FIND YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMERS

WITH THESE 5 KEY DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Game Thinking

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Are you tired of wasting time and resources sorting through feedback from the wrong people? Do you wish you had skills, tools and confidence to ignore irrelevant feedback, and laser-focus on EXACTLY who to listen to—and what to listen for—as you're bringing your ideas to life?

Successful innovation doesn't just happen by accident. If you want to increase your odds of success, do what successful innovators do: focus on delighting your early passionate customers—your Super Fans—before going after the mainstream market.

# Find the right testers with a Super Fan Funnel

If you have a sneaking suspicion there might be a better, faster way to do Customer Discovery—you're right! I've been experimenting with discovery practices for years. I've worked with dozens of startups and game teams: some were mega-hits, others minor hits—and many bit the dust.

What you're about to learn is based on data from the front lines of ambitious, innovative projects. After much trial and error, I've found that certain practices— done in a particular order—yield MASSIVE results. In this Playbook, you'll learn a set of powerful, connected techniques that will reliably accelerate your path to product/market fit—and help you avoid time-wasting detours and costly mistakes.

I call these techniques the **Super Fan Funnel**—because they work together to cast the right net, and then filter down your potential customers to EXACTLY the right testers for your early ideas.

Here's how this 3-stage filtering process works.

First, you write a highly targeted **Super Fan Screener**—a 6-question survey, that "casts the right net" and attracts potential early customers. If—like many entrepreneurs—you're not sure about who your early customers are, you'll get high-value data by running several different Screeners—each targeted at a differentiated Customer Hypothesis.
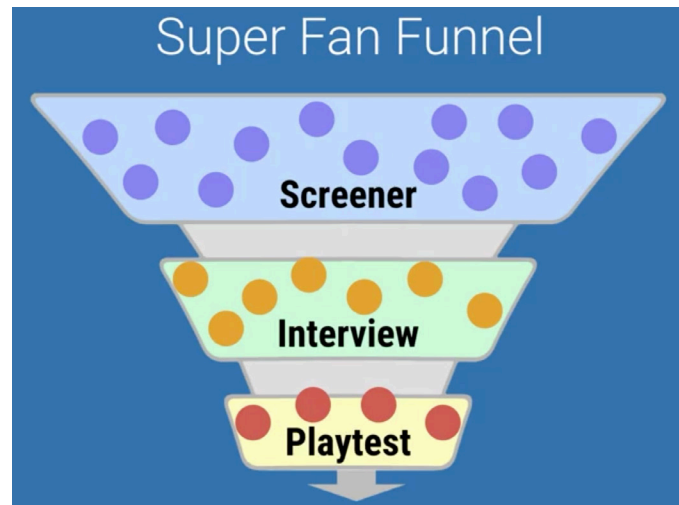
Next, you select the most promising survey respondents, and run **Speed Interviews**—5-10 minute conversations involving a few highly revealing questions. These interviews are just long enough to identify true Super Fans—and running them on many respondents will reveal patterns of behavior and needs much more quickly than long-form interviews.

From there, you select 5 or so people who are avid Super Fans and run an **MVP Test** AKA early product play-test to find out what your Super Fans really think about your ideas. This will give you actionable data that's WAY more useful than dozens of opinions from less targeted customers.

5 key discovery questions that surface your Super Fans

Being an entrepreneur is tough—and in practice, finding the right Super Fans is easier said than done. It's actually one of the trickiest aspects of successful innovation. You don't find them by running large-scale surveys to find your addressable market—or by showing your product to friends and family. Instead, you **zoom in on urgent customer needs**, and finding just a few people who really get what you're doing—even if the majority doesn't see it yet.

Create something that a few people love - even if most people don't get it right away.

Paul Buchheit
Partner, Y-Combinator

Game Thinking **Quotes**

To succeed as an Innovator, you need to ignore a LOT of the input coming at you, and listen closely to your passionate, high-value early customers. Once you understand what THEY think is fun, you can focus your MVP and super-charge your progress. To bring this to life—and help you write your own great discovery questions—I'm going to tell you a story about one of the most nerve-racking—but rewarding experience in my professional life: helping bring **Covet Fashion**, the hit mobile game, to life.

I was delighted to be working with a talented team of game developers, and we had LOTS of ideas for gameplay—but only a few short weeks to test and refine our ideas. If we didn't show real progress at the next milestone, our ambitious project would get cancelled. We needed input from the right people—and fast. We had an existing gamer audience to pull in from our previous games—but we needed insights from non-gamer fashionistas— because if our cooperative gameplay ideas didn't speak to them, the whole plan would fall apart.

But how could we actually FIND these people—and even trickier, find the early adopter version of these people? That where these five magic discovery questions come in. We hunkered down, wrote up a detailed hypothesis for our early customers, and then came up questions that would help us identify the right people. We posted a our Super Fan Screener on Craigslist and Facebook—and that brought in some non-gaming fashionistas. Then through Speed Interviews, we filtered them down to a few articulate Super Fans who were GREAT test subjects— and ran our early ideas and mockups by them.

Now, it was super-uncomfortable to show our rough, unfinished work to these opinionated fashionistas. But HUGELY instructive. We learned that they liked to dress up for events with a special partner—like a sister, friend, or roommate. We showed them lots of ideas—but when they saw cooperative gameplay that would let them "raid each other's closets" while dressing for high-fashion events, they went nuts.

Our hard work paid off! The project was approved—and went on to become Crowdstar's biggest hit to date. Three years after launching, Covet Fashion has 3M monthly active players—and is now its own division of the company. And it all started with 5 key discovery questions that got us on the right track.

QUESTION 1
Life Situation

What defines your Super Fans? What qualities will you sort on?

To identify your Super Fans—to cast the right net—you need to know if their situation in life is relevant for your project. **Ask yourself: what's MOST relevant for filtering IN who you want to talk to—and filtering OUT who you don't?**

What EXACTLY defines them as your target? Is it location? Level of education or income? Family or living situation? Maybe something about their commute habits? Or a medical condition?

Whatever it is, ask questions that lets you bucket people into groups and start to test your early hypothesis. And DON'T ask questions that aren't useful for 1st-stage filtering—e.g. if you want to talk with both men and women, don't waste a question asking about their gender—you can save that one for the next phase of filtering.
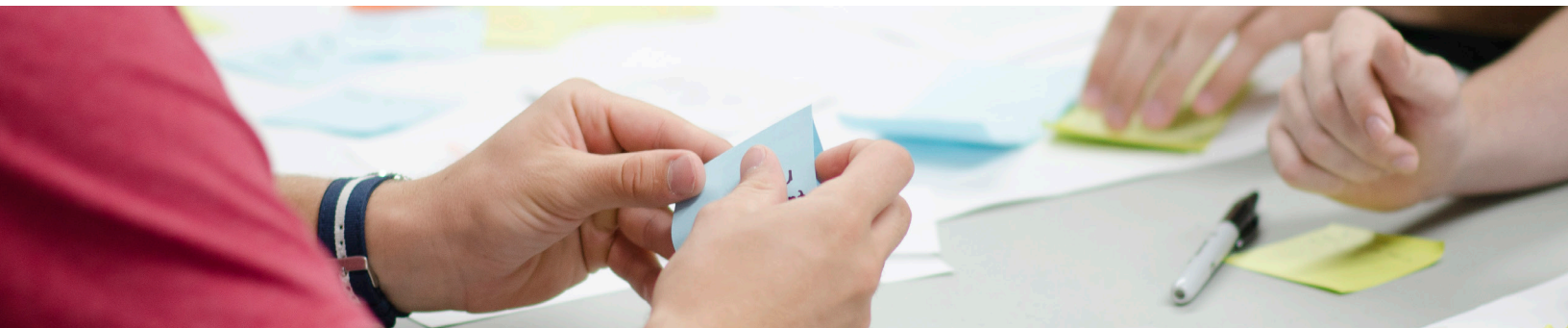
For Covet Fashion, we were looking for young women in large cities—both gamers, and people who didn't identify as gamers. We specifically called out "young women" in our outreach message to get people interested in the Screener—so our actual Screener question looked at intensity and frequency of mobile gameplay.

Now it's your turn: What questions can you ask that will filter your customers by their life situation—and help you choose the most appropriate ones to follow up with? Write down your ideas here.

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QUESTION 2
Existing Behavior

What behaviors identify people as early adopters? What do they DO?

One of the best ways to identify potential Super Fans is by their existing behavior. **What is it that they DO regularly that makes them well-suited for your situation?** Perhaps they use a certain kind of software tool or app—or they go to the gym—or they teach, or work in sales, or manage teams, or have recently purchased home security equipment. Try to identify behaviors that are maximally revealing—behaviors you can filter on.

For Covet Fashion, we needed to find Fashionistas who like to shop—so we asked about their fashion magazine reading and shopping habits, and about their favorite brands—which turned out to be GREAT indicators of unmet need.

It took us awhile to figure out the right question to ask—we ran several iterations of our early screeners. So if you can't figure this out at first, don't give up—keep iterating and you'll surely make progress.

Now it's your turn: What questions can you ask that will filter your customers by their actions—the ones most relevant to your project? Write down your ideas here.

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QUESTION 3
Unmet Need

How urgent and top-of-mind is their pain point, desire or need?

Now you want to get to heart of what separates early adopters or Super Fans from the majority. How dissatisfied are they with the current state of affairs? How urgent is their pain point, desire or need? **How strong is their motivation to try something different?**
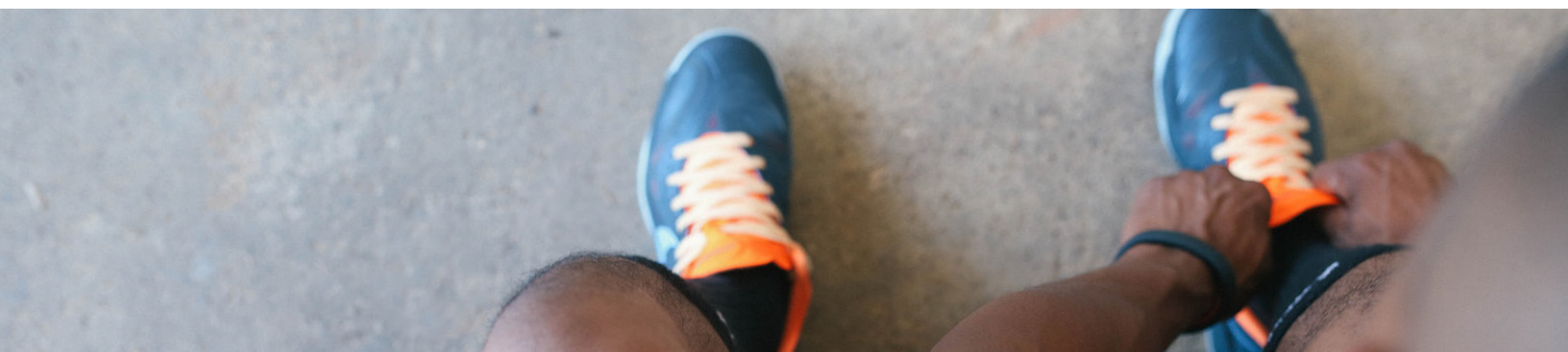
On Covet Fashion, we struggled with this one—but eventually figured out that asking people how they get their "fashion fix" revealed just what we needed to know. We started to hear stories like this:

"Every weeknight I come home from work, kick off my heels, flop on the couch, and flip through Vogue—it's relaxing, the clothes are beautiful—but I wish it was more interactive and fun."

We followed those up with deeper interviews—and BOOM! We'd found them—our non-gamer fashionistas with an unmet need that our game could meet. Bonus—we learned what THEY wanted, and then we could build that into the game from the ground up.

Now it's your turn: What questions will reveal your customers' unmet needs—and the urgency they feel around that? Write down your ideas here.

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QUESTION 4
Alternatives Tried

How are they already trying to solve this problem? What have they tried?

One of the clearest signs of an unmet need is trying—clumsily—to solve it. Here, you want to find out if your customers are actively DOING anything to solve their need—to scratch their itch. **How are they already trying to address their need— solve their problem—get what they're missing?**

What tools, events, methods, or apps, websites—whatever—are they seeking out? Knowing this is great competitive research—and it'll give you context for how urgent their problem is.

For Covet Fashion, we asked about what fashion apps, websites, blogs or games they'd tried already. From their answers, we learned that our passionate early customers really liked to read quirky fashion blogs with personality FAR more than mainstream fashion sites. That become a good rough proxy for finding the kind of early adopters we were looking for.

Now it's your turn: What questions can you ask that will surface relevant alternatives that your Super Fans have tried to solve their problem, satisfy their urge, or scratch their itch? Write them down here.

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QUESTION 5

Better Than Before

What's their appetite for improvement and change? Do they volunteer ideas?

True Super Fans aren't complacent—they want to see things get better, and they're eager to be part of the solution. This revealing question is all about assesing their appetite for improvement & change.

You can ask something like: *"What could be better about this situation? What's missing from current solutions? If you could wave a magic wand, what would you change?"*

Make sure what you're asking about is relevant to YOUR project—and you'll get to learn about what your most passionate early customers really want and need.

On Covet Fashion, this question was super-useful for sorting true Super Fans from regular ol' fashionistas. When we asked how they'd like their fashion-consuming experience to be different, many of them didn't have much to say—they were comfortable with the status quo. But the fashionistas who DID have something to say were quite forthcoming and articulate—and they turned into some of our best, highest-value MVP testers.

Now it's your turn: What can you ask your Super Fans that will reveal their appetite for change and improvement? Write down your discovery questions here.

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What's next?

So now you know the process for finding your early adopters—and gathering targeted, actionable insights about who they are, and what they want and need.

Perhaps you're wondering *"That's great—but how do I turn those targeted insights into the RIGHT MVP?"* That's revealed in our **Game Thinking Blueprint**—which shows you step-by-step how to iterate your way to success with a simple, stripped down Core Loop.

If you've ever spun round and round in discussions with your team, trying to figure out what should go into your MVP—and what can wait—this will save you a MASSIVE amount of time. You'll get a chance to download that blueprint—and watch the accompanying training video—in a few days. Ciao!

-Amy Jo