Bullseye Customer one-liner facilitator kit

Activity 2 of 9: The searchable hypothesis

What you're building: Your team's agreed-on customer one-liner — specific enough to build your full hypothesis from.

- *People:* 3–10 (the team closest to the customer)
- *Materials:* This guide + whiteboard software or analog supplies
- *Time:* ~60 min

Why this exists

Your team already has a theory about who your customer is, whether you all have said it out loud or not. The problem is usually that everyone's theory is slightly different — and no one's checked and no one's aligned.

Most teams skip this step entirely. They target a category ("startup founders," "product teams," "operators") and start building. Categories don't have problems, people do. And you can't interview a category.

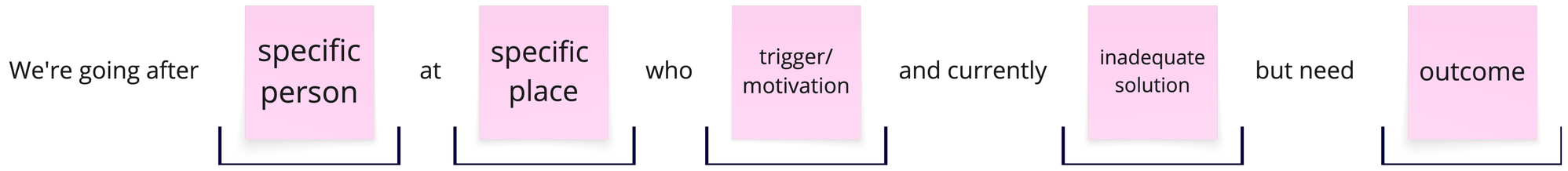
This exercise will surface what your team believes, finds where you disagree, and forces you to get specific enough to find and talk to that kind of person. About 60 min, getting to one sentence. That's the goal.

What happens next: The one-liner is the input to your hypothesis canvas — activity 3. It's also a good way to pressure-test whether your team is looking for the same customer.

Bullseye Customer one-liner

What the one-liner looks like

Five components, one sentence:



- Specific person — a role or a specific situation, not a demographic
- Specific place — company type, size, or stage
- Trigger — the moment that made this urgent, not just annoying
- Inadequate solution — what they're doing instead right now
- Outcome — what better/done looks like for them

What too vague looks like

You can say these out loud but they still won't work:

- Startup founders who are struggling to get traction
- Product teams who want to level up their customer discovery
- Operators who need better visibility into their business

They've got some detail but they're all hand-wavy and general in spots. All three fail the same test: could you write a screening question directly from that sentence without adding more detail? If not, you're hedging.

"Frustrated" isn't a trigger. "Needs visibility" isn't an outcome. The first words that feel true usually aren't specific enough.

Two examples of what tight looks like follows.

Bullseye Customer one-liner: examples

Here's a set of one-liners built with a seed-stage ops tooling startup. Three different people, same company size, and different challenges:

We're going after	a head of ops	at	a 20–100 person company	who	is tired of waiting on the engineering roadmap	and currently	submitting tickets that never move	but need	to run internal workflows without touching code or filing another request
We're going after	an ops director	at	a 20–100 person company	who	is losing visibility across departments	and currently	has no single source of truth for how work is actually moving	but need	to see the full picture without chasing it down manually
We're going after	a VP of finance	at	a 20–100 person company	who	is under a hiring freeze	and currently	watching their team drown in manual data entry	but need	to scale output without adding headcount

And here's a progression from another sprint — the same company, same problem, different person. This is from a fintech co that started targeting CFOs and found their way to controllers:

We're going after	CFOs	at	$50M+ SaaS firms	who	are overpaying on processing fees	and currently	lack real-time visibility into where margin is leaking	but need	modern dashboards that show exactly what they're spending and why
We're going after	controllers	at	$30M–$100M SaaS firms	who	spend hours manually reconciling transaction data	and currently	have no clean feed from their payment processor	but need	a reporting layer that stops the monthly cleanup cycle
We're going after	controllers	at	$30M–$100M SaaS firms	who	get handed an audit problem by their CFO	and currently	spend 20+ hours a month manually fixing line-item data in their ERP	but need	level 3 automation that stops flagging transactions — not a savings pitch, a sanity fix

Notice the shift. Same product. Different person, different trigger, different outcome. And all are tight enough to build a more detailed hypothesis around.

Bullseye Customer one-liner: exercise

THE EXERCISE (~60 min)

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Round 1: Group interview (30 min)

This is a conversation, not a survey. One person facilitates while everyone else listens, adds context, reframes, and pushes back.

One person speaks at a time. Capture one thought per sticky note — don't editorialize, just get it down.

A few questions to get the conversation going:

- Who feels this problem most acutely — what's their role, and what does their day look like when it's bad?
- At what stage or size does this become urgent, not just something they can deal with later?
- What was the moment they went from "we should fix this" to "we have to fix this now"?
- What are they actually doing instead right now? Not what they wish they were doing — what are they actually doing?
- What does done or better feel like for them?

By the end of round one, you'll have a stack of sticky notes — the volume of what your team believes right now. Some of it will conflict. That's useful data.

Bullseye Customer one-liner: exercise

THE EXERCISE (~60 min) *cont.*

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Round 2: Narrowing (10 min)

Sort your sticky notes into four categories: who, what, why you, exclusions. Then narrow each. Push every vague phrase toward something specific:

- ″Product managers″ → ″VP of Product at Series B SaaS who ships monthly”
- ″They′re frustrated″ → ″Can′t get developer time but has budget authority to try tools”
- ″They need visibility″ → ″Real-time pipeline visibility they can trust in a board meeting″

For each sticky note, ask: what′s underneath this? So what? Why does it matter now and not six mos ago? The goal is a tighter set of characteristics specific enough to construct the one-liner.

Round 3: Constructing the one-liner (20 min)

Use your sharpened notes to fill in the formula. It′ll feel clumsy at first but after you do one, the next ones should come easier. Write several versions with a different person, different trigger, different outcome. More is better here. When the flow starts to slow, write a few more.

Two main things to watch for:

- Disagreement is a signal. If the team is far apart on who the customer is, that′s something to test — not paper over. Write both versions.
- Behavior over intent. The trigger should describe what they′ve already done or tried, not what you think they want. ″Has been using spreadsheets for 18 mos” is a stronger signal than ″wants a better solution.″

Bullseye Customer one-liner: exercise

THE EXERCISE (~60 min) *cont.*

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Round 4: AI & dot vote (10 min)

Take a break. Look at everything you've made. Now time to use AI to widen your work. This isn't a shortcut, it's additive. Use this prompt — paste it into whatever model you're working with, then add your one-liners and a few sentences about your product and who you currently think you're building for:

> We just completed an exercise to identify our Bullseye Customer in a one-liner. Our goal is to identify a specific person we can ultimately recruit, interview, and test our assumptions with. Each one-liner follows this format: We're going after [specific person] at [specific place] who [trigger] and currently [inadequate solution] but need [outcome].
>
> Here are our one-liners: [paste them here]
>
> Here's a short description of our product and what we currently believe about our customer: [paste here]
>
> For each one-liner, return three things: (1) Whether the trigger describes a specific moment or a general state — if general, return a more specific version. (2) Whether the inadequate solution names something they're actually doing right now, or reads like an assumption — flag which. (3) Whether the outcome is specific enough to write a screening question from, or is still a category ("visibility," "efficiency," "scale") — flag which. Don't identify a best one-liner. Don't generate new ones unless prompted. Flag where the language is still hedging.

Bullseye Customer one-liner: exercise

THE EXERCISE (~60 min) *cont.*

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Round 4: AI & dot vote (10 min) *cont.*

You're looking for friction on the language you already have, not validation. Some of what comes back will sharpen a trigger or expose a generic outcome. Some of it will miss altogether, your team makes the call.

One constraint worth keeping: don't let the model generate new one-liners. If it does, you'll spend the next ten minutes reacting to its hypotheses instead of your own. You can always ask for alternatives later — after the dot vote, once you've committed to a direction.

Once you've tightened the one-liners, vote. Each team member gets the number of dots for the number of team members present, plus one. Stack all your votes on a single one-liner if you want — this is you picking one to start with. The others aren't gone, they're your next hypotheses.

A note on facilitation

Most teams that run this exercise find one or two moments where the conversation stalls — not because the question is hard, but because the team is too close to the answer. Someone's been thinking one thing for six months, someone else assumes everyone agrees with them, and no one's ever actually said it out loud.

This exercise is designed so those moments surface. If you run it and hit one, that's not a failure — that's it working. What you do with it is up to you. An outside facilitator doesn't make the exercise work better. They make it easier to stay honest when it gets uncomfortable.

Bullseye Customer one-liner: one last note

In closing

The goal is to agree on the customer you'll recruit first. The others aren't unimportant — they could be your second, third, and fourth hypotheses. Keep them.

You cannot recruit a generic person, so you'll start as specific as possible.

The one-liner you leave with today isn't final. It's a working hypothesis. Activity 3 — the hypothesis canvas — is where you'll pressure-test it across eight dimensions. If it holds, you're ready to recruit. If it doesn't, you'll know exactly what to sharpen.

Here's where we could go from here

You've just done something that most teams skip entirely.

The next step is the hypothesis canvas — activity 3. The one-liner is activity 2 of 9 in the Bullseye Customer Sprint — a process that takes most teams about two months and ends with real customer evidence and a direction everyone can stand behind.

let's talk! →

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No pitch, just a look at where you are and whether this is the right moment.



Bullseye Customer one-liner: examples

This is a progression of one-liners for a devtools co:

We're going after	operations managers	at	small companies	who	spend too much time on manual data workflows	and currently	stitch together tools like HubSpot, Sheets, and Salesforce	but need	a faster way to build custom automation apps without depending on a developer
We're going after	non-technical builders	at	small companies or maybe running their own businesses	who	have shipped something to real users (stakes)	and currently	can't diagnose what broke when things go wrong	but need	enough visibility into their app to fix it without starting over
We're going after	non-technical creators building React and Next.js apps with Lovable or Replit	at		who	hit bugs they can reproduce but have no mental model for diagnosing	and currently	currently paste errors back into the tool and hope for the best	but need	to see exactly what's broken so they can actually move forward

And this is a set of one-liners generated for a wellness and relationship app:

We're going after	college students	at	four-year universities	who	are in their first serious relationships and starting to question their patterns	and currently	have no way to track how they're actually showing up	but need	a mirror that's more honest than their group chat
We're going after	young adults	at	a major life transition — new city, new job, post-breakup —	who	are trying to build better habits before the next relationship	and currently	journaling or just winging it	but need	a structured way to stay accountable to themselves
We're going after	college students	at	colleges with active wellness or Greek life communities	who	are becoming more intentional about who gets their time and energy	and currently	going off gut feeling alone	but need	something that helps them see patterns before they're already too far in

Curious how far you get and your results — let's talk when you're ready.