TALKING TO CUSTOMERS

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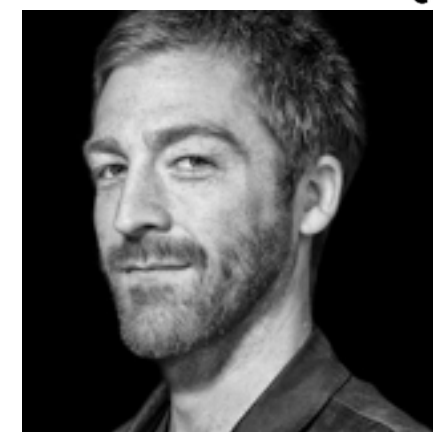
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Mailing list: http://bit.ly/fc-list
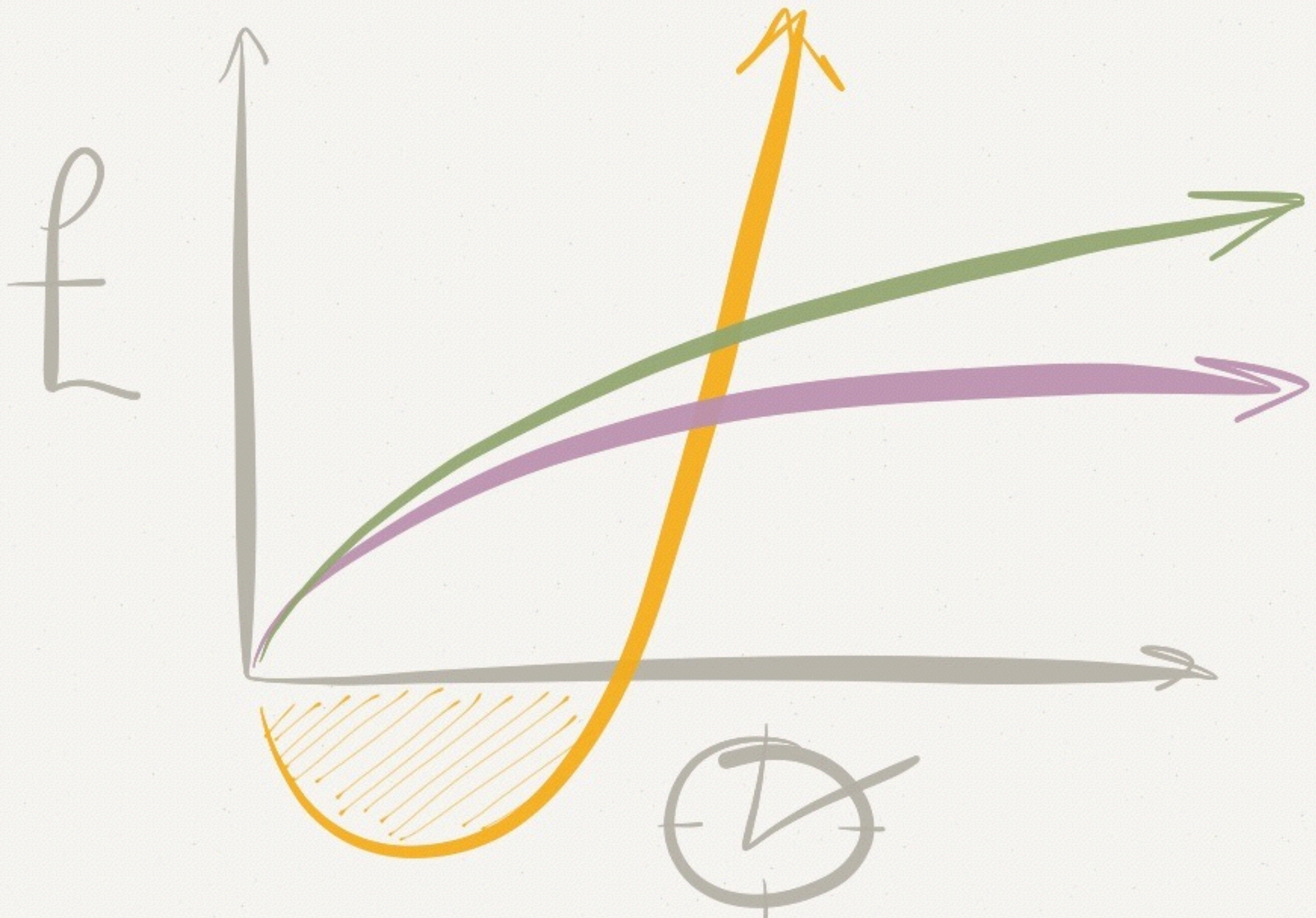
What is Customer development?

Find early customers and confirm their intent to buy before building everything

(without biasing them)

Until you've launched, the only 2 things you should be doing are **writing code and talking to customers**

Paul Graham
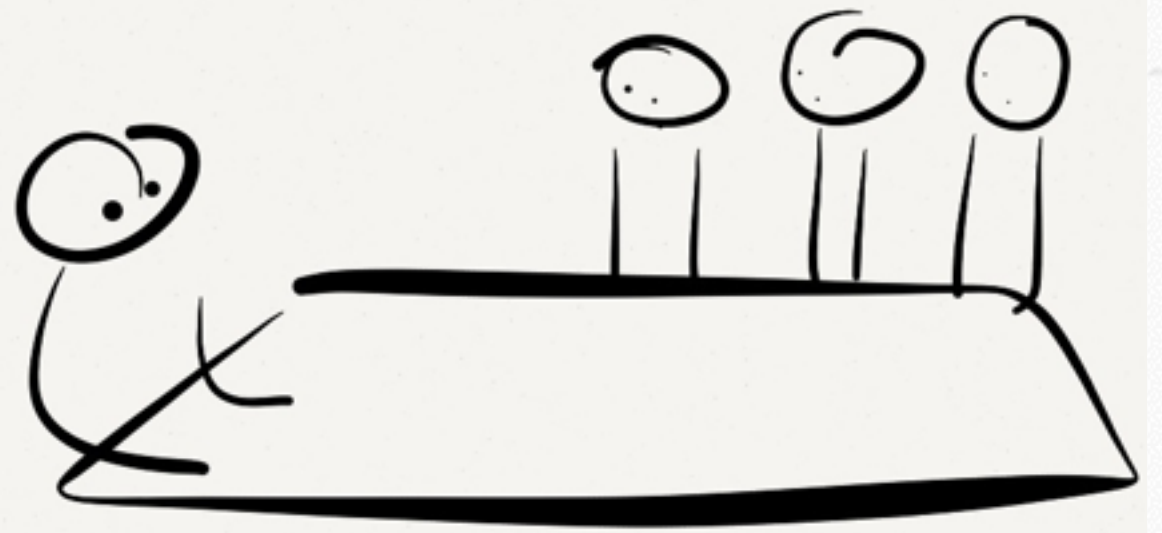
"I wish I'd known that sooner!"

Pets.com (and everyone)

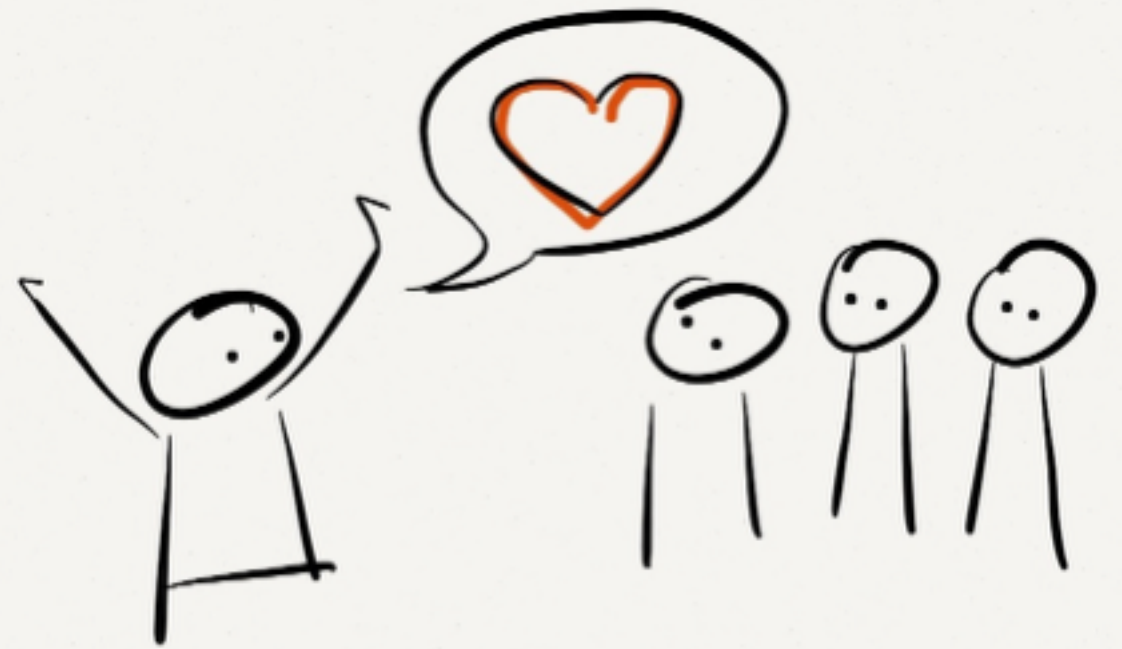*We can't plan under uncertainty.*
We need a way to search.

Talking to people is a great way to learn if our business will work

But it's hard to do right and easy to mess up

When we do it wrong, we get bad data to convince us we're right

And when we believe those false positives, we get in big trouble

Part 1.
What does bad data look like?

Types of bad data

1. Compliments
2. Fluff

Compliments

Most meetings end in a compliment. Is that a good sign?

Compliments are bad because they are **false positives**

Remember:

Even VCs are wrong most of the time. If their opinion doesn't matter, nobody's does! What matters is whether customers are going to use & buy it.

Ignore & deflect compliments. Then get back to gathering real data.

Types of bad data

1. Compliments
2. **Fluff**

3 types of fluff

1. Generic claims
2. Future promises
3. Hypothetical maybes

Anything generic is a lie.

Get to the truth by asking for concrete examples.

"Can you talk me through the last time that happened?"

You

Part 2.
How conversations go wrong

When we ask people about our idea...

But really, we're just fishing for kind words
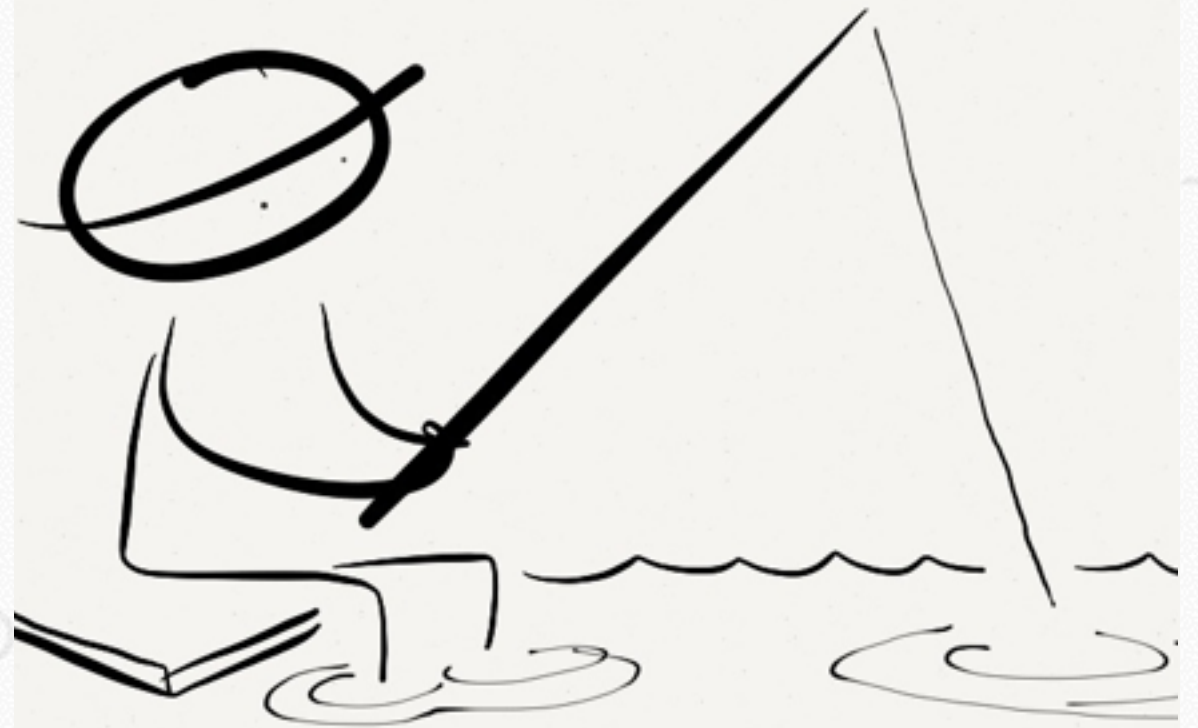
Conversations go wrong by default.
It's your job to fix them.

How conversations go wrong

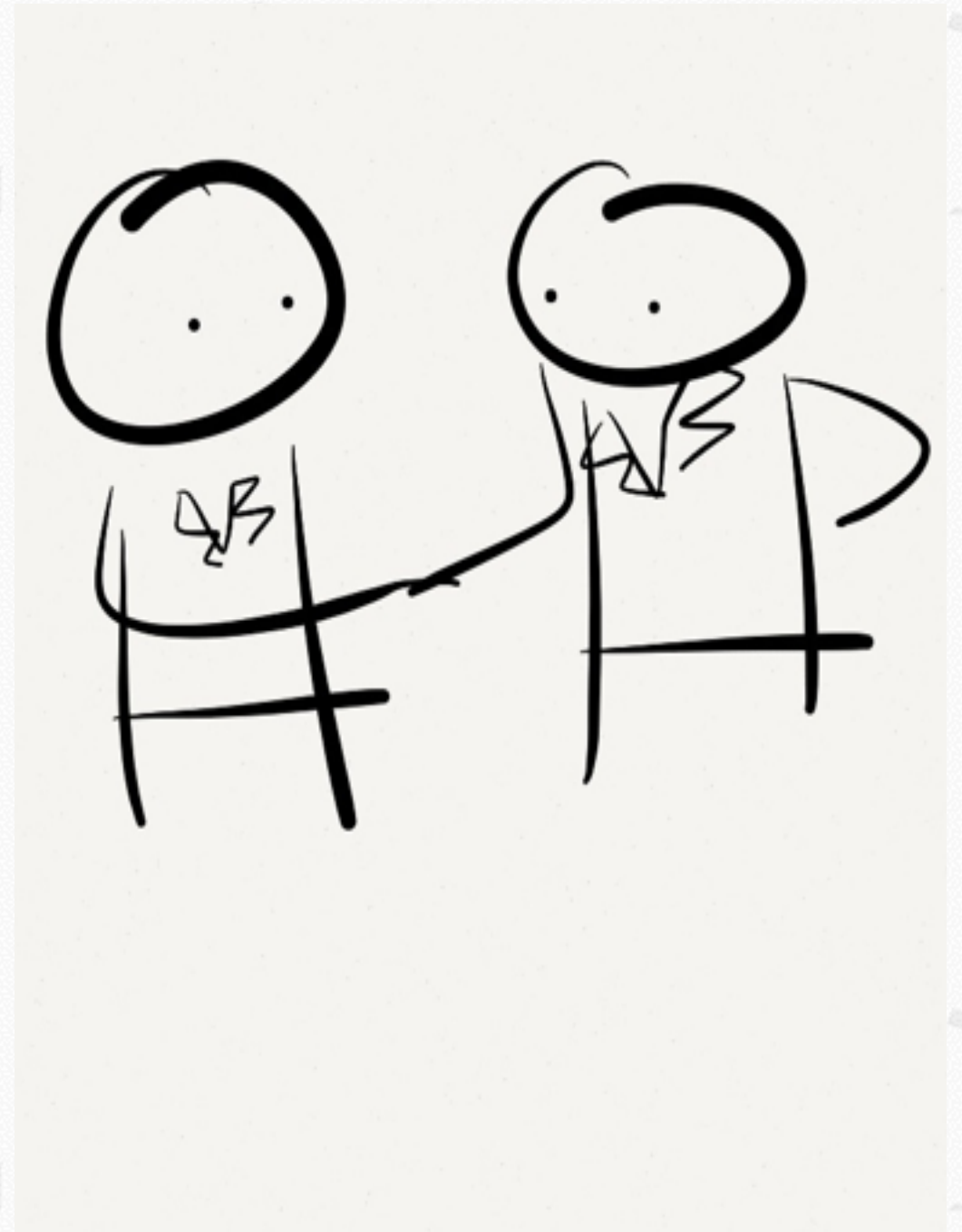# 1. **Being too formal**
2. Exposing the ego
3. Being pitchy

Stuff you DON'T need

1. A formal meeting
2. Business cards
3. An interview script
4. To pay them
5. An hour or more

What you DO need

1. To know what you want to learn
2. To ask about their life

Tip:

Pick customers you have easy access to. Then it's simple to have quick, casual conversations without wasting time.

You don't need a formal meeting to learn from customers. Just chat to them.

How conversations go wrong

1. Being too formal
2. **Exposing the ego**
3. Being pitchy

"I had an awesome idea for an app... So do you like it?"

Bad Founder, fishing for compliments

Why do they lie?

1. They don't have a strong opinion about it
2. They don't want to discourage you
3. They don't want to see you cry

Mentioning your idea

Exposing your ego

=

*If you mention your idea, they'll lie to you about it. **Talk about their life, not your idea.***

How conversations go wrong

1. Being too formal
2. Exposing the ego
3. **Being pitchy**

Convincing folks your idea is good = **Forcing false positives**

Remember:

Unless they are holding a checkbook, **you have nothing to gain by convincing them your idea is great.**

"Oops, sorry, I just slipped into pitch mode. I get excited. You were saying...?"

You, recovering from starting to pitch

If you're talking, you're not learning. **Talk less, ask more.**

Remember:

Anyone will say your idea is great if you're **annoying enough about it.**

Fix bad data

1. **Deflect** compliments
2. **Anchor** fluff
3. **Dig** beneath ideas
4. **Google** for trivia

Ask good questions which pass
The Mom Test

Would you buy a product which solved this problem?

Us

"Talk me through the last time you had this problem"

Us

How much money does this problem cost you?

Us

The Mom Test for good questions

1. Talk about their life instead of your idea
2. Ask about specifics in the past
3. Talk less, listen more

Also useful in...

1. Sales
2. Fundraising
3. Partnerships
4. Hiring

EVERYONE IS LYING TO YOU

They say you shouldn't ask your mom whether your business is a good idea, because she loves you and will lie to you.

This is technically true, but it misses the point. You shouldn't ask **anyone** if your business is a good idea. It's a bad question and everyone will lie to you at least a little. It's not their responsibility to tell you the truth. It's your responsibility to find it.

IT'S WORTH DOING RIGHT

Talking to customers is one of the foundational skills of both Customer Development and Lean Startup. We all know we're supposed to do it, but nobody seems willing to admit that it's hard to do right and easy to screw up.

This book is going to show you how customer conversations go wrong and how you can do better. It's a quick, practical guide that will save you time, money, and heartbreak.

Rob is a tinkerer and tech entrepreneur who has been driving perfectly good companies out of business since 2007.

Previously a shy techie and official winner of the World's Worst Salesperson award, he picked up quite a few bumps & bruises learning to talk to customers. The lessons are here, boiled down into practical, actionable tips based on extensive work with early stage companies through foundercentric.com.

THE MOM TEST

Rob Fitzpatrick

THE MOM TEST

How to talk to customers & learn if your business is a good idea when everyone is lying to you.

Rob Fitzpatrick

a foundercentric.com book

THANKS!

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