



CONDUCTING A PILOT PROJECT

To avoid wasting time, money, and resources on an endeavor that may or may not achieve the impact it promises, it is important to pilot early-stage ideas in real market contexts.

Successful pilots require previous user research, an innovation/design strategy, and validated solution concepts in order to define a minimum viable solution (commonly called a minimum viable product or MVP) to roll out in a small-scale, low-risk market setting. The author of Lean Startup Eric Ries defines an MVP as “a version of a new product which allows a team to collect the maximum amount of validated learnings about customers with the least effort.” As such, the primary benefit of introducing an MVP before a fully-developed solution is to gain more understanding about your customers’ (particularly early adopters’) interest in your solution before spending the time and money to develop all of its potential features.

OBJECTIVE

Pilot projects measure the performance of a solution over a longer period of time in real life conditions.

WASH-HCD CONNECTION

Conducting a pilot is helpful for WASH project teams when you have sufficiently refined a solution concept through several rounds of prototyping and testing, and have the resources and budget ready to measure its performance over a longer period of time in real market conditions.

TIMING

6+ months

MATERIALS

- DEPENDS ON PILOT

STEPS

1. Define the Minimum Viable Product.

- The first step in conducting a pilot is to define the minimum viable product (MVP). Whereas a prototype is any non-committal early representation of an idea or single feature, an MVP is a fully-operable or working solution that contains only the essential features required to satisfy the needs of your early adopters.
- To establish the essential features, teams should first review the user journey map that was generated during research synthesis and modified as needed during testing and validation in order to pinpoint the goal and specific needs that a customer or user is trying to meet when they engage with the potential solution.
- Teams should then work with stakeholders to prioritize all of the features previously tested according to their ability to meet the user’s specific needs (add value) and their ease of implementation. Only the features that are both high value and easy to implement are included in the MVP.



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STEPS

- 2. Develop the Pilot Testing Plan.** Once the MVP has been defined, the next step is to develop a complete project plan and timeline for the pilot including all key activities, tools, and resources required to execute the pilot. A key component of the testing plan is to define the specific criteria that will be measured throughout the pilot to evaluate the performance of the MVP. Please see 'Testing a prototype' for more detailed guidance on developing criteria.
- 3. Pilot Preparation.** With the testing plan in place, the next step is to prepare all key requirements for a successful roll out including the right people, resources, research requirements, user groups, training needs, materials, logistics and budget.
- 4. Pilot Implementation.** Once the preparation is complete, the pilot is then rolled out. Successful implementation involves continuous problem solving, rigorous performance data collection and analysis, and when possible, making iterative changes to the solution based on the data collected.
- 5. Performance Analysis and Reflection.** Performance data should ideally be collected throughout the pilot, but it is especially important at the conclusion of the project to gather and analyze the performance criteria established at the beginning of the project. This reflection gives the project team the opportunity to decide if any feature, area, touchpoint, deliverable etc in the solution needs to be improved, modified, or removed altogether before the solution is developed further for scale.

