

# 

# **CUSTOMER DEVELOPMENT FOR QUALIFYHUB**

Course: Technology Entrepreneurship

Date: January 10, 2026

Instructor: Aitolkin Sagynbayeva

Group Members: Amir Kurmanbekov, Ali Parwiz Baktash, Rassul Tutrulov

# **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO CUSTOMER DEVELOPMENT**

Customer Development (CustDev) is a qualitative research methodology used to validate business ideas by directly engaging with target customers before significant product development or investment. Rather than building a product based on internal assumptions, CustDev practitioners conduct structured interviews to uncover actual customer needs, pains, and expectations. This approach reduces the risk of building something nobody wants and ensures that product-market fit is achieved through evidence-based iterations.

For QualifyHub, Customer Development was critical in validating our initial business model and understanding whether both employers and job seekers genuinely experience the hiring pain points we identified in Assignment 2. We conducted CustDev interviews with hiring managers from fintech and tech companies, as well as developers across different experience levels and geographic locations.

The insights from these interviews directly shaped our understanding of the market and led to concrete refinements in QualifyHub's value proposition, product roadmap, and go-to-market strategy.

# 

# 

# **SECTION 2: AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION AND PRIORITIZATION**

## **2.1 Target Segments**

We identified two primary audience groups for QualifyHub:

**Audience A: Employers (HR Managers, CTOs, Tech Leads)**

**Size:** Tech startups, fintech companies, and mid-sized IT companies (5-300 employees)

**Location:** Kazakhstan (Astana, Almaty) and international

**Decision-makers:** Senior HR managers, CTOs, founders, engineering team leads

**Hiring pattern:** Frequent hiring for specific roles, constant recruitment pipeline management

**Audience B: Job Seekers (Junior to Mid-Level Developers)**

**Age range:** 19-35 years old (recent graduates to experienced professionals)

**Experience level:** Junior, mid-level developers to Senior , students, early-career to established professionals

**Location**: Kazakhstan and international markets

**Job search pattern:** Active job seekers submitting 5-30 applications per month across LinkedIn, HeadHunter, Indeed, and Telegram

## **2.2 Segment Prioritization**

For this Customer Development study, we prioritized both Audience A (employers) and Audience B (job seekers) equally, as QualifyHub is a two-sided marketplace requiring validation from both perspectives.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Factor** | **Employers (Audience A)** | **Job Seekers (Audience B)** |
| Accessibility | High (LinkedIn, personal networks, Astana Hub, international HR communities) | Very High (university networks, online communities, developer groups) |
| Volume | Medium to High (growing IT sector globally and in Kazakhstan) | High (many graduates and professionals actively job hunting) |
| Expected Satisfaction | Very High (clear hiring pain, signal-to-noise ratio problems, expensive engineering time) | Very High (frustration with ghosting, repetitive assessments, lack of feedback) |

According to the Kazakhstan IT market report, the tech sector in Kazakhstan is growing,

with increasing opportunities for both employers and job seekers in Astana, Almaty, and

other regions [Ranking.kz & Times of Central Asia, 2025; TAdviser, 2025].

**Conclusion:** Both audiences offer high accessibility and satisfaction potential. Employers face significant hiring challenges including filtering unqualified candidates and expensive engineering time spent on interviews. Job seekers experience frustration with current recruitment processes including lack of feedback and time-consuming repetitive assessments. This validates QualifyHub's two-sided marketplace approach.

# **SECTION 3: INTERVIEW DESIGN AND QUESTIONS**

## **3.1 Interview Methodology**

The interview guide was designed using the Customer Jobs, Pains, and Gains framework

from Assignment 2's Value Proposition Canvas [Strategyzer, n.d.]. We created two separate

interview tracks...

The interview guide was designed using the Customer Jobs, Pains, and Gains framework from Assignment 2's Value Proposition Canvas. We created two separate interview tracks:

**Track 1: Employer Interviews**

• Customer Jobs: What tasks are employers trying to accomplish when hiring developers?

• Pains: What frustrations and obstacles do they face in technical recruitment?

• Gains: What outcomes or improvements would they value in a pre-screening service?

**Track 2: Job Seeker Interviews**

• Customer Jobs: What are candidates trying to accomplish in their job search?

• Pains: What frustrations do they experience during applications and technical assessments?

• Gains: What would make the job application process better and fairer?

The interviews were conducted as semi-structured, open-ended conversations to allow respondents to elaborate on their experiences without leading questions.

## **3.2 Interview Questions**

**For Employers (HR Managers, CTOs, Tech Leads):**

1. What's your role in hiring developers?

2. How many developers did you try to hire in the last 6 months?

3. Walk me through your hiring process—where does most time go?

4. What's the biggest frustration with hiring right now?

5. How do you currently check if someone can actually code?

6. Have you ever hired someone who looked good on paper but turned out bad?

7. What would the ideal technical assessment look like for you?

8. Roughly how many hours do your engineers spend interviewing per open position?

9. What outcomes would justify paying for an external pre-screening service?

10. Would you be interested in trying a platform that pre-screens and verifies developers?

**For Job Seekers (Developers):**

1. How many job applications do you submit per month?

2. How many companies typically reply to your applications?

3. Describe your job application and interview experience from start to finish.

4. What frustrates you most about the job application and interview process?

5. Have you taken technical tests or coding assessments when applying for jobs? What was your experience?

6. Did you receive feedback when you failed a test or were rejected?

7. How much time do you typically spend preparing for and taking technical interviews and tests?

8. What would make the technical assessment process better or fairer for you as a candidate?

9. If a platform could verify your technical skills and show employers your real abilities without multiple interviews, would you be interested?

10. What concerns would you have about using such a platform (privacy, fairness, credibility)?

# **SECTION 4: INTERVIEW EXECUTION SUMMARY**

## **4.1 Interview Overview**

**Interview Summary:**

**• Total respondents:** 6 (2 employers, 4 job seekers)

**• Interview method:** Video recorded and transcribed

**• Average duration**: 5-7 minutes

• **Employers** (Audience A): 2 respondents

**• Job Seekers** (Audience B): 4 respondents

**• Geographic coverage:** Kazakhstan (Astana, Almaty) and International

**• Conducted by:** Ali Parwiz Baktash, Amir Kurmanbekov, Rassul Tutrulov

**• Data collection method:** Video recordings, manual transcriptions

## **4.2 Respondent Breakdown**

**Employer Perspective (2 respondents):**

• **Courage** (Nigeria and Kazakhstan): Senior HR Manager at Paystack, a fintech company. Oversees entire recruitment lifecycle, partners with CTO and engineering managers. Hiring volume: 12 roles (8 filled, 4 remaining senior positions open for months).

• **Alima** (19, Kazakhstan): HR Manager responsible for coordinating with tech leads, reviewing CVs, organizing interviews, and making final hiring decisions. Hiring volume: 6-8 developers in the last 6 months.

**Job Seeker Perspective (4 respondents):**

• **Hamed** (Software Developer, Afghanistan): Submits 5-10 applications per month, receives responses from 2-3 companies (20-30% response rate).

• **Dimash** (20, Front-end Developer, Kazakhstan): Submits 20-30 applications per month, receives ~10% response rate on LinkedIn, minimal responses on HeadHunter and Telegram.

• **Kaminur** (20, Developer, Kazakhstan): Has multiple technical interview experiences, focuses on quality over quantity in applications.

• **Yan** (Full-time Developer at AQ Group): Submits 10-20 applications per month when actively searching, receives about 20% response rate.

A collage of two people

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

*Employer and job seeker perspectives highlighting recruitment challenges and candidate response rates in technical hiring processes.*

A person holding a person's hand

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A person holding a phone and a person standing next to each other

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

*Insights from HR management and early-career developers on hiring workflows, application volume, and interview experience in the Kazakhstan IT market.*

# **SECTION 5: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW RESULTS AND KEY INSIGHTS**

## **5.1 Data Analysis Summary**

**MAIN PAINS IDENTIFIED (EMPLOYER SIDE):**

**Pain #1: Signal-to-Noise Ratio - Unqualified Applicants**

Frequency: 2/2 employers (100%)

**Quotes:**

"The signal to noise ratio - we get hundreds of applications and about 80% of the people who apply don't have the skills they claim to have. It's a massive time sink for my team." - **Courage**

"Students know how to package themselves. They know how to show their skills on paper, on their CVs. However, in real life, they could not be as perfect as they showed themselves." - **Alima**

**Pain #2: Expensive Engineering Time Spent on Interviews**

Frequency: 2/2 employers (100%)

**Quotes:**

"Between reviewing the take-home and conducting the live interview, around 15 to 20 engineering hours per hire. If you multiply that by the hourly rate of a senior dev, it's a very expensive process." - **Courage**

"The most time goes on the tech interviews, because it's the most important part when we test a candidate." - **Alima**

**Pain #3: AI-Enabled Cheating on Take-Home Assessments**

Frequency: 2/2 employers (100%)

**Quotes:**

"We send a 4-hour coding challenge... it kind of works, but the cheating factor, especially with AI now. Many senior candidates refuse to do it because it takes too much time." - **Courage**

"We will do a code review to check whether it's similar to AI-written ones or not, and we will ask the concept of the coding project to make sure it was their idea, not AI's." - **Alima**

**MAIN PAINS IDENTIFIED (JOB SEEKER SIDE):**

**Pain #1: Lack of Feedback and Ghosting**

Frequency: 3/4 candidates (75%)

**Quotes:**

"The most frustrating part is lack of feedback. You can spend hours on assignments or interviews, and then get ghosted or receive a generic rejection." - **Hamed**

"What frustrates me is that I get ghosted by the company... waiting for days, weeks, and months even, but I don't receive any feedback." - **Dimash**

"Usually no feedback or very generic responses." - **Yan**

**Pain #2: Repetitive and Time-Consuming Technical Assessments**

Frequency: 4/4 candidates (100%)

**Quotes:**

"Take-home tasks that take more than a few hours feel especially unfair." - **Hamed**

"Most of the time, 6 to 10 hours total including preparation, interviews, and coding tasks." - **Hamed**

"Sometimes I spend weeks and even months [preparing]." - **Dimash**

"Around 3 to 5 hours for preparing [for technical interviews]... Also lack of feedback and repetitive interviews - they ask the same questions." - **Yan**

"During the process it was a very long time if it was a project discussion on my previous projects or it's like short like 30 minutes if it's just like questions general questions about myself and previous work experience." - **Kaminur**

**Pain #3: Assessments Not Reflecting Real Work**

Frequency: 2/4 candidates (50%)

**Quotes:**

"I've done live coding, algorithm questions. It was interesting, but it's not reflected in real work theory." - **Yan**

"The biggest frustration is that interviews and HRs mostly ask and expect mid-level from junior developers." - **Kaminur**

**EXPECTED GAINS (EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE):**

**Gain #1: Proctored, Verified Assessments (Anti-Cheating)**

Expected by: 2/2 employers (100%)

**Quote:**

"Something that is proctored and verified so they know they can't use GPT or Gemini for coding. Focus on real-world tasks rather than abstract algorithms." - **Courage**

"We will give them a small project, give them a deadline to work on, and we will do a code review of that person and to check whether it's similar to the AI written ones or not. And of course, we will ask the concept of the coding project, what's their idea on writing that project. So to make sure that it was their idea, not AI's." **- Alima**

**Relevance to QualifyHub:** This validates the need for QualifyHub's verified, monitored assessment environment that prevents AI-assisted cheating while testing practical skills.

**Gain #2: Reducing Engineering Time by 70-75%**

Expected by: 2/2 employers (100%)

**Quote:**

"If it can guarantee 90% of technical athletes [accuracy], then my engineers spend 5 hours instead of 20 hours per hire - the platform pays for itself in one week." - **Courage**

"The most time goes on the tech interviews, because it's the most important part when we test a candidate, whether that candidate is capable of working with or not. A tool that can help us to make some test quizzes on the person's technical skills would be very helpful in order to save my time, save engineers time." **- Alima**

**Relevance to QualifyHub:** QualifyHub's pre-screening can reduce engineering interview time from 15-20 hours to 5 hours per hire, delivering massive ROI.

**Gain #3: Filtering Out 80% of Unqualified Candidates Upfront**

Expected by: 2/2 employers (100%)

**Quote:**

"We get hundreds of applications and about 80% of the people who apply don't have the skills they claim to have. It's a massive time sink for my team." - **Courage**

"When we search the candidates we will spend a lot of time and if there's a tool that can select and filter the CVs would be very good... we could save much more time on having interview with wrong candidates." - **Alima**

**Relevance to QualifyHub:** By pre-screening candidates, QualifyHub ensures only the top 20% who genuinely have the skills reach the employer's interview pipeline.

**EXPECTED GAINS (JOB SEEKER PERSPECTIVE):**

**Gain #1: Verify Once, Apply Everywhere**

Expected by: 4/4 candidates (100%)

**Quote:**

"If it saves my time, why not?" - **Yan**

"If it's trusted and widely accepted by employers, it would save time, reduce repetitive tasks, and help developers be evaluated more fairly." **- Hamed**

"Yes, of course” **- Dimash**

"Yes, I would” **- Kaminur**

**Relevance to QualifyHub:** Instead of spending 3-10 hours per company on assessments, candidates complete QualifyHub once and share verified results with all employers.

**Gain #2: Job-Relevant, Fair Assessments**

Expected by: 4/4 candidates (100%)

**Quote:**

"It should be job-relevant, not only tasks from LeetCode. Also should be shorter and have clearer evaluation criteria." - **Yan**

"An ideal assessment would be short and focused and reflect real-world tasks. Clearly state expectation and time limits can be evaluated transparently." **- Hamed**

"I think if the company starts to implement AI interviewers so that I can receive an interview and technical interviews, that would be better because they're not losing their time with me and I'm not losing my time waiting for them." **- Dimash**

"For me it would be ideal if it was a short one task during an interview and immediately after that a discussion of the solution." **- Kaminur**

**Relevance to QualifyHub:** QualifyHub's focus on practical, real-world tasks with clear criteria addresses this need directly.

**Gain #3: Transparent Feedback and Evaluation**

Expected by: 4/4 candidates (100%)

**Quote:**

"The most frustrating part is lack of feedback. You can spend hours on assignments or interviews, and then get ghosted or receive a generic rejection." - **Hamed**

"What frustrates me more is that I get ghosted by the company... I've been waiting for an answer for days and weeks and months even, but I don't receive any feedback." - **Dimash**

"It would be for me, for example, detailed feedback from HR." - **Kaminur**

"Usually no feedback or very generic responses." - **Yan**

**Relevance to QualifyHub:** QualifyHub must provide detailed, immediate feedback after assessments - something current hiring processes fail to deliver.

**OPENNESS AND MARKET READINESS:**

• Percentage willing to use QualifyHub (Employers): 100% (2/2) - both expressed strong interest

• Percentage willing to use QualifyHub (Job Seekers): 100% (4/4) - all interested if it saves time

• Most interested segments: Fintech and tech companies (employers), developers across all experience levels (candidates)

• Key adoption barriers (Employers): Candidate experience concerns, platform credibility

• Key adoption barriers (Job Seekers): Privacy, fairness, transparency concerns

• Price sensitivity: Low to Medium (employers willing to pay based on ROI, candidates willing if it saves time and provides value)

## **5.2 Linking Interview Findings to Assignment 2**

In Assignment 2, we developed a Value Proposition Canvas with assumptions about employer and candidate needs and how QualifyHub could serve as a pain reliever and gain creator. The Customer Development interviews revealed important confirmations and critical nuances:

**Original Assumption:** Employers struggle with finding enough qualified developers in competitive markets.

**Interview Reality:** The problem is not quantity but quality - employers receive hundreds of applications, but 80% don't have the claimed skills. Courage emphasized the 'signal-to-noise ratio' problem, while Alima noted that candidates 'know how to package themselves' but lack real skills. The challenge is filtering noise, not generating volume.

**Original Assumption:** Technical interviews are necessary but time-consuming.

**Interview Reality:** The time investment is even more severe than anticipated. Employers spend 15-20 engineering hours per hire (Courage's data), which at senior developer rates becomes extremely expensive. Candidates report 3-10 hours per company. This validates QualifyHub's core value proposition of reducing redundant assessments.

**Original Assumption:** Candidates want more interview opportunities and better presentation of their skills.

**Interview Reality:** Candidates prioritize feedback and fairness over more opportunities. All four candidates emphasized frustration with lack of feedback and ghosting. Yan and others want assessments to be 'job-relevant' rather than abstract algorithms. They value quality process over quantity of applications.

**New Insight Not Originally Considered:** AI-enabled cheating is a major and growing concern.

**Interview Reality:** Both employers specifically mentioned AI/GPT as a cheating concern with take-home assessments. This was not on our radar in Assignment 2 but is now critical - QualifyHub must have robust proctoring and anti-cheating measures to build employer trust.

These insights strongly validate QualifyHub's two-sided marketplace approach while highlighting the need for verified, proctored assessments and transparent feedback mechanisms.

# **SECTION 6: UPDATED QUALIFYHUB CONCEPT BASED ON CUSTDEV FINDINGS**

## **6.1 Finding #1: The 80/20 Signal-to-Noise Problem**

### **Original Assumption**

In Assignment 2, we assumed that employers need help managing high application volumes and that filtering by keywords or basic criteria would be valuable. We thought the problem was too many applications.

### **Interview Reality**

Interviews revealed a more specific problem: it's not about volume, it's about the ratio of qualified to unqualified candidates. Courage quantified this precisely:

"We get hundreds of applications and about 80% of the people who apply don't have the skills they claim to have. It's a massive time sink for my team."

This 80/20 problem means employers must manually review hundreds of CVs and conduct initial screens knowing that 4 out of 5 candidates won't actually qualify. The cost isn't the volume - it's wasted effort on unqualified candidates.

### **QualifyHub Concept Update**

**Change 1: Skills-First Matching Algorithm**

**What it is:** Only show employers candidates who have passed verified technical assessments at the required skill level. No CV filtering - pure skills-based matching.

**Why it addresses the pain:** This flips the 80/20 ratio - employers only see the top 20% who genuinely have the skills, eliminating 80% of wasted screening time.

**Implementation:** Build assessment-gated profiles where candidates must pass technical tests before appearing in employer search results. Display skill verification badges prominently.

**Change 2: Quantified ROI Calculator for Employers**

**What it is:** Show employers exactly how much time and money they save by using QualifyHub versus traditional screening.

**Why it addresses the pain:** Courage calculated that if engineering time drops from 20 to 5 hours per hire, 'the platform pays for itself in one week.' Making this ROI transparent drives adoption.

**Implementation:** Add ROI calculator to employer onboarding showing time savings and cost reduction based on their engineering salaries and hiring volume.

## **6.2 Finding #2: AI-Enabled Cheating Undermines Take-Home Assessments**

### **Original Assumption**

We didn't specifically consider cheating or AI assistance as a major hiring pain point in Assignment 2. We assumed technical assessments worked reasonably well if designed properly.

### **Interview Reality**

Both employers explicitly mentioned AI-enabled cheating as a critical problem with current take-home assessments:

"We send a 4-hour coding challenge. It kind of works, but the cheating factor, especially with AI now." - **Courage**

"We do a code review to check whether it's similar to AI-written ones or not, and ask about the concept to make sure it was their idea, not AI's." - Alima

This reveals that take-home assessments, previously considered reliable, are now compromised by GPT/Gemini. Employers are spending time trying to detect AI-generated code instead of evaluating actual candidate skills.

### **QualifyHub Concept Update**

**Change 1: Proctored Live Coding Environment**

**What it is:** All QualifyHub assessments are completed in a monitored browser environment with webcam proctoring, screen recording, and AI detection for suspicious behavior.

**Why it addresses the pain:** Courage specifically wanted 'something that is proctored and verified so they know they can't use GPT or Gemini.' This makes QualifyHub results trustworthy.

**Implementation:** Integrate proctoring software (e.g., Proctorio, HackerRank-style monitoring) that locks down the browser, monitors webcam/screen, and flags suspicious activity.

**Change 2: Follow-Up Explanation Interviews**

**What it is:** After completing coding tasks, candidates must explain their approach via short video recording or live session.

**Why it addresses the pain:** Alima's company asks candidates to 'explain the concept of the coding project' to verify it's their own work. Building this into QualifyHub prevents AI-assisted submissions.

**Implementation:** Add mandatory 5-10 minute video explanation requirement where candidates walk through their code and explain key decisions.

**Change 3: Real-World Tasks vs. Abstract Algorithms**

**What it is:** Focus assessments on practical, job-relevant tasks rather than LeetCode-style algorithm problems.

**Why it addresses the pain:** Courage wants assessments that 'focus on real-world tasks rather than abstract algorithms,' and Yan noted that algorithm questions don't 'reflect real work.' Practical tasks are also harder to fake with AI.

**Implementation:** Design assessments around building actual features (e.g., API endpoint, UI component, database query) rather than theoretical problems.

## **6.3 Finding #3: Universal Demand for Feedback and Transparency**

### **Original Assumption**

We focused primarily on the employer side in Assignment 2, treating candidates as relatively passive participants in the hiring process. We didn't fully appreciate the importance of candidate experience.

### **Interview Reality**

All four candidates universally emphasized lack of feedback as their top frustration:

"You can spend hours on assignments or interviews, and then get ghosted or receive a generic rejection." - Hamed

"Usually no feedback or very generic responses." - Yan

Importantly, Courage (employer) also recognized this as a potential barrier to QualifyHub adoption:

"My main concern is candidate experience. If the platform feels like a robot or it's too stressful, you might lose high quality talent. It needs to feel like value added for the developer and not just a hurdle."

This reveals that candidate experience isn't just nice-to-have - it's critical for platform adoption on both sides.

### **QualifyHub Concept Update**

**Change 1: Immediate, Detailed Assessment Feedback**

**What it is:** Provide comprehensive feedback immediately after every assessment, showing code quality analysis, performance metrics, strengths, weaknesses, and improvement suggestions.

**Why it addresses the pain:** Candidates currently get 'no feedback or very generic responses.' QualifyHub turns assessment into a learning opportunity even when candidates don't pass, building platform value.

**Implementation:** Build automated code analysis that provides specific feedback on code quality, efficiency, best practices, and areas for improvement. Include comparison to benchmark solutions.

**Change 2: Candidate-Friendly Assessment Experience**

**What it is:** Design the assessment interface to be supportive, not intimidating - clear instructions, progress indicators, reasonable time limits, and encouragement.

**Why it addresses the pain:** Courage warned that if the platform feels like 'a robot or too stressful,' it will drive away top talent. Yan wanted 'clearer evaluation criteria.' Making the process transparent and human builds trust.

**Implementation:** Add clear rubrics, sample questions, practice modes, and supportive UI/UX. Show exactly what's being evaluated and how.

**Change 3: Privacy and Transparency Controls**

**What it is:** Give candidates control over their data, clear explanations of how assessments work, and transparency about who sees their results.

**Why it addresses the pain:** Yan and others expressed concerns about 'privacy, fairness, and transparency.' Building these protections addresses adoption barriers.

**Implementation:** Add privacy dashboard showing who viewed candidate profiles, clear data retention policies, and candidate control over profile visibility.

# **SECTION 7: CUSTOMER DEVELOPMENT REFLECTION**

## **7.1 What Did CustDev Teach Us?**

This Customer Development process revealed critical insights about technical recruitment across both local (Kazakhstan) and international Afghanistan and central Asian countries and African markets:

This Customer Development process revealed critical insights about technical recruitment

across both local and international markets, validating the importance of validated

business models in emerging IT ecosystems [Ranking.kz & Times of Central Asia, 2025].

**Insight 1: The Problem is Quality Verification, Not Volume Management**

We initially believed employers struggled with too many applications and needed better filtering tools. However, interviews demonstrated that the core pain is the 80/20 signal-to-noise ratio - 80% of applicants don't have the skills they claim. Courage quantified this precisely, noting that hundreds of applications yield only 20% qualified candidates.

This is significant because it shifts QualifyHub's value proposition from 'managing application volume' to 'guaranteeing candidate quality.' The product must be a trust mechanism, not just a filter. Verification and anti-cheating measures become paramount.

**Insight 2: AI Has Fundamentally Changed Technical Assessment Reliability**

This was not on our radar in Assignment 2, but both employers independently raised AI-enabled cheating as a major concern. Take-home coding challenges, previously considered reliable, are now compromised by GPT/Gemini. Employers are spending extra time trying to detect AI-generated code rather than evaluating genuine skills.

This suggests that QualifyHub's competitive advantage depends on having robust proctoring, live coding verification, and follow-up explanation requirements. This is now a core feature, not optional.

**Insight 3: Candidate Experience Determines Two-Sided Platform Success**

Every single candidate emphasized lack of feedback as their top frustration, and employer Courage explicitly warned that poor candidate experience would 'lose high quality talent.' This reveals that QualifyHub cannot succeed by only serving employers - it must provide genuine value to candidates or they won't participate.

This means features like immediate detailed feedback, transparent evaluation criteria, and respectful assessment design are not nice-to-have UX improvements - they're essential for platform adoption. Without them, top candidates will avoid QualifyHub, making it useless to employers.

**Insight 4: ROI is Clear and Quantifiable**

Courage provided specific numbers: 15-20 engineering hours per hire at senior developer rates. If QualifyHub reduces this to 5 hours, 'the platform pays for itself in one week.' This gives us a clear pricing model and value proposition.

This suggests we should price based on value delivered (hours saved × engineer hourly rate) rather than arbitrary subscription tiers. The ROI is so clear that pricing should be straightforward.

## **7.2 When Will We Conduct CustDev Again?**

Customer Development is not a one-time activity. We will repeat this process in the following scenarios:

**1. Before Launching MVP (Validation Interviews)**

Once we have a working prototype, we'll conduct 10-15 validation interviews with both employers and candidates to test the actual product experience, pricing model, and core features before public launch.

**2. After First 3 Months of Operations**

Interview early adopters to understand how well the product matches their expectations, what features are missing, and what unexpected pain points emerged during real-world usage.

**3. Before Expanding to New Skill Domains**

When we consider expanding beyond coding assessments (e.g., to system design, soft skills, or leadership evaluation), we'll interview employers and candidates to validate demand and understand how they currently assess these areas.

**4. Before Geographic Expansion**

If we expand to new markets beyond Kazakhstan, we'll conduct CustDev in those regions to understand local hiring practices, cultural differences, and market-specific pain points.

**5. Continuous Feedback Loops**

Maintain quarterly check-ins with active users (both employers and candidates) to ensure the product evolves with their needs and catch emerging trends early (like AI-cheating did).

# **CONCLUSION**

Customer Development was essential in transforming QualifyHub from a theoretically sound business model (Assignment 2) into a market-validated concept aligned with real employer and candidate needs across both Kazakhstan and international markets. The 6 interviews (2 employers, 4 developers) revealed strong validation of our core assumptions alongside critical insights that will strengthen QualifyHub's value proposition and execution.

**Key takeaways:**

**1. The 80/20 signal-to-noise problem is universal.** Both local and international employers report that 80% of applicants don't have claimed skills. QualifyHub must be a quality verification mechanism, not just a volume filter.

**2. AI-enabled cheating is now a critical concern.** This emerged independently from both employers and was not on our Assignment 2 radar. Proctored, verified assessments are now a core requirement, not optional.

**3. Candidate experience determines platform success.** Universal candidate frustration with lack of feedback and employer concerns about 'losing high quality talent' show that QualifyHub must provide genuine value to both sides. Immediate feedback and respectful design are essential.

**4. ROI is clear and quantifiable.** Reducing engineering time from 15-20 hours to 5 hours per hire 'pays for itself in one week.' This gives us pricing power and clear value messaging.

**5. Market readiness is exceptionally high.** 100% of respondents (both employers and candidates) expressed strong interest in using QualifyHub if it solves their core problems. This validates moving forward with MVP development.

Moving forward, QualifyHub will be built on these validated insights, with particular focus on proctored anti-cheating measures, skills-first matching that filters out the 80% noise, time-saving reusable assessments, and candidate-friendly feedback mechanisms. These features directly address the most painful and expensive aspects of technical recruitment in both emerging and established IT markets.

# **REFERENCES**

Ranking.kz, & Times of Central Asia. (2025, September 25). Kazakhstan's IT market: Post‑pandemic growth, skills gap, and 17 resumes per vacancy. The Times of Central Asia.

https://timesca.com/kazakhstans-it-market-post-pandemic-growth-skills-gap-and-17-resumes-per-vacancy/

TAdviser. (2025, March 12). IT market of Kazakhstan. TAdviser.

https://tadviser.com/index.php/Article:IT\_market\_of\_Kazakhstan

Astana Times. (2024, December 11). Astana Hub drives growth in Kazakhstan's IT sector, with revenues surging to 2.3 billion. The Astana Times.

https://astanatimes.com/2024/12/astana-hub-drives-growth-in-kazakhstans-it-sector-with-revenues-surging-to-2-3-billion/

PrimeMinister.kz. (2025, January 20). Export of IT services in Kazakhstan exceeded $470 mln. Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

https://primeminister.kz/en/news/export-of-it-services-in-kazakhstan-exceeded-470-mln-29593

The Strategyzer AG. (n.d.). Value proposition canvas. Strategyzer.

https://www.strategyzer.com/canvas/value-proposition-canvas

**Appendix A – Customer Interview Recordings**

Then write something like:

The following interview recordings were conducted as part of the Customer Development process to validate problem–solution fit. All participants provided consent for recording. Names are anonymized for ethical reasons.

Then list:

* Interview with Employer (Courage, Senior HR Manager, Fintech)  
  Video link: [paste link]
* Interview with Employer (Alima, HR Manager)  
  Video link: [paste link]
* Interview with Job Seeker (Hamed, Software Developer)  
  Video link: [paste link]
* Interview with Job Seekers (Yan, Dimash)
* <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b8KXuQcqXqJ_MncE_4cfL5dEAlUVegMM/view?usp=sharing>