

Customer Development 101

aka, how we discovered  tarka

Who is Dan Moore?

Computer nerd since I was 8 years old

Software engineer (BSCS. )

Product Management Consultant (70+ startups)

Serial Entrepreneur (4th co, 1 exit, 2 failed)

CD Expert (14 years and counting)

Currently discovering Tarka, the
Customer Discovery copilot



Dan Moore

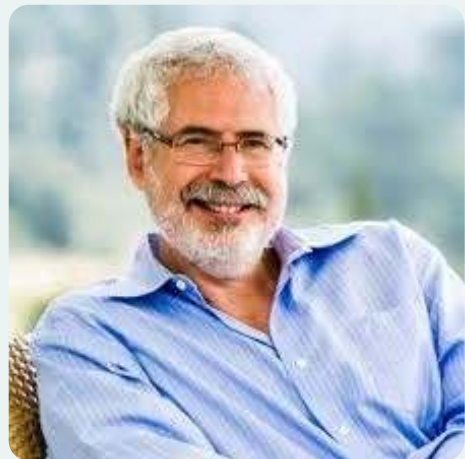
Cofounder of Tarka

dan@tarka.ai

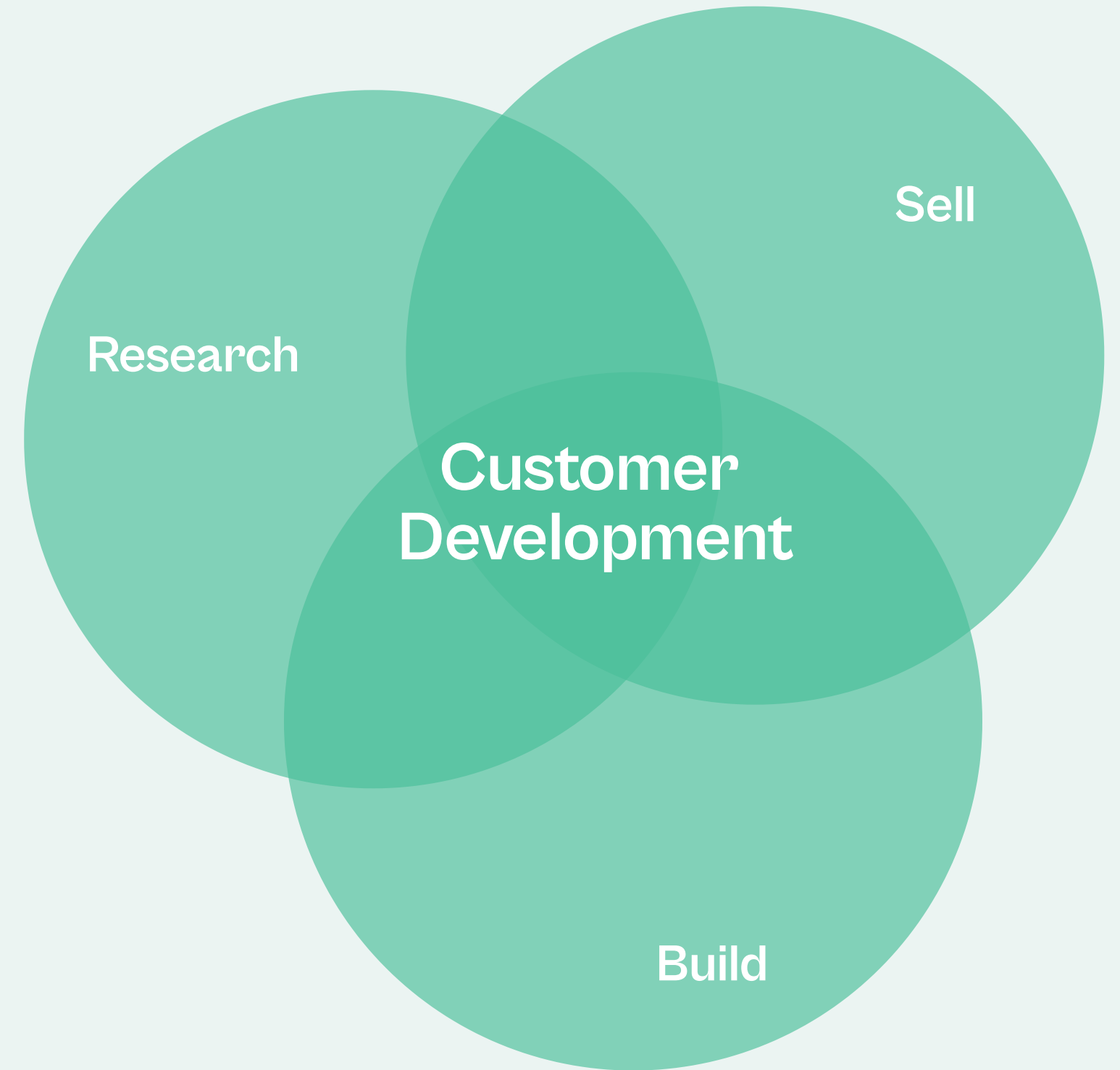
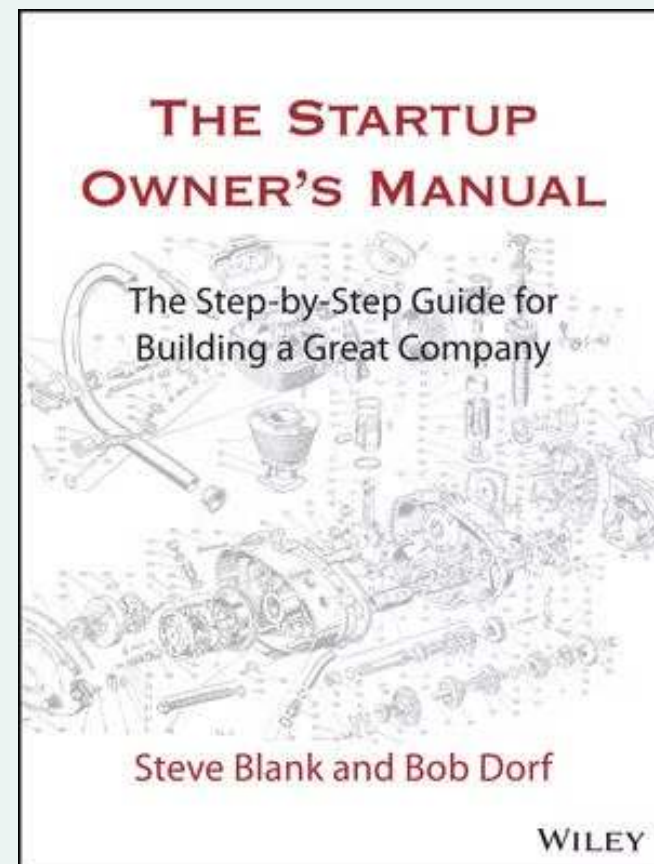


What is Customer Development?

1. Customer Discovery
2. Customer Validation
3. Customer Creation
4. Company Building



Steve Blank



How to land your first 10 customers

How we did it



Prospects

Find your customers

Connect with them

Discover their problems



Problems

Validate desirable value

Unfold your offer

Convert to pilots

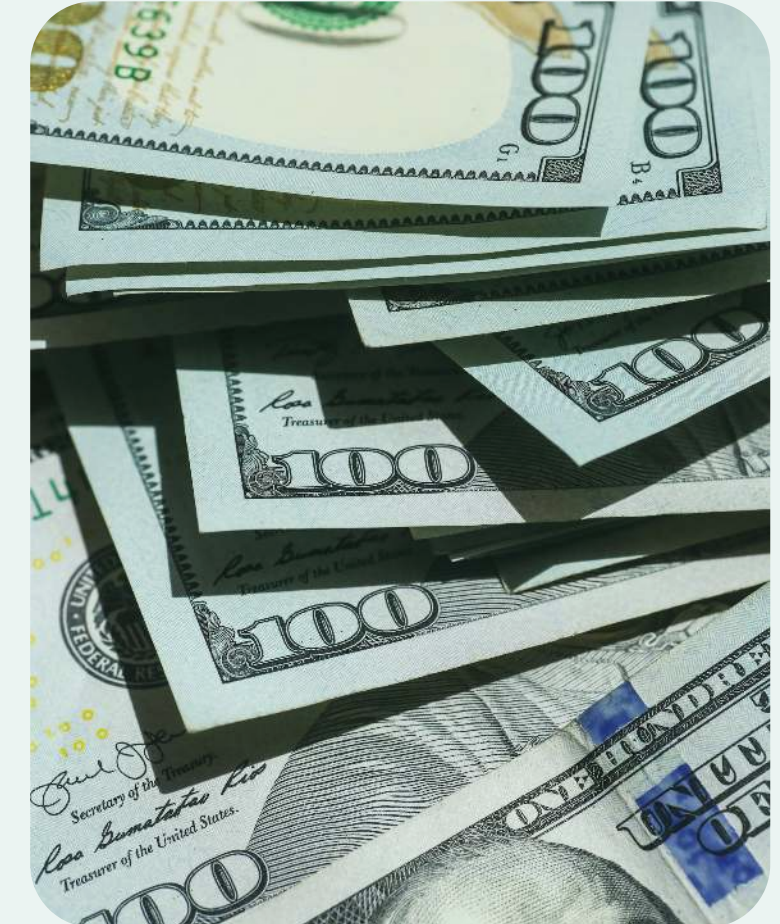


Pilots

Deliver value

Capture learnings

Double down



Proof

Start building

Continue learning

... profit?

Requirements

You bring expertise to the table

You can reach your customers

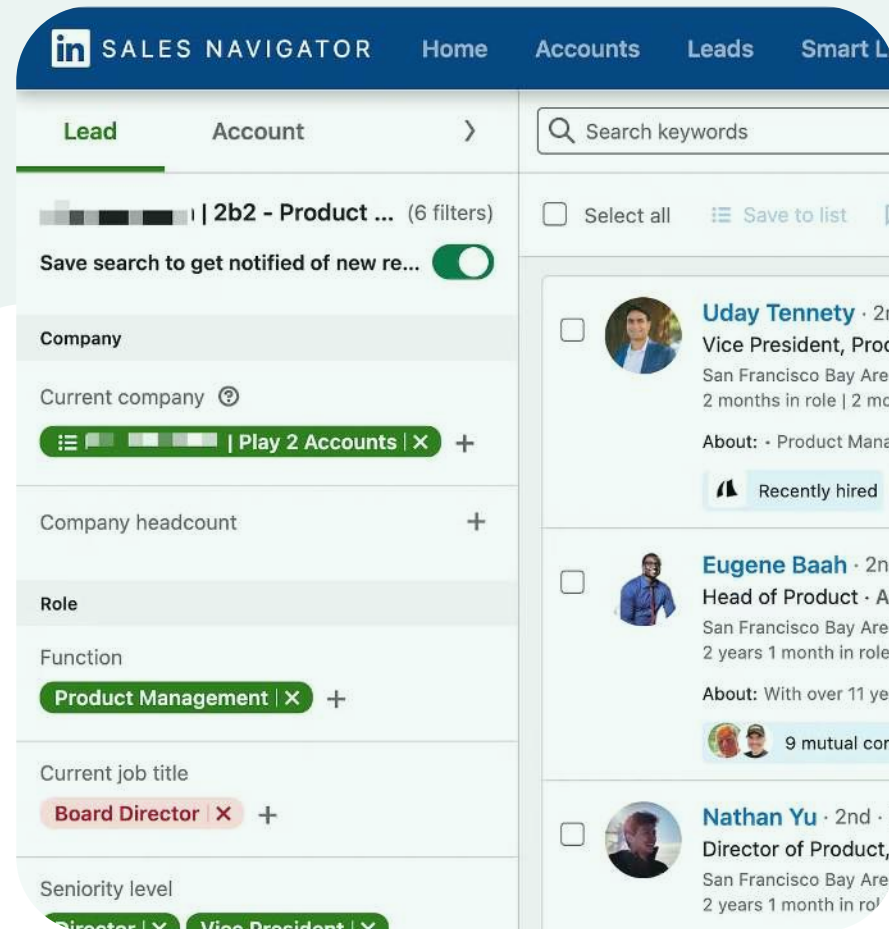
Your customers have problems

Your customers are early adopters

You can solve your customers' problems

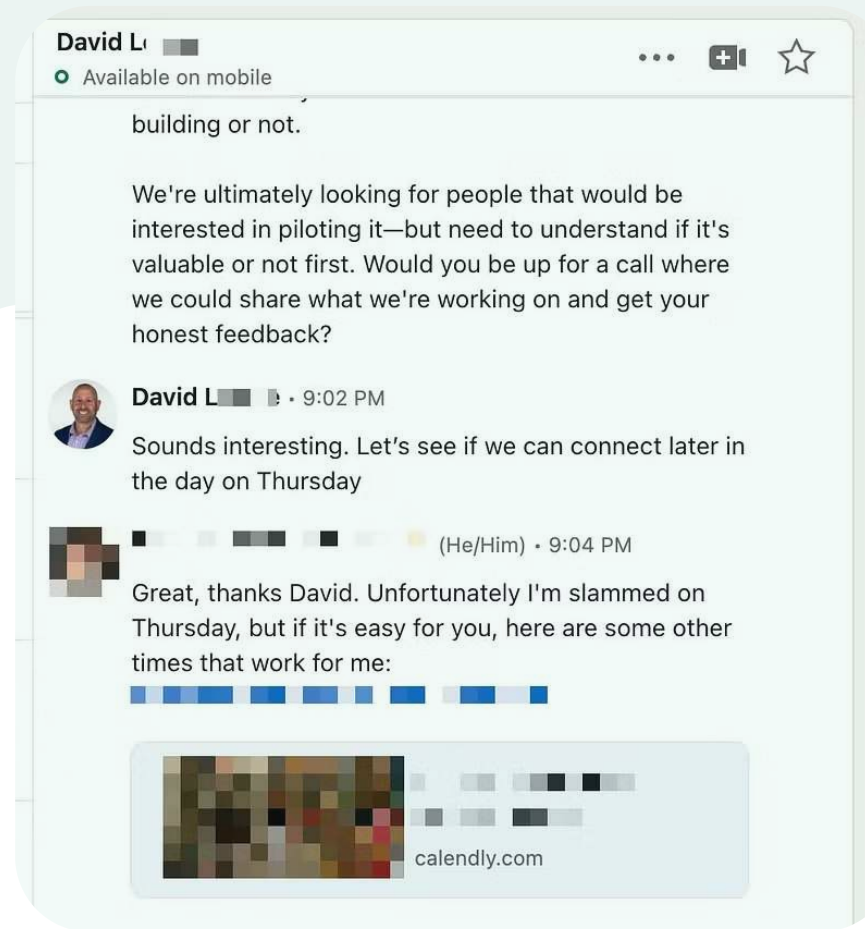
Caveat: This is decades of **B2B SaaS** experience.
YMMV outside of that.

Prospects → Problems (Customer Discovery)



Find your customers

How to identify target market segments for discovery



Connect with customers

How to get people to connect, chat, and join a zoom call



Discover their problems

How to run a successful problem-oriented interview

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn Sales Navigator interface. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Accounts', 'Leads', 'Smart Links', 'Messaging', and 'Admin'. The left sidebar contains filters for 'Lead' and 'Account'. The main content area displays a list of leads with the following details:

- Uday Tenny** · 2nd · Saved
Vice President, Product Management · Armada
San Francisco Bay Area
2 months in role | 2 months in company
About: · Product Management, GTM, and Partnerships Exec
Recently hired | 17 mutual connections
- Eugene Baah** · 2nd · Saved
Head of Product · Afriex
San Francisco Bay Area
2 years 1 month in role | 2 years 1 month in company
About: With over 11 years of experience in product manager
9 mutual connections
- Nathan Yu** · 2nd · Saved
Director of Product, GM of Labs · Inworld AI
San Francisco Bay Area
2 years 1 month in role | 2 years 1 month in company
About: I am on a mission to advance new technology aimed
8 mutual connections
- Jeff Love** · 2nd · Saved
Director of Product Management · Spoiler Alert
Greater Chicago Area
1 year 1 month in role | 1 year 1 month in company
About: Product leader with 10+ years of experience in comp
5 mutual connections | 1 recent post on Link

Find your customers

How to identify target market segments for discovery

Use LinkedIn SalesNav (\$99/mo)

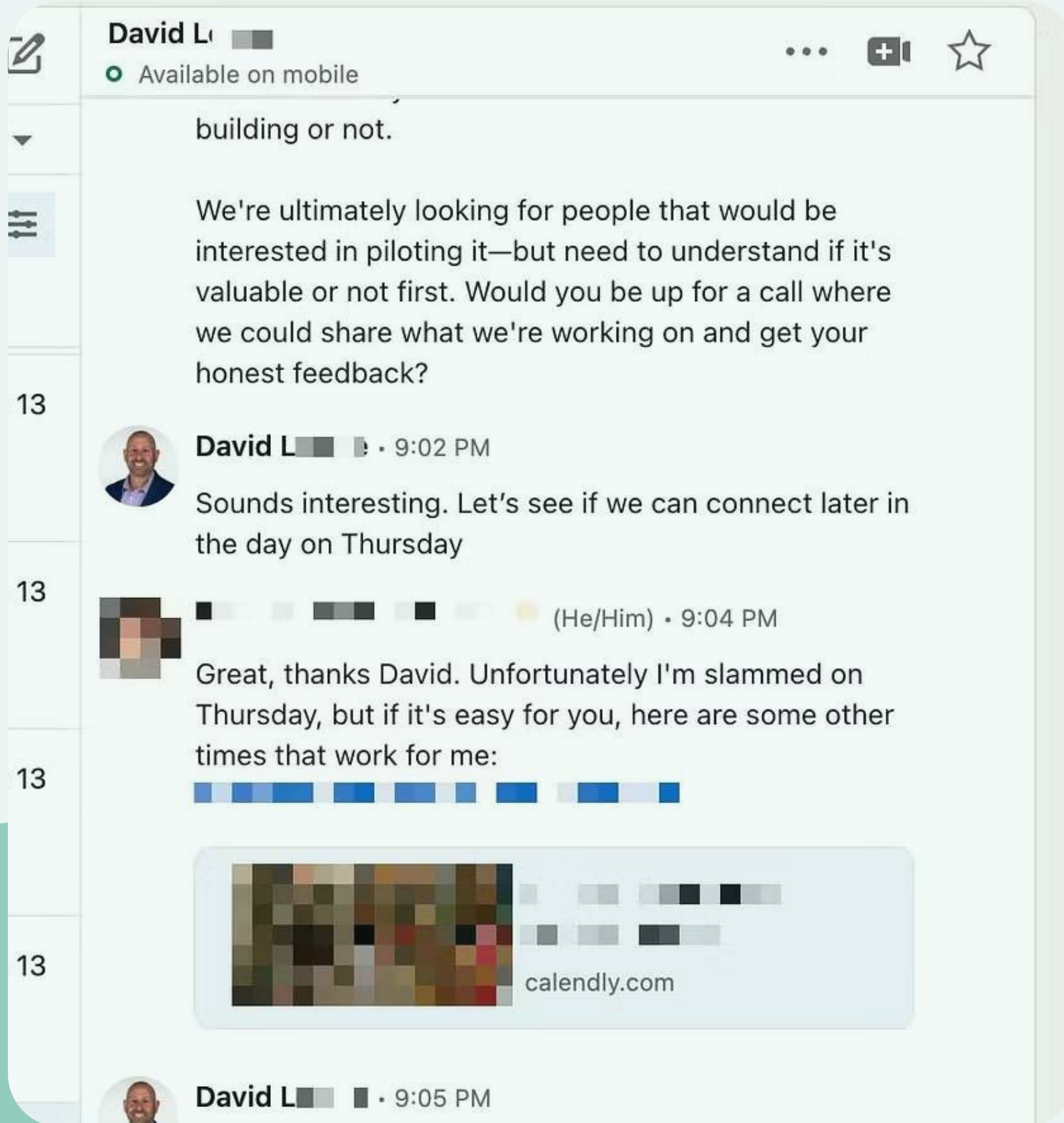
Filter Accounts by industry, size, location

Save to an acc list, removing consultants

Filter Leads by saved list, title, recent activity, 2nd+ degree

Save to a lead list

1,000 people is a good segment



Connect with customers

How to get people to connect, chat, and join a zoom call

Send a custom connection request

Hey <FName>, I'm working on <problem/struggle> and would love to learn from your experience. Can we connect?

Follow up once they accept

Thanks for connecting, <FName>. I'm exploring <problem/struggle> and would love to learn from your perspective since you've been in the space for so long. Are you open to a 30min zoom?

40% connection → 50% response → 30% calls



Discover customer problems

How to run a successful problem-oriented interview

Ask them to tell you stories*

Ask 1 question at a time and shut up

Go deep for CURSEs

Crucial - real money is being spent

Ubiquitous - there is a real market size to solving this problem

Recurring - this will stay top of mind for them

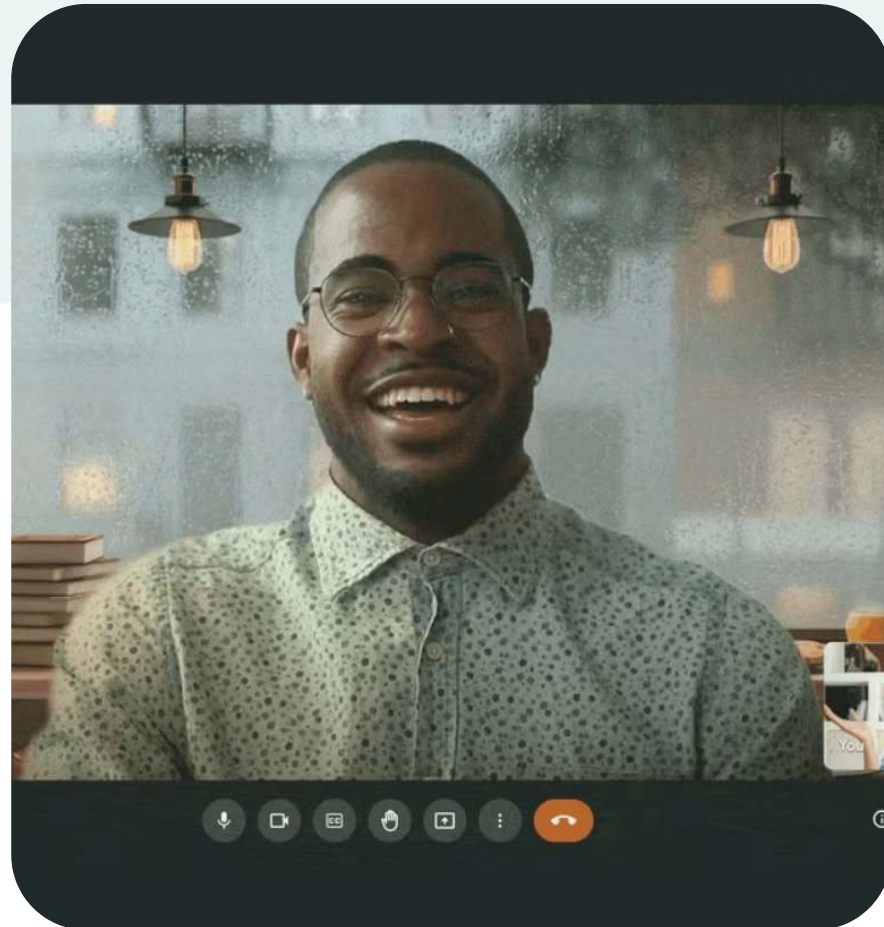
Specific - they don't have a great solution

Extreme - they're willing to do something about it

Always ask for a referral

*Want Tarka's interview guides? Email me for a copy of our 3 scripts and customer testing decks

Problems → Pilots (Customer Validation)



Validate desirable value

How to find the believable value grounded in customer problems



Unfold your offer

How to turn the value prop into a purchasable offer



Convert to pilots

How to find your true early adopters and willingness to pay

Validate desirable value

Find the believable value grounded in customer pain

Write value props based on problems

[PRODUCT NAME]

is for [USERS] who struggle with [PROBLEM]

that [DOES THESE 1-3 THINGS]

to achieve [OUTCOME]

Share visually in interviews and ask

On a scale of 0 to 10, how important is [PRODUCT] to your role at company today?

You're looking for 9+ in a consistent segment for 1 prop

SPECIAL DEAL

Limited time offer!

Unfold your offer

Turn the value prop into a purchasable offer

The problem you're solving

The value you're delivering

The general pilot process

Requirements for early pilot customers

3 different versions (1x, 2.5x, 5x priced)

A 50% off deal for early adopters

Resist the urge to offer it for free



Convert to pilots

Find your true early adopters and willingness to pay

Walk through the deck and get feedback

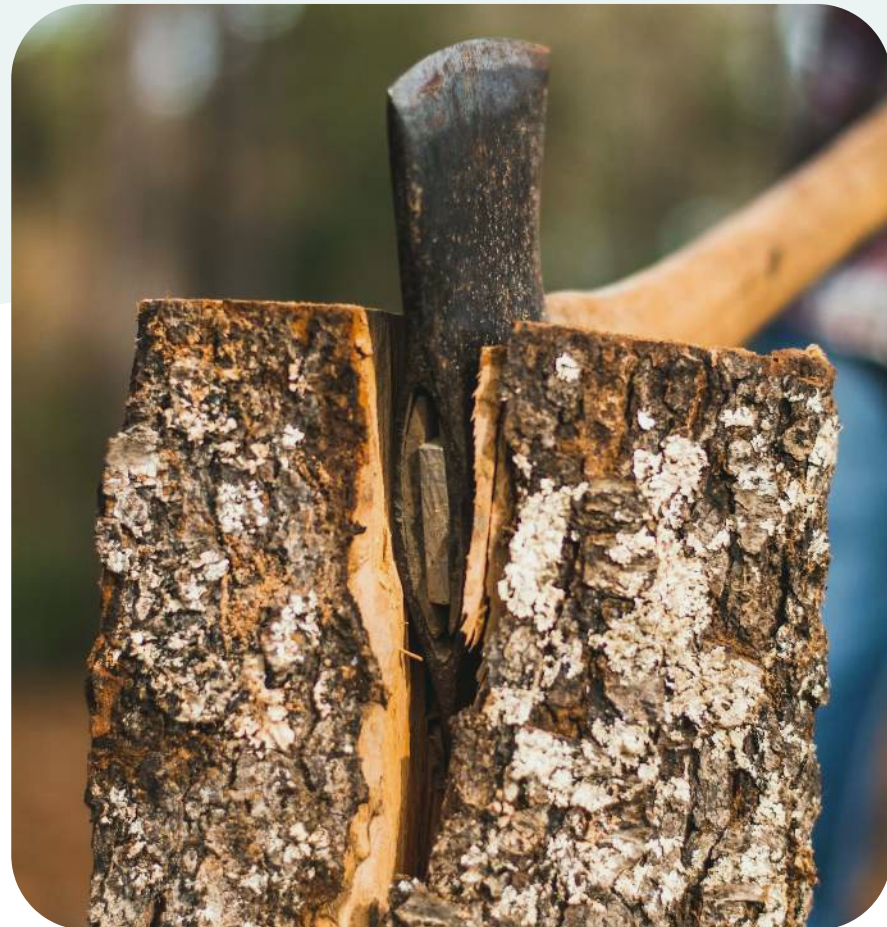
THEY should ask YOU to try / get started

If they don't, ask what they would need to see in order to pilot / purchase.

If you're talking to the right target (a buyer), then update the offer and ask again.

Don't stop iterating until you get 3 paid customers.

Pilots → Proof (Customer Creation)



Deliver value

How to do things that don't scale before building



Capture learnings

How to get deeply involved with your customers to maximize learning



Focus on champions

How to get fanatic customers and their social proof for the world to see



Deliver value

Do things that don't scale before building

Use whatever you're familiar with
(Google sheets, email, airtable, slack)

Get to customer value as fast as possible

Respond and collaborate promptly

If you write code, I guarantee you'll delete it



Capture learnings

Get deeply involved with your customers to learn the most

Map out your process visually to find places to experiment

Meet with pilots regularly and ask questions to maximize your learnings

Experiment by cutting the service smaller

Talk to 2 new potential customers a week



Focus on champions

Get fanatic customers and their social proof for the world to see

Fanatic customers will refer you

Add pilots as case studies in your sales deck

Follow and engage with your pilots publicly (like on LinkedIn)

**30% of your pilots should be fanatics.
You'll stop helping the ones that aren't.**

Proof → Profits



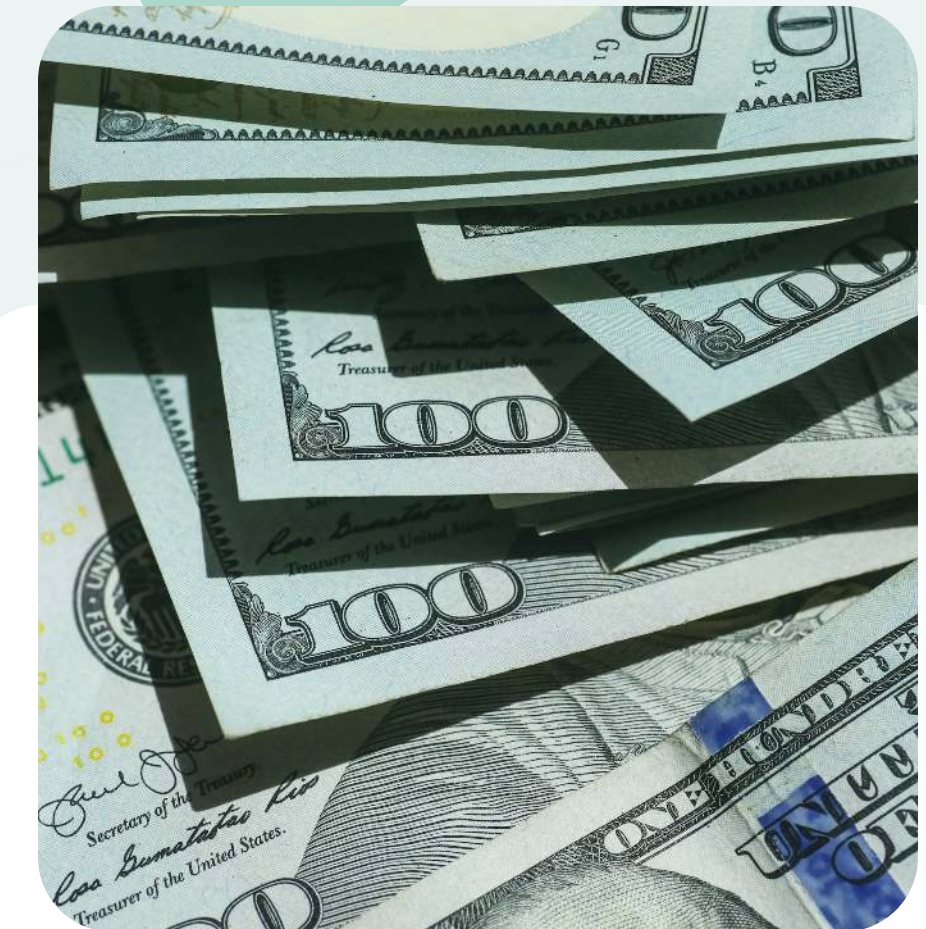
Start building

How to automate a piece at a time until customers can self-service



Continue learning

How to listen to customers daily, with continuous discovery



...profit?

How to scale execution and delivery to get profitable

Any questions?



Dan Moore

Connect on LinkedIn [/in/toobulkeh](#)

Email me dan@tarka.ai



The screenshot shows the Tarka CRM interface for a campaign titled "Play Title / LinkedIn Outreach" which has been live for 12 days. The dashboard includes a navigation menu with options like Overview, Contacts, Inbox (with 6 notifications), Calendar, Activity Log, and Settings. A progress bar at the top tracks the campaign's status: Targeted (489), Contacted (479, 98%), Connected (342, 70%), Conversing (195, 40%), Scheduled (148, 76%), and Held (83, 56%). Below this is a table of "Upcoming Calls" with 25 calls listed, including contact names, titles/companies, and scheduled times. On the right side, there are two panels: "Needs Attention" showing 5 items with unread messages, and "Timeline" showing progress for "Requests accepted" (70% / 40%), "Conversing" (40% / 50%), and "Interviews Scheduled" (76% / 20%).

Want to accelerate your customer development?

Join the waitlist at www.tarka.ai