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Product Brand Market Fit

Why brand is the great connector between product and audience
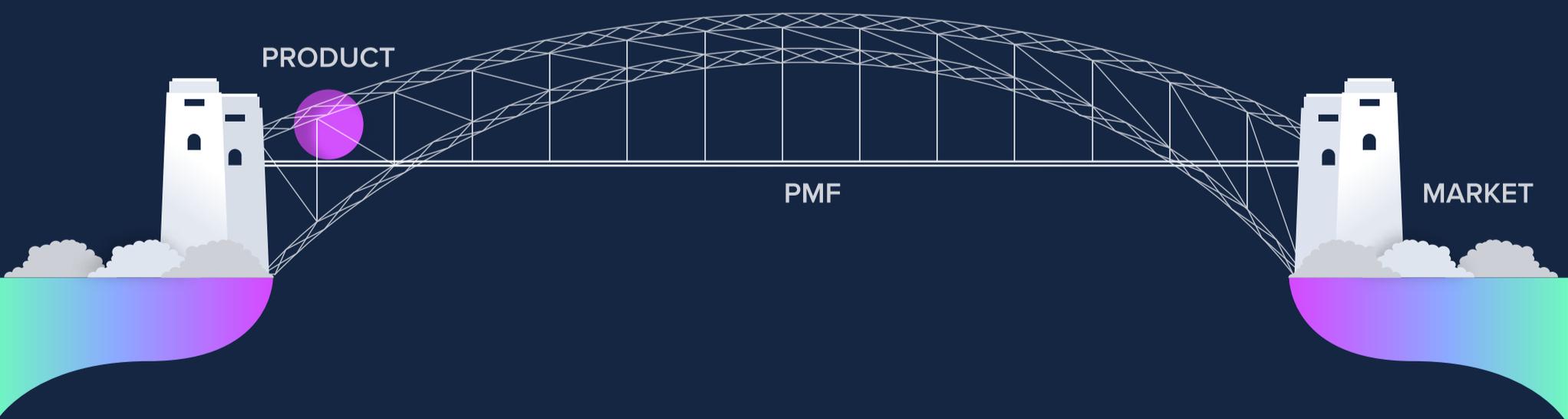
Product Brand Market Fit

While it is understandable why businesses choose to focus resources on product innovation and market research, there is an element often overlooked (especially in B2B scenarios) that can significantly accelerate and empower product-market fit.

That element is brand strategy.

Through strategic market research, laser-focused persona development, and compelling narratives, brand strategy emerges as the bridge that gaps the distance between product and market.

In this guide, we will show you how brand strategy positively impacts your product-market fit journey from the get-go, so that it guides, accelerates, and empowers your PMF from early stages of prototyping to pre-launch, GTM planning, and scaling your business.

However, the journey doesn't stop at recognizing the importance of brand strategy. It must be woven into the product development journey towards product-market fit, as it provides a clear vision on which features will bring more value to the audience, ultimately enhancing user experiences, engagement, loyalty, and word of mouth.
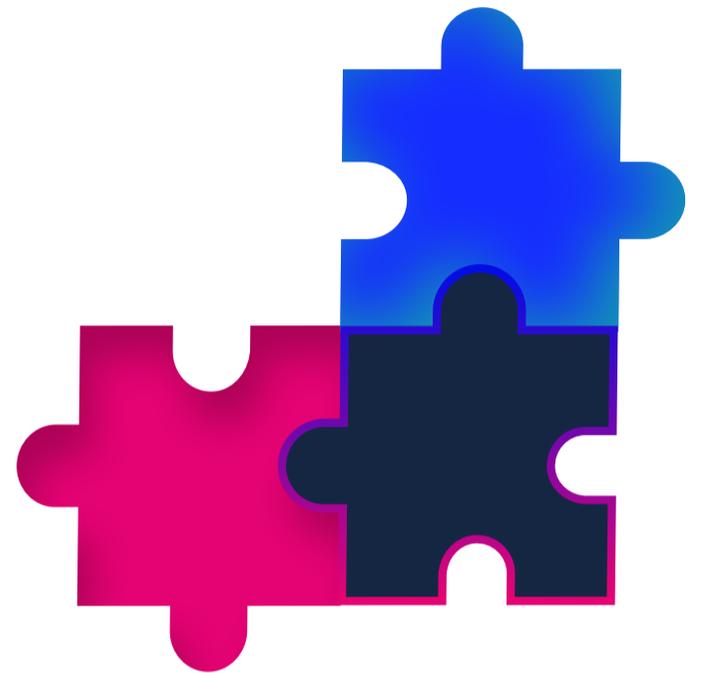
PRODUCT

PMF

MARKET

Understanding Product-Market Fit

Product-market fit signals a product's capacity to fulfill a significant market demand, marking a milestone design achievement for both startups and established enterprises.

It establishes a product offer that resonates with target customers. Make sure product-market fit is tight before moving forward with product development, securing investments, and hirings.

When a product doesn't perfectly fit a market, a company will encounter challenges beyond product development: attracting investors becomes increasingly harder; generating demand consumes significant marketing and sales effort; even top talent won't be able to fix the fundamental problems arising from the lack of PMF.

Benefits

Achieving product-market fit brings numerous advantages, including:

- ✔ Secure financing and investment
- ✔ Green-light product development
- ✔ Effective GTM tracks
- ✔ Product "stickiness"
- ✔ User adoption and loyalty
- ✔ Speedy market traction

PMF sets the foundation for scalable growth, lean company building, and provides a clear direction for spot-on product development from the very first prototype. This enables businesses to efficiently allocate resources towards expansion, refine their product lines to best serve market needs, and secure hefty investment rounds.

Why Product Market Fit Matters

Investors prioritize strong product-market fit as it is a statement of a venture's potential success and scalability, signaling that a business is effectively addressing a genuine market need.

Here are the main reasons why aligning product to market from the outset is so important:

Investment Attraction: product-market fit indicates a solution to a significant market need, attracting investors and good deals. At the same time, it reduces the perceived risk and increases ROI expectations.

Greenlight Product Development: with product-market fit as a North Star for product development, validated market demands guide features and functionalities from the initial prototype to full-scale production. This prevents burning resources on irrelevant features and fosters a lean approach to product development.

Effective GTM Tracks: Businesses can craft GTM tracks that resonate with their target audience by leveraging insights into customer needs and market dynamics, leading to faster market penetration, increased brand awareness, and revenue.

Sticky Products: Simply put, a product that sticks is a product that becomes part of the audience's daily lives. Product-market fit is the glue that makes the product stick to the hearts of the audience.

Speedy Traction: By precisely addressing user demands, these products quickly gather a loyal user base, accelerating growth. This swift traction sets a solid foundation for success.

Scalable Growth: The insights gained from a tight product-market fit inform strategic decisions that generate traction and loyalty, from product enhancements to market expansion efforts.

Brand Strategy: a Key Component to Product-Market Fit

On the tough road to product-market fit, one thing remains clear: all help is welcome. Enter brand strategy as a powerful blueprint to guide and accelerate the product-market fit process.

Brand strategy is so much more than a marketing component; it's the missing link that can help products go from an OK to exceptional. By integrating brand strategy as early as possible, products resonate more deeply from day one, addressing the audience's pain points, desires, and aspirations.

Users everywhere experience this reality daily. Ask around, and see people quickly list many products they can't live without: Google (Docs, Drive, Meet, Search, Spreadsheets, Ads), Slack, LinkedIn, Calendly, Zapier, Spotify, YouTube, and beyond, spanning lifestyle, entertainment, productivity, finances... the list goes on.

But here's the caveat: product-market fit alone didn't turn these products into the massive success they are. Stop and look at their brands, and how cohesive they have been ever since you saw them first.

Brand consistency builds trust, promotes clarity, and sets the tone for each single experience, from minor touchpoints like transactional emails to innovative features that set the product apart from the competition. Customers feel safe, because they know what they can expect.

Visuals, messaging, feelings... it all comes together so smoothly that when the user least expects, the product is part of their lives, frictionless, delightful, even addicting.

That's not by chance. That's by design. Brand strategy is the bridge that connects products to hearts, turning them into delightful experiences.

The Benefits of a Strong Brand Strategy for PMF

Transcending aesthetics, logo, typography and colors, brand strategy is the bridge that gaps the distance between the product and the heart of the market. Here's why:

Enhancing the Product's Appeal: Aligning brand identity with product utility fosters a deeper connection with the target audience, so the product is perceived as tailor-made to meet their needs and exceed their expectations.

Provides an Effective Route to Product-Market Fit: Brand strategy acts as a North Star, steering product development and iteration in a direction that resonates with the market's evolving preferences.

Facilitates Customer Loyalty and Repeat Business: Loyalty is born from consistency and reliability, both of which are hallmarks of a strong brand strategy. When customers find a brand that consistently meets their expectations, they are more likely to become repeat buyers and advocates.

Amplifies Marketing and Advertising Outcomes: Marketing efforts are supercharged by a strong brand strategy as unified messaging across all channels amplifies reach, impact, and trust.

Encourages Word of Mouth and Positive Reviews: Satisfied customers are the best advertisers. Delivering on the promises and providing fantastic experiences is the most efficient path to win their hearts and their referrals.

Emotional Engagement Through Storytelling: Crafting a narrative that connects on an emotional level transforms the product from a commodity to a part of the customer's very identity.

Key Takeaway: Brand is not an afterthought, but where great products begin and markets take shape. It's a two-lane street: from understanding what products and markets need, strong brands are created. This back-and-forth shows the importance of a foundational brand strategy from the beginning.
Start with your brand; use it to make sure your product meets market needs. As your product wins the hearts of your users, your brand will grow stronger and you will get more feedback on how to continue to delight your customers. It's a virtuous cycle where product reflect market needs, and market needs drive product features.

Achieve Product-Market Fit
(Guided By Brand Strategy)

Now that we understand how important product-market fit is, as well as the role of brand strategy to guide the journey, let's roll up our sleeves and get some work done. Here's a step-by-step guide of the process:

01 Ideation

Identify a Problem: First, you need to find a genuine problem with a huge market.

Create a Solution: Now, come up with a solution that is potentially scalable.

Identify Target Audience: Define who your product is for. Analyze demographic, psychographic, and behavioral traits.

Understand Pain Points: Conduct surveys, interviews, and market research to pinpoint the specific problems your target audience faces.

Define Value Proposition: Articulate how your product solves those problems.

Develop MVP (Minimum Viable Product): Construct a prototype or basic version of your product focused on solving the core problem for your target audience.

> **Oro Tip:** Hear your audience. Don't rush the process. The focus here is not creating an awesome prototype, but a minimal solution that solves their needs.

Take DoorDash as an example: they went to interview a macaroon shop owner and heard her declining a delivery.

They asked why (it was outside of the interview scope) and she said it was hard to staff because demand had spikes and valleys. That was their Eureka moment. Upon more research, they found that few restaurants delivered - and those who did, didn't like doing it.

Then, they uploaded a very simple landing page and delivered the orders themselves as they proceeded to the validation phase.

The first DoorDash landing page in May 2013

How Brand Strategy Helps Product Ideation

01 Market research and persona development lead to more accurate solutions
02 Persona insights guides feature prioritization and value proposition
03 Identifies PMF opportunities aligned with strategy and expectations
04 Aligns the product's mission with the target audience's values and needs

Practical Advice

Start by doing extensive market research and crafting a crystal-clear persona, and then embed your brand's values and mission into the product ideation process. This certifies that the product concept is not just a solution to a market need but also a reflection of what your brand stands for. Use brainstorming sessions and workshops that focus on aligning product ideas with brand stories and values.

Tools & Methodologies

Use Google Trends for market research to identify emerging needs. Miro for brainstorming sessions allows for collaborative ideation, mapping out solutions and target audience characteristics. The Lean Canvas, an adaptation of the Value Proposition Canvas, helps in defining and aligning the product's value proposition with customer segments. Ad campaigns can help gauge interest and gather initial data.

02 Validation

Define Your Criteria: Establish clear metrics for success.

Introduce the MVP: Launch a Minimum Viable Product to a select group of early adopters. It can be only a landing page to measure interest.

Get Data: Collect quantitative and qualitative data on user interactions and product performance. Running ads is a popular way to do this.

Run Customer Surveys: Deploy targeted surveys to gather insights directly from your user base.

Analyze Feedback: analyze responses with attention to find the insights that will either show product-market fit potential or the need to pivot.

Analyze Market Potential: having a huge market to scale is a key component. Without a huge market, you can't scale. If you can't scale, you won't be able to hire the top talents required to develop an amazing product experience.

**Launch:** when your PMF is ready, it's time to create a GTM strategy and launch it.

> **Oro Tip:** Really hear your audience. You may find the best insight is between the lines. And don't try to force product-market fit for your initial hypothesis.

For instance, AirBnB's first idea was to provide a secondary accommodation alternative for people when hotels were full due to events like conferences and conventions.

They tested it out during a 2007 conference, but people were not ready to stay in a stranger's home. After analyzing their data and the market, they pivoted to create a solution that was perceived as better than hotels across the board: safe, affordable, flexible, and so on.

They kept moving forward, and within two years they found PMF. The rest is history.
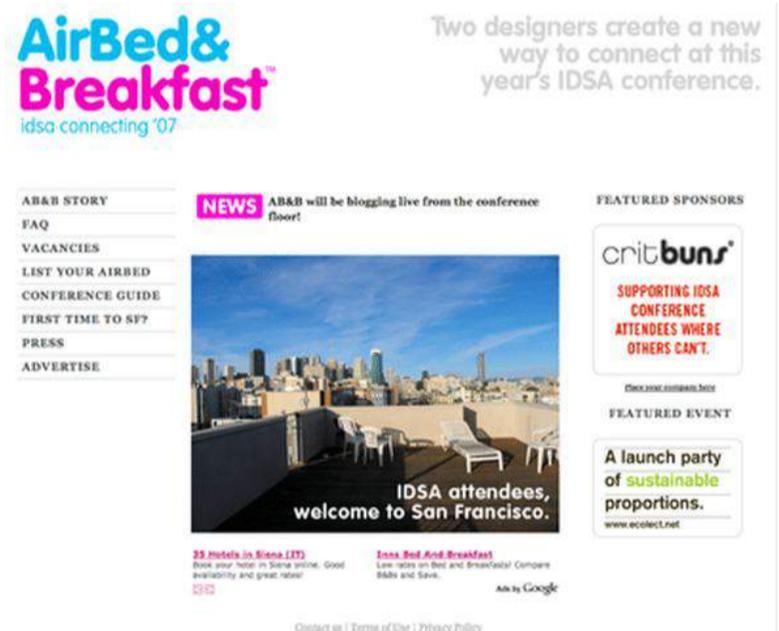
AirBnB's first landing page for the IDSA Conference.

How Brand Strategy Helps Product Validation

01 Enhances credibility and trust
02 Guides the design and messaging of the MVP
03 Frames validation metrics according to the audience's true needs
04 Maximizes value from interactions to gather genuine feedback

Practical Advice

When validating your MVP, incorporate brand messaging and identity into your testing. This includes using branded surveys, focus groups, and landing pages for A/B testing that not only test the product's viability but also its resonance with the brand's voice and ethos.

Tools & Methodologies

For gathering data, Google Analytics offers insights into user behavior on landing pages, while A/B testing tools like Optimizely allow for experimenting with different value propositions. Use Typeform for customer surveys to gather qualitative feedback, and Hotjar for visualizing user interactions and identifying pain points.

03 Scaling

Identify Product-Market Fit: Evaluate if your product satisfies a strong market demand. This is paramount, so we'll have another section focusing only on the criteria to identify product-market fit.

Expand Market Reach: Widen your target market reach through strategic marketing and scaling production capabilities.

Secure Investment: Obtain financial backing through pitches to investors, highlighting your product's potential. Make sure your presentation focuses on showing a tight PMF.

Pick a Growth Strategy: Choose between SLG, PLG, XLG, or hybrid to grow your business and execute it accordingly.

Hire Teams: Assemble a skilled team focused on your growth strategy and goals. Don't forget that you need to provide fantastic experiences at each touch point.

Develop Your Product: Create a comprehensive roadmap to evolve your MVP into a full-featured offering with delightful experiences.

Conduct Usability Testing: Implement testing sessions to ensure the product meets user expectations for ease of use.

Enhance Customer Support: Build a robust support system to address user inquiries and issues promptly.

Polish UX and CX: Survey your customers and analyze your data to further refine user experience and customer experience to enhance satisfaction and loyalty.

Measure Traction: Leverage marketing and network effects to build an initial user base and measure your growth.

Oro Tip: whatever you do, don't scale before you're 100% confident on your market fit. Premature scaling, a term coined by Steve Blank, is one of the biggest threats to your vision as it usually takes 2 to 3 times longer to validate the market than most founders expect. Don't let pressure, expectations, and exciting forecasts motivate your decision: 70% of startups fail due to premature scaling. The only thing that provides a solid framework to scaling your business is a tight PMF.

How Brand Strategy Helps Scaling

01 Enhances visibility and attracts a broader audience without diluting core value
02 Infuses sales and marketing channels with consistent brand messaging
03 Maintains brand consistency across touchpoints to strengthen customer trust
04 Amplifies brand reach effectively through targeted marketing strategies

Practical Advice

As you scale your product, infuse all sales and marketing channels with your brand's messaging and visual identity. Consistency across all touchpoints enhances brand recall and strengthens customer trust.

Tools & Methodologies

Marketing automation tools like Salesforce and Apollo can help maintain brand consistency across various channels, ensuring that every customer interaction reflects the brand's core message. Slack for team communication promotes alignment across departments. Asana for project management helps in tracking the development and marketing tasks critical for scaling. For measuring traction, Mixpanel provides advanced analytics to track user engagement and retention.

04 Expanding

Hone Operations: Streamline processes and workflows to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Continuous Experience Improvement: Keep enhancing product and service experiences through ongoing feedback, data analysis, and iterative design.

Explore New Markets: Research and identify new geographical or demographic markets that present opportunities for expansion.

Pay Attention to Customer Satisfaction: Continuously measure customer satisfaction.

Optimize Customer Support: Scale your customer support capabilities by incorporating advanced technologies like AI chatbots for immediate response.

Diversify Product Offerings: Develop new products or features that complement your existing offerings or even create new ones.

Invest in Community Building: Foster a loyal customer base and brand advocates through community engagement initiatives.

Oro Tip: while product-market fit will draw investors and bring growth, it's the work you do after you find PMF that will bring market leadership. So whatever you do, don't stop listening to your customers, optimizing the experience, and looking for new products (and new PMF). The better example is Tesla, who didn't stop at high-performance, eco-friendly vehicles and expanded to SpaceX, Starlink, X, and so on.

How Brand Strategy Helps Expanding

01 Amplifies market presence with cohesive brand storytelling

02 Strengthens customer loyalty with consistent brand experiences

03 Maintains brand identity amidst expansion challenges

04 Ensures brand consistency while adapting to cultural changes

Practical Advice

Deep-dive into market research to grasp nuances of emerging or fringe markets. Adapt your brand messaging to meet these new audience expectations, incorporating localization and potentially new product lines tailored to specific regional preferences.

Tools & Methodologies

Use segmentation tools (e.g. Mailchimp or Klaviyo) for nuanced, segmented marketing campaigns aimed at various market segments. Employ Google Analytics for insights into local trends and customer behavior, aiding in the strategic adaptation of your brand for new markets. CRM systems provide detailed segmentation and personalized outreach across diversified customer bases.

Identifying Product-Market Fit

Now that you know all the steps to achieve PMF and how brand strategy can help you get there, let's take a deep breath here and focus on how to identify whether you have it or not.

Identifying product-market fit involves a combination of market research, customer feedback, and iterative product development.

Key indicators include:
High user engagement
Significant organic growth
Positive customer testimonials

> **Oro Tip:** One of the most popular ways to measure product-market fit was created by Sean Ellis, the expert behind early growth in companies such as Dropbox, Evenbrite, LogMeIn and Lookout. It's a simple survey question that asks users how would they feel if they couldn't use the product anymore, with four options ranging from "very disappointed" to "not disappointed - it's not that useful". If more than 40% of the users respond "very disappointed", all you need to do is check the market: if there is potential to grow and scale, you're on the right track.

Since different industries have different criteria, there's a simple but accurate way to identify product-market fit, which is conveniently the original definition from Marc Andresseen:

- people are buying your product as fast as you can make it (or usage grows as fast as you can expand servers);
- your company account is flooding with money;
- you're hiring all the sales and customer support talents you can find...

But beware: as product-market fit is the holy-grail of modern ventures, it's easy to get excited with the vision and prematurely move to scale. These are the two most important elements: high growth through word-of-mouth and money piling up in your bank account. Without either one of these, you still don't have PMF.

Product-Market Fit Pitfalls
(And How Brand Strategy Helps Overcome Them)

The first mistake a company can make in the path towards product-market fit is thinking that it doesn't matter and don't even bother finding it. Developing a product that sticks is not something that happens by chance; it takes a huge amount of research, ideation, and early development. Would you rather haphazardly create products and throw them to the audience to see if it sticks… Or develop a strategy first - specifically, one that takes brand strategy into account since the very first day. (You would be astonished how many billion-dollar, venture-backed companies engage in the former.)

The second biggest mistake a company can make is to think the product-market fit is there when it's not (call it "executive cognitive bias?). Whether they're excited with the vision, or feeling the pressure, or if they see some initial traction, there are plenty of pitfalls that can prevent you from ever reaching PMF if you don't pay attention.

Both these mistakes can be prevented if you have a strong brand strategy to guide your PMF efforts. In fact, brand strategy will help avoid the most dangerous product-market fit pitfalls and misconceptions, like:
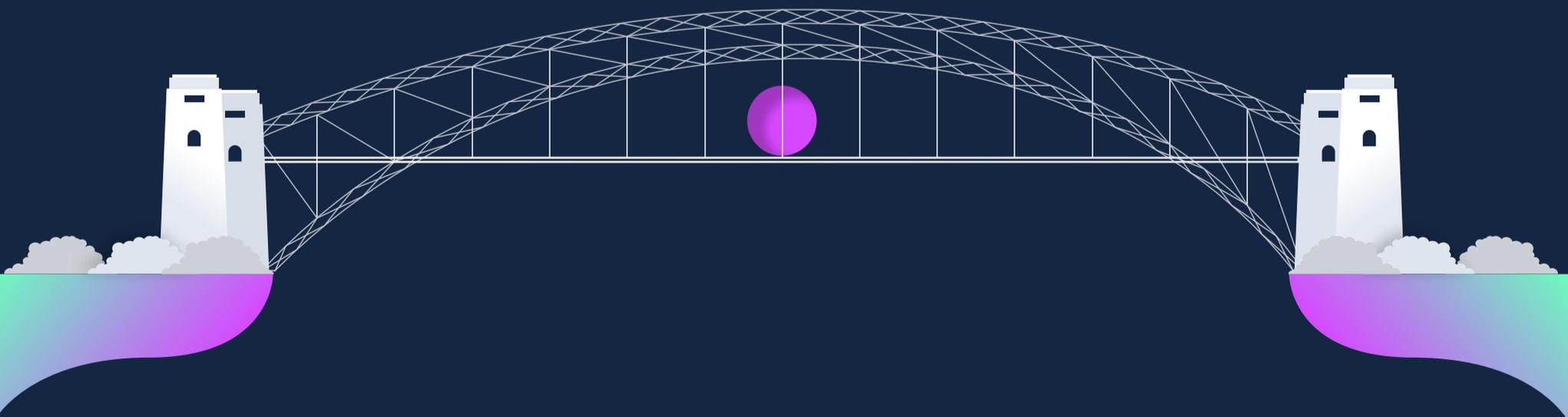
Common PMF Pitfalls	Strategic Approach
Rapid Hiring Equals Success: Companies often assume that quickly expanding their team in response to growing sales and user adoption signifies product-market fit. However, this expansion doesn't always translate to profitability. Overhead costs can outpace revenue, indicating that the product itself may not be as financially viable as growth metrics suggest. In fact, if you expand too soon it gets harder and harder to achieve profitability.	Brand strategy **emphasizes building a strong brand identity and value proposition before scaling. When growth is aligned with the brand's core values and mission, expansion becomes more sustainable and financially viable.**
High User Acquisition Rates: A common misconception is that a surge in new users or customers automatically means the product has found its market fit. In reality, this could be the result of effective marketing rather than the product's inherent market demand. If usage is not growing due to word of mouth, product-market fit is still not there.	Brand strategy **focuses on the right audience, ensuring that growth in user acquisition is not just a result of widespread marketing but is attracting genuinely interested users who see the value in the product, leading to better retention and loyalty.**
Feature Overload: Adding numerous features based on user requests or competitor actions is often mistaken for moving closer to product-market fit. This can lead to a cluttered product that strays from its core value proposition, confusing users rather than satisfying their needs. Focus on heavy-user feedback instead and work only on the features that will add value to the product.	Brand strategy **helps maintain clarity and consistency in the product's core message and offerings. By understanding the brand's vision and the needs of its target market, companies can avoid diluting their product with unnecessary features, ensuring the product remains true to its value proposition.**
Positive Initial Feedback: Praise from a small group of early adopters can lead companies to believe they've achieved product-market fit. However, this early feedback may not represent the broader market's needs or scalability potential as explosive growth lies beyond early adoption.	Brand strategy **involves continuous market research and engagement with a broader audience base, moving beyond initial feedback to validate the product's fit across diverse market segments. This helps in identifying scalable opportunities and refining the product for wider appeal.**
One-Size-Fits-All Approach: Believing that the same strategies or product versions will work equally well across different markets or customer segments is a dangerous path. Product-market fit can vary significantly across regions, demographics, and user types, requiring tailored approaches.	Brand strategy **recognizes the uniqueness of different market segments and tailors messaging and product offerings accordingly. By developing segment-specific brand narratives, companies can better align their products with the specific needs and preferences of each target group, enhancing market fit.**
Product Completion Myth: The belief that product-market fit is a one-time achievement after which the product is complete and needs no further changes. Markets evolve, and ongoing adaptation and iteration are necessary to maintain fit over time.	Brand strategy **fosters a culture of continuous innovation and adaptation. By keeping the brand aligned with evolving market trends and customer expectations, the product remains relevant and maintains its fit over time.**
Equating Short-Term Gains with Long-Term Viability: Mistaking short-term successes or spikes in metrics for a sign of long-term market fit. True product-market fit is demonstrated through sustained growth, repeat usage, and long-term customer value, not just immediate gains.	Brand strategy **focuses on building long-term customer relationships and brand loyalty. By prioritizing enduring brand values over short-term metrics, companies can ensure sustainable growth and a lasting product-market fit.**

Neglecting brand strategy as the component that unites the product with its intended marketing can jeopardize the outcomes. It's the brand that imbues a product with meaning, personality, and relevance, making it not just a secondary marketing tool but a part of the product's identity and the customer's daily life.

This oversight in integrating brand strategy into the journey towards product-market fit can lead to a shortsighted view of success, focusing solely on short-term metrics or features without considering the holistic experience from the customer's perspective.

Crafting a Brand Strategy That Bridges the Gap Between Product and Market

With brand as the bridge that leads the product into the heart of the audience, a foundational approach can accelerate product-market fit by aligning values and expectations.

A strong brand strategy is composed of several critical components, each indispensable in aligning a product with its intended market. Here's a comprehensive guide to brand strategy for PMF:

Market Research: Essential for identifying market needs and gaps, this stage informs product development to ensure relevance and demand in the marketplace, directly influencing PMF by aligning product offerings with actual market needs.

Persona Development: By defining the target customer's psychographics and demographics, this stage tailors the product's features and experience to the specific preferences of the audience, enhancing the product's market fit.

Purpose & Vision: Articulates the brand's core mission, guiding product development and company actions to resonate with customers on a values-based level, fostering a deeper market connection that transcends mere utility.

Promise & Values: Establishes the brand's commitment and ethical stance, building customer trust and loyalty by setting expectations.

Brand Narrative: Weaves the brand's purpose, promise, and values into a compelling story that emotionally engages customers, transforming the product into an extension of their identity and thus, solidifying its place in the market.

Brand Positioning: Differentiates the product in a crowded market by highlighting its unique value proposition, ensuring it is recognized and preferred by the target persona, which is critical for achieving and maintaining PMF.

Without these foundational elements of brand strategy, achieving product-market fit grows significantly more challenging, if not impossible.
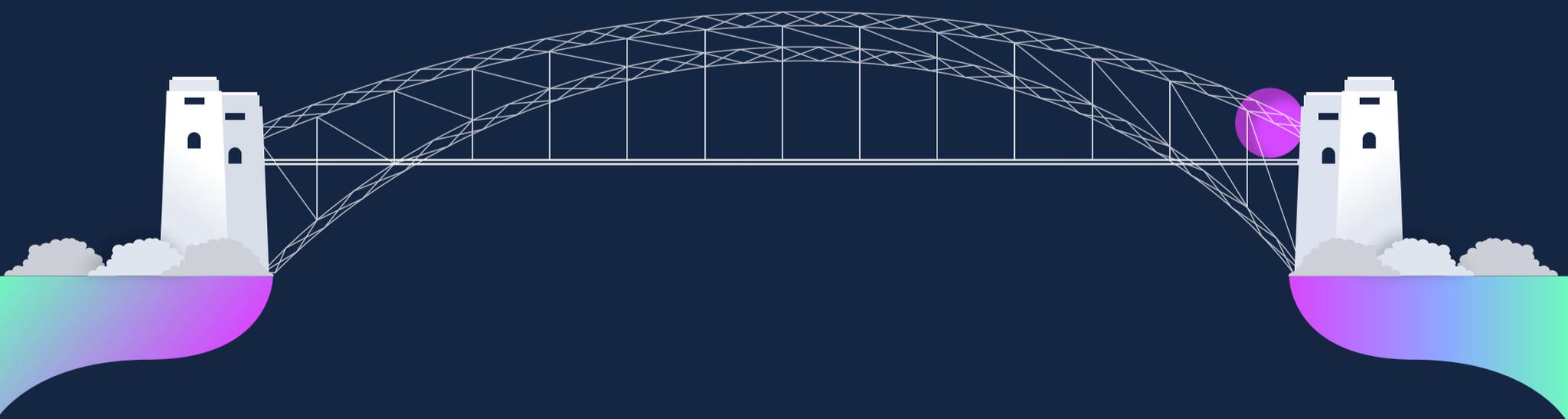
Feedback-Fueled Growth: Keeping Brand and Product Aligned With Evolving Market Needs

After achieving PMF and scaling, revenue pours in and resources are abundant. It's the perfect time to identify new opportunities, like potential fringe markets, new products, or new use cases for existing offerings. Agility in leveraging these opportunities is critical; it enables businesses to adapt their strategies quickly, capitalize on emerging trends, and address unmet needs in the market.

Developing a systematic approach to gathering and analyzing market feedback is decisive not only to reach PMF but to keep it, as people's needs and problems are evolving faster and faster with each new technological or cultural disruption.

This involves steady engagement with customers through various channels, such as social media, customer surveys, and feedback mechanisms embedded within the product itself. This wealth of data will provide the insights to dish out innovation swiftly in response to market changes, as well as pivot strategies and/or reallocate resources, when the need arises.
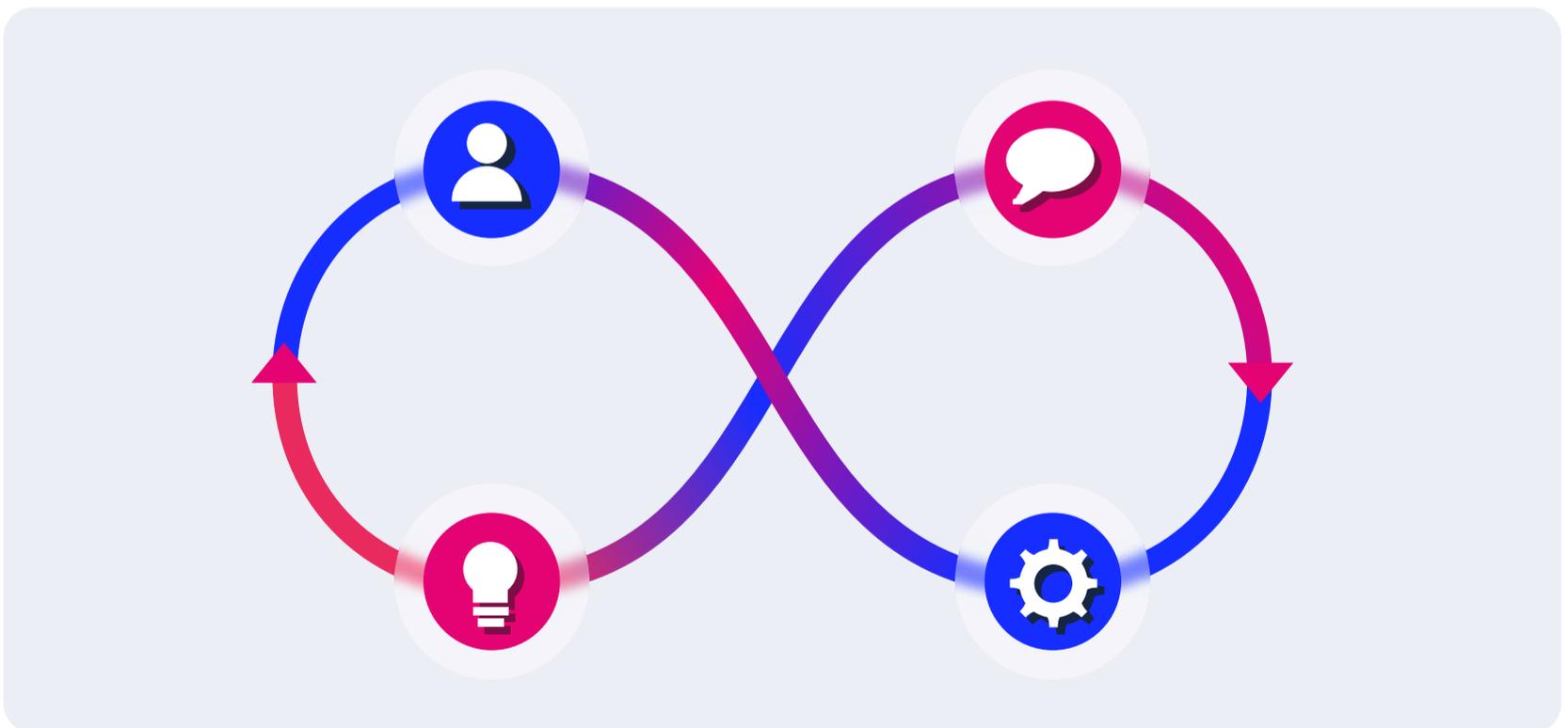
Brand Strategy: Paving the Way to Product-Market Fit

Nailing product-market fit feels like going through a puzzling maze with endless dead ends and crossroads. Only one path leads you to PMF success.

You can either choose to cross the labyrinth by trial and error, or use bran d strategy as your guide. If you go with trial and error, you rely on luck and risk wasting precious resources; on the other hand, brand strategy relies on a method and makes sure every penny counts.

This clarity in brand strategy empowers companies to efficiently navigate market and cultural shifts, ensuring that every product decision, from new features to simple tweaks, are designed to secure a special place in the hearts and minds of consumers.

Continuous evolution powered by genuine customer feedback and market insights drive a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement for both product and brand. This cultivates a devoted customer base and carves out a distinct competitive edge in the market.

Through deliberate brand strategy and steadfast adherence to PMF principles, businesses can secure lasting dominance, establish a unique market presence, and safeguard their legacy in the industry.

At Orogamis, we specialize in bridging the gap between your product and its perfect market fit through foundational brand strategy. Our expert team delves deep into understanding your vision, market position, and customer insights, crafting a brand strategy that not only distinguishes you in the marketplace but propels sustained growth.

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Let's embark on this journey together.

Reach out for a discovery call with Orogamis, and accelerate your product-market fit with unrivaled accuracy. Our goal is to help you turn your product into the next market sensation users can't live without.