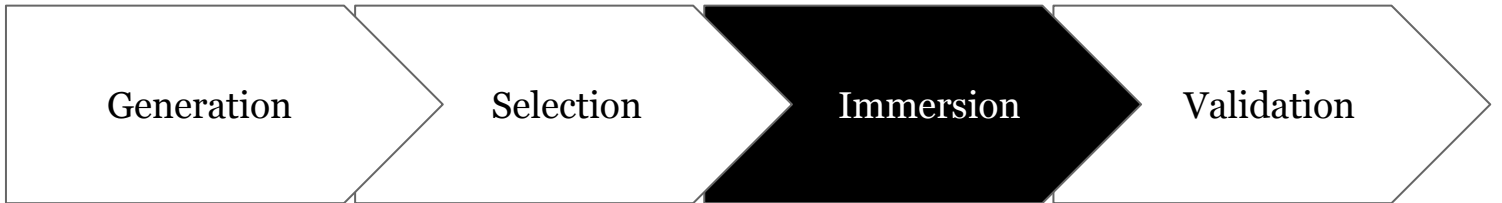


The IDEA Funnel



Stage 3 - Idea Immersion

In this stage we will dive deeper into your target market to understand more about them and how your idea might help solve their problems.

We'll do this in three ways:



- (1) Starting with a hypothesis (Customer Profile)**
- (2) Immersing into how they currently solve the problem**

Using one or more of the following techniques:

- Online search via blogs, forums, products/books
- Following a “day in the life of” / walking through steps
- Asking for advice

- (3) Refining the hypothesis as (2) occurs**



Understand this is an iterative process.

While we *start* with a hypothesis, we CANNOT make assumptions about a target market without validating it; and we can only validate it by immersing ourselves into the lives of the people in that market.

(1) Start with a Hypothesis

The first step is to fill out a “Customer Profile” as *The Innovator’s Method* recommends. I’ve taken their template and modified it slightly.

Fill in the statement below or use the larger blank sheet in the Appendix, taken from the point of view of someone in your target market. Again, this is just hypothetical - your best guess.

I am

(descriptor with at least 3 defining characteristics you developed in Stage 2)

with

(this hard-to-solve problem / pain point / unmet need)

which is hard to solve/meet because

(reasons it is hard to solve / meet)

and if I solved it I would

(ways my life would be better / different)

Example on following page



It can be fuzzy at this stage and that’s OK.

Think of it like a picture that becomes clearer and clearer as you put on better and better glasses. The “glasses” that make the hypothesis clearer are the exercises that follow.

(1) Start with a Hypothesis (illustrative example)



Below is a real-life example from a niche segment - people who have undergone weight-loss surgery. Doing this immersion effort *before* creating anything resulted in creating a unique product that served this market's needs and continues to grow month over month with very little effort.

I am A 33 year old, heavily overweight female undergoing gastric bypass procedure (weight loss surgery) in 2 months. I am attending mandatory support groups before this procedure where I learn about everything I need to do after surgery to lose the weight I need to.

(descriptor with at least 3 defining characteristics you developed in Stage 2)

with frustration and uncertainty around what types of foods I will be able to eat after surgery and what type of vitamins will be best for me

(this hard-to-solve problem / pain point / unmet need)

which is hard to solve/meet because

there are so many options out there and I hear different things from other people about which is best. I also hear that taking vitamins every day is super important but people say they taste awful and really fill you up so you can't even eat real food sometimes.

(reasons it is hard to solve / meet)

and if I solved it I would

feel confident knowing I was doing everything I could to lose the weight I need to so that I can fit into my wedding dress again and look beautiful for my husband on our 10-year anniversary.

(ways my life would be better / different)

(2) Immersion - overview



This is the heart of the process and also the most time consuming. There are many ways you immerse yourself in the market and research it deeply. Below are the ones I've found to have the greatest impact:

- (1) Research online - blogs, forums, products, books**
- (2) Following a “day in the life” or walking through the steps of how the problem is currently solved**
- (3) “Asking for advice” interviews**



In each phase we want to be paying attention to the actual words people use and especially to emotionally-charged ones . . .

. . . and continue to refine the Customer Profile based on new insights and feedback.



As a first step I'd recommend making an Excel or Google Sheets file with the following column headings:

People | Pain Points | Complaints/Criticisms/Compliments | Desires

Add to each as you work through the process to help inform your Customer Profile

Immersion Part 1 - Online

(3-4 hours / break into sets of 30-minute “sprints”

- (1) Type into a **Google search** “blog: _____ (your keyword / topic)
 - Make note of the top blogs based on followers, number of comments, recency.
 - Add to your spreadsheet based on what you find from ACTUAL users - and note that ACTUAL language they use

- (2) Go to **twitter.com/search-advanced**
 - Search for specific keywords / topics
 - Note hastags that come up and observe the conversations happening
 - Go to “More options > Accounts” at the top and note the top accounts in this topic
 - Click on various followers and make note of anything interesting that points to your topic (pains / complaints-criticisms-compliments)

- (3) **Amazon**
 - Look at both products & books and note in the reviews what people say
 - Look for complaints, criticisms, compliments - especially those that are emotionally-charged



Continue to make entries into your spreadsheet based on what you find. If you have found anything especially insightful you can refine your Customer Profile also.

(2) Immersion Part 2 - “day in the life”

(time dependent on location, etc)



Try to find a place where these people congregate in person and/or are faced with this problem. Then, do one or more of the following . . .

(1) Observe silently and pay attention to:

- the steps they take to work through the problem or the way they describe working through the problem
- decision points they make along the way
- the words they use (complaints, criticisms, compliments)

(2) Actually walk through the steps yourself and note:

- places you get stuck and why
- how you feel at those points (emotions)

(3) Note other stakeholders involved (family, friends, coworkers)

(recognize there are often up to 3 customers involved: the buyer, the installer, and the end user)



Continue to make entries into your spreadsheet based on what you find. If you have found anything especially insightful you can refine your Customer Profile also. Remember to use the ACTUAL words and phrases they use.

(2) Immersion Part 3 - Advice Interviews



(time dependent on location, etc)

Find a way to get time with ACTUAL people and do what *The Innovator's Method* calls “advice interviews.”

(1) **Ask people who you think have this problem and say something like**

“I’m looking for advice and wondering if you might be able to help”
(the authors stress the importance to ask for advice because often people think you’re selling something)

“I have _____ (problem) and am wondering if you have the same problem?” (Or “I’ve heard a lot of people have _____ (problem) . . . “

If they confirm, ask them to tell you about it.

(2) **Listen and be quiet.** Let them talk, remembering what they say so you can write it down afterwards. (note the pain points / complaints, criticisms, compliments)

(3) **Ask a follow up question:**

“If you were able to solve this how might your life be different?”

Pay attention to emotionally-charged pictures they paint - e.g. “I’d be able to look great for my husband at our anniversary party.” or “I’d be able to play with my grandchildren and be able to keep up without getting too tired.”



Continue to make entries into your spreadsheet based on what you find. If you have found anything especially insightful you can refine your Customer Profile also. Remember to use the ACTUAL words and phrases they use.

(3) Refine the hypothesis



Continue to refine your hypothesis as mentioned in each step so far.

Use the larger, blank worksheet in the Appendix if you find it valuable to do this by hand and make line-outs / erase as you go through the process.

Remember, this is an iterative process and probably the most time-consuming of all, but doing just this little bit of upfront work can make sure you have a strong foundation for solving a real problem . . . and thus creating a profitable business.

Blank Customer Profile on following page

Use as a working copy to add to / refine
your initial hypothesis.

Customer Profile



Use this sheet to continue refining your customer profile as you immerse into your market.

I am

(descriptor with at least 3 defining characteristics you developed in Stage 2)

with

(this hard-to-solve problem / pain point / unmet need)

which is hard to solve/meet because

(reasons it is hard to solve / meet)

and if I solved it I would

(ways my life would be better / different)