

The Why & How of VOC

Section 1: The Importance of Customer Insight in Innovation & Transformation



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95%

of GenAI pilots fail.

*Only 5% of enterprise pilots achieve
measurable revenue acceleration.*

— MIT NANDA Report, *State of AI in Business 2025* (via *Fortune*, Aug 18, 2025)



Innovation has always been a numbers game:

93%

Pharmaceutical R&D
failure at clinical trials

94%

Venture Capital
Funded Startups fail

50%

New product launches
miss targets

75%

ERP deployment
fail



Increase your chances of success:

- Start with the problem, not the solution
- Understand true value
- Validate early and often

We believe

Problem

Solution

We know



Without strong customer empathy
innovators risk creating a

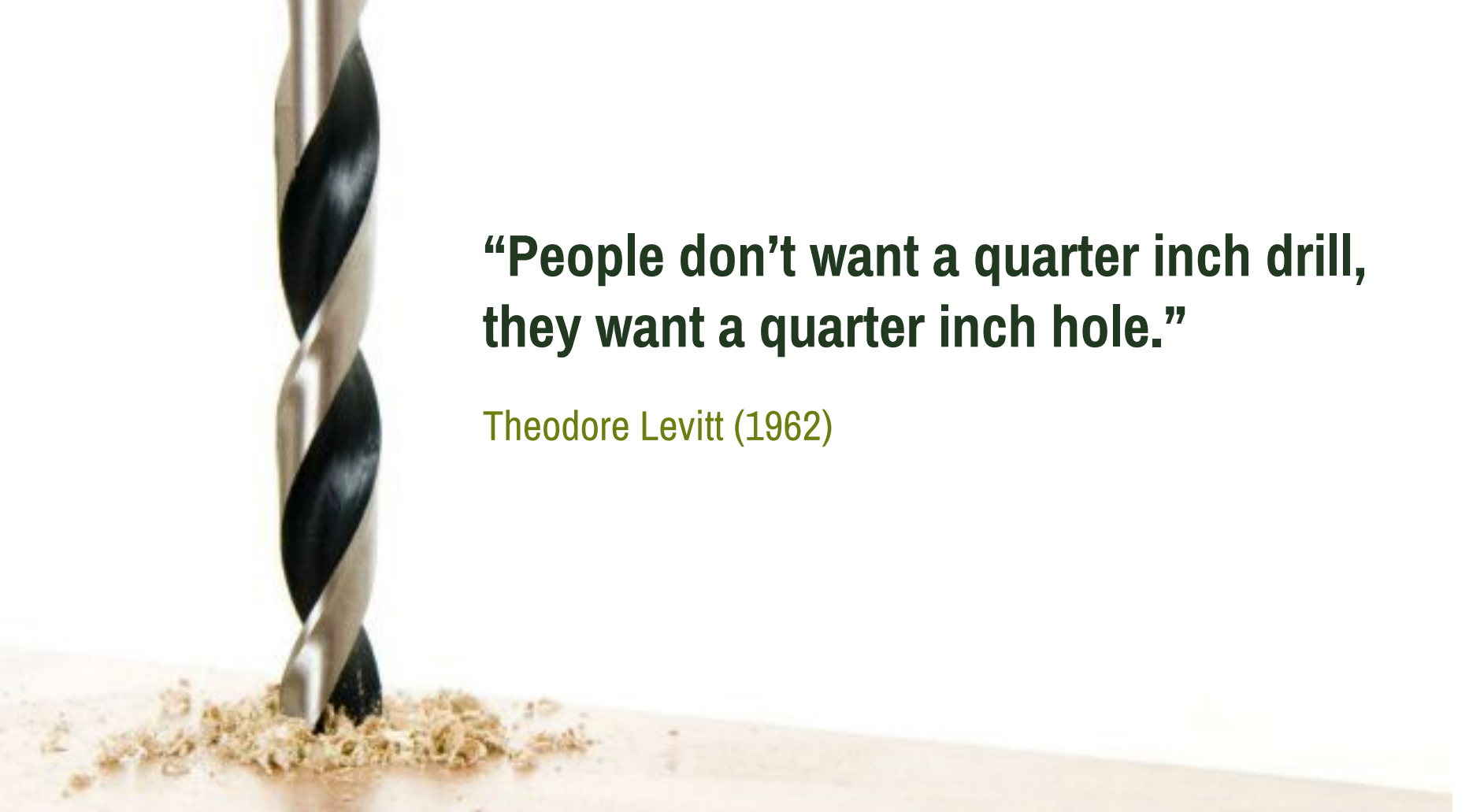
Solution Looking for a Problem

"I believe the Segway will do for walking, what the calculator did for pad and pencil. Get there quicker. You'll go further." Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway

"As important as the internet" John Doerr, US venture capitalists

"Most managers start with the solution first... although they develop highly innovative solutions, the product or service fails because they developed a solution that no one wants to buy." Nathan Furr & Jeff Dyer, *The Innovator's Method* (2014)





**“People don’t want a quarter inch drill,
they want a quarter inch hole.”**

Theodore Levitt (1962)



What is a Job-to-Be-Done (JTBD)?

A Job to Be Done (JTBD) is the underlying goal or outcome a customer is trying to achieve in a specific context.

Desired
Outcome

Stable
Over Time

Solution
Agnostic

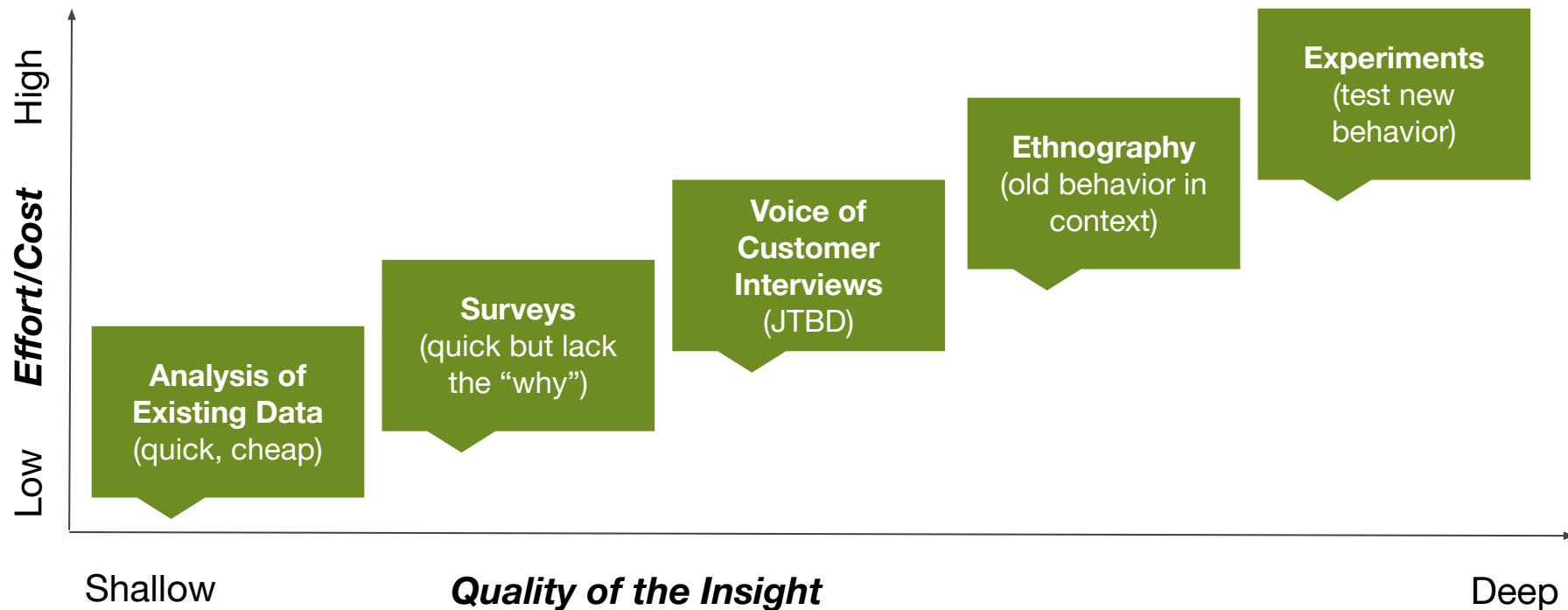
***“If we have data, let's look
at the data.***

***If all we have are opinions,
let's go with mine.”***

Jim Barksdale, former CEO of Netscape



Discovery & Validation Tools





Customer validation is not:

- *“I love it!”*
- *“I can see someone using this.”*
- *“This is a big problem for us”*



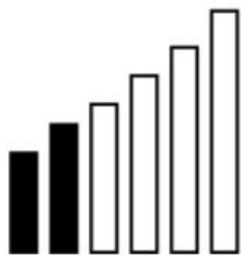
Customer validation is:

- *“This will save me 2 hours every day”*
- *Specific pain*
- *Low satisfaction with alternative*
- *Skin in the game*



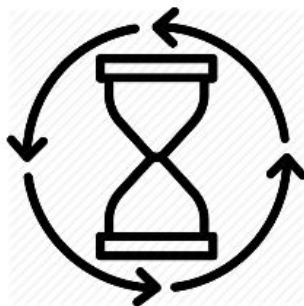


Intensity, Frequency and Density



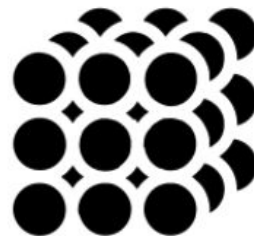
Intensity

Annoyance or show-stopper?
Economic value and
emotional/social pain



Frequency

How often does the problem
occur? Is it predictable?



Density

How many people have this
problem? How big is the
market?



Caution! Easy $\neq$ Good

Surveys

Surveys are useful for:

- Recruiting respondents for deeper interviews
- Validating a problem uncovered in VOC at scale
- Estimating how big a segment is

Limited value for

- Understanding the why behind behavior
- Uncovering Jobs to Be Done
- Early discovery (you don't even know what to ask yet)
- Capturing reactions, confusion, or nuance

Focus Groups

Seem efficient: many people in the same room. But...

- Groupthink and social dynamics bias responses
- Loudest voice wins
- Hard to get at true motivations or struggles
- One well-recruited 1:1 interview is far more valuable

Exception: Co-creation sessions can work when each participant brings a unique role (e.g., nurse, administrator, surgeon). Value is in seeing trade-offs across roles.

The Why & How of VOC

Section 2: Voice of Customer Best Practices

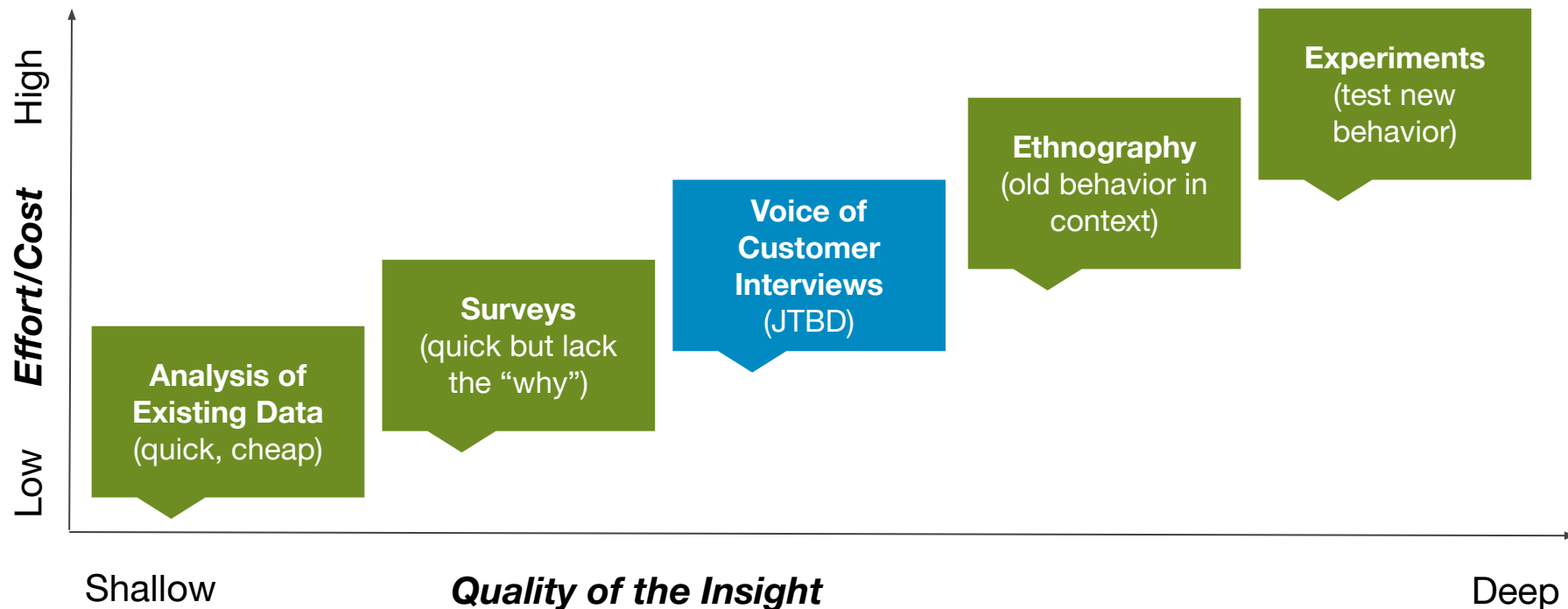


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Discovery & Validation Tools





Typical Approach of Market Research

Ask

Don't Ask. Observe Behavior.

It is easy for people to open their mouth, it is much harder for them to open their wallet. When you test willingness to adopt/pay focus on what they do, not what they say.

existing
customers

The Tyranny of the Served Market

Your existing customer base will steer you towards incremental and urgent problems that offer limited growth. Look for under served/over served customers.

what they
want

**Innovators innovate,
customers VALIDATE.**

Don't ask customers for features or their needs. Likely they don't know. Validate that there is a problem worth solving through customer discovery.



Instead: Talk to the Right People the Right Way

1

What Do You Want To Learn?

Assumption Mapping

2

Who Do You Want to Learn From?

Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)

3

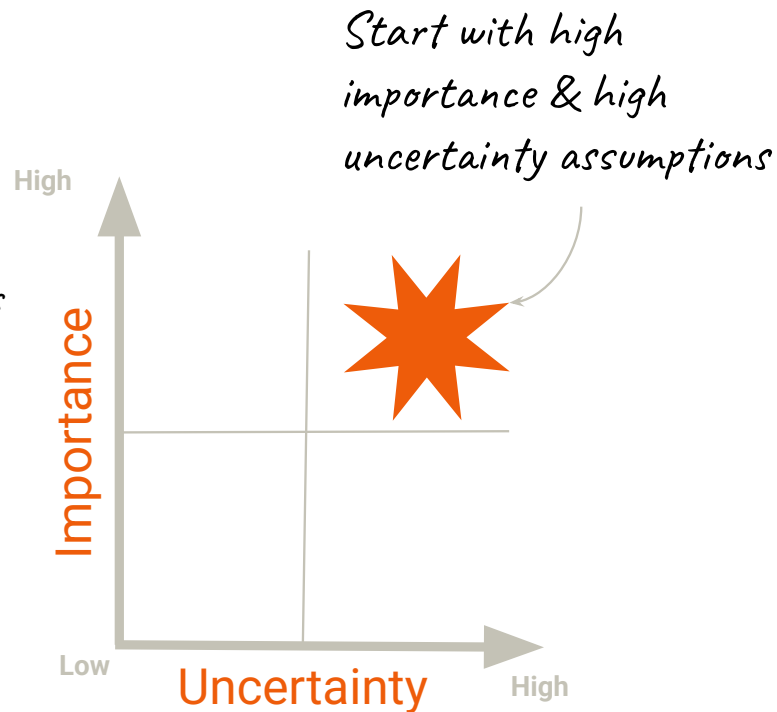
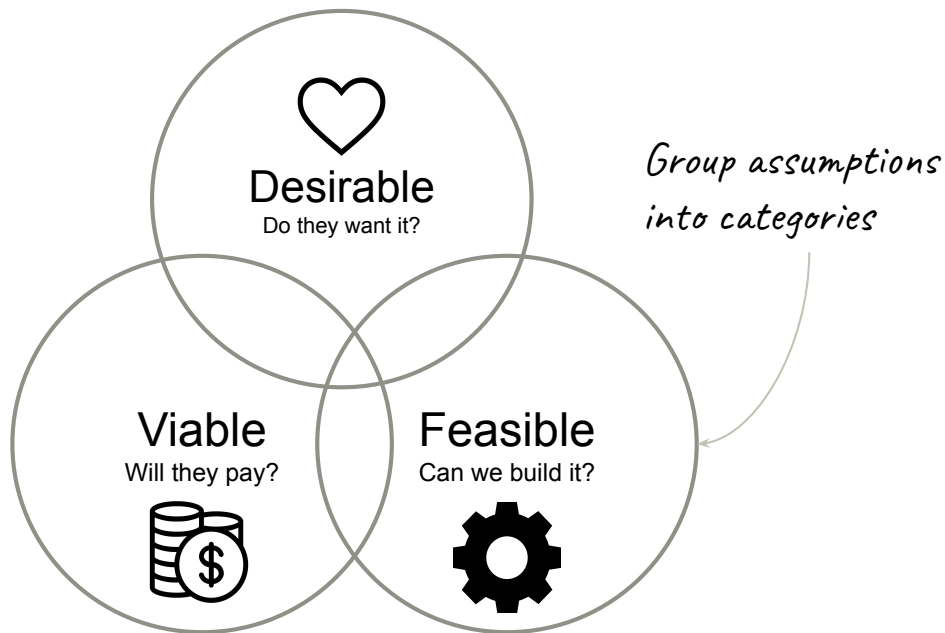
How Do You Want to Learn?

Discussion Guide, Stimulus, & Analysis



#1 What Do You Want To Learn?

Assumption Mapping





Start with high importance & high uncertainty assumptions

Example Research Objectives

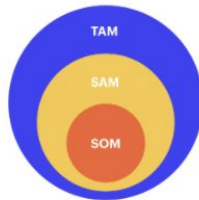
1. Problem Discovery

What are the areas of frustration and delight?



2. Addressable Market

What are the characteristics of non-customers? What would make them convert?



VOC will be able to validate that non-customers exist and what their characteristics are. It cannot size the market segments.

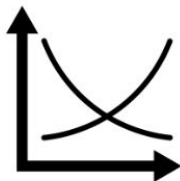
3. Value Proposition

Validate value proposition and understand what unique attributes and differentiated value statements resonate most.



4. Price Elasticity

How do customer assess value? Will a lower entry price increase unit sales?



VOC can test willingness to pay and generate insights into the relative perceived value of products. It does not constitute a full pricing study such as a max/diff or conjoint analysis.

5. Best-Fit Customers

What customer clusters resonate most with the new offering? What are their characteristics? How do they learn about new products?



6. Drivers and Barriers

What are the drivers and barriers to adoption?





King Charles

Male & born in 1948
Raised in the UK
Wealthy & famous
Married twice
Self-employed
Lives in a castle
Enjoys traveling
abroad, dogs, sports
cars, and fine wines



Ozzy Osbourne

**Demographics don't cause purchases.
Struggles cause purchases.**



#2 Who Do You Want to Learn From?

Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)

1. What do your ideal customers have in common?
2. Where can you find them?

Your Turn:

- (1) Describe your ideal customer.
- (2) How might GenAI help with this?



Respondent Screener

1. **Behavioral questions** that confirm they've done the job you're studying ("How do you currently handle X?")
2. **Frequency questions**, how often do they encounter the situation
3. **A problem intensity signal**, do they find it frustrating enough to care?
4. **A clear next step** (link to Calendly, request for email, etc.)



Vera Sell • You
Co-Founder, ClearSight | Faculty, PSU School of ...
1yr •

* My dog can't take this survey—but you can!

I'm advising a PSU Data Science capstone team researching GenAI use in the workplace, and they need 100+ responses by the end of next week 😊

If you've used tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, or Claude at work (or even if you haven't), please take 5 minutes to help them out:

👉 https://lnkd.in/gvnUd_Ex



👍 18

5 comments · 8 reposts

👍 Like

💬 Comment

🔄 Repost

➦ Send

📊 4,533 impressions

[View analytics](#)



#3 How Do You Want to Learn?

Discussion Guide

1. **Start broad, then go narrow**, open with story-based questions ("Tell me about the last time...") before drilling into specifics.
2. **Validate the problem first**, before discussing your proposed solution
3. **Push past "great idea"**, ask to quantify the value
4. **Consistency is key**, lets you spot patterns across interviews rather than just collecting interesting stories

Avoid: Closed Questions
starting with is, are,
would, and do you

Instead: Open-Ended "W" Questions
when, who, why

My Favorite Questions

- **Unprompted pain:** what is your biggest challenge when you...
- **Pain score:** on a scale of 1-10 how would you rate this challenge?
- **Wow score:** on a scale of 1-10 how would you rate this idea? Why
- **If you had a magic wand**, what problem would you want to solve?



#3 How Do You Want to Learn? During The Interview

1. Request permission to record the interview
2. Stay away from generics or opinions about the future, instead ask for story or specific experiencing
3. Ask open ended questions that get people talking
4. Look for "duct tape" and workarounds
5. Don't embed the desired answer in the question
6. Focus on learning, not selling
7. Dive deeper when you discover strong emotions
8. Seek to understand priority
9. Focus on desired outcomes and struggles
10. Ask for a referral (who else should we talk to?)
11. Don't pitching the solution





#3 How Do You Want to Learn?

Stimulus Material

1. Rough is better than polished
2. Make it just concrete enough to react to
3. Show 2-3 concept variations when possible
4. Use GenAI to build stimulus material quickly
5. **Stimulus material is a reaction trigger, not a sales pitch.**



#3 How Do You Want to Learn?

Stimulus Material

Advice Interview

Problem Only

Conduct 5-10 advice interviews and validate the problem you want to solve.



Recruit respondents, see recruiting tactics for ideas

**30-60 Minute
Advice
Interview**

Learning Metric

How many mention as a top problem
Problem Intensity (mosquito vs shark bite)

Skin in the Game

Refer a colleague, sign up to get updates,
request a demo, beta tester

Story Board

Problem + Solution

Create a visual story of your idea (mainly focus on the problem). Add the customer journey to the illustration. Use it as part of the advice interview.



Learning Metric

How many understand your value prop?
How many are excited (WOW Score)?

Skin in the Game

Refer a colleague, sign up to get updates,
request a demo, beta tester

Brochure/Flyer

Problem + Solution + Call to Action

Create a 1-page brochure or flyer explaining the problem and the solution, add a call to action like email us, click to learn more. Distribute 100-200 to relevant audience.



Learning Metric

Number of people who call/email/click

Skin in the Game

Provide an email

Email Campaign

Problem Only

Create a compelling pitch explaining the problem with a teaser of the potential solution. Include a call to action (order now, learn more). Instead of taking an order explain that you want to talk to potential customers before developing the idea further.



Learning Metric

Email open rate and click rate
How many sign up for advice interview

Skin in the Game

Refer a colleague, sign up to get updates,
request a demo, beta tester

A/B Test - Digital Ads

Problem Only

Pick 2-3 top rated problems from the advice interviews, create a digital ad for each problem, run ads on Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter. Send people to a landing page



Learning Metric

Click through rate for each ad
How many book demo, sign up as beta

Skin in the Game

Email

Landing Page

Problem Only

If testing off-brand, create logo and get domain name, set up landing page explaining the problem you solve, ask for email of people who are interested in learning about the solution. Drive traffic to page.



Learning Metric

Traffic from different sources
How many people leave email

Skin in the Game

Click through, email



#3 How Do You Want to Learn?

Analysis

1. Upload transcripts & summarize
2. Create a content grid
3. Look for patterns

create a spreadsheet as an artifact that takes the key specifications of the IMC power analyzer in 10 classes (5) based on how the respondent feels about it: 1) benefit must have (green) 2) benefit nice to have (yellow) 3) below expectation must have (orange) 4) don't care (gray) 5) not specified (gray). On the columns list the respondent by number + company once you have done that, look across these requirements and see if you can find any patterns? Is there a cluster of customers that require the same specs? Who values 2000 V vs does not care or nice to have? For what respondents is the sampling rate of 4MS/S a blocker? create customer segments by specification requirements



Write a message...



Sonnet 4.6



Claude is AI and can make mistakes. Please double-check responses.

Imc voc spec assessment - XLSX



Download as .xlsx



fx

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2						
3						
4	Spec Group	Specification	Description	IMC Value Prop?	1 Felix Liebherr (DE) WOW:7	2 Chen G WO
5	VOLTAGE & SAFETY	±2,000 V DC Direct Input	No probes needed	➕ DIFFERENTIATOR	✖ Below Exp.	✓ Must
6		CAT III Safety Rating	Operate in HV zone	➕ DIFFERENTIATOR	✓ Must-Have	✓ Must
7		IP54 Protection	Dust & splash proof		✓ Must-Have	🟡 Nice-
8	SAMPLING & RESOLUTION	Sampling Rate 4 MS/s	Up to 4 MS/s (vs 10–15 MS/s competitors)	✖ GAP vs comp.	✖ Below Exp.	🟡 Nice-
9		24-bit Resolution	vs 18-bit competitors	➕ DIFFERENTIATOR	🟡 Nice-to-Have	🟡 Nice-
10		Power Measurement Accuracy Spec	Published spec (not just V/I)	✖ MISSING	✓ Must-Have	🟡 Nice-
11	SYNCHRONIZATION & DATA	Electrical Sync <10 ns (PTP/IEEE 1588)	Multi-module sync	➕ UNIQUE	✓ Must-Have	✓ Must
12		Electrical + Mechanical Sync (torque/speed)	PA + DAQ unified	➕ UNIQUE	✓ Must-Have	✓ Must
13		Full-Rate Raw Data (continuous)	No export limitation	➕ DIFFERENTIATOR	✓ Must-Have	🟡 Nice-
14	FORM FACTOR & DESIGN	Realtime HW Calculation (inline FAMOS)	Calculated results live, reduces data load	➕ DIFFERENTIATOR	✓ Must-Have	🟡 Nice-
15		Modular Single-Phase Design	Daisy-chain, à la carte phases	➕ DIFFERENTIATOR	✓ Must-Have	🟡 Nice-
16		Low Weight / Portable (2.5 kg)	vs ~14–18 kg benchtop	➕ DIFFERENTIATOR	✓ Must-Have	✓ Must
17		No Built-in Display	Controlled via PC/Studio		✓ Must-Have	— Dor

VOC Spec Assessment

Customer Segments

2000V & 4MS-s Analysis

***“It's easy to open your mouth,
but hard to open your wallet.”***



Further Reading

- Nathan Furr & Jeff Dyer. *The Innovator's Method: Bringing the Lean Start-up into Your Organization*. Harvard Business Review Press, 2014.
- Nathan Furr & Andrew Shipilov. "Beware the AI Experimentation Trap." *Harvard Business Review*, August 2025. <https://hbr.org/2025/08/beware-the-ai-experimentation-trap>
- Aditya Challapally et al. *The GenAI Divide: State of AI in Business 2025*. MIT NANDA Initiative. Coverage in *Fortune*, August 18, 2025: <https://fortune.com/2025/08/18/mit-report-95-percent-generative-ai-pilots-at-companies-failing-cfo/>
- Clayton Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma*. Harvard Business School Press, 1997.
- Clayton Christensen, Taddy Hall, Karen Dillon, and David S. Duncan. *Competing Against Luck: The Story of Innovation and Customer Choice*. Harper Business, 2016.



AI Acknowledgment

This lecture is based on original content developed and refined since 2018. AI helped check references but largely stayed out of the creation of this lecture.

Thank You



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Further Reading

- Giff Constable. *Talking to Humans: Success Starts with Understanding Your Customers*. 2nd ed., Constable Consulting, 2014.
- Giff Constable. *Testing with Humans: How to Use Experiments to Drive Faster, Smarter, and More Reliable Product Decisions*. Constable Consulting, 2018.

