GROWTH DRIVEN SOLUTIONS · WHITE PAPER

Choosing Where to Play: The Market Opportunity Navigator

Decide which market to go after before you invest in how to win it.

Many startups put real effort into the wrong market. Founders refine the product and iterate the business model, but often skip the most important decision: **which market should we go after first?** Research shows that entrepreneurs spend too little time identifying opportunities and often jump at the first one that looks promising, while serial entrepreneurs compare several before committing.

The **Market Opportunity Navigator** is a free framework built to answer that question. It was developed by Prof. Marc Gruber (EPFL) and Dr. Sharon Tal (former head of the Technion Entrepreneurship Center) from 15+ years of research with hundreds of startups. It is set out in the book *Where to Play* (FT/Pearson, 2017) and is endorsed by Steve Blank, who added it to Lean Startup as a fourth tool, as well as by Alex Osterwalder and Rita McGrath.

HOW IT WORKS: THREE STEPS, THREE WORKSHEETS

1 Search broadly
MARKET OPPORTUNITY SET

Describe your core abilities independently of your current product, then match them to new applications and customer groups. Application + customer = market opportunity.

2 Assess deeply
ATTRACTIVENESS MAP

Rate each opportunity's **Potential** (reason to buy, market volume, economic viability) and **Challenge** (implementation obstacles, time to revenue, external risks). Each one lands in a quadrant: Gold Mine, Quick Win, Moon Shot or Questionable.

3 Strategize smartly
AGILE FOCUS DARTBOARD

Choose a primary market. Test the other options for product and market relatedness, keep at least one backup option and one growth option open, and place the rest in storage.

QUESTIONS IT ANSWERS

- What markets could our technology, skills or assets serve?
- Which opportunities are worth the effort, and which are traps?
- Where should we focus first, and what is our fallback?
- Where do we grow next, and are we heading in the right direction?

WHO IT IS FOR

Founders choosing a beachhead market, deep-tech and university spin-outs, scaling businesses planning expansion, and corporate innovation teams. Accelerators, investors and educators use it too.

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WHY USE IT

- **A better first market:** fewer costly pivots and less wasted runway.
- **Structure instead of gut feel:** a visible decision that co-founders and investors can discuss.
- **Focus without lock-in:** backup and growth options stay open.
- **Growth beyond the obvious:** starting from abilities reveals new markets.
- **Fits your toolkit:** it works alongside the Business Model Canvas and Lean Startup.
- **Free to start:** a web app with teamwork features, a GPT-4 opportunity assistant, worksheets and an edX course.

WORKED EXAMPLE: FLYABILITY

Flyability makes collision-tolerant inspection drones. The team mapped its abilities to more than 15 customer segments and shortlisted five.

- **Gold Mine:** thermal-boiler inspection, with high potential and low-to-mid challenge. Chosen as the market to pursue now.
- **Growth options, kept open:** oil-and-gas storage tanks and vessels.
- **Backup option, kept open:** police forces, whose risks are not shared with the primary market.
- **Placed in storage:** nuclear rooms, because the market is small and the obstacles severe.

USE IT WELL

- Beware of your own biases, and back every rating with customer evidence.
- Make it a team decision, and repeat it as you learn.

Not sure you're in the right market? Let's talk.

In a **free, no-obligation discovery call** we'll review your market choice and its assumptions, sketch your Market Opportunity Set, and agree on a practical next step. There is no fee and no sales pitch.

Book your free call →

Sources: wheretoplay.co · app.wheretoplay.co · app.wheretoplay.co/assets/examples/flyability_example.pdf · youtube.com/watch?v=N4ZUMr70-0w · youtube.com/watch?v=s-jwzd0VOAA · pearson.com (ISBN 9781292178929) · books.google.com · actu.epfl.ch