

МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ  
ЗВО «УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ КАТОЛИЦЬКИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ»

Факультет суспільних наук  
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**МАГІСТЕРСЬКА ДИПЛОМНА РОБОТА**  
на тему: Designing Lean Go-To-Market Strategies for an Educational Startup

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Рецензент

Львів 2024

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## OBJECTION

The author of this work has spent 15 years in the tech industry, focusing on building products and leading teams. Most of the author's experience has been working with products from 1 to 10 or above. In this study, it was a personal challenge to move a new product to the market from scratch from 0 to 1 and gain the needed skills for such product marketing and other activities. This project is important because it allows the author to extend a personal approach to product development and become a more universal specialist. The author wanted to learn how to build successful products at any stage, starting from zero or scaling an existing product. This challenge will help to grow skills.

This study explores and explains the lean Go-To-Market (GTM) process for creating a startup in an education area. Building a successful product from scratch is a challenging journey. It involves different stages and requires different thinking regarding product development. A new product requires different marketing and sales strategies and processes than scaling an existing product. This study highlights the importance of understanding these stages and applying the tactics in practice. It aims to provide a roadmap for entrepreneurs who want to launch new products and make them successful. Additionally, there is specific knowledge that can be applied to Ukrainian-based products.

This work helps avoid common mistakes and speeds up the development process. The study includes tools that can be used as references for lean product building. These tools were selected to minimize overall costs while maximizing the efficiency of the building process.

The successful outcome of this research will be formulating a path and a set of tools for developing a lean GTM strategy. Additionally, the research aims to create a product with a measurable number of users and assess its growth potential. This work will be a valuable resource for anyone interested in starting from scratch and building a lean product. Moreover, the broader impact of this research lies in its potential to contribute to

the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Ukraine. By sharing these insights and strategies, the study aims to help innovation and encourage the development of new products.

## SECTION 1. METHODOLOGY AND FIRST PRODUCT

### 1.1. GTM Overview

According to our study in the UCU Business School, most products fail, with an average of only 0.3% of early-stage products surviving in the long run. Two main factors can significantly increase the chances of success. The first and most important factor is the team, and the second is the team's expertise in the relevant area. The team's skills and their approach to challenges make a critical difference.

GTM strategy is an important concept that helps teams navigate the initial steps of entering a new market. It defines a set of actions that helps a product team plan its market entrance and reach its target audience. Experts from the Harvard i-lab describe GTM as a combination of understanding the target market, defining value propositions, building a sales process, and early customer feedback [1]. GTM strategies are iterative and should be continuously adapted and reassessed based on market responses and feedback.

The main goal for a new product is to quickly access users. This can be achieved in several ways. For example, you might be a well-known expert in your field, have a large social media of followers that you can convert into users, or find ways to access users directly. All these approaches define a lean strategy. Communication platforms or social media are especially valuable because they allow you to find users quickly with minimal expenditure. In this section, we will focus on leveraging open resources.

This section also focuses on our first product development iteration, the challenges encountered, and the conclusions drawn from that experience.

### 1.2. Defining Product Area

This work's author is interested in language learning and the educational sector in general, which sparked the initial problem idea. Selecting a problem that will keep you engaged for many years is strategically important for startup development.

Many people around the globe struggle to learn foreign languages, and English is the most commonly used language in global business communication. In Ukraine, there are discussions about the benefits of making English the second language, which would significantly accelerate English learning among Ukrainians. Based on these principles and personal interest, the focus of this study was chosen to be on the problem of learning English. The main goal of this study is to learn GTM strategies and develop the necessary skills.

The education sector is highly competitive and often described as a "red ocean" in literature. However, future projections show a solid 8.8% compound annual growth rate (CAGR), presenting challenges and opportunities [2].

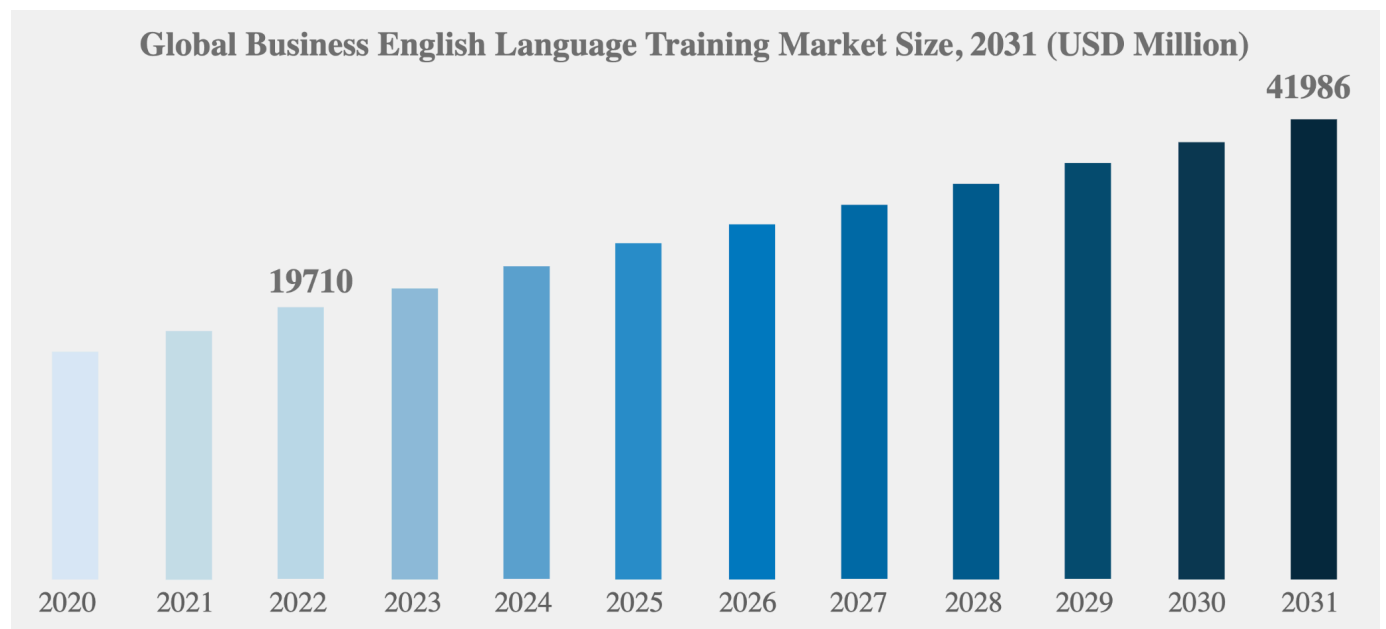


Figure 1.1. Global Business English Language Training Market Size

When working in such a competitive area, it's crucial to introduce innovations that differentiate your product from competitors. This means the solution and the GTM strategy must be innovative and offer a fresh approach. Ideally, your customer acquisition strategy should rely on lean concepts and aim to be viral. Utilizing cold outreach, lean digital

marketing, referral programs, and other techniques will attract and retain learners significantly. This aligns perfectly with the idea of applying lean GTM concepts.

Risk mitigation is also important. Considering the market and competitors, their potential financial budgets, and overall presence, it is important to identify and target a niche market quickly. This approach will help reduce risks and increase the chances of success. By focusing on a specific niche, we can leverage our strategies and lean approaches to stand out.

### **1.3. Building Methodology**

The Lean Startup methodology, described by Eric Ries in his book *The Lean Startup*, provides a framework for building and launching new products [3]. Despite being proposed over ten years ago, these concepts remain highly relevant today. This is highlighted in a recent Eric's reflection on YouTube titled "Reflections on a Movement | Eric Ries" [4].

At the heart of the Lean Startup methodology is the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) concept and the iterative cycle of "Build - Measure - Learn." This approach emphasizes starting small and focusing on the most critical aspects of product development early on. By doing this, teams can quickly validate their assumptions, learn from their mistakes, and make necessary improvements or pivots without wasting significant resources.

We will adopt this methodology for our product development process, following these steps:

1. Identify the problem we aim to solve.
2. Develop the simplest product version that can be released to early users.
3. Use the MVP to test our assumptions about the product.
4. Collect and analyze data to measure the product's performance and user satisfaction.
5. Based on the feedback and data collected, decide if a change in strategy is needed.



6. Continuously refine and improve the product based on user feedback and collected data.

By following this structured approach, we aim to develop a product that solves a real problem, is liked by users and achieves market success.

#### **1.4. Market Analysis**

Before starting the development, we must understand the market landscape and the competitors operating in this space. The problem of learning the English language is well-known, and many services try to address it in various ways. There are at least three well-known Ukrainian services that partially or entirely focus on the problem of English learning:

1. Preply - A marketplace for 1-to-1 and 1-to-many tutoring classes.
2. Promova - Offers both a set of learning materials and a tutoring marketplace.
3. Grammarly - Indirectly helps people improve their English by correcting their writing, with its main feature being Writing Assistant.

To start the market analyses and competitors, we used platforms like G2 and Capterra to collect and examine key product metrics. The G2 and Capterra platforms collect and provide user reviews for various products. This data helps us build assumptions and develop our product and GTM strategy.

#### **1.5. User Interviews**

The next step in our research process is conducting a series of user interviews. User interviews can be very insightful but potentially misleading for a startup's initial stage.

The book "The Mom Test: How to Talk to Customers" emphasizes how to conduct user interviews to understand the user problems and challenges users face and what they are willing to pay for [5]. Often, what users say they need and what they actually need can

be different. Keeping this in mind is essential to recognize when interpreting interview data.

We conducted around 15 user interviews with both learners and several English teachers to gain a comprehensive understanding of their problems and actions towards language learning. We aimed to interview people from a broad demographic spectrum to ensure a diverse range of perspectives.

The leads for the user interviews were gathered from our personal network. We reached out to several teachers we had worked with before in our efforts to learn English and their students to participate in the interviews. Additionally, we asked each student to introduce us to two other learners they know. This approach helped us collect the minimum required number of participants for the user interviews.

Our findings revealed a gap in the language learning platform market that focuses on training materials for home assignments and class preparation. Teachers reported spending several hours each week preparing materials for their classes and homework for their students. Meanwhile, students highlighted they mainly struggled with speaking and grammar.

Based on these insights, we considered developing an MVP, a platform that resolved these needs. The offering will focus on grammar training, which students find particularly challenging. It must be both educational and engaging, as grammar topics can often be boring and lead to a lack of focus in learners.

By addressing these specific pain points, we aim to create a product that meets the needs of both teachers and students, enhancing their learning and teaching experiences.

## **1.6. Competitor Analysis**

The competition in the English learning area is intense. Beyond the competitors mentioned earlier in this section, we found that this industry is highly segmented, with many competitors targeting different profiles and offering specialized services.

Some well-known competitors include:

1. British Council provides online education to improve English skills through various courses and resources. Their offerings include general English courses, exam preparation, and professional English.
2. The IELTS IDP platform focuses on preparing for the IELTS exam, one of the most famous English proficiency tests. It offers targeted courses to help users develop the specific skills needed for the exam. While its specialization is a strength, its narrow focus limits its appeal to those who are preparing for the IELTS test.
3. English Club provides a broad set of materials for English learners and teachers. These resources include grammar guides, vocabulary lists, and teaching tips. However, English Club does not cover a specific customer segment, which means its approach is more generalized.
4. LanGeek is a language learning platform that aims to make language learning easier, faster, and smarter. Its focus on technology-driven solutions sets it apart from competitors' more traditional methods.

Other platforms were also identified, but they mostly offered similar services to those listed above or were not mature enough products with an insignificant market presence.

We used the Competitive Product Matrix approach from Scott Sehlhorst's Product Management course at UCU Business School to analyze the market and products. This approach allowed us to check customer segments, the problems each product aims to solve, the features it offers, and how our product positions itself within this landscape.

From the many platforms we researched, the user categories they focused on and the main problems they resolved. We identified three primary target segments for these platforms:

1. Job Seekers. These are temporary learners who aim to improve their English skills quickly.

2. Students. This segment includes both university and school students who need to improve their English for academic purposes.
3. Professionals. These individuals already have jobs and seek to learn English to advance their careers.

We mapped our user conversations onto these segments and analyzed the overall problems and specific issues mentioned by each segment. Our initial assumption was that Students and Professionals were more important customer segments for us, representing a stable, long-term user base with significant learning needs. Job Seekers, being temporary learners, were considered less critical due to their short-term goals.

The Competitive Product Matrix approach showed that we could achieve success by focusing on the major problems of the Students and Professionals segments. This insight helped us check our goals, allowing us to develop targeted solutions and GTM that address the specific needs of these user groups.

Table 1.1

## Competitive Product Matrix

	42	79	70									Us (future)
	37	66	60					Langeek				
	27	47	49			IELTS IDP						
	34	59	51			BritishCouncil						
Importance of each problem to each customer	Job Seekers	Students	Professionals	Problems	Us (right now)	Now	Future	Now	Future	Now	Future	
	2	5	4	Engagement (Gamified Learning)	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	5
	2	4	2	Multiuser Education	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	3
	3	4	3	Broad Topics	3	5	5	1	1	4	4	4
	3	2	4	Confidence in Knowledge	3	2	2	4	4	3	3	3
	1	4	4	Good UX	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	5
Importance of customer to our strategy	1	4	3									
423	34	236	153	BritishCouncil	(future)							
362	27	188	147	IELTS IDP	(future)							
481	37	264	180	Langeek	(future)							
568	42	316	210	Us	(future)							
Overall relative strengths of all competitors, given relative importance of each customer group as a function of our selected strategy												

## **1.7. Define Product and Key Features**

Based on our Competitor Analysis and User Interviews, we identified a set of initial features that could help address the challenge of learning languages. In the previous chapter, we used the Product Matrix approach to select the most essential ideas for the product's first version.

An essential aspect of our product design was innovation, finding new mechanics that existing products don't use extensively or don't use at all. We aimed to introduce innovative features to set out our product in the competitive landscape.

At the same time, we wanted to incorporate a gamification process to increase user engagement and retention. Gamification elements can make the learning process more enjoyable and motivate users to continue using the product over the long term.

Initial Features:

1. Interactive Grammar Classes. These classes combine text tutorials with interactive exercises to make grammar learning more engaging.
2. Learning Paths. Personalized learning plans based on users' proficiency levels and learning goals.
3. Teacher Resources. Tools and materials to help teachers create and manage their classes more efficiently, saving them time on preparation.

By focusing on these features, we aim to create a product that addresses the key pain points identified in our research and offers an engaging learning experience.

## **1.8. Technology, Requirements and Development**

Selecting the right technology stack is essential and often time-consuming in product development. Our strategy was to use technologies that the team is already familiar with, while also choosing tools that allow for faster development of new features in the future. This helps to organize a development process now and to have easier access to a candidate talent pool in the future.

Based on the recent “Language Ranking” article from the dou.ua portal, we selected technologies that are both well-known to our team and have a market presence with growing popularity [6]. This ensures we use relevant tools that will support long-term development.

**Client Side.** We chose TypeScript for front-end development, a preferred language for feature-rich browser applications. Additionally, we selected the React and Next.js libraries as a basis for establishing a code structure. This library combination also offers good Search Engine Optimization (SEO) opportunities, which are crucial for our inbound marketing efforts.

**Server Side.** We chose a technology stack rising during the last years: TypeScript and Node.js. Despite this stack not being the market leader, its portion will likely remain significant. This stack is also familiar to front-end developers, allowing for minimal onboarding and enabling developers to work on both client and server sides.

**Database.** We selected MongoDB, a well-known player in the market, as the database solution. MongoDB provides the necessary infrastructure and connectors to work seamlessly with our TypeScript and Node.js code.

**Hosting.** We decided to host all servers and clients on Google Cloud Platform (GCP), using Cloud Run for server and client machines [7]. For the database, we chose MongoDB Atlas [8]. The cost for Google Cloud varies based on machine usage, typically around tens of US dollars per month, while MongoDB Atlas costs slightly less than \$10 per month. It's a simple and quick go-to production solution for the MVP and product validation stage. This approach also allows us to migrate to the cost-effective infrastructure in the scaling product stage because all system parts will likely be independent.

To develop a comprehensive product, we identified the following key requirements:

1. Landing page.
2. Authorization module for sign-up and login operations.
3. Home page.
4. Search functionality.

5. Three levels: Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced.
6. Pages with tests and grammar rules.
7. Purchasing page.
8. Profile page.

Time Assumptions. Most products have a big development timeline. From our experience, most products are released in about 4-6 months. Of course, the timeline depends on the industry and complexity, and it would be incorrect to generalize this for all types of products. However, for a regular product with the features listed above and some time budget for changes in requirements, we assume a timeline of around 4-6 months. Depending on the team's previous working experience, this timeline could be reduced to 2-4 months. This is still a long timeline for us because we want to test the product idea and see results as quickly as possible.

Our goal for the development stage is to complete it within only one month by scoping out anything that isn't essential to the initial release. It's also important to avoid changing the development scope unless absolutely necessary. This focused approach will help us quickly bring the product to market, allowing us to validate our idea and iterate based on user feedback.

### **1.9. Initial GTM Strategy**

There are two main approaches to marketing, each with its own sub-paths:

1. Outbound Marketing.
2. Inbound Marketing.

Given our lean approach, the main idea was to extensively use free outbound marketing methods. Our goal was to find as many open platforms as possible to contact potential clients during the development stage. Later, during the scaling stage, we could use more appropriate inbound and outbound marketing channels, such as PPC and blog

articles. For the first iteration, however, it was crucial to utilize easily accessible resources where we could directly contact users and engage in conversations with them.

In the education segment, there are numerous platforms where people connect. After initial research, we identified a set of platforms that would be most useful for us:

1. Community aggregators [9].
2. Discord servers.
3. Facebook groups.
4. Reddit threads.
5. Some other small platforms for communication.

Most of these resources and user groups were found through simple searches combining terms like “English” and “Community” or similar phrases.

We noticed that community aggregators were particularly useful because they provided a qualified list of user forums. Additionally, the research concluded that many people preferred using Discord servers to learn English. While Facebook groups and Reddit threads are popular, they were less effective in generating responses in our case.

Once our product was ready, we sent over 100 cold outreach messages to people from different Discord servers with a simple message:

"Hey [name], I work on a new grammar service - lingoquiz.ai. Could you please try it and give feedback? It'll help us build a better product."

We also tested a few other messages, but their response rates did not significantly differ. The response rate from Discord was good, leading to about 30 conversations with users. Some of these conversations turned into long-thread discussions about the features the product should have, which highlighted for us the overall interest in the problem and solution.



We also attempted to engage users on Facebook and Reddit, but these efforts resulted in almost no response. Therefore, we concluded that these platforms were not effective for our initial outreach. In contrast, our interactions on Discord proved a value, providing us with insightful feedback and great results.

By focusing on free outbound marketing methods and leveraging community-driven platforms, we were able to engage with potential users effectively and collect important feedback for our product development.

### **1.10. Product**

The product's first version included the essential pages: a landing page, authorization pages, a home page, a test page, a purchasing page, and a profile page.

Two English teachers helped us prepare the tests for the three levels (Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced). Using a combination of the teachers' knowledge and ChatGPT's prompting approach, we created a set of about 50 exercises. Additionally, we developed a prompting method to generate future tests almost automatically with high-quality standards. These tests were provided in the necessary technical JSON format with the required regular expressions for our exercises.

The initial development stage took approximately 5 weeks to achieve the first working version of the product. During this period, we focused on creating a functional and user-friendly interface that met the basic needs of our target audience. Despite the short timeline, we could release a functional and reliable product. Further refinement and bug fixing continued after the 5th week and the initial release. We consider this an excellent result from a timeline perspective, which allowed us to iterate and improve the product quickly.

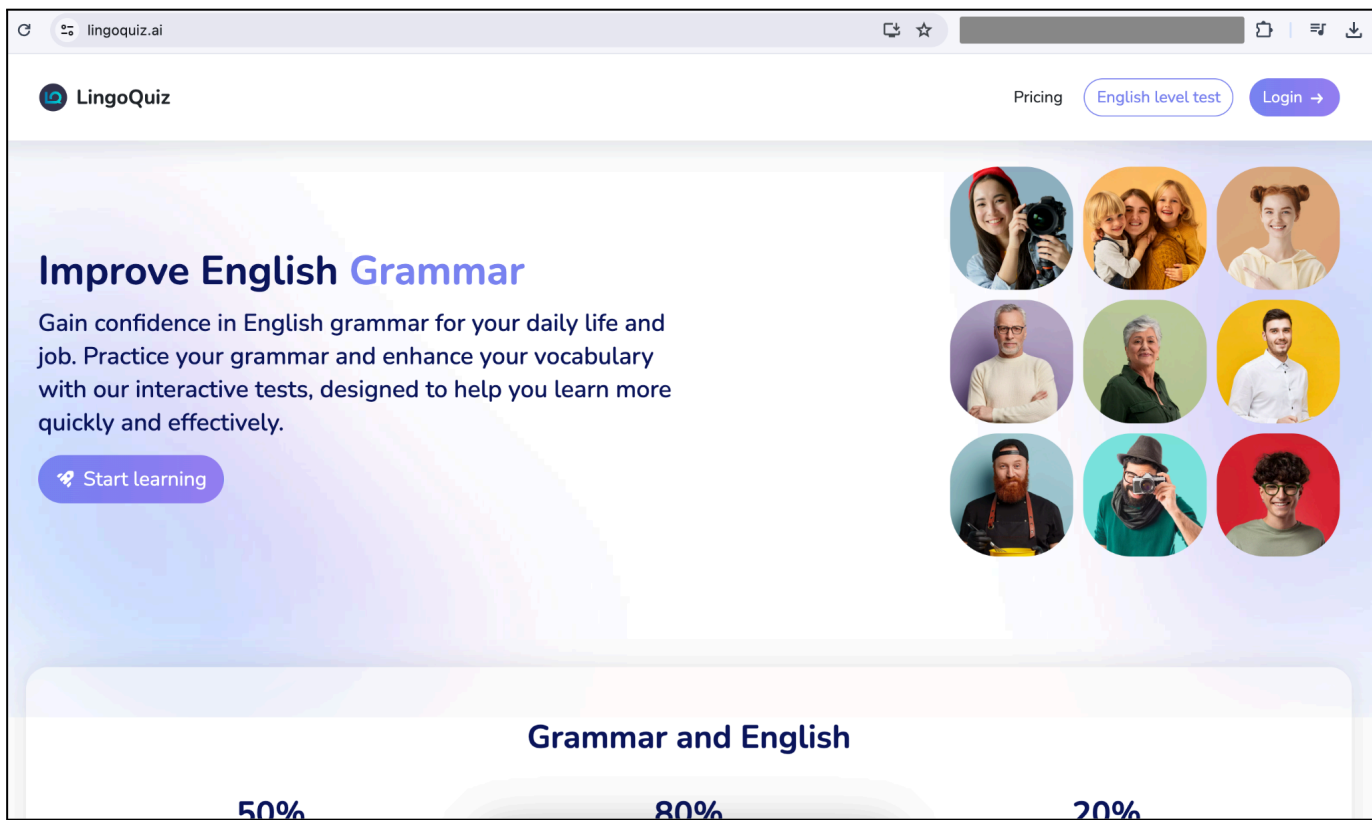


Figure 1.2. Landing Page

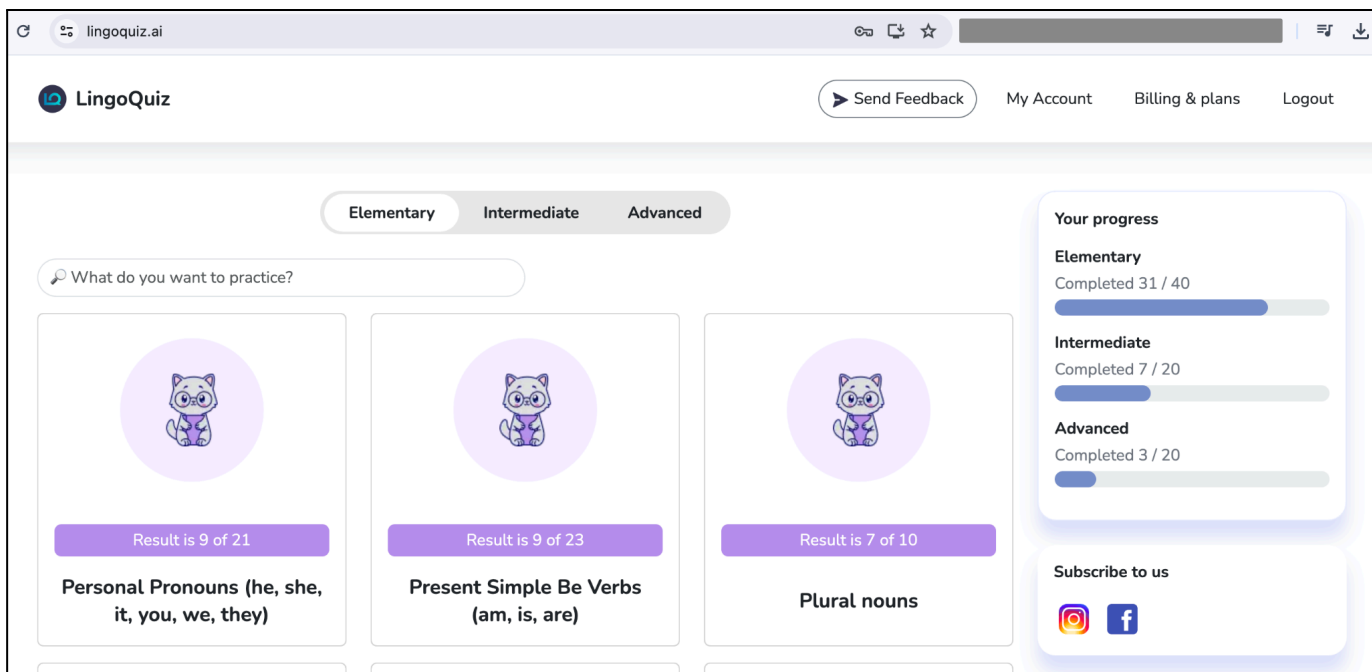


Figure 1.3. Home Page

The platform exercises included three different types:

1. Multiple Choice. The user selects the correct word from several options, with only one correct answer.
2. Fill in the Blank. The user writes the correct word manually without hints.
3. Drag and Drop. The user drags and drops the word into the correct position in the text.

The screenshot shows the LingoQuiz interface for an exercise titled "Present Simple Be Verbs (am, is, are)". The page is divided into a main content area and a right-hand sidebar. The sidebar includes a "Progress" section with a progress bar at 2/23, and an "Exercises" section with four items: "Explanation", "Word selection" (checked), "Fill in the gaps" (checked), and "Drag and Drop exercise" (checked). The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: "Elementary > Present Simple Be Verbs (am, is, are)". Below the title, it says "Select the correct variant from dropdown". There are five sentences for correction:

- I am very happy.  ✓ you?
- These flowers  ✗ beautiful. Don't buy them!
- He  my best friend.
- We  from France.
- You  a good student. You study a lot.

A "Next" button is located at the bottom right of the main content area.

Figure 1.4. Exercise Page #1

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL 'lingoquiz.ai/t/zzQUs3WtOr0'. The page title is 'Present Simple Be Verbs (am, is, are)'. The main heading is 'Present Simple Be Verbs (am, is, are)'. Below the heading, the instruction reads: 'Complete the sentence by filling in the missing word'. There are five sentences with input fields:
 

- She  a doctor. She works in a shop. (The word 'are' is marked with a red 'X' as incorrect.)
- It  a sunny day. (The word 'is' is marked with a green checkmark as correct.)
- They  my favorite band. I love their songs.
- I  not hungry.
- She  from Spain. She doesn't speak Spanish.

 A 'Next' button is at the bottom right. On the right sidebar, the 'Progress' bar shows 2/23. The 'Exercises' list includes 'Explanation', 'Word selection' (checked), 'Fill in the gaps' (checked), and 'Drag and Drop exercise' (checked).

Figure 1.5. Exercise Page #2

The screenshot shows the same web browser window. The main heading is 'Present Simple Be Verbs (am, is, are)'. The instruction reads: 'Drag the words and drop them into the answer area to complete the exercise'. A word bank contains the following words: 'is', 'are', 'am', 'Are', 'are', 'is', 'Is', 'is', 'is', 'is', 'are', 'is', 'am'. Below the word bank, there are three sentences with input fields:
 

- I  James. My mother  Julia. She .
- a vet. I have a sister and a brother. They  older than me. My sister  Ann. It
- a beautiful name. My brother  Jan. They .

 On the right sidebar, the 'Progress' bar shows 3/23. The 'Exercises' list includes 'Explanation', 'Word selection' (checked), 'Fill in the gaps' (checked), and 'Drag and Drop exercise' (checked).

Figure 1.6. Exercise Page #3

The profile page allows users to change their first and last names.

The purchasing page included a payment module. Only the first two exercises at each English level were available for the user for free. The third and following exercises required payment. We used the Paddle platform to connect payments.

### **1.11. Product Metrics**

We developed an analytics system using Amplitude to measure user retention on Day 1 and Day 7 and to track the number of users who completed the exercises. This system allowed us to collect data on how users interacted with our product and identify areas for improvement.

After launching the product, we analyzed the initial metrics:

1. Day 1 Retention. Approximately 30% of users returned to the app the day after their first visit, indicating a level of initial interest and engagement.
2. Day 7 Retention. About 10% of users were still active a week after their initial visit.
3. Exercise Completion. 20% of users completed all six free exercises available (two free exercises in each of the three English levels). This completion rate highlighted that a segment of users were highly engaged and willing to complete the free available content.

We also tracked subscription attempts. A few attempts were made to purchase a subscription, but none were completed successfully. This indicated potential issues in the subscription process or a need for further value to improve conversions.

The relatively high Day 1 retention showed that our initial marketing and onboarding were effective. Still, the steep drop in Day 7 retention pointed to a need for better content engagement and retention strategies. The exercise completion rate was good, suggesting that those who engaged with the content found it valuable.

### **1.12. User Feedback**

The user feedback we collected from interactions on Discord was positive. Additionally, we received two responses through the "Send Feedback" button on the platform, providing product feedback and several more ratings without text messages.

We spoke to Discord users who were engaged with the product and discussed how it helped them with their language learning challenges. These discussions allowed us to thoroughly understand the users' experiences and the specific problems they were trying to solve.

The detailed feedback from users highlighted several key areas for improvement and innovation. For instance, some recommended more personalized learning paths. These suggestions aligned with our goals for future improvement. However, not for the MVP stage.

Overall, the feedback helped shape the future development of our product and allowed us to take a look at the product from the side.

### **1.13. Product Dilemma**

As described earlier, the English learning market is highly competitive and the "red ocean." We understood this challenge from the beginning and wanted to innovate by focusing on a less crowded niche - home assignments and gamified grammar exercises. Despite our efforts to get out of this unique area, capturing and maintaining user attention in such an overcrowded market remains challenging. Users today lose focus quickly, making it more critical than ever to address a deeply engaging and recurring problem. We also noticed this from the user feedback, which became a tough challenge for us.

All English learning platforms compete intensely for users. However, even with all available tools, the user's learning curve remains slow, and the educational process needs to be highly varied to develop English skills effectively. This creates extra barriers for users to keep with one platform over the long term.

Through conducted conversations with employees of English education platforms, our competitors, we understand that competitors invest heavily in pay-per-click (PPC) marketing, spend big budgets on advertisements, and almost entirely build their economy on this principle. The economics of this approach are very tight, often requiring years before seeing a profit. This long-term investment strategy does not align well with our lean approach, which aims for quicker, more efficient results.

Another factor to consider was the product metrics. While our product numbers can be interpreted in various ways - average, good, great - the reality is that people were using the platform but not intensively enough to meet our high expectations for driving rapid growth, making it challenging to push the product scale forward in such a competitive market.

In summary, while we had an innovative approach, the competitive landscape, user engagement challenges, and the market's economic realities created significant dilemmas. Our passion for the product and its building created an additional personal challenge, which made the idea of stopping work on the product hard to accept.

#### **1.14. Conclusions**

Our solution showed initial promise with good user numbers for Day 1 retention. However, in a highly competitive industry, exceptional performance and virality are necessary for a product to stand out and compete effectively. While our product demonstrated potential, it did not achieve the user traction needed to grow in the market.

Although our product could potentially be scaled in the future and gain a position in the market, the timeline for scaling has to be long. Additionally, our innovative approach to education did not deliver the exceptional results we had hoped for. Our reliance on virality through a referral system did not show significant success either.

Given these outcomes, we decided to explore other problems and pivot. The pivot allowed us to step back and consider alternative ways to apply our skills and resources

more effectively. This pushed us to reassess our strategy and consider new directions to achieve our goals.

In conclusion, while our initial product showed promise, the realities of a highly competitive market pushed a strategic pivot. This experience highlighted the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in the startup journey. This iterative evaluation, adaptation, and improvement process is fundamental to the lean startup methodology and critical for long-term success.



## SECTION 2. ITERATION PROCESS

### 2.1. Objections

As the iteration process continued, we decided to explore more problems and potential solutions. The pivoting process had both pros and cons: challenging because it meant stopping the current development and opening up the possibility of discovering new and more promising problems to solve. We established a critical rule for ourselves during this phase: iterate extremely fast. This time, we aimed to gather initial user feedback in less time than before. Although a 5-week development cycle is relatively fast, we needed to reduce this timeline further.

One effective strategy is to build something in which you have deep expertise and a strong belief. However, in our case, we lacked a deep expertise area that we felt confident in pursuing. Our interests were broad, spanning the educational segment, tech companies, and other fields. Without a clear, trusted idea, we decided to drastically cut our iteration time from 5 weeks to just a few days. This allowed us to test hypotheses quickly and efficiently.

In discussions with the study supervisor, Bohdan Hnatkovskyy, we came up with the initial idea to extend our competitor comparison table and dive deeper into comparing problems, solutions, and features. Speed is crucial at this early stage. The faster we can iterate, the better.

Initially, we spent four weeks building a landing page and a small MVP for our first product. While we evaluated this speed as great, it was not enough for rapid iteration and finding unique approaches. To increase our product's chances of success, we decided to start with just a landing page this time. This ultra-lean approach might seem risky, but if a product with only a landing page and a pricing page showed good results in subscriptions, the problem would indicate strong potential for success and growth.

Our new approach emphasized that creating and presenting a product to users doesn't require a fully functional version. The goal was to validate the idea quickly and efficiently. We revised our product development chain to the following steps:

1. Landing page.
2. Sign-up page.
3. Payment solution.

Charging users early in the process is essential to prove the idea's viability. Although we tried this approach, we faced some challenges. Nonetheless, this method allowed us to test user interest and commitment before fully developing the product.

## **2.2. Problem Research Methodology**

In today's world, finding a completely unique problem or solution is challenging. There are a few strategies to address this: direct competition with existing products, copying a solution for a specific market, finding an innovative way to solve a problem, or identifying niche user groups where a specific combination of product features will work better.

New products for new and existing problems appear almost every day. Being completely unique is impossible. In such a crowded market, standing out and differentiating yourself is crucial.

Ultimately, differentiation could happen at multiple levels:

1. Product level. You need to build a product that works better than others.
2. User satisfaction level. Ensuring that users are satisfied with the product. This involves creating a seamless user experience and working with feedback.
3. GTM and user acquisition level. An effective GTM strategy is important for acquiring and retaining users.

By focusing on these areas, you can differentiate your product and achieve success in a competitive market. Our research focused on these areas, aiming to find a relatively unique solution. To generate new product ideas after restarting our product, we added these steps to our algorithm from section 1:

1. Iterating on problems that are somewhat familiar to us.
2. Brainstorming potential solutions or areas to explore.
3. Finding similar products on user feedback platforms like G2 or Capterra.
4. Checking user reviews, focusing on:
  - a. Products with generally poor reviews (approximately 4.5 stars or below).
  - b. Products with great reviews but containing repetitive negative feedback from users.
5. Reaching out to users on social networks who have complained and asked for more information.

In step 4, we focused on specific complaints about product features rather than general issues like bugs or slowness. Identifying repetitive complaints suggested areas where existing products were lacking, presenting potential opportunities for us.

In step 5, we attempted to contact users based on the data provided by user review platforms. While looking for users' procedures was challenging due to limited information on the user review platforms, the users were willing to chat and provided valuable insights.

Below is an example of a successful product where finding niches and opportunities is challenging. Grammarly has an overall rating of 4.7 and more than 8,000 reviews, and over 7,000 users have given it a perfect 5-star rating. Competing directly with such a product, especially by focusing on features, is difficult. This highlights the challenge of using a lean approach in a market dominated by well-established players.

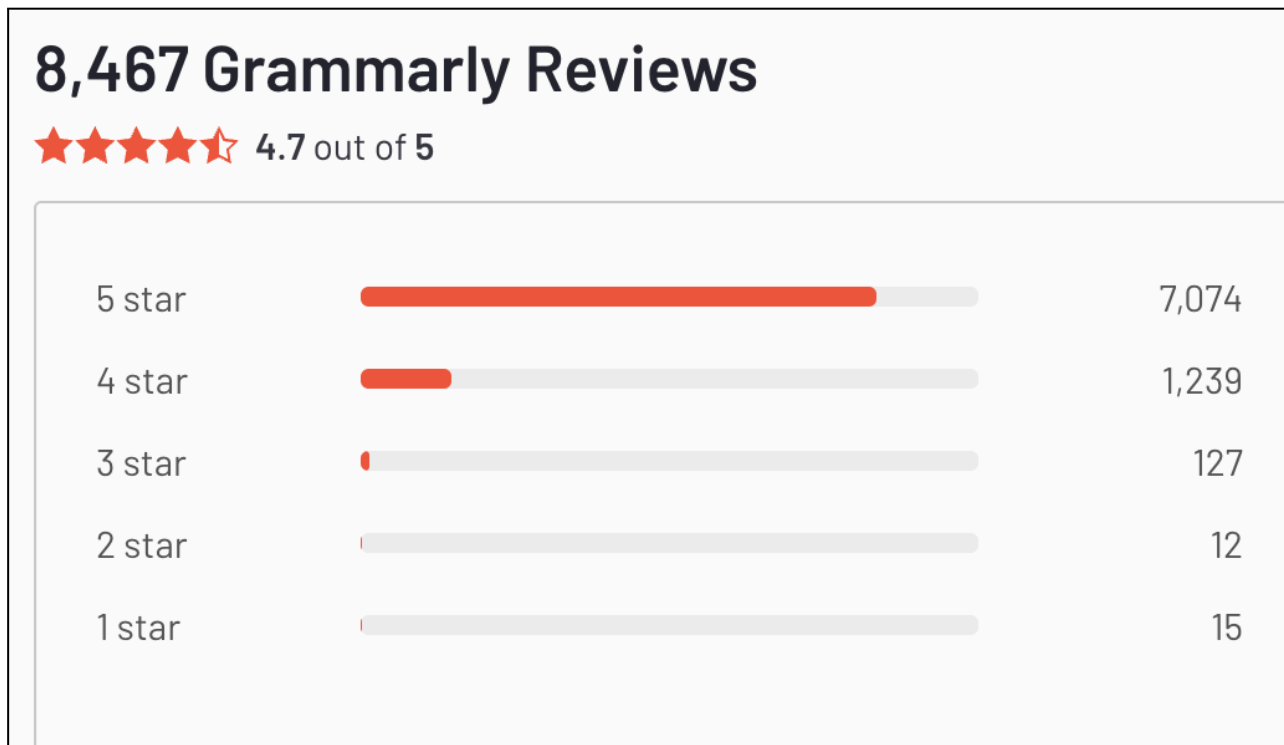


Figure 2.1. Great Product Review Example (Grammarly)

On the other hand, some products do not perform well despite being on the market for several years. These products continue to receive poor ratings and reviews, indicating ongoing issues and dissatisfaction among users.

In the specific example below, it is evident that the product does not serve its users effectively. The overall rating is only 3.7, which is below the acceptable threshold for a successful product. From a personal exploration, any product with a rating below 4.5 on G2 should be considered a candidate for deeper analysis. Additionally, the rating distribution, with significant 1, 2, 3, and 4-star reviews, suggests many unhappy or partially satisfied users.

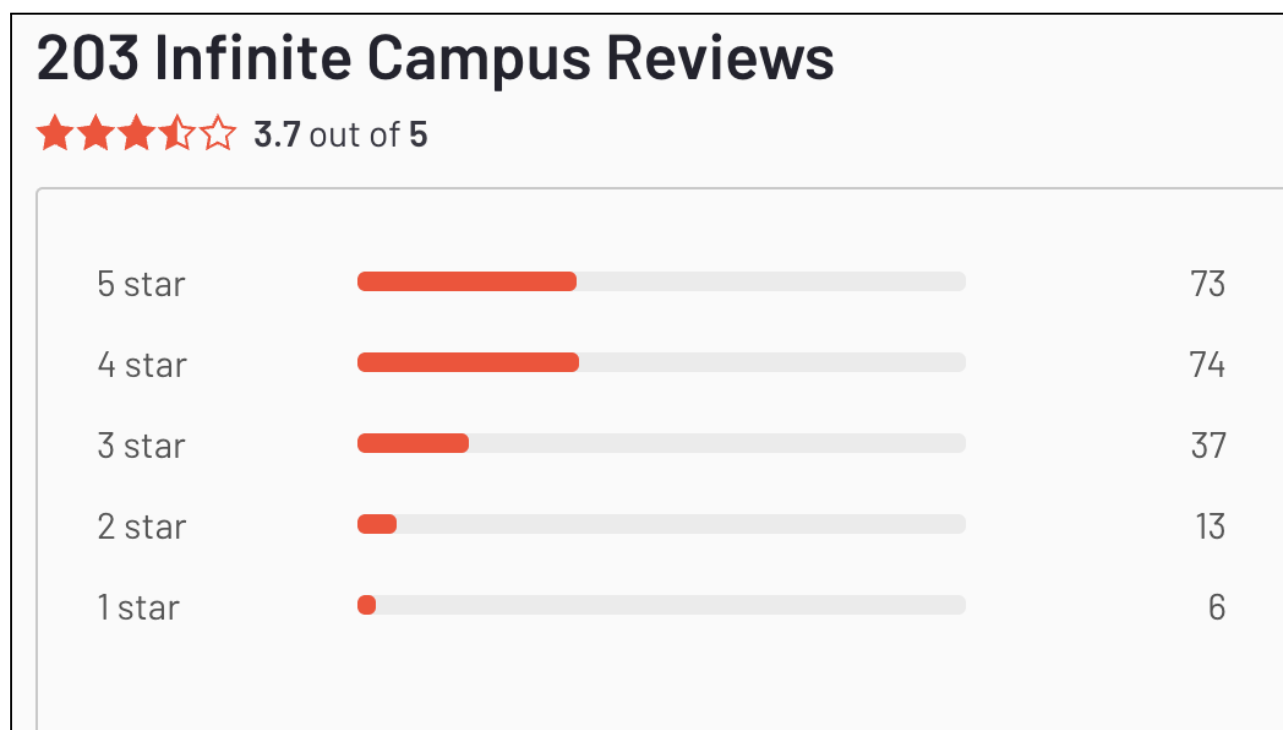


Figure 2.2. Average Product Review Example (Infinite Campus)

Our next step is to sort reviews from bad to good and analyze them one by one. The more time we invest in this process, the greater our chances of uncovering interesting insights and ideas. However, significant and trending issues can often be identified relatively quickly. We focus most of our attention on understanding the problems users dislike the most.

Below is an example of a negative review from an actual product user mentioned in the previous section. This review highlights specific issues and areas where the product fails to meet user expectations.

**What do you dislike about Infinite Campus?**  
 There are a plethora of things I dislike. A huge problem is that I can't print a progress report for parents. Our IT person has to print them. That also includes report cards. In addition, it takes a lot of steps just to add grades. It takes so much longer than Power School. Power School is a much better product.

Figure 2.3. User Complaint Example #1

Users frequently point out problems such as missing or poorly implemented features. These critiques can serve as a valuable source of ideas for future improvements and enhancements.

**"Difficult to use"**

**What do you like best about Infinite Campus?**  
It checks all of the boxes on our needs to do list. It does these things at a price that is lower than others.




**What do you dislike about Infinite Campus?**  
It doesn't do anything particularly well. it is not user-friendly. it hasn't kept up with industry changes or needs. it doesn't work well with other platforms or tools. no API or LTI integration.  
our data is virtually trapped inside.

Figure 2.4. Extended User Complaint Example #2

It is important to consider the date of the ratings and the overall dynamics in product development. Our research indicates that if products have persistent problems, these issues tend to remain throughout their lifecycle. However, there is a chance that the team will address and fix these issues, improving their product.

Another useful tool is performing a quick search for competitors using user review platforms. This allows us to identify new competitors and assess their ratings quickly. This approach may not always be precise, as competitors can vary widely in scope. For example, educational software in the niches of LMS and grammar could be considered similar. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct searches carefully and with a clear idea in mind.

**Top Rated Disprz Alternatives**

 <p><b>Cornerstone Learning</b> ★★★★☆ (492) 4.1 out of 5</p>	 <p><b>Docebo</b> ★★★★☆ (562) 4.4 out of 5</p>	 <p><b>Moodle</b> ★★★★☆ (391) 4.1 out of 5</p>
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[See all Disprz Alternatives](#)

Figure 2.5. Product Comparison and Navigation Tools

We also used a matrix that matched product popularity and rating, graphically highlighting potential opportunities.

It is important to have a comprehensive map of competitors, highlighting their pros and cons and evaluating them carefully. If there is an ideal product that users love, it may be challenging to compete using lean approaches alone. However, an extensive PPC strategy could be effective. A combination of a lean market entry followed by aggressive scaling with PPC might also work well.

Understanding the current market situation takes time. Even after just a few days of research, the perception of the market can change drastically. Some products may appear more favorable after closer discovery. This methodology is crucial as it helps save time in the future by providing a clear understanding of the competitive landscape.

### **2.3. Research and Problem Statement**

So, using this methodology, we started our research. This process took some time and required several adjustments along the way. While finding crucial insights remains challenging, the tools and analytics provided create a more established basis for iterating over product ideas and selecting the right GTM concept in the future.

Through several iterations of research and analysis, we formulated a new product idea. Our assumption was to build a platform that allows users to upload any document, and the platform would then use AI services to create interactive tests. This idea was particularly seen as HR-related software. Narrowing this idea further, we focused on developing a user onboarding solution. Based on the provided documents, our platform would allow HR or L&D managers to create a list of questions to help new employees better understand their company and build awareness.

This approach aimed to address a specific need in the HR and onboarding process, leveraging AI to enhance new employees' learning and integration experience. We hoped to offer a unique solution that stood out in a competitive market by targeting this niche.

By checking different platforms, we understand that each area has many software options and competitors. However, not all of them operate in the same market or target the same customer segment.

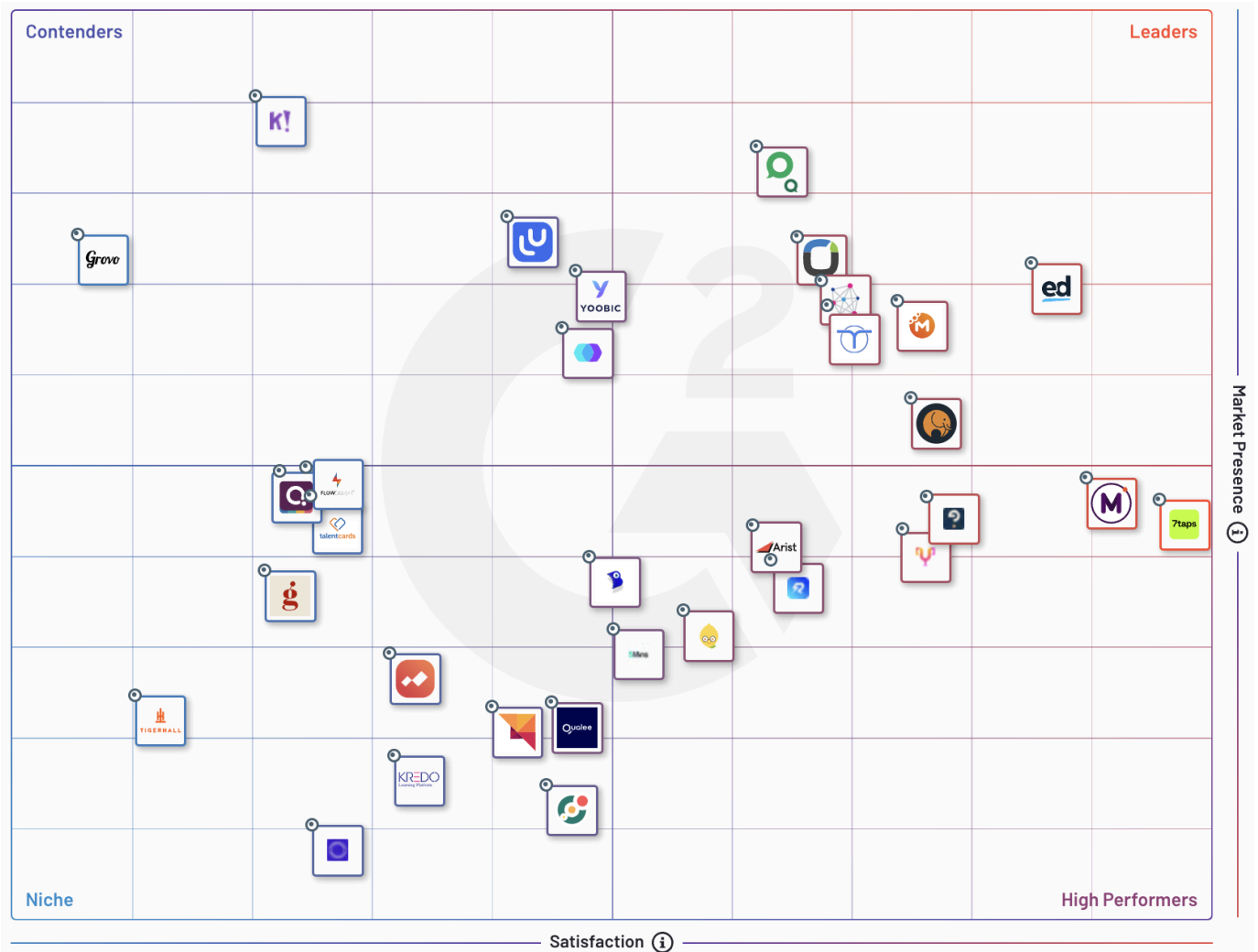


Figure 2.6. Learning Products (Performance/User Satisfaction)

The following figure demonstrates progress and a desire to become a momentum leader. This representation helps us identify and understand smaller competitors who have rapidly grown in their ratings in recent years.



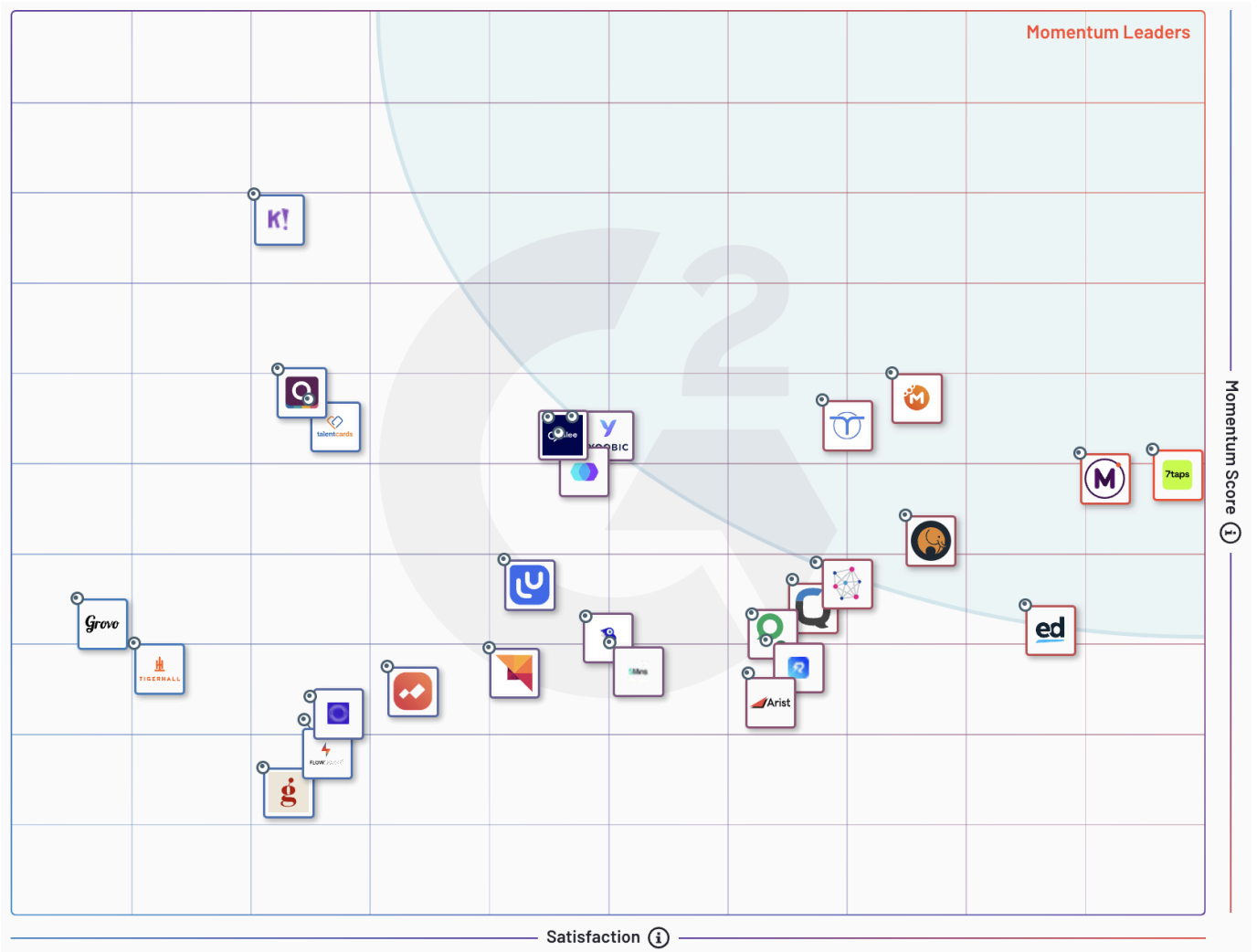


Figure 2.7. Learning Products (Momentum Leader Projection)

## 2.4. User Interviews and Finalizing Assumptions

After building our initial assumptions, we searched for people to conduct user interviews and validate our hypotheses. Since this software is B2B-oriented, we used more specific tools to reach potential users. We divided user segment into two main segments at that time:

1. US market. Our primary focus was to find users in the US market.
2. Other countries. This included other countries and Ukraine particularly.

Initially, we identified LinkedIn as a valuable resource. Later, we started using B2B lead generation platforms Apollo.io and Clay.com, which will be discussed in detail later. These tools were instrumental in reaching the first segment of users. We leveraged our personal network for the second segment of users to reach as many people as possible.

We conducted 20 user interviews, primarily with Ukrainian representatives who are now spread across the globe, including Ukraine, the US, Canada, and Europe. We also managed to interview one US person. These interviews showed us that the HR software industry is saturated with numerous solutions such as Deel, Gusto, Rippling, Personio, and others. Most HR or L&D managers did not express a strong need for additional software unless it provided significant added value for their company. They generally preferred all-in-one solutions. Our interviewees included representatives from outsourcing and product companies, such as Reface, Roosh, and Grammarly.

Another part of our user interview and research stage was to find existing software and interview their employees. We conducted several outreach attempts, including contacting the Ukrainian-born service Yangol. The service shut down in 2021 after operating for half a year and having three paying big clients [10]. However, the founder, whom we found via LinkedIn, provided valuable insights. This conversation highlighted our assumptions and challenges about the market and small products, which HR and L&D managers had previously shared with us.

Through these user interviews, we collected insights about user needs and researched existing platforms. Our final goal was to identify a niche where the current features are not well-represented.

From this research, we concluded that there is a potential opportunity to develop a microlearning platform for employees.

## 2.5. Financial Model

The cost structure is often a key concern in many B2B platforms. For our educational startup, we plan to use a subscription revenue model with options for monthly, quarterly, or yearly payments.

Key metrics to monitor are Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC) and Customer Retention Rate (CRR). Lifetime Value (LTV) helps us understand how much revenue a product generates over its lifespan with a particular business.

At this stage, our LTV:CAC ratios are hypothetical. We aim for an ideal ratio of 3:1. Regarding CAC, we didn't plan to use performance marketing during the search for product-market fit. Instead, we will focus on organic growth through rapidly growing channels like user communities and word-of-mouth.

According to various sources, the average CAC for the HR industry in 2024 is around \$410 [11]. This means that the LTV for a B2B user should be about \$1,230, which is higher than in most B2C businesses.

Table 2.1

Average CAC for the HR Software Industry

Security	\$805
Staffing & HR	\$410
Telecommunications	\$694

The initial price for HR software ranges from \$50 to several thousand USD per month. Our analysis of open G2 resources shows that smaller or solo-founded products

typically charge around \$50 per month. At the same time, larger platforms start at \$200 per month and charge an additional \$1 to \$3 per user.

Assuming a price of \$200 per month, we would need just over six months ( $\$1,230/\$200$ ) to achieve our desired LTV:CAC ratio. This is promising, considering the nature of B2B operations. In the initial stages of product development, our focus will be on improving the CRR to build a strong product foundation and achieve these numbers in the future.

## **2.6. MVP Scope**

This time, we decided to shorten the product development cycle. With many product unknowns, we chose to start with only a landing page. We conducted two experiments: one with payments included in the selling cycle and one without. Ultimately, we decided to simplify the purchase flow and focus on lead conversion.

We developed only landing and sign-up pages and put these into the market. This was a complete experiment in which we wanted to see how users would react to this software. Based on their reactions, we planned to conduct additional user interviews and learn more from real users. We prepared titles and content for the landing page, presenting it as a microlearning platform for employees.

This approach allowed us to gather initial feedback quickly and assess the viability of our concept without a significant investment in development. It also provided insights into user expectations and behaviors, which would inform future iterations and improvements.

## **2.7. Conclusions**

Iteration time is crucial for validating an idea. If there is uncertainty about whether your solution can solve the problem long-term, it's essential to quickly test potential services, offer them to users, and build a user base.

In this section, we describe the problem selection and validation process and outline key aspects of the methodology used for this purpose. Additionally, we provide a financial model to project costs, revenues, and profitability, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of our solution's economic viability.

We also outlined ideas for the lean MVP scope. These preparations set a solid foundation for the next phase of our project. The next section will focus on lean development and defining and executing our GTM strategy.

## SECTION 3. DESIGNING GTM STRATEGY

### 3.1. Objections

When designing our GTM strategy, we encountered several challenges that needed to be addressed. These challenges primarily revolved around lean budgets and resources.

We refined our approach inspired by Sean Ellis and Morgan Brown's book "Hacking Growth: How Today's Fastest-Growing Companies Drive Breakout Success" [12]. The book highlighted a systematic approach to rapid business growth used by top companies and introduced the concept of "growth hacking," a mix of marketing, data analysis, and product development to find and exploit growth opportunities.

Our GTM strategy needed to operate on a very lean budget, ideally without spending more than a couple of hundred USD. This posed significant challenges in effectively marketing and acquiring users with minimal financial resources.

Predicting market response is challenging, and there were concerns about whether the target audience would resonate with our value proposition and messaging. This required developing a framework to support scalability and ensure we're ready to grow.

To address these objections, we took the following steps:

1. We developed a comprehensive plan outlining each step of our GTM strategy.
2. We focused on utilizing free or low-cost marketing channels like social media, community engagement, and word-of-mouth.
3. We assessed our resources and prioritized key activities that would have the highest impact.
4. We proposed conducting a pilot test with a small group of target users to validate our approach.

Addressing these objections refined our GTM strategy. This approach allowed us to move forward with greater confidence, knowing we mitigated potential risks.

### **3.2. Framework 5-50-100**

There are several user types in each product adoption cycle. From our marketing strategy course, we know that Innovators and Early Adopters usually start using the product first. Understanding this, we aimed to use this concept in our user base-building goals.

Our approach, the framework 5-50-100, means that we first find 5 Innovator-type users with whom we can build a direct connection. Ideally, we should invite these people to a single chat platform like Slack or Discord, allowing us to work closely with them to build the product's first version together. This collaborative approach ensures that the final product deeply meets the needs of its users.

Following this, we would scale to 50 users. At this stage, the initial 5 users must be enthusiastic about the product and willing to refer it to their friends or companies. Their advocacy is essential for organically expanding our user base.

By focusing on building a strong foundation of innovators and early adopters, we aim to create a loyal user base that will help us refine the product and spread the word organically. This approach was designed to ensure that our product met real user needs and gained genuine support from its earliest users.

Once we reach 100 users, we will be ready to execute and develop PPC marketing strategies to scale our user acquisition efforts further.

With this approach in mind, we started to execute our GTM strategy for acquiring new users.

### **3.3. Lean GTM Strategy**

This time, we decided to change our strategy. In B2B marketing, user behavior and the methods to reach your audience differ significantly from B2C. Additionally, the sales cycle in B2B can take many months to close a deal. After the session led by Kent Summers for the "Harvard Alumni Entrepreneurs" YouTube channel, where the author highlighted the principles for startup founders and teams with practical B2B sales strategies and tactics,

we got into the challenges in a time of selling cycles and approaches [13]. For this study, we aimed at different kinds of users and selling cycles. We focused on more efficient methods to achieve idea validation and Product-Market Fit (PMF).

We could identify forums and communities where our target users congregated. However, such platforms were significantly fewer compared to B2C markets like English learning. On the other hand, a new resource became available for our B2B product outreach - LinkedIn.

Due to LinkedIn's limitations on sending messages, we considered purchasing a premium account but also explored a more cost-effective approach. Our strategy involved a two-step outreach process: first, sending a connection request, and once accepted, following up with a message. Although this approach required more time, it proved effective for B2B outreach, similar to the effect of sending direct messages.

To find leads for user interviews and initial users, we used:

1. Apollo.io.
2. Clay.com.

These tools were excellent for identifying new leads and obtaining their LinkedIn profiles and emails if needed. Both products offer free packages suitable for initial research and building a list of a few hundred leads without costs. Apollo provides additional CRM features that Clay lacks, but Clay offers more advanced data manipulation capabilities. We used both services for our needs, with a preference for Apollo due to its CRM features.

By leveraging these tools and strategies, we could efficiently build a user base list and validate our ideas within a lean budget. This approach allowed us to focus on the most critical aspects of our GTM strategy, ensuring we remained agile and resource-efficient.



### **3.4. Finding the First Five Clients**

**Building a Buyer Persona.** To effectively target our initial clients, we need to build detailed assumptions about our buyer personas. This helps us understand our ideal customers and how to reach them.

**Targeting Industries.** We identified two main segments where our product would be most useful:

1. Companies with 20-100 employees, primarily office-based.
2. Companies with a large number of employees who do not use gadgets like laptops on a regular basis.

Ideal candidates for the first segment include tech companies and businesses with large sales offices. Potential targets for the second segment include hotels, hospitals, and healthcare providers. From our initial user conversations, we developed a profile of key decision-makers:

1. Owners, CEOs, Founders.
2. Head of People, VP of People, Chief People Officers.
3. HR Managers.

In addition to decision-makers, we also targeted individuals who were highly involved in employee training and development:

1. People Managers.
2. Training & Development Coordinators.
3. L&D Specialists.

By focusing on these specific targets, we can use our outreach efforts and messaging to resonate with the needs and challenges of our ideal clients. We used this targeting to identify and connect with the first five clients who are most likely to benefit from our product and become advocates for it.

### 3.5. Messaging Scripts

In our outreach efforts, we used slightly different text approaches for user messages. LinkedIn allows for longer messages, while platforms like Slack and communities there require more concise communication. Below are examples of the messages we used.

#### LinkedIn Message Example:

"Hey [Name], I hope you're doing well. I came across your profile on LinkedIn, and your experience as a People Manager at a tech company looks impressive and very relevant to my work on improving employee onboarding processes for businesses with 20-200 employees.

I'm working on a product to resolve employee onboarding challenges as part of my business school project. My ultimate goal is to develop software that engages and accelerates onboarding.

Your experience would be invaluable to my research. Would you mind having a chat to discuss any challenges you face while onboarding new employees? I appreciate your time and feedback!"

#### Slack Message Example:

"Hey [Name]! I'm working on a product to resolve employee onboarding challenges as part of my business school study. My ultimate goal is software that engages and accelerates the onboarding process. Would you mind having a chat to discuss any challenges you face while onboarding new employees?"

Results and Insights. Both messaging formats gave similar conversion rates, with a few replies out of every hundred messages sent. However, the most effective

communication method was leveraging a personal network, which almost ideally converted contacts into calls or at least a chat.

### **3.6. Building a Landing Page**

For testing purposes, we decided to start lean by focusing on creating an efficient and cost-effective landing page. After some research, we selected Framer as an ideal candidate due to its simplicity and strong SEO abilities. Other possible solutions included Wix, Umso, and SquareSpace.

Framer offered an excellent solution with a template base and seamless integration with Figma. Some high-quality templates were free to use. Framer itself costs around \$10 per month, making it a budget option. Additionally, Framer supports responsive design, ensuring our site looks great on both phones and tablets.

After some initial experimentation, we found that building a Framer-based website could be accomplished in as little as four hours. This efficiency was one of our goals at the beginning of the research in this section and the development of our second product.

In addition, we shifted our focus from technical challenges to ideating and validating the problem. The most time-consuming part of this process was defining the problem, creating a user persona, and establishing an initial value proposition. This approach allowed us to test our ideas and gather valuable user feedback without thinking about technologies.

The key message, "Make Employee Training in Minutes," highlights an important insight we gained from user interviews. The description and the call-to-action (CTA) "Get Started" strengthen this message.

In addition, visual content, such as an image that illustrates how the service could look, enhances this message. Since we don't yet have a fully developed platform behind the landing page, the picture was created as a UX sample in Figma. We hired a UX designer from a freelance website to create this visual representation, effectively conveying our proposal quickly.

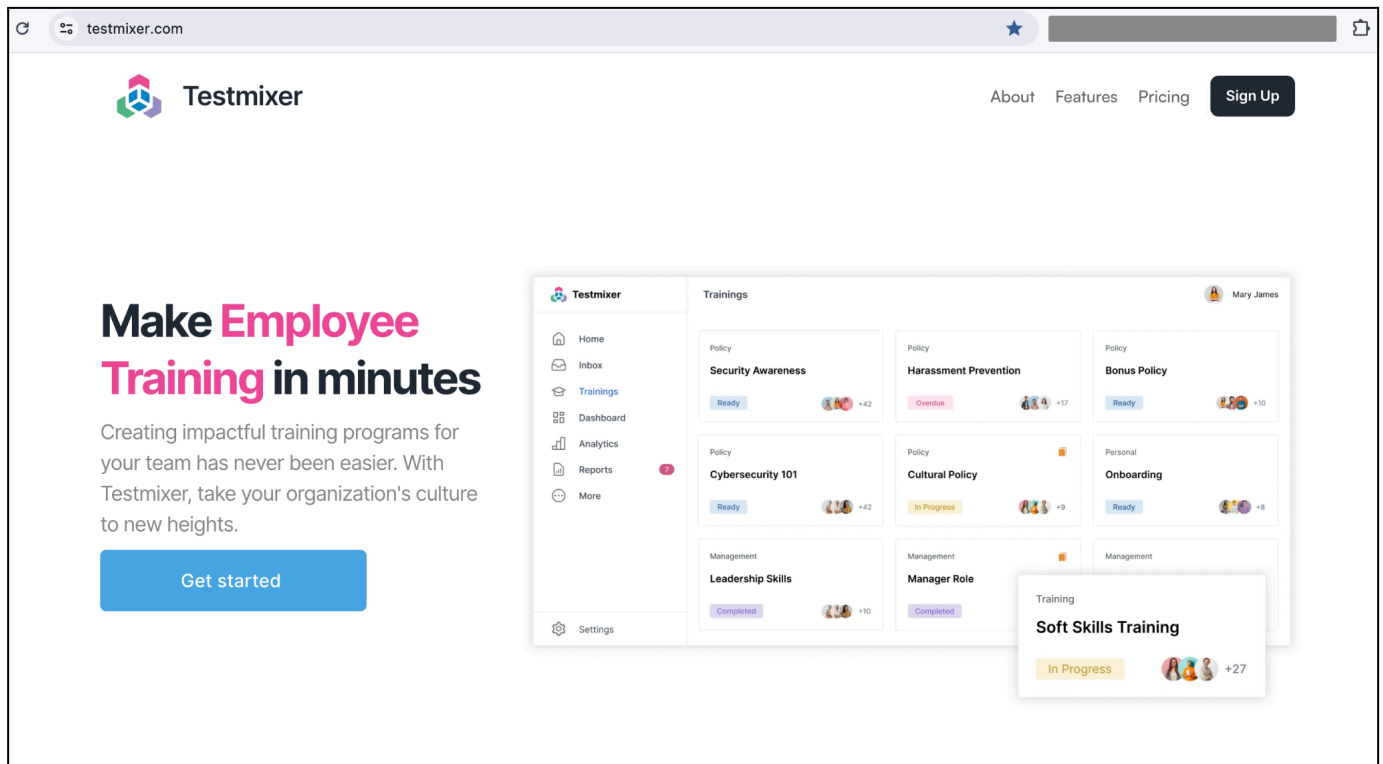


Figure 3.1. Home Page for the Microlearning Platform for Employees

In addition to the landing page, we developed a sign-up page with a form designed and built using FilloutForm. This form went through several iterations:

1. Initially, it was a multi-step form that included a payment page at the final stage. We planned to charge users before providing the product, as this approach is recommended in lean practices to validate demand. However, in our experiments, we didn't receive responses or payments without an actual product.
2. In the final iteration, we simplified the form to three pages, requesting essential information such as the user's name, business company name, LinkedIn profile, and other relevant details. This streamlined form began to convert users successfully.

The image shows a web browser window with the URL 'testmixer.com/sign-up'. The page features the Testmixer logo in the top left and a 'Home' button in the top right. The main content area is titled 'Intro' and contains two text input fields. The first field is labeled 'What's your first name?' with a red asterisk indicating a required field. The second field is labeled 'And what about your last name?' also with a red asterisk. Below the second field is a blue button labeled 'Next >'. The footer of the page is dark and contains the text 'TestMixer © 2024 All Rights Reserved' on the left and 'Privacy Policy' and 'Terms of Service' on the right.

Figure 3.2. Sign Up Page for the Microlearning Platform

The landing page described in this chapter was exactly what we aimed to build. With some practice, the technical creation of a similar landing page could be reduced to just a few hours. However, since we were learning and doing it the first time, we spent 2-4 days working on it, parallel to defining the user messages. This is still a very fast approach.

Additional time was needed to create images and visual content to populate the page. While free stock platforms are available for sourcing pictures, for a high-quality service, it's better to showcase the final product to present users with a clear idea of its product. This approach also helps filter out users who might sign up but do not intend to use the product.

### 3.7. Results

Our goal was to build the first community of five users who could become early adopters or innovators. We used several sources to achieve this.

We sent over 100 connection requests and follow-up messages via LinkedIn, using the scripts and approaches described in the earlier chapters of this work. Additionally, we joined two Slack communities with HR and L&D specialists, experimenting with different messages on these platforms. This effort resulted in five responses.

We gained access to three communities out of five requests sent:

1. People People Group [14].
2. Hashtag People Group [15].
3. Building Inclusive Cultures [16].

Through these efforts, we conducted three interviews and identified some potential leads.

Overall, we consider these numbers to be very promising. Delivering the product and message to users takes time, especially in the B2B segment, where not all users are innovators or ready to use new products. Patience and effort are key to building a strong community of early users.

### **3.8. Conclusions**

Throughout the design and implementation of our GTM strategy, we encountered several challenges and opportunities that significantly shaped our approach. These experiences have provided valuable insights into product development and market entry.

When designing our GTM strategy, we faced significant challenges, primarily centered on the quick iteration challenge. The 5-50-100 approach, which involved working closely with five Innovator-type users, allowed us to dive deeply into creating the right product.

By building user personas and conducting cold outreach, we were able to build the initial group of users we needed. This highlights the importance of not diving into product development and resource expenditure prematurely. Building a strong foundation of

Innovators and Early Adopters is the key to developing a successful product that meets real market needs. These elements are essential for navigating the complexities of the market and ensuring that our product development efforts align with actual user demands and expectations.

By adopting these approaches, we reduced risks, adapted to challenges, and created a solid foundation for future growth. This methodology ensured that our product development was going the right way.

## SECTION 4. STARTUP TOOLKIT

### 4.1. Tools Overview

One of the goals of this work was to describe a set of tools that could be used for fast iteration in product development. Here is a summary of the key instruments we used:

1. G2, Capterra. Two popular platforms that provide user reviews. These platforms offer similar features with slight differences. The main features we utilized include extended reviews and ratings, side-by-side comparisons of similar products, product analysis with grid reports, and lists of popular and trending product solutions. We used both platforms, G2 and Capterra. The platforms provided valuable resources and tools, offering some insights for a deeper analysis.
2. Namecheap. Namecheap is a popular domain registrar that offers a variety of modern features to support domain registration and website hosting. The platform provides features of domain registration in multiple zones and email hosting, which were actively used. In our case, Namecheap did not offer any extra value compared to other well-known registrar platforms. We selected this platform based on our previous positive experience, with no complaints. Other domain registrars could also effectively serve these needs.
3. Figma. Figma is a popular design and prototyping tool that offers modern features to support design development. It also boasts a large designer community that creates numerous free templates for landing pages, which can be readily used. Figma was used intensively in our projects to prepare materials and as a source of templates. It was easy to quickly achieve results with Figma, even without prior knowledge.
4. Framer. Framer is a popular design and prototyping tool that offers advanced features to support interactive design development. It has a big community of designers who create numerous free templates and resources, which can be readily utilized in a matter of minutes. Framer became a super valuable tool for us, allowing us to replicate any needed design with just a few steps quickly. Its Chrome



extensions for websites and Figma plugins make it an excellent tool for rapid prototyping. Additionally, Framer natively supports web hosting, significantly speeding up the development of landing pages. The main con is the increasing cost when expanding the team. However, for solo work, the price remains competitive at around \$10 per month.

5. ChatGPT. ChatGPT is an AI-powered language model that assists with content generation. It was particularly helpful in creating content for landing pages, providing quick and efficient text that enhanced our products.
6. FilloutForm (also JetForm, TypeForm, and others). FilloutForm has been a valuable tool for us, providing the quick and efficient creation of sign-up pages and significantly reducing the time spent building the authorization pages. FilloutForm is a form-building tool that allows users to design custom forms with a no-code builder. It also offers a large number of integrations with various platforms, which could create an ecosystem with other tools. FilloutForm is one of many similar platforms, such as JetForm and TypeForm. Any of these platforms could be used, as there is no significant difference between them for the basic requirements needed to create a sign-up form and page.
7. Apollo.io. Apollo was used for B2B lead generation and sales outreach. It offers a variety of features to streamline sales efforts and improve efficiency. Among many other platforms, Apollo stands out for its robust database of leads and email sequencing options. Additionally, it's free for limited and lean discovery, and the free package was sufficient to generate a noticeable amount of leads for our needs.
8. Clay.com. Clay is a platform for building and managing a B2B lead database. It has been a valuable asset for us, enabling the efficient generation and management of leads. While Clay can be compared to Apollo in terms of lead generation, it differs in the tools and management features it offers. Nevertheless, both Apollo.io and Clay were utilized effectively in our research.

9. Paddle. Paddle is a payment service offering a range of features to help software companies and individuals manage their billing, payments, and subscriptions. Most importantly, it operates as a merchant of record, providing back-end tax services, making it more usable for small products in the Ukrainian ecosystem than platforms like Stripe. Paddle is an essential tool that simplifies payment complexities and enables rapid experimentation with payment products.
10. Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager. Both Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager provide tools for getting insights and simple to medium-level analytics to track website actions. The best part is that they don't require a lot of effort or coding skills to start using. They offer analytics, reports, real-time data, and more features. We used Google Analytics specifically for our analysis work.
11. Hotjar. Hotjar is designed to analyze user behavior in depth. One of its major features is heatmaps, which allow for a detailed analysis of user interactions. This feature has helped us understand how users behave on landing and other pages, including a few times when this tool helped to rethink and rebuild our UX and delivered messages.
12. Google Ads. Google Ads is an online advertising platform used for user acquisition through targeted advertising. We used Google Ads for some experiments with PPC advertising, which helped us acquire new users. However, it is not ideal for a lean approach and should be used intelligently to maximize its effectiveness. For the scaling stage, it is a very useful tool.
13. FB Pixel. The platform is used for targeted advertising on Facebook. We used it for the same reasons as Google Ads, but it requires more visual content compared to the text approach of Google Ads. FB Pixel advertising is great at delivering visual and emotional messages. There are also a lot of differences between user audiences and their intent on Facebook and Google Search. However, both platforms are better suited for the scaling stage rather than for lean idea validation and market entry.

14. Other Platforms and Services. We also used Amplitude, which offers more advanced analytics capabilities, Discord/Slack for engaging with communities, and some other minor services.

These tools collectively enabled us to iterate quickly, validate our hypotheses, and refine our product. Each platform and service contributed uniquely to our products, offering specific strengths at various stages and situations. Their combined use allowed us to optimize our efforts, speed up processes, and achieve better outcomes. Additionally, all of them offer free or low-cost packages, which is beneficial for lean product development.

## CONCLUSIONS

The process of creating a new product is challenging and has numerous limitations, including time, money, competition, and many others. It is rarely straightforward. This study aimed to develop a lean GTM strategy for an educational startup, providing a structured approach to navigating these challenges.

It is crucial not to dive into product development and resource expenditures (money, time, energy) prematurely until ideas are thoroughly validated. The key thing is to delay these commitments and work as long as possible while validating your ideas. This helps avoid unnecessary investments and ensures that the product meets market needs. The iterative process of "Build - Measure - Learn" proves to be an important framework for this approach.

Flexibility and readiness to pivot based on feedback are crucial for success. The journey described in this study involved multiple iterations and adjustments, demonstrating the need to stay adaptable and responsive to user needs and market dynamics.

Effective use of tools and resources, such as G2, Capterra and others, significantly contributed to the efficient development and validation of the product. These tools enabled rapid prototyping, user feedback collection, and market analysis, ensuring a lean and efficient development process.

The 5-50-100 framework for building a user base proved effective in scaling the product step-by-step. Starting with a small group of innovators and early adopters, the product could be refined and improved based on real user feedback before opening to a broader audience.

A valuable exercise for new products is considering how to accelerate your development process speed more than you initially thought. Identify tasks that can be postponed until your hypotheses are validated. The author of this work had the opportunity to explore these concepts deeply in the study at the UCU Business School.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of a lean and iterative approach to product development and market entry. By focusing on validation and efficient resource use, entrepreneurs can navigate the market and increase their chances of developing a successful product. This study not only applies to educational startups but also offers insights for other areas. The experiences and lessons learned from this study provide an understanding of how to build and scale products from 0 to 1 effectively.

## GLOSSARY

B2C - Business to Consumer

B2B - Business to Business

CAC - Customer Acquisition Cost

CAGR - Compound Annual Growth Rate

CRM - Customer Relationship Management System

CRR- Customer Retention Rate

CTA - Call-To-Action

GCP - Google Cloud Platform

GTM - Go-To-Market

LTV - Lifetime Value

MVP - Minimum Viable Product

PPC - Pay-Per-Click

PMF - Product Market Fit

SEO - Search Engine Optimization

US - United States

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