

HOW TO:

BE A SUCCESSFUL SJW WHO GETS SH*T DONE

A Blind Mice Guide to Student-Led Initiatives

BY



with JHY

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INTRODUCTION

When you are deeply interested in any issue, merely doing what is assigned to you at school or participating in existing student organisations may not be enough to fully showcase your passion. To let your curiosity show through, you might want to develop and lead an initiative for a cause you care about. This might be a service organisation, entrepreneurial effort, or even an artistic project—perfect for the “innovator” persona discussed in the FBM Portfolio Guide. If you are driven by curiosity and want to work independently, a student-led initiative can be one of the most fulfilling things to pursue.

When you start your own initiative, it shows others that you are invested in creating something that is entirely yours—that you identified what was missing in the world and tried to fill this gap. By identifying collaborators to join your effort, you can develop critical leadership skills, and managing the project can help your communication habits. Most importantly, you will walk away with something you can truly be proud of, since you developed the project start to finish without relying on or boxing yourself into existing efforts.

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL SLI

If you have an idea you genuinely want to work on, chances are that your intentions are in the right place. But it is important to keep in mind that merely having ideas about what you might be able to accomplish will not get you anywhere. You need to be realistic and identify what is practical to aim for. Reflect on what your capabilities are and what change you want to make, then zone in on your next actionable steps.

Wabisabi Solution Fluency (WSF) Process

One helpful framework that we would like to introduce is the Wabisabi Solution Fluency (WSF) Process. While there are many other frameworks such as the Design Thinking Process that can also be used to develop an effective project, we felt that the WSF process has a more end-to-end approach.



	Scientific Method	Writing Process	Media Production	Design Thinking
define	Aim	Prewriting	Preproduction	Define
discover	Background / Introduction	Prewriting	Preproduction	Research
dream	Hypothesis	Prewriting	Preproduction	Ideation
design	Equipment / Method	Draft	Preproduction	Prototype / Choose
deliver (produce)	Experiment	Revision / Editing	Production	Implement
deliver (publish)	Results	Publish	Post Production	Implement
debrief	Conclusion	Review	Review	Learn

Read more about the WSF process [here](#)

The process outlines 6 D's to bring a project from ideation to successful completion:

Define: Decide exactly what needs to be solved, and give proper context to the problem.

Discover: Research, gather, and analyse knowledge about the problem.

Dream: Open up the heart and mind to the possibilities of a solution the way you want it.

Design: Develop the actual mechanics of your solution.

Deliver: Do what is needed to complete the product (produce), and present the proposed solution to your relevant target (publish).

Debrief: Look at the ways you succeeded, and ways you could improve your approach in future situations.

As can be seen from the table above, the process can also be used for other forms of work and learning processes — making it extremely versatile.

John Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

The “**Deliver**” stage of the Wabisabi Solution Fluency Process is when all the heavy lifting occurs (i.e. the execution/implementation of the plan). It is a critical step that determines how successful the final product will be.

It's a giant step in the process, and John Kotter's 8-Step Change Model helps further break it down so you can identify what factors to focus on to create lasting impact. This methodology was cultivated from over four decades of Dr. Kotter's observations as a professor in Harvard Business School. By identifying and extracting the success factors of leaders and organisations when they were trying to transform or execute their own strategies, he managed to combine them into the 8-Step Model to aid the process of initiating change.

Consult the model below to streamline and maximise your efforts:

8 Step Kotter Model of Change for PowerPoint



1. **Create Urgency:** An organisation is much likelier to succeed if every team member is aware of the need to create change. Create active conversations around what the existing problem is, and how important potential solutions are.

Example: You and your peers recognise that elderly citizens living alone often have trouble accessing information about the eligibility and application of government subsidies. You discuss how critical it is to remedy this issue so that their quality of life can be improved.

2. **Form a Powerful Coalition:** No big change can occur on your own. You should identify competent individuals to join the pursuit, and consider putting together a range of skills, experiences, and backgrounds. You should be unified in intent but diverse in perspective.

Example: You invite other passionate and competent students to join you to fill roles such as co-head, program coordinator, media/design director, and outreach coordinator.

3. **Create a Vision for Change:** Draft a vision that is easy to understand and encapsulates the overall aim in order to generate support from the whole organisation. It should be simple, but ideally inspirational as well.

Example: You create a mission statement with your peers. It contains keywords that convey your core values, as well as outlines your target audience and big-picture goals.

4. **Communicate the Vision:** Generate support from the organisation by utilising your coalition's existing networks to communicate your vision. **Identify key stakeholders such as the social service or relevant VWOs who could be doing something similar and communicate/ collaborate with them.**

Example: You publish the mission statement on your website, and employ marketing strategies to announce to your community what your organisation is trying to accomplish.

5. **Remove Obstacles:** it might be tempting to focus solely on the positives, but identifying potential drawbacks is critical for success. Try to narrow down which individuals, traditions, legislations or societal tendencies might get in your way.

Example: You lead discussions on identifying biggest challenges. You conclude that gaining the trust of the senior citizens you want to support will be the hardest immediate step, and you begin to brainstorm how to solve this problem.

6. **Create Short-Term Wins:** In order to keep up the organisation's motivation, effort, and rapport, celebrate small milestones instead of waiting for a big win.

Example: When you establish your first community partner, hold a small celebration with your organisation and discuss what factors led to your success. Recognise the individuals who worked especially hard to achieve this milestone.

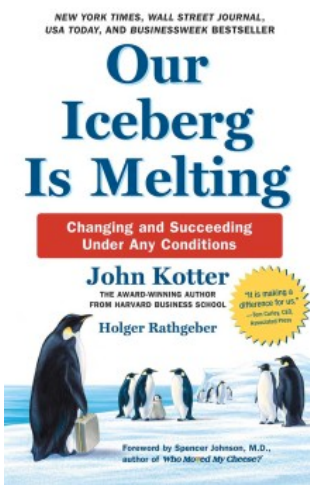
7. **Build On the Change:** It is common for organisations to start out with ambitious intentions and voracious progress, then fall into complacency by the end. Follow through on your project by sustaining effort and setting further goals for improvement.

Example: After a full year of developing your organisation, have extensive debrief conversations on what factors can be improved for next year. Identify concrete goals for problem-solving or expansion, and create preliminary plans.

8. **Anchor the Changes in Culture:** Solidify your efforts so that the impact will be permanent and self-sustaining, instead of dissolving once the core people leave.

Example: Continue working so that your organisation has an established place in the community. Create a plan for transitioning into new leadership to ensure sustainability.

If you would like to find out more about the 8-Step model for leading change, you can have a look [here](#). Alternatively, you can also read this allegorical story about the model [here](#)



On the surface, Our Iceberg Is Melting is a simple story of a colony of penguins facing a dilemma. But contained within the story and the characters is a powerful message about the fear of change and how to motivate people to face the future and take action.

The book can help you better understand how the 8-Step model can be used in school for your SLIs.

Additional Material: The Mom Test

This book is about how to do customer interviews and learn what people want when everyone is lying to you. It's a quick, practical, and effective approach to customer development which will save you time and heartbreak.

It is also especially relevant when you are trying to gather feedback and potential response to the project that you are planning. By learning how to frame your questions differently, you will be able to get actual honest feedback to improve on your idea rather than the usual “wah your idea is not bad” or “that sounds like a good idea” or “I think its good”.

EVERYONE IS LYING TO YOU

They say you shouldn't ask your mom whether your business is a good idea, because she loves you and will lie to you.

This is technically true, but it misses the point. You shouldn't ask *anyone* if your business is a good idea. It's a bad question and everyone will lie to you at least a little. It's not their responsibility to tell you the truth. It's your responsibility to find it.

IT'S WORTH DOING RIGHT

Talking to customers is one of the foundational skills of both Customer Development and Lean Startup. We all know we're supposed to do it, but nobody seems willing to admit that it's hard to do right and easy to screw up.

This book is going to show you how customer conversations go wrong and how you can do better. It's a quick, practical guide that will save you time, money, and heartbreak.

"Read this short book! We believe this is the best and most accessible book for entrepreneurs who are seeking product market fit."

— Simon Murdoch
Partner
Episode1 Ventures



Rob is a tinkerer and tech entrepreneur of 10 years. As a techie who was forced into an enterprise sales role at his first startup, he learned (the hard way) that everything they tell you about early stage customer conversations is wrong. In the years since, while working on both his own companies and helping others with theirs, he's found a better way.



The Mom Test - How to talk to customers

Rob Fitzpatrick

"Ounce for ounce, there's no better way to learn what customers want and will buy than this wonderful little book. If you want your new product or new business to succeed, start here."

— John Mullins
Author of *The New Business Road Test*



Rob Fitzpatrick THE MOM TEST

How to talk to customers and learn if your business is a good idea when *everyone is lying to you*

This book is a required reading in various entrepreneurship courses at Harvard, UCL, Imperial, and a number of the world's top accelerators — so we really recommend it. Besides its a really short book.

Click [here](#) to download the PDF version of the book.

Final Thoughts

There is ultimately no hard and fast rule on how you should carry out your SLI. The frameworks that we have introduced in this guide are just meant to help you streamline your thought and working process. As long as you remain passionate about your initiative and stay rooted to reality, your project will definitely be a success*!

*Subjected to how you define it. **So please remember to set some KPIs to track your progress as well!**

RESOURCES FOR SLI/START UPS

Resource Type	Resource	Details
Locations	Location You Can Utilise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Your school ●https://www.commonspaces.sg/ ●Youth Corps' Red Box (If you are interested to book The Red Box spaces, please contact youthcorps_booking@nyc.gov.sg with your event details.)
Funding	NYC Young ChangeMakers Fact Sheet YCM COVID-19 Edition Fact Sheet	<p>About</p> <p><u>Eligibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●SG citizen/PR ●15 - 35 years old ●Project should benefit the Singapore community. ●Project should be completed within six (6) months from date of award of the grant. ●Fundraising projects organised by youths for local beneficiaries may be supported. <p><u>Funding Awarded</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Successful applicants will receive an in-principle grant approval of up to \$3,000 or up to 80% of total allowable project cost, whichever is lower. ●Projects that demonstrate exceeding merits in terms of project scale and impact will be awarded up to \$5,000 or up to 80% of total allowable project cost, whichever is lower. <p><u>How to Apply</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Apply through the MCCY Grants Portal. Ensure you have your SingPass ready. ●Application is open throughout the year. ●Applications should be submitted at least six weeks before the project commencement date. Applicants are reminded to check NYC's website for the dates of the YCM Open Mic sessions and if necessary, submit the application earlier than six (6) weeks before the project commencement date to secure a slot at the YCM Open Mic session. ●For content-based YCM projects (e.g. films, productions, campaigns, publications, plays, etc.), applicant is advised to submit the following compulsory documents, in addition to the standard YCM documents, to aid in the assessment of the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○Script (for productions, films, plays, etc.) ○Content outline/Synopsis (for publications such as books, magazines, guides, campaigns, etc.) ○Copies of relevant permits & licenses, if applicable ○Declaration of all potential sponsorships and partnerships <p>Find more grants here.</p>

<p>Funding</p>	<p>National Youth Council (NYC) National Youth Fund (NYF) Fact Sheet</p> <p>More details not found in this table can be found in the links above.</p>	<p>About The NYF supports ground-up youth initiatives to champion community and social causes through partnerships with Youth Sector Organisations (YSO) including youth social enterprises, schools, Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL) and other community partners.</p> <p>Eligibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to applicants between the ages of 15-35 with a strong track record of community involvement. • Must be SG citizen/PR <p>NYF supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Youth Programmes</u> Youth related programmes for youths or by youths, which contribute towards youth leadership development, engagement of young working adults and the growth of youth interest groups or social movements, or enhancement of current youth related programmes. ● <u>Capability Development</u> Projects that strengthen organisational internal capabilities and capacities. This includes the development of the respective organisation’s internal capabilities in the areas of research, resource or programme development and manpower. ● <u>Youth Leadership Development</u> Outstanding youth leaders who wish to pursue training and development in reputable local and international platforms with the intent of leading community projects/initiatives or starting new positive social movements. ● <u>Research</u> Projects that deepen the understanding of salient youth issues or trends. <p><u>Funding Awarded</u> Depends on your project.</p> <p><u>How to Apply</u> To apply for the NYF Youth Leadership Development, click here.</p> <p>To apply for the NYF Youth Programmes / Capability Development, click here.</p> <p>For a successful and smooth submission of application, please ensure that your SingPass/ CorpPass account is ready before applying.</p> <p>For further queries: grantmgmt_enquiries@nyc.gov.sg.</p> <p>Do note that the application documents must be submitted at least 2 months before the start of your project.</p> <p>The formal process of grant scoping and assessment to approval will take about 2 – 6 months, depending on the nature of the project and the grant quantum.</p>
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<p>Funding</p>	<p>NYC Singapore-ASEAN Youth Fund Fact Sheet</p> <p>More details not found in this table can be found in the links above.</p>	<p>About The SAYF aims to promote greater interaction among ASEAN youth. It supports projects which foster unity and forge friendship among ASEAN youths, and increase awareness and understanding of ASEAN culture.</p> <p>Eligibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Project should be open for participation to youths aged 15 to 35 from all ASEAN member states. ●Should involve youths from at least 3 ASEAN member states. ●Project should ensure that at least 50% of the targeted youth participants are from ASEAN member states. ●Project must meet at least 1 of the 4 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Plan of Action and Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY) focus areas and themes, found in the fact sheet <p>Projects with significant impact will be considered favourably.</p> <p>Funding Awarded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●The SAYF funds projects on a cost-sharing basis. Approved projects will be funded up to 80% of the total allowable project cost. ●Each organisation is subject to a grant limit of SGD\$50,000 per financial year starting from 1 April each year to 31 March the following year. <p>How to Apply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Apply through the MCCY Grants Portal. Ensure you have your SingPass ready. ●Application is open throughout the year. ●Application should be submitted at least 2 months before the proposed project start date.
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STUDENT-LED INITIATIVES

A. BEFORE JUMPING IN

BEFORE creating any Student-Led Initiatives (SLI), use the following questions to determine whether it is actually worthwhile to pursue it.



- Is it something you truly care about?

A self-explanatory question... if not why even bother doing it.

- Has something similar been done before?

*If yes, find out how the other projects fared and consider if there are any relevant learning points you could use.
If no, find out if it is because your idea is not practical and/or feasible.*

- What are you hoping to get out of it (i.e. skills to develop and experience to gain)?

Define your personal objectives so you know exactly how to work towards it.

- Do you have a team with the right values and passion?

Unless you are planning to be a one-man army, you will need like-minded and competent people to make the project a success.

- Is your project addressing a significant issue or need?

An initiative tackling something with little demand is just a waste of time and resources.

B. FIGHTING THE BOSS

DURING the planning phase of your project, use the following questions to evaluate whether you are going in the right direction to create an effective SLI.



- What is the size of social impact?

Evaluate the potential number of people that will benefit from your project. While quality and quantity are both equally important, having maximum input for minimal output may not be a worthwhile use of your time and effort.

- Are there any measurable KPIs to track progress?

Self-explanatory question to substantiate your successes and failures

- Is the idea and/or effect sustainable?

An effective initiative must be long term and/or impactful enough in its message to elicit sustained benefits for the people and community involved.

- Is your project scalable?

A project that has the potential to be scaled up and replicated by others can benefit more people — making it more effective and sustainable.

[Click here to view the final part of the checklist once you have defeated the boss!](#)





C. UNLOCKING ACHIEVEMENTS & EXP

CONGRATS on making it this far! The journey to defeating the boss (completing the opportunity) may not be an easy one, but it is definitely worth your time and effort. However, the adventure is not over.

To fully maximise your experience, you should have a final evaluation and reflection on the lessons learnt. Below are some guiding questions to ask yourself:

Evaluating the Experience

- Are you proud of your final deliverables (products, results, outcomes etc)?
 - If yes, what's so good about them?
 - If no, what's wrong with them?
- How did you respond to challenges? Would you do anything different next time?
- Which of your methods or processes worked particularly well?
- Which of your methods or processes were difficult or frustrating to use?

Reflecting on Lessons Learnt

- What was your most interesting insight?
- How did your involvement and participation fit into your broader goals of developing yourself?
- What would you want to improve on?
- What did you realise about yourself?
 - Did this give you a new perspective,
 - challenge your point of view,
 - Introduce you to new techniques, skills, processes?

Additional Questions (for SLIs and Leadership Positions)

- How accurate were our original estimates of the size and effort of our project? What did we over or underestimate?
- What can be improved on?
- Did you have the right people assigned to all project roles?
- Were roles and responsibilities of team/stakeholder clearly delineated and communicated?
 - If no, how could things be improved?
- If given a chance to do it again, what would you have done differently