

## Lean Customer Research™ – Getting Out to Customers

Connecting to your customers can make or break your business. How much time do you spend with customers? You don't have to be a large company with a hefty marketing budget to learn about customers.

**Lean Customer Research®** is an iterative, continual research with actual and potential customers in order to **test your assumptions** about what customers want, need, and will buy.

Customer Research techniques include:

- ✓ Interviews
- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Ethnography/Immersion
- ✓ Surveys
- ✓ Prototype testing

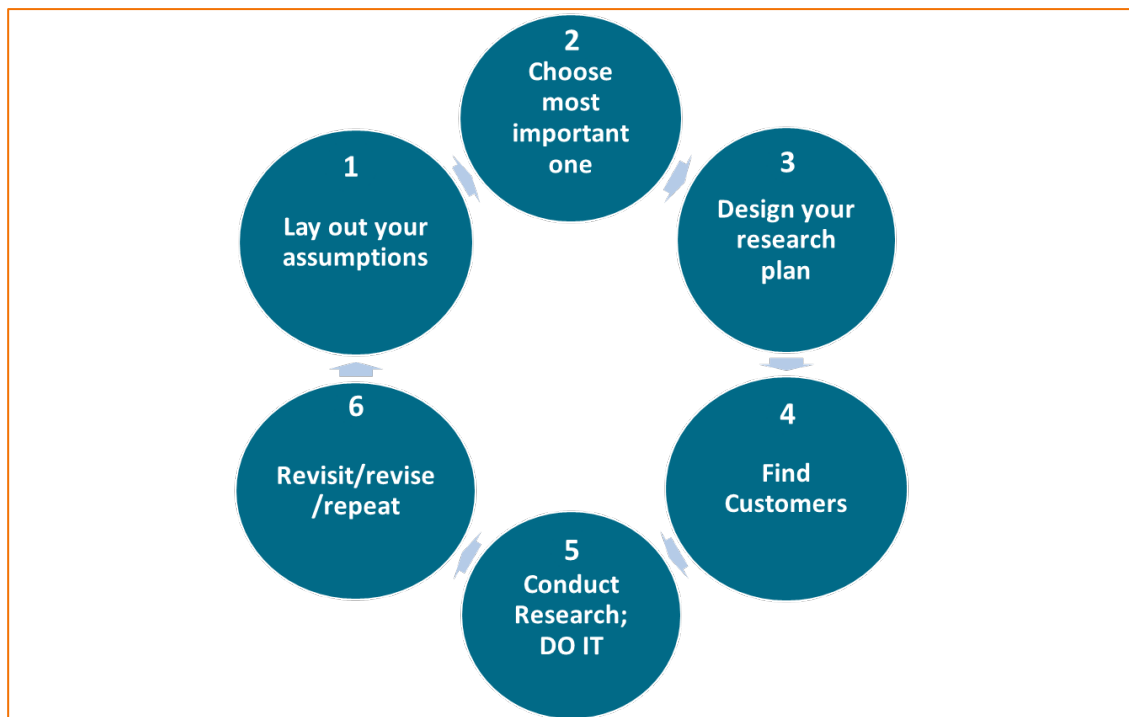
WHY DO THIS? If you build it, they MIGHT NOT come! What can we learn from customers?

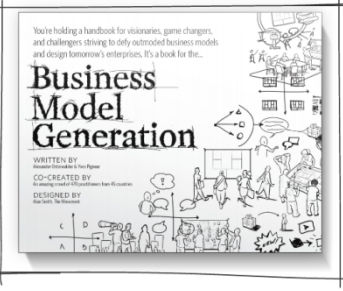
- Their problems
- What else they are using
- How they use products/services

Why DON'T WE GO OUT?

- Process Efficiency
- Condescension
- What else?
- Creator Ego
- Fear

### THE LEAN CUSTOMER RESEARCH™ FRAMEWORK



<p><b>1. Lay out your assumptions</b></p> <p><i>Each component of your business plan is built on assumptions that should be tested</i></p>  <p><b>One-Page Business Model Canvas</b> <i>(see also "Lean Canvas" and "Value Proposition Design")</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who is/are my customer(s)?</li> </ul> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is the problem/need/want I am addressing?</li> </ul> <hr/> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What value does my solution provide? How is it unique?</li> </ul> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>2. Choose the most important assumption—or just choose one!</b></p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- women will buy used clothing online</li> <li>- given the opportunity, women who are losing weight will want to sell their expensive, larger clothing online</li> </ul>	<p>My most important assumption:</p>
<p><b>3. Design your research plan</b></p> <p>Interview tips:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Avoid yes/no questions</li> <li>2) Interview for stories</li> <li>3) Dig deeper</li> <li>4) Find out about alternates</li> <li>5) Tap into the vision</li> <li>6) Shut up. And listen.</li> <li>7) Ask "who else should I be speaking with?"</li> </ol> <p>IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU!</p>	<p>Develop 2 or 3 interview questions:</p> <p><i>What are some of the ways you...?</i></p> <p><i>Tell me about a time when...</i></p> <p><i>If you had all the money (or time) in the world...</i></p> <p><i>It's 2040, you are ..... Who would you?</i></p> <p><i>What else are you using to.....</i></p>
<p><b>4. Find customers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Craigslist</li> <li>- Online groups</li> <li>- Malls</li> <li>- Coffee shops</li> <li>- Meetups</li> <li>- Conferences or Trade shows</li> <li>- The Library</li> <li>- LinkedIn/Facebook groups</li> <li>- Alumni Network</li> <li>- Your own personal/social network</li> </ul>	<p>Where can I find customers to interview/observe?</p>

<p><b>5. Conduct research; DO IT!</b></p> <p>Get out there (before you think you're ready!)</p> <p>You can do "warm-up" interviews to tweak your questions</p> <p>Conduct observations and do field research to uncover "tacit information"</p> <p>Do research on problems AND solutions</p>	<p>My commitment:</p>
<p><b>6. Revisit/revise/repeat</b></p> <p>As you get further along, you can work with customers to evaluate prototypes of your product, your messaging, promotional materials, pricing.</p> <p><i>See also "The Lean Startup" and "Four Steps to the Epiphany" for more about this approach.</i></p>	

**Final Thoughts:**

Offer a Painkiller, not a Vitamin

- Vitamin: nice to have, good for you, something you should take but don't always
- Painkiller: must have, you crave it, it becomes addicting

Be driven by your research findings, not your own ego.



**Ivy Eisenberg**, founder of Our IdeaWorks, LLC, is an innovation, customer research, and technology professional with more than 30 years on the front end of innovation, in new product development and in software business analysis and project management. She excels in connecting businesses to their customers to create richer insights and build products that customers need, want, and enjoy using.

She has worked in healthcare, financial services, telecommunications, consumer goods and services, non-profit organizations, and education. Infusing everything she does with passion, humor, and warmth, Ivy is also an award-winning humor writer, storyteller, and story coach. She holds an MBA in Marketing, with a concentration in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from New York University's Stern School of Business.