
A custom software
consulting company
leading non-technical clients
**past potholes**.


Bringing **startups**
and **entrepreneurs**
from **Vision** to **Version 1**.


We build **iPhone** apps,
**Android** apps,
and **Web** apps.

Today’s topic is all about MVP’s (**Minimum Viable Products**).

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Ask a client what their ‘**V1**’ is?
Their ‘**Minimum Viable Product**’?

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BLUE ORIGIN
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Clients are frustrated with the vendor selection process, too.

They'll explain their software concept to a dozen firms, and receive quotes from $**30k** to $**300k.**

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Why is that happening?

Explain your **rocket ship**, and every developer will have a different set of assumptions on how it should be built.

Thus, the need for an **MVP.**

And, spec'ing out the needs of that MVP in **exhaustive detail**.

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Keeping things small reduces **budget** and **timeline** risk.

But, convincing a non-technical client to adopt this mentality is our major challenge.

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There’s been talk: ‘MVPs are **dead**.’

‘Users expect **feature-packed** and **flawlessly functioning** products the **first time**.’

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**It is true** that the bar has been raised.

But what does that mean for MVP's?

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First, a bit about me.

A partner with Designli. Taking the lead on our **SolutionLab**.

Lots of people can take your money to code your software. The SolutionLab makes us **different**.

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We spend time on the front end, figuring out the **business case** behind the app.

How the new product will **solve problems** & **add value** to achieve an ROI.

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This means our full-time jobs are to identify **opportunities for**, and to **implement**, software **MVP's** for newly identified problems.

“MVP” does not mean **copping out** on usability or on building a valuable product.

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“MVP” does not mean building something that is so limited in scope that it feels **half-assed**.

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MVP’s just need to be approached **the right way**.

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# HOW TO BUILD A MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT

## NOT LIKE THIS


## LIKE THIS

This also helps because pivots are **real**, and should be **embraced**.

Can you **name** these **companies**?

Began as an online role playing game where users would travel around a digital map, interact with other users to buy, sell and build items with an added photo sharing tool.

Flickr!

Originally began as an online platform which allowed people to browse and shop their favorite retailers, and send them updates when their favorite items were available and on sale.

Pinterest!

Originally began as a website where people could find and subscribe to podcasts, but the founders feared iTunes would be taking over the podcast niche.

Twitter!

Let’s look at **real examples** of how to identify what a good MVP would be in order to **solve a problem**.

(Based on Designli client projects)

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# Gasoline Ordering System

- Company sells gasoline to gas stations. Receives orders and delivers said gasoline on a weekly basis.
- **Problems?**
  - Gas prices change regularly.
    - Hard for customers to predict
    - Hard for customers to know when to order
  - Customers must call in order to Company's receptionist.
  - Manual processing of orders, accounting, etc.

# What is a fully featured software solution to this problem? The **rocketship**, as requested by the client:

- Allow customers to login to their accounts, see gas prices in real time, place an order from an iPhone/Android/Web app.
- Tied into Company's ERP to automatically process orders / give truck drivers the go-ahead on making the delivery. Customers can view truck drivers en route.
- Tied into Company's accounting software to track bills & invoices.
- Tied into Bloomberg market data, for customers to see gas price trends to help in knowing when to buy.
- **$250-350k solution / 12 month build time.**

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# What is a good **MVP** here? How would the **SolutionLab** guide this software effort?

- Allow customers to login to their accounts, see their gas prices in real time, place an order from app (single codebase: cross-platform using **Flutter**; no web).
- Order is sent to receptionist *via email* for manual processing. Existing manual processes take over from the point of order onwards.
- See Bloomberg market data within app via a *web view* (no need to learn Bloomberg's complex API's)

What does the customer see? **For MVP's, this is what matters.**

- Once (IF!) customers adopt, can replace back-end manual systems with software automation.
- **$30k solution / 2 month build time.**

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# Project Reporting Tool

- Company provides construction services to businesses.
- **Problems?**
  - Expensive Project Managers travel to various construction sites around the country to do ‘eyeball inspection tests’ and report progress to clients. Flights, hotels, etc.
  - Manual progress report creation for the end client on weekly basis. PM manually maintains ‘punch list’ of pending tasks.

# What is a fully featured software solution to this problem? The **rocketship**, as requested by the client:

- All construction workers to install ‘Worker App’ (iPhone/Android) and manually ‘check in’ to the job site each day.
- Workers would take pictures of progress on a regular basis as prompted by the app.
- Allow the end-client to login to ‘Client Web-App’ to see all check-ins and progress pictures.
- Allow the Project Manager to login to a ‘PM Web-App’ to monitor progress and punch list (by assigning tasks to individual contractors).
- **$200-250k solution / 10 month build time.**

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# What is a good **MVP** here? How would the **SolutionLab** guide this software effort?

- Wait a minute…the Company already provides iPhones to all workers. No need for **Android**.
- Workers install native app; app automatically checks in based on GPS location when they arrive / leave.
- Workers take picture of progress at end of each work day, syncs to web dashboard.
- Project Manager accesses ‘PM Web-App,’ selects which items they want to dump into a client-facing report (generates PDF). Client-facing report exported and manually sent to client each week by PM.

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What is the most important business pain point to solve? **For MVP's, this is what matters.**

- This solution automates report generation and eliminates the need for eyeball inspection tests.
  - PM's can handle more jobs. Fewer flights around the country.
- No need to automate client communication at this stage.
- **$90k solution / 4 month build time.**

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# Sales Collaboration Tool

- Company brokers deals between Buyers and Suppliers. Acts as a ‘middle man’ for connecting these two parties.
- **Problems?**
  - Company sales agents act independently. They find a supplier, then look through their own rolodex to find someone that may be interested in buying.
  - Hundreds of sales agents, **not** sharing information! (what?!)

Let’s approach this one a bit differently.

What would a **bad** MVP look like?

We could simply connect sales agents via a group email chain - emailing the listserv when a new Supplier is found, asking if anyone knows a Buyer.

- MVP’s for solving business problems do not always involve custom software. The main priority is to solve the problem at hand.
- This solution was attempted.

The outcome? **Not good**.

- No organization.
- No categorization of different types of Suppliers and information around what Buyer is needed.
- No searchability.
- No indication of time sensitivity.

Usability = poor, so adoption = low.

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What is a **good MVP** here?

- Web platform. Sales agents post new Supplier that are found, and what they're offering.
- Tag with time sensitivity (need a buyer in X days) and categorize by type.
- Sales agents who know Buyers and are looking for deals to suggest to them can 'follow' certain categories.
- Can prove immediate ROI to Company by simply helping sales agents **share knowledge** and **rolodexes**.
- Design this **most vital feature set** extremely well so that usability among sales agents is high. Add on new features later.

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What can we build to prove immediate ROI to the client? Or, if building a B2C app, to prove out a revenue-generating concept as soon as possible? **For MVP's, this is what that matters.**

- All this company really needs is a simple intranet to share leads across salespeople, for the greater good of the company.

- Side note: LOTS of opportunity in old school business models like this one for software automation of paper-and-pencil processes.

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# So…

MVP's are **not dead.**

Building a Minimal Viable Product just means tackling the issue at hand in the most **elegant & simplest way possible** to prove the need and to prove the market.

You can build MVP's that are a **pleasure to use** and that satisfy the **high standards** of end-users.

('**Manual back ends**' are the best hack for this).

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Polish your digital product so that it **feels complete** with its MVP feature set, even if the future roadmap is much larger!

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# Questions?