

Discover Your Market: A Student Entrepreneur Project

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A free, classroom ready module that helps students explore customers, value, and early opportunity discovery.

Adapted from the work of Jon Eckhardt, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin–Madison

Understanding a market is the foundation of every strong business idea. **Discover Your Market** helps educators introduce customer discovery and opportunity exploration through a hands-on, research-informed project. Adapted from Jon Eckhardt's [original T-shirt entrepreneurship exercise for college classrooms](https://eiexchange.com/content/294-t-shirt-project-teaches-customer-discovery-to-fu) (<https://eiexchange.com/content/294-t-shirt-project-teaches-customer-discovery-to-fu>), this module brings evidence-based entrepreneurial thinking into high school settings in a way that feels practical, flexible, and classroom-ready.

What Students Learn

This module introduces students to early-stage entrepreneurial and marketing thinking through guided exploration rather than guesswork. Students practice skills they can apply across future projects, courses, and career pathways.

Students will learn how to:

- Identify and compare different customer groups
- Explore customer needs, motivations, and preferences
- Create simple customer personas
- Develop value propositions grounded in evidence
- Communicate insights using clear, professional business language

Rather than starting with a fully formed idea, students experience how opportunities develop through exploration, reflection, and iteration - mirroring how real entrepreneurs and marketers work.

What's Included (Free to Download)

Educator

Guide

(<https://eiexchange.com/api/submissions/1338/documents?file=Educator%20Resource%20Guide.pdf&download=1>) (PDF)

A clear, structured guide that supports concept introduction, classroom facilitation, and discussion. Includes pacing options for a single class session or a short multi-day project.

- Simple pacing options
- Step-by-step facilitation
- Discussion prompts & teaching tips
- Flexible for different class formats

Student

Packet

(<https://eiexchange.com/api/submissions/1338/documents?file=Discover%20Your%20Market%20-%20Overview.pdf&download=1>) (PDF)

A project-based packet that leads students through the learning objectives, project details, planning steps, and assessment expectations. Students work in teams using the corresponding project resources as they explore customer discovery, value creation, and opportunity development.

- Clear learning objectives
- Guided worksheets & activities
- Market research templates
- Reflection questions

Project

Resources

(<https://eiexchange.com/api/submissions/1338/documents?file=Discover%20Your%20Market%20Handouts%200%26%20Resources%20Packet.pdf&download=1>) (PDF)



All of the templates and tools students need to complete the lesson and project, including resources for market segmentation, customer personas, value propositions, planning, and reflection. Designed for easy digital use and printing.

- “Discover Your Market” project framework
- Simple research tools (interviews, surveys, observation)
- Print-ready or digital-friendly materials

Ready to Use

Everything is designed for easy sharing and printing, so you can use it in your classroom right away.

How the Project Works

Educators start by selecting the pathway that works best for their classroom. **Make It** focuses on a physical product, **Mock It** on a digital storefront, and **Market It** on an event or experience. Teachers can easily customize the project based on time, resources, and student interests.

Students then work in teams to explore an idea, investigate who it’s for, and clarify why it matters. Using guided resources, they identify target audiences, define customer needs, and refine their concept based on feedback, mirroring how entrepreneurs and marketers test ideas in the real world.

While the format may vary, the learning stays consistent. Students grapple with the same core questions: **Who is this for? What do they value? And how does this idea create value?** This flexible structure allows educators to adapt the experience while maintaining clear, meaningful learning outcomes.

Why Educators Use This Module

- **Research-Based, Classroom-Ready**
Built on established entrepreneurship research while remaining accessible and practical for high school learners.
- **Low-Pressure, High-Engagement**
Students explore ideas without the stress of launching a full business, allowing them to focus on understanding customers and testing assumptions.
- **Flexible for Real Classrooms**
Easily adapted to emphasize physical products, digital storefronts, or events and experiences -

depending on student interests, time, and available resources.

- **Fits Across Courses and Programs**
Works naturally in business and marketing classrooms, entrepreneurship programs, advisory periods, career pathways, and interdisciplinary settings.
- **Builds Transferable Skills**
Strengthens customer empathy, critical thinking, communication, and creative problem-solving that students can apply to future projects and pitches.

Educators often note that students stay engaged because the activity connects directly to familiar products and everyday choices. As the project progresses, students naturally shift from surface-level ideas to more thoughtful analysis rooted in customer understanding.

Download the Free Materials

The full module is available free of charge and includes the educator guide, student packet, and printable worksheets. All materials are designed to support ease of use and thoughtful implementation in a wide range of classrooms. They can be downloaded from the links at the top of this article.

- **Educator Guide**
(<https://eiexchange.com/api/submissions/1338/documents?file=Educator%20Resource%20Guide.pdf&download=1>) (PDF)
- **Student Packet**
(<https://eiexchange.com/api/submissions/1338/documents?file=Discover%20Your%20Market%20-%20Overview.pdf&download=1>) (PDF)
- **Handouts & Resources Packet**
(<https://eiexchange.com/api/submissions/1338/documents?file=Discover%20Your%20Market%20Handouts%20%26%20Resources%20Packet.pdf&download=1>) (PDF)

About the Author

This module is adapted from the work of **Jon Eckhardt, Ph.D., Pyle Bascom Professor in Business Leadership at the Wisconsin School of Business**, whose research examines entrepreneurship, opportunity discovery, and the early actions that shape new

ventures. The original T-shirt entrepreneur exercise developed in his work provides the foundation for this expanded high school module.