

Synthetic customers · Omar at AI Lab School

Meet your customer before they exist

A ten-minute exercise for interviewing your ideal customer before you have one, in any AI chat. It does not replace talking to real people. It makes the first ten conversations shorter, sharper and far better aimed.

Time
Ten minutes per idea

Works in
ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini
or Copilot, on your phone

You need
Two chats that never see
each other

Your data
Stays on this phone. I
never see it.

Before you start

Use your AI's temporary-chat feature, or turn memory off in its settings. A private browser window does NOT do this. Check it by asking one chat what it remembers about you. Before you close any chat, copy the profile from step 2 into your phone's notes: you will need it twice.

THE PROCESS · SEVEN PROMPTS, TWO CHATS THAT NEVER MEET.

Your idea, in three sentences

1

Classify

Known or unknown customer · improving or discovering · which of the four markets

2

Build the profile

Six points, and every invented detail tagged [GUESS]

3

Grade your questions

Before a real person hears them. Throw out the hypothetical and the leading ones

A NEW CHAT FOR EACH ONE

4A

Chat A, blind

Start without naming the problem. Never mention your product. What they did last time, what it cost, what they tried, what they paid.

NEVER MEET

4B

Chat B, informed

The full pitch, with the price. Same person, new chat. Their honest reaction, what would stop them, what they use today.

5

The skeptic

One prompt whose only job is to prove the idea fails

6

The real test

With a stranger, this week. Not a friend, not family

Read the two numbers

The seven prompts

Copy them as written. Replace anything in [brackets].

1 Classify what you are actually doing

Most people are polishing a product for a customer they never identified. This reveals it in five minutes.

PROMPT 1

I am working on this idea: [describe it in three sentences, in plain language].

Ask me three questions, one at a time, one for each point. Wait for my answer before asking the next one:

1. Do I already know who my customer is, or am I still finding out?
2. Am I improving something for a customer I already understand, or exploring something unknown?
3. Which market am I in: one that already exists (I am better or faster than what is there), a resegmented one (a smaller or cheaper slice of an existing market), a new one (nothing like this exists), or a clone (a proven model brought to another country or industry)?

Three questions in total, not one more. Do not guess: if one of my answers is vague, do not ask again, mark it as "you do not know this yet". After my third answer, state the three conclusions clearly and explain how each one changes the way I should test this idea.

2 Build your customer's profile and expose your own assumptions

A profile with no real data behind it is a mirror, and a mirror only shows you your own idea. This step asks for sources, and asks the AI to admit when it has none.

PROMPT 2

Build a detailed profile of a TYPICAL person who has this problem: [idea]. Not my best possible buyer, not an early adopter. The ordinary case.

Cover six things:

- Who they are on paper: age, job, income, where they live, size of their business
- What they believe and what they fear: values, identity, what worries them
- What they are really trying to achieve when they look for a solution, including the emotional and social part, not only the practical one
- What really drives their decision
- How they buy: budget, who else has to approve, how they bought something similar before
- What we know from real data and what we are making up

Before you invent anything, look for real public information about this kind of customer in my city or my industry: the census bureau or the statistics agency that applies, chambers of commerce, trade associations, press coverage, industry reports. For every number or claim you take from a source, give me the source and the year on the same line.

If you cannot search the internet, say so clearly in your first line and mark EVERYTHING as [GUESS]. Do not invent sources, statistics or studies. An honest [GUESS] is useful to me. A citation that turns out not to exist is worse than nothing, because I am going to act on it.

Mandatory rule: mark everything you made up with [GUESS]. Do not paper over the gaps. At the end, give me two things: the two facts I could get this week to remove the most [GUESS] tags, and a simple count of how much of this profile comes from sources and how much is guessed.

3

Let the AI grade your questions first

This one alone justifies the exercise, even if you never do the rest. It also fixes your real interviews.

PROMPT 3

These are the questions I plan to ask real customers: [paste your list]

Grade every one. For each question tell me:

- Is it hypothetical? That is, does it ask someone to guess their own future behavior? Examples: "would you use it?", "would you pay for this?". People are terrible at predicting that.
- Is it leading? Does the way it is written invite a polite answer?
- Rewrite it so it asks about the past or the present.

Be harsh. If a question cannot be saved, say so and replace it. Then give me the five best of your corrected versions, in the order I should ask them.

New chat. Not a new message.

Close the previous window. Open a new one. If the AI remembers the previous step, this step is useless.

4A

Chat A, blind. The product is never mentioned

Nobody can flatter a product they have never seen. This chat is the only honest signal you will get out of all of this.

PROMPT 4A

You are this person: [paste the profile from prompt 2].

Answer me as that person, in the first person and without breaking character. Answer honestly and in a bit of a hurry, like someone who has other things to do. One question at a time.

0. Before I tell you what I want to talk about: tell me what the hardest part of your working week is. Give me the three things that cost you the most time or money, in order.

Only after you have answered that: I want to ask you how you handle [describe ONLY the problem. Never mention your product, your solution or your idea].

1. Tell me about the last time this happened to you. What did you do?
2. What did it cost you in time or money?
3. What have you tried before, and why did you stop doing it?
4. Have you ever paid for something to solve it? What happened?
5. From 1 to 5, how much does this really bother you? 1 is a minor annoyance, 5 is something you think about every week. Give me the number and explain it.

At the end, step out of character: could you guess what product I am selling? If yes, tell me what gave it away. If I described the problem too narrowly, tell me now.

New chat. Not a new message.

Close the previous window. Open a new one. If the AI remembers the previous step, this step is useless.

4B

Chat B, informed. A completely new chat

Yes, these questions are hypothetical, and step 3 told you to throw them out. Here they are on purpose: Chat B does not measure the truth, it measures how much enthusiasm your pitch manufactures. That is the number you will compare against Chat A.

PROMPT 4B

You are this person: [paste exactly the same profile].

Answer me as that person, in the first person and without breaking character.
Answer honestly, even if you are not interested.

I am going to show you a product: [what it does, who it is for, what it costs].

1. What is your honest reaction when you see it?
2. What has stopped you before from buying something like this?
3. What do you use today instead, and why would you switch or not?
4. From 1 to 5, how likely are you to pay [price] for this? 1 = I would not even open it, 3 = I would try it for free, 5 = I am getting my card out today. Give me the number and explain it.
5. The last time you bought something for this same problem, how much did you pay and what made you decide? If you have never bought anything, say so clearly.

New chat. Not a new message.

Close the previous window. Open a new one. If the AI remembers the previous step, this step is useless.

5

The skeptic round

If nothing contradicted you, the method failed. That does not mean your idea won.

PROMPT 5

This is my idea and everything I learned: [paste the idea, the profile and the answers from the two conversations].

Your only job now is to argue that this fails. You are not here to help me, you are here to be right. Make the strongest possible case for each point:

- The problem is a "nice to have", not real pain
- The group that would pay is too small for the business to work
- It is not the moment yet; something else has to change first
- I led the answers and got the enthusiasm I was looking for

Then tell me which of the four is the most dangerous, and what real-world evidence would prove you wrong.

6

The cheapest real test

None of this counts until a stranger is involved. This is where the exercise pays for itself.

PROMPT 6

Based on all of the above, give me the cheapest thing I can do in the next seven days to test this with real people. Not a business plan. One action.

It has to cost less than [how much money] and take me less than [how many hours].
It has to involve at least one real person who is not a friend or family.
Tell me exactly what to do, what to say, which result means I keep going and which one means I stop.

Read the two numbers together.

Each chat gave you a number from 1 to 5. Put them here and the map tells you which box your idea lands in.

WRITE DOWN THE NUMBER EACH CHAT GAVE YOU

Chat A, the pain

Chat B, the enthusiasm

Pain · Chat A

A 3+ / B 1-2

The problem is real, the proposal is not there yet.

A 3+ / B 3+

Strong signal.

A 1-2 / B 1-2

Low signal on both sides.

A 1-2 / B 3+

Fragile signal.

Enthusiasm · Chat B

A 3+ / B 3+ Strong signal. The problem is real and your proposal connects. This is the week to go find your first real conversation.

A 3+ / B 1-2 The problem is real, the proposal is not there yet. You already have the hard part. Keep the problem and rethink what you are selling.

A 1-2 / B 3+ Fragile signal. The enthusiasm came from the side that had already seen your pitch, and the side that had not did not feel the problem. Test the problem somewhere else before investing more.

A 1-2 / B 1-2 Low signal on both sides. Nothing that hurts enough has shown up yet. It is a useful result: ten minutes just saved you a few weeks.

WHY IT WORKS

Chat B gives you the polite answer because you showed it a pitch. Chat A cannot, because it never saw one. The distance between the two numbers is what your pitch added, not what your customer felt.

This never replaces talking to real people. It makes the first ten conversations shorter and sharper, and it means you need fewer of them.

Designed by Omar Mendiburo for AI Lab School.



tehablaomar.com/taller/synthetic-customers

Scan to open the web version, with the prompts ready to copy.