Customer Interviewing:

The BEST WAY to Validate Your Business Model

Finding People to Interview

- First, define your customer

- Do not interview your friends!

- Use friends, family members and fellow students for introductions to potential interviewees

- Use LinkedIn, Facebook or Google searches to identify people to talk to

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Getting People to Actually Respond

- Look for connections
  - Get an introduction from someone
  - Cite a mutual acquaintance
  - Explain how/where you found the person's name
- Go to a physical location where interviewees work or hang out
- Promise to call back or stop by a second time if the interviewee doesn't get back to you
  - Make it clear you will keep following up until they respond
- Things that people like to hear:
  - "Thank you in advance"
  - "I heard you are an expert in _____"
  - "I'm a student and I could really use your help"
  - "This is <u>not</u> a sales call"

In-Person Interviews are Best

	In-Person	Video Chat	Phone Call
Undivided attention (interviewee isn't checking email or surfing the web)	Yes	Probably	No
Observe body language and facial expressions	Yes	Kind of	No
Interviewee can actually show you a relevant process or a competitive product	Yes	No	No
Interviewee likely to go off on insightful tangents	Yes	Maybe	No
Interview someone who's not local	No	Yes	Yes

DON'T DO THESE (we've tried them and they are a *massive* waste of time)

- Surveys: a pre-scripted set of questions vastly limits your learning
- Group interviews: group-think rapidly takes over
- Email interviews: you'll get a ton of one word answers

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Getting Prepared to Interview

- Set 2-3 goals for the interview
  - Goals will likely be something you want to learn based on your hypotheses
  - You don't need to test every hypothesis in one interview – more than 2-3 goals will likely just make you crazy
- Develop 3-5 questions
  - Should be based on your goals
  - Too many questions turns the interview into a survey, which is *not good*
  - Organize your questions from broadest to narrowest

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Anatomy of an Interview

- Introduce yourself and your team
- Thank them for *their* time
- Optional: ask a few background questions about the person (job title, experience in field, etc.)
- Start with broad questions, then narrow
- Drill down – ask "why" a lot
- End the interview

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Interview Tactics

- Ask open ended questions
- Make sure your questions don't imply what the "right answer" should be
- Separate opinion from behavior and fact
  - People are bad at predicting what they will do, but good at recounting what they have done
- Seek out and explore bad news!
- Watch body language
- **Listen 80% of the time**

Sample Open-Ended Questions

- Can you take me through what a typical day… or surgery… or class period is like?

- What are your biggest problems with how things are done today?

- What problems keep you up at night?

- What would an ideal product look like?

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Listen, Listen, Listen!!!

- Be A Rabbit

- Not An Alligator

Ask These at the End of Every Interview

- What questions should I have asked that I did not?

- Who else can I talk to? Would you be willing to make an introduction?

Avoiding Confirmation Bias

- Keep track of what you are actually hearing, not what you want or expect to hear

- Bring an interview buddy to take notes

- Spend ¼ to ½ hour after each interview reviewing your notes and adding in details you couldn't write down at the time
  - Do this right after the interview – even 15 minutes later you will have forgotten a lot

Customer Discovery DON'Ts

- Don't try to sell your product!

- Don't talk about your product!

- Don't talk to your friends!

- Don't only talk about good news!

- Don't change your approach until you've done at least 5 interviews!