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Four Questions Towards Understanding User Adoption of Your Product

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3-4 minutes



Pretty much every new app has the following problem: lots of people sign up but don't stick around.

I frequently get asked what are benchmarks for retention after one day or one week. My answer tends to be the same for products in the early days:

Ignore the benchmarks. Find the patterns in the stories of people who do get your product. Figure out what converted them and got them so excited to keep using your product every day or every week. **In the early days, your main focus should be to attract and create more and more of those "core users" who deeply use your product.** Over time you can try to increase averages, but first, you just need a core and strong base.

Most people look too much at the "big data" and try to draw conclusions. In the early days of a product you have to talk to people. You need anecdotes much more than data. You could say *The plural of anecdote is data*.

To collect anecdotes, you have to talk to actual users. The best users to call are ones who can help you understand why they tried your product and what hooked them. I like to look for **bouncebacks**. Bouncebacks are users that have tried your product, bailed immediately and didn't find it useful, came back to try again for some reason (at least 1 week later, or even better, 1 month later), and then got hooked.

The first step is to identify some bounceback users to call. Select users who you now consider highly active users, but had a specific gap between the time of first signup, and getting into habitual use. Look for different ranges of time between their first attempt to use the product, and when they returned and got hooked. Reach out to them and ask if they would be willing to chat with you about their experiences with your product. It is good to target having around 10 conversations. It is ok to divide the conversations up among different team members.

Ask the following four questions:

- 1) What prompted you to sign up and try out our product in the first place?
- 2) What did not meet your expectations or what was hard to figure out?
- 3) Why did you come back to give the product another try?
- 4) What worked the second time that got you using it more frequently?

Try to find patterns in their answers to help you understand:

- the reasons people were interested to try out your product in the first place
- what your product did not deliver upon first experience
- better messages that caused the user to come back and still be interested a second time
- what they did to convert to become an active user

From these patterns, you can invest in revising your marketing and improving your product and onboarding. Revamp your messaging to focus more on the messages that brought people back and got

them engaged. Update your product and onboarding to simplify whatever the users did the second time to get fully engaged.