Results from 21st of May in Riga, Latvia

Symposium of Common Entrepreneurial Challenges

Customer Retention

How can you keep customers/users interested and coming back for more, once they've already tried your offering?

Addressing Issues Promptly

- **Fix Problems Quickly**: If something is wrong, address it immediately to maintain customer trust and satisfaction.

Gathering Feedback and Improving Services

- **Feedback Questions**: Ask customers questions after their visit to understand their experience.
- **Customer Service and After Service**: Provide excellent service during and after the customer interaction.

Engagement and Communication

- **Newsletters**: Send newsletters by email to keep customers informed and engaged.
- **Customer Register**: Create and maintain a customer register for personalized communication.
- **Talking to Customers**: Engage with customers during their visit or afterwards to make them feel valued.

Special Offers and Incentives

- **Birthday Gifts**: Send birthday gifts to create a warm feeling and show appreciation.
- **Parties and Events**: Organize parties and events for customers, such as Christmas, Midsummer, or Easter celebrations.
- **More Value than Expected**: Always aim to provide more value to customers than they expect.
- **Discounts and Bonuses**: Offer discounts for future purchases and bonuses to reward loyalty.

Social Media and Online Presence

- **Social Media Channels**: Use social media to communicate with customers and keep them engaged.
- **Follow Discussions**: Monitor and participate in discussions on social media and other platforms to stay connected with customers.

Customer Needs and Trust

- **Polite Attitude**: Always maintain a polite and respectful attitude towards customers.
- **Trust**: Build and maintain trust by being reliable and transparent.
- **Feeling Valued**: Ensure that customers feel valued at the end of their interaction.
- **Keep Promises**: Always keep your promises and be punctual.

Handling Issues Openly

- **Transparency in Problems**: Be open when something goes wrong and fix it quickly.
- **Networking with Customers**: Develop a strong network with your customers to foster loyalty.

Continuous Improvement

- **Develop Yourself**: Continuously improve your skills and services to meet customer expectations.
- **Investigate Customers**: Regularly investigate and understand your customers' evolving needs and preferences.

By implementing these strategies, you can keep your customers engaged, satisfied, and coming back for more.

Sustainability (environmental)

How can what you do, and how you do it, be of benefit to the environment? (or damage it as little as possible?)

Reduce Waste and Promote Recycling and Circularity

- Sort waste diligently to ensure proper recycling.
- Use recycled materials wherever possible.
- Encourage the use of second-hand clothing, products, furniture and all else you use.
- Put used books, equipment and other things back in circulation to minimize waste.

Eco-Friendly Practices in Daily Operations

- Use eco-friendly materials in building and maintaining your operations.
- Implement composting toilets to reduce waste.
- Adopt a heating system that is energy-efficient and environmentally friendly.
- Minimize paper usage, especially while teaching.

- Avoid using dryers and other demanding equipment, when possible, to save energy.

Sustainable Products and Packaging

- Shift to reusable packaging, especially glass, to reduce single-use plastics.
- Promote natural body-care product lines that are eco-friendly.

Green Transportation and Mobility

- Buy products locally to reduce the carbon footprint associated with transportation.
- Encourage walking and cycling to reduce reliance on motorized transport.
- Use HP bicycles or similar eco-friendly transportation options.

Energy Conservation

- Conduct sessions in natural light to save electricity.
- Promote energy-saving practices in all activities, such as LED-bulbs and anything else that can save energy.
- Be holistic and look at all aspects of your operations or project.

Community and Education

- Educate people on sustainable practices and environmental awareness.
- Organize team-building activities in natural settings to foster appreciation for the environment.
- Develop nature-based solutions to environmental challenges.
- Emphasize the importance of human ecology and place it at the forefront of decision-making.

Digital and Remote Work

- Increase the number of online meetings to reduce travel-related emissions.
- Operate without a physical office where possible to cut down on resource use.
- Collect and recycle printed materials instead of disposing of them.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

- Solve problems where they occur, focusing on immediate and practical solutions.
- Develop and test new methods and solutions through pilot scale testing.
- Engage more people in understanding and implementing environmental forest management.
- Use crowdfunding and online platforms to support and promote sustainable initiatives.

This are actionable takeaways for participants to implement in their efforts to be more environmentally sustainable.

Testing Your Idea (Prototyping)

How can you, in a cheap, easy, and quick way, make a first version of what you are offering to test it and learn about reality?

Utilizing Existing Resources and Networks

- Use existing services and compare them with your idea to identify areas for improvement.
- Involve students in testing and developing your product through co-creation and assessment tools.
- Leverage your network of friends and colleagues to provide reviews and feedback.

Creating and Testing Prototypes

- Create a simplified "mock" prototype to test basic concepts.
- Use 2D (cards) or basic materials for initial prototypes.
- Develop a product or masterclass to demonstrate the concept in a tangible way.
- Offer parts of your service for free to encourage participation and feedback.

Feedback and Iteration

- Conduct questionnaires and surveys to gather feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Post pictures and mock ads on social media to gauge interest and gather feedback.
- After trials, identify key persons or groups who can provide valuable insights.

Marketing and Outreach

- Create fake ads to test market reaction to your product or service concept.
- Publish pictures and mock ads on social media platforms to attract attention and gather feedback.
- Offer your prototype on platforms to generate interest and collect pre-orders.

Practical Testing and Demonstrations

- Enact or demonstrate your service to show its value and gather live feedback.
- Host events where participants can interact with your product or service.
- Collect reviews from network/friends who participate in events or trials.

Events and Focus Groups

- Organize focus groups to meet your target audience and get their reactions.
- Host events where you can gather a group (focus group) to test your idea and get feedback.
- Invite friends to small gatherings to discuss and evaluate your product or service.

Crowdfunding and Scaling

- Use crowdfunding platforms to generate funds and validate demand.
- Conduct pilot scale testing for methods or solutions to refine your product.
- Collect proof of concept through small-scale trials and feedback sessions.

Continuous Learning and Improvement

- Learn from each step, from low-cost trials to more extensive non-profit events.
- Stay with your manufacturer during the prototyping phase to ensure alignment and quality.
- Keep refining your prototypes based on continuous feedback and testing.

Conclusion By following these steps, you can efficiently test and refine your ideas, ensuring they meet the needs and expectations of your target audience before fully launching them into the market. This iterative approach helps in minimizing risks and optimizing the final product or service.

Selling

How can you make your first sales happen?

Identify Customer Needs and Problems

- Identify customer needs and problems to tailor your solutions.
- Provide a good proposal that addresses these needs effectively.
- Highlight the cost-benefit ratio to demonstrate value (product/revenue).

Creating Irresistible Offers

- Make offers that customers cannot refuse, including special offers and finance options.
- Implement a bidding process if applicable.
- Share profits to align incentives with partners or customers.

Marketing and Outreach

- Utilize social media and the right platforms to reach your target audience.
- Conduct marketing campaigns to raise awareness and generate interest.
- Use your network and friends to spread the word and provide testimonials.

Demonstrations and Trials

- Host demos, exhibitions, and presentations to showcase your product or service.
- Offer free samples to let potential customers experience the value first-hand.
- Demonstrate the solution to the customer, emphasizing the benefits and solving their problems.

Engagement and Feedback

- Open Q&A sessions to engage directly with potential customers.
- Show the price clearly and provide office hours for customer queries.
- Use sales pitches and elevator pitches to succinctly convey your value proposition.

Strategic Partnerships

- Look for partnerships that can enhance the quality and reach of your offerings.
- Create syndicates for mutual benefit and ensure a win-win situation.
- Form strategic alliances and partnerships to expand your market presence.

Testing and Iteration

- Conduct test pilots at reduced prices to gather initial feedback.
- Use these pilots to refine your product and approach before a full-scale launch.
- Continuously iterate based on customer feedback and market responses.

This structured summary provides clear, actionable steps for participants to follow in making their first sales and effectively selling their products or services.

Understanding Your Customers/Users

How can you really get to know and understand your potential customers/users?

Building Relationships and Gathering Insights

- **Create Trustful Relationships**: Establish and maintain genuine connections with your customers.
- **Be Sensitive to Critique**: Welcome and thoughtfully consider customer feedback.
- **Reflect and Think**: Analyze what you have discovered about your customers.

Methods for Understanding Customers

- **Interviews**: Conduct one-on-one conversations to gather deep insights.
- **Questionnaires**: Use structured surveys to collect specific information.

- **Shadowing/Observing**: Watch how customers interact with your product or service.
- **Piloting and Asking Feedback**: Implement pilot programs and solicit feedback.

Market Analysis and Research

- **Competitors' Customers**: Study the customers of your competitors to identify gaps and opportunities.
- **Statistics**: Use data and statistical analysis to understand trends and behaviors.
- **Scanning Social Media**: Monitor platforms like TikTok to understand customer interests and issues.
- **Events**: Participate in industry-related events to network and gain insights.

Customer Needs and Communication

- **Finding Needs, Problems, and Dreams**: Understand what your customers need, the problems they face, and their aspirations.
- **Speaking the Same Language**: Communicate in a way that resonates with your customers, using professional and relatable language.

Leveraging Professional Networks

- **Professional Associations and Unions**: Engage with industry groups and use their resources.
- **Websites (Info)**: Utilize information from relevant websites to stay informed.
- **Using Your Own Networks**: Leverage your personal and professional connections.

Personal Engagement

- **Meeting Personally**: Meet customers face-to-face to build stronger relationships.
- **Listening to the Customer**: Pay attention to what your customers are saying and respond accordingly.
- **Check If the Customer Has Money**: Understand the purchasing power of your customers.

Local and Direct Methods

- **Using Local Distributors**: Partner with local distributors to reach a broader audience.
- **Asking How You Feel**: Engage customers emotionally by asking for their feelings and perceptions.

By implementing these strategies and methods, you can gain a comprehensive understanding of your potential customers and tailor your approach to meet their needs effectively.