

# 3 ways

YOU ARE WASTING TIME AND MONEY  
WHILE DEVELOPING YOUR DIGITAL PRODUCT

# Introduction

If you downloaded this ebook, there must be a good reason why. You must have a goal in mind. You may be thinking about building a digital product or you are currently building one either in-house or with a development company.

**When building a new product, you may find yourself in some risky situations while designing it that may generate huge losses of your most important resources: time and money.**

27

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You are not alone. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, around 27 million working-age Americans are starting or running new businesses.

But the question remains, how many startups tend to survive the difficulties and challenges of creating a new business?

And yes, you may have an idea about those challenges, but... what happens in real life? How do you confront these problems in practice? How can you learn from others' experiences so that you can be more prepared in a practical and action-oriented way? That's what this ebook sets out to explain, based on a decade's worth of firsthand experiences, working with both startups and Fortune 500 companies at UruIT. We have overcome risky situations in the past and learned how to avoid them to develop products that not only survive, but thrive in the market. **Here are the three major ways we've seen companies waste time and money while developing their digital products so that you don't make the same mistakes!**

MISTAKE N° 1

# Ignoring users

## The potential consequence

What does any company or product need? Customers. (A.K.A. Users.) Don't neglect them when designing your product! The potential losses of building software without understanding its users are huge. For example, you could end up building a product that absolutely no one will use. Or in a less horrible scenario, your product may have been adopted by some users, but you spent a lot of time focusing on developing new features that you feel are great but, in the end, your users simply don't need.

## Case Study

Last year, a startup from the real estate industry was creating a tablet app. When the startup team reached out to us, its members had already built half of the application, having spent about three months on its design and development.

**Our UX designers started asking the typical questions:**

Who are your users?

Which devices do they use?

Where are they when they interact with your software?

After taking the users more carefully into consideration, they realized that it didn't make sense to build a tablet app because the users don't typically use tablets. Most importantly, they do not use tablets in the very situation for which the app was designed to be used!

The team's initial logic behind building a tablet app was that this kind of app was the only one they were missing (they already had several products built for other devices). As it turned out, that was not a good enough reason, since none of their potential users would, in fact, use it!

The real estate startup then had to work with UruIT from scratch in order to come back from the mistake of not putting its users' needs first.

## How you can avoid this mistake?

**Listen to your users from the very beginning**

Strong user experience (UX) design is key in order to save time and money throughout the whole life of a project. User experience is the concept of understanding who your end users are and what they will do with your software. In the end UX drives ROI, because users are the ones who will interact with your product (if you do it right), so build it for them, with their needs and habits in mind.

One of the most effective ways to reduce waste is to avoid building the unnecessary.

And, don't wait until it's too late! **Fixing a problem with UX after a project is complete can cost 100 times more than during initial design.** By taking the time to understand your audience and crafting a personalized digital journey around their needs, you can reduce development waste and long-term costs.

## B O N U S T I P S :

- Ask yourself questions about how the product should be. Then validate the answers with potential users by doing user interviews.
- Conduct demographic surveys.
- Invite users to participate in usability tests.
- Talk to our UX experts to find out how these practices work!

Knowing your users and how they behave allows you to prioritize what's essential in the app and what's secondary or complementary, which, in turn, allows you to make decisions on what's included in the scope. This is fundamental for when your budget and time to market are limited.

## BONUS TIPS :

### Keep listening!

Continued user understanding validates your product on the market and provides you with tools to discover what else you can offer.

This implies a clearer vision of how to expand your business and, in the case that the market does not want your product, could provide insights as to how to pivot, reinventing it in a market-friendly way.

## Case Study

**In 2010, a spinoff was born in UruIT.** This new business unit was focused on CRM solutions; we had created an application that incorporated gamification techniques with existing CRMs, allowing companies to boost sales. We thought we had the best idea in the world and dedicated significant resources to create this app. Once it was ready, we couldn't understand why it wasn't taking off the way we imagined it would.

Despite this, one feature of our app was connecting exceptionally well with its users.

Soon enough, it hit us: the users were telling us **what they truly wanted!** And, they weren't the things we assumed they wanted. Happily, we took the hint and developed a product solely based on this single feature that our users praised. As a result, we created a very successful product that is used today by important sports teams in the USA such as the Boston Celtics, the Chicago Bulls, the New York Mets and the San Diego Padres.

## B O N U S T I P S :

### Try UruIT's UX Assessment Tool!

At UruIT we've built this simple yet effective tool to measure your current product usability, analyze its maturity, and find improvement opportunities.

[Try it here!](#)

MISTAKE N° 2

**Waiting too long to  
validate your product**

## The potential consequence

Imagine running out of budget just to find out that what you have built is not valuable to your users. In this case, you end up doing a lot of re-work, spending more time and money (That is, if you still have more to spend!) because you didn't ensure your product's viability on the market.

It's not only about listening to and understanding who you're building your product for before actually starting to build it, **it is also about putting your product out in the market** and validating if there is someone out there who is willing to pay for it.

## Case Study

One of our clients, a startup from San Francisco, set out to reinvent the process of employee schedule management. Its team wanted to have the whole app built before showing it to anyone. This is a very typical situation, as most clients are hesitant to show their unfinished work, yet, unfortunately, it is a BIG mistake. The startup spent about six months designing, developing and putting all the effort in that it takes to develop a new application without even validating it first.

The most important thing is to understand who your users are and why and how they interact with your software. What's the best way of doing so? Validating as early as possible.

Why would you invest such a large amount of time and money into something that you don't even know whether or not it will be adopted? In this startup's case, they hadn't even validated its product in the market, so the team took an expensive gamble and ran a much higher risk than if they had.

### **B O N U S   T I P S :**

We have also seen in another case, a product that had met all of its potential users' requirements, but its creators failed to verify if anyone would actually pay for the product. One key thing when validating your product is to validate, beyond its usefulness, its worth to potential users. Would they pay for it? And if so, how much?

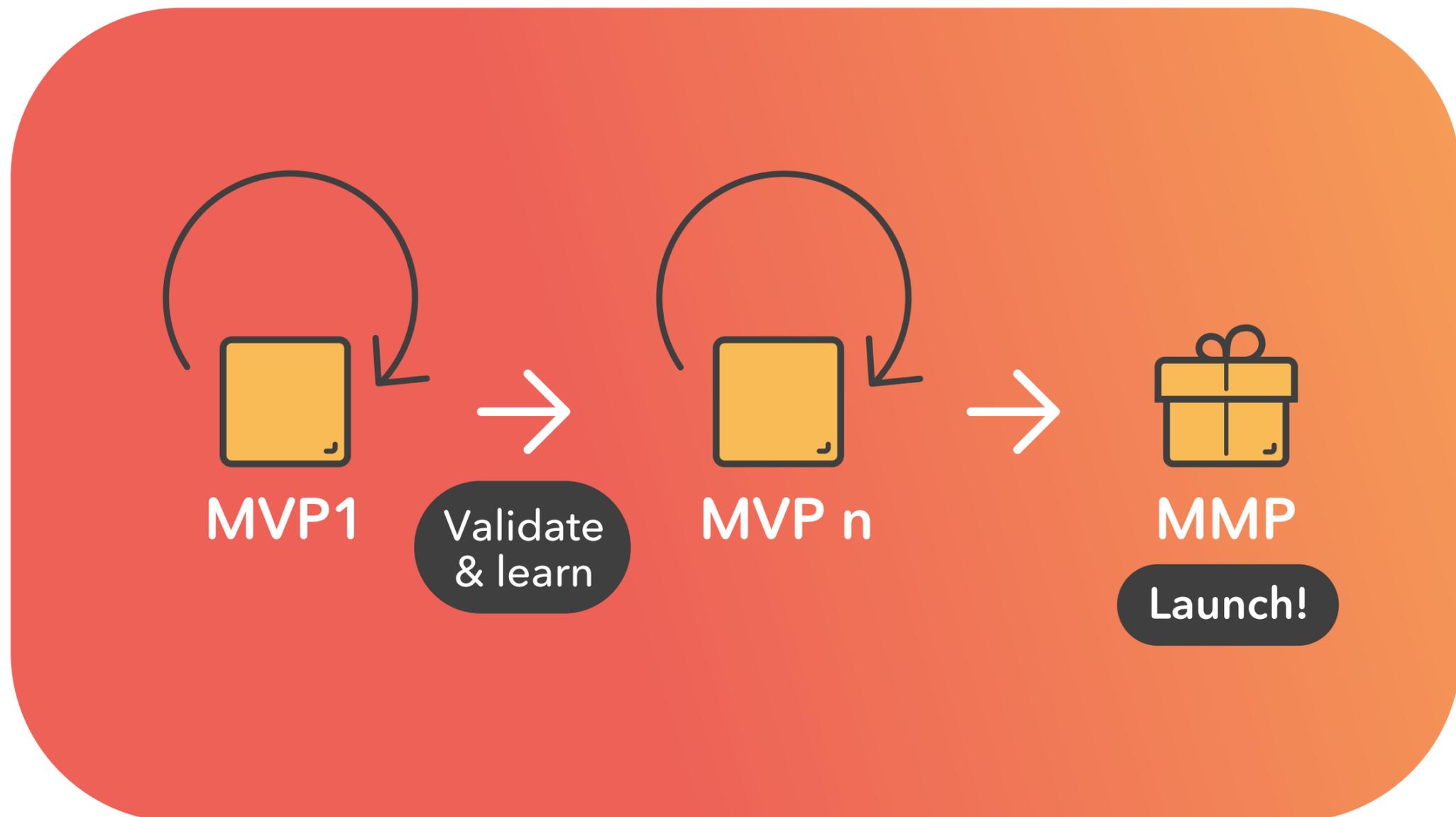
## How you can avoid this problem

### Fail Fast

What does that mean?

1. **Build only the most essential elements first**, aka the minimum viable product. It should contain only what's most important. Reduce the scope of the project if necessary.
2. **Learn from your mistakes.** Iterative development allows you to discover if you are going along the right path or if there's anything to adjust in your application. It also makes it possible to determine sooner rather than later whether a project investment should be stopped.

3. **Avoid rework.** Don't go back and change everything about your product just because of one negative feedback you receive. But, do learn from your users' feedback to decide your next steps based on real data.



**4. Take small steps,** learn as you go, and refine the scope along the way. Know that important characteristics of the solution will emerge later on, as the project unfolds. For projects to succeed, be flexible. Plans must be built to continually adapt to changing conditions.

**5. Release features often for users to evaluate and test.** Releasing features constantly allows you to improve the app frequently, and always based on users' impressions.

**6. Don't forget about users.** Keep them engaged in your project often. Making them feel heard is an important motivation for them to become and remain a customer. Let them know about coming updates and ask them for what new features they are hoping for the most.

**7. Release to test your business model,** not the software itself.

MISTAKE N° 3

**Not having proper alignment  
within the team**

## The potential consequence

Occasionally, not everyone involved in a project always shares the same set of values and pushes for the same goals. One of the dangers of having a misaligned team is that these teams are often weak on strategy, building a product that no one wants to buy as they failed to collaborate and review ideas before and during development. They are usually poor at execution as well, which leads to issues with the product not being built correctly or on time, and the go-to market execution poorly implemented.

Misaligned teams happen when there is:

- 1. Infrequent communication:** When stakeholders do not communicate enough, a discrepancy may occur between the vision for the product and the actual, resulting product.

**2. A lack of a shared vision:** If you have a vision of the business goals with clear objectives, you are able to keep aligned, prioritize, and stay focused on what's most valuable. Transparency and visibility also allow you to collaborate, bring in what you have learned from your experience and find the best way to achieve a goal. It allows you to identify ways to improve and make suggestions. If you don't, then you end up just being a machine: executing, but not evolving.

**3. Uncertainty as to for whom the product is being built:** As we mentioned above, the end user must always be kept in mind. Aligned teams have a shared vision for how the product solves its users' needs. When that shared vision isn't in place, it is much harder to build a product that users will enjoy.

## Case Study

Prior to partnering with UrulT, one of our clients, the CEO of a Los Angeles-based company worked on developing an app with a team based in Vietnam for over one year. The way they “worked together” looked something like this: The CEO would talk to the developers and tell them what the requirements were, then the developers would develop the app based on that one conversation, and that was all the interaction they ever had. A year after the beginning of the project, the CEO took the time to take a look at what the team had built. He found that nothing of what they had developed was useful. **It goes to show that communicating often and from early on is key for building the app you truly want.**

## How to avoid a misaligned team

### Empower and unite your team

These are some sure-fire ways to unite the team so that it operates at the most optimal level:

- 1. Bring everyone together towards a common goal** which means communication, shared values and a shared vision are essential. A shared vision is imperative for fostering a strong team culture, and when it's missing, there can be major negative impacts for the business.
- 2. Communicate early and often** about the project plan, the scope, and the overall progress.

3. **Have open communication channels** with anyone involved in the company.
4. **Use the right tools.** Tools used in everyday interactions are critical for achieving effective collaboration and communication among team members such as, Slack, JIRA or Assembla, Trello, Sketch and zeplin.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

# Good practices when working with a dev partner

Should you decide to contract a partner to help create your digital product, beyond avoiding the three ways that we explained that teams waste time and money, make sure to follow these best practices to ensure your collaboration goes smoothly.

### **Test the capability of your development partner**

It's advisable and logical to test the capability of your development partner. You'll need a team that is open to change. Because, for example, after conducting user testing or shifting the business strategy, you may agree that the original set of requirements must be altered in order to achieve the desired business goals. Therefore, make sure that your partner is adaptable as well as technically capable.

## **Working software as the primary measurement of progress**

Seek to first build the minimal viable product, following Agile development practices, and go from there. Agile methodologies promote incremental, iterative development that should provide you with a new version of the software as often as once a week (or even more frequently if you use continuous delivery models) so that you can always be sure that what is being developed is what you had in mind. What's more, you'll be able to test with users from the very early stages of your project.

## **Start with small contracts**

Bear in mind that during the first weeks of the engagement with a partner you will be going through a social learning phase, in which you will have to determine if there is a good fit between the team and your company. Initially, do a trial engagement so that you can test the quality of the partner's work before making a larger, long-term commitment.

## **Development and UX teams must work integratedly and collaboratively**

You will want to work with a partner that values maximum communication between the UX designers and developers involved in the project. Why? Well, in order to focus on delivering validated, valuable, working software as early as possible, it is key that the partner help you to prioritize the development of each feature. But, doing so is only possible if the designers work in unison with the developers while keeping in mind your business goals. This involves, for example, designers taking into account things like how much time it takes for a developer to build what they have designed. If designers and developers have visible and clear goals, strong communication, and are actively involved in the project, then they will be able to easily eliminate superfluous tasks and find the best way to build what you need with better quality, on time and within budget.

# In summary

If you only retain three important pieces of information from this paper, let them be these:

- ✓ Engage users in the project. Let them show you what they want!
- ✓ The best market research is putting a product out and seeing if people will buy it.
- ✓ Visibility into the business and product vision are key for everyone involved.

