



Customer Development

Reality Self-Check First



- I know customers will come once we build the product
- I validate ideas with AI without talking to real customers
- I believe my market is unique and normal rules don't apply
- I know my customers because I'm "one of them"
- I use third-party data instead of customer interviews
- I defend my solution instead of exploring the real problem
- I know customers show interest and that's why they will pay
- I ask my friends, colleagues, peers and family for the feedback
- I talk only to active or happy users, not to churned or lost ones
- I know the broader market will react similarly to the early adopters

Ticked any of the above?
You are in a costly assumptions bubble

What Customer Development Is

- » structured customer interviews
- » systematic interview analysis
- » explicit hypotheses about customers, problems & demand

methodological framework
= decision-making tool

Irrational User Pains

"Feel it, but can't explain it"

Best research methods:

- » ethnography (observe users in context)
- » behavioral neuroscience / cognitive bias analysis
- » competitive intelligence
- » shadowing real workflows

User pains show up in **behavior, avoidance, friction, and emotional reactions**

Hidden Pains

"Feel it, but won't admit it"

Best research methods:

- » usage metrics
- » reviews and support tickets
- » analysis of workarounds
- » language analysis in closed communities

Direct questions trigger **self-presentation**. Pains surface in **data, complaints, and informal language**

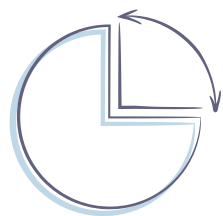




5 Steps of CustDev



Segment



A group of people with a shared pain

- » Start broad, narrow down
- » Segment by pain and its context, not demographics
- » Form and test a motivation hypothesis
- » Check context and ability to act
- » Identify the most motivated users
- » Expand to groups with similar pains or motivations

Interview Analysis

Capture signals, not transcripts

- pain
- emotion
- cost of mistakes



Don't add interpretations or advice

Look for 4 things

- real pain
- real behavior
- failed attempts
- demand triggers

Tags for transcription

- Pain
- Trigger
- Last experience
- Attempted solution
- Cost
- Context

Patterns matter more than opinions

1 mention → interesting
 3 mentions → trend
 5 mentions → pattern

Hypotheses



An honest question to the market, NOT your belief validation

Bad hypotheses:

- » are not tied to a specific segment
- » contain no measurable parameters
- » cannot be tested with a concrete question
- » are framed to confirm an existing belief

Good hypotheses:

- » clearly defines who to talk to
- » can be tested with facts
- » include measurable criteria
- » can be linked to a success metric



Decisions

What **to build** first and what **not to build**

What features, segments, or ideas **to cut**

How **to position** the problem and value

Price thresholds & acceptable **trade-offs**

Who **to target** now and whom to ignore

Messaging that resonates with real users

Channels where demand actually appears



Core principles

- ! Study **the user's world**, not your solution
- ! Study how the market solves the problem **without** you
- ! Every question must confirm or disprove a **hypothesis**
- ! Talk **only** to the target audience
- ! Ask about **the past**, not hypothetical futures
- ! Use **open questions**: "Why?", "How?"

Interview Flow

Warm-up

Goal: reduce tension to avoid people telling you what you want to hear

Core questions

Goal: determine whether the problem is **real** and **worth solving**

Network expansion

Goal: get referrals for new interviews



Upsell logic is optional and **ONLY** explored **after the interview**

Question Types to Include in Interview

- Context**
"Tell me about the last time you..."
- Trigger**
"What happened that made you deal with this...?"
- Behavior**
"Who did you turn to for help?"
- Solving attempts**
"What have you already tried to solve this?"
(If the pain is real, there were attempts)
- Decision-making**
"How did you decide what to do?"
- Emotions**
"What was the most frustrating part of this process?"
- Potential solution scenarios (NOT your product)**
"What matters most to you here?"
"What would an ideal solution look like?"
- Finding new respondents**
"Who else do you think I should talk to?"

How Many Interviews?

10-100k customers	100k-1M customers	1M+ customers
~10	~20-50	~200

Stop when answers start repeating

What Not to Do

- » **Pitch the product during the interview**
No 'Let me show you our idea...' – it distorts answers
- » **Ask about future behavior**
No "Would you buy?" or "Do you like it?" – it is not data
- » **Interview friends, colleagues, or investors**
They want to support you, not tell the truth
- » **Discuss or suggest pricing**
"What if it costs €10?" – is not data
- » **Show a prototype**
Triggers design evaluation instead of problem discussion