

**GRÜNDEN?  
KLAR DOCH!  
DU, WIR  
& UNSER  
NETZWERK**

**BPW  
2026**

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# BPW 2026

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## Seminarprogramm Brandenburg



Investitionsbank  
des Landes  
Brandenburg **ILB**

# BPW 2026

Deine Idee | Dein Konzept | Dein Unternehmen

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## Förderer



Der Businessplan-Wettbewerb Berlin-Brandenburg wird gemeinsam durch die Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe des Landes Berlin und durch das Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit, Energie und Klimaschutz des Landes Brandenburg unterstützt sowie aus Mitteln der Europäischen Union kofinanziert.



#wirgründen

# KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

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Customer Research Workshop

Veronika-Adriane Posch · May 11, 2026

## INTRODUCTION

# IT'S GREAT TO MEET YOU

## Veronika-Adriane Posch

Marketing & Growth Expert · 11+ years  
Founder & Podcast Host

**VP GROWTH**  
CONSULTING

◀ In her  
code ▶

## Let's connect

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# What we'll be covering today

(1) Why Customer Research Matters

(2) PMF, ICP & Research Techniques

(3) Forming a Testable Hypothesis

10 min break 13:50 – 14:00

(4) Let's Start Building (interactive)

(a) Groups

(b) Hypothesis & Persona Map

(c) AI Project & Skills

(d) Interview Guide & Survey

10 min break 15:00 – 15:10

(5) Group Presentations

(6) Beyond PMF: What Comes Next

(7) Q&A + Wrap-Up

## WORKSHOP GOAL

# By the end of today, you'll walk away with your tool set to create

- A testable hypothesis about your target group(s)
- Your ICP: how to define your ideal customer(s) with real, solvable problems
- A ready-to-use interview guide & survey
- Your own AI project set up to run your customer research

# Why Customer Research Matters



WHY IT MATTERS

# The #1 reason startups fail is not a bad product.

42%

of startups fail because there's no market need.

*CB Insights, 2024*

# Three core questions to keep asking



1. Which problem are you solving?
2. For whom are you solving it?
3. Who's paying & how high is their willingness to buy?

## DEFINITION

# Customer research ≠ asking people if they like your idea.

### IS

- Understanding real behaviors, frustrations, and workarounds
- Testing your assumptions before you build
- The foundation of every product and marketing decision

### IS NOT

- ✗ Collecting compliments from friends and family
- ✗ A one-time survey you do once and forget
- ✗ Asking "would you use this?" People always say yes

# Building without customer research is expensive.

You build products and features nobody asked for.

You optimize for a customer that doesn't really exist.

You create a shop or platform that doesn't convert.

Your marketing efforts don't pay off.

**All of this is possibly fixable down the line. But it will cost lot of scarce time and money.**

# PMF, ICP & Research Techniques



PRODUCT MARKET FIT

# The right product, for the right people, at the right moment.



2020 – 2022

Corona Pandemic & Lockdowns

Quick rise and fall



2022 – today

The speedy rise of AI applications  
for consumers and businesses

# Everyone is not your customer.

## Total Addressable Market

Everyone theoretically affected

## Target Group

Shared characteristics, needs, or context

## ICP (Ideal Customer Profile)

Best-fit buyer or user

## Persona

One human. One name. One frustration.

# Are you validating an idea or a product?

## THE MOM TEST



*When you have an idea or hypothesis*

Don't ask about your product, ask about their life.

Talk about the past, never about the future.

*"What's the hardest part about [X]?"*

*"Tell me about the last time [X] happened."*

*"How are you currently dealing with it?"*

# Are you validating an idea or a product?

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## SEAN ELLIS TEST



*When you have an MVP or early users*

*"How would you feel if you could no longer use this product?"*

**40%+ say "very disappointed"**

→ **You're in PMF territory**

# ICP defines who. Target Audience is how many. Persona is who you talk to.

	ICP	Target Audience	Persona
<b>What it is</b>	Strategic definition of your ideal customer	All people matching your ICP criteria	One human representation of your ICP
<b>Used for</b>	Sales, GTM, positioning	Market sizing, ad targeting	Product, UX, interviews, content
<b>B2C (KidLoop)</b>	Urban parent, child 0–6, dual income, sustainability-aware	~2M parents in DACH matching these criteria	Sophie, 33, Berlin. New mom with first kid, drowning in too-small clothing.
<b>B2B (BriefRight)</b>	Creative agency, 10–50 FTE, Germany, project-based	~8,000 agencies in Germany	Marcus, Account Manager. Many hours lost to incomplete briefs.

# Qualitative first. Quantitative later.

Method	Answers	When to use
User Interview	Why? How? What does it feel like?	Always. Especially early stage
Observation	What do they actually do (vs. say)?	When behavior is hard to articulate
Survey	How many? How often?	After you know what to ask
Behavioral Data	What did they click, buy, abandon?	When you have a product running

# 5 – 8 good interviews reveal 80% of the patterns.

## Uncover what surveys can't

Emotion, context, workarounds. The texture of the problem.

## Reveal the behavior gap

What people say vs. what they actually do.

## Surface unexpected problems

Your best product insights come from questions you didn't plan to ask.

## Non-negotiable rule

No family. No friends. Talk to strangers.

# Once you know the 'why', surveys tell you the 'how many'.



photo: Anela Loria Unsplash

## DIY Survey

Create your survey, share a link, distribute across platforms. Free, fast, flexible.

Examples: Typeform · Google/Microsoft Forms

## Precision Panels

Define your exact target audience for participation. Reaches people well outside your own network.

Examples: Appinio · Netigate

# How to create meaningful interviews & surveys

## 1 Stay in the problem space

Never reveal your solution. Ask about the problem, not your answer to it.

## 2 Behavior over opinion

"How often do you...?" beats "Do you think...?" every time. You automatically avoid suggestive questions.

## 3 No leading language

"How frustrated are you by X?" assumes frustration. Remove the assumption.

## 4 Ask open ended questions

Your most useful insight will come from something you didn't specifically ask. Your interviewee might surprise you with a different & valuable pov.

## 5 Max 10 questions

Completion drops sharply beyond that. When in doubt, cut. Less questions, more room for input.

## 6 Screener first

Qualify respondents before they answer. Unqualified responses are noise.

## 7 One concept per question

"Satisfied with X and Y?" is two questions in one. Split them and keep your interviewee focused.

## 8 Anchor every scale

1 = Not at all · 5 = Extremely. Undefined scales produce meaningless data.

# Forming a Testable Hypothesis

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# Hypothesis = Structured Assumption

- 1 Most founders have hypotheses in their heads.

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- 2 The problem: they never write them down.

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- 3 If you don't write them down, you can't test them.

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- 4 If you can't test them, you can't learn.

# Your go-to structure to form a hypothesis

*We believe that [target group] experiences [problem / need] because [underlying reason].*

*We will know this is true when [observable evidence from interviews / data].*

# What this looks like in practice

## Online local marketplace

We believe that private individuals and small local businesses experience a need for a simple, low-barrier way to trade goods and services within their immediate vicinity because existing global e-commerce platforms are too complex, involve high fees, and disconnect the social and ecological benefits of local, face-to-face transactions.

We will know this is true when we see a consistent growth in local ad listings (network effect), a high retention rate of "casual" sellers who prefer the "free-to-list" model, and an increasing willingness of power users and professional sellers to pay for visibility features and secure payment tools to manage their high volume of inquiries.

## High-end business bags

We believe that professional women experience a lack of accessories that are both highly functional for work (e.g., fitting laptops, sliding over suitcase handles) and aesthetically elegant because the market is traditionally split between "ugly" practical business bags and "beautiful" luxury handbags that lack the necessary features for a modern career.

We will know this is true when we see high organic growth through word-of-mouth in the business community, a low return rate despite the high price point due to the functional "problem-solver" nature of the product, and successful expansion into global markets (shipping to 60+ countries) where professional women face the same trade-off.

## WATCH OUT

# If your hypothesis can't be wrong, it's useless.

- |          |   |          |  |
|----------|---|----------|--|
| <b>X</b> | "We believe people want a better solution"<br>→ too vague | <b>✓</b> | Specific problem with a specific root cause          |
| <b>X</b> | "We believe everyone will love this"<br>→ not a segment   | <b>✓</b> | Specific target group                                |
| <b>X</b> | "We believe our product is innovative"<br>→ not testable  | <b>✓</b> | Specific evidence — including what would disprove it |

The goal isn't to confirm your hypothesis. The goal is to learn. A falsified hypothesis just saved you months of building the wrong thing.

# BREAK

Back at 14:15

*Quick reset before we start building.*

**Let's  
Start  
Building.**



GETTING STARTED

# Let's form groups



# No startup idea yet? Feel free to use one of these

CASE A

**B2C**

Monthly clothing subscription for parents of young children.

Kids grow fast. Buying new clothing is expensive. Second-hand is effort. KidLoop delivers the right size on time. You send the old box back.

Target: Parents, children 0–6.

Core problem: Cost + time burden of managing sizing.



**Kid Loop**

CASE B

**B2B**

SaaS tool that ensures creative agency clients deliver complete briefs before a project starts.

Fewer rework loops. Less miscommunication. Less scope creep.

Target: Creative agencies, 10–50 FTE, Germany.

Core problem: Rework caused by incomplete client briefs.



**Brief Right**

# You will build in three blocks

①

## Hypothesis

Your core assumption. Made explicit and testable.

②

## Define your ICP & Personas

Representative fictional human(s). Name, context, problem, and frustration.

③

## Interview guide, Survey & Analysis (AI)

We'll set up an AI project together which you'll use to create ready to use interview guidelines and a survey template.

# This is your core structure

*We believe that [target group] experiences [problem / need] because [underlying reason].*

*We will know this is true when [observable evidence from interviews / data].*

## High-end business bags

We believe that professional women experience a lack of accessories that are both highly functional for work (e.g., fitting laptops, sliding over suitcase handles) and aesthetically elegant because the market is traditionally split between "ugly" practical business bags and "beautiful" luxury handbags that lack the necessary features for a modern career.

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# Amara, 36

VP Business Development · Series B Fintech · Frankfurt · Client-facing 4 days / week



*“Everything I bring to work has to perform and present well. The bag is no different.”*

## Context

Nigerian-German. Grew up in Düsseldorf, studied at LSE, built her career across London and Frankfurt. In the office 3 days, traveling or in client meetings 2. MacBook Pro 14", iPad, headphones, full kit. Aesthetics matter to her, in work and life. She dresses for herself first and knows exactly which rooms she walks into.

## Workaround

Owns 4 bags, rotates by meeting type. Mentally taxes herself every morning choosing. Once showed up to a pitch with the wrong charger because she'd switched bags in a rush. Has a note in her phone to remind her what to transfer.

## The Problem

The market gives two options: beautiful bags that can't fit a laptop, or 'practical' bags that look like office supplies. Her strong personal aesthetic means the safe work bag makes her feel like she's cosplaying as someone else. Has the budget. Hasn't found the product.

## Aspiration

One bag she grabs without thinking. That looks like her. That fits everything. Not a compromise between function and aesthetics. A statement that does both.

# What an AI project can help you to do

## Sharpen your hypothesis

Is it specific? Is it testable? What would prove it wrong?

## Optimise your persona

Push from "business woman" to "Amara, 36, Frankfurt, VP BizDev, efficiency & appearance work attire gap"

## Generate interview questions

Behavior-based, open-ended, tailored to your specific assumptions

## Analyze interview notes

Patterns, surprises, confirmed / disproved assumptions

## Prepare for a specific call

Who are you talking to? What should you pay attention to?

*Important: AI is not a replacement for the actual intellectual work. Consider it your sparring partner and employee, not a replacement for cognitive work.*

# Set up your Customer Research project in Claude

*Switching Tabs for this part: show & tell*

1

Go to your chosen AI tool & create a new Project

2

Give it a precise name like “Customer Research {Business Name}”

3

Define your project settings and add skills

Feel free to use or download and customize [these md files on Google Drive](#)

Please note: use and/or modify these files on your own risk/responsibility. Always check skill md files before you upload them to your skills library.

4

Start a new conversation inside the project for each of these packages:

4.1 Interview Guide

4.2 Survey Template

4.3 Response Analysis

# How to create meaningful interviews & surveys

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**3 No leading language**  
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**4 Ask open ended questions**  
Your most useful insight will come from something you didn't specifically ask. Your interviewee might surprise you with a different & valuable pov.

**5 Max 10 questions**  
Completion drops sharply beyond that. When in doubt, cut. Less questions, more room for input.

**6 Screener first**  
Qualify respondents before they answer. Unqualified responses are noise.

**7 One concept per question**  
"Satisfied with X and Y?" is two questions in one. Split them and keep your interviewee focused.

**8 Anchor every scale**  
1 = Not at all · 5 = Extremely. Undefined scales produce meaningless data.

# BREAK

Back at 15:10

# Group Presentations



# 5 minutes per group. No slides needed.

①

## Your hypothesis

Read it out loud. Exactly as written.

②

## Your persona

Name them. Describe their problem and context in 2–3 sentences.

③

## Your interview questions

And tell us: which are your key / leading questions and why?

# Beyond PMF: What Comes Next.



# Once you have customers, the questions change.

- Why are they staying? Why are they leaving?
- What does "satisfied" actually mean for them?
- Which feature drives loyalty — and which one should you kill?

## Tools that come in:

NPS Surveys

Cohort Analysis

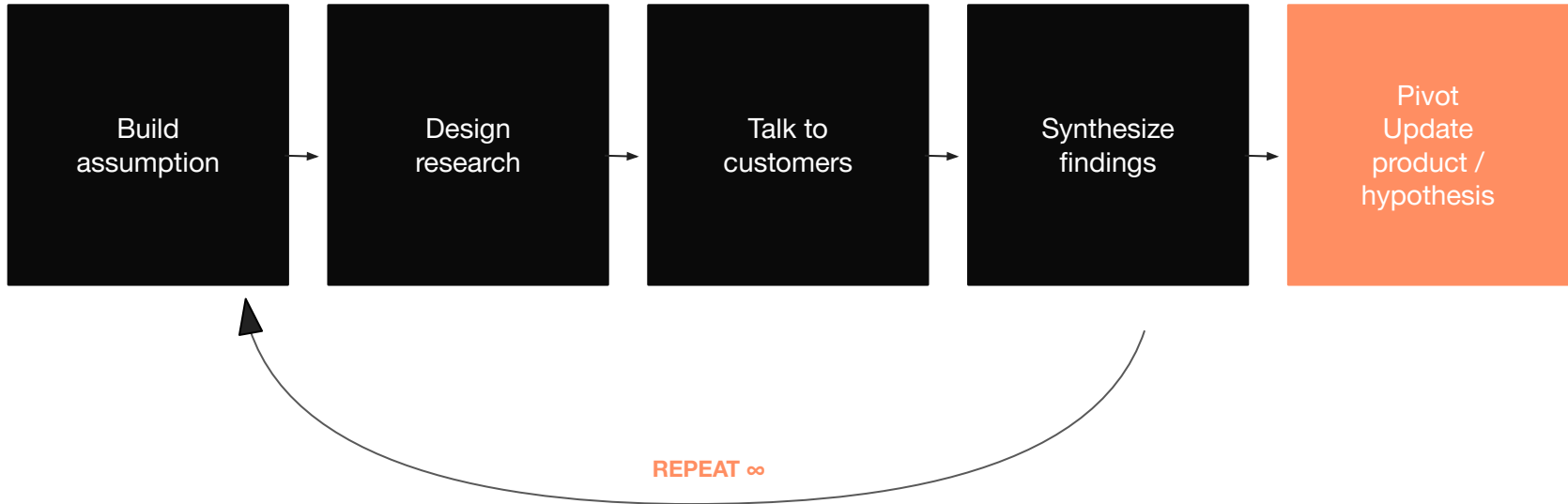
Customer Interviews  
(incl. Feature Demos)

Session Recordings

A/B Testing

## THE PRACTICE

# The best founders never stop talking to customers, even when they're at scale.



**Q&A**

# Stop guessing, start asking.

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You've got the tools to conduct meaningful customer interviews.  
Now go talk to people.

## EXAMPLES

# Hypothesis blueprints for fictional businesses.

### CASE A – Online local marketplace

*"We believe that parents of children under 6 find managing children's clothing both expensive and time-consuming, because kids outgrow sizes every 3–4 months.*

*We will know this is true when at least 6 out of 10 parents we interview name cost or time as a top frustration."*

### CASE B — BRIEFRIGHT (B2B)

*"We believe that account managers at creative agencies regularly lose productive time because client briefs arrive incomplete or unclear.*

*We will know this is true when interviewees describe re-briefing, scope corrections, or rework as a recurring pattern — not an exception."*