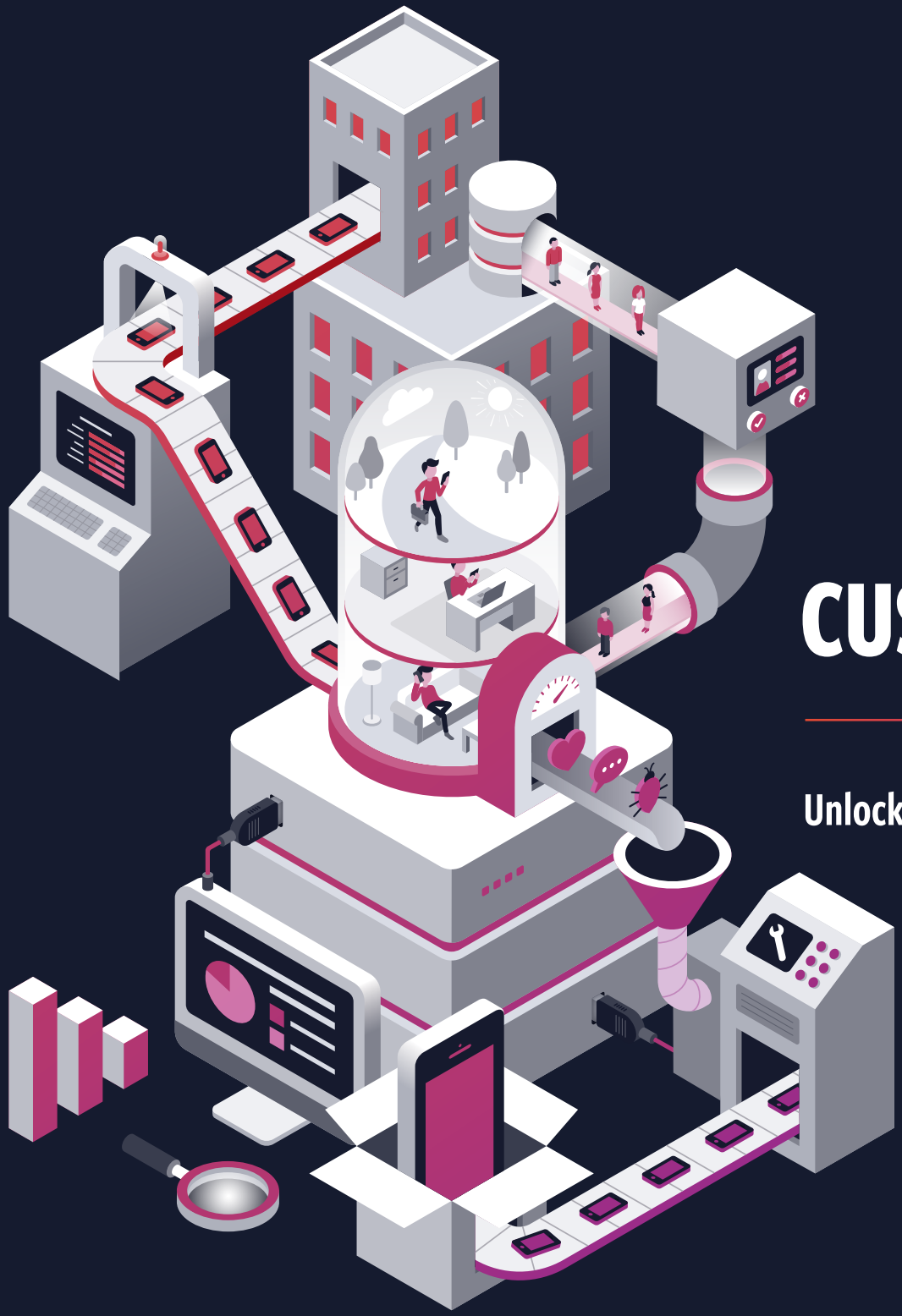


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CUSTOMER VALIDATION

IN 20 MINUTES

Unlocking Customer Feedback with Modern Beta Testing

Table of Contents

1 **MEETING THE DEMANDS OF MODERN MARKETS** 1

- Real Products: Forecasting the User Experience 4
- Real Customer: 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

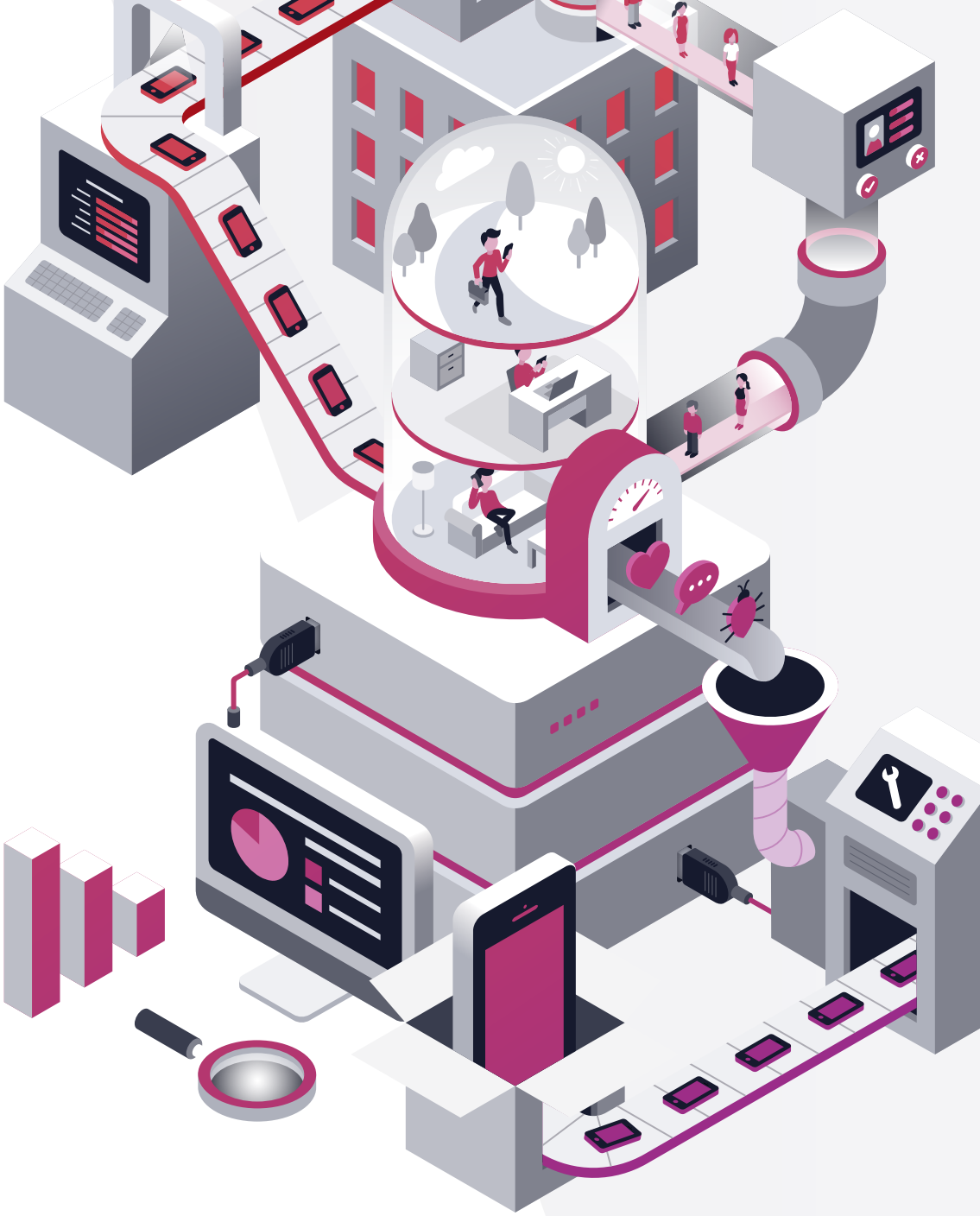
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Meeting the Demands of Modern Markets

Today's technology is incredibly sophisticated. In the last 25 years, Software as a Service (SaaS) and the Internet of Things (IoT) have launched a new era in how people interact, work, and create. Ninety percent of Americans own a smart device. Nearly three out of four millennials use voice assistants on a daily basis. Enterprises are shifting rapidly to SaaS platforms, with an anticipated 73% running almost entirely on SaaS by next year.

But while there's limitless opportunity to pioneer in this new tech landscape, there are also challenges to tackle. They include unwieldy customer expectations, unpredictable interactions between products, and evolving market segments with different and sometimes incompatible needs. On top of these challenges, customers expect products to work exactly the way they need them to.

Because of this, the role of the product manager is also evolving. To meet the demand for innovative, individualized, and seamless experiences, product managers research, implement, and iterate in overlapping cycles. Like customers, they're looking for new and better ways to save time, spend less, and stay ahead.



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Technology and product development has evolved a hundred fold over the last 25 years.

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

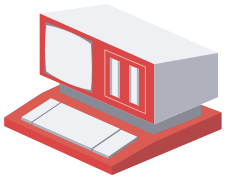
Knowing just how much has changed, it seems unbelievable that even advanced product teams are testing the same way they did in the 90s. It's not that there isn't a need; emerging technology makes continuous validation with real people in real homes more vital than ever. And it's not that there isn't a need for evolution. *It's that product teams need testing methods that are as robust and flexible as the modern products they're building.*

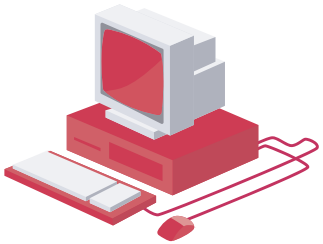
If you've ever run a traditional beta test, you're probably aware of two things:

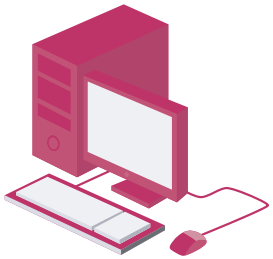
- It's difficult to net the deep product understanding you'd expect to see.
- There has to be a better way.

This e-book contains the framework for Customer Validation, which modernizes traditional beta testing. 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 user scenarios, and identifying solutions that will delight your audience.









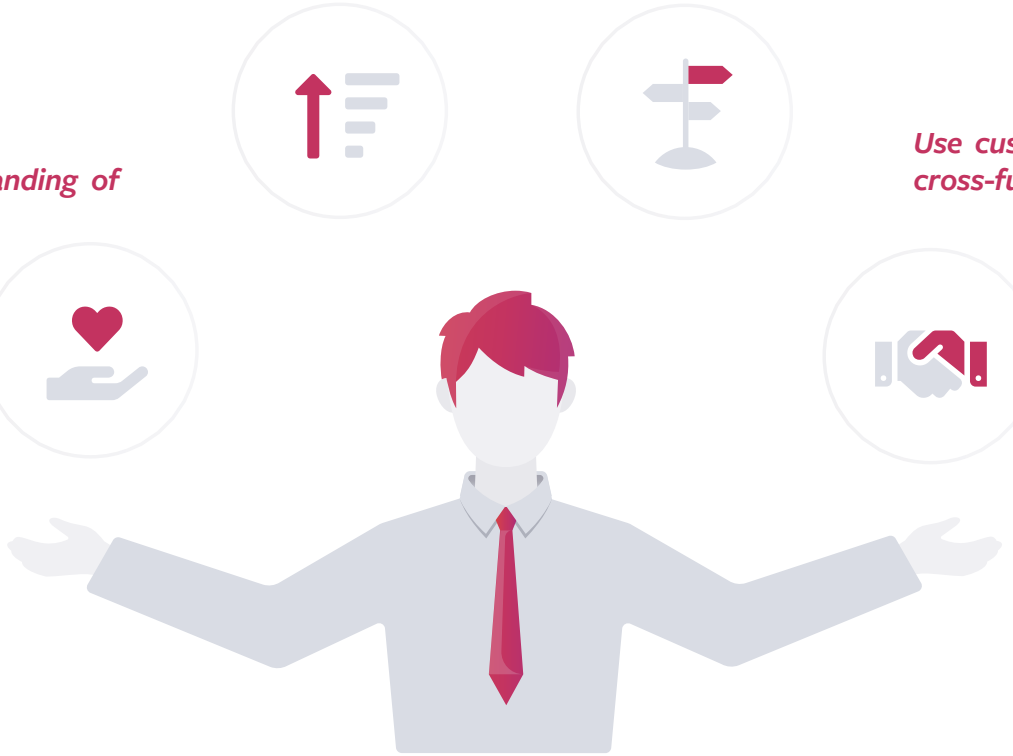
CUSTOMER VALIDATION IS A COLLECTION OF PROCESSES THAT EMPOWER YOU TO:

Prioritize feedback and transform it into product requirements.

Collaborate directly with your market to develop your product vision and roadmap.

Deepen your understanding of customer needs.

Use customer insights to align cross-functional teams.



Real Products: Forecasting the User Experience

'Real products' means incorporating as many real elements of your product into customer tests as possible. The closer the product is to the real thing, the more accurate your user research results will be. By listening to testers' impressions of the build, packaging, and other materials, you'll get a firsthand look at how your customers will interact with and experience your product.

Using real products during your customer tests enables you to accurately evaluate:



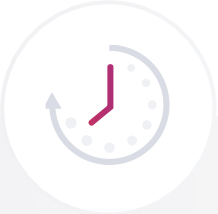
PHASE 1: STABILITY

Expand your QA team's findings. Use a small panel of technical users to surface critical bugs and stopping issues before they get to a larger group of testers.



PHASE 2: SATISFACTION

With disruptive stability issues out of the way, your testers can give you feedback on key features and their overall experience unencumbered by show-stopping errors.



PHASE 3: MATURITY

Continue to refine and update your product after launch. Testers focus on providing immediate feedback about your product's latest features and fixes before they're released.

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 testers, however well meaning, to produce biased and/or irrelevant feedback. Your ability to use tester feedback to make key decisions 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 (attitudes about products, technical expertise, habits)
- 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 in product development. Even a robust QA lab with dozens of routers and terabytes of test data is a drop in the ocean compared to the number of technographic landscapes found in homes across even just one target audience.

To effectively validate your product in the real world, it takes more than the right mix of demographic traits. You also need the right blend of technical devices. The systems, phones, routers, smart speakers, work stations, and other elements that make up real-world ecosystems can all color your customers' interaction with your product.

Targeting specific technographic profiles addresses this interaction between people and technology. By identifying testers with an ecosystem of devices consistent with your target market, you'll expand your research and testing efforts tenfold. That also translates to a lot of money your QA team won't need to spend on devices for their lab.



Webinar: Achieving High Satisfaction Through Beta Testing

Time Frame:
Letting Testers Get to Know Your Product

The amount of time testers spend with products maybe the most unique factor of Customer Validation. Unlike an ethnographic or usability study that lasts a few hours, testers live with your product for a sustained period. This surfaces deep-seated bugs and critical errors that arise only from real-world usage.

Over the years, our data has revealed that a window of two to six weeks is the sweet spot for surfacing bugs and reaping actionable feedback on product experiences. In two weeks, testers will identify 90% of the critical issues. But after six weeks, you begin to hit diminishing returns with repeated feedback.

CONTINUOUS TESTING

Unlike the traditional "set it and forget it" attitude toward product revisions, continuous iteration has paved a new standard for product evolution. Following launch, a series of subsequent updates continue to refine the product (SaaS) or adapt it to ever-changing technographic environments (IoT).

Continuous customer 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 components of beta testing into a modern series of phases. No matter where a product sits within its lifecycle, these phases provide targeted, holistic, real-world validation that supports today's product development needs.



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.

Beta Phase

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.



Product Launch



Delta Phase

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

The product team continues to evolve and improve the product, and focuses testing on new 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.

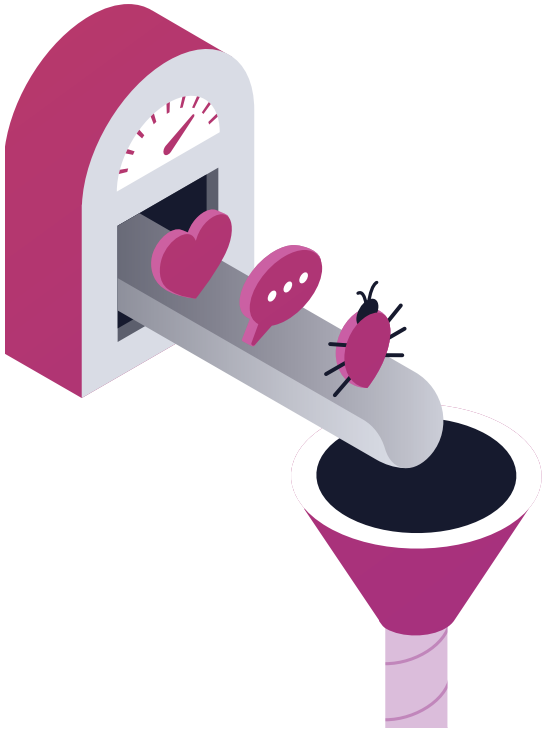


Webinar: Building a Better Mousetrap for Early Product Feedback

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

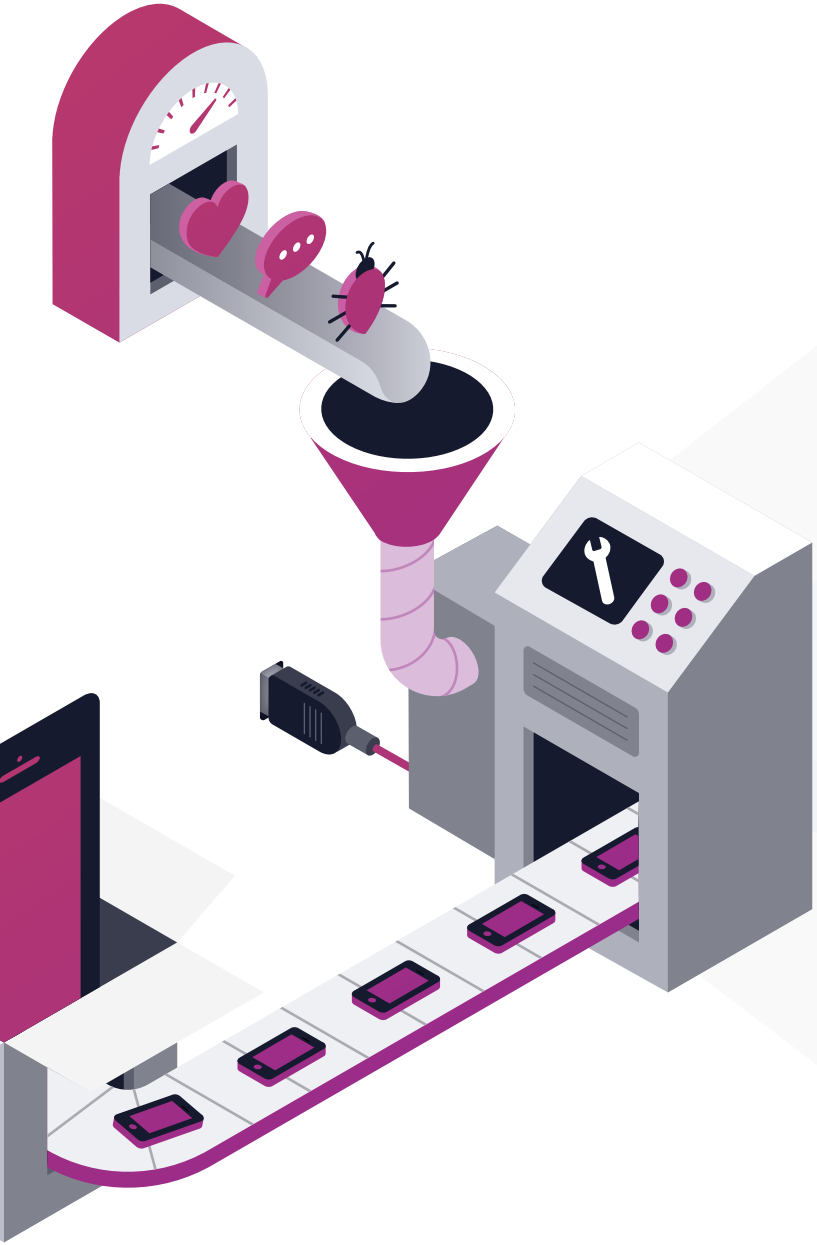
are problems with the product's quality, interoperability, or real-world performance.

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.

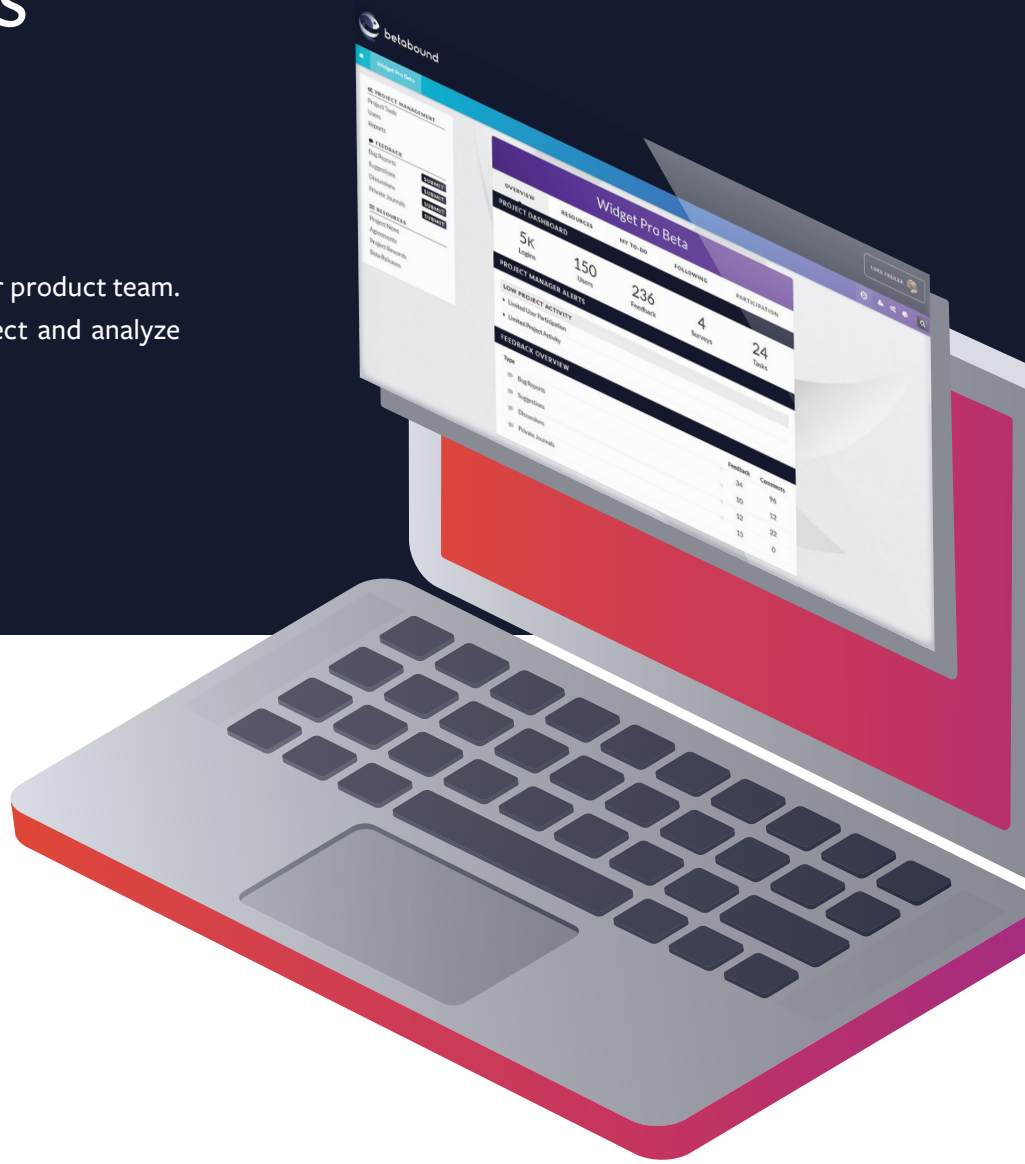
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Powering modern product development by bringing you closer to your customers

CUSTOMER VALIDATION PLATFORM

The **Centercode Platform** closes the gap between your target market and your product team. With built-in templates and easy-to-use automation, you can seamlessly collect and analyze customer feedback to deliver transformative results.

SCHEDULE A DEMO



TESTER NETWORK

Find customers in your target market by leveraging our 200,000+ tester network during your next recruitment.

CUSTOMER VALIDATION FRAMEWORK

Produce consistent and reliable Customer Validation results with proven processes for creating customer-focused product recommendations.