

TESTING YOUR IDEA: CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS

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Conducting Customer Interviews

- Everyone should conduct at least 3 interviews before they launch their business
- Interviews are powerful tools



What to use interviews for

- Great for:
 - Finding out what people love or hate about a product
 - Finding out about current solutions
 - Finding out why particular solutions have been chosen
 - Getting a sense for customer environment
- Bad for:
 - Predicting future actions
 - Making assumptions about demand
 - Figuring out pricing
 - Figuring out wished-for product features

Source: Frank Crespedes, "Customer Visits for Entrepreneurs"

First step in interviewing: Who to Interview

- Potential end customers/users
 - These are people who have the need you are trying to solve.
 - You can learn about their needs, and about how they try to address them on your own.
- Potential buyers
 - Store managers, retailers, or other buyers
- Experts
 - When trying to find out about complex issues like regulation, industry structure, technology, and industry history.
 - Industry experts, academics taste makers, or journalists may help get sense for the market.
- A list of 95(!) ways to find interviewees: <http://is.gd/95ways>

Second step in interviewing: Asking Good Questions

- Ask similar questions to everyone
- Don't start with your solution
- Ask them about themselves first, to set them at ease and understand context.
- Make sure to listen and be quiet, resist the urge to talk too much.
Also, ask open ended followup questions: "what happened next?"
"and then what?" etc.

Second step in interviewing: Asking Good Questions

- Then delve into the problem, asking open-ended questions:
 - *What is the biggest issue associated with [your problem]?*
 - *Tell me about the last time you encountered this problem...*
- Next, ask them about how they solve their problem now:
 - *How are you dealing with this now?*
 - *What do you like about this solution? What do you dislike?*
 - *Have you tried other approaches? How have you searched for solutions?*
- Last, you can talk about your solution:
 - You should introduce the idea or solution and let the interviewee ask questions about it.
 - Don't try to sell

Final step in interviewing: Draw conclusions

- No matter how good your memory is, write your results down right after the interview
- Don't draw conclusions until after the interviews are done
- Look for patterns in the interviews



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