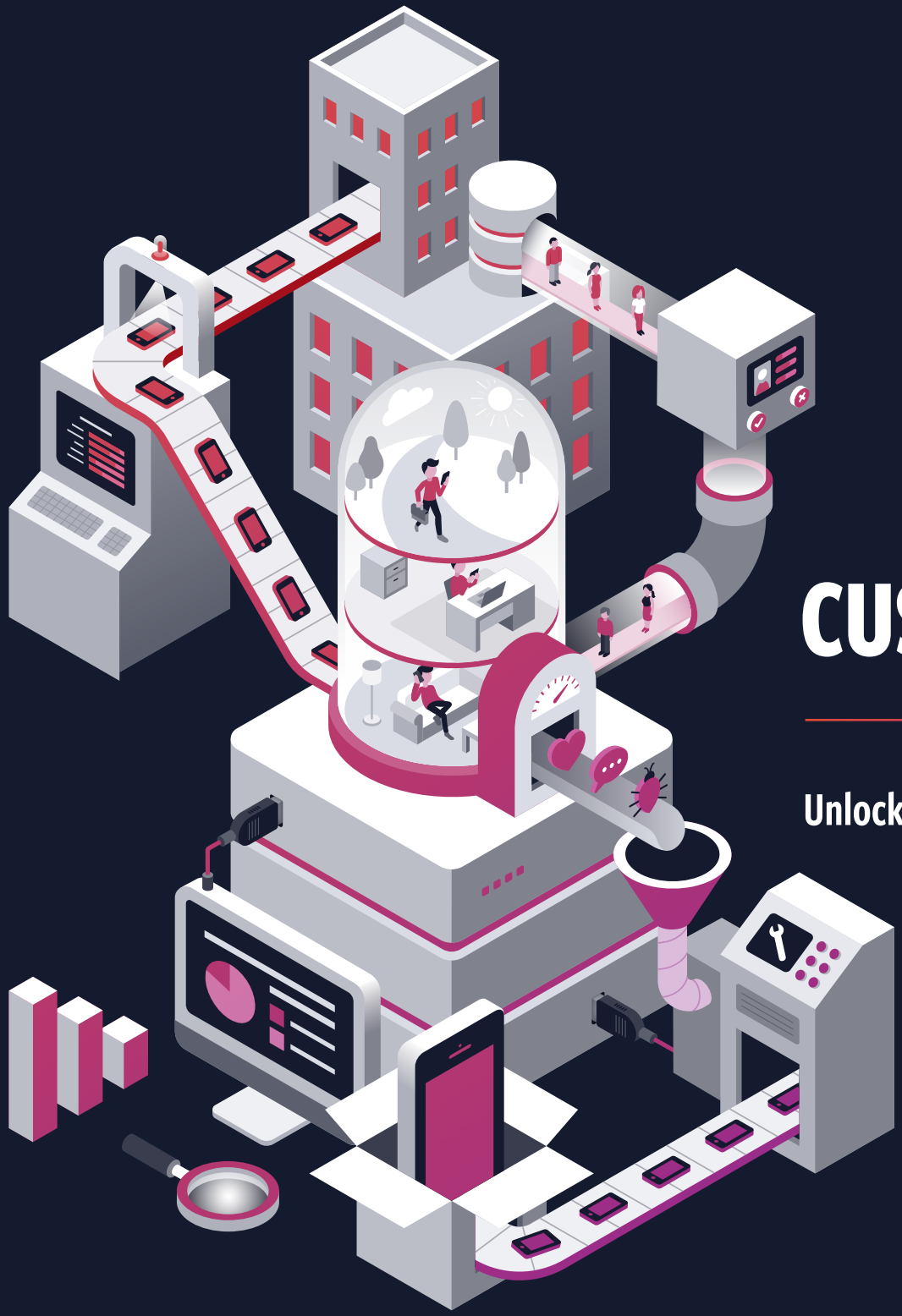


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CUSTOMER VALIDATION

IN 20 MINUTES

Unlocking Customer Feedback with Modern Beta Testing

Table of Contents

1 **KEEPING UP WITH THE SPEED OF MODERN DEVELOPMENT** 1

- Real Products: Monitoring Real-World Performance 4
- Real Customers: Targeted, Enthusiastic Strangers 5
- Real Environments: Target Market Technographics 6
- Time Frame: Letting Testers Get to Know Your Product 7

2 **THE CUSTOMER VALIDATION FRAMEWORK** 8

- The Customer Validation Framework in Action 9
- Turning Feedback into Actionable Results 11
- Promoting the Voice of the Customer Across Your Organization 13

3 **THE EVOLUTION OF CUSTOMER VALIDATION TOOLS** 14

- Features to Look for in a Customer Validation Tool 15

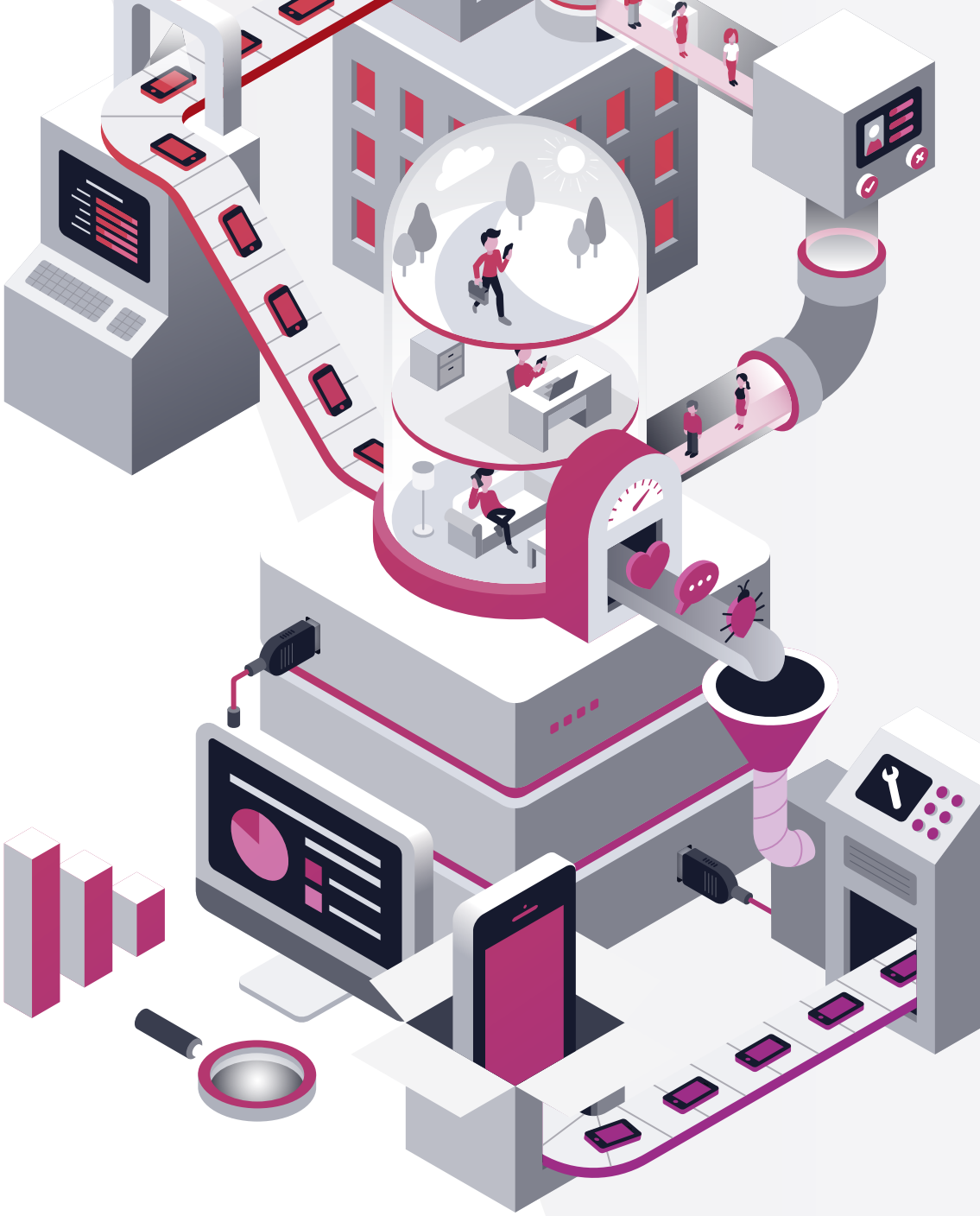
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Keeping Up with the Speed of Modern Development

Today's technology is rapidly evolving. In the last 25 years, Software as a Service (SaaS) and the Internet of Things (IoT) have launched a new era of products. Agile development has accelerated the release schedule to light speed. It's becoming harder and harder to deliver the high-quality products and satisfying experiences that customers demand.

While there's limitless opportunity to pioneer in this new tech landscape, there are also new challenges to tackle. They include complex technical environments, increasing expectations for seamless product functionality, and rapidly multiplying test scenarios as technological diversity flourishes. On top of these challenges, customers demand products to not only work, but work *exactly* the way they need and want them to.

Because of this, the minimum requirement of product quality has also evolved. To meet the demand for seamless and genuinely delightful experiences, engineering and QA teams test, implement, and iterate in overlapping cycles. They need customer acceptance and validation in every phase of product development, not just in design or after release.



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Technology and product development have evolved a hundredfold over the last 25 years.

So why are we still beta testing like it's 1994?

Knowing just how much has changed, it seems unbelievable that many companies are still trying to squeeze beta testing practices developed for decades-old products into today's rapid product development cycles. Emerging technology makes continuous validation with real people in real homes more vital than ever. And the gaps in traditional beta testing spell a need for Customer Validation methods that are as robust and flexible as today's products and development processes.

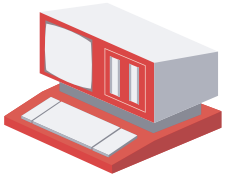
If you've ever run a traditional beta test, you're probably aware of two things:

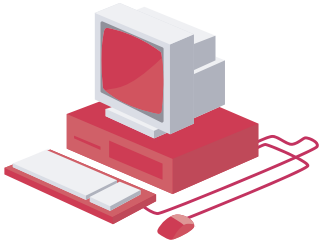
- The process seems slow and difficult
- You're unsure about the value of the results

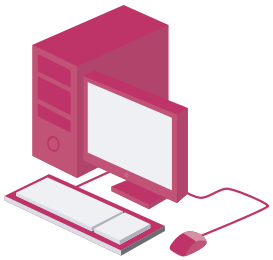
This ebook outlines the framework for Customer Validation, which modernizes traditional beta testing processes. It anchors the four key components of traditional beta (people, products, environment, and time frame) around the needs of present-day product development. This includes: establishing the building blocks for thoroughly testing interoperability, creating accurate and abundant user scenarios, and identifying fixes that will delight your audience.

Finally, it carves a path for validating products with customers in a way that's both thorough and compatible with rapid iteration and agile development.









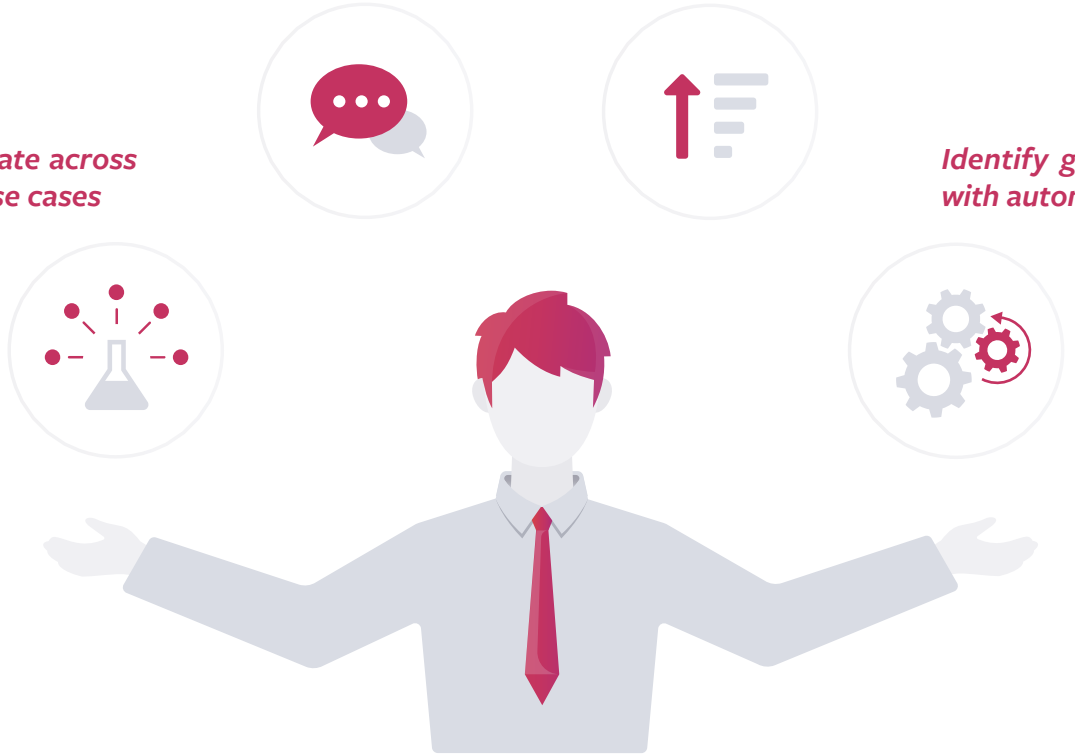
CUSTOMER VALIDATION IS A COLLECTION OF PROCESSES THAT EMPOWER YOU TO:

Deepen your understanding of known issues with user feedback

Prioritize issues that have the greatest impact on the user experience

Quickly test and evaluate across a wider spectrum of use cases

Identify gaps that can be closed with automated tests in the future



Real Products: Monitoring Real-World Performance

'Real products' means incorporating as many real elements of your product into customer tests as possible. The closer your product is to the real thing, the easier it will be to resolve critical bugs surfaced by usage in the wild. By following user feedback as testers explore your product in a live technical environment, you'll get a true assessment of its stability and performance.



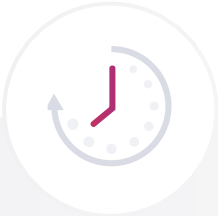
PHASE 1: STABILITY

Expand your QA team's findings. Use a small panel of technical users to surface critical bugs and stopping issues before your product hits your larger audience.



PHASE 2: SATISFACTION

Get a deeper understanding of user satisfaction with key features, beyond static product specs. Grow your catalog of use cases to improve the user experience.



PHASE 3: MATURITY

Continue to refine and update your product after launch. Pre-release feedback about your product's latest features and fixes help you prioritize issues and stay agile.

Webinar: Picking the Right Test Strategy

Real Customers: Targeted, Enthusiastic Strangers

Traditional beta testing programs have used family, friends, members of the product development team, and off-time professionals to collect feedback. The central flaw in these practices is the tendency for these testers, however well-meaning, to produce biased and/or irrelevant feedback. Your ability to use feedback to tailor your product to your customers depends on the accuracy and relevancy of that feedback.

This means finding testers who are targeted, unbiased, and invested in your product's improvement.

Webinar: Building a Tester Community

TARGETED

Aligned with your target market

- Demographics (age, gender, location, income level)
- Psychographics (technical aptitude, habits, attitudes about products)
- Technographics (type of phone, enterprise environment, connection speed)

ENTHUSIASTIC

Excited to help improve your product and participate in your test

STRANGER

Unbiased in their relationship with you, your product, and your company

Real Environments: Target Market Technographics

Interoperability is notoriously difficult to grapple with. Even a robust QA lab with hundreds of devices and terabytes of test data is a drop in the ocean compared to the number of technographic landscapes found around the world. When you add in the wide range of people who will be using your products, the number of potential test scenarios and environments is mind-blowing.

The amount of time, manpower, and device investment needed to cover all of these environments isn't feasible with the speed of today's development processes — especially when you're trying to keep up with the ever-changing nature of today's user environments.

Opening up your test lab to include the wide range of phones, computers, routers, smart speakers, work stations, and other devices owned by your customers provides a realistic way to tackle the opposing constraints of speed and coverage during your tests. By identifying testers in your target market with an ecosystem of devices used by your larger audience, you'll expand your lab and deliver confident, credible test results. That also translates to a lot of time, money, and resources your team won't need to spend recreating hundreds of user scenarios.



Webinar: How to Evaluate Product Quality Through Alpha Testing

Time Frame:
Letting Testers Get to Know Your Product

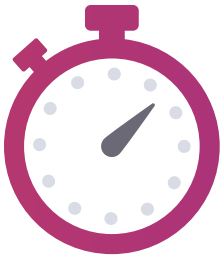
The amount of time testers spend with your products may be the most unique factor of Customer Validation. Unlike a usability study or crowd-sourced QA session that lasts a few hours, Customer Validation allows testers to use your product in their everyday lives for a sustained period of time. This surfaces deep-seated bugs and critical errors that only arise from real-world usage.

Two to six weeks is the sweet spot for surfacing most bugs. During the first two weeks, testers will identify 90% of critical issues. Over the years, our data reveals that with a shorter period of time, you're at risk for missing major issues. With a longer period of time, you'll start seeing redundant feedback and repetitive insights — if you're testing after six weeks, it's usually to let the product soak for long-term issues.

CONTINUOUS TESTING

Your product will continue to change throughout its lifetime. This applies whether you're rapidly adding new features (Saas) or adapting your product to ever-changing technographic environments (IoT).

Delta Testing drives the agile development of your product by taking a community of reliable testers through short, focused test sprints. This method of continuous Customer Validation generates immediate feedback on upcoming features and fixes.



The Customer Validation Framework

The Customer Validation Framework translates the goals of traditional beta testing into a series of specific phases. These phases provide targeted, holistic, real-world feedback for validating quality at each point in the product release cycle.



Alpha Phase

Validating Stability |
Test Ready (60 - 80%)

The experience has been vetted by professional testing resources and deemed ready for initial usage by end-users.

Validating Satisfaction |
Near Feature Complete (80 - 90%)

Engineering and Product are confident that most severe issues have been resolved and the experience is ready for representative customers.

Beta Phase



Product Launch



Delta Phase

Validating Maturity |
Post-Launch (100 - X%)

Engineering and QA teams continue to iterate and improve the product by testing new builds, features, and quality enhancements.

Customer Validation Framework in Action

1

INITIALIZATION

Develop a Strategy

Identify product areas that are 1) feasible to test in the time that you have available, 2) a priority for your core stakeholders, and 3) will have a significant impact on the customer experience.

2

PLANNING

Create a Plan

Select the top five to ten product areas from that list and use them as topics. Write corresponding activities that outline what your testers need to assess for each topic, and how they'll submit that feedback. Put a schedule around the plan so you'll know what to expect and when.

3

PREP

Recruit (the Right) Testers

Break down the defining characteristics of your target market. Identify their demographics, technographics, and psychographics. Divide those traits into "must-haves" and "nice-to-haves." Use this as the basis for qualifying testers.

Customer Validation Framework in Action (cont.)

4

TEST

Collect Useful Feedback

Focus on maintaining a steady flow of feedback through consistent interaction with testers. Respond to each submission. Manage and filter that feedback to keep it organized. Segment submissions by traits (iOS or Android, for example) to monitor key experiences. Use feedback scoring to surface high-priority feedback and critical issues.

5

CLOSURE

Deliver Great Results

Present your discoveries based on the data. Rank your issues in order of prominence. Tailor your data storytelling to your stakeholders.

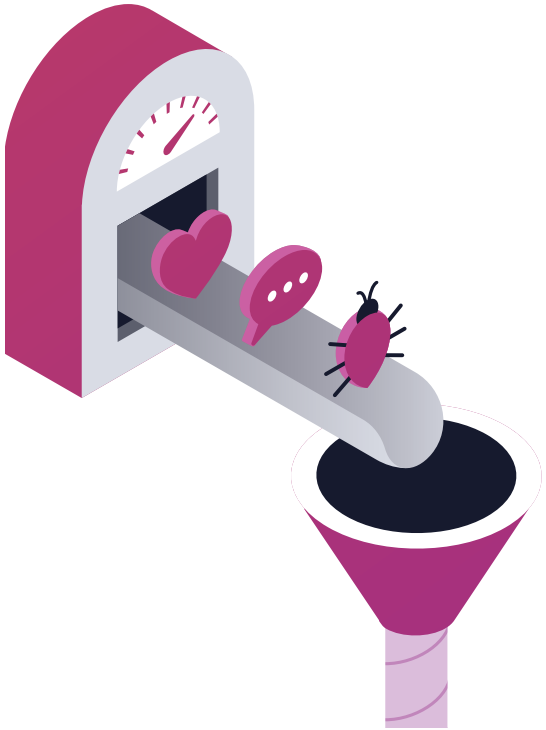


Webinar: Building a Better Mousetrap for Early Product Feedback

Turning Feedback into Actionable Results

Developing data-driven, actionable recommendations from mountains of tester feedback is the cornerstone of an effective Customer Validation program. But without a reliable process in place, it can become a massive time sink.

By dividing tester submissions into **issues**, **ideas**, and **praise**, you'll create clear guidelines for which aspects of your product to **fix**, **improve**, or **promote** before release.



FEEDBACK PROVIDED BY TESTERS

ISSUES

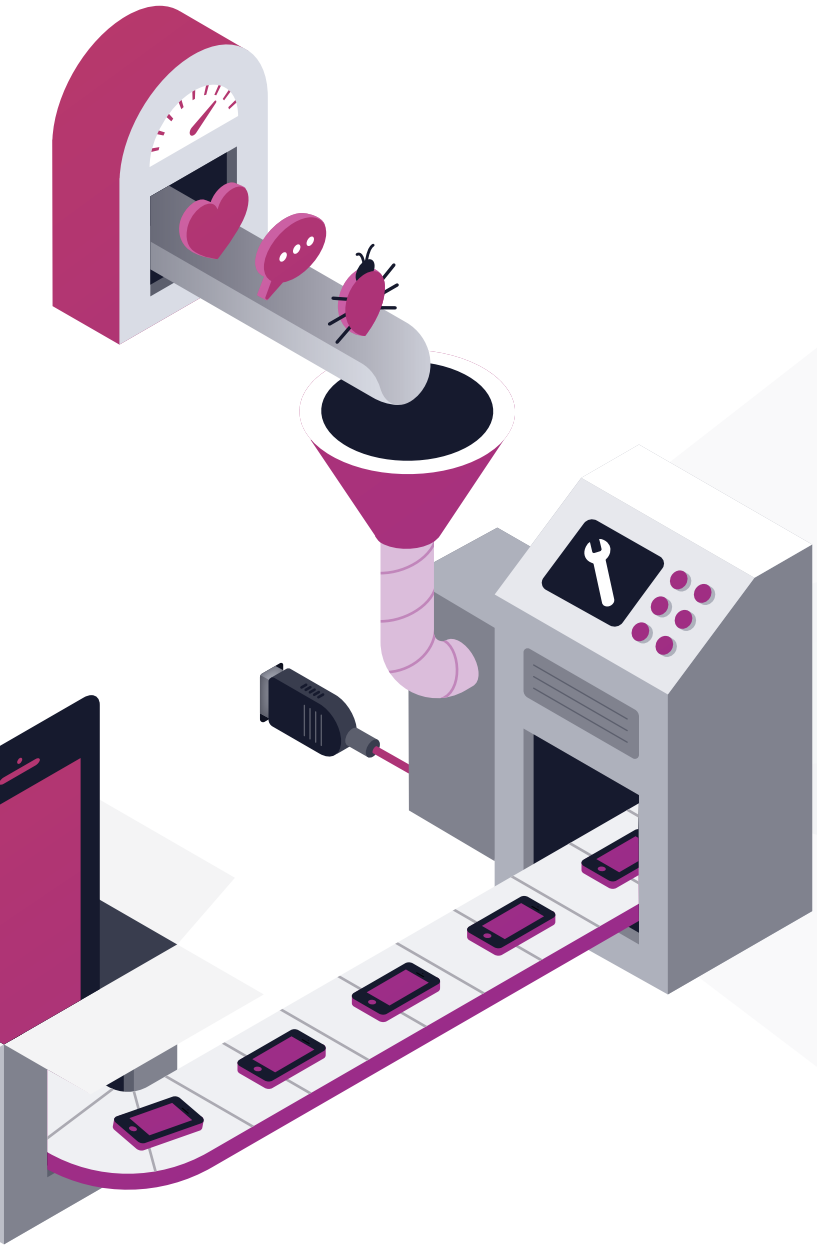
are problems with the product's quality, interoperability, or real-world performance.

IDEAS

reflect the acceptance of your product and provide the customer's viewpoint so you can make improvements and prioritize your backlog.

PRAISE

highlights the features and experiences of the product that delighted testers and will in turn delight your customers.



HOW TO TAKE ACTION

FIX

what doesn't work as designed or is harmful to the user experience.

Examples: interoperability issues, newly discovered bugs, and poor product interactions

IMPROVE

what works but could do more to delight your customers and elevate their experience.

Examples: improved information architecture, feature modifications, and customer preferences

PROMOTE

the positive experiences that stood out to your customer testers. Highlight the high-points of your product in marketing messages and use them to encourage everyone involved with its development.

Promoting the Voice of the Customer Across Your Organization

Customer Validation data and insights should be used across your organization. They help ensure that every team is tuned in to the voice of the customer throughout the entire product development life cycle. If you're unsure of the value other stakeholders might gain from your results, here are some use cases to help get you started.



PRODUCT

- Feature prioritization
- Use case validation
- Market acceptance



DEV/QA

- Expanded test ecosystems
- Issue prioritization
- QA gap analysis



UX

- Design tuning and validation
- Quantitative research
- Qualitative experiences



MARKETING

- Customer quotes and testimonials
- Messaging validation
- Market trends and insights



SUPPORT

- Support load planning
- Support staff training
- Self-serve help and workarounds



Webinar: The ROI of Beta Testing

The Evolution of Customer Validation Tools

Most companies are still following the old model of using whatever tools are available. But what you save using low cost options often ends up tripling the time it takes to manage customer tests.

Email, spreadsheets, and other generic productivity tools lack substantial integrative abilities, which translates to several rounds of manual data entry. In addition, point solutions - such as survey tools, issue tracking systems, forums, and analytics tools - perform well inside their wheelhouse but fall short when it comes to holistic customer test management. As a result, processes for streamlining workflows are harder to solidify, templates are harder to build, and program performance metrics are more difficult to track.

MODERN TOOLS

As professionals seek smarter solutions for driving value with their customer tests, they are leaning more and more on specialized tools. These take the form of either a purchased platform solution like Centercode, or an in-house tool developed over years of refining processes to fit program needs.

1 PURCHASED PLATFORM SOLUTION

These systems centralize the various functions required to run effective Customer Validation tests to simplify processes and provide holistic analysis. For instance, they can link survey responses to submitted issues, and automatically prioritize feedback for building accurate product recommendations.

2 BUILT IN-HOUSE

Larger Customer Validation programs sometimes opt to build their own solution, motivated by existing investments. While this path requires a substantial developmental and financial investment to produce and maintain, it provides a hyper-tailored solution that can produce positive results similar to what you'd get with a purchased platform.

Features to Look for in a Customer Validation Tool

INTEGRATIONS

Integration features enable you to link your Customer Validation tool to powerful systems — like Jira, Tableau, and Salesforce — that are used across departments and disciplines. This increases the ability to spread the value of Customer Validation throughout your organization.

DATA CENTRALIZATION

Centralization features make community, project, and program data accessible through a single tool. They also make data easy to enter, track, analyze, export, and scrub — which is especially useful in the era of personal privacy and GDPR.



SMART FEATURES

These functions work in tandem with other powerful features to support and maintain the flow of feedback. Examples include: impact scoring, which automates feedback prioritization so that the most impactful issues float to the top, and predictive match, which reduces duplicate issue entries and shaves hours of time off of feedback triaging processes.

AUTOMATION

These features help you streamline your processes. Automating repeatable tasks like sending submission confirmations and sorting tester feedback makes it easier to keep your tests on task and on schedule.

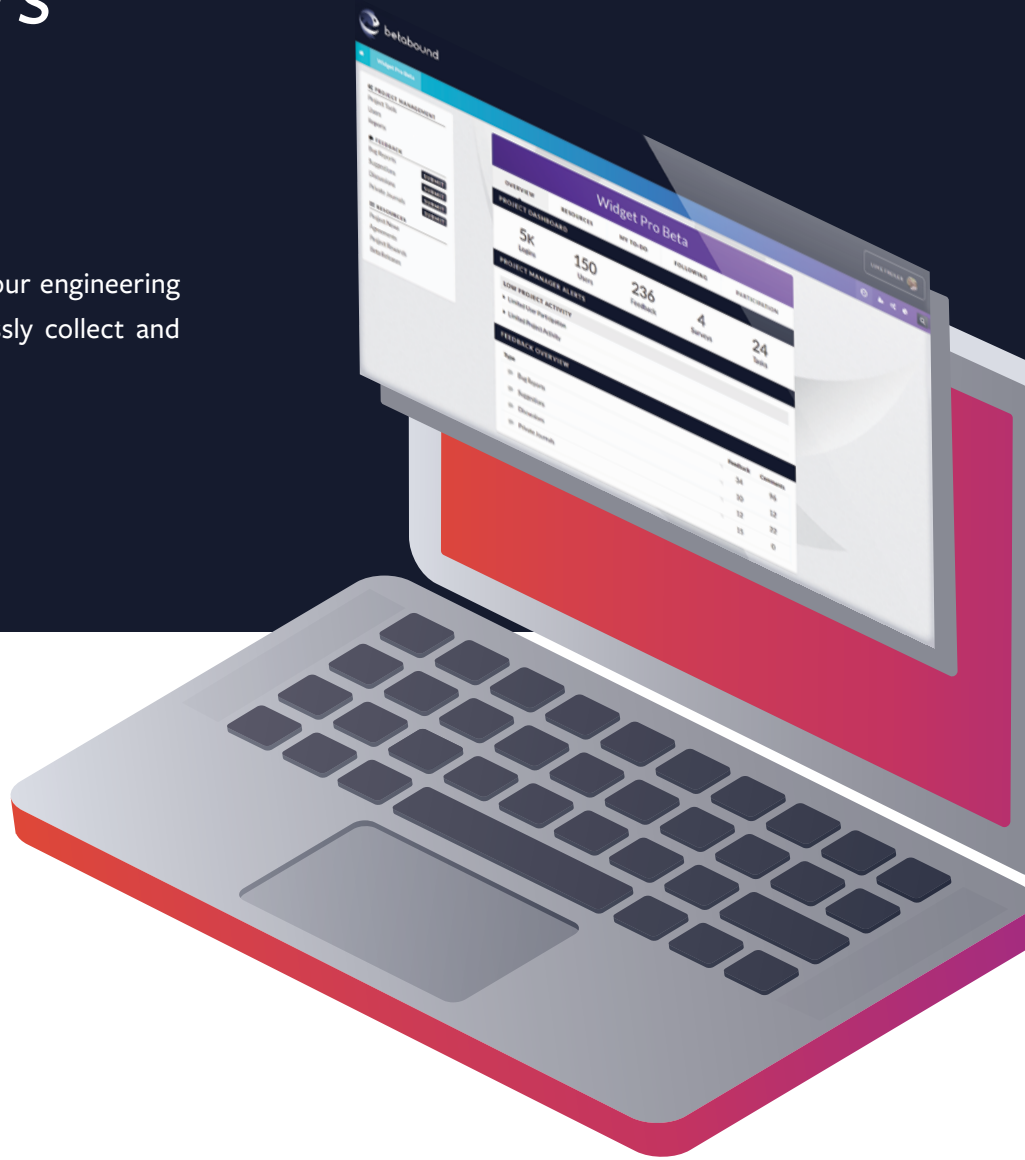
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Powering modern product development by bringing you closer to your customers

CUSTOMER VALIDATION PLATFORM

The Centercode Platform closes the gap between your target market and your engineering team. With built-in templates and easy-to-use automation, you can seamlessly collect and analyze customer feedback to guarantee consistent, bug-free releases.

SCHEDULE A DEMO



TESTER NETWORK

Grow the reach of your QA team by using our 200,000+ pre-profiled tester network during your next recruitment.

CUSTOMER VALIDATION FRAMEWORK

Produce consistent and reliable Customer Validation results with proven resources for driving customer-focused fixes and improvements.