

Suggested questions for use in a VES Analysis of operational detail

Every organization is engaged in both internal and external exchanges that are typically known as value exchanges. Every participant in an organization, from leader to led, should ask some, if not all, of the following questions of themselves and each other if there be a desire to enhance performance at every level.			
Questions, hints for addressing them, and suggested first focus: Business Model (ves1) Business Ecosystem (ves2) and Internal Transactions (ves3)			
	Question	Hints	Focus
A1	What is the overall purpose of the business model? - Why does it really exist? - What other value networks does it serve	Every system fulfills its real purpose. Sometimes the espoused purpose of a business model is actually quite different from the purpose that is revealed by its activities.	ves1
A2	- Are there influencers or beneficiaries that have been overlooked? - Are key players being discussed in your conversations that are not represented? - Should they be?	It is always important to ask what is missing or who has not been included. Look for key stakeholders who influence activities or are affected by them even if it appears they are not directly involved.	ves1 ves2
A3	- How deeply enmeshed and interdependent are the participants?	The number, type, and frequency of interactions are indicators of the intensity and quality of relationship between a pair of participants.	ves3
A4	- Is every participant both contributing to and receiving value from the value exchanges as a whole?	Perceived value is determined by the number of in-going and out-going value transactions. If people feel they are not gaining positive value they are more likely to withdraw from contributing.	ves3
A5	- Does it appear that some participants might be gaining value at the expense of another? - If so, what are the implications?	This also is a question of perceived value. If other participants feel a particular participant is behaving unfairly, they are more likely to reconfigure roles and interactions in ways that diminish that participant's role in the system – or alter the value interactions.	ves3
A6	- What do the patterns of reciprocity flows tell you about the internal transactions? - Do they appear to be healthy or is there a possible imbalance?	A consistent pattern of reciprocity of exchanges is an indicator of a healthy flow of value and whole-system optimization. Missing links, dead links, and broken pathways of value are indicators of missed opportunities for maximizing value. Sequencing value transactions as they occur in the overall activity helps reveal missing links and poorly configured value paths	ves3
A7	- Are there bottlenecks, constraints, or instability in the flow of value? - If so, why?	The pattern of interactions can be affected by control mechanisms and decision making. When one participant unduly constrains or controls transactions it is an indicator of structural or behavioural constraints impeding the flow of value.	ves1

B1	- How does value gained by one participant extend to other groups or strategic partners within an organization in a way that accrues value for the business ecosystem as a whole?	If a group of participants belongs to the same organizational entity, then value that is gained by one participant from an external stakeholder accrues both directly to that entity and either directly or indirectly to all other participants in that organization. When value gained by one participant is not accrued efficiently to its internal and external organizational partners, then value gain is diminished.	ves2
B2	- How does the pattern or rate of growth in knowledge and other intangible deliverables compare to corporate growth and profitability?	Knowledge is the intangible that is easiest both to grow and to convert to other types of value so systems that generate high value probably would have correlating high growth rates for value-added knowledge exchanges. If there is high growth of knowledge exchanges, yet corporate profitability and growth remain flat, then there may be problems with value realization. But a high number of intangible exchanges is not always a positive sign. It could indicate that people are interacting a lot to try to manage infrastructure problems or unhelpful behaviours.	ves1
C1	- What does the pattern of interaction suggest about the level of trust in the business ecosystem? - What norms of behaviour are revealed by the pattern of value exchanges?	The ratio of formal to informal value transactions, or the depth and quality of knowledge flows, can be an indicator of trust.	ves2
C2	- Is one type of value exchange more dominant, either between groups of participants or the system as a whole? - Why do you think that is? - What would the implications be if it were different?	The dominance of a particular type of exchange may be an indicator of assumptions about value that drive system behaviours. This pattern also may point to places where there may be structural or behavioural constraints on maximizing value.	ves1 ves2 ves3
C3	- Are there roles that people need to be engaged in, or offering value, but they aren't?	Every role play and its interactions is an opportunity to create value or build relationship.	ves1
C4	- Does every action elicit a response from participants? - If not, why not?	Every action either triggers another value transaction or has an internal impact on the participant who is the recipient. If an action does not trigger a positive value-creating response or generate additional value interactions, one needs to ask why is that activity happening?	ves3
C5	- Who might play a new or different role in the business model? - What would happen if roles disappeared or were combined? - What if the position of a participant changed or the participant suddenly forged informal relationships with new participants?	Questions around "What role do you really play in this business?" can be very powerful. By imagining themselves in different roles people will often spot unseen opportunities.	ves1

C6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How closely aligned are the role plays and your personal or group brand? - What do the intangible deliverables tell you about the different "brands" and reputations that are represented in the business model? 	<p>Intangible deliverables often point to kinds of things that people are known for — how they might be regarded. There can sometimes be disconnects between the role people think they play and the role that is actually represented by their interactions. Looking at outgoing intangibles can also indicate certain kinds of attributes or qualities of individual participants.</p>	ves1
C7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If there is a "heartbeat" in the business ecosystem, where is it? - What participants play the most critical roles in its life? - What would happen if the roles were not there or the people playing them were replaced with someone else? 	<p>Sometimes the most important participants are simply overlooked. Either their role is taken for granted or they appear to be peripheral (such as a champion or resource provider) — but if they were not there or someone else took that role the whole dynamic of the ecosystem could change in — well, in a heartbeat.</p> <p>(Also refer to keystones in business ecosystems.)</p>	ves2

A: Relates to intent, scope and health

B: Relates to Value realisation: Sharing (S) Enhancement (E) Conversion (C)

C: Relates to role play behaviour and participant behaviour/alignment/intention

NB: (Questions reorganized from an original set devised by Dr. Oliver Schwabe, to whom acknowledgement is given.)