

# The Old Ball Coach: A Case Applying Four Startup Methodologies

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## How does a startup become viable?

This question became more than academic when I became the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of my own tech startup, TOBC. There are plenty of methodologies out there for developing a startup. Unfortunately, we found that no single methodology fit our startup.

In this case, I discuss how we applied four related startup methodologies—by Eric Ries, Steve Blank, Agile Methodology, and Alexander Osterwalder & Yves Pigneur—to our startup. We discovered that these methodologies guided our startup development in different ways.

## What is The Old Ball Coach?

The Old Ball Coach (TOBC) is a browser based, football management simulation game that allows a user to play the role of football head coach and general manager. The game is targeted to football video game players that typically enjoy playing the simulation part of current popular football games more than actually playing the individual games. Its primary purpose is to deliver a management experience instead of the management experience being an additional/supporting feature.

## Methods

TOBC set out to test our assumptions on whether there are people who would pay for our services. We turned to Steven Blank’s *The Startup Owner’s Manual*, Osterwalder and Pigneur’s *Business Model Generation*, Ken Schwaber and Jeff Sutherland’s *Agile Scrum Alliance Scrum Guide*, and Eric Ries’ *The Lean Startup* to launch TOBC from ideation to consumer recreation.

This capstone explores what methods TOBC used and why. Then I examine the results from ascribing to particular heuristics.

“The only help a youth wants is to be directed what books to read and in what order.”- Thomas Jefferson

## Lessons Learned

Methodology	Steps	Feedback Loops	Benefits	Weaknesses
Steven Blank	There are 2 areas: Customer Development, Customer Validation, with 4 phases nestled within each	Slow, if any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Road map to follow</li><li>Shared language to begin explaining what our product is</li><li>Checklist to follow for each phase</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Doesn’t quite explain how to follow the roadmap or how it fits into the entire method Blank lays out.</li><li>Doesn’t provide the user any structure</li><li>No feedback loops</li></ul>
Osterwalder & Pigneur	9 “Building Blocks” that show the logic of how a company intends to make money	Componentized feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clear business model that gives the company a shared language and a systematic way to challenge assumptions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It didn’t give us a good way to collaborate to get the job done.</li></ul>
Agile Methodology	Weekly 15 minute Scrum framework where these three questions are ask: 1. What have you been working on? 2. What are your impediments? 3. Do you have anything to demo?	Fast, transparent feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clearer alignment on strategy and execution</li><li>Stay informed and focused on what matters most</li><li>Share knowledge and best practices</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Time intensive</li></ul>
Eric Ries	Build, Measure, Learn	Precise, customer-centered feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Accurate data</li><li>Actual needs of the customer</li><li>Reveal info we wouldn’t have thought to ask because of failure</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lacks guidance for how to execute iterations</li></ul>

## Illustrations & Artifacts







## Major Literature Cited

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## Image Sources

- TOBC Archives
- The Lean Startup, Eric Ries, 2011

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Hook 'Em!

## Conclusions

As the company worked with the different approaches, TOBC realized that no one approach was a magic bullet. Combining the best from each approach was most effective for startup success. Table 1 compares the four approaches.

Startups may need unique combinations of methods. This case study helps us to understand the different approaches brought to the table for our unique startup.

Understanding the composition of the team’s collective strengths as well as the possible gaps in individual experience is key. Trying to embrace a learning organization concept and building proficiency in areas that the team lacks knowledge in also helped. This is where having a growth mindset will yield better results, in both the short and long term. As with the lessons learned from Agile and Ries, TOBC took an iterative approach and learned from those experiences.

All startups face unique circumstances. Multiple approaches can help them to better understand these circumstances, just as they did for TOBC . We are continuing this journey and will doubtless use more approaches. But we systematically examine these approaches so we can draw better lessons.

## Contact Me



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