**ENT 3003: Venture Concept Write-Up Guide**

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 As part of ENT 3003, you are required to write a short (2-page, single spaced) description of a concept for a new venture. This write-up guide describes what you should cover in your write-up, and in so doing, it also presents a recommended outline for you to follow.

The three major elements of your write-up are the (1) opportunity, (2) innovation, and (3) venture concept. You should begin your write-up with detailed descriptions of each of these elements.

**Opportunity.** An opportunity may be defined as a group of customers with unmet or under-met needs. When you describe the opportunity you have identified, you need to be sure to describe *both* (1) who has the need (i.e., who are the potential customers?) and (2) the nature of the need. Other questions you should address in this section:

***Figure 1.*** *Relationship between entrepreneurial opportunity, innovation, and the new venture concept.*

* What are the forces or changes in the environment creating this opportunity?
* How is this market defined geographically and demographically?
* How are customers currently satisfying this need? And how loyal are they to whatever they use now?
* How big is this opportunity?
* How long will the “window of opportunity” be open?

**Innovation.** An innovation may be defined as a new or creative service, product, or process that may be applied in the marketplace to address customer needs. The service, product, or process you develop in this class may be radically innovative or it may be incrementally innovative. In this section, I would like to you discuss your innovation in moderate detail. Explain what it is, what it does, and how it works. You should also describe how you will make money – in other words, what, *exactly*, are you selling and for how much? For instance, if I was starting a business to teach people how to play the piano, I would be selling an hour of my time for $50.

**Venture Concept.** A venture concept may be defined as the application of a specific innovation to address a specific opportunity. In this section, describe how your innovation will solve or address the opportunity you identified. You also want to explain why customers will buy your innovation. In describing the concept, you also want to be sure to cover issues such as:

* What are the reasons to think customers would switch to this new product? How hard will it be to get them to switch?
* Who are the competitors? What are their possible weaknesses or vulnerabilities?
* What role does packaging, your price points, distribution, customer support, the customer experience or the business location play (if any) in defining your business concept?
* How would you organize a “business” to support the ongoing production of your new product, service, or process? How many employees? What roles are in the venture?

**The three minor elements**

I also want you to cover three final elements in your description. Your treatment of these questions can be relatively short. Please focus most of your time on the opportunity, innovation, concept descriptions above.

First, describe what you think your most important resource will be. You might call this your venture’s “secret sauce” or “unfair advantage.” Besides your actual innovative product, service, or process, what will you have that will make it hard for competitors to copy your success?

Second, what’s next for the venture? Describe either the next opportunity you want to tackle with your current innovation, or describe the next new product, service, or process that may be aimed at your existing customers.

Third, what’s next for you? Assuming you launched, where do you want to be in five years with this venture? Where do you want to be, as an entrepreneur, in the next decade, and how does this first venture help you achieve your vision?

**Avoiding booby traps & helpful tips**

Here are a few common errors that students make when preparing their concept descriptions. Beware of these errors, and carefully avoid them.

1. Students talk about their innovation or concept in their description of the opportunity. When you talk about opportunity, you should talk only about your customers and their needs.
2. You can’t solve everything. Figure 1 shows how an opportunity and innovation *only partly* overlap. Your innovation won’t solve every customer’s need, and at the same time, most customers will buy your product, service, or process for part of the attributes and features it offers and ignore (or care less about) the others. Recognize these limitations, and especially don’t hesitate to indicate who your customers *aren’t.*
3. Related to No. 1, students tend to blend all three of these elements together. Be careful. Each of these elements concern unique concepts and should be described as clearly as possible.
4. Many concepts fail to provide enough detail about the three elements. The more you can fit into this description (and you’re limited to only two pages), the more in-depth the online conversations can be.
5. Students often assume that the best way to write a concept description is to use a narrative format. That’s not true. In the last two pages alone, I’ve used a picture, I’ve used bullet points, I’ve used numbered lists, and I’ve used narrative. I’ve also used bolded sub-headings, and I have italicized important words. What I care about is clear communication -- do what it takes to clearly describe your venture concept.