

**TECHSTARS**

ENTREPRENEUR'S  
TOOLKIT

# Entrepreneur's Toolkit



# For your company.

- 3 STEP ONE \\ CUSTOMER
- xx STEP TWO \\ PITCH
- xx STEP THREE \\ VIABILITY
- xx STEP FOUR \\ EFFECT
- xx STEP FIVE \\ GROWTH
- xx STEP SIX \\ PROFIT
- xx STEP SEVEN \\ DEMO

STEP ONE \\\

# Make your customers... yours.

Someone else is out there right now, working to find your customer before you do. Your goal is to not only get to that customer first, but to build a better solution that meets their needs and wants better than your competition. This first step of knowing your customer is to understand their problem better than anyone else.

[WATCH THE TRAILER](#)

## Featured Thought Leader

**Zach Nies** is VP of Education at Techstars and a member of the faculty at the University of Colorado at Boulder. His whole career has been dedicated to entrepreneurship at startups and inside large companies. He is using that experience guided by his core value of Learn, Do, Teach, Learn to help companies of all sizes successfully bring new products and services to market. At CU, he is an Executive Advisory Board Member for the Silicon Flatirons Center and the College of Engineering and Applied Science. Prior to being VP of Education, Zach was a Managing Director for the Boulder Techstars program. Before joining Techstars, Zach was Chief Technologist at Rally Software.



## In this step you will:

Unpack this content with thought leader Zach Nies, interact with these self-paced worksheets, and practice with a “Get Out of the Building” video.

## You will start by:

- 1) Defining the problem first, then solutions.
- 2) Recruiting and interviewing members of your target audience.
- 3) Pivoting your offer based on customer feedback.

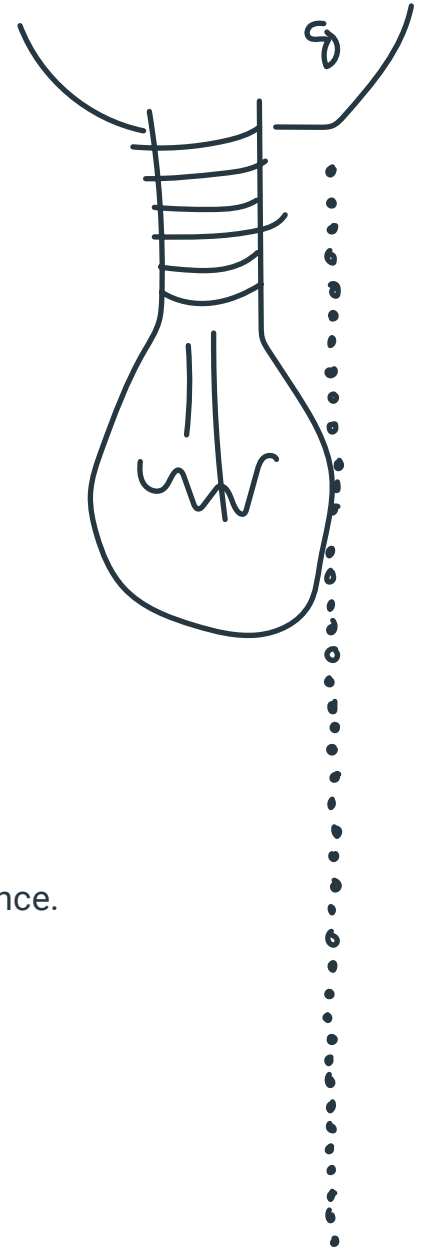
## Time and speed are of the essence.

Listening: 45 minutes.

Planning: 20 minutes.

Try it: 30 minutes.

## Ready? Let's go.



# Define their problem.

## PROBLEM VS SOLUTION DEFINITION

We have to be careful not to get too far ahead of ourselves and build solutions without fully understanding the problem; we risk losing time, energy, and other resources building a lack-luster solution to our customer's issue.

### SOLUTION-BASED

How have you been defining your current solution?

My solution is:

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Now take a minute to write down your Intention as your problem.

### PROBLEM-BASED

What is your customer's problem you hope to solve?

My customer's problem is:

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Why frame a problem over a solution?

**Problem framing opens us up to explore opportunities for multiple solutions.**

## A PRIMER ON EMPATHY

Empathy is putting yourself in your customer's shoes and seeing the world from their point-of-view so you can understand and possibly relate without judgement. Empathy doesn't put a silver lining on things, it stays neutral, meeting your customers where they are.

Extra: Brené Brown talks [about empathy](#) as fueling connection and feeling WITH people, not for people.

Consider a recent time where you showed empathy.

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Then what happened?

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Empathy matters. Here's why:

**When showing empathy, you'll find more insights that go beyond your current understanding of your customer's problem.**

# Planning your interviews.

## BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW

As you begin to plan your interviews, ask yourself:

**Recruitment:** who do I know that represents my ideal customer?

**Gaps:** what do I need to learn right now to make my work better?

**Themes:** how can I start to organize some themes around my desired learnings?

## EMPATHY INTERVIEWING PREP

At the end of your interview time with a user or customer, you want to have captured what that person said and did. You want to have an understanding of what that person thinks and feels.

**The following sheets will help you plan for your best possible interviews.**

## SOLO BRAINSTORM

I need to learn:

Learning this is important because:

My potential customers have the following characteristics:

I will find my prospective interviewees here:

I need to interview at least 10-15 people. Currently I have:

My prospective interviewees wants me to contact them initially by:

I will meet my interviewees at:

I will thank my interviewees for their time and info by rewarding them with:





THEMES AND QUESTIONS

- 1. Write down the themes for your desired learning.
- 2. Based on themes, design at least three open-ended questions that will help you gain empathy.
- 3. Review and rewrite your questions so they invite the prospective customer to tell stories.
- 4. Order the questions so they flow like a natural conversation.

Themes	Questions

## BEFORE YOU GO: INTERVIEW TIPS

### **DO ask why.**

You are not the expert on their lives — they are. Ask them why they do or say certain things.

### **DO encourage stories.**

Ask questions that get people telling stories. “Tell me about a time when you...”

### **DO listen for inconsistencies.**

Sometimes what people say and what they do are different. These inconsistencies hide interesting insights.

### **DO capture your interviews.**

Interview in pairs. Use a voice recorder. Capture video. You’ll need this later.

### **DO use fewer words.**

Set up questions with ten words or less. Try not to lead them.

### **DO listen and watch for nonverbal cues.**

Body language and emotions are revealing.

### **DO let silence linger.**

Silence allows a person to reflect on what they’ve just said and may reveal something deeper.

# After your Interviews.

## MAKE YOUR TOP TEN LIST

Write down the top ten insights from each interview. Compare your list with your partner's. What was most surprising? Most expected?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

## THINKING ON IT: DO YOU NEED TO PIVOT?

**Validation:** I need to change:

**Feasibility:** This is going to get in my way:

**Desirability:** Does my customer need or want what I'm building?

## EMPATHY MAPPING

After you let your top ten list simmer for a few days, come back to your data and do an empathy map. You may want to copy this and make one for each prospective customer you talked with during your interviews.

<b>SAY</b> Capture specific quotes from the customer as well as any phrases or words that struck you as something that might contain a deeper meaning.	<b>THINK</b> Capture phrases that begin with “I think...” or “I believe...” that were specifically stated by the customer. You might also capture other thoughts that may not have been explicitly stated but can be inferred from what the customer said.
<b>DO</b> Capture things you saw the customer doing. Writing down specific details or even drawing out diagrams can be useful.	<b>FEEL</b> Capture feelings and emotions that the customer displayed or talked about having. You might also capture other feelings that you infer from behaviors that you observed.

## EMPATHY WORKSHEET

**What feelings of tension and anxiety were present for your customers?**

**What was appealing and motivating to your customers about your new idea fully realized?**

# Who are your best customers?

## THEIR NEEDS

My customers need and are motivated by:

What do you see that they may not see? These are your insights!

## THEIR SITUATIONS

My customer's are contending with these circumstances:

What do you see that they may not see? These are your insights!

## Now, what's the best possible way to state the problem you are working to solve?

In the [Situation], [Customer with Emotion] is [Tension or Anxiety] and needs a way to [Need] because of [Insight].

Use post-its to practice with this until you write your top 2-3 problem statements.

# Your best problem statements:

Write your best 2-3 from your post-its.