

CHICKEN OR EGG? ARE WE BUILDING IN ROADBLOCKS WAITING FOR FEEDBACK?



Five Questions to Ask Yourself Before Speaking With Users

User feedback is vital to the success of our projects. It can help us identify which new ideas we should pursue as we develop and can keep us focused on delivering just what users need.

We have all seen projects that didn't have the right user validation and feedback. We know this information is important, but getting it, and using it effectively, can be difficult. This can be especially problematic with new projects where you can get into that tricky phase of being slightly ahead of where the users are. It may be tempting to wait to proceed based on user feedback, but that leads to a "chicken or egg" scenario. The faster you can provide meaningful improvements, the greater the adoption, which means greater feedback.

The important thing is not to let the difficulty in getting feedback hold up your project. Generally, the goal in producing something new is to put out a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and get user feedback in the real world. We feel that when looking at user feedback, you should treat it the same way – come up with an MVP for user feedback. With this **Minimum Viable Feedback (MVF)** you get only the feedback necessary to proceed.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before engaging users:

- Have they experienced the problem you are attempting to solve? If so, is this issue visible to them in a meaningful way? If you are asking questions about something they don't really care about, what does that tell you?

- Are they an active user? Does this user often make use of the newest features available in a product?
- What would you do with their input? Will you ignore it if it doesn't back up what you feel? Will the user see the benefit of contributing or think it's a waste of time and not want to help in the future?
- Do you have enough to go on to gauge their response – is the concept clear, do you have prototypes?
- Do you have specific questions with actionable outcomes? You should be focusing on the answers you need right now. After you have better prototypes, or actual code, you can then go back for confirmation and ask questions you have for the next phase.

Instead of hesitating to go to users because you want to do it all at once, you will instead build a continuous feedback loop. You can ask initial need verification questions, then show initial prototypes, and next demonstrate what you have coded and discuss prototypes for the next Sprint. Users become more engaged and are in a better position to provide useful feedback. You will find after adopting this MVF approach you gain the feedback you need along the way. More importantly, you will be able to quickly provide solutions that will find greater acceptance and solve real user issues.