

This eBook is released under Creative Commons [Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license.
This eBook is produced as part of the mvpdesign.co project, backed by [Lifelhack](https://lifelhack.com)

INTRODUCTION



MVP Design is an enquiry into how we best craft Minimum Viable Products to be potent tools for learning, as well as delivering customer value.

This is a practical guide for entrepreneurs and product designers who need to understand what an MVP is, how to go about designing it, and want a way to share the concept with other people.

We believe that you can build better MVP's if you understand the core puzzle pieces which make up a minimum viable product, and visualise them so you can talk about them with your team, advisors or investors.

We believe you can build your MVP design capability over time better if you have a repeatable process to start from and improve upon with other entrepreneurs, innovators and product designers.

This eBook outlines what we've learnt whilst building our own MVP's, as well as supporting early stage entrepreneurs and their ventures through our work on [Lifehack](#). It's a collection of our learnings and insights, not an instruction guide which will automagically make your startup succeed - that will come from you and the quality of the people around you in your team, mentors, investors and advisory.

The MVP Design Process eBook is broken into three main sections;

- MVP Definitions from leading startup thinkers
- A Practical Guide to the MVP Design Process
- The MVP Design Canvas



DEFINITIONS



Here are what the leading Startup thinkers say about Minimum Viable Products:

"In product development, the minimum viable product (MVP) is the product with the highest return on investment versus risk. The term was coined and defined by Frank Robinson, and popularized by Steve Blank, and Eric Ries"

Wikipedia "[Minimum Viable Product](#)"

"Think about an MVP as a series of small experiments you're running in front of customers to elicit their responses about features, pricing etc. You're trying to use these MVP's to get learning. An MVP is not a smaller version of your full product."

Steve Blank, "[Getting the MVP Right](#)"

"The minimum viable product is that version of a new product which allows a team to collect the maximum amount of validated learning about customers with the least effort."

Eric Reis, "[Minimum Viable Product Guide](#)"



"A Minimum Viable Product is the smallest thing you can build that delivers customer value (and as a bonus captures some of that value back)."

Ash Maurya, "[Practice Trumps Theory: Minimum Viable Product](#)"

What can we learn from these definitions?

We interpret these definitions to tell us a number of key things:

- 1. Our MVP is not just a stripped back version of our full product vision.*
- 2. Our MVP is a vehicle for learning something about our product or business model.*
- 3. Our MVP must provide value to our users or customers.*
- 4. We should be capturing value from the experiment - but it wont always be financial.*
- 5. We need to think about what we need to learn, what will create value, and how we will deliver both of these in one coherent experience for a customer/user.*

We will be focusing on this fifth point to lead us into action for the rest of the eBook.

There are some key terms used which you may want to explore further:

- [Experiments](#)
- [Validated Learning](#)
- [Customer Value](#)



THE DESIGN PROCESS



Context

The MVP Design Process is intended for use with Startup Experiments which are part of a suite of tools spanning from the Lean Canvas to Validation Boards to help you identify what are the riskiest parts of your business model.

Once you understand which assumptions are the riskiest ones you have made ([we highly suggest this free short course by Ash Maurya about this](#)), you are ready to create a Startup Experiment to test this assumption. Your Experiment may be a prototype, an interview, a landing page, or some other approach - but if you're ready to build your MVP, then you can use the following design process.

We suggest using a Lean Stack Experiment learning sheet (we use the one from LeanStack) to do the following:

1. Provide some background to what you're trying to learn
2. Identify the learning outcome of the experiment in the form of a hypothesis
3. Plan the metrics which you will need to collect to (in)validate your experiment hypothesis
4. Explain how the experiment will run

Step 4 of the Experiment process is where the MVP Design Process picks up, as it's easy to get lost in the mindset of building something you want to build, instead of building an MVP that will deliver the learning you need whilst creating value for your user/customer. There's a [great article from Steve Blank about the difference here](#).

STOP. THINK. IS THIS REALLY THE **MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT**?



A Lean Startup Experiment Example

Experiment: #1 : Tailored Volunteer Listings

Due Date: 31/03/15

<p>Background: <i>What are you trying to achieve?</i></p> <p>We need to test the assumption that people would sign up for volunteer activities if they could find something relevant to them.</p> <p>Need to assess what is important to them in this experience.</p>	<p>Results: <i>Enter the data</i></p>
<p>Falsifiable Hypothesis: <i>Your statement on expected outcome of the event. The formula is !Specific Repeatable Action! will !Expected Measurable Outcome!</i></p> <p>By creating an MVP where people can get tailored volunteer activities for their specific profile, we will get a 10% click through rate to book onto the activity.</p>	<p>VALIDATED INVALIDATED</p> <p>Learnings: <i>What (new) insights do you have? What has been reinforced or disproved?</i></p>
<p>Experiment Details: <i>How will you set up and run the experiment? For whom? In what context?</i></p> <p>Create a MVP which enables:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. "Volunteer Abby" (our persona) who is looking online2. Enable them to build a profile3. Enable them to get a tailored listing of events and activities (done by a human)4. Allow them to book the activity immediately (done by a human)	<p>Next Experiment: <i>What will you do next? Will you pivot or persevere?</i></p>

Experiment sheet adapted from LeanStack by Lifehack // find out more at leanstack.com & lifehackhq.co

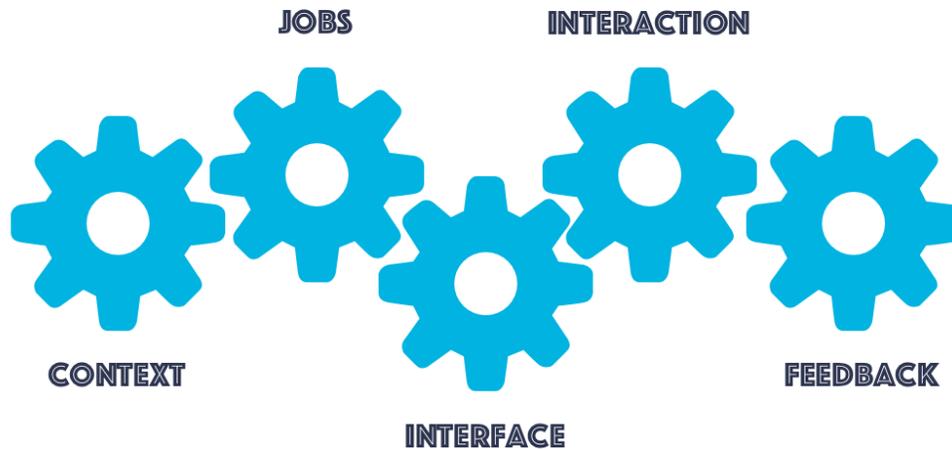
Filling out this sheet enables us to take the work we've done already on understanding user needs (*tailored volunteer activities*), and wrap it around a core assumption we highlighted (*they will sign up directly for the activities*).

What this experiment sheet still doesn't tell us, is exactly what that MVP actually looks and feels like, and we don't have a cohesive plan as to how we're going to build it to share with our team our advisors.



Mapping The MVP Design Process

The stages of the process which you need to go through to design your MVP are as follows:



User Context:

This is the context which your user will be using the MVP, with a particular focus on how they will be introduced to it and engage with it.

Example: User persona "Abby", already signed up on landing page, we will email her with opportunity to join alpha trial and a link.

User Jobs:

These are the specific things they will do, read, interact with, buy or other kinds of jobs they need to get done. In short, it's the content.

Example: Build a profile, receive tailored listing, book a place on one of the activities.

User Interface:

This is the medium that you will use to deliver the content - it could range from face-to-face, through to a simple web page, or even email, print or letters.



Example: Use a survey tool to get their profile details, then use Email to send them a tailored volunteer listing, and a simple "Book Now" button / web link for bookings.

User Interaction:

This is the way in which users will be able to communicate with you throughout the MVP experience. It could include things like user forums, email, twitter and a range of other ways.

Example: Email for any simple questions, skype if they want to have a chat about the activities or if they are unclear on how to book.

User Feedback:

This is the way(s) in which you will gain the insights and learnings you're trying to obtain. This could include a wide variety of approaches from observation, to interviews, to web analytics, surveys and much more.

Example: "Book Now" button clicks, 1-5 Rating Scale and a face to face interview.



THE CANVAS

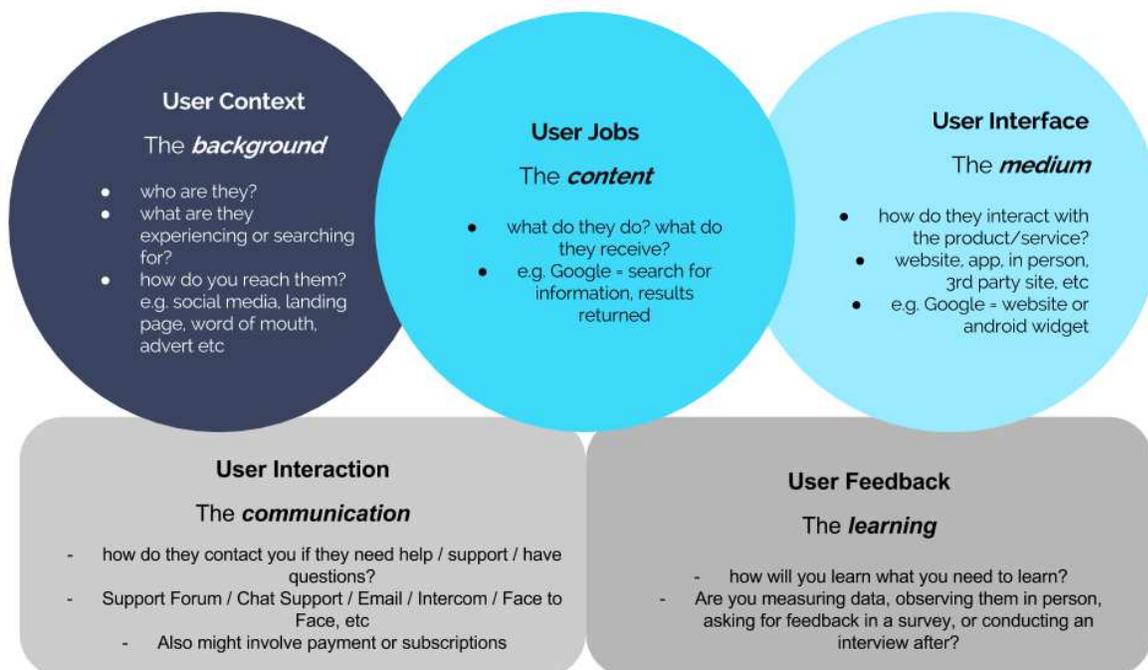


Much like Business Planning, we could all write 10 page plans for each MVP, but that's over the top. The Business Model Canvas and subsequently the Lean Canvas, helped us realise that simple, lightweight planning tools which get the ideas out of our head onto the page are incredibly valuable.

We've been doing the same thing with MVP Design for nearly a year now - using a simple structure to get words and pictures down on paper so people can share them, talk about them more concretely and build, change and improve different modules of their MVP.

Here is version 1.2 of our MVP Design Canvas:

The model of a User's Experience of a Product/Service *for use in MVP, Prototyping, and Experiment formation*



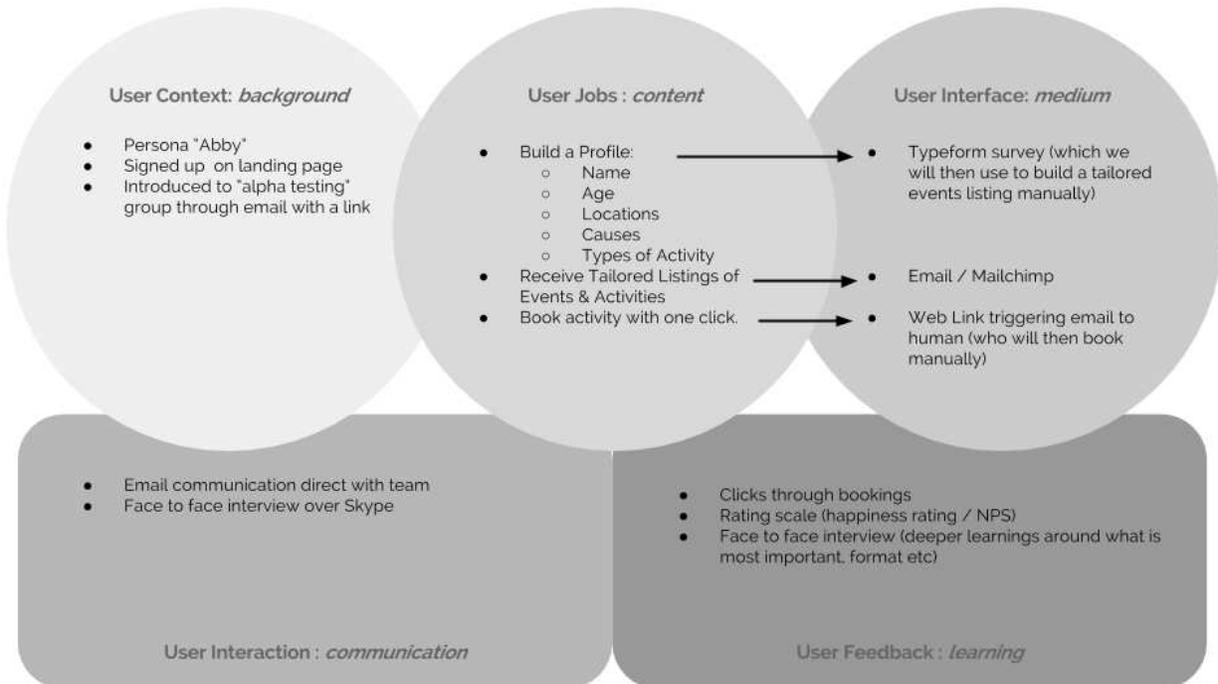
Version 1.2 - Created by *Lifehack* - <http://lifehackhq.co>



This eBook is released under Creative Commons [Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license.

A MVP Design Canvas Example

MVP Name: Tailored Volunteer Listings Date: 31/03/15



MVP Design Canvas v 1.2 - Created by [Lifhack](#)

You can see we've pulled in the information from the design process into the visual model, and can now share and talk about this with other people.

How this typically works is that someone might share that they think maybe something isn't quite right in one of the sections - such as the User Interface, and then they can suggest a change. Such as instead of Emailing the tailored listings, perhaps it should be a simple web page - this can then be debated by the team and then reminding ourselves that we want to keep this **minimal**, this is good enough as we will get the information we need from keeping this simple.

We've found that it gives us structure to have more robust discussions about what we really need, what we can strip out, and makes sure we've ticked the boxes on ensuring we'll get what we want to learn, whilst also creating something of value for our users.



Get Your Own Canvas

We want to enable you to use this process, so we're sharing the MVP Design Canvas for the price of a post to your social networks.

Along with the process outlined above, we hope you enjoy our MVP, which we've design and built using our own process and canvas. Please feel free to point them to our [MVP Design website](#) or share this eBook with them directly.

DOWNLOAD THE CANVAS

If you would like to know more about the thinking behind this work, or speak to the founders, [get in touch on twitter](#).

Bonus Content

We have also written a resource about Prototypes, MVP's and Experiments which may appeal to some entrepreneurs, innovators & product managers, as well as Accelerator & Incubator Program leads. Download it here:

EXPERIMENTS, PROTOTYPES & MVP'S



A Note From The Author

Kia ora,

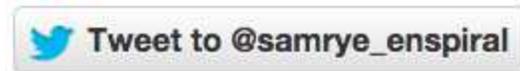
Thanks for reading this far, that's no mean feat, but who said entrepreneurship was going to be easy?!

It's been a privilege to have been working on supporting ventures through [Lifehack](#) and [Enspiral](#) over the last few years, as well as helping out at programs like [Live The Dream](#) and [Innes48](#).

I'm stoked to be able to share some of the learnings and insights from all that mahi, back into the startup community which I have been a part of for about 5 years now. I think a lot about what I could have done differently in my last startup, how we can bring startup culture into our current work, and how my [current & future projects](#) can go better/faster/further.

I don't think of this eBook as a final authority on MVP Design, so much as an MVP itself and a starting point. MVP Design is in permanent beta, and I hope people can remix, reuse and share their learnings with the wider community. That's why I've released this first version of the eBook with a Creative Commons license.

I look forward to hearing whether the process and canvas work for you - contact me on twitter or shout me a coffee and tell me what you liked, didn't like and how it could be improved?



Nga mihi,

[Sam Rye](#)

co-Lead at [Lifehack](#)

