

How to Know What You Don't Know

Making good products means understanding real problems

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Problem Centric Thinking

A **product** is a **solution** to a **problem** for a **market segment** } Group with a common problem

Before any work takes place, must answer:
What problem are you solving? For who?

How to Find Real Problems



Did you know?

Most people aren't like you
They also have problems
Their problems are probably
different than yours
You don't know everything



Quiz: Who to ask when identifying problems?

- A) No one – Just google it
- B) No one – Just take a good enough guess so you don't look stupid
- C) Your friends so that you don't have to talk to someone new
- D) People with those problems who experience them and can describe them

Making Contact

Take a rough guess at who might know

Industry reps, product managers, “strategists”

Email → Email → Call

Friendly, succinct, to the point

Play the odds

Assume 25% will reply at each stage

Be honest about not knowing

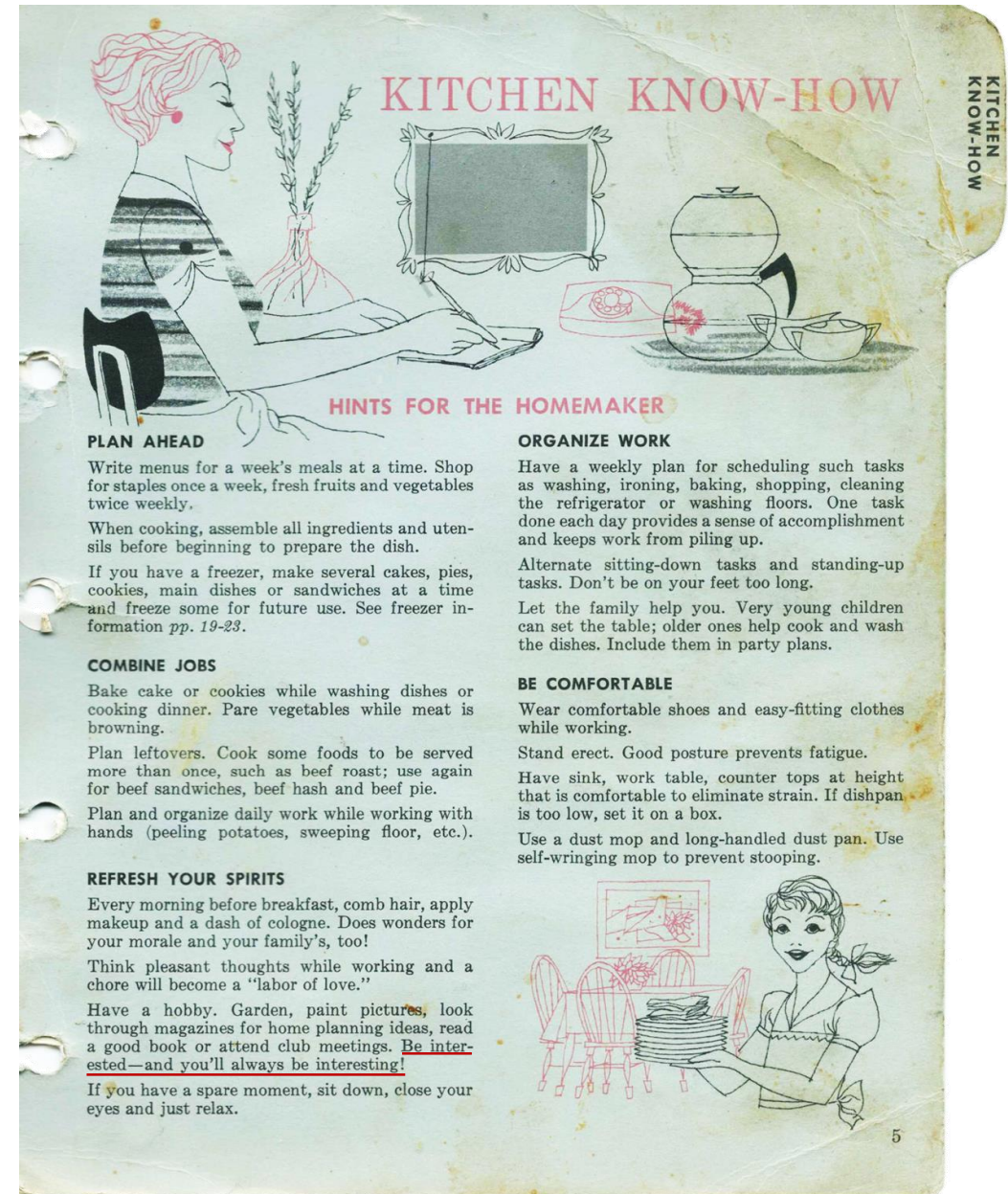
People like feeling helpful

Research first and look for common ground

UW Alumni, co-op company, friend/relative

Betty Crocker 1968

- “Be interested, and you’ll always be interesting!”
- Try for minimum 70/30 ratio of them talking vs. you talking
- Have questions prepped in advance
- Advanced level: Ask how they *feel* about it
- Try this at a party
 - You’ll do the least talking but be the most popular!



Example: App for Truck Drivers



Here we know the solution in advance (an app) – but to do what?

Not ideal to start and the end and work backwards



Check out what's already out there: Google “truck driver apps”

<https://www.nonforceddispatch.com/best-apps-truck-drivers>

Called “Primary Market Research”



Find out who represents these people: Google “truck driver union”

<http://teamsterscanada.org/en/about/union-profile/#haul>

Google “John McCann director teamsters”

<http://www.teamsters879.ca/about/>

Got it: John McCann – jmccann@teamsters879.ca + 10 more

Target
Acquired:
John McCann

What's the
Ask?

Email 1

“Hi, John. I’m a student at UWaterloo and I want to make an app for truckers. Do you know any friendly truckers I could contact to find out how a new app could improve their job?”

Email 2

“Hi again. Do you know anyone I could talk to about what could help out truckers, tech-wise?”

Phone Call

“Hi, John. My name is Derek Wright, and I’m a student from the University of Waterloo. [I’m following up on an email I sent you a few days ago / Thanks for replying to my email]. Maybe you’re not the right person, but I’m trying to understand how an app might help truckers. Do you know who I could talk to?”

Example: Unknown Solution for Indie Bands

- Who knows about indie bands? Google “indie band management”
 - <http://www.7smgmt.com/> (looked legit)
 - Could reach out to all the bands directly
 - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/7s-management/people/>
 - Look for the word “partnerships” – they’re used to working with ... people!
 - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kaila-frisone/>
 - Could guess at email, but I would just call.
 - Too much time on this one.
 - <https://www.indiemontreal.ca/contact-us>
 - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/indie-montr%C3%A9al/about/>
 - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jon-weisz/>
 - Google “jon weisz indie email” → Jon Weisz 514-893-3574
jweisz@indiemontreal.ca

Target
Acquired:
Jon Weisz

What's the
Ask?

Email 1

“Hi, Jon. I’m a student at UWaterloo and I want to see if there’s something engineers could do for indie bands. [You seem like you might know a thing or two about them!] Could I ask you about the kinds of challenges indie bands commonly face? Or, do you know any friendly bands I could contact?”

Email 2

“Hi again. Do you know anyone I could talk to about what could help indie bands, tech-wise?”

Phone Call

“Hi, Jon. My name is Derek Wright, and I’m a student from the University of Waterloo. [I’m following up on an email I sent you a few days ago / Thanks for replying to my email]. I’m creating an engineering project and want to understand what I could do that might help indie bands. Maybe you’re not the right person, but do you know who I could contact?”

So, What Do You Want to Know?



Principles

You are there to find problems or opportunities, not to imply solutions
Scope of questions depends on scope of market segment
Have seed questions ready, then be prepared to follow the conversation



Starter Questions: Trucker App

What are the best/worst parts of being a trucker?
Do you regularly use any apps? Any specifically for truckers? What's good/bad about them?
What are three things that would make your job better?



Starter Questions: Indie Bands

What's common about most successful indie bands? Why do indie bands usually fail?
If you could tell every indie band coming into your office one thing, what would that be?
What's one thing that would make an indie band have a better chance of success?



Starter Questions: Farming

What trends do you see in farming?
Is there anything that makes you crazy about how farms are currently run?
What do you think farming will look like 20 years from now?

Parting Thought

Your Magic Career Accelerator →

