DOHE

Objective 2.1

Value Proposition

Validate the Customer Problem

Confirm that the problem you're solving truly matters by engaging real customers, gathering evidence, and validating genuine pain points.

Ideation

Objective Description

Find out if the problem you want to solve really matters to real people. Talk to potential customers, listen carefully, and see how serious the problem is for them. Don't rely on guesses — collect real stories, examples, and proof that the problem exists and is painful enough to fix.

Why This Objective Matters For Your Startup

Validating the customer problem ensures you're solving a real and painful need, not building from assumptions. It lays the foundation for every decision that follows — from product design to marketing and fundraising. By deeply understanding who your customers are, what frustrates them, and how they currently try to solve the problem, you confirm there's a real opportunity worth pursuing. This evidence helps you build a product people actually want — and investors believe in.
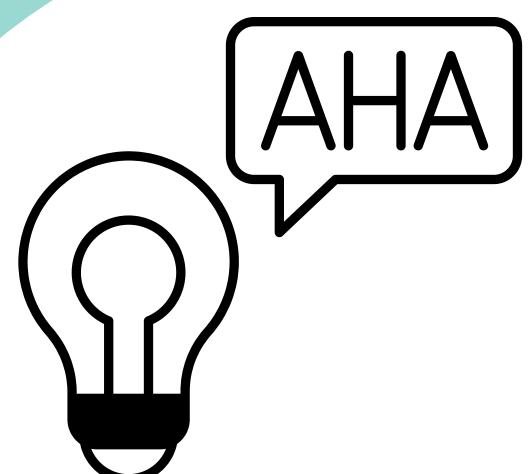
Reveals Real Pain Points – Talking directly with potential customers uncovers the real frustrations, frequency, and costs behind the problem — giving you clear proof it's worth solving.

Focuses Product Direction – When you know what truly matters to users, you can design focused solutions instead of guessing what features to build.

Reduces Startup Risk – Early validation prevents wasted time and money building for a problem that doesn't exist or isn't urgent enough to fix.

Strengthens Investor Confidence – Evidence of genuine customer pain makes your idea more credible and fundable — showing that your solution meets a clear market need.

Builds a Customer-Centric Mindset – Engaging with users early builds empathy, shaping a company culture that listens, learns, and adapts around real people's problems.

AHA

Key Concepts & Resources

- Problem Validation: Before building anything, confirm the problem truly exists and matters deeply to customers.
- Empathy: Listening to real users helps you understand pain points beyond assumptions.
- Evidence-Based Insight: Decisions grounded in real data and stories reduce the risk of solving the wrong problem.

Problem Interview Framework

A structured way to uncover and validate real customer pain points.

- Talk to 5–10 target customers to understand their workflows/frustrations.
- Ask open-ended questions like "What's hardest about doing X?" or "What happens when this problem arises?"
- Look for emotional reactions and repeated themes — these signal real pain worth solving.

The Problem Interview Framework helps replace assumptions with firsthand evidence, building confidence that the problem is significant and widespread.

▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7CqXLsaTsM

The 5 Whys Framework

Identify the root cause behind customer frustrations.

- Start with a surface-level issue, then ask "why" repeatedly (around 5 times) to dig deeper into the real cause.
- This reveals whether the pain is minor or systemic — and if your solution would truly create value.
- Document the key insight from each "why" to identify the biggest opportunity for improvement.
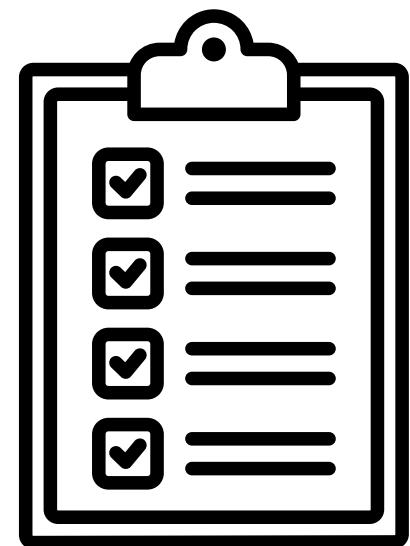
The 5 Whys Framework transforms vague complaints into clear, actionable problem statements.

▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Stc0beAxavY

Objective Action List

1. The founder clearly described the target customer group — who they are, what they do, and why this problem matters to them.

2. A short profile or persona was written for each key customer type, based on research and observation.

3. At least 10–15 potential customers were contacted and interviewed to understand their experiences with this problem.

4. The founder documented how customers currently solve this problem and what frustrates them about existing options.

5. Notes or summaries were recorded from all customer conversations, highlighting common words or patterns in what people said.

6. The founder identified at least 2–3 major frustrations or gaps that customers repeatedly mentioned.

7. The team checked how frequent or painful this problem was by asking measurable questions (e.g., "How often does this happen?" or "How much time/money does it cost?").

8. A clear summary of evidence was created showing how serious the problem is — with quotes, numbers, or stories from real users.

9. The founder shared findings with mentors or peers to get feedback and confirm the data felt strong enough to prove the problem.

10. A short "problem statement" was written in one clear sentence, describing who has the problem, what the problem is, and why it matters.