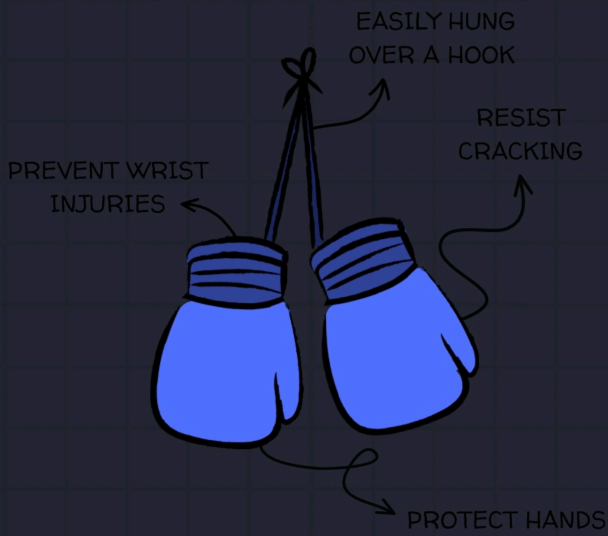
“WHEN YOU DESIGN IT, MAKE SURE IT’S USEFUL, USABLE, AND DELIGHTFUL.”

FIRST EDITION

# DESIGN IT

THE FIND IT, DESIGN IT, SELL IT SERIES




*If you can’t shape it, you can’t ship it.*

BY LAYAN FARAJ

# Design It

When You Design Your Product, Make Sure It's Useful, Usable, and Delightful

*By* **Layan Faraj**

## A Personal Note from the Author

Thank you for taking the time to read my book. It means so much to me! I'd love to hear your thoughts, feedback, or even just connect.

Feel free to reach out to me at
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Looking forward to hearing from you!

NOT TO THE LIGHTBULB MOMENTS, THE GENIUS PITCHES, OR THE SHINY SUCCESS STORIES.

BUT TO THE QUIET, ANNOYING ONES.

TO THE SOCK THAT VANISHED MID-LAUNDRY.

TO THE APP THAT FROZE WHEN YOU NEEDED IT MOST.

TO THE LINE THAT NEVER MOVED.

TO THE FORM THAT MADE NO SENSE.

TO THE MEAL DELIVERY THAT SHOWED UP COLD.

TO THE "EASY SETUP" THAT WASN'T.

TO THE TOOL THAT ALMOST WORKED—ALMOST.

TO THE BROKEN BUTTONS, THE CLUNKY FLOWS, THE ENDLESS "UGH."

AND TO THAT STUBBORN LITTLE VOICE—THE ONE THAT WHISPERS,

"THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY."

THIS BOOK IS BECAUSE OF YOU.

IT'S TIME TO DESIGN IT.

# Table of Contents

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

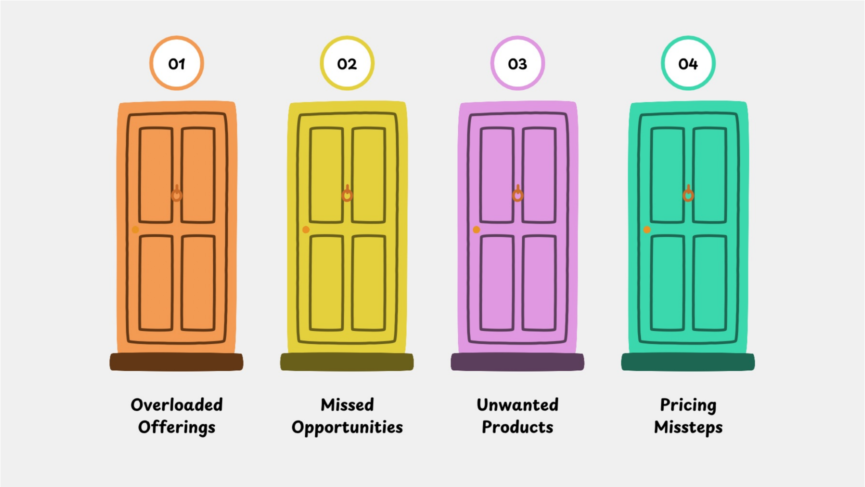
# Introduction: Welcome to the Failure You Didn't See Coming

You've just time-traveled five years into the future. Your product exists—and guess what? It failed.

What went wrong? Was it too generic? Did customers ignore it? Did they try it, then delete it from their lives with a shrug?

Chances are, your failure didn't come from a lack of effort or ambition. It came from walking one of four common paths to failure.

## The Four Paths to Failure




Many products and services don't fail because they're inherently bad ideas.

They fail because they fall into familiar traps—patterns that show up again and again across industries, business models, and stages of growth.

These four paths to failure are adapted from Monetizing Innovation by Madhavan Ramanujam and Georg Tacke, whose work originally focused on pricing but offers insights that are just as relevant to product development:

- **Overloaded Offerings** - Trying to do too much, which confuses or overwhelms customers.
- **Missed Opportunities** - Failing to recognize what customers actually want or need.
- **Unwanted Products** - Creating something that simply doesn't resonate with its target audience.
- **Pricing Missteps** - Setting prices that don't match the value customers perceive.

The good news? You're not in that future yet. And if you understand these pitfalls before you build, you can avoid them entirely. In the pages ahead, we'll break each path down, and show you how to make better decisions from day one.

## Path 1: Overloaded Offerings

The first path to failure is "*overloaded offerings.*" This happens when a product or service is packed with too many features, making it overwhelming for customers to use or understand. Instead of adding value, these extra features dilute the core purpose of the product. Imagine a bottle of water that changes color every 30 minutes. While this feature might sound creative, it would cost a lot to develop and doesn't enhance the bottle's primary purpose: helping people quench their thirst by drinking water.

Why do businesses fall into this trap? There are a few common causes:

- ❖ **Misguided assumptions:** Believing that more features will attract a broader audience, forgetting that value is what truly matters.
- ❖ **Lack of focus:** Losing sight of the customer's main problem, leading to unnecessary additions.
- ❖ **Feature wars:** Competing with other businesses by constantly adding new features without considering usability or value.

To avoid this trap, we rely on three structured practices that keep our offerings from becoming overloaded—and ensure every part of the product carries real weight.

### Testing Assumptions with Lean Prototyping

First, we challenge our assumptions by using *lean methods*. Instead of building a full-featured product based on internal guesses, we start with a minimal version—just enough to deliver the core value—and test it with real users. This process helps us understand whether the product is genuinely useful, easy to adopt, enjoyable, and something people are willing to pay for. If it passes those tests, we consider enhancing or scaling it. If not, we rework or discard the idea. This approach keeps us grounded in real user behavior, not wishful thinking.

## Staying Focused Through the Problem Story

Second, we maintain focus through the *problem story*. A structured narrative that defines who the customer is, what problem they face, and what they are trying to accomplish. By anchoring our product decisions to this story, we avoid feature creep and stay aligned with the user's actual needs. It acts as a guidepost, reminding us that our role is not to impress users with features, but to solve a meaningful problem for them.

## Using the Differentiation Strategy

Finally, when analyzing competitors, we don't fall into the trap of simply copying what they offer. Instead, we apply a *differentiation strategy* based on four key actions: eliminate, reduce, raise, and create.

- ❖ We *eliminate* features that competitors include but don't actually provide value to the user.
- ❖ We *reduce* elements that increase cost, effort, or complexity without a meaningful return.
- ❖ We *raise* the quality or presence of features that truly enhance the customer experience.
- ❖ And we *create* new elements that solve problems in more effective or innovative ways.

This helps us stand out for the right reasons—by delivering meaningful value, not by bloating our product.

By combining these three practices—lean testing, problem stories, and strategic differentiation—you can avoid the trap of overloaded offerings.

## Path 2: Missed Opportunities

The second path to failure is "*missed opportunities.*" This happens when a product or service doesn't evolve with the market or fails to explore emerging customer needs–leaving massive growth potential untapped. One of the most well-known examples of this is BlackBerry, which dominated the mobile phone market in the early 2000s. But when Apple launched the iPhone in 2007 with a full touchscreen and a consumer app ecosystem, BlackBerry dismissed it. They delayed investing in touchscreen devices and ignored the rise of app stores, thinking that customers still cared more about physical keyboards and enterprise-grade security than media, user experience, and apps. That miscalculation cost them their lead.

I believe this kind of trap usually happens for three key reasons:

- **Lack of market research or customer interviews:** Not understanding what customers actually need or how the market is evolving.
- **Inability to spot growing trends or sub-niches:** Missing out on emerging customer demands and market shifts.
- **Reluctance to innovate beyond the original idea:** Becoming stuck in old concepts instead of evolving with changing needs.

To avoid these pitfalls, we rely on three core practices that help uncover opportunities and build products that stay relevant.

### Understanding Customer Needs Through Interviews

First, we emphasize the power of *customer interviews*. This helps us discover unmet needs, emotional triggers, and hidden frustrations. And interviews allow us to see beyond assumptions and understand what customers are truly trying to achieve.

### Analyzing the Competitive Landscape Holistically

Second, we conduct a broad analysis of the market by identifying four types of competing products: direct competitors, indirect alternatives, workarounds customers currently use, and completely different solutions that satisfy the same core need. This gives us a holistic view of customer choices and helps us understand where our product fits—and where gaps may exist.

### Embracing Adaptability

Finally, we champion adaptability as a mindset. Businesses that succeed long-term are those that evolve continuously. As the saying goes, *"A business that refuses to adapt is like a ship stuck in a changing tide."* Opportunities often come disguised as small signals. Teams that stay flexible and curious are better equipped to notice them, respond early, and generate lasting value for their customers.

By combining these practices—listening to customers, scanning the full competitive landscape, and remaining adaptable—you ensure your business remains open to new growth. Rather than missing opportunities, you'll be positioned to recognize and seize them as they arise.

## Path 3: Unwanted Products

Imagine someone who spent months working tirelessly to build an innovative product or service. When the time finally came to launch, they were filled with excitement–only to face days, weeks, and then months without making a single sale. Eventually, they realize a hard truth: their product is UNWANTED.

This is the third path to failure, "*unwanted products.*" The core reason for this failure is simple: the product doesn't resonate with its target audience.

But why does this happen?

- **Solving a problem that doesn't exist:** Creating a solution for something customers don't see as an issue.
- **Relying on assumptions rather than facts:** Making guesses about what customers want without validating those ideas.
- **Focusing too much on your own perspective:** Designing based on personal preferences instead of customer needs.

At first glance, this may appear similar to the "*overloaded offerings*" path. But in many ways, this is worse. Overloaded products still attempt to deliver value–albeit poorly. Unwanted products, on the other hand, start from a flawed foundation: an idea that holds no value in the eyes of its intended users.

To prevent this, we use a structured approach grounded in The Three Elements of a Great Product: Useful, Usable, and Delightful.

### Usefulness: Solving a Real Problem

The first and most important element is usefulness. A product must address a real problem or fulfill a genuine need. Without this, nothing else matters. To validate usefulness, we conduct what we call the *Value Test*. This test checks whether customers see the product as relevant, important, and worth paying attention to—or even better, worth paying for. If a product isn't useful, it won't survive.

### Usability: Making It Easy to Use

Once usefulness is confirmed, we move to the second element: *usability*. A product may solve a real problem, but if it's difficult to understand, clunky to navigate, or frustrating to interact with, users will abandon it. We learn how to design for usability and then apply a *Usability Test* to ensure that the product is intuitive and accessible. Users should be able to grasp how it works quickly—without needing a manual or training.

### Delight: Leaving a Lasting Impression

Finally, we address the emotional layer of the experience —delight. A delightful product creates a positive emotional response. It might be through a thoughtful design, smooth interactions, a touch of humor, or a beautifully crafted interface. It's about turning functionality into a memorable experience. To do this, we focus on two things: *crafting a GREAT offer* that resonates with the customer, and answering the key question: *How can we leave a positive impression at every interaction?*

By designing with usefulness, usability, and delight in mind—and by testing each of these dimensions carefully—you ensure that what you build is not only functional, but also valued and loved by your customers.

## Path 4: Pricing Missteps

The fourth path to failure is *pricing missteps*. Whether the price is too low compared to the perceived value of the product or too high, both scenarios lead to failure.

Pricing innovative products and services isn't as simple as calculating production costs and adding a small markup —this is called cost-based pricing, and it overlooks a vital component: *perceived value*. In reality, pricing is not just a financial decision—it's a strategic message. Price tells customers what your product is worth. That's why a basic handbag might sell for $5,000 while a visually similar one might sell for $20. The difference lies in how customers perceive the value of the offer, not just in what it costs to make.

When pricing your product or service, you should consider:

- How valuable is the solution to customers?
- How much are they willing to pay for it?
- What are the unique benefits of the product or service?
- How does it improve their lives or work?
- What are competitors charging, and how does that compare to the value the product offers?

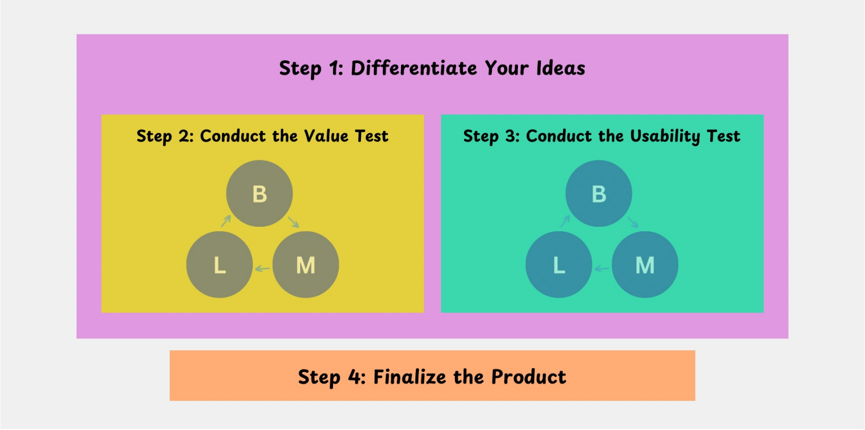
In this book, we dedicate a full chapter to *value-based pricing*, providing a step-by-step guide on how to price your product or service based on its perceived value. Keep in mind that value-based pricing is not about charging the highest possible price–it's about finding the sweet spot where the price reflects the value customers perceive, allowing you to maximize profitability while maintaining customer satisfaction.

## Now You're Back in the Present

You've just explored the four paths to failure: *overloaded offerings, missed opportunities, unwanted products, and pricing missteps*. More importantly, you've seen how each of these pitfalls can be avoided with thoughtful strategies.

Now, you're here–still reading–because you've decided to do things differently. You're ready to avoid those common traps and build something that is useful, usable, and delightful. So the question is: **How is this book structured to help you do that?**

**The book is built around *four key steps*.**



**Step 1: Differentiate Your Ideas**

**Step 2: Conduct the Value Test**

**Step 3: Conduct the Usability Test**

**Step 4: Finalize the Product**

## Theory: Differentiation and Value

## Step 1: Differentiate Your Ideas

Before we start designing our product or service, we need to understand two key concepts: *differentiation* and *value*. These are what make a product stand out in a market and what ultimately convince customers to choose it over the competition.

A product or service is truly differentiated and valuable when it offers something unique, solves the problem better than alternatives, and resonates with customers by aligning with their needs and expectations. If we can get these things right, we're already ahead.

To build this foundation, we'll start by exploring:

- ❖ What differentiation really means and how businesses use it to stand out. We'll break down *the Strategy of Differentiation,* which involves four key actions: Eliminate, Reduce, Create, and Raise. This approach helps businesses rethink what features to include, improve, or remove to make their product unique.
- ❖ What makes a product valuable, and how to create that value by focusing on two principles: Reducing Pain (minimizing frustrations, obstacles, or inefficiencies) and

Increasing Gain (enhancing benefits, convenience, or satisfaction).

Once we've covered these fundamentals, we'll move on to three practical steps to differentiate our ideas. These steps will help us refine and strengthen our product or service to ensure it stands out:

- ❖ **Get your problem story** - Revisit the problem story you created in Find It Book. This keeps you focused on the real customer pain points.
- ❖ **List the existing solutions** - Identify what's already out there and how competitors are solving (or failing to solve) the problem.
- ❖ **Apply the differentiation strategy** - Use the Eliminate & Reduce, Create & Raise framework to reshape your idea in a way that sets it apart.

By following these steps, we'll generate a range of differentiated ideas. And from here, we can start turning these ideas into real solutions.

## Theory: Turning Ideas into Solutions
## Step 2: Conduct the Value Test
## Step 3: Conduct the Usability Test

Now that we have a list of ideas for our solution, it's time to take the next step–turning those ideas into solutions.

As the saying goes, *"the art of business is about knowing what people want."* But building something people actually want is risky. We often assume we know what customers need, but assumptions don't always match reality. A product might seem perfect in our minds, but that doesn't guarantee people will buy it or find it useful.

To minimize this risk, we need an approach to testing ideas before fully committing to them.

That's where two critical tests come in:

- ❖ **The First Test:** Does This Idea Bring Value to the Customers?
- ❖ **The Second Test:** Can Customers Figure Out How to Use It?

These two tests work together to ensure that what we create isn't just a great idea, but a usable and valuable product or service.

To implement these tests, we'll use the Lean Method—a systematic approach that helps us:

- ❖ **build ideas quickly,** reducing wasted time and effort.
- ❖ **Measure the impact,** seeing if customers genuinely find value in the idea.
- ❖ **Learn whether to pivot or proceed,** so we don't invest heavily in something that won't work.

This method significantly increases the chances of success because it allows us to validate ideas before pouring time, money, and resources into them.

Imagine spending months building what you believe is the "*perfect product*"—only to launch it and realize that customers don't want it. That would be frustrating, right? Our goal is to avoid this scenario by testing and refining our ideas early, ensuring that what we create is something people truly need and will use.

### Step 4: Finalize the Product

Once you've built a product or service that is both valuable and usable, the next step is to make it irresistible to customers.

To do this, you need to:

- ❖ **Craft a GREAT offer** that makes it hard for people to say no.
- ❖ **Price your product correctly** to reflect its value and attract the right customers.

When you get the solution right and both of these right, you'll reach a crucial milestone called *product-market fit*–the point where people don't just use your product; they love it and can't imagine living without it.

This is the second stage of success for any business. The journey typically follows three key stages:

- ❖ **Problem-Solution Fit** - Validating the problem, developing a solution, testing, and iterating until you've built something valuable and usable.
- ❖ **Product-Market Fit** - Ensuring that people genuinely want your product, love using it, and are willing to pay for it.
- ❖ **Scaling** - Expanding your reach, growing your customer base, and optimizing for long-term success.

This step–finalizing the product–is the bridge between building something good and launching something great. It's the final polish that transforms a working solution into a product customers truly want.

# FINAL THOUGHTS

*"Failure is an opportunity to begin again more intelligently."*
*–Henry Ford*

Failure is an inevitable part of life–it provides insights that success often can't. It teaches valuable lessons, builds resilience, and helps us grow stronger. Rather than fearing or avoiding it, we should embrace it as part of the journey.

That said, not all lessons need to come from personal mistakes. Many people have already faced challenges, made mistakes, and found solutions–and they've captured those experiences in books. What took someone 30 years to learn, you can absorb in just a few hours. By learning from their journeys, you save time, energy, and resources. That's why **reading is so powerful**–it allows us to gain wisdom without having to experience every setback ourselves.

# Before We Start - A Quick Recap

This is the second book in the *"Before You Go to Market"* journey.

If you've already read the first one – Find It – you're in the right place. You'll notice a bit of repetition at the start, especially around the first step. That's intentional. We want to reset the stage clearly, and make sure you've absorbed the foundational thinking needed for what comes next.

If this is your first time joining us – welcome! Let's catch you up quickly so you can follow along with confidence.

In Find It, we learned that strong business ideas aren't based on random creativity. They're built by identifying real problems and generating solutions that matter. We walked through six essential steps to find a problem worth solving:

**Step 1: Found a Growing Market**
We started by choosing a market that's growing, not shrinking–one with new customers, active trends, and room for opportunity.

**Step 2: Chose the Right Job to Be Done**
Then, we looked for a real problem people want to solve. We focused on pain points that matter and picked a job that's urgent, common, and valuable.

**Step 3: Focused on a Small Niche**

Instead of going broad, we narrowed our focus to one clear group and one clear problem. This made everything simpler and more effective.

**Step 4: Broke Down the Job**

We used the JTBD (Jobs to Be Done) framework to deeply understand the problem: what triggers it, what people want, and what success looks like.

**Step 5: Understood Why People Switch**

We studied the four forces that drive people to change or stay the same—what pushes them, what pulls them, what scares them, and what habits hold them back.

**Step 6: Wrote the Problem Story**

Finally, we summed up everything into one clear story that explains the problem, the pain, and the need. This set the foundation for generating solutions.

From there, we moved into generating solutions (the second part of the book). Before we invented a single solution, we learned how to:

- ❖ Differentiate our idea, so it stands out.
- ❖ Add value, so it matters.

We used a simple strategy to shape our idea:

- ❖ Eliminate what's not essential.
- ❖ Reduce what overwhelms.
- ❖ Raise what matters most.
- ❖ Create what's missing.

And we set two guiding goals:

- ❖ Reduce customer pain.
- ❖ Increase customer gain.

Our process was grounded in reality:

1. We returned to the Problem Story.
2. We studied existing solutions.
3. We crafted new ideas that are truly different and truly valuable.

That's where Find It ended. And now, it's time for the next step: DESIGN IT. This book picks up from there. However, we'll revisit differentiation and value once again.

To get the most out of this book, you might want to start with **Find It.** That's where we laid the foundation for everything you'll build here.