

Public Summary - Customer Development of Learn with Locals

This research applied the method of customer development of Steve Blank (Blank 2005) on the online language platform called Learn with Locals (LWL). The customer development method exists of four phases; customer discovery, customer validation, customer creation and company building. Customer Development is a lean way to create a start-up. The idea will be validated with the customer to see if it has potential, rather than just spending money on it, before knowing if it is going to work. Learn with Locals is an idea for an online language teaching platform. Expats in the Netherlands could learn Dutch on this platform through interest-based conversations in an affordable way, unlike traditional language courses. Learn with Locals was still an idea when this assignment started. Therefore, it was necessary to see if this idea was a solution to a problem the target group was experiencing.

The focus has been on the first two of the four phases of customer development, because for the last two phases the product should be almost completely finished, which is not the case for Learn with Locals. The goal of the first phase (customer discovery) is all about figuring out who your customers are and whether the problem you are creating a solution for is also important to them. This has been done by using different techniques such as market research and conducting interviews with different expats and teachers. On the basis of all the gathered information the personas were created, four different personas for the expats and tutors. In the customer validation phase the focus personas have been chosen through an internal validation session to see which persona fitted the best with the value proposition. The brainstorm session was done internally on the basis of the created personas because the product was not finished yet to validate it with the customers. In this phase, more information is gathered about the company's standards and values, but also about the future. This has been done by creating a product plan, channel strategy and a value proposition. With the business-to-business buyer journey map it has become clear how to target the focus persona in the future, by looking into the process they go through when buying a product. Furthermore, a list of requirements have been created out of all the conducted research for the online platform.

In addition to the customer development some brand awareness has to be generated, also to be able to gather expats that could be interviewed. Therefore, content had to be created for the platform. To create consistent valuable content a content strategy is formulated. The content strategy phase is about how to create content for your target audience based on research. The goal with the content creation was to at least reach 50 expats in the Netherlands, create some awareness and build a community. This was done by creating content for Instagram, Facebook, Reddit and TikTok.

The research has been concluded with recommendations for the future of Learn with Locals and answers on the formulated research questions, based on all the given insights.

reference

Blank, Steven. 2005. "The Path to Epiphany: The Customer Development Model." The four steps to Epiphany 1 (1): 17-29. <https://web.stanford.edu/class/archive/engr/engr140a/engr140a/cgi-bin/MFP/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Session-4-Customer-Development.pdf>, accessed 20 June 2021.