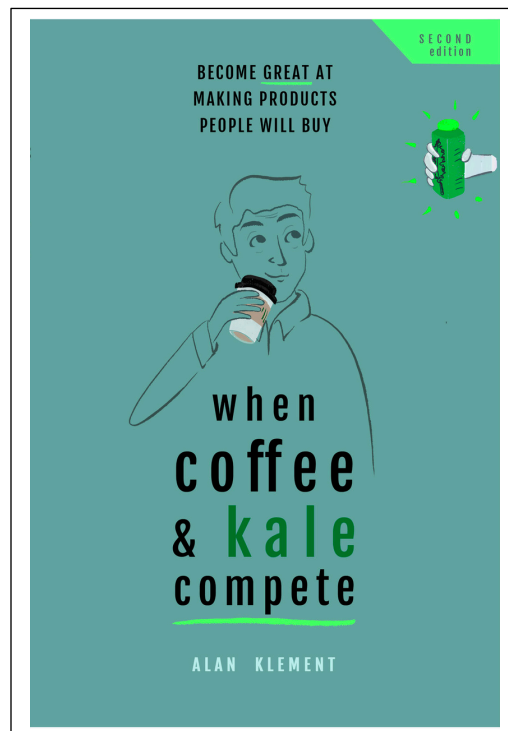

BOOK REVIEW

"When Coffee & Kale Compete: Become great at making products people will buy" by Alan Klement

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(Available on amazon.com:
Paperback for around US\$5.79 for a
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The title is a tad obtuse, but the sub-title is a more fitting representation on what the book is all about. It caught my attention because in the world of leadership coaching

and business consulting, there is always the discussion about innovation and creativity. I've read a good deal on innovation and creativity in business, but this book takes it from another angle. A very pragmatic angle; the customer's need to find a solution.

We all know that it's a changing world; that change is a given. We also know that through the COVID-19 pandemic, that such an unheralded crisis forced businesses and organisations into change paradigms that they had never encountered before. Some were very creative and innovative doing things that they had never undertaken before (e.g., the South Australian company Detmold who made packaging re-configured their factory to produce face masks).

This book focuses on something called **JTBD** which stands for "Jobs to be done". There is apparently a long history of this theory of innovation with proponents like Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen ("The Innovator's Solution") and Strategyn Founder Anthony Ulwick ("Jobs To Be Done"). Jobs to be done applies to customers' jobs or the jobs that customers want done. In other words, customers have a desire to improve themselves and their life situations while at the same time they can imagine their lives being better when they have the right solution. Customers buy a product or service to get a job done.

The definition for JTBD us as follows: *"A Job to be Done is the process a consumer goes through whenever they aim to transform their existing life-situation into a preferred one, but cannot because there are constraints that stop them."* What this really says is that a Job to be Done describes a "better me". It answers the question, "How are you better off since you started using [product / service]?" and "Now that you have this [product / service], what can you do now that you couldn't do before?"

Key here is that customers don't want your product or what it does; they want help making themselves better by making progress and transforming a life-situation. They want help improving their lives. Hence, it's not about products per se; it's about people who have a JTBD.

Of course, this means getting up close and personal with your customers. The decisions that we make about our customers and what they need or want can't be done by visible figures or stats only. The argument is that surveys such as Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) or Net Promoter Score (NPS) are figures that might on face value seem straight-forward, but can be very misleading. Take Spirit Airlines in the United States for example. Customers have consistently rated it as the worst airline in the USA, but it continues to be the fastest-growing and most profitable airline in the US. If the CEO listened to the customer ratings, the airline would close down, but instead, he sees what they do. They keep buying tickets and flying. Ryanair in the UK and Ireland is similar.

These are some of **the principles of Customer Jobs**:

1. Customers don't want your product or what it does; they want help making themselves better (i.e., they want to make progress and transform their life situation).
2. People have Jobs; things don't.
3. Competition is defined in the minds of customers, and they use progress as their criterion.
4. When customers start using a solution of a JTBD, they stop using something else; the competition for a JTBD is a zero-sum game.
5. Favour progress and improvement over outcomes and goals.
6. Customer need to feel successful at every touch point between themselves and your business, not just at the very end when the outcome of an action is realized; design your product or service to deliver customers an on-going feeling of progress.
7. Progress defines the value; contrast reveals value.
8. Producers, consumers, solutions, and Jobs should be thought of as parts of a system that work together to evolve markets (e.g., provide not just cooking grills and BBQs, but grilling accessories, cooking guides, educational materials, recipes etc).

One of the real keys to being innovative is to continually refresh the competitive landscape with on-going feedback from customers. This doesn't mean set surveys or Net

Promoter Scores. This means really talking to your customers. And this doesn't mean the obligatory follow up call by a tele-centre or receptionist to see how the customer is going. What customers count as competition for a JTBD is always changing. As the world changes, so do customers and their choices for a better life. Nothing remains static. Somewhere, unknown to you, your customers might have come across a new way of getting the Job Done. This is critical to understand. Hence, you need to continually interact with your customers and you need a responsive inquiring individual to handle such calls. Understand, this is not a "tick the box" exercise. These crucial conversations with customers could mean the difference with you staying in business and being out of business.

In this way, the best method is to talk with your customers regularly and keep interviewing new ones. Learn the stories behind their purchases. What solutions have they tried? What other solutions did they consider before buying yours? For existing customers, learn if they've heard about or tried other solutions. For customers that have stopped using your product or service, ask them why. Have they switched to a new solution or does the JTBD no longer exist for them?

In summary, innovation according to this author is based on the assumption that we all have an intrinsic desire to improve ourselves, to become a better version of ourselves which is all related to JTBD. The theory makes sense and is consistent with various psychological models that indicate that we move up a hierarchy of needs to improve ourselves. From observation, it does appear that JTBD is much closer to the mark in regards to how successful products and services are built. If you start using JTBD as a lens, you can recognize a number of the principles in practice in many successful tech innovators. The book does provide a lot of examples for successful products which helps the understanding of JTBD. There are also some helpful templates at the rear of the book.

(Dr Darryl is a clinical and organizational psychologist as well as a credentialed executive and personal coach. He is also an author, international speaker and past university lecturer. Dr Darryl assists people to find their strengths and reach their goals. Further information on Dr Darryl can be accessed from www.DrDarryl.com.)