The Brutal Truth About Your Product

Why Your Customers Aren't Coming Back (And How To Fix It)

Take this 2-minute diagnostic and discover your #1 bottleneck. Most founders pour resources into acquisition while their product quietly bleeds users. This assessment reveals exactly where you're losing customers—and more importantly, how to fix it before your next funding round.



Section 1: CATALYST

How Users Discover and Remember Your Product

The catalyst is the trigger that brings users back to your product. Without a strong catalyst, even the best products fade into obscurity. These questions reveal whether you're staying top-of-mind when it matters most.

Reminder System

Do you have a consistent system for reminding customers about your product?

- Yes - I have automated reminders
- No - Users must remember on their own

Emotional Timing

Are your reminders tied to the emotional moment when customers actually need you?

- Not at all - Generic timing
- Somewhat - Partially aligned
- Very much - Perfectly timed

Email Engagement

What's your email open rate on product-related messages?

- Below 10% - Poor engagement
- 10-20% - Average performance
- Above 20% - Strong connection

Your catalyst determines whether users think of you when they have a problem. If they forget you exist, nothing else matters. Strong catalysts create habitual usage patterns that compound over time.

Section 2: GATEWAY

Onboarding Friction and First Experience

The gateway is your user's first impression—the moment that determines whether they'll invest time in your product or abandon it forever. Every additional step is a potential exit point. These questions expose whether you're making it easy or creating unnecessary friction.

The best products deliver value before asking for commitment. If users don't experience a win quickly, they'll never see what makes your product special.

01

Steps to Value

How many steps does it take a new user to experience the core value of your product?

- 5+ steps - Too complex
- 2-4 steps - Reasonable path
- 1 step - Immediate value

02

Quick Wins

Do new users see concrete progress or a quick win within the first 24 hours?

- Never - No early success
- Sometimes - Inconsistent wins
- Always - Guaranteed progress

03

Clarity of Action

When a user lands in your product, is it immediately obvious what to do next?

- No - Users feel lost
- Somewhat clear - Some guidance
- Crystal clear - Obvious next step

Section 3: LOOP

Engagement Patterns and Reward Systems

The loop is what keeps users coming back day after day. Without compelling reasons to return, even satisfied users drift away. Variable rewards—unpredictable positive outcomes—create anticipation and drive repeat usage. The most addictive products master multiple reward types: social validation (Tribe), accomplishment (Hunt), and self-expression (Ego).



Variable Rewards

Do you have variable rewards that keep users coming back?

- No rewards at all
- Basic predictable rewards
- Multiple surprise rewards



Return Rate

What % of users who complete your core action come back within 7 days?

- Below 30% - Weak retention
- 30-50% - Moderate stickiness
- Above 50% - Strong habit



Reward Types

Is your primary engagement loop based on Tribe, Hunt, or Ego rewards?

- I'm not sure - No strategy
- One type only - Limited appeal
- Multiple types - Broad motivation

> The difference between a good product and an addictive one often comes down to the sophistication of your loop. Users should feel compelled to return, not obligated.

Section 4: INVESTMENT

Building Long-Term User Commitment

Investment is the secret weapon of retention. When users put time, data, or effort into your product, they develop ownership. The more they invest, the harder it becomes to leave. This isn't about dark patterns—it's about creating genuine value that compounds with usage.

The best products get smarter and more personalized over time, creating switching costs that aren't about lock-in but about accumulated value. Every action should make the product more valuable to that specific user.

Natural Investment

Do users naturally invest time, data, or effort into your product as they use it?

- Minimal investment - Passive usage
- Some investment - Limited customization
- Deep investment - Rich personalization

Compounding Value

Does your product get better/more personalized the more a user engages?

- No - Static experience
- Somewhat - Minor improvements
- Yes, significantly - Dramatically better

Pro Tip: Track how user investment correlates with retention. Users who customize settings, add data, or create content are 3-5x more likely to remain active long-term.

Your Product Health Score

Diagnostic Results and Scoring Zones

Based on your answers across all four dimensions—Catalyst, Gateway, Loop, and Investment—you'll fall into one of four zones. Each zone represents a distinct product maturity stage with specific actionable next steps.

DANGER ZONE

0-8 points

Your product is leaking users at every stage. This is where most founders are—building features while the foundation crumbles. You need immediate intervention before scaling makes the problem worse.

OPPORTUNITY ZONE

9-15 points

You're close to breakthrough. One major fix in your weakest dimension could transform your retention. Focus is critical here—don't try to fix everything at once.

MOMENTUM ZONE

16-21 points

You're winning the retention game. Users are staying and engaging. Now it's about scaling these systems without breaking what works. Refinement over reinvention.

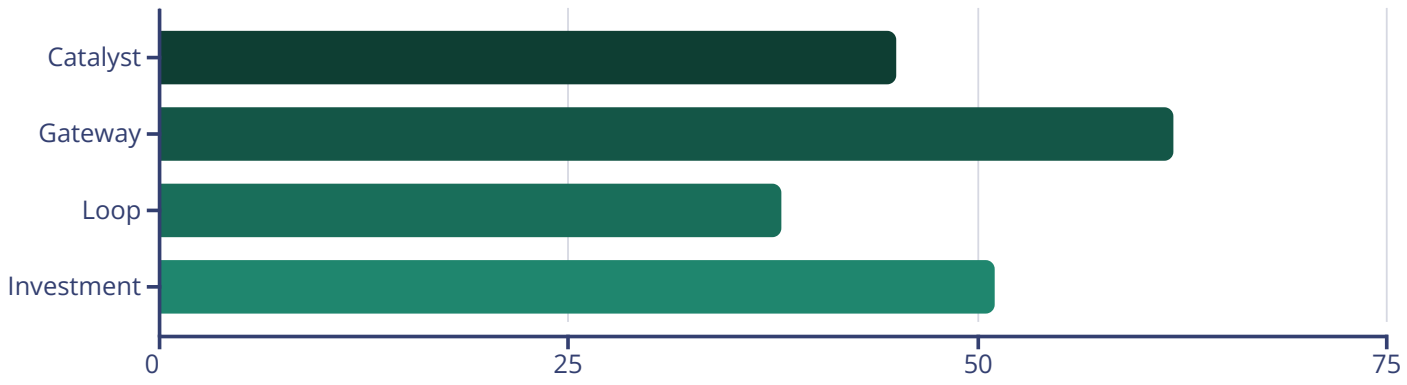
HABIT ZONE

22-25 points

Your product is genuinely sticky. Users have formed habits around your product. Time to scale aggressively and capture market share while competitors struggle with retention.

Understanding Your Bottleneck

Your score reveals not just where you are, but where to focus next. If you scored lowest in **Catalyst**, users don't know when to use you. Low **Gateway** scores mean friction is killing first impressions. Weak **Loop** performance indicates users aren't finding reasons to return. Poor **Investment** metrics suggest users aren't building commitment.



This chart shows where most products score across the four dimensions. Notice how **Loop** is typically the weakest—most founders underinvest in engagement systems, focusing inste

Your Next Move

Personalized Action Plan Based on Your Score

Now that you've diagnosed your product's retention health, it's time to act. Your score isn't just a number—it's a roadmap. The zone you're in determines your next 90 days of product strategy.

Don't try to fix everything simultaneously. The fastest path to improvement is addressing your single biggest bottleneck with laser focus.

1

Identify Your Weakest Link

Review your answers and find which of the four dimensions—Catalyst, Gateway, Loop, or Investment—received your lowest scores. That's where users are falling through the cracks.

2

Run a Focused Sprint

Dedicate the next 2-4 weeks exclusively to improving that one dimension. Ship one meaningful improvement that directly addresses your bottleneck.

3

Measure Impact

Track your key metric for that dimension: email open rates for Catalyst, time-to-value for Gateway, 7-day return rate for Loop, or customization adoption for Investment.

4

Iterate and Scale

Once you've improved your weakest area, retake this assessment. Then move to your next bottleneck. Compounding small wins beats random feature additions every time.

Remember. The products that win aren't always the most innovative—they're the ones users can't imagine living without.