Experiential Entrepreneurship Exercises Journal

Enabling More Active Entrepreneurial Classrooms
Through Sharing, Learning & Doing

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Call for Articles

Experiential Entrepreneurship Exercises Journal (EEEJ), published quarterly by Illinois State University's George R. and Martha Means Center for Entrepreneurial Studies, is a forum for the dissemination and exchange of innovative teaching exercises in the fields of entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business management. EEEJ is currently seeking original contributions that have not been published or are under consideration elsewhere.

The scope of all articles published in EEEJ is limited to experiential exercises, with maximum relevance to those teaching entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business management. The Journal appeals to a broad audience, so articles submitted should be written in such a manner that those outside of academia would be able to comprehend and appreciate the content of the material.

Format

All formatting requirements and author guidelines can be found at http://launchideas.org/?page_id=2

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Review Process

All articles submitted to EEEJ will be double-blind reviewed. Authors will normally receive reviewers' comments and editor's publishing decision approximately 60 days after submission.

Submission

All submissions should be made at http://launchideas.org/?page_id=11.

All correspondence should be addressed to Doan Winkel at dwinkel2@gmail.com.

Please visit our homepage at http://launchideas.org/.

Setting the Stage:
Thoughts from the Ivory Tower

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Discussions surrounding how to teach entrepreneurship are increasing in frequency and vigor, both inside and outside academia. The question of *can* entrepreneurship be taught is a slippery slope. My personal view is that it is a mindset, and not something that can be taught like the many skills we all learn in our education journeys.

I can teach someone about debits and credits. I can teach my son to write cursive letters. These are skills that can be taught. But a mindset? I'm not so sure that can be taught. We as educators can expose our students to experiences through which they can develop and hone their mindset.

That is why I started this journal – so we can share those experiences with colleagues, so the classrooms in which entrepreneurship is being taught and the mindset is being developed can be more effective.

Students around the world want to learn about entrepreneurship. They want to learn what it feels like. They want to learn how to do it. They want to learn the skills and mindset necessary to succeed in this most difficult of career paths. We as educators and guides need to get them learning through action. Through play. Through creativity. And empathy. Through innovation. And reflection. The opportunities to expose them to entrepreneurial thinking and doing are endless, if we expand our definitions (or do away with them all together!!) and take a leap of faith to teach this subject in the way we know in our hearts it needs to be taught. That model doesn't ascribe to standards and assessments and the boxes academia has set up for us. But I challenge you to stay outside those confines and boundaries. We don't belong there. Entrepreneurship doesn't belong there. Think of how you learned to be an entrepreneur. Think of the things you went through that helped you develop the mindset you needed to succeed. ***(By the way, if you haven't done that, then get out and do that or you shouldn't be teaching this)***. Put those things in your classroom. And here are more exercises that you can use in your classroom to introduce your students to entrepreneurial thinking and doing. I appreciate your interest in our journal and look forward to any feedback and further contributions you may have.

Give Away $1

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Abstract

Students often develop intricate plans before ever verifying the assumptions upon which those plans are built. This exercise is a very realistic way for students to understand the impact of rapidly testing assumptions with live customers.

Keywords: Customer Development, Selling, Planning, Assumptions

Subject Area: Entrepreneurship

Subject Topic: Customer development

Student level: Undergraduate or graduate

Time Required: at least 2 hours

Recommended Number of Students: 20 – 40

The Process

Step 1:
Students are tasked to go to a public place and give away five separate one dollar bills. We recommend assigning this challenge without any advanced lesson on what students are supposed to be learning or what they should expect. It makes the experience a lot more authentic and a stronger learning tool. Before students begin, they pair up and draft a mini-business plan for the exercise. This mini-business plan should answer the following questions for each student individually (but have them develop the plans together):

- Where will they go?
- What kind of people will they approach?
- What will they say to get the conversation started?
- What is their plan for the conversation?
- Out of five attempts, how many dollar bills will they be able to give away?
- Each student only has five attempts – no second chances!

Step 2:
Students are instructed to record one another interacting with "customers". The more secretly they can record these interactions, the better and more realistic the experience and debriefing will be. We recommend students hide camera phones in their pockets, act like they're texting and film, or other creative ways to unobtrusively recording the interactions.

Step 3:
Students then turn in a one-page reflective write up after the exercise. In this write up, they are asked to compare what actually happened to their predictions based on the original mini-business plan they developed. They also prepare a powerpoint/Prezi presentation to highlight their lessons learned through the exercise.

Step 4:
Once all the students in class present their results, ask the following questions to lead discussion:

- What about the exercise surprised you the most?
- What do you think you went wrong with your initial plan?
- What did you learn by interacting with your customers that you couldn't have predicted in your business plan?

Then use the discussion to cover the following topics:

- How business plans are filled with assumptions, even if the author is really smart or has a lot of experience
- The importance of testing your assumptions and not committing to a specific plan before you've had an opportunity to verify your guesses
- How you can learn more about your business by interacting with customers than you can figure out by doing research on your own

Ground Rules

In order to make this challenge interesting, we recommend the following ground rules:

- Students need to approach members of the same sex. (To limit bias in the results)
- The people students approach must either be walking somewhere or talking on their phones. (To simulate what it's like to interrupt customers in the real world with a product or service)
- Students cannot tell the people they are approaching that they are doing an experiment or a challenge or anything for a class. They have to come up with a genuine reason of why they would want to give a dollar to that particular person.

Student Reaction

When [the professor] told us about this project, my first reaction was "this is going to be easy" because I thought, who doesn't want free money? But it was one of the hardest things I did in my three years in college. I came up with a pretty specific plan of the kind of student I wanted to approach and what I wanted to say. I started getting really nervous as the time came to go and do it. I guess I realized how awkward this might be once I started talking about it and thinking it through. I ended up giving four of the five dollars away. That really shocked me. I approached students who looked kind of messy, because I figured they might be the most desperate. But none of them immediately took the money. They tried ignoring me, tried walking away, tried shaking their head (two were talking on their phones at the moment I was trying to hand them the money). I thought at one point I would just try stuffing the dollar in their shirt or pants pocket and that might be easier than talking to them. This exercise taught me a couple important lessons:

1. Plans don't matter. I had pretty specific plans. But once I approached the first student, I forgot what I was going to say (when I reviewed after, I realized it never would have worked anyway – I was trying to play stupid and be all vague, which it turns out really freaked one guy out). I also had pretty specific plans of what kind of student I wanted to approach. Once I started the exercise, I just wanted to get it over with, so I picked the first student I saw.
2. Learning is continuous. I learned a lot about human behavior, and about me, each time I talked to a student.
3. Giving away money is really hard!! I still don't understand why, but it is. If someone tried giving me free money, I'd take it.
4. Approaching strangers isn't easy. My stomach was in knots because I was worried about looking like a creep, and about getting rejected. But I realized after the first one that the more confident and friendly I was, the better I was going to do.

I wish I could do more exercises like this. It was really scary once I realized what I needed to do, but is definitely something I'm going to remember for a really long time.


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Founded in 1955, ICSB was the first international non-governmental organization formed to promote the growth and development of small businesses and entrepreneurs. ICSB currently has 16 country-based or regional affiliates with members from over 70 countries.
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Bridge Building:
A Game for Teaching the Entrepreneurial Process

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Abstract

Teams compete to design and construct a model of a bridge using limited resources. This interactive competition requires students to work together in groups to: a) think creatively about designing the bridge, b) agreeing on all aspects of the construction of the bridge and using personal strengths within the team, and c) utilizing marketing techniques to sell the model of the bridge to a wealthy real estate developer.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial process, entrepreneurship education, creativity, experiential exercises, teamwork and resource constraints

Manuscript Subject Area: Entrepreneurship

Subject Topic: Design and creative problem solving exercise with resource constraints

Student Level: Secondary, undergraduate and graduate students

Time Required: Approximately 75 minutes (can be done in 60 minutes)

Recommended Number of Students: No more than 50 students (5 to 7 on a team and an observer for each team)

Acknowledgments

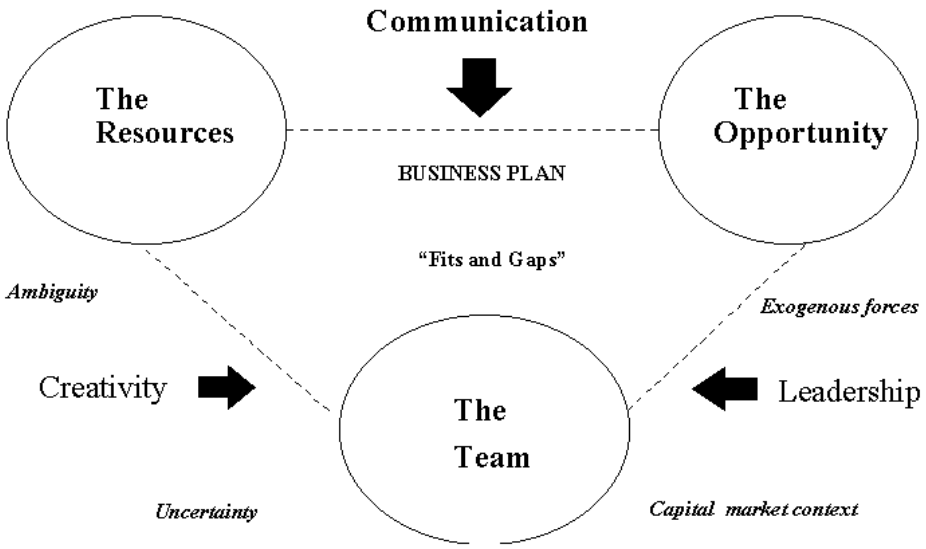
This experiential entrepreneurship education activity was developed for use in the Know About Business (KAB) curriculum published by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The KAB curriculum has been introduced in over 40 countries and has been translated into over 20 languages. KAB is intended for use in secondary and university classrooms. Promoting youth entrepreneurship is an important strategy for the ILO in resolving the global unemployment challenge for young job seekers and job creators. For further information, contact the ILO at:

www.knowaboutbusiness.org or www.ilo.org/seed

Game Objective

The objective of the game is to have teams compete to construct a model bridge using limited resources. The game requires students to work as a team to plan, design, and build the bridge with limited resources. Using experiential learning developed by Kolb (1984), teams must creatively apply entrepreneurial skills to design the bridge, reach agreement on all aspects of construction of the bridge, use the expertise of team members to construct the bridge and utilize marketing techniques to sell the model of the bridge to a wealthy real estate developer. The game can be used to reinforce the Timmons Model of the Entrepreneurial Process.

Figure 1:
Timmons Model of the Entrepreneurial Process



Timmons, J. A. (1985). *New Venture Creation*. Chicago, IL: Tata McGraw-Hill Education.

Game Design

Students are divided into teams of 4 to 7. Each team should decide on a name for their team. The instructor states that a very wealthy real estate developer wants to construct a bridge over a river for cars and trucks. Construction firms are being asked to submit designs for a model bridge that would be modern, stunning and amaze people coming into the city. The bridge must be 6 inches high, 12 inches in length and 4 inches wide so boats can pass under the bridge safely.

The bridge should be both aesthetically pleasing, but sturdy enough to support a light weight to be placed on the top of the middle of the bridge. The instructor should have a weight available at the beginning of the game so that the team members can hold the weight to understand how sturdy the bridge needs to be designed to hold the weight. Students are informed of the scoring criteria to determine the winner of the contract to construct the bridge. The criteria are as follows:

Evaluation Criteria

- **Design**: Original design of bridge (compared to finished product) 20 points
- **Quality**: Construction sturdiness (weight on top of middle of bridge). 20 points
- **Production Accuracy**: Correct height, width, length of the bridge 20 points
- **Resource Management**: Efficient/effective use of materials 20 points
- **Presentation**: Marketing presentation on quality, benefits, and design 20 points

At the start of class, pass out the Request for Proposal in Appendix A to each of the teams and discuss each of the criteria. Teams might elect one of their members to take a leadership role. Remind the students if the bridge is not sturdy, it may collapse during the evaluation when a weight is put on the middle of the bridge.

One or two students should be designated as Team Observers for each team. They would use the Observer Form in Appendix B to write comments regarding the actions and performance of the team members during the playing of the game.

Resource Mobilization

Teams are given 10-15 minutes to design a bridge on a piece of paper (give more time if needed). Each team is then provided with the same amount of building materials. Each team is provided four feet of scotch tape to use in constructing the bridge. Teams need to be very economical in using the tape. Additional tape may be provided to all the teams (at the discretion of the instructor).

Building Supplies

Materials to build the bridge include: used plastic water bottles, old newspapers and magazines, used paper, sticks, stones, etc. Each team should have the exact same amount of materials.

Building Construction

The teams have 30 to 40 minutes to construct their bridge. The teams may work in different parts of the room to hide the bridge design features from competitors. If needed, additional time for constructing the bridge may be granted by the instructor.

Marketing Pitch

Each team will have 3 minutes to make a marketing “elevator pitch” to the class and the instructor as to why their bridge should be selected.

Judging

To avoid any perceived bias, another instructor or a departmental staff member might serve as the judge for evaluating the bridge design and construction. The judge should be present during the bridge building and observe the entire game. For “measurement” purposes, the judge would need a tape measure and a weight that can be placed on the bridge to determine its durability. After evaluating all the bridges, the judge should give favorable comments about each bridge. The instructor would then announce the third place, second place and the first place winners.

Debriefing on Learning Points

The instructor would ask the team Observers to come to the front of the room and have a general discussion of the performance of the teams using their responses to the questions in Appendix B. There are two key learning objectives of this activity that should be reinforced. The first objective is to highlight the entrepreneurial process and importance of teamwork to an entrepreneurial organization. From the identification of an opportunity (market opportunity that created the need for the bridge) to teamwork (leadership, team building, and decision-making), and mobilization of resources (materials, uncertainty, competitive actions, ability to adapt, and change), the team was able to utilize the entrepreneurial process during the game. The instructor can write the main elements of the Timmons model on the board during the discussion to reinforce the model.

Second, most business activities take place within an organization. As Timmons stated, a critical ingredient for success in entrepreneurship is the entrepreneurial team (1985). Entrepreneurial leaders learn from others; they teach, adapt and change. The team leader needs to adapt to change and deal with adversity. The team must be persistence to accomplish the task of building the bridge and determined to pursue their proposed entrepreneurial venture.

Student Reactions

This activity has been done with undergraduate students, secondary students and faculty in Uganda, Ethiopia, and the United States. The feedback from the bridge building game includes the following:

- The limited time to construct the bridge put pressure on the teams to complete the task with the limited resources available.
- Your final product may not be what you originally designed it to be.
- Students learned to cope with stresses and meeting deadlines.
- Like a business, the tasks of constructing a bridge were divided among the team members.
- The game shows that team problem solving is much more effective than individual problem solving.
- Quick decisions had to be made during the game. The teams could see the results of their decisions and make changes when needed.
- Teams implemented their own meaning of creativity.
- “Wow.” My team came up with a bad design.
- The game provided many learning points related to entrepreneurship concepts previously learned and that increased the instructional value of playing the game.
- I am definitely not going to be a bridge builder.
- Teams were able to use the entrepreneurial process to achieve their goals.

Appendix A:
Request for Proposal: Bridge Building & Design

The objective of the game is to enable students to demonstrate entrepreneurial skills such as: innovative solutions, creativity, resource mobilization, and teamwork necessary to accomplish a group task. The challenge is to construct a model of a bridge using limited resources. The group needs to creatively apply skills to design the bridge, reach agreement on all aspects of the construction of the bridge, use individual personal strengths to construct the best bridge possible and utilize marketing techniques to sell the model of the bridge to a wealthy real estate developer.

Design Criteria. The area under the bridge must be 6 inches high, 12 inches in length, and 4 inches wide so boats can pass under the bridge safely. The bridge should be both aesthetically pleasing, but sturdy enough to support a weight to be placed on the top of the middle of the bridge. The bridge construction will be evaluated based on the five criteria below.

Team Members:	RATING (1to 20)* 1=poor ---- 20=excellent					COMMENTS
BRIDGE BUILDING CRITERIA <20 points>	1	5	10	15	20	
Design: Original bridge design and attractiveness (compared to finished product)						
Quality: Construction sturdiness, ability to handle the weight.						
Production Accuracy: Accurate height, width, length of the bridge specifications.						
Resource Mobilization: Efficient and effective use of resources and materials						
Presentation: Marketing presentation to client about the quality, benefits, and design of the bridge (limit 5 minutes)						
OVERALL COMMENTS ON PROJECT	Overall Score					

Appendix B:
Observer Form

During the playing of the game, your task is to record your observations of the team as they are in the process of designing and constructing the bridge. These observations might include the following:

Teamwork

- How did the team divide the tasks and why was teamwork an important part of this activity?
- How was the team leader determined and did the team work effectively with the team leader throughout the process?
- To what extent did all the team members contribute equally to the task and how would you rate the ability of the members to work as a team?

Innovative Design and Problem Solving

- How did the team handle problems related to the design and construction of the bridge?
- If you were part of the team, in what ways would you have improved the design and construction of the bridge?
- In what ways was the team innovative and creative while playing this game?

Resource Mobilization

- To what extent were the construction resources (tape, paper, etc.) used efficiently and how well did the team operate with the resource constraints?

Elevator Pitch

- How did the team prepare for the marketing elevator presentation and why is the ability to communicate critical to marketing elevator pitch presentation?

Entrepreneurial Process

- In what specific ways was this game an example of the entrepreneurial process?

References

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. *1*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

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The Lambert Memo Exercise

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Abstract:
Finding a project that engages soft skills, real world practices, and entreprenuerial mindset while helping students to create a tangible project to use as a platform to a better job or internship.

Keywords: Community Engagement, Soft Skills, Memo, Service Learning

Manuscript Subject Area: College classroom engagement, learning, and structure.

Manuscript Subject Topic: Bringing the service learning environment and the "real world" together to create unique project results.

Student Level: Undergraduate (First or Second Year)

Time Require: 3 Hours/Week

Recommended Number of students: 30

When college educators receive a submission from a student, there is no doubt that some cringing might take place. The texting, short e-mail format, and interactive gaming displays continue to rewards quick and often incorrect conversation pieces. What should be good papers disappears into a sea of grammar and punctuation mistakes leading to a low grade.

This is the challenge I saw when approaching business students. Their intentions were good, but their submissions were terrible. It was time to help the students understand that concise, well presented work was not that challenging. More importantly, it was necessary for them to see that the "real world" demands this sort of response items. Enter the Memo Exercise, in which the expectations are for good writing, a result driven report that shows growth within the class, and a way to monitor those who might be struggling.

Throughout the course of the semester, students are challenged to report their progress to me on various topics. Most of the service learning courses that are run tend to be group work based. That said, you don't necessarily need to have a group project running in order to implement this system.

Most recruiters and employers are seeking candidates that can write, present, and speak well. For numerous reasons, we have seemed, as educators, to move more towards testing and less towards what has commonly become known as "21st Century Skills." These "skills," formerly known as "soft skills" or "people skills," seems to have fallen by the wayside. In an ironic twist, today's companies demand concise and accurate submissions versus that of broad responses. This exercise allows the faculty member to challenge the class in a whole new way.

Step 1:

Find some small assignments that can easily be replaced that still carries the weight of the points and length so that the class still meets all standards set by the department. This might be take home assignments, postings to Blackboard, or a low point quiz. For my classes, we do five memos a semester. This is in replacement of five low point assignments.

Step 2:

Let the students stumble just a little bit. Don't mandate a particular form. Let them search it out using Word, Google, and other business tools. Remember, most employers are going to have their own set form, which the student (then hopefully employee) will learn to tool to the company's liking.

Step 3:

Make the Memo assignments at least two pages long. Make sure they have the proper header. Allow them to double space everything, which won't make the assignment too daunting. Most importantly, make sure they have some fun with this. It is supposed to be a way for them to teach you about how they're doing in the class as much as it is about you helping them become more proficient writers.

Step 4:

The grading process needs to be two-fold. First, you need to make sure grammar, punctuation, and spacing are all properly presented. Second, you want to make sure they're showing you progress. As you go through the grading, look for their questions and concerns. As you draw near to the end of the submissions, make sure they have less questions and more answers. Allow them to show you that they understand the importance of timely submissions and accurate reporting.

Teaching the Dynamic Nature of the Business Model Canvas

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Abstract

The business model canvas has become an integral element of modern entrepreneurship education. While much has been developed to aid students in understanding how to fill out the nine sections of the business model canvas, the dynamic nature of the tool is often lost. This is a major gap in learning outcomes, as the dynamic nature of the business model canvas is a key benefit and a differentiator over the traditional business plan. To fill this gap, we propose an experiential exercise to map out the pivots of the venture described in Diana Kander's All in Startup.

Keywords: Business model canvas

Subject Area: Business model

Subject Topic: Business model canvas

Student level: Undergraduate

Time Required: 50 minutes

Recommended Number of Students: 12 – 40

The Concept

Before this exercise can be implemented, students must have some knowledge of the general workings of the business model canvas and its nine elements. There are many outlets for instructors to provide this content, which include thousands of online videos, case studies, and books on the subject (e.g. Blank & Dorf, 2012; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010). For the point of this exercise and to understand the human side of the business model canvas, students will need to read Diana Kander's (2014) book, *All in Startup*. This novel details the story of an entrepreneur working to find a business model for his venture. Thanks to the expert guidance of an experienced mentor, the main character tries a number of different business model iterations to make his business work. Through the narrative, readers are not only exposed to iterations of business models, but are also exposed to the thinking behind those pivots, how they are tested, and the result. By having students retell the story by mapping out the initial business model, pivots, and final business model, the students experience the dynamic nature of the business model canvas and the thought processes of why the pivots had to occur. We also add an advanced version of this exercise to have students do their own customer interviews to see if they would have another pivot to the business model not discussed in the book.

After reading the book, students will have gotten to know the main character's original business model, the pivots that occurred to do customer interviews, and the final business model. In cross-disciplinary teams of two or three individuals, give each team five minutes to fill out the business model canvas for the main character's original business model of ReBicycle. See Image #1 of the original business model of an online-only retailer for high-end bikes sold direct to consumers. Next, for three minutes, select two or three teams to share their canvas to make sure all teams have correctly filled out the original business model. From this, ask the students to identify the first pivot explored in the book, which is the idea to open a physical bike store to drive sales. Give teams another two minutes to make updates to the business model canvas based on this pivot. As Image #2 shows, this will change the channel, cost structure, etc. Take another three to five minutes to have other teams provide their updates to the business model canvas based on the bike store idea. However, from this pivot, have the students discuss what is going on in the story during this pivot and have them discuss why Owen thought this was a necessary pivot for ReBicycle. Lastly, have the students map out on the canvas for the business model to become a bike share supplier for cities. For the remaining time in class, have teams present their final canvas and have them reflect on: What elements of the business model changed over each pivot and why? What made the final canvas better than the first two? Are there still weaknesses or assumptions needed to be tested from the last pivot that influence other elements of the business model canvas? The focus of the discussion is to see the changes in the business model canvas over time and why those changes occurred (i.e. either from context of the story or through necessity based on the pivots). Finally, if the point is not expressed by the students, the instructor to explicitly point out the fact that this evolution occurred through the customer development process.

Advanced option:

Ask students to start with the initial canvas for ReBicycle and create their own iterations. What else would they try to correct the failing business model? How could they validate these changes in the real world? What kind of interviews would they have to conduct to test their assumptions? The advanced version of this exercise could take a number of weeks to

implement in class in order to give students the proper amount of time to conduct interviews outside of class. Students should find ways to conduct at least 5-10 interviews to test each of their changes to the canvas.

Student Reactions

Drawing the changes on the whiteboard allowed the class to see how the business model canvas boxes affected each other. Every pivot would result in a change in a box so if customer segment changed then revenue stream would likely too. If we had just read the book rather than learn visually I would not have thought of the boxes as intertwined.

Although we did a case study, I really liked using the book to map out ReBicycle's pivots because I knew the back story of why Owen had those thoughts and made certain decisions. I didn't get those connections from the case, but got it much more through the narrative of the story.

ReBicycle has been an excellent corollary to keep in the back of my mind while I plan my own venture. The mapping of the business model canvas seemed relatively tangential at first and I was skeptical of its long-term benefit towards individual venture creation. After doing several examples and mapping out my own, I began to see that it is a useful tool in identifying assumptions and making sure all bases are covered before launch. Reading about and capturing the pivots of ReBicycle helped me see the fluidity of the business model canvas.

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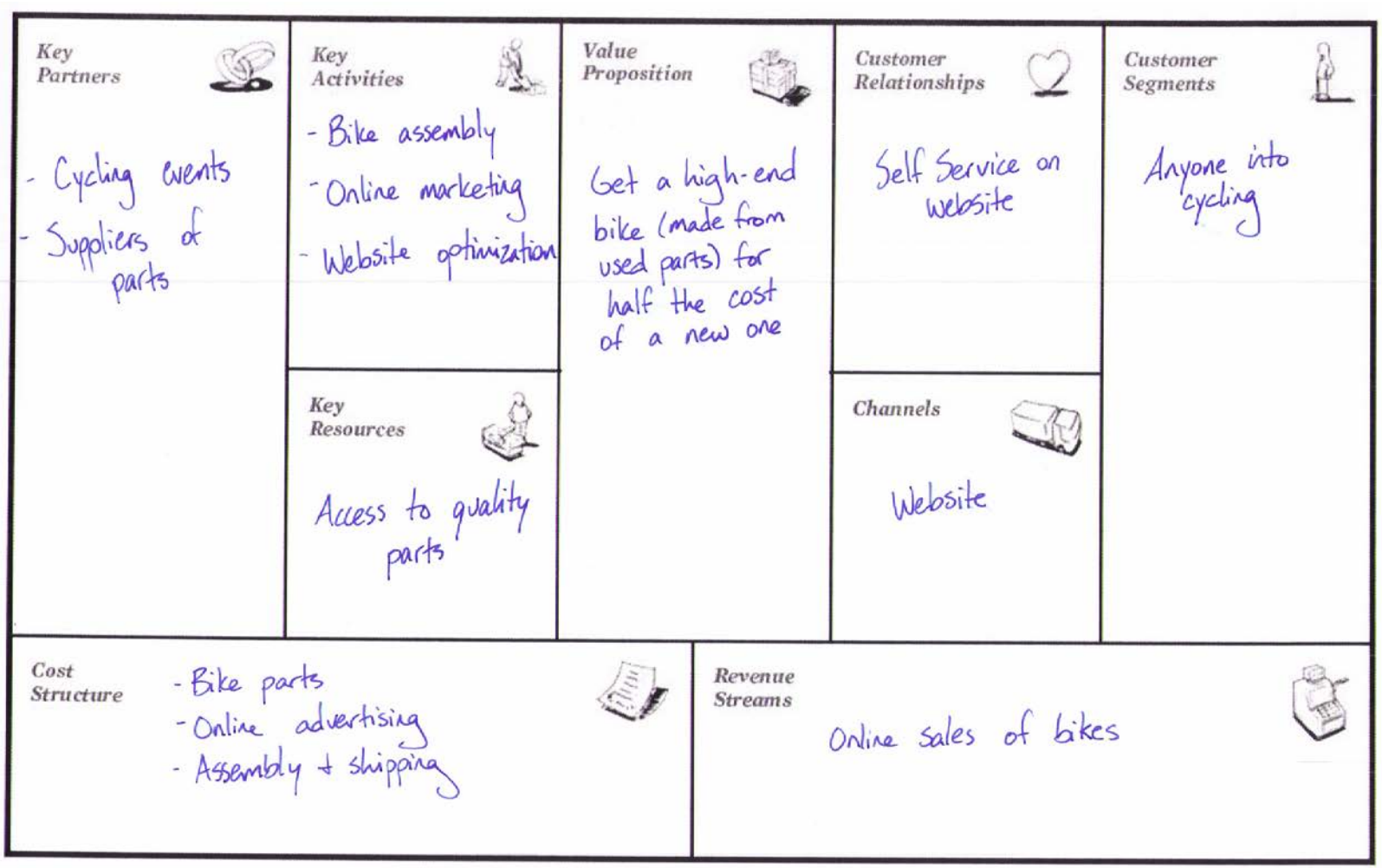
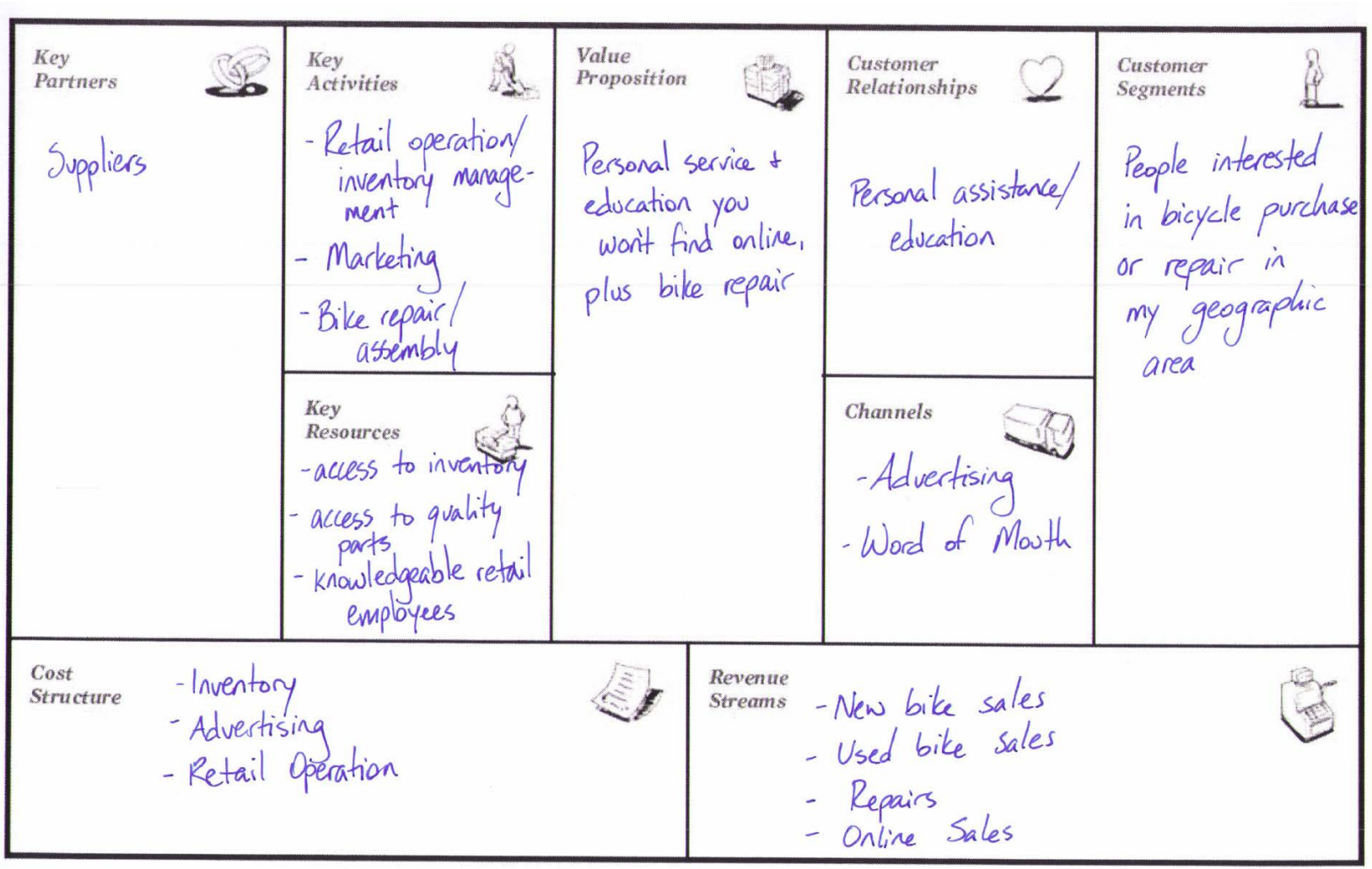


Idea #1 ReBicycle



Idea #2: Bike Shop

Key Partners

- Quality suppliers

Key Activities

- Bike assembly
- Sales

Key Resources

Access to large volume of consistent parts

Value Proposition

customized bikes that meet bike share build specs and can be produced in the US for competitive price

Customer Relationships

Custom-built inventory

Channels

- Referral / Word of mouth
- Thought leadership
- Sales staff

Customer Segments

public & private bike share prog. operators

Cost Structure

- Bike parts
- Assembly + Shipping
- Commercial space

Revenue Streams

- Large volume sales
- Repair contracts

Idea # 3: Bike Share Supplier