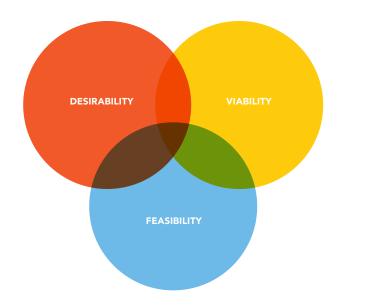
# John Gauch: Portfolio

My business design approach is rooted in curiosity about people, our world and how we interact. This portfolio offers a glimpse into the way I think, approach projects and provide value.

> I have spent my career building products, experiences, teams and businesses: at startups (Internet Appliance Network, Axiom, Spartan, PTDC) and on innovation projects (IBM, QuickCoach). I gained design and innovation skills in line-of-business roles solving problems and pursuing new opportunities. My general management experience – encompassing strategy, leadership, project management, business development, business performance, financial analysis – has complemented and added breadth to my design capabilities.



**DESIRABILITY:** Is there user desirability for a new solution (i.e., struggle with current options)?

**VIABILITY:** Is it economically viable to create and deliver the solution?

**FEASIBILITY:** Is it feasible organizationally and technically to build the solution?

My multi-faceted lens allows me to explore problems, develop and test hypotheses and ideas and create solutions at the intersection of the classic DVF innovation framework. With empathy and understanding, I glide from competency to competency, weaving together these three goals into viable new solutions and ventures.

**Contact** I would love to discuss how I could support your organization. I am a US citizen living in Toronto and work across Canada and the US and internationally.

[ 617-833-0719 🖂 john@johngauch.com 🖵 johngauch.com in johngauch

## Contents

Highlighted here are projects from different company lifecycle stages demonstrating varied design and innovation skills.

### Convu

Learning in the field about demand for human connection Experimentation • Interviews • Low- to high-fidelity MVPs



## Spartan

#### Overcoming the "obstacles" to event participation

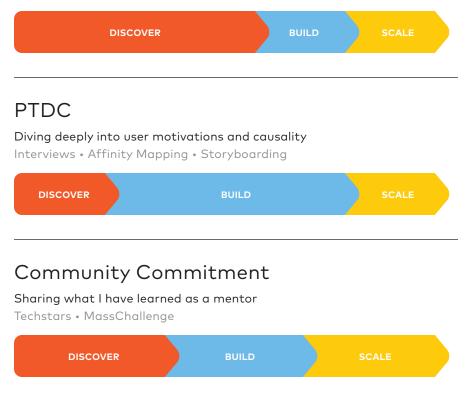
 $Observation {\ \bullet \ } Ideation {\ \bullet \ } Prototyping {\ \bullet \ } Implementation$ 



## QuickCoach

Exploring and validating a "silent" struggle

Time-boxed Sprints • Testing • Prototyping



## Convu

Peer coaching program offering participants similar benefits to working one-on-one with a professional executive coach.

DISCOVER Explore <> Test <> Decide BUILD SCALE



**Opportunity** Social Media connects us, but those connections are not always meaningful, nor do they necessarily make us happy or help us learn and grow. Convu's founder, an entrepreneur and master coach, hypothesized that foundational listening and coaching skills could be taught to anyone.

Any of us could get started with brief training and provide value to a partner. **If he was right, he might create a different kind of media platform – one that hosted learning conversations facilitating personal growth.** Rather than rushing to build an undefined digital service at potentially significant expense, Convu's founder wanted to evaluate demand for the concept and confirm its efficacy first.



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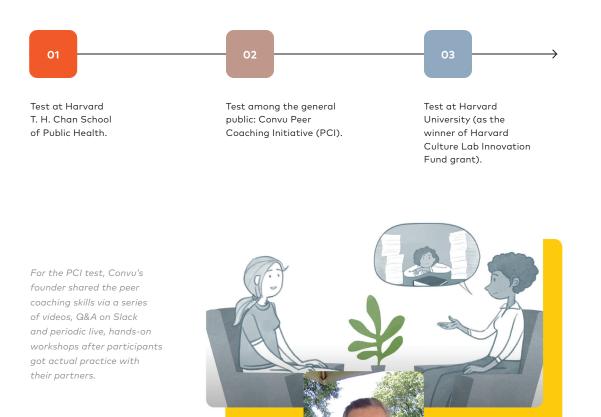
**Team** I partnered with Convu's founder on this design project supported by an informal board of advisors and an on-demand creative team, including a graphic designer and web developer.

**Approach** Because we had questions about solution efficacy, to start we designed and carried out a field experiment testing the core hypothesis – that the deep listening skills inherent to coaching were accessible to the population at large without extensive training. In parallel, we carried out secondary research seeking precedent products for other indications of concept viability, which we found (Friendship Bench, Harvard Graduate School of Education, WellMed).



We tested whether "non-professionals can successfully implement elementary principles of good coaching following brief written or oral instructions." A river with two banks was the analogy we used to share key coaching principles. Test results provided confirming evidence for our hypothesis. Next, we wanted to get an initial understanding of the potential demand for a peer coaching solution. To do this, we interviewed seven users across two of the precedent programs, at Harvard and WellMed, for an hour each. These interviews provided additional confirming evidence that basic coaching skills are accessible to nonprofessionals and early signs that peer coaching solved a meaningful problem for people better than existing alternatives.

This was the jumping-off point to developing our peer-coaching training, or "protocol," that we subject to increasingly sophisticated, live, in-market experiments. Each test allowed us to explore and evaluate current pains, goals and solution criteria – through user feedback, observation and interviews – which insights we built into the next experiment.

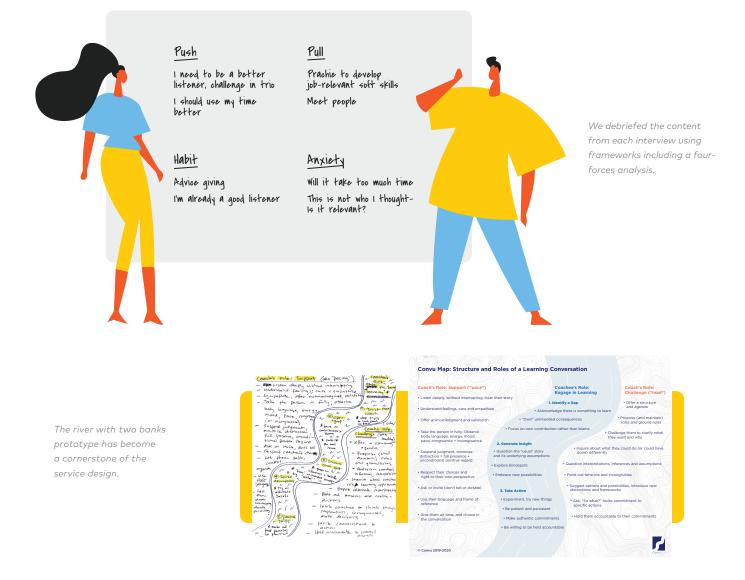


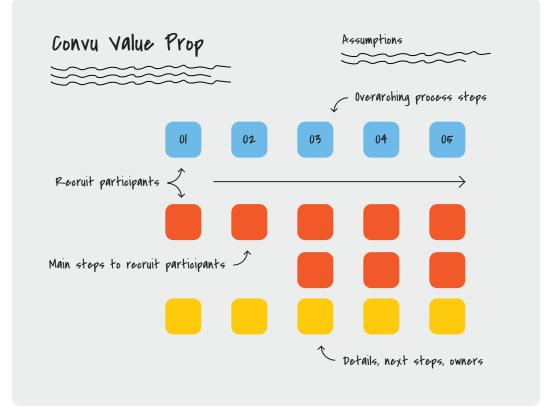


**Results** Qualitative and quantitative findings from earlier research showed Convu's benefits. Active participants, for example, recommended the program to others at a level of 4.8 out of 5. This helped Convu obtain a competitive grant from Harvard University's Culture Lab Innovation Fund to pilot a Convu service for undergraduate and graduate students. Collectively, the solution principles also offered a solid starting point for a future digital product (or another scale solution) that would bring Convu to the much larger audience imagined by its founder.



**Reflections** Experimentation and testing do not need to be tools that are postponed to later in a design process. Tests can be designed and used to learn at any project stage, as we did in this case.





We gave special consideration to the process for matching peers as part of service design and used process maps to work through onboarding and other test details, including how to "market" the tests themselves.



#### Other topics, methods and tools covered at Convu:

- Societal and technological developments
- Current alternatives and competition
- Solution ideation
- Expert interviews
- Affinity group analysis
- Storytelling
- User value proposition canvas
- Business model design

International brand transforming obstacle racing into a global endurance sport and pastime.





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**Opportunity** Born at the same time as many non-traditional endurance events (different kinds of themed runs), Spartan had a reputation for being a tough race, and many potential racers felt anxious that they lacked the athletic skills to participate. Fear of the physical course obstacles – about 20 in a short 5K run – was a big stressor and stopped people from signing up. What could Spartan do to address user anxiety about facing the obstacles on race day and bring in more participants?



**Team** I led this project with the support of a professor with a Ph.D. in kinesiology and expertise in obstacle racing, a member of the Spartan product team, plus input from an architect who created Spartan race obstacles and the Spartan Race Production team that built the courses at each venue.

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**Approach** Spartan's team responsible for user education tracked insights, opportunities and questions in a "product opportunity backlog." We pieced together the insight about users' obstacle fears from this backlog and other unstructured data sources: user discussions on social media platforms, reports from staff field observations, conversations with the customer support team, snippets of insight from racer surveys.

We followed a step-by-step design process to explore how we could reduce obstacle anxiety, keeping feasibility top of mind from the outset because even the most basic race "obstacles," ranging from a rope climb, to spear throw, to wall climb, to various kinds of carries, are not standard equipment for a typical fitness facility or home.



**STEP 1:** Identified/opportunity to explore from backlog.

**STEP 2:** Carried out additional primary research to add depth to the information in the backlog about user problems and pains and goals. This included carrying out and analyzing a halfdozen 60-minute-long user interviews to add texture to our growing understanding of the opportunity.

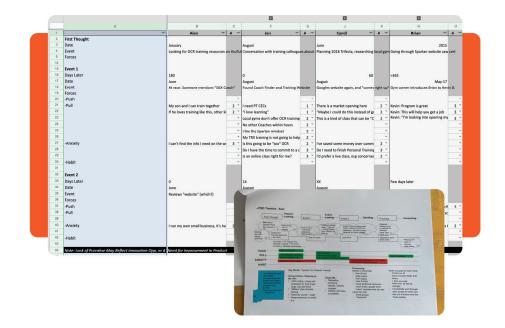
We concluded there was substantial confirming evidence that obstacle anxiety was leading some people not to sign up, or show up, for the race.

We were also able to identify at this point what were likely criteria for a potential solution. **STEP 3:** Ideated products and services to help racers. These ideas included providing additional racer content (blog posts, social media videos), publishing or selling plans so users could build their own obstacles, supporting licensed Spartan coaches to build obstacles at their facilities, etc. **STEP 4:** Tested a leading concept initially in 2D and then in 3D that combined multiple ideas. The "napkin pitch" called for a live, oneday obstacle training pop-up class serving a race region, co-offered by Spartan and a Spartan coach at the coach's facility.

3D tests began at a local coach's gym with Spartan staff serving as "consumers," before a test at a host gym with actual users who paid to participate.

We also confirmed a workable business model as part of this step and tested its assumptions and projections.

We mined prior interviews of our Spartan coaches for insights into whether and how co-hosting obstacle events would support their needs before scheduling follow-up conversations with coaches specific to this project.









We learned that with minimal instruction and skill a coach could build a six- or seven-foot wall – a standard Spartan obstacle – that would be the centerpiece for the events we contemplated they would host. 3D tests also entailed creating a participant manual evaluated for useability.

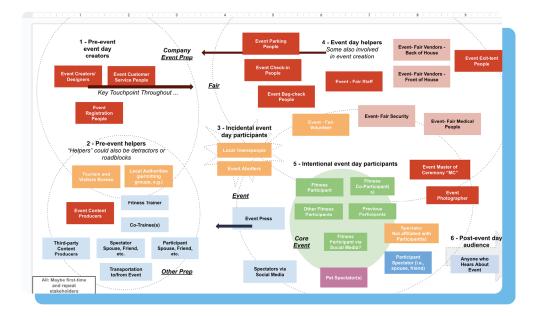


**Results** The design process helped us decide there was evidence of demand for a regional hands-on event that would give users practice with real obstacles, sufficient to give them "a feel" for race day. Our research also showed we could offer hands-on obstacle experiences economically, and we were beginning to run these regional events when the finish line moved.

The company changed the financial constraints the program would need to meet, and the chosen service could not meet those goals.

The team rebounded quickly by moving to the next most compelling idea from the design work and quickly went through the remaining process steps – again. In the end, the team validated a new concept. We would host an obstacle experience at the Spartan venue on the real race obstacles on Fridays, the day before the actual races. Using existing resources cut down significantly on costs, enabling the initiative to hit the financial targets.

A few months later, we successfully launched the class with sign-ups consistent with our forecast and encouraging feedback, including an NPS >60.



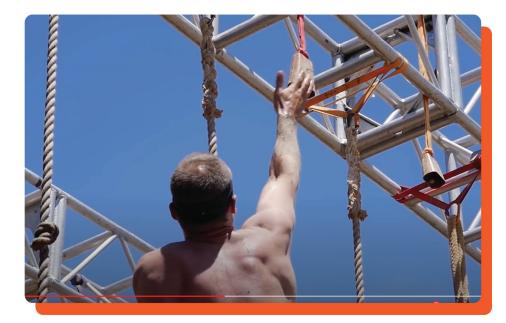
We referred to other contextual assets available to us to develop empathy for the Race Production team's situation when we re-focused our effort on a solution at the race venue.



**Reflections** We felt the Race Production team would be concerned about an event at the venue interfering with race set-up, so we did not seriously consider that option originally. The production team was wary, and they were still willing to engage in a conversation. This was a helpful reminder to surface and test assumptions and possible biases at the outset of a project.

A video helped to inform consumers we would be hosting the obstacle training experience at race venues going forward.

View entire video <u>here</u>.





#### Other topics, methods and tools covered at Spartan:

- Field research/Observational research
- Current alternatives and competition
- Co-creation prototypes
- Solution principles
- Discovery driven planning
- Value chain map (from prior research)
- Service roll-out and evaluation

## QuickCoach

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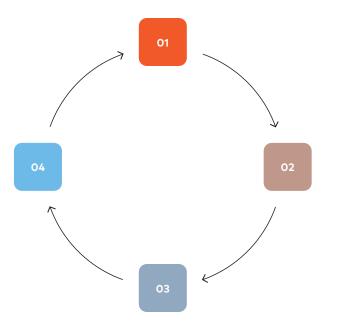
Web application allowing users to quickly create, share and easily track professional-looking exercise programs for clients.

DISCOVER			
Explore <> Test <> Decide	BUILD	SCALE	

**Opportunity** After several experiences using popular mobile and web applications fitness professionals relied on to create client programs, the leader of what would become known as QuickCoach felt frustrated and curious. **The apps were bloated** with features, difficult to navigate and expensive, raising the question whether there were innovation opportunities in the space.

**Team** We partnered with one principal and one associate from an external design team on this project. The internal team consisted of myself, the CEO, head of product, creative director and a software engineer. We tapped into additional creative support and web development help as needed.

**Approach** We executed this project via a series of two-week design sprints, each following the same four steps. This effort emphasized learning by building artifacts shared with three to six target users and obtaining feedback via observation, interactive dialog and interviews. The sprints moved organically from seeking out user pains and problems to creating a prioritized list of solution principles.



- 01 **PLAN:** Determine learning objective and audience.
- 02 IDEATE: Ideate and decide on test design (what we will show, observe and do).

O3 EXECUTE: Build and carry out test (timeline, guide(s), artifact(s), interviews).

04 DEBRIEF: Discuss insights into learning objectives, next areas to explore; integrate learnings into big picture findings so far.

- User value proposition for something new/different.
- Solution principles what must be true of any product.

05 REPEAT.

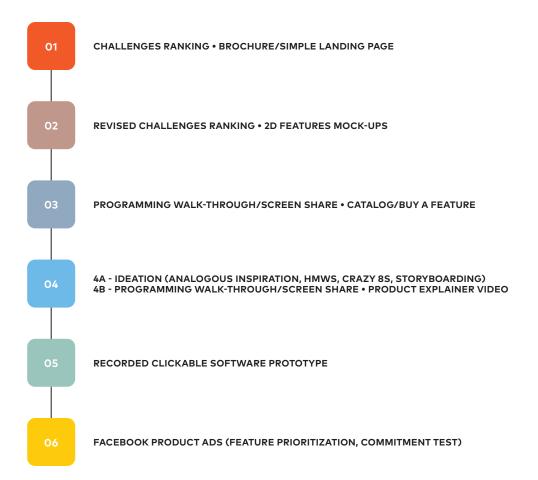
### QuickCoach



**Results** After six two-week sprints, the team found compelling evidence of demand for a new programming solution.

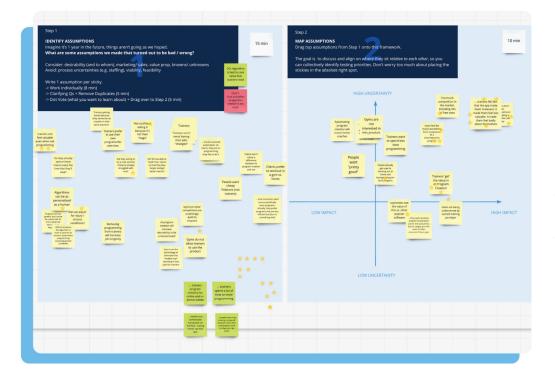
The opportunity was not to make a better version of existing platforms. While we obtained evidence of useability shortcomings with incumbent apps and websites, we also learned that users of these products appeared willing to jump through hoops to get the app functionality they sought and master the applications.

We saw an attractive opportunity among non-users of these platforms – individuals who were currently using a combination of pen and paper, Excel and Google Sheets, plus email, texting and video recordings, to hack together their own solution. These non-users far outnumbered the platform customers. Our solution principles led to a product blueprint describing a mobile-friendly web app with a shortlist of critical features that emphasized ease of use. Waitlist sign-ups exceeding 10,000 individuals provided further evidence we were on the right track.





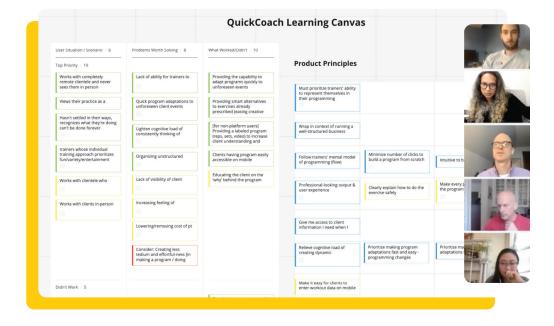
**Reflections** Another approach we considered was running a seventh sprint, a Wizard of Oz experiment, to learn whether a test audience would find value in a solution over an extended period, to derisk the project further. The CEO, however, felt the available evidence was strong enough to invest in building a light production version of the web app.



The identification of assumptions is an inherent part of every project. One way we did this at QuickCoach was through a dedicated Assumptions Workshop.

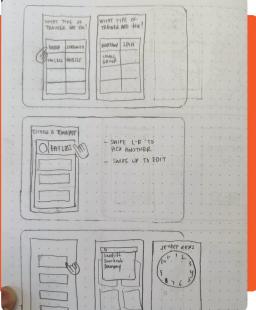
Another approach was a Wizard of Oz experiment to learn whether a test audience would find value in a solution over an extended period.

## QuickCoach



A standard part of our process was updating big-picture findings after every sprint and creating a "Learning Canvas."





In the 4A Ideation Sprint, we looked at the UI mechanisms of other products to see how a product in our space might "speed up the process of [creating and] putting a personal touch on a program ... and sending programs without introducing a learning curve."

## QuickCoach

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warmup			

For Sprint 5, we used a third-party software platform that allowed users to interact with a potential user interface. They narrated their step-by-step experience. Video examination included extensive non-verbal analysis (i.e., what the user did versus what the user said).



#### Other topics, methods and tools covered at QuickCoach:

- Field research/Observational research
- Social and technological developments
- Jobs to be Done timeline and four forces
- Journey map
- Storyboarding
- Business model design
- Organizational learning and development

Online business education helping underserved users to create richer personal lives.



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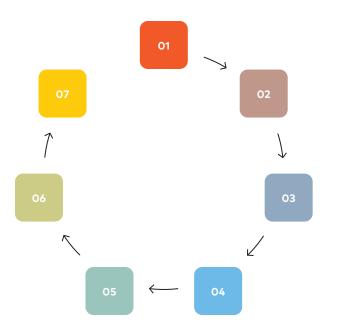
Opportunity The number of users of the PTDC's product had plateaued, and team members were scratching their heads. Why? Had users' tastes changed? Were other external factors at play? Or maybe the company's practices had changed imperceptibly over time. Dashboard metrics raised the question, and addressing the issue would require zooming in to develop a deeper, clearer understanding of the situation.

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**Team** I led this project with the PTDC's head of product, plus support from outside designers who provided input as needed. The team also included a professor expert in quantitative research and analysis.

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**Approach** Company leaders understood we could not fix the problem until we understood it. We followed a seven-step approach centered around 13 interviews of product users. We interviewed each individual for an hour. We then carried out a clustering analysis to identify user patterns and captured our findings in a "Spec" and storyboard reflecting each pattern, laying out user struggles and desired outcomes, how they discovered our product and whether the product helped them.



01 PROJECT DESIGN

02 RECRUITMENT

- 03 IDENTIFICATION OF INTERVIEW POOL
- 04 SELECTION & INTERVIEWS
- 05 INTERVIEW DEBRIEFS
- 06 ANALYSIS (CLUSTERING OF INTERVIEWS)
- 07 ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS

The team's quantitative researcher helped us identify a group of 13 interviewees generally representative of our users to interview.

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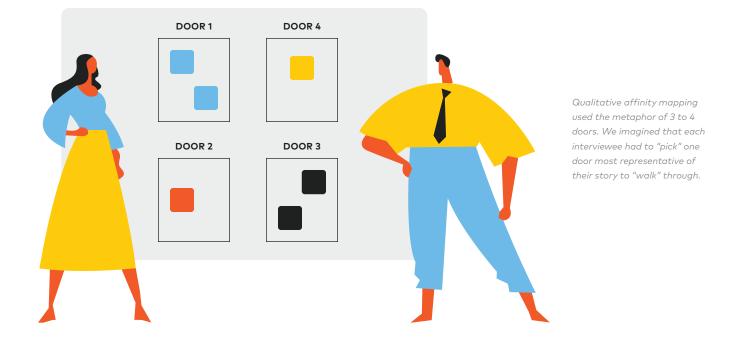


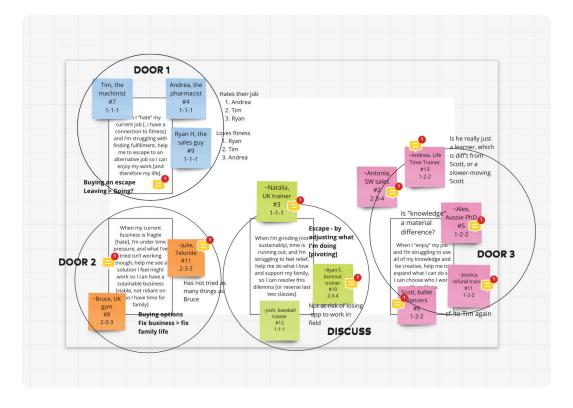


Doctorate in physical therapy (2014)
Doctorate in physical therapy (2014)
[2015-16] Discovered PTDC google "training article" for personal use
2017 - Few hours per month own rehab clients
Mid-2018 - Up to 30-40 hours rehab, and this starts to shift
Summer 2018 'more in person rehab clients' From rehab to fitness to dance studios (via fiance) t online
Today - 17-18 hours rehab, home exercise support for Hopkins, just under 50 online group

PUSH (when I am when I feel when I need to)	PULL (so I can)				
When I want to do more" - Post-doctorate, I'm getting 'restiess" and later 'restiess" with just being a physical therapit" "Finness incoverage not being used" - FUNCTIONAL, When I can't be creative (more from programming, business building) - EMOTIONAL.	<ul> <li>So I can be onealive (§1.32) <sup>1</sup> still consider programming and building a business is definitely creativity.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>				
When I need to work with D1, ( <u>43.40</u> ) "high level abletes"     Worked with D1 basketball team in college	<ul> <li>(57.33) "I became passionale about creating something of my own" as I had experience with my own rehate (above)</li> <li>So I can do more of what I am enjoying doing (57.53) "I would much rather be working on my own business than I would here (doing rehab at the hospital)"</li> </ul>				
When "I need[ed] to go online to reach enough people"	WEAK - So I can achieve what Gerard Moon has done				
<ul> <li>When the world going digital         <ul> <li>(45:53) "And I think I felt like, to be successful, I did need to go online" I wonder if this is what we meant here.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	So I can reach more dancers - Not a ton of dancers where I live locally				
<ul> <li>When I want to make use of my LLC, liability insurance*</li> </ul>	So I can capitalize on not many people doing what I'm doing-reach audience				
When I "I want to learn something more" about how to build my business	<ul> <li>So I can achieve my goal - <u>Comes</u> to conclusion: (<u>53.27</u>) "I never envisioned it wouldn't work to some degree."</li> </ul>				
•	•				
<ul> <li>I want to do this (internal trigger) - Hopefulness. No time aspect. Lack of desperation. I could continue doing my day job</li> </ul>	Creating something new				
HABIT	ANXIETY				
(20.00) "I do enjoy the hospital"     O Existing rehab clients and picking up hourly work	My market (dancers) is different. They fear resistance training. "Struggling artists". Not worried about fat loss				
•	<ul> <li>I have to be able to expand my reach to reach new audience: Arolety around transitioning focus to dancers</li> </ul>				
•	<ul> <li>No idea how to run an online business</li> </ul>				

We took hardcopy notes of each interview, did an initial debrief of the story timeline and four forces into a template, and then created a transcript of the interview for reference in future steps of the process.





JOHN GAUCH: PORTFOLIO



**Results We identified three distinct user patterns, each with different motivations and desired outcomes when they bought our product.** The research also drew a picture of the causal mechanism that drove each user story – the dominos that would need to fall before someone would become a user of the product.

We realized we could be more intentional about (1) what users to focus on, and (2) how to tune our communications and our product to these users. The next steps included building a resulting customer experience map to guide these improvement opportunities.

One downstream initiative entailed rebuilding a landing page. Page performance had been stuck for over a year despite repeated efforts to improve it. **After incorporating the new user insights, performance improved 22 percent in a concurrent test against the existing page.** 

The research drew a picture of the causal mechanism that drove each user story – the dominoes that would need to fall for someone to become a user of the product.



**Reflections** There are two ways to identify user patterns from the interviews: qualitative or hybrid (qualitative-quantitative). We did both to allow us to see and compare the results. The purely qualitative approach is packed with information. The hybrid method may add nuance, and one needs to weigh that potential benefit against the additional time the hybrid method takes to execute.

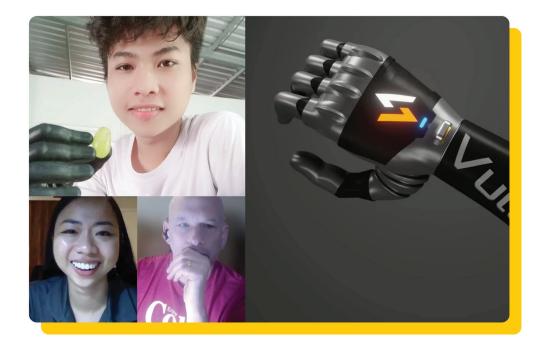


#### Other topics, methods and tools covered at the PTDC:

- Current alternatives and competition
- Content analysis (KJ method)
- Storytelling
- User value proposition canvas
- CX improvements and evaluation
- Organizational learning and development

# Community Commitment

I developed my skills from interacting with designers and innovators and doing projects, as well as through formal education. I continue to shared what I have learned with others, including entrepreneurs I mentor through the Techstars and MassChallenge start-up accelerators.



Mentee Vulcan Augmetics, based in Vietnam, participated in Techstars' Toronto cohort. They have developed a robotic prosthetic arm intended to disrupt high-end incumbent products. Weekly mentorship conversations have covered the innovation mindset, Jobs to be Done timeline, testing process, and journey mapping.

Other mentees have included Captain.ai, Detrapel, HealthTracka, iDialogue, Wave Co (S. Korea), and others.

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