# The Lean Startup Methodology

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The methodology the course runs on, from Eric Ries's *The Lean Startup* and Steve Blank's customer development work.

### The customer development process

Blank splits building a company into two halves — **search**, then **execution**:

| Phase | Stage | What happens |
|---|---|---|
| **Search** | Customer discovery | Turn the vision into facts — do these customers have this problem? |
| **Search** | Customer validation | Confirm there's a repeatable, scalable sales model |
| **Execution** | Customer creation | Create end-user demand and drive it into the channel |
| **Execution** | Company building | Transition from a search organisation to one that executes |

A **pivot** loops back from validation to discovery when the facts don't support the model.

COMP1100 lives almost entirely in the **search** half, and mostly in customer discovery — the design end rather than the entrepreneurship end. See customer-discovery[1].

[1] courses/comp1100/customer-discovery.pdf

## Why the search half is the hard part

> "What you will get wrong is that you will not pay enough attention to your users.
>
> You will make up some idea in your own head that you will call your 'vision', and you will spend a lot of time thinking about your vision. In a cafe. By yourself. And build some elaborate thing without going and talking to users, because that's doing sales, which is a pain in the ass, and they might say no.
>
> You will not ship fast enough because you're embarrassed to ship something unfinished, and you don't want to face the likely feedback that you will get from shipping. You will shrink from contact with the real world, contact with your users. That's the mistake you will make."
>
> — Paul Graham, Y Combinator

Every mechanism in the course is designed against this failure mode: test cards force a hypothesis to be falsifiable before you build, MVPs force shipping before it's finished, and studio deadlines force contact with real people.

## Verify, pivot, or refine

After each round of experiments there are three moves, at escalating cost:

| Move | What changes |
|---|---|
| **Refine** | The **product** — adjust features within the same strategy |
| **Pivot** | The **strategy** — same vision, different route to it |
| *(rethink)* | The **vision** — the deepest and rarest change |

The ordering is the point: refining the product is cheap, changing strategy is expensive, and abandoning the vision is a last resort. See experimentation[2] for how the decision gets made from evidence rather than mood.

[2] courses/comp1100/experimentation.pdf

## Inspiration and sources

The seminar names its sources explicitly:

- **Tina Seelig** — *inGenius: A Crash Course on Creativity*
- **Steve Blank** — *The Four Steps to the Epiphany*, *The Startup Owner's Manual*
- **Alexander Osterwalder** — *Business Model Generation* (the origin of business-model-canvas[3] and value-proposition-canvas[4])
- **Eric Ries** — *The Lean Startup: How today's entrepreneurs use continuous innovation to create radically successful businesses*

[3] courses/comp1100/business-model-canvas.pdf
[4] courses/comp1100/value-proposition-canvas.pdf