b>Introduction to Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching Team Introductions</li> <li>Class Goals</li> <li>Teaching Philosophy</li> <li>Expectations of You</li> </ul>
9:15 - 9:30 am	<b>Team Introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams will provide a 1 minute summary of the problem they are solving and for whom they are solving it.</li> </ul>
9:30 – 10:30 am	<b>Customer Discovery and Business Model Generation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Segments (CS), Sub-Segments, Types, Ecosystems</li> <li>Value Propositions (VP)</li> <li>Problem-Solution, Product-Market, and Business Model Fit</li> </ul>
10:30-10:45 am	<b>Break</b>
10:45-11:15 am	<b>Customer Discovery and Business Model Generation (continued)</b>
11:15 am –12:00 pm	<b>Presentation: Individual Team Canvas</b>
12:00 -1:00 pm	<b>Lunch (on your own)</b>
1:00 – 2:00 pm	<b>Workshop: Best Practices for Customer Discovery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who should you interview</li> <li>How to get, conduct, and record customer interviews</li> <li>Practice (role play) interview exercises</li> </ul>
20 minute sessions between 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm	<b>Mandatory Office Hours</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teams will have one-on one office hours (20 minutes) with a teaching team member</li> <li>Teams may leave and return at designated time slot</li> </ul>

**Meeting 2: March 11, 2016 to be scheduled individually)**

Teams will meet one-on-one with teaching team (30 minutes) to provide updates on interviews, who they talked to and the impact of the findings on their customer segment/value proposition canvas. Teams that are working with OTC on their MII funding applications should arrange for an OTC representative to accompany them to office hours.

**Meeting 3: March 18 or 21st, 2016 (to be scheduled individually)**

Teams will have one-on-one office hours with teaching team (30 minutes) to discuss interview results related to customer segment/value proposition and product market fit. Teams that are working with OTC on their MII funding applications should arrange for an OTC representative to accompany them to office hours.