

Carnegie Mellon University

Swartz Center for Entrepreneurship



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Customer Discovery Kickstart Program
Information Session

Background - CMU NSF I-Corps Site Program

- 2014-2021
- 9-week Customer Discovery training program
- Designed to accelerate the economic and societal benefits of research projects that are ready for commercialization
- Student startups (not CMU IP) not eligible



2022 – Customer Discovery Kickstart program

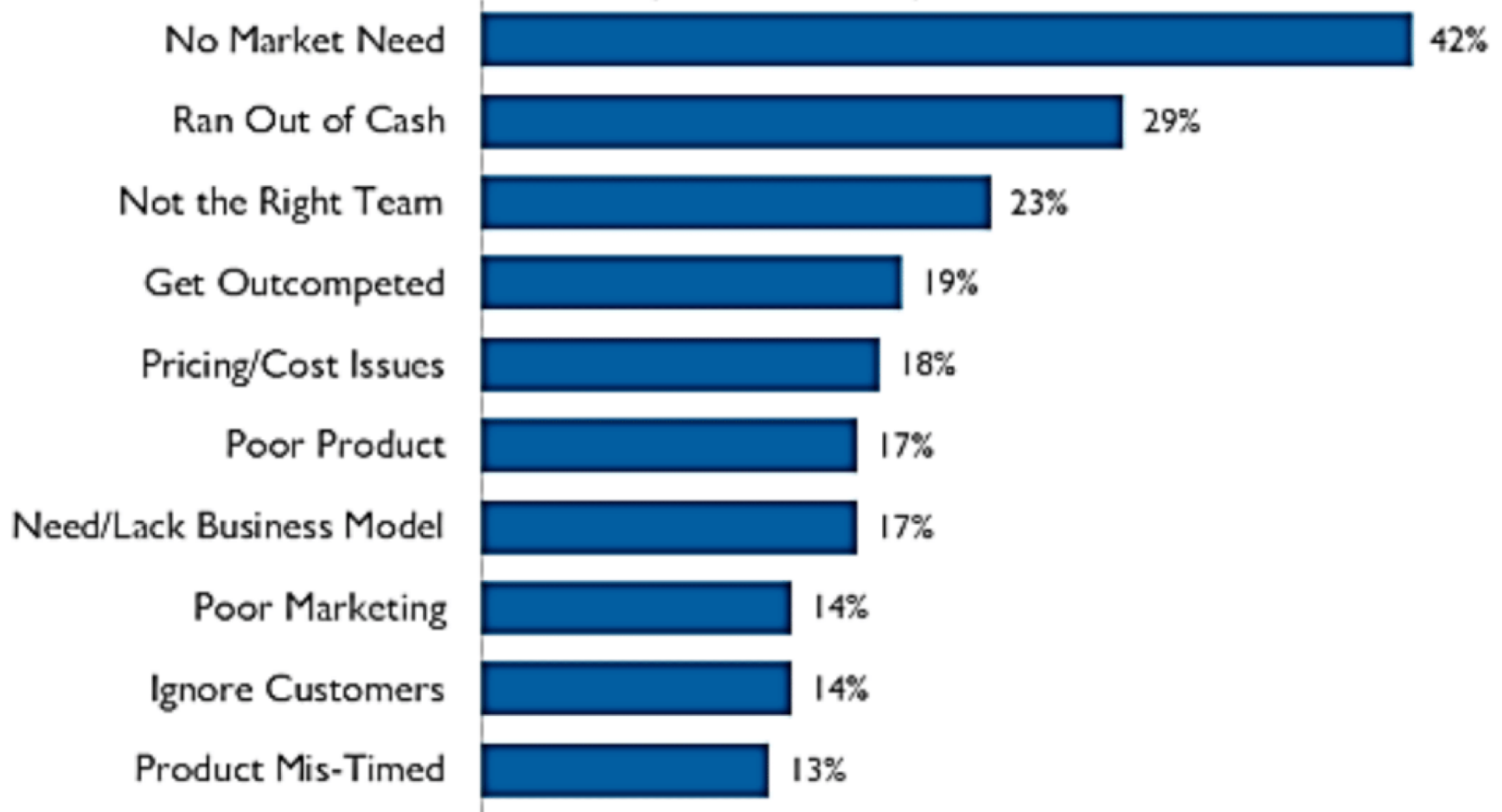
- Created by Olympus incubator to serve student startups not eligible for I-Corps
- Modeled after I-Corps curriculum
- Part 1 – customer discovery
- Part 2 (spring 2023) – continue customer discovery, communications



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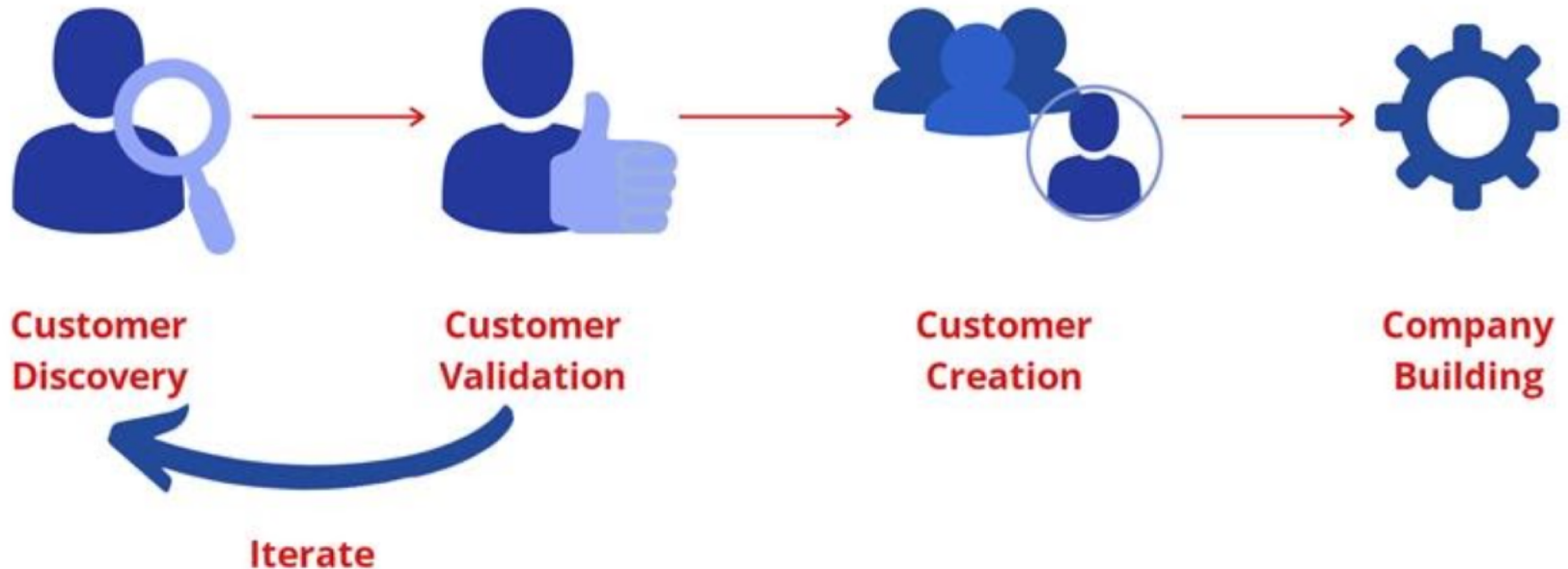
Top 10 Reasons Startups Fail

Based on an Analysis of 101 Startup Post-Mortems



<http://www.cbinsights.com/blog/startup-failure-reasons-top/>

The Customer Development Model



- Customer Discovery is about “breaking your assumptions” instead of confirming them.
 - Avoid “confirmation bias” trap
- It is not about selling your product to the customer
 - Seek information to design a suitable solution
- Customer Validation is about testing your hypotheses with real potential customers
 - What needs to be true for your startup to be successful

2022 – Customer Discovery Kickstart program

- 4-6 weeks long
 - 4 required cohort meetings
 - Meet with assigned EIR weekly
 - Complete 20 new, unique customer discovery interviews
- On demand videos (some from I-Corps Hub) and “homework”
- Average 7 hours time spent per week
- Goal is to make progress towards product/market fit



Customer Discovery Kickstart program benefits

- Cohort experience
- Structured customer discovery
- 1:1 coaching
- Networking opportunities
- Find product / market fit faster
- Prepares teams for fundraising



2022 – Customer Discovery Kickstart program – application process

- Accepting up to 9 teams
- Applications – open now, deadline Oct 12
<https://bit.ly/cdkNov2022>
- Apply to Project Olympus
- Program tentatively scheduled 11/2-11/30



Testimonials

“CDK has been instrumental to us in identifying the product-market fit before investing lots of time and resources into our startup. We have also identified alternative go-to-market strategies after interviewing with customers.”

Ardalan Tajbakhsh, co-founder Piximo Robotics

“Through Project Olympus, Sonder could develop its business model and product/market fit in a more structured and effective way with continuous invaluable support from EIRs.”

Bruce Kim, co-founder Sonder

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