

# The First Class

A single session on *The Impact Entrepreneur Breakthrough*

One class. One chapter. One canvas. This guide gives you the questions to ask, in order, with notes on where the discussion tends to go and how to bring it back. It assumes your students have read Chapter 2, about twelve pages. It does not assume they have read the rest of the book, or that they have ever run anything.

Every framework in *The Impact Entrepreneur Breakthrough* asks the reader to examine an enterprise they are responsible for. Undergraduates are not yet responsible for one. So this session hands the class a company to analyze, and one substitution rule that makes the book's tools work on it.

**The substitution rule.** Everywhere the canvas or the Roadmap says **your**, read **the company's**. Say it aloud once before the group work. It is the only instruction students need in order to use material written for practitioners.

## What students can do afterward

1. Distinguish single-issue from systemic problem framing on a concrete case.
2. Identify where a visible fix *displaced* harm rather than eliminating it, and name what was left structurally unchanged.
3. Choose one implementable change for that company and defend the choice against the alternatives.

### Before class · about fifteen minutes

- Read Chapter 2.
- Choose three products your students actually use. A cotton t-shirt, a smartphone and a cup of coffee all work, as does anything with a supply chain the room can picture.
- Print the Systemic Intelligence Canvas, one per group of four.
- Open the Implementation Roadmap at Section C and leave it open.

## The session

### 0–10 min Choose the company

Offer the three products. “Here are three things most of us used this week. Pick one.” Take a show of hands and go with the winner.

Then: “Name a harm that went into making this. Who was harmed, and who fixed it?”

Write the answers on the board and keep them. You need the list in the next move.

**Note.** The list will come fast and stay shallow. Let it. That shallowness is the raw material for the next fifteen minutes, and correcting it now costs you the move.

### 10–25 min Where the harm went

The pivot of the session. Read the book's opening aloud:

In the 1990s, many major clothing brands pledged to eliminate child labor from their supply chains. They audited factories, terminated noncompliant suppliers, and published sustainability reports celebrating progress. Twenty years later, child labor persists—sometimes in the same regions, just pushed into smaller, less visible operations. Brands achieved compliance on paper while the underlying conditions that led to child labor (poverty, lack of education access, weak governance) remained unchanged or worsened.

CHAPTER 2, OPENING

Then: “The brands audited. They terminated suppliers. They published reports. Twenty years on, the child labor is still there, only harder to see. So where did the harm go, and what was left structurally unchanged?”

Then, pointing at the board: “Take one item from our list. If the company fixed exactly that tomorrow, where would the harm move?”

**Note.** Expect pushback here from students with business backgrounds, and the Supplement's guidance holds: press them to name what was structurally unchanged. The more common wrong turn is moral rather than analytic, and the room starts arguing about whether the brand is bad or whether shoppers should buy differently. Chapter 2 answers that under structural causality, and reading the line aloud is the reset: systemic intelligence “examines why wages are too low for consumers to afford durable goods, why marketing manipulates insecurity, and how to restructure incentives throughout the system.”

Groups of four, one canvas each. State the substitution rule, then set three blocks and only three:

- **1 Map Your System.** The challenge is already chosen: the harm the class named.
- **2 Expand Time Horizons.** Six months, three years, ten, fifty.
- **4 Read System Signals.** What is the system telling the company, and what would it do if it listened?

Skip blocks 5, 6 and 7. They ask for conversations the student would have to schedule, a premortem on a coming initiative, and a ninety-day practice. Those belong to someone running an enterprise, and asking students to invent answers teaches them to invent answers. Skip block 3 as well: its feedback loops are already inside block 1's sketch.

**Note.** Give a five-minute warning before you stop them. Block 1 absorbs whatever time it is given. If a group stalls on the causal-loop sketch, tell them to draw two arrows and move on; the diagram is not the deliverable.

### 50–60 min **Interface Carpets**

Narrate this one. It is short, and it is the counter-case.

Ray Anderson founded Interface, a commercial carpet manufacturer, in 1973. In 1994, asked to state the company's environmental vision, he concluded that Interface was “plundering the earth” and set a goal he called Mission Zero: no negative environmental impact by 2020. He gave it twenty-six years rather than two. The company went after what produced the damage, including an experiment in leasing carpet rather than selling it, which rewards durability instead of volume. By 2013 roughly 49 percent of its raw materials were recycled or bio-based, with estimated savings from avoided waste costs of \$450 million. Mission Zero was met in 2019, a year early, with a 96 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions and an 89 percent cut in water use.

Then: “What did Interface change that our company did not?”

**Note.** You are steering toward this: Anderson changed what generated the harm instead of auditing for it afterward. If a student says the difference is that Anderson cared more, take it seriously and then test it. Caring produced the audits too.

### 60–72 min **The one thing**

Put Section C of the Roadmap on the screen. “You now run this company. Answer as them.”

Work the decision tree together. Question 1 asks for a primary role, and for most products the answer is “I build or run an enterprise.” Question 2A then offers four failures and routes the class to a single toolkit.

Then: “The tree gave you one toolkit. Defend it against the other three.”

**Note.** This is where the third objective is met and where the session stops being a discussion. Make them argue. The tree gives a first toolkit, not the only one: the Roadmap sends the reader back for a second, from a different dimension.

### 72–75 min **Close**

“Name the one thing, and say what would have to be true for it to happen.”

**The fifty-minute version.** Instructor picks the product (5). Where the harm went, unchanged (15). Canvas, blocks 1 and 2 only (15). Interface narrated (5). Decision tree, no defense round (10).

**If you want an assignment.** The Instructor's Supplement carries the full set. The one that follows this session most directly is Week 2's take-home case analysis in Model 1: two to three pages applying systemic against single-bottom-line thinking to a product's supply chain, tracing how fixing one visible problem may displace harm elsewhere.

## Where these live

- [The Systemic Intelligence Canvas](#) (the one used in this session, printable)
- [Frameworks Workshop Pack](#) (all eighteen canvases in one file)
- [Implementation Roadmap, Section C](#) (the decision tree used in move five)
- [Instructor's Supplement](#) (three course models, discussion questions for all sixteen chapters, rubrics)
- [Reader's Companion](#) (framework summaries and glossary, for student use)

Every adopting course may schedule one complimentary virtual visit per term, a 45 to 60 minute author Q&A. Write to [info@impactalchemist.com](mailto:info@impactalchemist.com) with your institution, course and enrollment.

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