



# Understanding Your Product and Consumer



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# Morgan Patrick

Where Compassion Meets Tenacity



Nerd Out

Wood Fired Pizza

Ethiopia  
volunteer work

Italy  
pizza making

Baking

5AM Workouts

Hobbies



Notable  
Travels

Family

Sven, Claudette (6)

Grew up in  
St. Louis, MO

ENFJ  
Advancer  
Arranger

New Opportunities  
Acts of Service

Nature Valley  
Pillsbury  
Mott's  
GoGurt  
Chex Mix  
Gushers

Innovation  
Strategy

Consumer  
Insights

Work  
Passions

Inspiration

Work  
Persona

Work  
History

16yrs at  
General Mills



Instructor Bio



# Agenda

## Part 1: Understanding Your Product Offering

- *Define the Problem You Solve*
- *Design Your Offering to Solve the Problem*

## Part 2: Knowing Your Target Consumer

- *Defining Your Target*
- *Talk to Your Consumers*

# Understanding Your Product Offering



***Answer in the chat***

***Why would a consumer  
buy this product?***

# A “Product” is More than the Ingredients

## Attributes

Vs.

## Problem to be Solved





# Define the Problem (or Joy!) You Solve



## Reflection Questions:

- What role does your product play in your consumer's life?
- What "job" is my product doing for the person buying it?



# **Define the Problem (or Joy!) You Solve**

# In R&D we **START** with the Problem (or Joy!)

**Invent a  
granola  
bar that is  
new to the  
market...**

## Healthy Swap

*I want the experience of my  
favorite foods, just healthier.*

*Granola bars **are** sweet  
and I prefer a salty  
snack over a sweet.*

*I usually eat  
sweetened granola  
bars **which aren't** as  
healthy for you.*





# The Pitch Experiment



  
**untopped**  
wood fired crust

 Make pizza within 2 days of purchase. Store crusts in the freezer for up to 2 months.

 Thaw frozen crusts at room temperature for 1hr and preheat oven to 450°F.

 Hack! Before topping, spray the outer rim of the crust generously with water. This creates steam for a crispy, delicious crust.

 Add sauce and toppings sparingly. Too many toppings will make the crust soggy. Be creative... almost anything can top a crust!

 Bake directly on oven rack for ~80 minutes, until the crust starts to crisp. Add time if you prefer it crispier.

 Optional: Turn on the broiler for 2-3 minutes at the end to fully cook the toppings. Be careful not to overbake your crust!

# The Pitch Experiment



I treated the farmers market like an experimentation lab...

*“Faster than delivery”*

*“Restaurant-quality pizza from your oven”*

*“Easy, crowd-pleasing dinner”*

*“Make pizza night magic— with no mess”*



# The Pitch Experiment

*Here's where I landed...*

- My customers love pizza
- They don't have the time or energy to start from scratch (or dine out)

**Your shortcut to restaurant  
quality pizza at home**



# The Pitch Experiment

You're not just selling your product. You're selling the solution to someone's need.

Your product might solve lots of problems—but your pitch needs to start with one.

How you say it matters just as much as what you say. Short, simple phrases worked better than clever ones.

People will find other uses for your product. Let them. You don't need to explain everything upfront.



# Design Your Offering to Solve the Problem





**Ask Yourself**  
*(over and over and over...)*

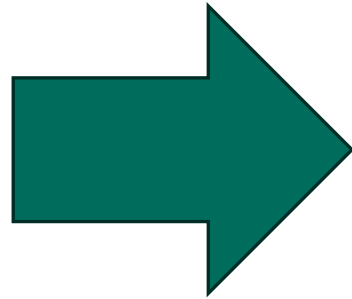
**Is EVERY part of your offering reinforcing the solution you're selling?**



# Design Your Offering to Solve the Problem



Problem: Granola bars are too sweet...





# Design Your Offering to Solve the Problem

## What we got wrong....

- ✗ **Context:** Granola bar aisle is ALL sweet
- ✗ **Brand:** Nature Valley Brand = Sweet Bar
- ✗ **Product:** Rectangle shape = Sweet
- ✗ **Design:** Color and Design = Sweet



Maybe what we should have done????  
(AI-generated Image)





# Design Your Offering to Solve the Problem

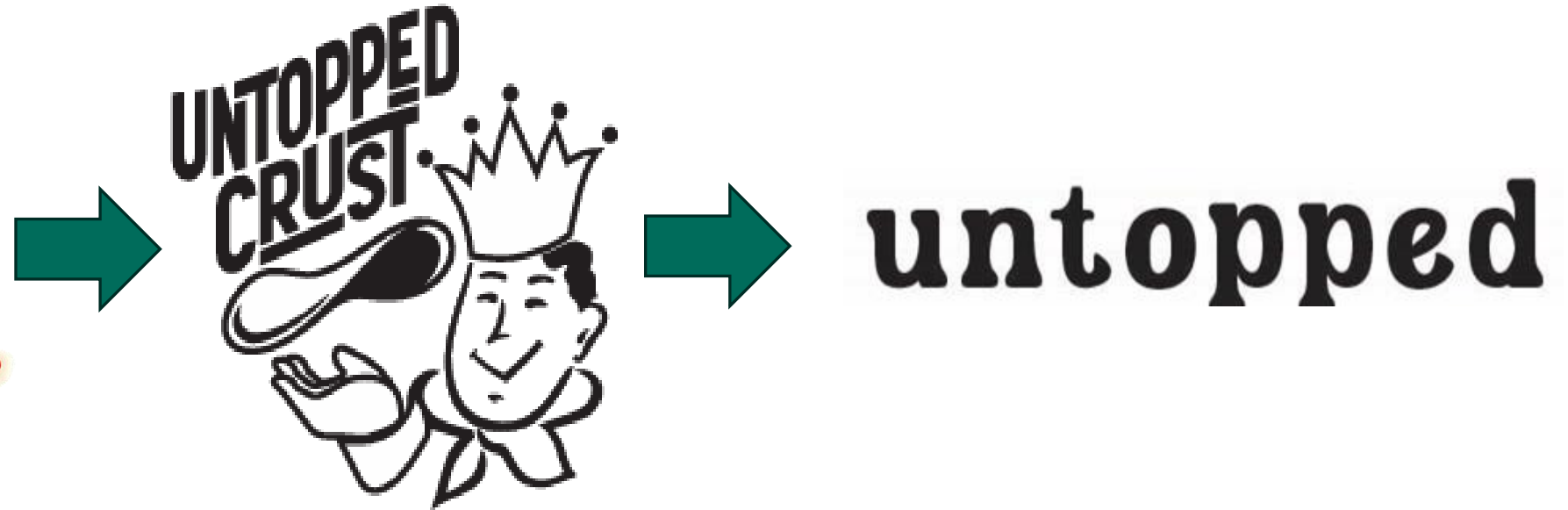
## Reflection Questions:

- What are the components of your product offering? (Think beyond the product itself.)
- Are all those components working together to deliver the value your customer expects?
- Where are you sending mixed signals?



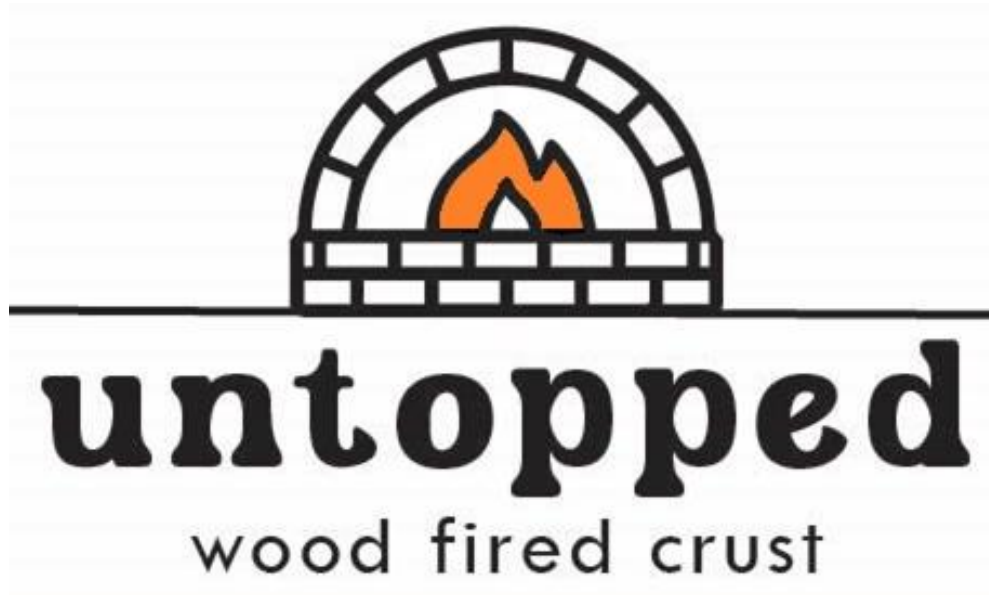


# Mixed Signals, Confused Consumers



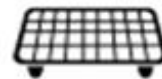


# Mixed Signals, Confused Consumers



Your shortcut to restaurant-quality pizza at home!

This crust was hand crafted during a 4-day process!



Bake directly on oven rack for **~10 minutes**, until the crust starts to crisp. Add time if you prefer it crispier.





# Mixed Signals, Confused Consumers


**Your brand starts communicating before you say a word.** Make sure it's sending the right message.

**Clarity should never come at the expense of value.** Tell people what it is *and* why it's better.

**Design isn't just aesthetic—it's strategic.** Your name, logo, packaging, and directions are part of how you deliver your promise.

**Listen for confusion.** The questions and assumptions people make are some of the best insights you'll get.





Gather & Grow: Knowing Your Product & Consumer

## Gather & Grow

# Product & Consumer

B BRONZE

### Define the Problem You Solve

When you're just starting out, it's tempting to talk about *everything* your product can do. But customers need one clear, simple hook. At the Bronze stage, your job is to experiment with different ways of explaining your product so people understand how it solves a problem for them.

#### Questions to Work Through:

What's the main problem my product solves? (Be specific!)


How would my *ideal* customer describe this problem in their own words?

What's the short, memorable way I can say how my product solves it?

If I tried three different pitches at the farmers market this month, what would they be?

#### Possible Next Steps:

- Write 2–3 short “hooks” you can test with customers.
- Use market days or pop-up events to see which version gets the most questions, smiles, and sales.



Gather & Grow: Knowing Your Product & Consumer

## Gather & Grow

# Product & Consumer

S SILVER

### Define the Problem You Solve

When you're just starting out, it's tempting to talk about *everything* your product can do. But customers need one clear, simple hook. At the Silver stage, your job is to experiment with different ways of explaining your product so people understand how it solves a problem for them. **Now you can also think about how you can make your product stand out from the competition.**

#### Questions to Work Through:

What's the main problem my product solves? (Be specific!)


How would my *ideal* customer describe this problem in their own words?

What's the short, memorable way I can say how my product solves it?

If I tried three different pitches at the farmers market this month, what would they be?

#### Possible Next Steps:

- Write 2–3 short “hooks” you can test with customers.
- Use market days or pop-up events to see which version gets the most questions, smiles, and sales.
- Test your hooks on your packaging or signage.
- Test your hooks on your website or social media.
- Test your hooks on your sales pitch.



Gather & Grow: Knowing Your Product & Consumer

## Gather & Grow

# Product & Consumer

G GOLD

### Define the Problem You Solve

When you're just starting out, it's tempting to talk about *everything* your product can do. But customers need one clear, simple hook. At the Gold stage, your job is to experiment with different ways of explaining your product so people understand how it solves a problem for them. **Now you can also think about how you can make your product stand out from the competition.**

#### Questions to Work Through:

What's the main problem my product solves? (Be specific!)


How would my *ideal* customer describe this problem in their own words?

What's the short, memorable way I can say how my product solves it?

If I tried three different pitches at the farmers market this month, what would they be?

#### Possible Next Steps:

- Write 2–3 short “hooks” you can test with customers.
- Use market days or pop-up events to see which version gets the most questions, smiles, and sales.
- Test your hooks on your packaging or signage.
- Test your hooks on your website or social media.
- Test your hooks on your sales pitch.



Gather & Grow: Knowing Your Product & Consumer

## Gather & Grow

# Product & Consumer

P PLATINUM

### Define the Problem You Solve

When you're just starting out, it's tempting to talk about *everything* your product can do. But customers need one clear, simple hook. At the Platinum stage, your job is to experiment with different ways of explaining your product so people understand how it solves a problem for them. **Now you can also think about how you can make your product stand out from the competition.**

#### Questions to Work Through:

What's the main problem my product solves? (Be specific!)

How would my *ideal* customer describe this problem in their own words?

What's the short, memorable way I can say how my product solves it?

If I tried three different pitches at the farmers market this month, what would they be?

#### Possible Next Steps:

- Write 2–3 short “hooks” you can test with customers.
- Use market days or pop-up events to see which version gets the most questions, smiles, and sales.
- Test your hooks on your packaging or signage.
- Test your hooks on your website or social media.
- Test your hooks on your sales pitch.

# BREAK



# 05:00



# Knowing Your Target Consumer



# Knowing Your Consumer Target



“Everyone” Is Not a Strategy



Photo credit: CBS Minnesota



# Knowing Your Target Consumer



## Design Target

The bullseye group of consumers that help determine the design principles for your new product experience.

VS.

## Target Consumer

The group of consumers you aim to serve is the full dartboard. Keep in mind, there are more consumers beyond the dartboard.



### Please the **passionate** first

A product that pleases everyone, excites no one. Remarkable products have a point of view, and often it is the point of view of the passionate consumer.



Photo credit: CBS Minnesota

# Knowing Your Consumer Target



## Reflection Questions:

- Who else has this same problem?
- How many of them are there?
- Are they willing to pay for your solution?

# Knowing Your Target Consumer



Granola bars **are sweet** and I prefer a salty snack over a sweet.



I usually eat sweetened granola bars **which aren't as healthy** for you.



Granola bar users who are looking for a less sweet option

Not everyone is a salty snacker

Healthy bar moments tend to be in the morning

Salty Snackers Who Want A Healthy Swap for Chips & Portability vs. Nuts

Passionate about savory flavors

Unique pain points that can be solved by a granola-like bar

Photo credit: CBS Minnesota

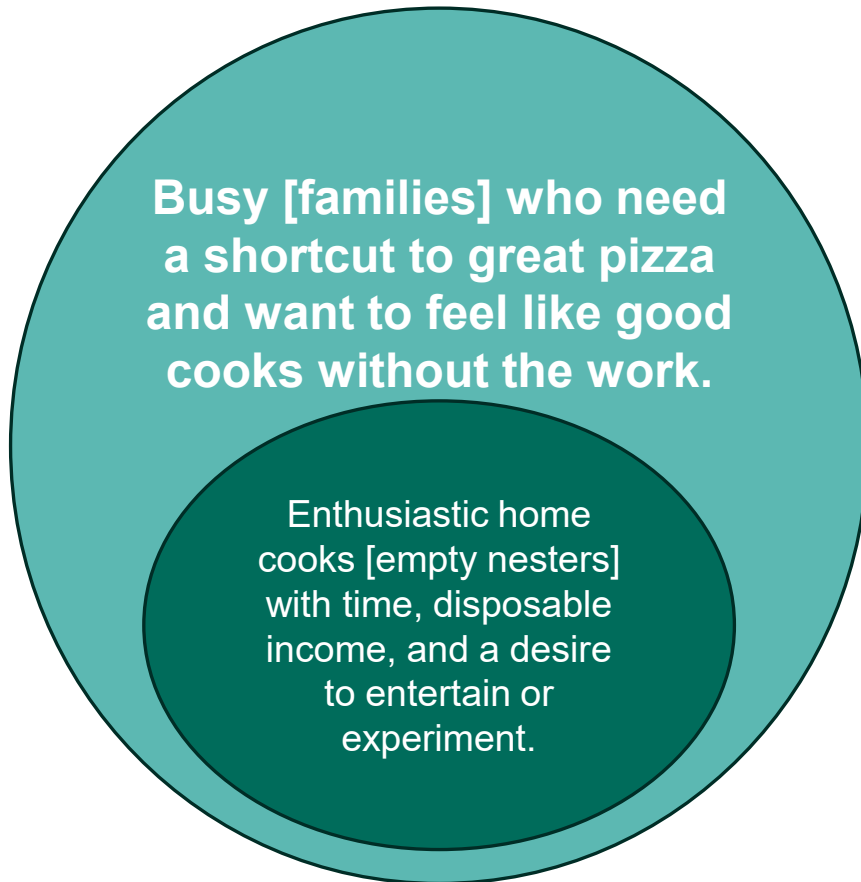


# Parents, Foodies, and Foodie Parents





# Parents, Foodies, and Foodie Parents



I could tailor my pitch on the fly based on who was walking up.

I priced my crusts with both restaurant and delivery comparisons in mind.

I knew where to lean in when thinking about new products (hello marinara sauce)

Photo credit: CBS Minnesota

# Parents, Foodies, and Foodie Parents



**You are not your only customer.** Pay attention to who comes back, not just who stops by.

**Your design target is not your biggest group—it's your most inspiring one.** They help you make better decisions.

**Total addressable consumers shape your business strategy.** You need both to grow smartly.

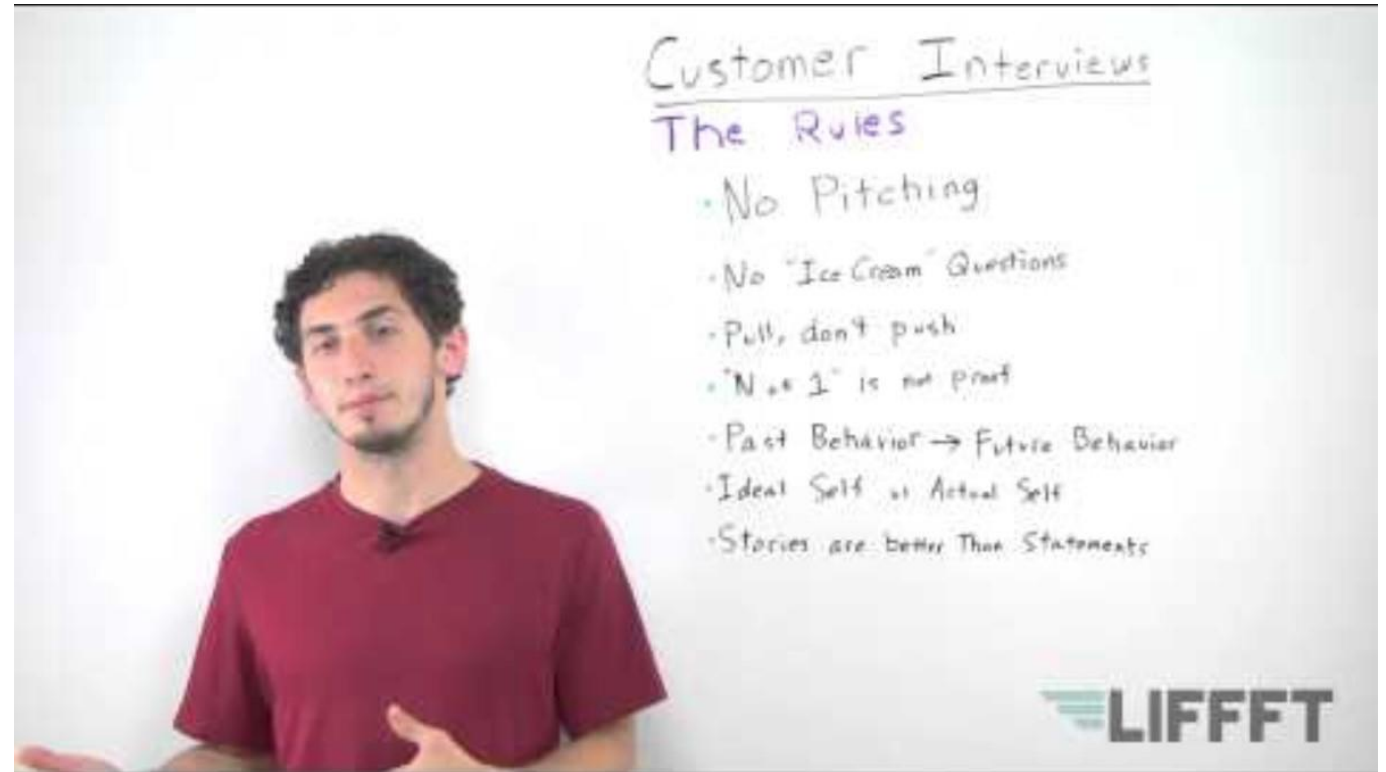
**Listening > guessing.** Your consumers will tell you what they want—if you're curious enough to notice.

# Yes, You CAN Talk to your Consumers



*There are so many ways you can interact with your consumer:*

- **Pitch & Interact** at markets
- **Customer observation** at the grocery store
- **Sampling** events at a store
- **Commission research**





# We did it! Questions?

- Office Hours **NEXT Thursday** – 30 min time slots
  - 8:00–9:00am
  - 12:00–2:00pm