

# **Planning For Success With Your Sideline**

By Sideline Teammates

There are numerous theories about how to effectively plan for success with your Sideline. What's important is that you craft an initial approach that works for you, refine it, and confidently depend on it until you see a reason to modify or replace it.

Here are two widely supported planning approaches that large and small organizations use successfully: a) trial-and-error; and b) business modeling

## **Trial-and-Error**

This planning approach applied to Sidelines would say that you develop a minimal version of your product or service idea and try it out in a small way, with a very limited customer outreach. Then after you field-test your idea, you modify your results, and field-test it again with a similar sized approach or slightly larger. With successive iterations of your idea, you build in additional design features, test them with consumers, over and over again until you have a much better idea about who are your preferred customers, what they most want, and your ability to meet their quality demands. If you were starting an on-call bicycle repair service near campus and used the trial-and-error approach you might experiment with 4-5 different service offerings and on-call approaches until you found the one that seemed to garner the most traction.

## **Business Modeling**

This approach is a much more systematic, contemporary, and uses a more inclusive picture of key factors that jointly interact to impact implementation of your idea. It is also called the Business Canvas model. It is popular nowadays because it looks at the entire scope of your idea and tries to illustrate on one visual chart, you're your different Sideline components can work in concert to make your idea viable. Attached is a sample Business Canvas for a "personal sideline" developed by an author.

## **Effective Planning Tips**

Here are other tips that can help you better plan the work so you can work the plan:

Be Effective – carefully review what your research shows is the right thing to do

Seek Efficiency – do things right, once you know what are the right things to do

Become clear and agreed as much as possible with stakeholders [customers, helpers, suppliers] about what mutually matters to all of you

Assess customer ideas of quality by noticing how they vote with their feet

Pay constant attention to external and internal factors that can help or hurt

**Planning does not equal Decision Making**

One more important dimension of planning is how it differs from decision-making. A plan is what you do before making a committed decision to act. Sadly, many Sidelines never move past the planning stage, regardless of which approach you choose. The author William James once said there are three dimensions of decision-making which distinguish it from planning: a) is the decision alive? b) is the idea being discussed monumental?, and c) is the action forced? For James, true decision-making always involves topics that are alive, monumental and forced – that you can't put off any longer. Otherwise you're doing planning or simply contemplating ideas, with no intended action. Planning is very helpful for developing a realistic action plan but only when you actually set a launch deadline and garner your first customer have you moved past planning to decision-making.