

From Desk to Founder:

How to Transition Into B2B Entrepreneurship in 2025

Prepared for Lean Culture

Étienne Garbugli

Author of Lean B2B & Startup Coach



Who am I?



- Author of **Lean B2B & Find Your Market**
- 3x **B2B Founder**
- Fractional **Head of Growth**
- Startup Coach



Why Be an Entrepreneur in 2025?

- To capitalize on global uncertainty
- To diversify and spread your risk
- For higher upside potential
- To leverage new foundational technologies
- Because startup costs are decreasing
- Because new sectors are still digitizing
- Because organizations have more and more needs
- Because solutions are increasingly more verticalized

Why Start Employed or as a Consultant?

- Financial security lowers risk
- Direct access to stakeholders and pain points
- Passive customer insights
- Opportunity to secure a first customer
- Learn from organizational operations
- Build a strong professional network
- Insider knowledge of competitors
- Lower stress

What Can Happen



Sisense → Gong
\$7.5B Valuation



Consulting → Retool
\$3B Valuation



Wireless Generation → Datadog
\$47B Valuation

Our Roadmap

1. Learning to See
2. Dissecting Winners
3. Mapping Your Unfair Advantages
4. Extending the Search
5. Shaping a Business Opportunity

Step 1.

Learning to See

Seeing the Opportunities in Your Work

- Why can't this...
- How come this won't...
- Couldn't this...
- If only this...
- Or other variations

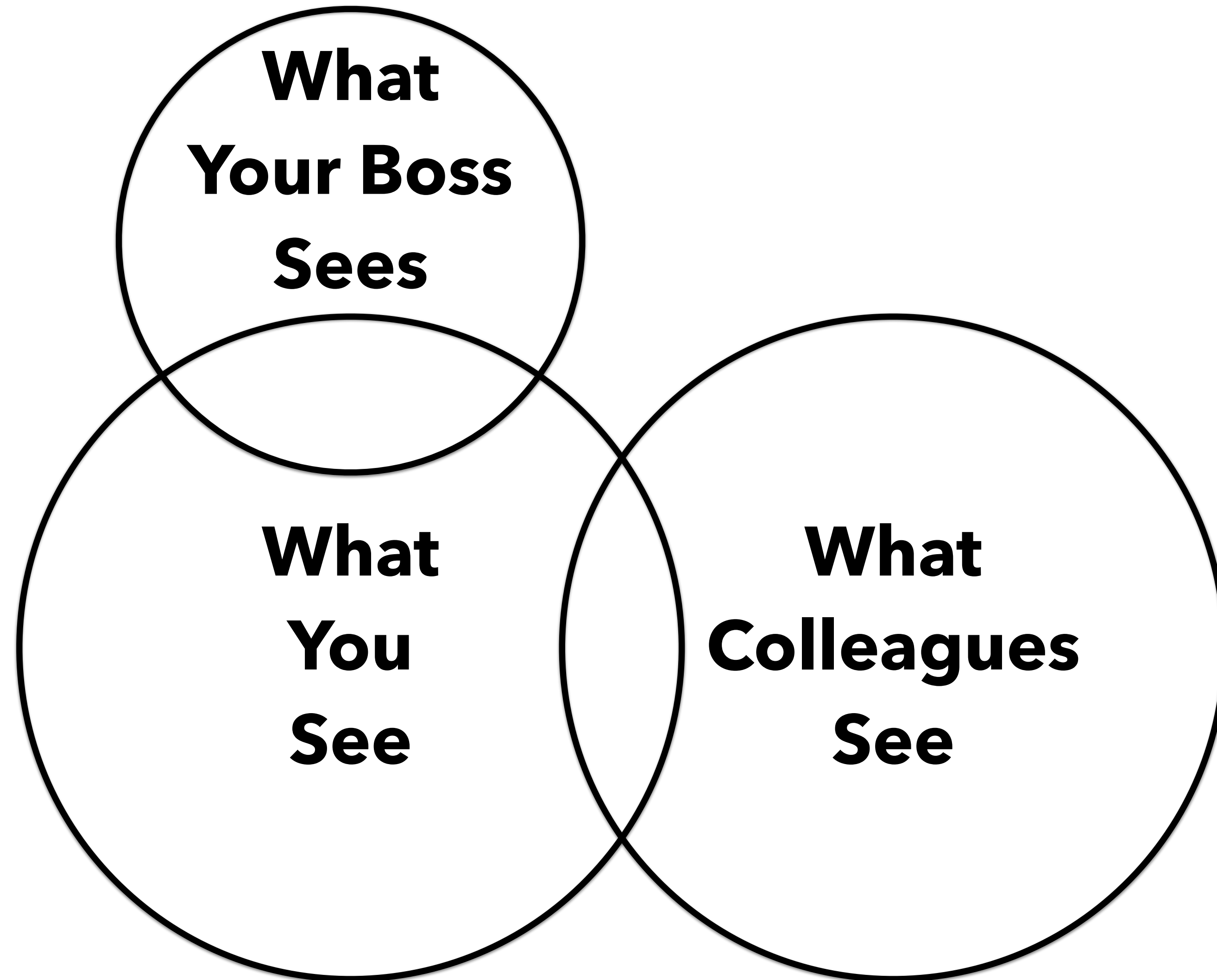
Seeing the Opportunities in Your Work

- **X** « It would be nice if this product had this other feature. »
- **X** « What if this product could also do X? »
- **X** « This *could* be useful. »

Seeing the Opportunities in Your Work

- Often: no emotion = no opportunity
- Focus on repeated pains
- Things that prevent you from achieving your objectives
- Things that impact your colleagues and managers
- Things you avoid doing altogether

Seeing What Others Are Seeing



**What
Your Boss
Sees**

**What
You
See**

**What
Colleagues
See**

Evaluating Organizational Processes

- What are the company goals? What are teams tasked with?
- What's working well? Why is it working well?
- Where are objectives struggling? Why?
- How do teams collaborate?
- Where are the gaps? What are the inefficiencies?
- What issues are getting addressed? Which do not?

Digging Into Past Decisions

- « How long have we been with _____? »
- « Do you recall why we chose that product? »
- « Had we looked at _____? »
- « This was _____'s decision? »
- « How is it so far? »

Key Ideas

- Opportunities are everywhere in our work or clients' businesses
- You can see them yourself, get them from colleagues or your manager, find them by analyzing business processes, or find them by revisiting past decisions
- You don't need to jump on any opportunities
- The important thing is to change your mindset to start seeing

Step 2.

Dissecting Winners

Mapping Paid, Kept & Cancelled

▼ Removed

Kept

▲ Added

Intercom

New Relic

Avo

AWS

Sendgrid

Amplitude

Google Cloud

customer.io

Mutiny

Stripe

Datadog

Cloudflare

Understanding the Decision

Avo

Purchased because our analytics were always a mess.

Generally satisfied, but end users are complaining about the UX.

Unlike competitors, Avo worked with Google Cloud and our full analytics setup.

Understanding the Customers

Avo

End-User

Data Analysts
Fixes bugs on the fly

End-User

Integrators
Quickly integrates in product

Customer

VP Engineering
Improves product quality and uptime

Understanding Decision-Making

Avo

Release in November broke the analytics



CEO raised issue to CTO



VP Engineering was tasked with search



3 solutions were short-listed and demoed



Key Ideas

- In the organization, you have everything you need to learn about product selection and decision-making
- Your new solution will replace or augment an existing solution
- Understanding decision-making in that space will help reveal gaps and opportunities
- It's an optional step to understand B2B product sales and selection

Step 3.

Mapping Advantages

"Use your advantages. Business doesn't reward you extra points for picking a "harder" audience."

Amy Hoy
Serial Entrepreneur



List Out Your Functional Expertises

CEO	CTO
-----	-----

List Out Your Domain Expertises

	CEO	CTO
FUNCTIONAL EXPERTISE	Product Manager (10 years)	Developer (8 years) Director of Development (4 years)

What Are Your Other Advantages?

- Businesses you own?
- Unique things you know?
- Social media presence?
- Site traffic?
- Books or publications?
- Contacts? Network access?
- Patents?
- Other?

Key Ideas

- Not all opportunities will be « good fits »
- It's a good idea to focus on opportunities you can win or have an advantage in
- Advantages come in many shapes and forms starting from your professional experiences to what you do in your personal life

Step 4.

Extending the Search

Before Moving Forward...

- Check your contract(s)
- Try to see if there are any precedents
- Speak to your client or manager
- Explain your intent
- Negotiate where possible
- Get written authorization

Weighing the Alternatives

▼ Unemployed

▲ Employed

No Income

Steady Income

Lots of Time

Little Free Time

No Prospect Proximity

More Prospect Proximity

(Often) Few Constraints

Legal Constraints

No Brand Recognition

Brand Association

High Pressure

Low Pressure

What to Do as an Employee

- Reach out to others with similar roles
- Organize informal knowledge sharing events
- Attend events where these folks might be
- Connect on social media
- Get intros from folks in similar roles to their orgs

What to Do as a Consultant

- Do the round of your existing customers
- Reach out to past customers
- Directly reach out to potential prospects
- Make your questions part of your discovery process
- Look for ways to work at customer sites
- Connect on social media

What You're Looking For

- The existence of the same or similar tasks or Jobs
- Similar pain, limitations or problems
- Expression of frustration or a desire to make a change
- Ideally, a path to revenue

Key Ideas

- You can get deep insights in your organization, but it will only be one data point
- It can be a good idea to clear up your situation before starting to engage with other organizations
- Whether you're a consultant or an employee, there are different strategies you can use to learn from other organizations
- There are very specific things you're looking for at this stage

Step 5.

Shaping an Opportunity

Identifying Jobs & Segment



Not US-Based

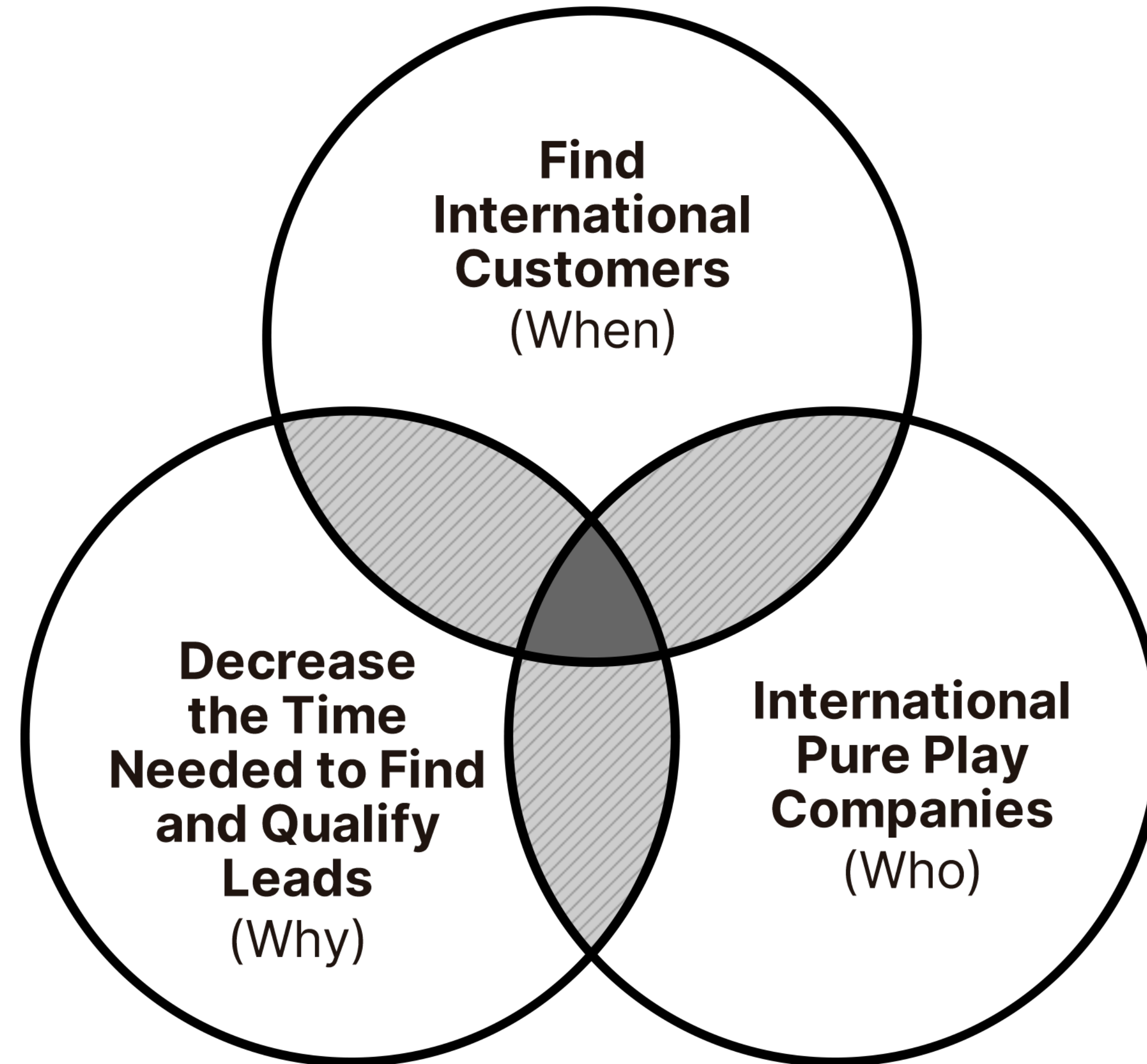
Not Self-Service

Locking in on the Differentiated Value

Find International Customers...

Faster	→	Reduce the time needed to find qualified leads
More consistently	→	-
With greater efficiency	→	Improve customer account dispatch
With greater certainty	→	Improve prospect pre-qualification
With greater results	→	Increase the number of companies identified
At a lower cost	→	Reduce false positives during qualification
With fewer risks	→	Reduce the risk of email accounts getting flagged
With more flexibility	→	Increase the number of markets available
With less downtime	→	-
With less pain	→	Reduce email deliverability issues
With less frustration	→	Reduce the need for manual data entry
Producing more revenue	→	Increase outreach email conversion rates
Producing more loyalty	→	-
With more reach	→	Increase the number of local companies identified

Selling to Learn



Finding Prospects

- Forums, Groups, & Communities
- Twitter, Bluesky & Reddit
- YouTube & Blog Post Comments
- Product Reviews
- Related Needs or Problems
- Job Posts
- Events, Conferences & Watering Holes
- Service Providers
- Investors, Accelerators, and Incubators
- Annual Reports of Public Companies
- Etc

Creating a Timeline

- Plan for iterations
- Work with timeboxes
- Understand your cashflow
- Keep momentum high

How You'll Know It Works

- You'll learn a lot more about the opportunity
- You'll get enthusiastic prospects willing to refer you
- Meetings will grow and prospects will want to organize more meetings
- (Hopefully) You'll get sales and commitments

How You'll Know It Doesn't

- You'll have difficulty sustaining the full attention of prospects
- You won't get serious referrals and opportunities will end at the full meeting
- You'll get deprioritized
- Deals won't close

Failing Forward

- Entrepreneurship is about sustaining
- You know there's at least one company for this opportunity
- Find more companies like your employer
- Or adjust and improve

Conclusion

- User entrepreneurship is perhaps the main way business opportunities have been identified in B2B
- It provides a great sandbox to learn, find opportunities, and soft land into entrepreneurship
- The major differences vs outside-in entrepreneurship are focused on how the opportunity is identified and the pre-validation process
- It's a good tactic to lower the risk of building the wrong products in B2B

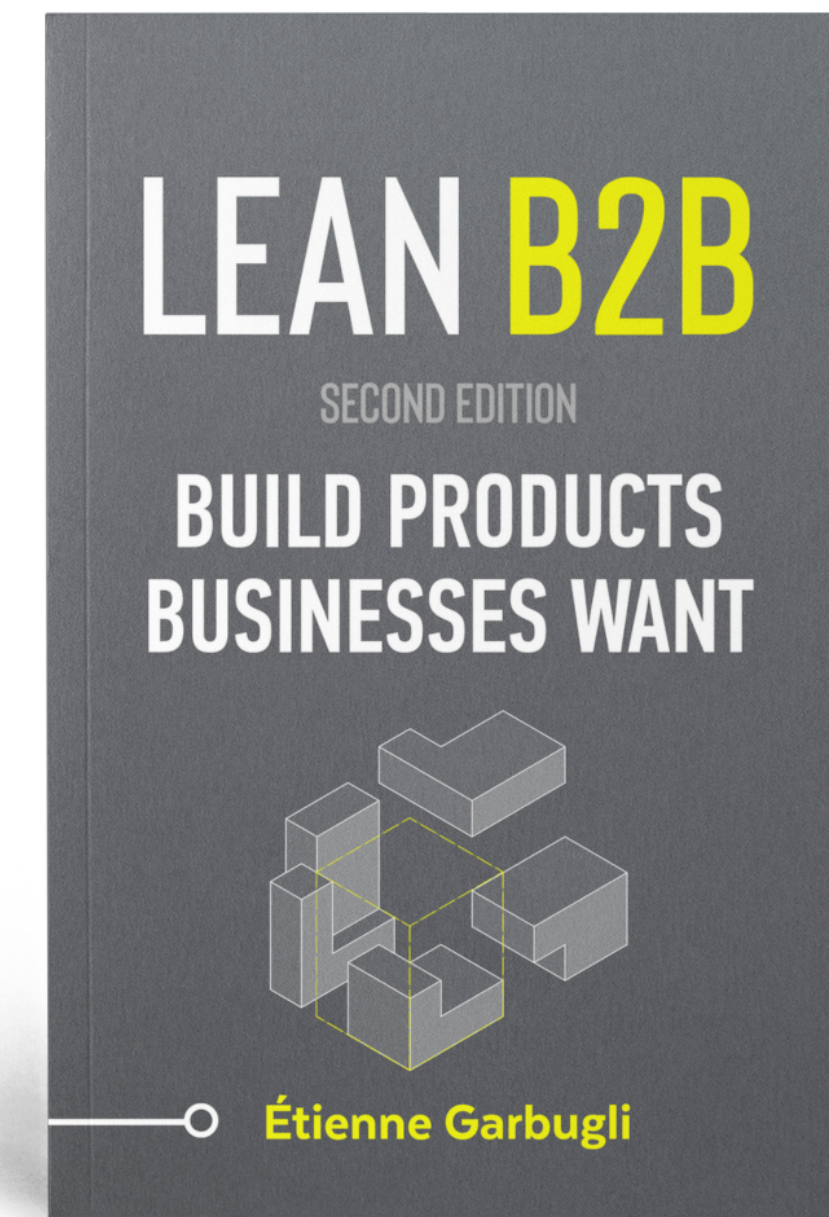
Thank You. Any Questions?

Email: etienne@leanb2b.co

Bluesky/Twitter: [@egarbugli](https://bsky.app/profile/egarbugli)

LinkedIn: [/egarbugli](https://www.linkedin.com/company/egarbugli)

Étienne Garbugli



www.leanb2b.co/coaching