

Customer Research Conversation Guide

Structure and recording template for ten discovery conversations

Companion to Chapter 7: Customers vs. Funding

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David White | How To Start A Business Without Any Money

Research Before You Build

EY didn't launch the Entrepreneur of the Year programme based on what they thought CEOs wanted. They spent months finding out what they actually wanted. The answer was different from the assumption. That difference is why the programme ran for twenty-five years.

This guide structures ten conversations with potential customers. Not pitches — conversations. You are listening, not selling.

Before The Conversations

The problem I think exists (one sentence):

The people who have this problem (be specific — job title, industry, situation):

Ten people I will speak to:

Name	How I know them / How I'll reach them
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	

8.	
9.	
10.	

The Conversation Script

"I'm researching [problem area]. I'm not selling anything — I'm trying to understand how people in your position actually deal with this. Could I ask you a few questions? It will take about fifteen minutes."

Block 1: Current Situation

- How do you currently handle [problem area]?
- What does that process look like on a typical week?
- What tools or services do you use for this?

Block 2: Frustrations

- What's most frustrating about how you currently handle this?
- What have you tried that didn't work?
- If you could change one thing about this, what would it be?

Block 3: Value

- How much time does this currently take you each week / month?
- What would it be worth to you to solve this properly?
- Have you ever paid someone to help with this? What happened?

Block 4: The Close

- Is there anyone else I should be speaking to about this?
- [If relevant] I'm thinking of building something that does X. Would you be interested in being one of the first five people to try it?

Conversation Recording Template

Complete one of these per conversation.

Conversation #: _____ | **Name:** _____ | **Date:** _____

What they currently do (their process):

Their biggest frustration (in their words — quote where possible):

What they've tried / spent / paid before:

The one thing that surprised me:

Would they pay for a solution? Yes / Maybe / No | At what price point?

£ _____

Referral: they suggested I speak to:

Pattern Analysis (after all ten conversations)

The frustration mentioned most often (in their words):

The solution they said they'd pay for:

The price point that came up most:

Decision	My answer
Is the problem real enough to build on?	Yes / No / Adjust
Does my proposed solution match what they want?	Yes / No / Adjust
Is the price I have in mind viable?	Yes / No / Adjust

Am I ready to find five paying customers?

Yes / Not yet — reason:

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