
The Product Definition Workbook

Find a problem worth solving, define a customer, choose a single solution to ship, and pitch it in five minutes — built around the CIRCLES Method™ for product management by Lewis C. Lin.

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Find a problem worth solving

Look at your day-to-day from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. Where there is friction, there is a product. Use the 5 Whys to push past the surface complaint to the real one.

The problem, in one sentence

Plain language. The thing that bugs you, slows someone down, or quietly costs money.

The 5 Whys cascade

Ask why five times. Each answer becomes the question for the next round. Stop when you hit something you can't explain away.

Why 1	
Why 2	
Why 3	
Why 4	
Why 5	

Root cause

In one sentence, the underlying problem you're actually solving.

Know your customer

Who feels this problem first, hardest, or most often? Specificity beats reach — one well-described user beats a generic 'everyone.'

Who is it for?

Role, life stage, or context.

Who benefits when it's solved?

Sometimes the user and the buyer aren't the same person.

Defining characteristics

Three traits that distinguish this person from a casual lookalike.

Behavior worth knowing

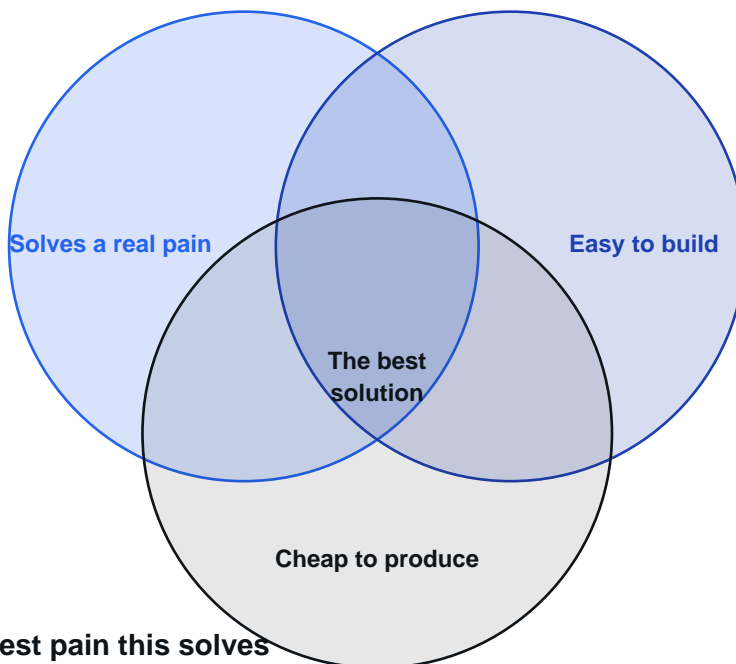
What do they do today instead of using your thing?

User stories — in priority order

Format: As a [user], I want to [verb], so that [outcome]. Three is plenty for v1.

Prioritize like an operator

You can't do everything in the first release. The best move sits in the overlap of three questions: does it solve a real pain, can you actually build it, and does it cost less than what it earns?



The clearest pain this solves

What hurts most, today, for the customer in Lesson 02?

Why it's buildable with what you have

Resources, time, skills you already have. No imaginary team.

Why it's cheap to produce

The first thing to do — the quick win

The smallest move that proves the rest is worth doing.

List solutions and pick one

There's more than one way to solve this. Most of them aren't code. List four, name the trade-offs, then pick the one you can ship.

SOLUTION ARCHETYPES — PICK AT LEAST TWO FROM DIFFERENT ROWS

Physical product — Something you can hold.

Software, app, or website — The default, but not always the right call.

Service provided by people — Concierge, manual, white-glove.

An item you can rent — Access without ownership.

Re-organization — Changing how something already works, no new product needed.

Solution A — description and one trade-off

What it is, and what you give up to ship it.

Solution B — description and one trade-off

Solution C — description and one trade-off

Solution D — description and one trade-off

The one you're shipping

Pick one. Say why it's better than the other three for this customer.

Measure what you ship

A ship date without a measurement plan is a guess. Define what success looks like before launch — and decide, in advance, what would make you roll back.

The one KPI that matters

A number that moves when the product works. Pick one, not five.

Today's baseline

The current value of that number, even if it's a rough estimate.

Target after launch

The value that would make you say 'this worked.'

Rollback trigger

If the metric goes the wrong way, what value or what behavior tells you to pull the change?

Counter-metric to watch

The thing that, if it gets worse, means you broke something else to make the headline number look good.

The five-minute pitch

If you can't pitch it in five minutes, you don't know what you built. Six questions, three rules.

1	Name the company or solution <i>What do you call it?</i>
2	Introduce the team <i>Who's building it, in one line per person.</i>
3	Who you're helping <i>Pull the customer description from Lesson 02.</i>
4	The problem you're solving <i>Pull the root cause from Lesson 01.</i>
5	Your solution <i>Pull the pick from Lesson 04.</i>
6	Why it's better <i>One specific advantage. Not three. One.</i>

THREE RULES OF DELIVERY

Tailor — The same pitch for an investor, a customer, and a teammate is the same pitch for none of them.

Strong, positive language — 'We're building' not 'we're trying to.'

Short — Five minutes is a budget, not a target. Land in three if you can.

Your full pitch — in your own words

String the six answers above into one short paragraph. Read it out loud. Time it. Cut.
