



Technology Start-ups

Lecture 5

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Get Ready To Interview



Through a series of **conversations**



Surveys

How familiar are you with the steps that can be taken to prevent students from joining a gang? *(Circle one)*

Not at All
Familiar
1

Mostly
Unfamiliar
2

Somewhat
Familiar
3

Mostly
Familiar
4

Extremely
Familiar
5

How likely are you to recognize gang behavior/activity? *(Circle one)*

Very
Unlikely
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A Little
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2

Moderately
Likely
3

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Likely
4

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- Assumes you know right questions to ask



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- Assume you know right answers too!



Other problems w/ surveys

- You can't see the customer
 - Can learn a lot from body language
- Focus groups evolve to "group think"



Surveys

- Close ended: you are administering a questionnaire
- Statistical: you derive meaning from looking at aggregate results
- Requires systematic analysis skills
- Best done via on-line survey (or, in the olden days, via phone survey)
- Best used for confirmation research where you are trying to verify / quantify what you think is important

Good for $N > 1000$



Customer Interviews

- Open ended: you are having a conversation
- Anecdotal: you derive meaning from each conversation
- Requires excellent listening and observation skills
- Best done face to face (or at least by video Skype or by voice call)
- Best used for exploratory research where you are trying to get to know a problem or a persona

Good for $N < 500$



Interviews vs Surveys





Talk to People

- Learning about customer problems
- Probe deep
 - Ask how he/she solves problem
 - Determine problem importance
- Stick to script
- Talk to someone you know



Talk to People

- Take someone with you
- Pick neutral ground
- 20-30 mins
- Don't record interviews
- Document results immediately



Talk to People

- Start with 1st degree contacts
- Ask for Introductions

“Do you know anyone as knowledgeable as yourself that I should talk to?”



Objections

- Don't know what they want?
 - Customers don't specify features
 - Customers verify problems!
- 20 interviews isn't significant
 - 10 people saying "yes" (or "no") is significant!



Objections

- Why spend time interviewing
...just build it?
 - Building even a small product
can be a waste



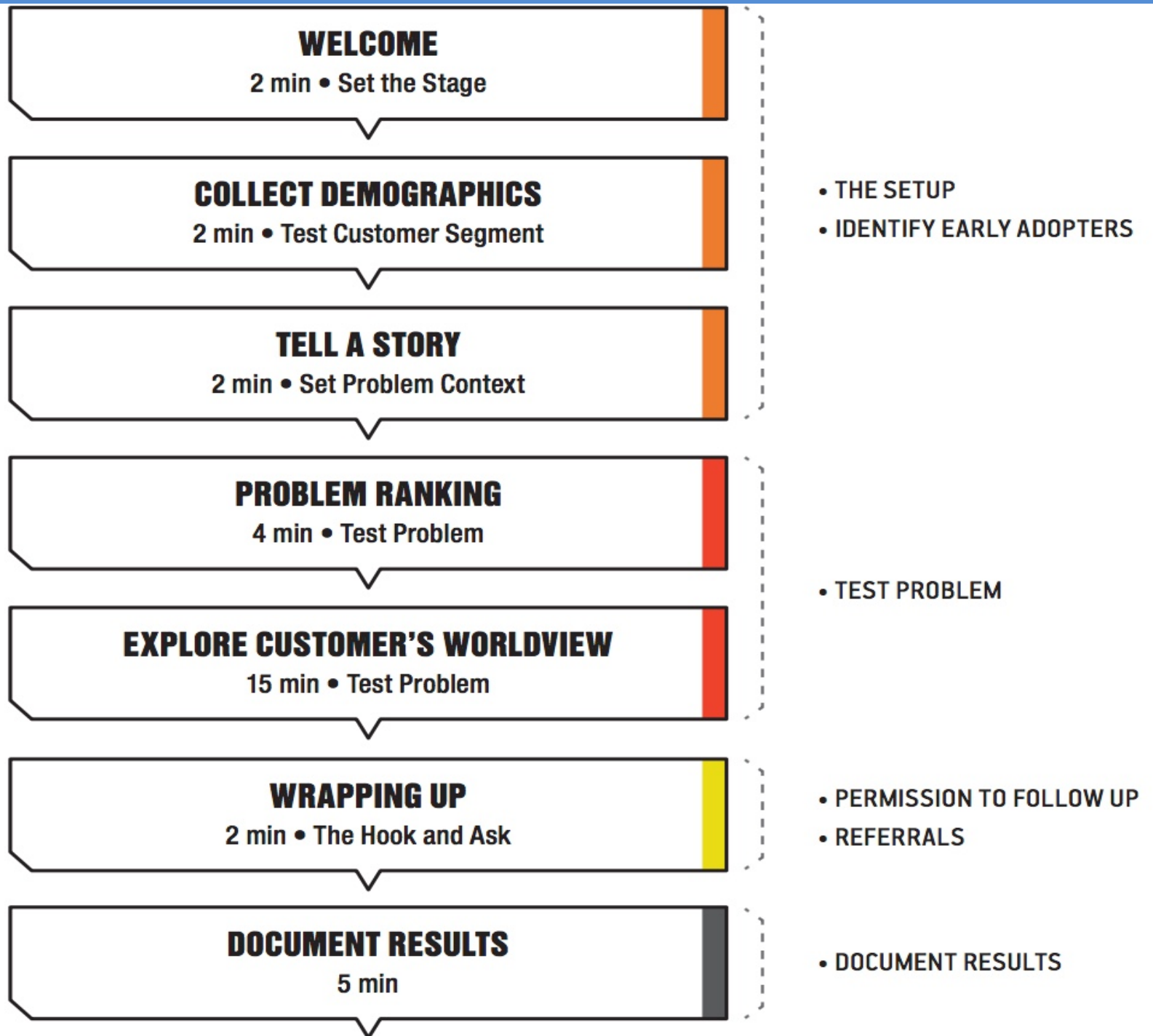
Chapter 7

The Problem Interview



Validate Problem/Customer

- *Product risk: What are you solving?*
(Problem)
- *Market risk: Who is the competition?*
(Existing Alternatives)
- *Customer risk: Who has the pain?*
(Customer Segments)





WELCOME
2 min • Set the Stage

- Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us today.
- We are currently working on startup for a course project. I got the idea for the service after blah blah blah.
- But before getting too far ahead of ourselves, we wanted to make sure other customer segment share these problems and see whether this was a product worth building.
- The interview will work like this. I'll start by describing the main problems we are tackling, and then I'll ask if any of those resonate with you.
- I'd like to stress that we don't have a finished product yet, and our objective is to learn from you, not to sell or pitch anything to you. Does that sound good?



COLLECT DEMOGRAPHICS

2 min • Test Customer Segment

- THE SETUP
- IDENTIFY EARLY ADOPTERS

Ask some introductory questions to collect basic demographics that you believe will drive how you segment and qualify your early adopters:

Before we go on to the problems, I'd like to learn a little about you:

- Do you know about divination?
- Do you explore any divination websites online?
- Do you discuss divination with others online?
- How often?
- With whom?



TELL A STORY

2 min • Set Problem Context

This is the bulk of the interview.

Illustrate the top problems with a story:

Great, thanks. So, let me tell you about the problems we are tackling. We have been consistently reading about all the malware breaches and realized that that small businesses must have this problem. We also did some investigations and found that small businesses weren't being served adequately through current security products. We found security products were expensive and time-consuming.

MORE STORY HERE. Does any of this resonate with you?



PROBLEM RANKING

4 min • Test Problem

• TEST PROBLEM

- State the top one to three problems and ask your prospects to rank them
- Do you have any other problems related to blah that I didn't talk about?

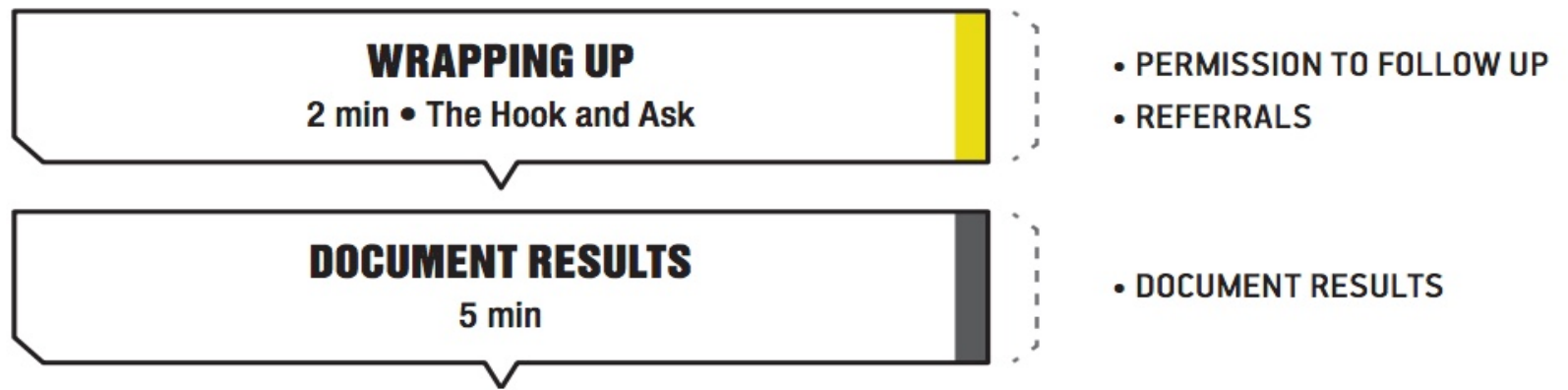


EXPLORE CUSTOMER'S WORLDVIEW

15 min • Test Problem

- The best script is “no script.”
- Ask how problem is addressed today
- Let them go into detail
- Ask follow-up questions
 - Don't lead them or
 - Don't try to convince them of a problem (or solution).
- Judge body language and tone
- Rate each problem: “must-have,” “nice to have,” or “don't need.”

This is the bulk of the interview!



- Ask for permission to follow up.
 - Goal is to establish a feedback loop with prospects
- Ask for referrals to other potential prospects
- Take the five minutes to document results while they're still fresh in your mind



When are you done?

When you have interviewed at least 10 people and you:

- Can identify the demographics of an early adopter
- Have a must-have problem
- Can describe how customers solve this problem today