



WORKBOOK

Design Your Product

*start from first principles, all the way through user flow, implementation,
and third-party tools*



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Step X: Consider Your Customer

A successful project needs someone to appreciate it. Whether you want people to read your *free* ebook, or use your free app, or pay you money for a consulting package, a video course, a SaaS, or whatever... it doesn't matter. You need to consider your guest first and foremost, or your project will be vague and wishy-washy. If you don't know how to answer these questions, don't just guess... [read this first](#).

Who's your Audience? — what business are they in? what do they do? what's their professional title?

What hurts them? What pain are you trying to kill? What does that pain look like? How do they try to solve it already?

Step 1: Product Assumptions

Now's the time to check all your assumptions at the door. There's a whole slew of features that “every product's gotta have” — for web apps, you might assume things like: sign up, sign in, some type of billing, password reset, FAQs, etc., etc. What about for ebooks? A way to package & sell the ebook, take payment, give refunds, distribute updates. Take *each* type of product you're considering and *wrack your brain* for *every* assumption you may be making. Get 'em out here on paper so you can analyze them.

Product Type

Assumptions (in the product, around the product)

Step 2: Your Product from 100,000 Feet

The biggest picture. What type of product is it? What are similar products (the competition — duhn duhn dunnn)? Does it fall inside a known product category? This super-high-level stuff will help you make the hard decisions later on.

Product Name (or code name)

What's the before? *(for the customer)*

What's the after? *(for the customer)*

What type of product is it?

*SaaS? Downloadable sw? Ebook? White paper? Workbook?
Screencast? Developer tools (like plugins/libraries)?*

What competitors do you see?

Can't think of any direct competitors, try to take a step back and look for competition or similar products at one level removed.

Does your product fit into an existing category, if so, which?

e.g. "time tracker," "project management tool," "programming screencast," etc.

By what means can it deliver the fix (to deliver the result to the customer?)

does it automate it? make it easier? more efficient? save them money? educate them? outsource it?

Step 3: Use Flow

What does your product flow look like for your ideal, existing customer? Your *ideal* customer sits down to use your product. This ideal customer will get the *most possible* value out of your product. This is not the first time she's used it, or one of your products, so she's familiar with it / has data in it already /etc. **List what she would do with it, in order.** Again, let your imagination run free. (*And draw diagrams or whatever else helps you!*)

Step 4: Use Flow

How would that change for a brand new customer using your product for the very first time?

What about for a customer who still gets value out of your product, but who is *not* the ideal customer?

Step 5: Features

Product

Which features do those 3 use flows suggest / require / include / hint at?

Step 6: For You

Product

What features do you, as the person selling the product, require?

Choosing a plan or level of product? Delivery of digital product? Automated re-billing? Administrator dashboard? Email list management?

Step 7: Skills You Need

Product

Do any of the features you've written down so far require skills/tools/knowledge you don't have (yet)? Which features and which skills, etc?

Step 8: Shop the Shelf

Product

Are there any features/components that you could complete with a third-party service, open source tool, plugin, theme, etc? (Especially any from the list on the previous page.)

Step 8: Competition

Product

Are there competing products, or similar products in other industries you can compare to? What features do they offer that you have yet to write down?

How do your competitors make things harder, more time consuming, or more annoying to their customers?

Step 9: Necessities

Product

What, of the hard, time-consuming, or expensive stuff... does your ideal customer *absolutely require* need to achieve *any* result? (e.g. they don't really "require" invoicing from day 1... ask me how I know)

Step 10: Nice to Haves

Product

What elements or features can you add later, as you grow? (Because remember, no product is complete right out of the gate.) **What will you have to compromise in order to do that?** (Forewarned is forearmed.)

Step 11: Backwards Plan

Product

Take the *Necessities* for version 1, the skills and features and things you *absolutely have to have...* and create your backwards plan. (Do not include Nice to Haves, stuff for v2, etc. Keep it simple!)