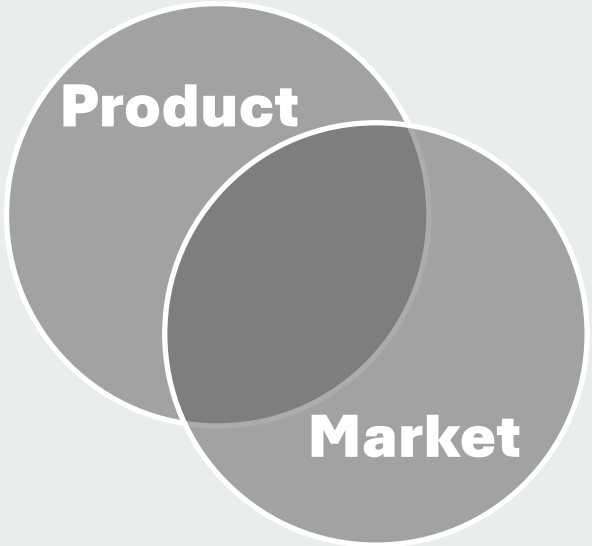
Take the quiz!



Optimizing product-market fit: *Designing IO solutions for real people*

Allen Kamin
March 15, 2024



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Alternate titles

Perfect is the enemy of the good
Voltaire

Progress over perfection

Impact over activity

Practitioner-Scientist Model of IO

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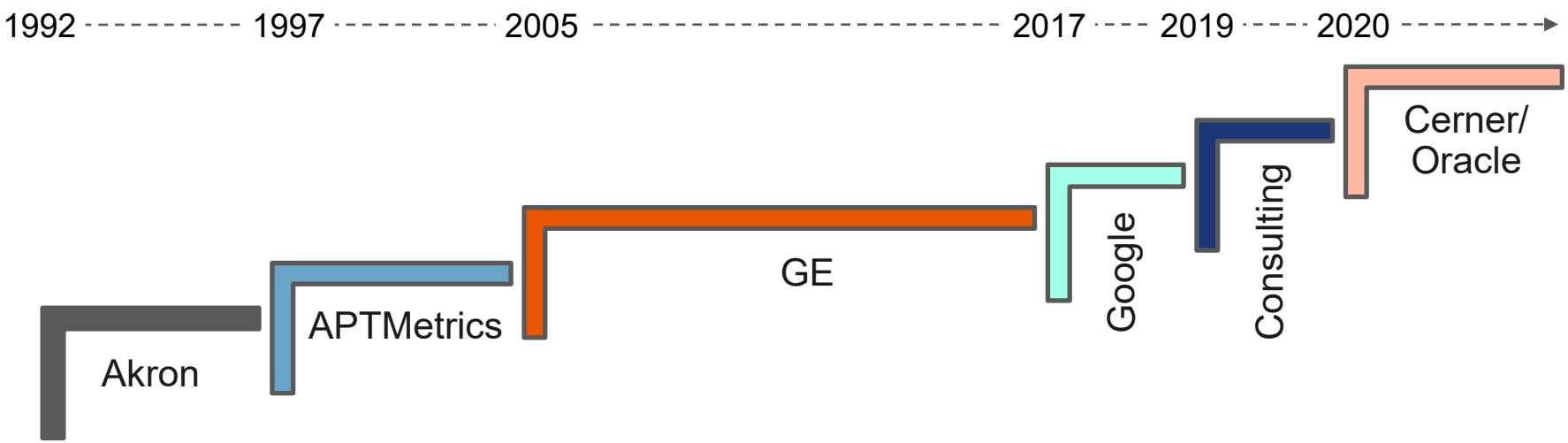
Yes, And...

Agenda



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My reality

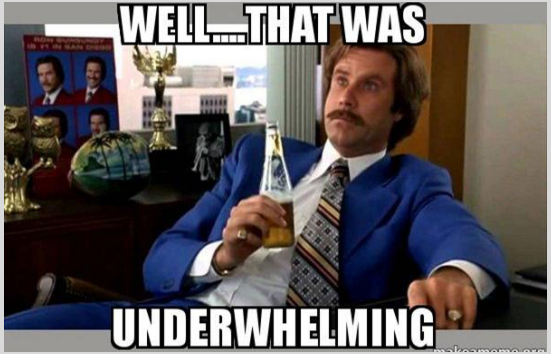
How I design solutions



How my solutions actually got used



The unfortunate result



Trade-offs

What I tended to maximize	What I tended to ignore

What we tend to be maximize	What we tend to ignore
• Alignment to scholarship • Standardization • Measurement accuracy • Validity • Fairness (SMDs) • Developmental vs evaluative • Legal defensibility	• Environment • Complexity • Maturity/Readiness • Experience • Adherence • Adoption • Constant iteration • Effectiveness/Impact





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I love it!
Me too!



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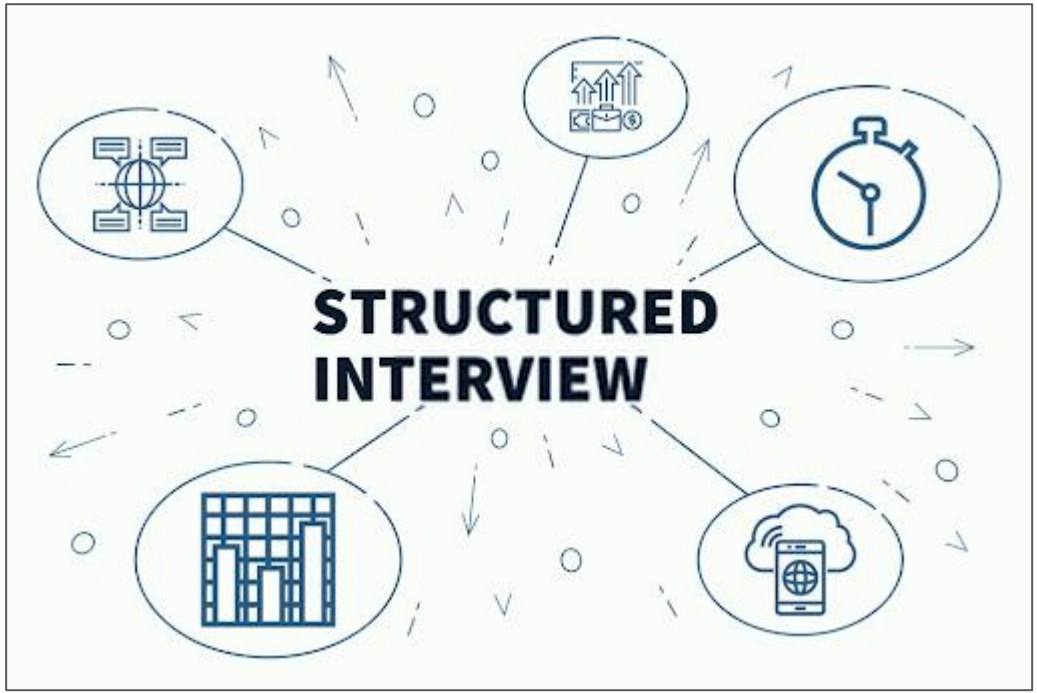

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Develop and validate interview



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Process candidates through hiring process

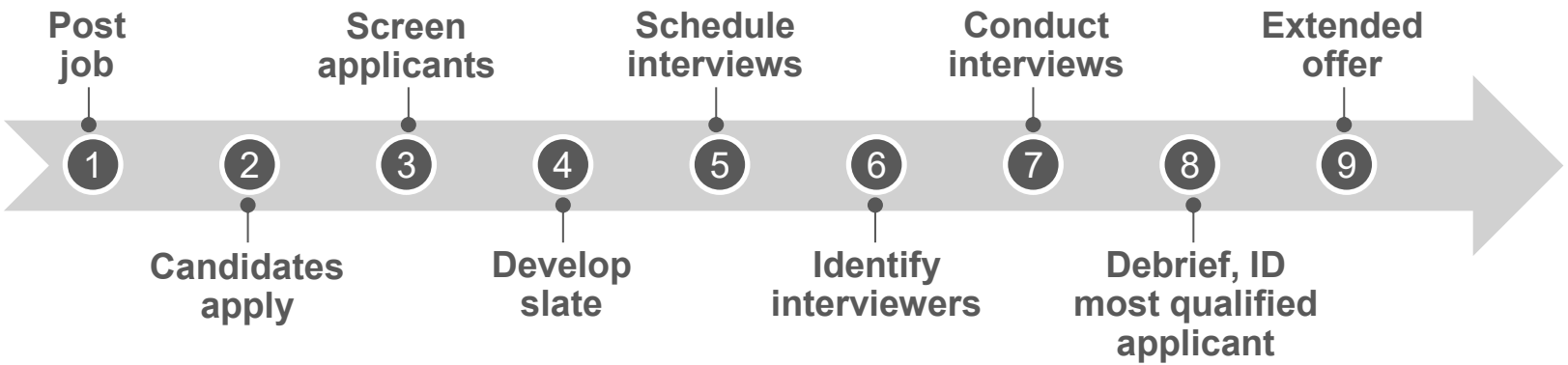
Conduct job analysis for position

Develop interview questions and evaluation scales

Convene focus group to content validate with SMEs

Develop interview guides

Train interviewers



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What happens in real life?

What happens in real life?



What happens in real life?

- X Recruiter screens resumes based on quality of school attended
- X Interviewers skim training, guess to pass knowledge check
- X Some interviewers start by asking where applicant is from
- X Only some of the defined interview questions are asked
- X Notes seldom taken
- X Someone writes, “accent makes it a little hard to understand” about one applicant
- X No one rates applicants on the dimensions of the interview
- X Manager insists hiring an applicant despite having performed poorly in interview

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We are facing two critical challenges

World is changing faster than ever



Scale and complexity of big companies works against them

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We are facing two critical challenges

World is changing faster than ever



Scale and complexity of big companies is working against them

Being challenged to think, act and lead in new ways

- Act quickly
- Start small, be simple
- Customer-focused
- Embrace learning
- Tolerate extreme ambiguity
- Focus on outcomes
- Empower others
- Be bold/take risks

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	Project Mindset	vs	Product Mindset
Problem Type	Complicated	→	Complex
Perspective	Inside out	→	Outside in
Goal	Completion	→	Consumption/ Adoption
Metrics	Completion, Cost, Acceptance	→	Consumption, Impact
Requirements	Exhaustive	→	Iterative
Teams	Intermittent	→	Continuous, Multi-disciplined

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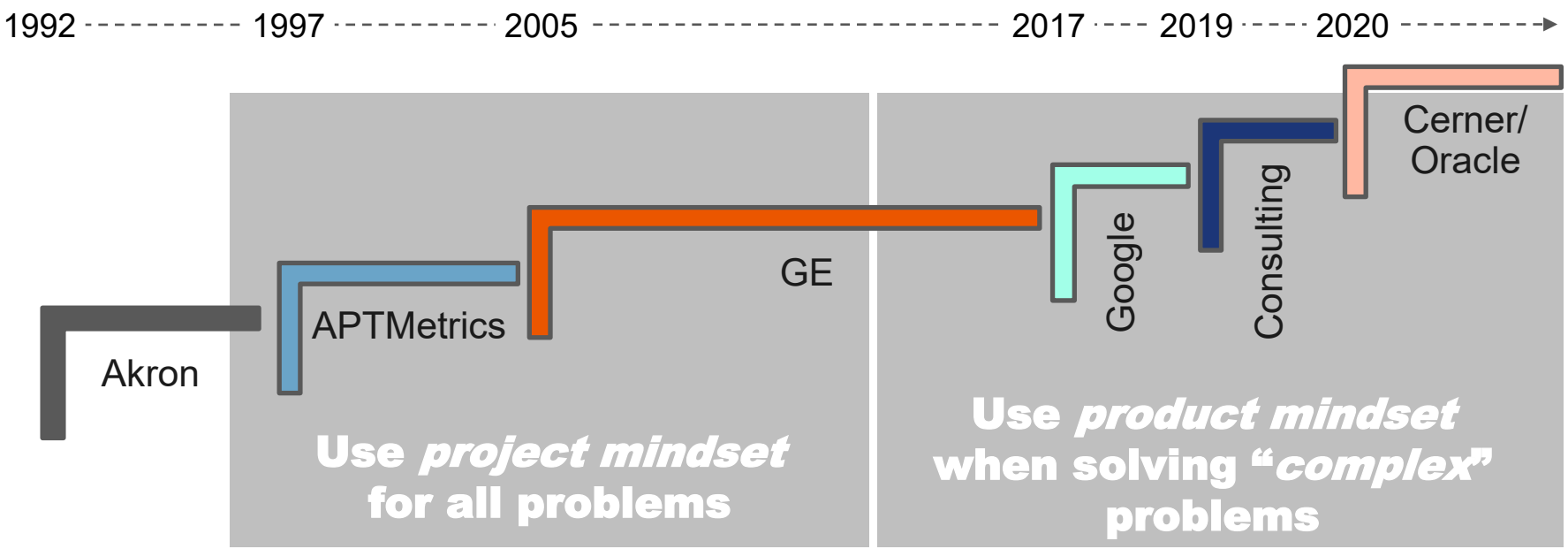

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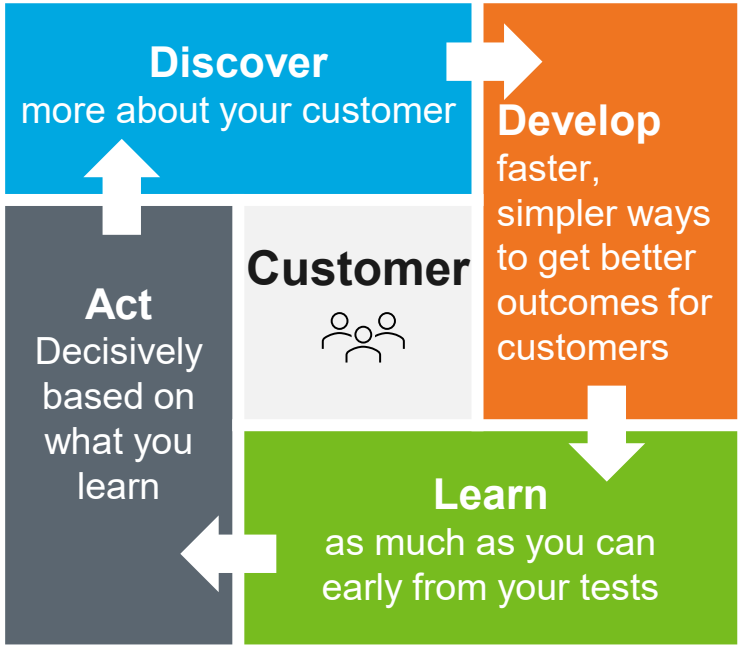
How to go about doing our work differently

Variation of Lean Start-Up



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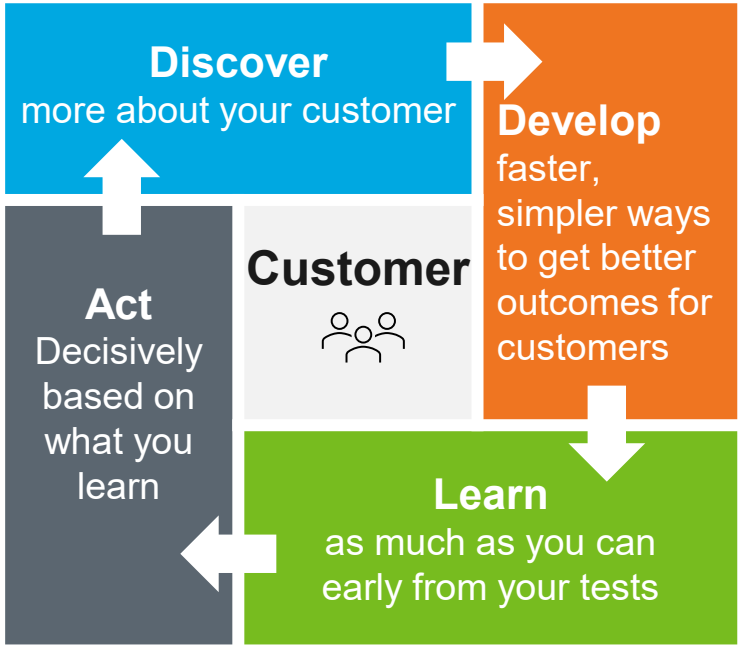
How to go about doing our work differently

Variation of Lean Start-Up



Multi-functional teams

Assume you are **funded by Venture Capitalists**

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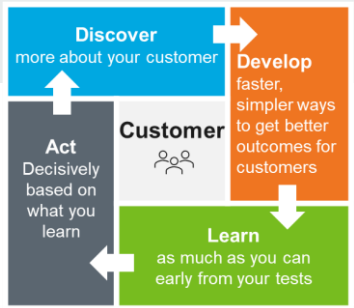

Clearly define problem from the customer(s) perspective

Customers vs. Stakeholders

Develop **empathy** for your customers

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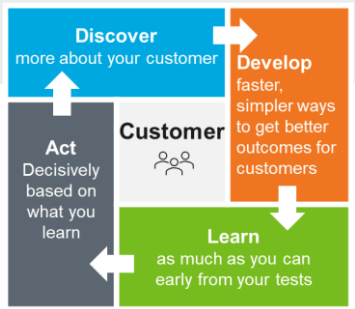
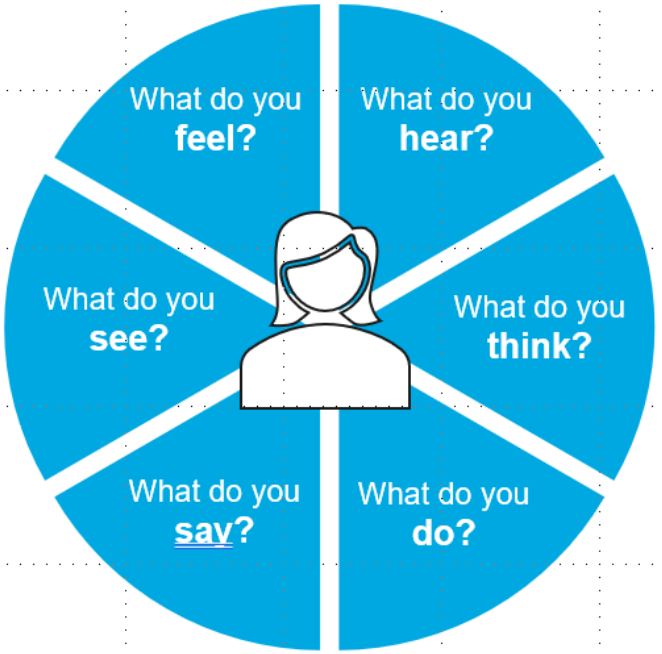


Clearly define problem from the customer(s) perspective

Customers vs. Stakeholders

Develop **empathy** for your customers

Additional questions for customers



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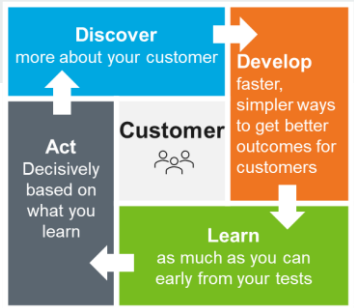

Clearly define problem from the customer(s) perspective

Bad Questions

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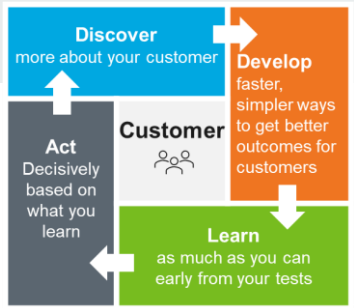

Clearly define problem from the customer(s) perspective

Bad Questions	Pro-Tips
	• Don’t assume you know the problem • Be careful not to rely on opinions of proxies • People often tell you want they want you to do, not the outcomes they want • Not collecting “requirements”

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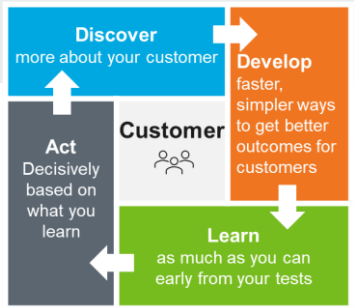

Develop

Brainstorm solutions

Define hidden (key) assumptions

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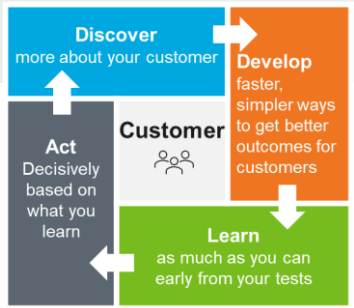

Develop

Brainstorm solutions

Define hidden (key) assumptions

Transform assumptions into hypotheses

- **If we do “x”, I believe it will result in “y”**
- **Test via small, simple experiments**

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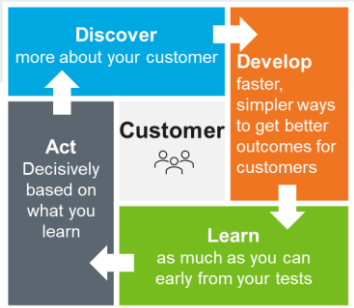

Which hypotheses should be tested first?

Prioritize them based on:

1. **Confidence** the hypothesis is true
2. **Importance** of hypothesis to project success
3. **Speed** each hypothesis can be tested

	Confidence it's true			Importance to project success			Speed to test		
Hypotheses	L=3	M=2	H=1	L=1	M=2	H=3	S=1	M=2	F=3
1.									
2.									
3.									

"Green" answers should be prioritized to be test. **"Red"** answers are less important to test.

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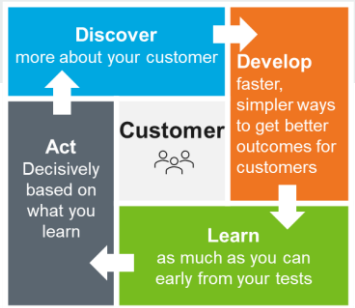
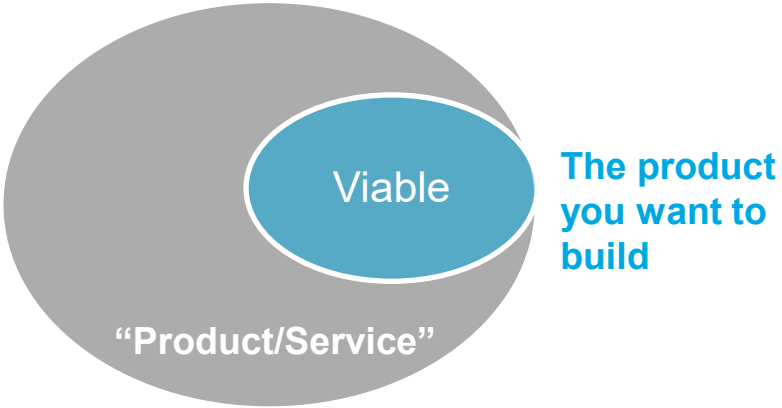


Develop

Building and testing Minimally Viable Products (MVPs)

- Enable us to **learn the maximum** amount about whether a product or service delivers customer value **with the minimum investment of resources and time**



The product you want to build

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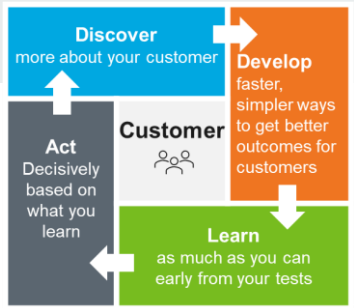
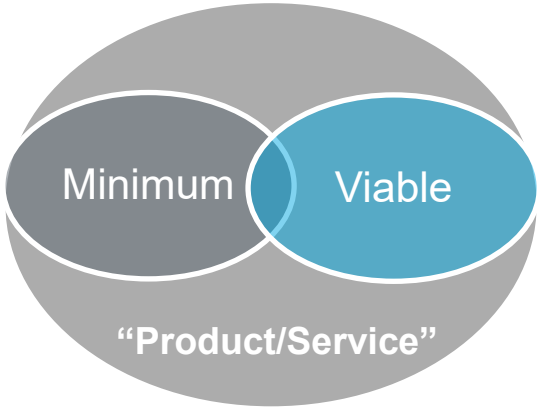


Develop

Building and testing Minimally Viable Products (MVPs)

- Enable us to **learn the maximum** amount about whether a product or service delivers customer value **with the minimum investment of resources and time**

Limited products nobody wants to use



The product you want to build

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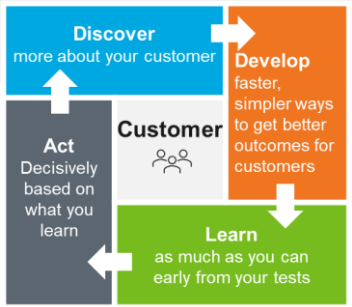
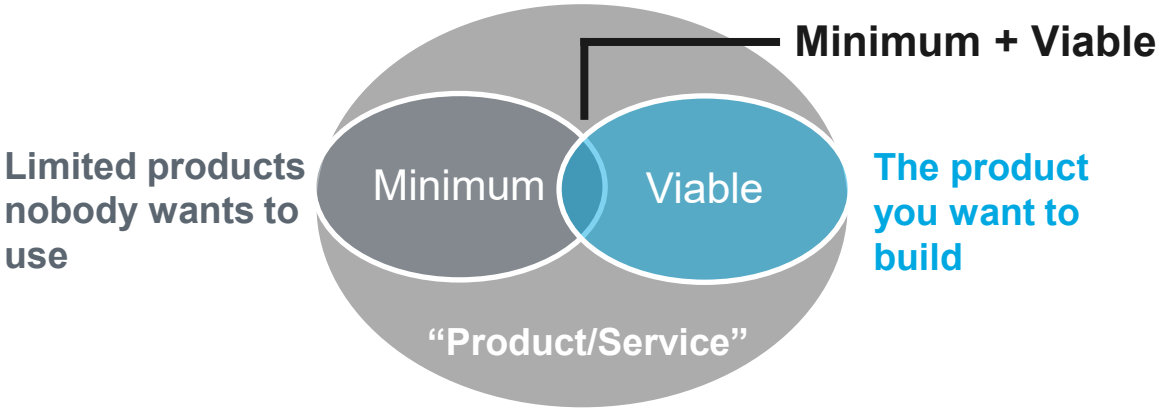


Develop

Building and testing Minimally Viable Products (MVPs)

- Enable us to **learn the maximum** amount about whether a product or service delivers customer value **with the minimum investment of resources and time**



- Basic but features that are **enough to let customers use and get their feedback**
- Includes **essential features** (e,g., safety)

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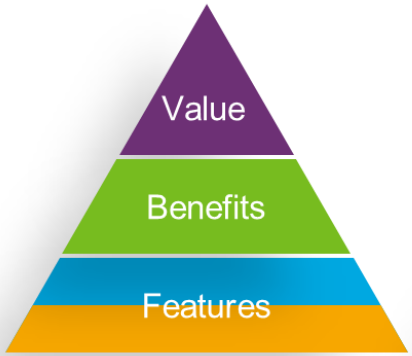
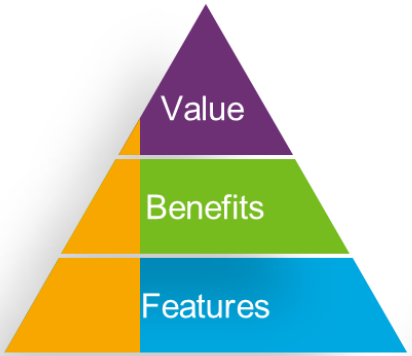
A good MVP

Not Good



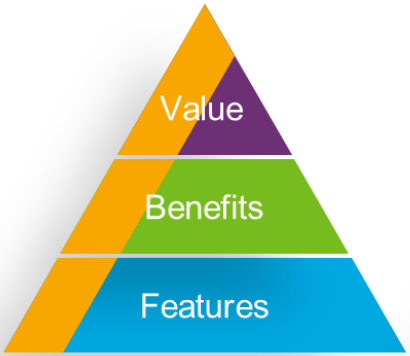
Which features can I build?

Bad



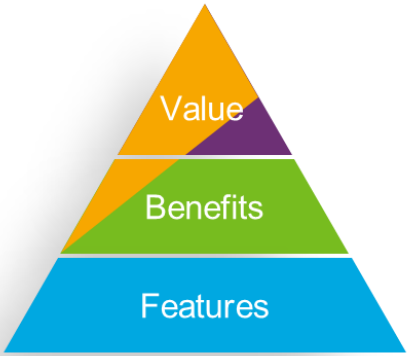
What are the minimum features to provide at least some value?

Better



What version of my product can I build that captures most of the value?

Good



*How can I validate my solution delivers some value to clients?***

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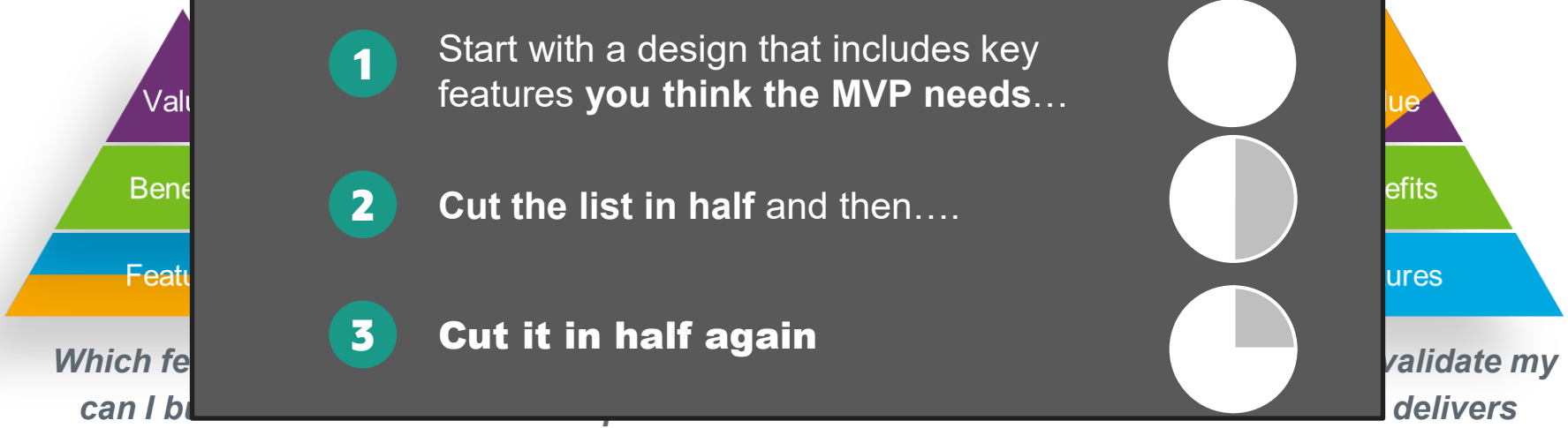
A good MVP

Not Good | **Bad** | **Better** | **Good**



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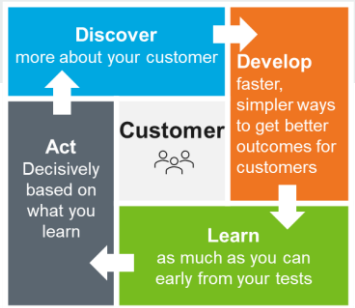

Learn

“Action” research

Sample “tests”

A. Create a mickey mouse tool (dashboard), with a very simple process. Let small number of people use it. Come back in two weeks and learn what actually happened.

B. Ask 10 people to read a research brief. Come back in two weeks and learn what actually happened.

C. Show a simple rough outline of solution to some customers.

D. Share a prepared communication with 8 customers before sending it to all.

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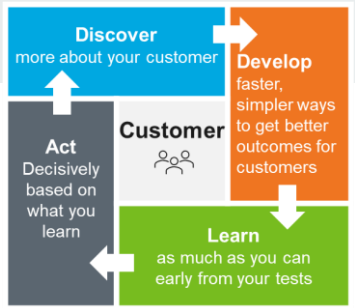

Learn

“Action” research

What customers do is more important than **what they say, like or want**

- What happens as a result of customers using the MVP?
- Use “discovery” questions

- Are customers willing to write email to CHRO letting them know they are excited about the new solution and want to be an early adopter when it goes live?

- What did they find confusing about what was in the comms?

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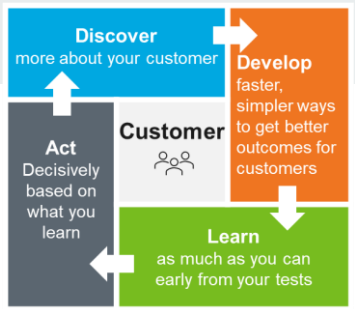

Learn

Pro-Tips

- Avoid “vanity metrics” and “success theater”
- People are NOT used to working this way
- “Protect the MVP”
- Strong preference for conducting individual interviews vs focus groups

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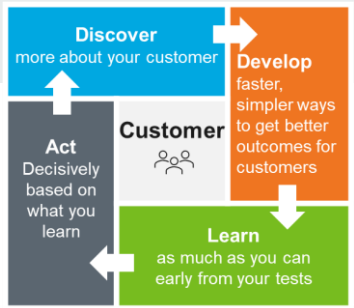

Act

Make informed decisions based on learnings from prototypes

- Are we on the right track or not?
- Which features add value?
- What's causing frustration?
- What's being ignored?
- How/what do we need to change?

Iterate

Persevere

Pivot

"Fighting the pivot"

Monitoring

- Track key metrics and performance indicators
- Collect and prioritize customer enhancements. Plot on difficulty by impact matrix
- Make further adjustments/ enhancements

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What’s failure

Productive Failure
Prove early that a solution was built on incorrect assumptions, and we can celebrate the savings
Learned and failed fast!

Achieved Failure
Successfully executed a plan to create a new product or service that no one uses.
Failure caused by mistakes, laziness, incompetence
If we build something that no one wants or uses, why are we proud that we were on time and budget?

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Design better microwaves!



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$1,000,000 Question

What's the outcome you are trying to obtain?

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Thank you

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Volunteers to share their two word take-aways?

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