



**avante**

**STARTUP BOOTCAMP**

**FACILITATOR NOTES**

# EXPLORING & VALIDATING YOUR IDEAS



Introduction

Getting Started

Setting Expectations

Share Your Story

First Pitches

Victories & Roadblocks

Value of Ideas

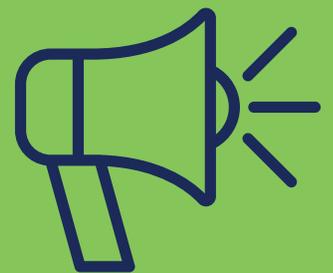
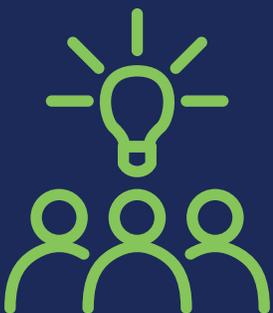
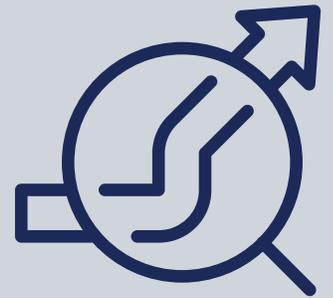
Business Types

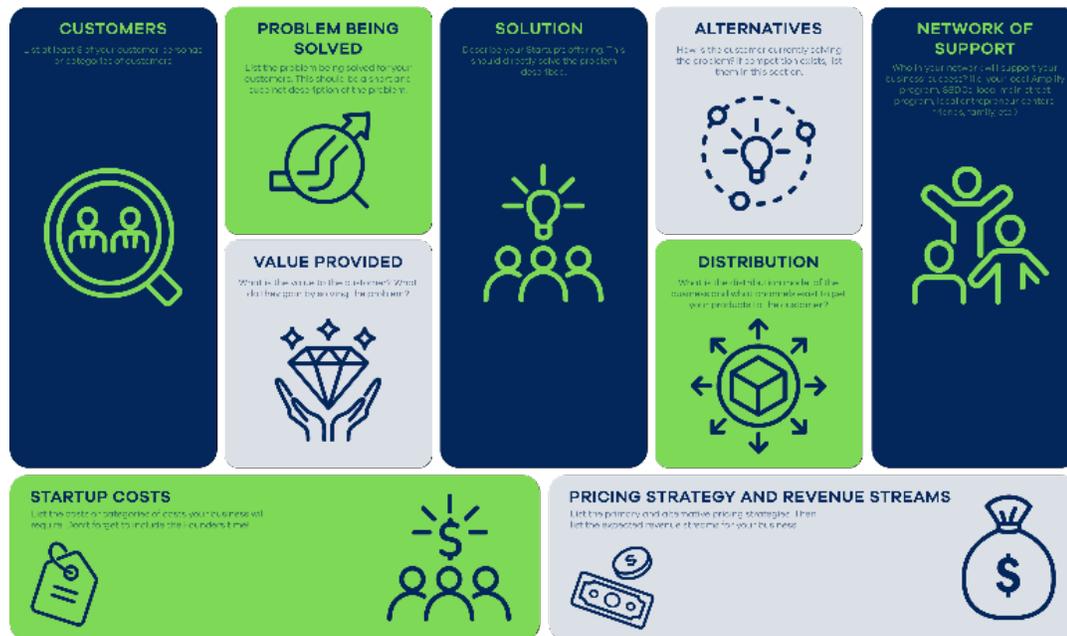
Solving Problems

Conclusion



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## AVANTE WEEK 1

# Exploring & Validating Your Ideas

Welcome to Week 1 of the Avante Bootcamp! This week, we'll focus on refining your ideas, validating their potential, and assessing your readiness to bring them to life. Whether you've already launched your company or are starting from scratch, this is an invaluable opportunity to sharpen your vision. If you're already in business, take this time to evaluate your ideas, identify roadblocks, and build a plan for sustainable growth. If you are starting from ground zero, we'll guide you through the process of proving your ideas before you begin. Let's get started!

## TOPICS COVERED THIS WEEK:

- How to Prepare Yourself for Entrepreneurship
- Knowing When You Are Ready to Start
- Selecting Your Best Ideas
- Tools to Validate Ideas
- Doing Things That Don't Scale
- Setting Realistic Expectations

PROBLEM BEING  
SOLVED



## AVANTE BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

The decisions made in this chapter will help fill out the **Problem Being Solved** section of the Avante Business Model Canvas.

### Goal of Week 1

The goal of Week 1 is to help you understand what it's really like to be an entrepreneur while guiding you through the initial steps of validating your ideas. This process will help you confirm that you are on the right path to achieve success.

***“It’s not about ideas.  
It’s about making ideas happen.”***

Scott Branson, Behance Co-Founder

## BEFORE WE GET STARTED

- Introduce Yourself to Someone New in the Cohort
- Review the Story You Crafted in the Pre-Work
- Update and Practice Your Pitch

# Week 1 | Instructor Notes

Week 1 sets the tone for the rest of the program. We've found that when you set the right tone, expectations, and get the cohort connecting with each other from the start, you're laying the foundation for building a mini community of dedicated entrepreneurs.

## IDEAL SPEAKERS FOR WEEK 1

If you choose to have speakers on Week 1, we recommend asking less experienced entrepreneurs or a mix of entrepreneurs to create a more relatable atmosphere for them. You want to demonstrate that anyone can start a business and Week 1 is all about selfdiscovery, idea validation, and setting realistic expectations on what it is like being a Startup Founder.

### NOTE

You can also utilize our speaker library to highlight these experiences:

<https://launchavante.com/speaker-library/>

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN:

- Arrive at least 20 minutes before the start of the program
- Arrange the room into a collaborative setting (a U shape configuration is best)
- Set up the Customer Interviews poster where it is visible by everyone
- Prepare any books, snacks, or drinks for the program
- Set up a recording device (such as a camera or phone) to record the cohort's first pitches!
- Verify any speakers you have asked to arrive are coming on time
- Call on the cohort to speak, answer questions, and share often. By doing this early, you set the expectation that they will be sharing throughout the program.

# GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

# 2



Week 2 Overview

Finding Product-Market Fit

Identifying Your Customers

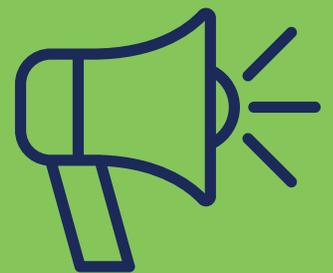
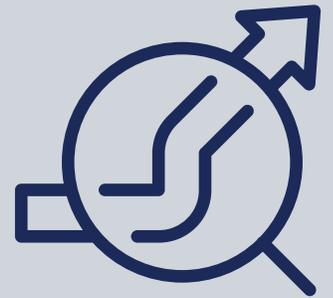
Customer Personas

Customer Interviews

Conclusion



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## AVANTE BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

The decisions made in this chapter will help fill out the Customers section of the Avante Business Model Canvas.

### Goal of Week 2

The goal of this week is to help you understand your customers and give you a framework to identify who your best customers are, what they want, and how to interview them to receive valuable, unbiased feedback.

***“Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.”***

- Bill Gates, Microsoft Co-Founder

## BEFORE WE GET STARTED

- Find Somewhere New to Sit
- Introduce Yourself to Someone You Don't Know
- Be Prepared to Share Your Week 1 Homework Assignments

# Instructor Notes

Week 2 is all about the customers. This week, cohort participants will be learning about how to create customer personas, who their customers are (and are not!), and we will be diving heavily into the Mom Test Framework. If you haven't watched the Mom Test Training Video, we highly recommend doing so before your session this week!

## IDEAL SPEAKERS FOR WEEK 2

We highly recommend either finding speakers in your local community for Week 2 or identifying a few to highlight from our video resource library. Ideal speakers for this week are people that are passionate about talking to their customers and can share how this has led them to change how they approach their business.

Facilitators often find local entrepreneurs who started their businesses with one direction and then made a significant pivot on what they offer to their customers. This message illustrates the concepts:

1. The initial idea evolves to success if you listen to your customers
2. Customers' true opinions drive success, not the entrepreneur's own ideas of what they think the customer wants

### NOTE

You can also utilize our speaker library to highlight these experiences. We recommend these videos:

<https://launchavante.com/speaker-library/>

## ACTIVITIES THIS WEEK

### CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS

Our research shows that holding a live customer interview (in 3-5mins) can be the best way to communicate the Mom Test framework. There are two ways to do this:

- The facilitator interviews one of the participants using the framework.
- The facilitator can ask two participants to interview each other in front of the cohort

### TIP

The facilitator can do this live, copy the examples in the training video, or play clips from the training videos.

### TIP

Set a timer so this does not run beyond a few minutes and both parties get a chance to practice!

After the interviews take place, have the cohort provide feedback on how well they followed the framework and highlight any places they did not. Do a short example of not following the framework by pitching the business idea and asking leading questions so the cohort can see the differences.

Here are some tips on how to create the best experience:

- Arrive at least 20 minutes before the start of the program
- Arrange the room into a collaborative setting (a U shape configuration is best)
- Set up the Customer Interviews poster where it is visible by everyone
- Prepare any books, snacks, or drinks for the program
- Consider recording the cohort's pitches again and sharing them via the private #cohort community channel after the session
- Verify any speakers you have invited are coming on time
- Prepare to call on the cohort to speak, answer questions, and share often. By doing this early, you set the expectation that they will be sharing throughout the program.
- Set the tone that the cohort is expected to come prepared with their assignments completed and ready to share with their cohort

## AVANTE RECOMENDATION

### WEEK 2 SESSION FLOW

Welcome the Cohort Back with Victories and Roadblocks	5 minutes
Homework Review	10 minutes
Pitches & Feedback	20 minutes
Facilitate Week 2 Content (1st Half)	45 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Facilitate Week 2 Content (2nd Half)	45 minutes
Live Speakers or Play & Discuss Videos	45 minutes
<b>Total Time:</b>	<b>3 hours</b>

# BUILDING A PLAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS

# 3

Week 3 Overview

Distribution Models

Distribution Channels

Business Models

Pricing Strategies

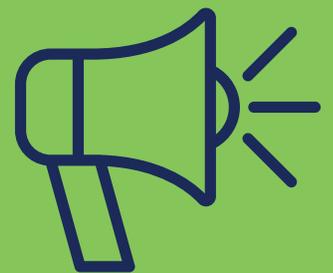
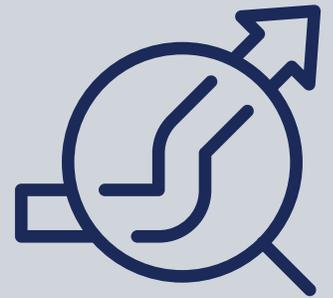
Psychological Impacts of  
Pricing

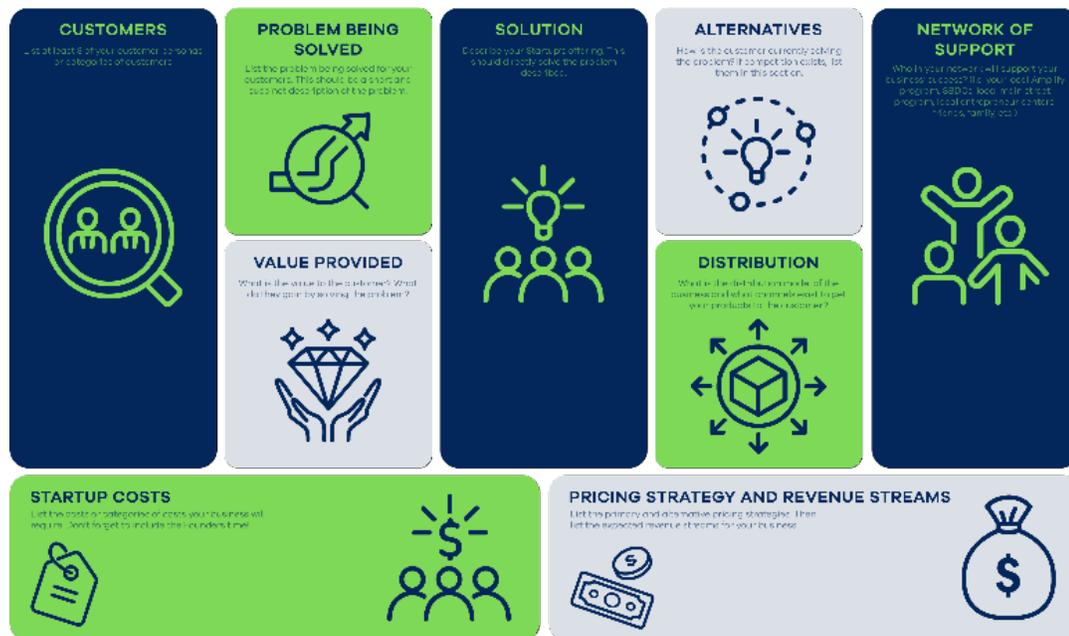
Multiple Pricing Strategies

Conclusion



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## AVANTE WEEK 3

# Building A Plan For Your Business

Welcome to the third week of the Avante Bootcamp! This week is focused on building a plan for your business. We will be discussing business models, distribution methods, pricing, and we will dive deeper into the Avante Business Model Canvas and how you can use it to document the progress of your new Startup's growth.

### Topics covered this week:

- Distribution Models
- Business Models
- Pricing and Pricing Strategies
- Updating the Business Model Canvas

## DISTRIBUTION



## AVANTE BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

The decisions made in this chapter will help fill out the Distribution, Pricing Strategy and Revenue Streams as well as the Startup Costs sections of the Avante Business Model Canvas.

### Goal of Week 3

The goal of this week is to continue building and documenting the plan for your Startup's future success. At the end of this week, you will understand the different distribution, business, and pricing models and identify which ones best apply to your Startup. You will also have an updated Avante Business Model Canvas that includes this week's concepts.

***"We have a 'strategic plan'.  
It's called doing things."***

- Bill Gates, Microsoft Co-Founder

## BEFORE WE GET STARTED

- Find Somewhere New to Sit
- Introduce Yourself to Someone You Don't Know
- Be Prepared to Share Your Week 2 Homework and Customer Interviews

# Instructor Notes



Week 3 is all about building a plan for the business. This week, we will discuss how to balance Founders' grand visions for their startups with manageable steps to take to get there. Avante believes in dreaming big while starting small. This enables the Founders to build momentum quickly without getting lost in the millions of decisions it will take to reach their grand visions.

We will also discuss topics like distribution methods (e.g. B2B, B2C, ecommerce, wholesale, etc.), the difficulties of pricing products and solutions, and the different pricing strategies available to Startups.

Last, we will end this week by updating the Avante Business Model Canvas with the information covered this week so that Founders can start to see a more defined plan develop on their canvas.

This is also the first week that Founders should've conducted at least three customer interviews as homework, and we highly encourage facilitators to put a strong emphasis on the importance of talking to customers.

**A Startup Founder's willingness to talk to customers is one of the early indicators of a strong Founder, and their chances of success are much greater.**

## IDEAL SPEAKERS FOR WEEK 3

Selecting speakers that have experience in pricing and selling products is ideal. Depending on who is in the cohort, we recommend finding speakers that are relatable. For example, if the cohort has a lot of packaged goods or retail businesses, then a local entrepreneur that sells their goods locally would be ideal. If you have a diverse group of businesses, consider inviting a small panel of speakers that is more representative of the group to discuss their business models and pricing.

Of course, we always have multiple speakers available on these topics in the video library.

**Here are some tips on how to create the best experience:**

- Arrive at least 20 minutes before the start of the program
- Arrange the room into a collaborative setting (a U-shaped configuration is best)
- Set up the Customer Interviews poster where it is visible to everyone
- Prepare any books, snacks, or drinks for the program
- Consider recording the cohort’s pitches again and sharing them via the private #cohort community channel after the session
- Verify that any speakers you have invited are arriving on time
- Call on the cohort to speak, answer questions, and share often
- Set the tone that the cohort is expected to come prepared with their assignments ready to share with their cohort

**WEEK 2 SESSION FLOW**

Welcome the Cohort Back with Victories and Roadblocks	5 minutes
Homework Review	5 minutes
Customer Interviews Review	5 minutes
Pitches & Feedback	20 minutes
Facilitate Week 3 Content (1st Half)	45 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Facilitate Week 3 Content (2nd Half)	45 minutes
Live Speakers or Play & Discuss Videos	45 minutes
<b>Total Time:</b>	<b>3 hours</b>

# BUILD YOUR COMPANY & YOUR TEAM

# 4

Week 4 Overview

Nonprofit vs For-Profit

The Right Structure for  
your business

Entity Types

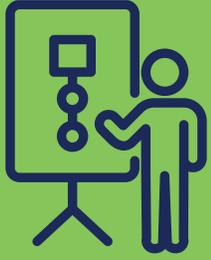
Beneficial Ownership  
Information (BOI)

Trademarks

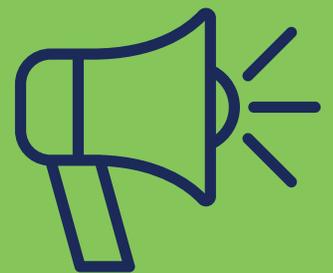
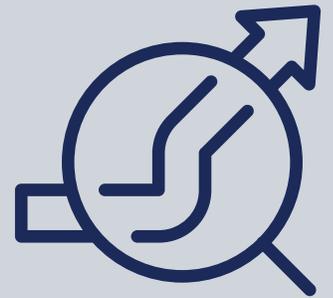
Companies with Multiple  
Owners

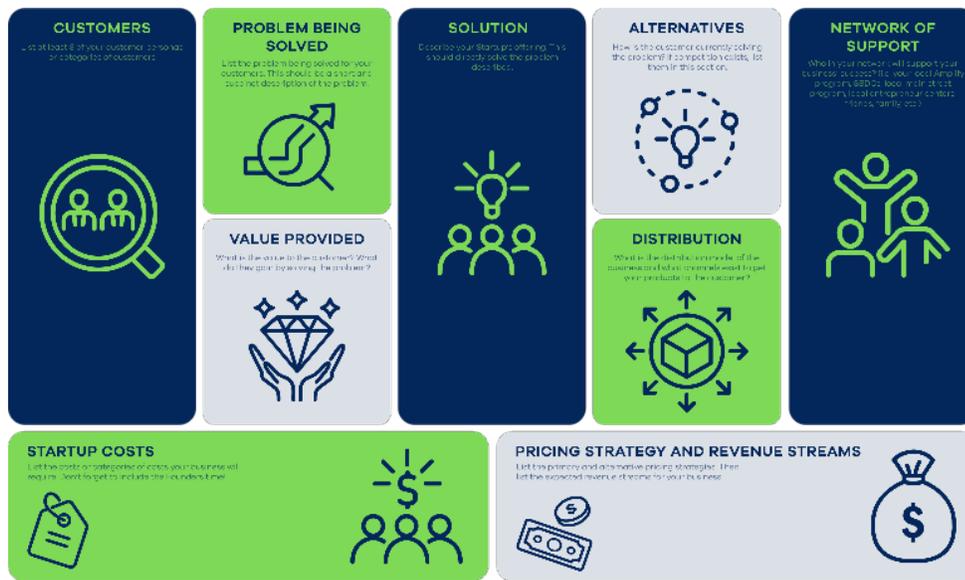
Building the Right Team

Conclusion



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## AVANTE WEEK 4

# Build Your Company & Your Team

Welcome to the fourth week of the Avante Bootcamp! This week, we're focusing on building your company, officially incorporating it, and assembling an incredible team. We'll cover the different types of companies, the incorporation process, how to seek legal help, and how to find the best people to join your team as you grow.

### Topics covered this week:

- Company Structure
- Nonprofit vs For-Profit Considerations
- How to Incorporate a Business
- Trademark Basics
- Building the Founding Team



## AVANTE BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

This chapter helps Founders learn how to form a business and what structure to choose. It is not tied to one section of the canvas but may cause the Founder to adjust multiple sections of their Avante Business Model Canvas.

### Goal of Week 4

The goal of this week is to gain an understanding of how to build your company. We will cover the different business types (LLCs, Corporations, etc.) and how to choose the best type for your business. We will also discuss trademarks, and we will finish this week covering how to build an amazing founding team to grow your business.

***“No matter how brilliant your mind or strategy, if you’re playing a solo game, you’ll always lose out to a team.”***

– Reid Hoffman, LinkedIn Co-Founder

## BEFORE WE GET STARTED

- Find Somewhere New to Sit
- Introduce Yourself to Someone You Don’t Know
- Be Prepared to Share Your Week 3 Customer Interviews

# Instructor Notes



Week 4 is all about helping the cohort start their businesses. We will be covering company structures, the incorporation process, and providing a checklist for them to use when going through the process.

## A COUPLE OF IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE:

The Avante program has been reviewed by lawyers and accountants for accuracy. Laws and regulations often change, and we do our best to update our content regularly. However, it is always a good practice to refer Founders to lawyers and accountants on some of the topics around company structure, legal, and financial advice.

### ➤ **Founders Should Choose Their Own Company Structures**

Facilitators should not choose what type of structure a business should use. They should provide the Founders with options and encourage them to decide. This is a decision they must make!

### ➤ **Avoid Giving Direct Financial or Legal Advice**

Remind the cohort that you are not a lawyer or accountant (unless you are one!). It's ok to provide the cohort with thoughts and opinions; however, you must make it clear to the cohort that it is not legal or financial advice. If you are unsure, you should always refer the Founder to a lawyer.

Facilitators often say, "I am not a lawyer, and I recommend you speak to one for clarity. I do know that many startups do X, Y, and Z. You must decide what is best for you and your business."

Founders will make many defining decisions this week. While Founders may ask the facilitator for advice, it's always better to push them to decide for themselves. When a Founder is truly stuck, we recommend opening the question up to the cohort rather than answering individually.

## IDEAL SPEAKERS FOR WEEK 4

This week is a great opportunity to bring in a business-focused lawyer, potentially a supporter of your Avante program, to speak to the cohort. If they can attend the full session, you can refer to their expertise as questions come up.

Of course, we always have multiple speakers available on these topics in the video library.

## Here are some tips on how to create the best experience:

- At this point, we know you have this down! Do what is working best for your cohort!
- Verify any speakers you have asked to arrive are coming on time

# AVANTE RECOMENDATION

## WEEK 2 SESSION FLOW

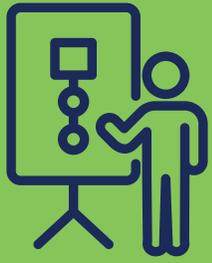
Welcome the Cohort Back with Victories and Roadblocks	5 minutes
Homework Review	5 minutes
Customer Interviews Review	5 minutes
Pitches & Feedback	20 minutes
Facilitate Week 3 Content (1st Half)	45 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Facilitate Week 3 Content (2nd Half)	45 minutes
Live Speakers or Play & Discuss Videos	45 minutes
<b>Total Time:</b>	<b>3 hours</b>

# BUSINESS FINANCIALS & FUNDING YOUR STARTUP

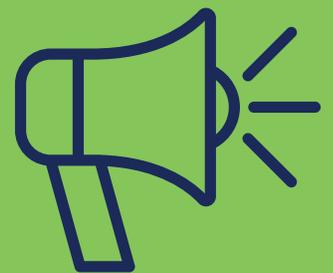
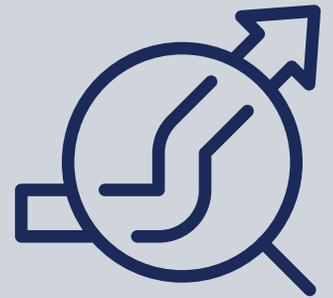
# 5

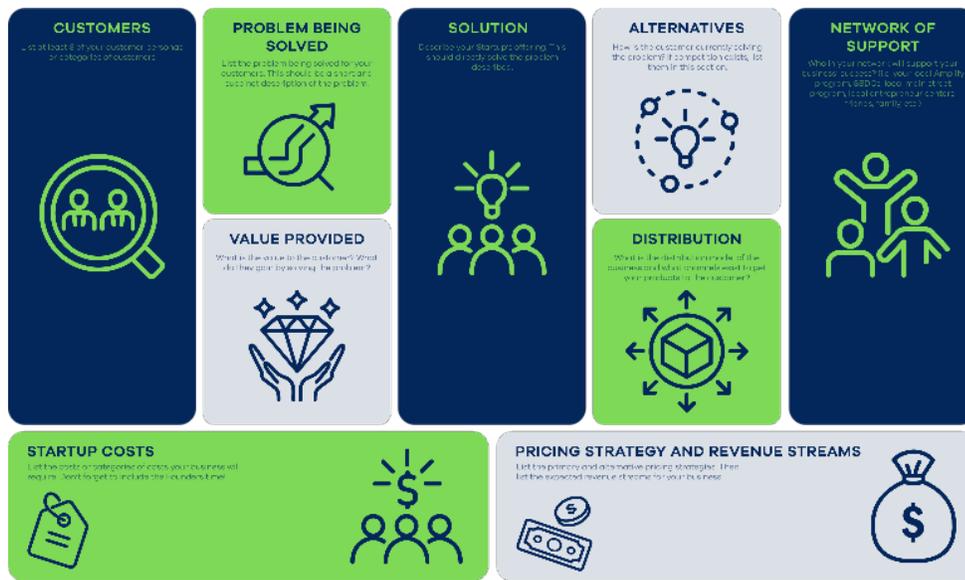


Week 5 Overview  
Startup Financials  
Knowing Your Numbers  
Financial Tools  
Financial Projections  
Emergency Funds  
Funding Your Startup  
Conclusion



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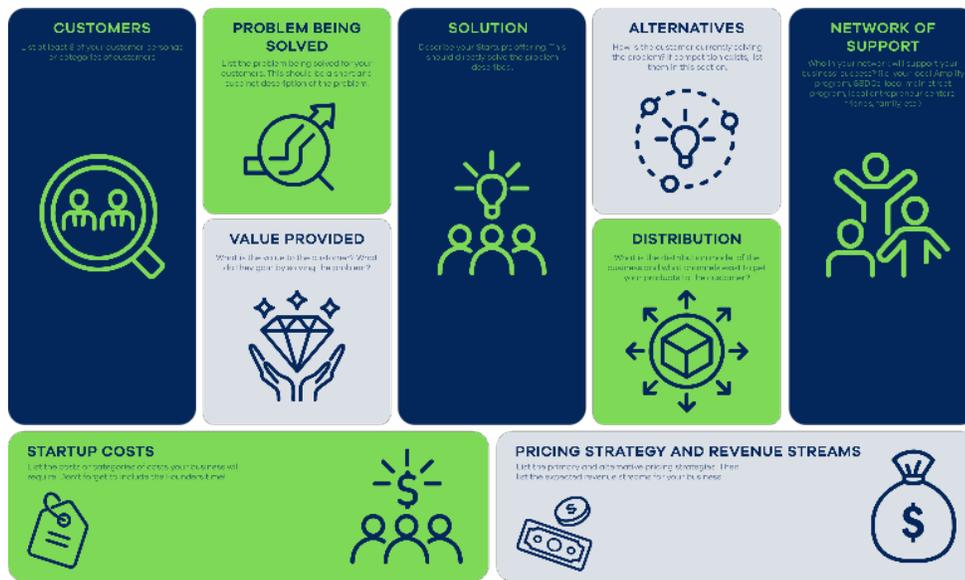
## AVANTE WEEK 5

# Business Financials & Funding Your Startup

Welcome to the fifth week of the Avante Bootcamp! This week, we're focusing on the importance of understanding your business finances. We'll cover the key metrics to measure your company by and explain the most important financial reports. Don't worry, you don't need to be an accountant to grasp these vital topics!

### Topics covered this week:

- The Importance of Knowing Your Numbers
- The Key Metrics for Success
- Building Basic Financial Projections
- Funding Your Startup
- Types of Funding Available



## AVANTE WEEK 6

# Marketing Your Business

Welcome to the sixth week of the Avante Bootcamp! This week, we're focusing on marketing your Startup. We'll cover topics such as brand building, developing your brand voice, and exploring the different marketing channels available to your company. While creating products and services can be challenging, marketing is what ultimately makes or breaks your business.

### Topics covered this week:

- What Marketing Really Is
- Marketing Channels
- Building Your Brand & Brand Voice
- Storytelling for Startups
- Marketing Strategies with AI



## AVANTE BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

This week is focused on the business's marketing. The topics covered will focus on the Customers, **Value Provided**, and **Alternatives** sections on your **Avante Business Model Canvas**.

### Goal of Week 6

This week is all about understanding marketing, what it really means, and how to approach it as an early-stage Startup Founder. By the end of the week, you should have a simple strategy in place and be ready to begin the journey of marketing your new company.

***"People don't buy what you do.  
They buy why you do it."***

- Simon Sinek

# Instructor Notes



Week 6 is all about marketing. We've noticed that most new Startup Founders fall into one of two groups. Some believe they can "just use social media" to market their company, while others have little to no idea what marketing involves. The rare few who do understand its importance, or who come from a marketing background, often have expectations that do not match what a new Startup can realistically achieve on a tight budget.

At Avante, we believe that building the product or service is often the easy part. It is the Startup's approach to marketing that determines success. Unfortunately, many new Founders believe that if they simply build something great, it will "sell itself." We need to break this mindset early. As a facilitator, you can help each Founder see how essential it is to have a practical and realistic marketing plan.

## IDEAL SPEAKERS FOR WEEK 6

Experienced entrepreneurs who understand the importance of marketing can bring tremendous value to this week's content. Marketing agencies can also be a good fit if they have worked with very small companies. It's also common for past speakers to return and share their insights on marketing again. Hosting panels with multiple speakers is also an effective way to show new Founders just how challenging, yet essential, marketing can be.

Additionally, multiple speakers on these topics are available in the video library.

## THE END IS NEAR!

This is the final week of the Avante Cohort learning together. While many programs host a Demo Day at the end, not all do. Regardless of the format, it is important to celebrate the progress and accomplishments made so far. If your organization is planning a Demo Day, make sure to communicate this to the cohort in advance and allow time for pitch reviews before the event takes place.

Another meaningful way to celebrate is by watching the very first pitches the new Founders gave, if you recorded them. It's a great way to highlight just how much progress has been made in only six weeks.

## AVANTE RECOMENDATION

### WEEK 2 SESSION FLOW

Welcome the Cohort Back with Victories and Roadblocks	5 minutes
Homework Review	5 minutes
Customer Interviews Review	5 minutes
Pitches & Feedback	20 minutes
Facilitate Week 3 Content (1st Half)	45 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Facilitate Week 3 Content (2nd Half)	45 minutes
Live Speakers or Play & Discuss Videos	45 minutes
<b>Total Time:</b>	<b>3 hours</b>



# Customer Persona Template

<b>Persona Name:</b>  (e.g. Emily the Event Planner Mom, Mike the Busy Dad Professional)	
<b>Demographics</b>  <i>Age:</i> <i>Gender:</i> <i>Income Level:</i> <i>Occupation:</i> <i>Location:</i>	<b>Pain Points</b>  • • •
<b>Goals</b>  • • •	<b>Behaviors</b>  • • •
<b>How to Interact</b>  • Preferred Communication Style/Channel:  • Tone of Voice:  • Key Strategies to Connect: (e.g. platforms, types of content, services)	<b>Bonus: Product/Service Fit</b>  • What offerings most appeal to this persona?  • How can your brand solve their problems uniquely?



# Business Model Canvas

Startup Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Version \_\_\_\_\_

## CUSTOMERS

List at least 3 of your customer personas or categories of customers

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

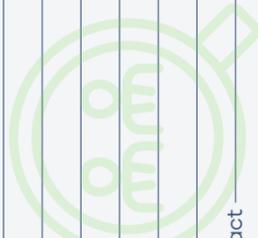
Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Pain Points \_\_\_\_\_

Behaviors \_\_\_\_\_

Goals \_\_\_\_\_

How to interact \_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Pain Points \_\_\_\_\_

Behaviors \_\_\_\_\_

Goals \_\_\_\_\_

How to interact \_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Pain Points \_\_\_\_\_

Behaviors \_\_\_\_\_

Goals \_\_\_\_\_

How to interact \_\_\_\_\_



## PROBLEM BEING SOLVED

List the problem being solved for your customers. This should be a short and succinct description of the problem.



## VALUE PROVIDED

What is the value to the customer? What do they gain by solving the problem?



## SOLUTION

Describe your Startup's offering. This should directly solve the problem described.



## ALTERNATIVES

How is the customer currently solving the problem? If competition exists, list them in this section.



## DISTRIBUTION

What is the distribution model of the business and what channels exist to get your products to the customer?



## NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Who in your network will support your business' success? (i.e. your local Amplify program, SBDCs, local main street program, local entrepreneur centers, friends, family, etc.)



## STARTUP COSTS

List the costs or categories of costs your business will require. Don't forget to include the Founders time!



## PRICING STRATEGY AND REVENUE STREAMS

List the primary and alternative pricing strategies. Then list the expected revenue streams for your business.

