

# HOW TO **VALIDATE** **PROBLEM-SOLUTION** **FIT** WITHOUT BUILDING ANYTHING

Customer validation & insight generation

## WHERE THIS IS USED

- Venture Studio programs
- Accelerators
- Corporate Incubators
- AI Studio (pre-agent design)
- Foundry-as-a-Service engagements

## AUDIENCE

- Venture Builders
- Product Strategists
- Innovation Program Leads
- Startup Founders
- Corporate Venture Teams

## PHASE

Phase Two: Validation & Design → Problem-Solution Fit (Weeks 2-4)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guide teaches teams **to test whether a proposed solution genuinely resolves a validated customer pain** — before writing a single line of code, hiring for the venture, or spending any capital. Using a combination of paper prototypes, role-play scenarios, landing pages, and structured willingness-to-pay experiments, teams can generate statistically meaningful demand signals in under two weeks.

The output is a Problem-Solution Fit Assessment document that either authorizes the team to proceed to **MVP design** or triggers a pivot.



# THE CORE PROBLEM

## Why Most Teams Get This Wrong

- Teams confuse internal enthusiasm for external demand — ‘we love it’ is not the same as ‘customers will pay for it.’
- Prototypes are built too early, encoding bad assumptions into expensive artefacts.
- Willingness-to-pay is never tested — teams discover pricing problems after building the product.
- Solutions are designed for the loudest customer voice, not the most representative segment.
- In corporate ventures: organizational pressure to show progress drives premature building.

## In GCC contexts:



In relationship-driven GCC business culture, verbal affirmation during meetings often signals politeness rather than purchase intent — making behavioral validation essential.



# PREREQUISITES

- Completed Guide A1 with a minimum of 15 customer interviews and a validated pain point
- A written Problem Statement: one paragraph describing the problem, who has it, and why current solutions fail
- At least 3 solution concepts (these can be rough ideas, not finished designs)
- Access to a simple prototyping tool: Figma (free tier), Canva, PowerPoint, or even paper
- A landing page tool: Carrd, Webflow, or equivalent (for demand signal testing)
- A defined success threshold: the minimum conversion rate or signal strength required to authorize progression to MVP.



# 4

## EXPECTED OUTPUT/ SUCCESS CRITERIA

### You Have Succeeded When:

- ✓ 3 solution concepts tested with minimum 5 customers each using structured walkthrough method
- ✓ Willingness-to-pay data collected from at least 20 target customers
- ✓ A ranked solution concept with >50% of tested customers expressing strong preference
- ✓ At least one pricing anchor point validated (customers stated a price they would pay)
- ✓ A Problem-Solution Fit Assessment document with a clear Proceed / Pivot / Stop recommendation
- ✓ Executive sponsor sign-off on the recommended solution direction



# STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

## STEP 1 DEFINE YOUR SOLUTION CONCEPTS

- 1.1 Based on your Guide A1 pain point findings and Phase One Opportunity Areas, write 3 distinct solution directions.
- 1.2 Each solution concept should be one paragraph: what it does, who it serves, and how it resolves the pain.
- 1.3 Use this AI prompt to pressure-test your concepts:

### AI PROMPT

"For each of these 3 solution concepts, act as a skeptical customer and identify: (1) the 3 most likely objections, (2) what would make them walk away, (3) what competing alternative they would choose instead, (4) the minimum viable version they would actually pay for."

## STEP 2 BUILD A PAPER PROTOTYPE FOR EACH CONCEPT

- 2.1 For each solution concept, create a 5-slide visual representation: (1) Problem statement, (2) How the solution works in 3 steps, (3) What the customer does differently, (4) The outcome/result, (5) A pricing page with 3 tiers.
- 2.2 Do NOT use real product branding, logos, or polished design — paper-level fidelity forces customers to respond to the concept, not the aesthetic.
- 2.3 Label each concept with a neutral name (Concept A, B, C) to avoid anchoring bias.



### STEP 3 RUN SOLUTION WALKTHROUGH SESSIONS

- 3.1 Schedule 30-minute sessions with customers from your Guide A1 interview pool. Prioritize the customers who expressed the most intense pain.
- 3.2 Walk the customer through each concept using the 5-slide structure. Do not explain or defend — only observe their reaction.
- 3.3 After each concept, ask: *'What resonates? What doesn't work for you? What would you need to add or remove? On a scale of 1–10, how likely would you be to use or seek out this solution?'*
- 3.4 Record scores and verbatim responses in your Concept Testing Tracker.
- 3.5 After all 3 concepts, ask: *'If you had to choose one of these to use tomorrow, which would it be and why?'*
- 3.6 Ask the interviewee how much of \$100 they would spend today for this solution and why.

### STEP 4 TEST WILLINGNESS TO PAY

- 4.1 For the top-ranking concept after Step 3, design a pricing test using the Van Westendorp Price Sensitivity Model (also known as the Price Sensitivity Meter, PSM). Ask 4 questions:
  - *'At what price would this be so cheap you would question the quality?'*
  - *'At what price would this be a bargain — expensive but still worth it?'*
  - *'At what price would this start to feel expensive?'*
  - *'At what price would this be too expensive to consider?'*
- 4.2 Run this with at least 20 target customers. Use a simple Google Form or Typeform for scale.
- 4.3 Analyze results to find the Acceptable Price Range (intersection of acceptable and not-too-cheap).
- 4.4 Cross-validate with a fake door test: build a landing page describing the solution, state a price, and add a 'Join Waitlist' button. Run targeted outreach and measure conversion rate.

**STEP 5** PRODUCE THE PROBLEM-SOLUTION FIT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Compile all walkthrough scores, willingness-to-pay data, and landing page conversion rates.

5.2 Use the following AI prompt to generate a first draft of your assessment:

**AI PROMPT**

"Based on this validation data [paste data], assess Problem-Solution Fit across 5 dimensions: (1) Pain Severity, (2) Solution Resonance, (3) Willingness to Pay, (4) Frequency of Need, (5) Switching Likelihood from Current Solution. Score each dimension 1-5. Produce a radar chart description, a 3-sentence fit summary, and a recommended action: Proceed to MVP / Pivot Concept / Stop."

5.3 Present the Assessment to your executive sponsor with a clear recommendation.



# 6

## TROUBLESHOOTING

| ISSUE   | LIKELY CAUSE  | FIX   |
|---|---|---|
| Customers choose different concepts in each session | Concepts are not differentiated enough                    | Sharpen the unique mechanism of each concept. Increase contrast between options.                      |
| Willingness to pay data is too wide a range         | Question framing is too abstract                          | Add context: 'For a team of 10 people, using this weekly...' Ground the price in a concrete scenario. |
| Landing page conversion is below 5%                 | Audience targeting is wrong, or pain is not severe enough | Re-examine your customer segment. The pain may exist but not be urgent enough to drive action.        |
| Executive sponsor rejects all 3 concepts            | Concepts don't connect to strategic intent from Phase One | Return to Phase One thesis. Re-anchor concepts to the approved strategic challenge statement.         |



# VALIDATION STEPS

Has at least one concept scored above 7/10 in more than 50% of walkthrough sessions?



Is there a clear Acceptable Price Range from the Van Westendorp analysis?



Has the executive sponsor reviewed and signed off on the recommended solution direction?



# NEXT STEPS



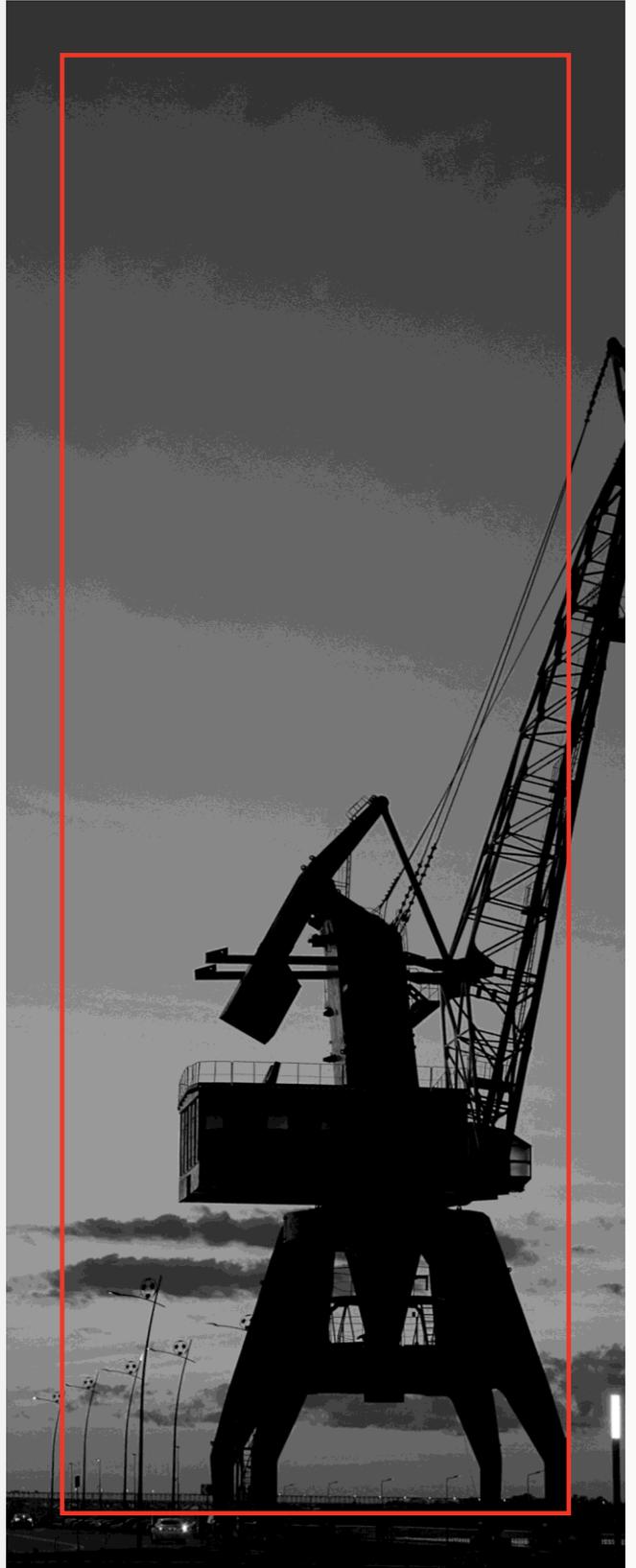
First, proceed to Guide A3:  
How to Synthesize Customer  
Insights and Demand Signals



Then, feed the winning  
concept into Guide B1:  
MVP Specification Design



Archive losing concepts with  
reasons — these may become  
relevant at a later stage



# CHECKLIST

## PREPARATION

- Problem Statement written in one clear paragraph: the pain, who has it, and why current solutions fail
- 3 solution concepts defined – each as a one-paragraph description of what it does, who it serves, and how it resolves the pain
- AI pressure-test run on all 3 concepts: objections, walk-away conditions, competitive alternatives, minimum viable version
- Paper prototypes created for all 3 concepts using a 5-slide structure (Problem / How it works / What changes / Outcome / Pricing)
- Concepts labeled neutrally as Concept A, B, and C – no product branding or polished design used
- Real content used in prototypes (not Lorem Ipsum): real language, real pricing tiers, real outcomes

## SOLUTION WALKTHROUGH SESSIONS

- Minimum 15 solution walkthrough sessions scheduled with customers from Guide A1 interview pool
- Customers with the highest Demand Signal Scores from Guide A1 prioritized for early sessions
- Sessions introduced as: We are testing the concept, not asking for your approval – there are no right answers
- Facilitator presents all 3 concepts without explaining or defending any of them
- Post-concept questions asked for each: What resonates? What does not work? What would you add or remove? Score 1–10
- Final question asked after all 3 concepts: If you had to choose one to use tomorrow, which would it be and why?
- Concept scoring tracker updated after every session



## WILLINGNESS-TO-PAY TESTING

- Van Westendorp Price Sensitivity survey designed with all 4 questions (too cheap / bargain / expensive / too expensive)
- Survey grounded in concrete context: specify team size, frequency of use, and role to avoid abstract pricing responses
- Survey distributed to minimum 20 target customers (Google Form, Typeform, or equivalent)
- Acceptable Price Range calculated from survey results (intersection of not-too-cheap and not-too-expensive)
- Fake door landing page built for the top-ranked concept with a stated price and Join Waitlist button
- Targeted outreach sent to drive traffic to the landing page; conversion rate measured
- \$100 spending exercise run in at least 5 sessions: customers allocate budget across pain points to reveal true priorities

## PROBLEM-SOLUTION FIT ASSESSMENT

- Walkthrough scores compiled: top-ranking concept identified with greater than 50% of sessions scoring it above 7/10
- AI-generated Problem-Solution Fit Assessment produced and cross-referenced against raw data
- Assessment covers 5 dimensions: Pain Severity, Solution Resonance, Willingness to Pay, Frequency of Need, Switching Likelihood
- Clear recommendation produced: Proceed to MVP / Pivot Concept / Stop
- Executive sponsor has reviewed and signed off on the recommended solution direction

