New Business Models and Strategies for Lexicography

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Introduction & Problem

This poster outlines and discusses a number of theoretical considerations on new business models and strategies for lexicography. The poster is based on selected empirical data produced during an ELEXIS transnational research visit at Kdictionaries in Tel Aviv in December 2018. The research visit at Kdictionaries produced a number of research interviews with experts from all over the world and some valuable insights produced during the action research conducted at Kdictionaries. The action research at Kdictionaries was designed and conducted together with and involving my host. A total of four business model innovation workshops were carried out during the research visit.

The poster is based on the hypothesis that *"lexicographic data are neither sufficiently integrated in job-related tools nor sufficiently integrated with or related to the tasks that we solve"*, cf. Simonsen (2017b:407).

Lexicography as a business activity has been facing serious challenges for the past 15 years and both private and public lexicographic companies are standing on a burning platform.

However, surveys conclude that a very large majority of lexicographic companies and organizations still seem to be clinging to the past and lack new business models and new strategies, cf. Simonsen (2017b). Very few lexicographic companies have a clear business strategy let alone a business model. And if you do not have a clear strategy for how you intend to create value and to whom, you are in dire straits. In other words, we are standing on a burning platform and radical innovation is needed.

It all starts (and ends?) with the core competencies of the company or organization, cf. Hamel & Prahalad (1994:227), who make a very strong case for the correlation between business success and the right mix of core competences. Interviews and consultancy tasks have clearly demonstrated, cf. Simonsen (2017a) that it all starts with the Board and the Management.

If they fail to realize that they themselves need new core competences then the problem will persist, and when nobody at management level has the required skill set to formulate a business strategy, to develop the value proposition, to develop a business model or to develop an effective sales strategy then it will eventually lead to total disruption of the company or organization in question.

The objective of this poster is to discuss a number of theoretical considerations on new business models and strategies for lexicography based on selected insights from 45 interviews.

Methodology and empirical data

This poster and my research in business models in lexicography are based on semi-structured research interviews with experts in a number of fields and on insights from extensive practical experience with action research in lexicographic companies

The empirical basis thus consists of 45 interviews of experts in lexicography, terminology, language technology, text assistants, speech-to-text services, business development, artificial intelligence, educational technology, publishing, etc. to gain insights in and knowledge of different business models and different strategies.

The empirical basis of this poster also consists of action research insights from a large number of consultancy tasks in boards, managements and companies on strategy development and business development.

Theory

This poster is based on the Value Proposition Canvas, cf. Osterwalder et. al (2014) and the Business Model Canvas theories, cf. Osterwalder & Pigneur (2010).

In addition to that the poster is also based on a number of other theories from business development, innovation and strategy.

All interviews and consultancy tasks have been based on the Value Proposition Canvas below, because it is the basis of most business decisions. I have asked all interview persons about value creation and about their value proposition, which appears after having analyzed the Customer profile on the right hand side and the Product profile on the left hand side, see also the Value Proposition Canvas in Figure 1 below.
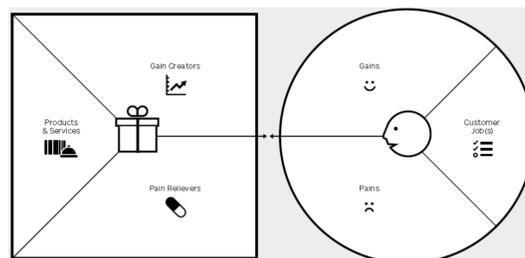

Figure 1. Value Proposition Canvas

After having identified the value proposition of the lexicographic product or service, the Business Model Canvas shown below in Figure 2 can be used to develop your own business model.

During the majority of the interviews relevant sections from the Business Model Canvas have been discussed and very often it very quickly became clear that this is not a one-size-fits-all discipline. We need to develop and tailor-make the business model to our own company or our own organization. The Business Model Canvas, cf. Osterwalder & Pigneur (2010) is for example very useful when analyzing, identifying and specifying who, what, where, when – and when operationalizing how you intend to create value and with/to whom. See the nine important fields/considerations to go through/make when developing your business model in Figure 2 below.
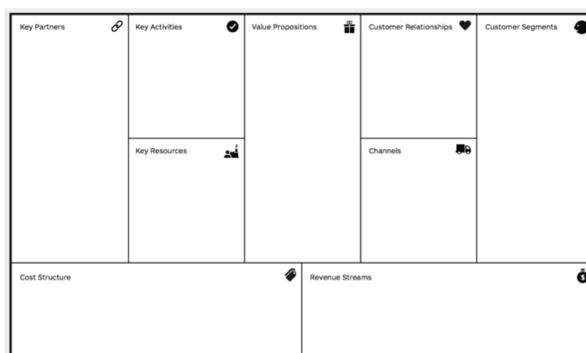
Figure 2. Business Model Canvas

After having identified the value proposition of the lexicographic product or service, the Business Model Canvas below can be used to develop your own business model. During the majority of the interviews relevant sections from the Business Model Canvas have been discussed with the interviewees and very often it very quickly became clear that this is not a one-size-fits-all discipline. We need to develop and tailor-make the business model to our own company or our own organization and use the model above when analyzing, identifying and specifying who, what, where, when – and when operationalizing how we intend to create value and with/to whom.

In addition to these general models on business models, I have also chosen to include theoretical considerations on digital business models, cf. also Weill & Woerner (2018). Weill & Woerner (2018) argue that *"enterprises won't succeed by tweaking the management practices that lead to past success"* and that *"businesses of all sizes will need to reinvent themselves and substantially change their organizations, including their business models, people, structures, critical competencies, and cultures"*. This argument was also clearly put forward by Simonsen (2017a). In a digital world disruptions can come from all sides, including from new entrants, new business models from traditional competitors and from enterprises crossing industry.

Analysis and Discussion

It is important to remember that it is not possible to develop a one-size-fits-all business model. This is a very complex question and each market, service, country, language and technology should be taken into account. Lexicography as a business activity has so far not at all embraced the digital opportunities, and according to my research very few companies and organizations have a proper digital business model.

Interviews and consultancy tasks also indicate that most companies and organizations in lexicography may be characterized as "suppliers", cf. Weill & Woerner (2018). This means that they are part of a value chain they cannot control and they have no or only partial control of the end customer. This means that they underperform on measures such as customer experience, time to market, revenue growth and net profit margin, which makes them even more vulnerable.

We need to develop new digital business models and we need to rethink our value proposition. We should strive for becoming ecosystem drivers instead of remaining dispensable suppliers. In addition to that, my research also seems to have produced the following insights that may eventually be developed into proper business models

The many interviews and consultancy tasks seem to indicate that lexicography in both privately and publicly owned businesses could be business developed by focusing more on:

- Ubiquitous, integrated, automated, effortless and flow facilitating lexicographic services, such as for example text writing assistants Grammarly, Textio or Write Assistant

- Mobile and domain-specific lexicographic services, such as for example the mobile services provided by Visioneducation or Clarify

- Community or Cloud Funded lexicographic services, such as for example Wordnik

- Domain-specific and corporate-focussed lexicographic services, such as for example Altomhus.dk

- API-delivered lexical data sets, such as for example Lexicala API

- Learning-integrated lexicographic services, such as for example MV-Nordic, Encyclopedia Britannica etc.

- Lexicographic services based on new technology such as Artificial Intelligence, Speech to Text etc. such as for example Dictus, Skype Translator etc.

Conclusions

The objectives of this poster was to discuss business models and strategies in lexicography. On the basis of a preliminary analysis of the many interviews conducted and the consultancy tasks completed it is argued that we have to develop new digital business models and rethink our value proposition. It is argued that we should strive for becoming ecosystem drivers instead of dispensable suppliers, and I would argue that mobile, ubiquitous, flow-facilitating, domain-specific and corporate-focused lexicographic services might be a way forward. Admittedly, there is so much more research to be done in this area, but lexicography not only deserves, but also needs to play a role in the information society.

Literature

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