



BUILD WHAT PEOPLE WILL BUY:
**How Qualitative
Research Improves
Technology Product
Development**

Obtaining, recording, and incorporating consumer feedback is critical to developing new tech products. Here's how we do it at Discuss.io.



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INTRODUCTION

Is this a user/business problem worth solving? What would users pay for a solution? Is our prototype usable? Is this feature worth tweaking, or should we abandon it?

These are questions product managers must ask themselves every day. Asking questions is easy; finding answers is the challenging part. There is simply no substitute for qualitative research, having real conversations with real users to discover their motivations and the emotions that form the basis for their decisions every day.

Interpreting and analyzing the answers that come from those conversations can be an even harder challenge than gathering the answers themselves. Luckily, Discuss.io is tailored to provide unmatched ease of use for user researchers and participants alike.

This guide discusses how Discuss.io facilitates qualitative and quantitative research at every stage of the hardware and/or software technology product lifecycle. The stages covered are:

- Opportunity assessment
- Discovery
- Implementation
- Post-launch optimization
- Sunsetting

Discuss.io offers purpose-built smart videoconferencing technology designed to capture user insights at scale. Within the app itself, individuals may be assigned different roles: moderators, observers, translators, etc. Offering a variety of transcription, translation, whiteboarding, screen-sharing, and video-bookmarking services, our platform is designed to streamline research processes at every step of the way.

Our watchwords? User empathy.

Here's how we do it.





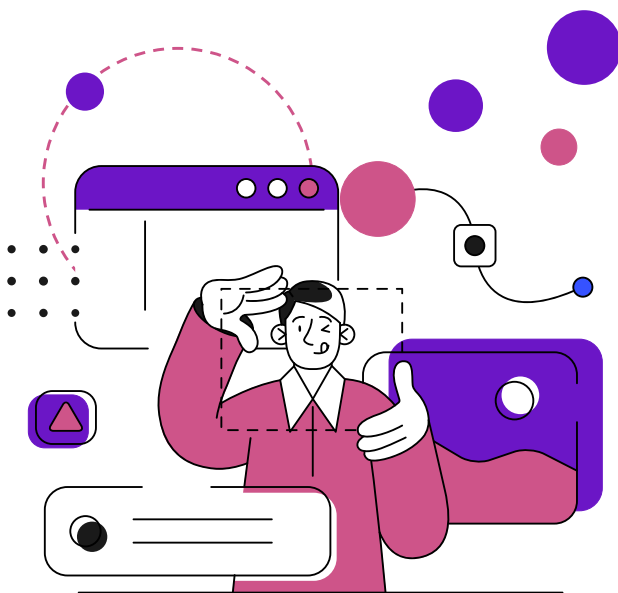
OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT



OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

“Brands must understand emotional experiences if they want to understand what will and will not resonate among consumers.”

– Jim Longo, Co-founder and Chief Strategy Officer at Discuss.io



So you have an idea about a product or service. Awesome! First, there are a few questions to answer:

- Why build this?
- What problem or pain is this solving?
- Who would use it?
- What are they using now?
- How big is this opportunity?
- Are we, as a company, capable of overcoming this challenge?
- Is the upside worth it?
- Is this the right moment to pursue this idea?

Opportunity assessment is the cornerstone of new technology development. All the efforts of the design and engineering departments will be to no avail if product leaders lack a central vision, a central goal and, above all, a central understanding of users’ needs and desires.

Put simply, you need user feedback to understand if a problem is worth solving. (Not all are.) At this stage of the product strategy process, qualitative feedback is king.

Opportunity assessment is not just about prototypes. It’s about user motivation, what people value and how they make decisions—a host of details only obtainable via real, human interaction. Will people pay for this product or service? Is the pain big enough to motivate them to change behavior? These are questions you can only answer through user conversations and prototyping.



How Discuss.io can help:

By ensuring ease of locating and communicating with qualified research participants, Discuss.io helps obtain feedback on the business case itself. Purpose-built for user conversations, Discuss.io enables you to record conversations, bookmark moments of interest and obtain transcripts that allow for quick and easily readable analyses across different interviews. You can unearth valuable insights that will revolutionize your understanding of user motivations.

Expanding into international markets is a challenge for most companies, as cultural nuances may promote or inhibit adoption rates among certain user groups. Discuss.io eases this process by localizing the experience. With Discuss.io's participant recruitment services and integrated translation capabilities, you can access those users and gain firsthand perspectives you won't obtain anywhere else.

Gaining on-the-ground feedback is critically important—and, all too often, critically difficult. With Discuss.io's team of experts, it doesn't have to be. Leave the heavy lifting to us so you can focus on the analyses that matter.



Client Story: Opportunity Assessment

“Jennifer” works at a financial services company seeking information on how users make banking decisions. She can use quantitative data to facilitate basic analyses, but, knowing that banking decisions are driven by multiple, complex, and intersecting motivations, Jennifer decides that nothing can replace live human interaction and the qualitative data it will generate.

Enter Discuss.io.

While Jennifer appreciates the clarity of the video-streaming services, the true appeal of Discuss.io for her lies in its whiteboarding and screen-sharing features. With these features, Jennifer can more easily manage discussions and gauge user reactions to certain digital experiences, distilling the motivations behind their decisions. She can then apply these insights to the company's competitors, studying aspects of their brand strategies and the effects on potential clients.



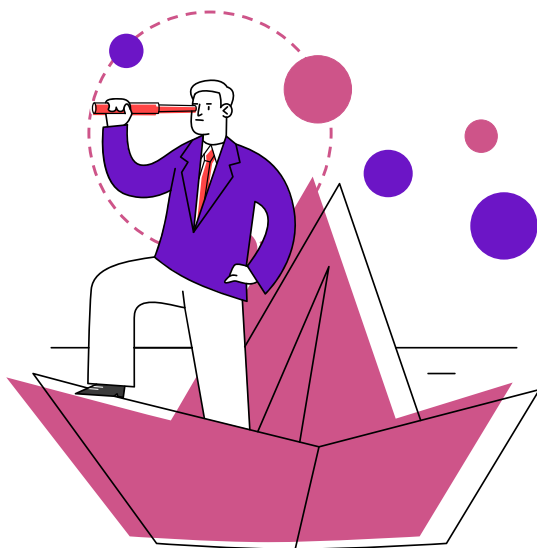
DISCOVERY



DISCOVERY

So you've found a niche in the market and decided it's worth your while to pursue it. You find yourself asking questions like:

- What will the solution look like?
- How will people feel about this solution?
- What's the ideal design?
- What's the scope of the project?
- How much might an individual pay?
- Is this a desktop or mobile experience? Can it be both? What are the similarities or differences?



Discovery is about refining the project requirements and building the architecture for later stages. At this stage, usability testing is key for prototypes as well as concepts. The ultimate goal is validation, but don't be afraid of early-stage refutation. An early setback may be a blessing in disguise as it costs a lot less to re-focus and change course at this stage than after you've invested in real code. You want to get it as right as possible at this stage to save pain and costs later.

This is the stage at which quantitative data enters the scene, being an essential feature of most usability tests. That said, qualitative research still rules the roost, as any quantitative data must still be considered in the context of the team's overall understanding of user motivation and long-term product vision.

That means that user interviews at the discovery stage are still essential to the process, enabling development teams to quickly "feel the pulse" of typical users regarding initial feedback about the product, potential design, and even price range. The answers to these questions are vital, so this step should never be missed.



How Discuss.io can help:

This is an area in which Discuss.io really shines, because even when user researchers have oodles of feedback—videos, calls, recorded meetings—analyzing it can seem like a job and a half. That’s why Discuss.io offers a signature “Save Moment” feature. Clicking the “Save Moment” button will highlight and save the fifteen seconds before and after the selected moment, creating a short and easily shareable video clip. Researchers can then compile highlight reels of clips with consistent or common reactions from different meetings, assisting in efficient and effective data interpretation.

Another benefit of Discuss.io is that observers can speak with the moderator during interview sessions. If, during a research session, a participant says something particularly exciting or worrying, you can communicate with moderators and urge them to learn more—all without interrupting the participant’s train of thought. That’s what we call handy!



Client Story: Discovery

“Zeke” works at an internet hardware company that specializes in modems and routers. Compared to its competitors, this company produces exceptionally competent and reliable products. However, Zeke knows that many users become easily frustrated when complex technological devices fail to work as intended. He worries whether the troubleshooting details are presented in an easily digestible manner for everyday customers.

Enter Discuss.io.

Having provided the participants with routers that are purposely defective in some manner, Zeke uses Discuss.io to follow and record a variety of user reactions on their mobile devices. Doing this testing on mobile devices allows the respondents to stay connected through their cellular data while the routers intentionally fail giving Zeke and team observable usability data. Using the “Save Moment” function to bookmark consistent behaviors across different videos, Zeke notes people’s initial reactions, their most common interpretations of the troubleshooting advice, their levels of visible frustration when problems fail to resolve themselves, and whether they are capable of solving the issue on their own or require the help of a customer service representative.



IMPLEMENTATION



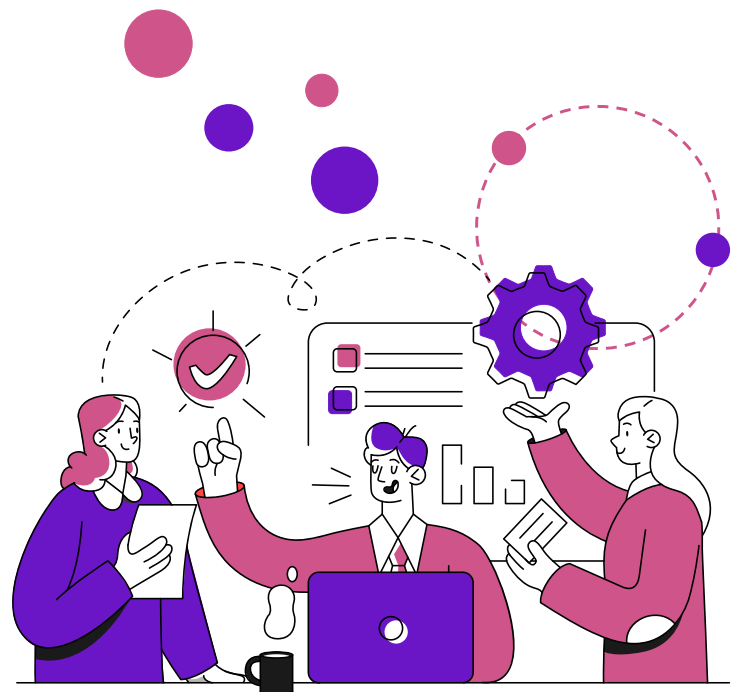
IMPLEMENTATION

The goal of implementation is to build the system to the point of a beta release. The prototype phase is past; rather, this is fingers-to-keyboard work on building the product itself, conducting internal product tweaking and analyzing the likelihood of user acceptance.

A crucial key to implementation is that product teams must be careful about the kind of user they choose to survey at this stage. It is easier to examine the motivations of a narrow group of people than it is a large one. Experts who understand the nuances of development and testing—people who have some understanding of market demands and alternatives—are best. From the product manager’s perspective, the goal is to offer a core competence, richer than a mere prototype, and to use the consequent feedback to resolve any dead ends and develop a launch-ready product.

Though the best questions you can ask at this stage should be quite specific to your particular product, there are a few basic questions that can give you a general idea of user sentiment at the implementation stage, such as:

- Is there a confusing/difficult part of using this product? If so, why?
- How much would you pay for this product as it is right now?
- What surprises, either good or bad, did you encounter when using this product?
- How would you feel if you couldn’t have this product?

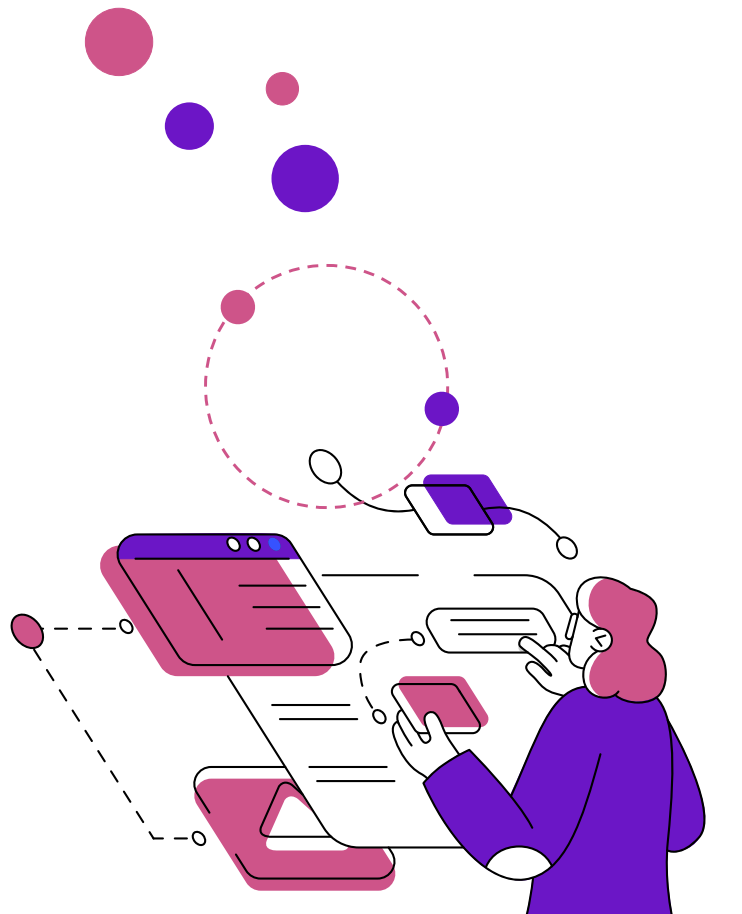




How Discuss.io can help:

The key here is to isolate variables using qualified research participants, and Discuss.io is perfectly poised to do that. Our platform is designed to work with your own panel of participants—but selecting the right candidates can be tricky. (Trust us. We've been there.)

Discuss.io also provides professional assistance in writing screeners that help you filter to your target audience. This service is personally tailored for each project. The correct screener gives you the right participant segment that aligns with the business objective of your decision guide. Our goal is to establish a working relationship with a reliable and consistent group of participants whom you can consult throughout the development process. We think ahead.





**POST-LAUNCH
OPTIMIZATION**



POST-LAUNCH OPTIMIZATION

The MVP is finished, and it's gone public. Congratulations! Pat yourself on the back; you've earned it. But the work's just getting started. This is the time for post-launch optimization.

Post-launch optimization requires a ton of quantitative analytics (e.g., adoption, feature usage, click tracking, etc.), but understanding and incorporating these data requires further qualitative research. We call these deep dives: the work of applying qualitative research to explain the numbers you're seeing via your analytics tools. While quantitative data analysis may reveal a certain percentage of repeat customers, for example, a Swedish study indicated that customer loyalty and customer satisfaction are **not one and the same**. Qualitative analysis will help you interpret the numbers on your screen.

At this stage, quantitative analytics provide a starting point from which we consider why user behavior is the way it is. You may find yourself asking questions like:

- How do users feel about the product?
- Why do they feel that way?
- Why does this account do this but not that?
- Why is this user segment behaving in this particular way?
- Why is the product overperforming/underperforming in terms of sales?
- How should the product roadmap look?
- What additional features and capabilities should be considered or included in this product?

In some ways this is a “tidying-up” stage. When soliciting user opinions, you may encounter users who say, “This is a great product, but it would be better if only it had . . .” Based on your qualitative data, you can determine whether such statements represent isolated opinions or a common sentiment that should be addressed in the future.

However, this stage is about more than just tidying up. It is also about planning for product growth if your product meets with initial success. How will you build a product that lives and grows over time? Conducting real user interviews at this stage can help you discover how to ensure that your product growth plan makes sense in the context of what your users want and expect.



How Discuss.io can help:

This is where Discuss.io truly excels. By this stage, quantitative data exists in abundance—but the best product leaders understand the necessity of marrying qualitative and quantitative data. Discuss.io fulfills a unique interpretative role in this stage, applying qualitative perspectives to quantitative numbers and helping discover the why behind the how, the what, or the how many.

Each of Discuss.io's signature features plays a different role in this process. Screen-sharing capabilities allow designers and user researchers a birds-eye view into the user experience: what they see, what they click, how long they linger. The "Save Moment" feature remains as invaluable as ever, particularly regarding user suggestions for future or as-needed product improvements. And, of course, the transcription service allows user researchers to access countless minutes of keyword-searchable interview material at will.



Client Story: Post-launch Optimization

"Vanessa" leads the Shopper Insights division for a high-profile CPG firm that has recently expanded into e-commerce. Their products have just been made available on the virtual sites of such retail giants as Walmart, Target, and Amazon: a huge accomplishment. However, Vanessa wonders how their product placement and performance compares to that of their competitors in the online realm. She'd like to know what users see while walking the virtual shelves.

Enter Discuss.io.

Vanessa can use the screen-sharing and recording functions with internal team members and selected research participants, allowing Vanessa to audit the company's product presence on the retailers' apps. Better, she can use these findings to generate a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data: how long the average user spends on the screen, competitors' average prices, how many rows the user scrolls down before making a purchase. This allows her to place her findings in context and to step into the user's shoes as well as her own.





SUNSETTING



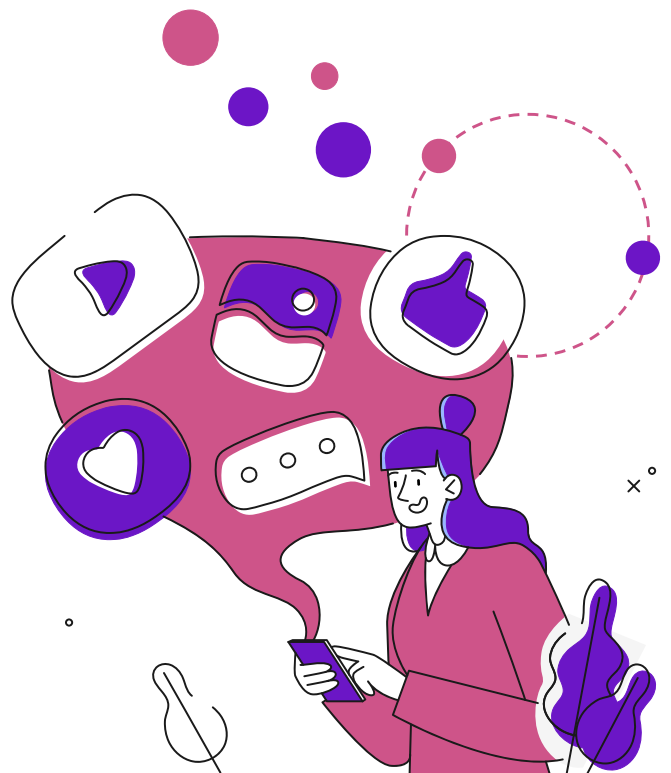
SUNSETTING

Times change. As your product progresses through its lifecycle, the repeated cycle of evolution and adaptation means that certain product features will invariably become outdated.

Good product managers must then ask themselves whether such features ought to be removed entirely or whether it is worth the resources to tweak and repair them. Such decisions are made using a variety of factors, including:

- Adoption rates
- Usage rates
- Long-term company and product strategy
- Maintenance costs
- Replacement costs

As with everything, there is one person above all to consult, and that person is the user. Feedback is essential to not only detect issues, but also to determine whether such issues represent a product problem, a business problem, a customer service problem, or something else entirely. Only when you're in possession of all the facts can you make qualified, if difficult, decisions.





Don't make life difficult. Talk to users the easy way.

How Discuss.io can help:

One of the best things about Discuss.io is that our best features never cease to be useful, whether you're at the earliest stage of the product lifecycle or the latest. Product teams typically know which users they want to talk to, and we support this through our Respondent Management Hub and other "bring your own" panel capabilities. If you need assistance finding a broader group of users, we have a marketplace of recruiting services that can help.

Those who possess in-depth experience as customers can provide insights born of long experience, be they positive or negative. (Remember: negative feedback isn't the final word. It's an opportunity to learn, adjust, and gain more positive feedback down the road!) Our "Save Moment" technology lets researchers observe not only which behaviors are consistent across different participants, but if—and how—those behaviors have shifted over time.

Companies need users, and users need good products. User-centric strategies are good for everyone. Think of it as good karma; a [recent study](#) found that companies perceived to be user-centric commanded superior loyalty intentions on the part of customers, translating into increased performance and higher profits.

In layman's terms, knowledge is power, and engagement is everything. From the first step on your journey to advanced strategic adjustment, from opportunity assessment to sunseting, Discuss.io remains dedicated to providing you (and your product) with every tool you need to succeed.



A photograph of two men in a meeting room, looking at a computer screen. The man on the left is leaning over the desk, pointing at the screen. The man on the right is sitting at the desk, looking at the screen. The background shows a modern office environment with a grid ceiling and large windows. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple gradient.

**We can't wait to work with you.
Ready to see Discuss.io in action?**

[Get a free demo](#) today.

GET A FREE DEMO

