



IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE

FOR **ENGINEERS!**
A GTM PRIMER

ICP vs. TARGET MARKET— THEY'RE NOT THE SAME



**YOUR TARGET MARKET
IS EVERYONE WHO
COULD BUY.**



**TARGET MARKET
DETERMINES REACH.**



**ICP
DETERMINES FOCUS.**



**AN ICP DESCRIBES THE TYPE OF COMPANY
THAT FITS YOUR PRODUCT SO WELL THEY
CONVERT QUICKLY, RETAIN LONGER,
AND DRIVE THE MOST REVENUE BACK.**



WHY ICP IS A FILTER, NOT A LIST OF NAMES



**THIS ACCOUNT
IS WORTH
PURSUING.**



**THIS ONE ISN'T
WORTH OUR
TIME.**

66

A good ICP lets your team confidently say “**this account is worth pursuing**” or “**this one isn’t worth our time.**” That distinction sounds simple. In practice, most early-stage teams **never actually make it.**

**“SMBs with
50-500 employees”
IS NOT AN ICP**



**“SMBs
with
50-500
employees”**



ASK MOST FOUNDERS ABOUT THEIR ICP AND YOU'LL GET A DEMOGRAPHIC GUESS — ONE THAT COSTS SIGNIFICANT WASTED AD SPEND AND COUNTLESS HOURS CHASING PROSPECTS WHO WILL NEVER BUY.

AD SPEND

WASTED HOURS

DEAD LEADS

THE DIMENSIONS THAT MAKE AN **ICP** **ACTIONABLE**

A REAL ICP IS DEFINED BY FIRMOGRAPHIC ATTRIBUTES, TECHNOGRAPHIC SIGNALS, BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS, AND PAIN-BASED CRITERIA — THE SPECIFIC PROBLEMS YOUR PRODUCT SOLVES.

22-13

GET THESE RIGHT AND YOUR MESSAGING, ROADMAP, AND DEAL SELECTION **ALL SHARPEN.**



FIRMOGRAPHIC ATTRIBUTES

Who they are.



TECHNOGRAPHIC SIGNALS

What they use.



BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

What they do.



PAIN-BASED CRITERIA

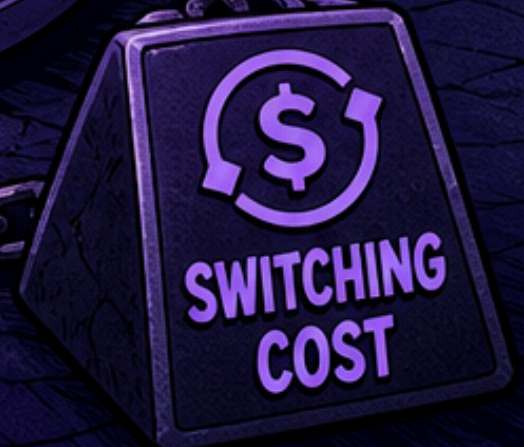
What problems your product solves.



THE ICP TRAP ENGINEERS FALL INTO

You build something that solves a **real technical** problem. You find companies with that problem. You call it your **ICP**.

But technical fit is only **one dimension**. You're missing **budget authority**, **urgency**, and **switching cost** — each equally important to closing deals.



TWO ICP DIMENSIONS THAT KILL PIPELINE



1 BUDGET AUTHORITY.

Reaching a junior analyst when the VP of Engineering controls the budget wastes outreach.

Technical champions who can't sign a PO give great feedback and no revenue.



VP OF ENGINEERING



TECHNICAL CHAMPION (NO BUDGET)



JUNIOR ANALYST (NO BUDGET)

2 URGENCY.

Observable signals — new funding, a CxO hire, a compliance deadline — reveal whether solving the problem is a priority now.



LOW SWITCHING COST = ICP ACCELERANT

Some accounts are a perfect technical fit but locked into an incumbent with painful migration.

Others run spreadsheets and can switch in a week.

High switching cost means longer cycles, more stakeholders, and endless 'next quarter' deferrals.



THE THREE PEOPLE YOUR ICP MUST IDENTIFY



PROBLEM FEELER

Feels the pain.
Needs the solution.



BUDGET OWNER

Controls the budget.
Approves the spend.



DECISION MAKER

Signs off.
Makes it official.



Developers explore tools independently but **rarely approve purchases.**

You can win every technical evaluation and lose the deal because the budget holder **never felt the pain.**

Your ICP must map: **who feels** the problem, who **owns** the budget, and who actually **signs.**

EARLY ICPs ARE EDUCATED GUESSES

MOST ICP TEMPLATES START WITH ANALYST REPORTS AND DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH.

THAT GENERATES HYPOTHESES— BUT RARELY SURFACES THE SPECIFIC TRIGGERS THAT DEFINE A REAL ICP.

“MANY FOUNDERS REPORT THEIR ICP BECAME SHARPER AFTER THEIR FIRST 10 CUSTOMERS, NOT BEFORE.”
— <24-22>

THE INSIGHT COMES FROM A HANDFUL OF REAL CONVERSATIONS WHERE SOMEONE EITHER PULLED OUT A CREDIT CARD OR SLAMMED THE DOOR.



POTENTIAL CUSTOMER LIST			
COMPANY	INDUSTRY	EMPLOYEES	REGION
Northpeak Systems	SaaS	50-200	US
CloudNova	FinTech	200-1000	AU
Stratus Labs	DevOps	100-300	NA
BrightWare	Healthcare	500+	APAC
SummitScale	Enterprise	150-500	NZ
FieldCore Solutions	Field Services	150-500	NZ
VectorFlow	Logistics	100-250	AZ
DataMotive	Logistics	250-1000	AZ
Apex Dynamics	Manufacturing	50-150	UK

ANALYST REPORTS

DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

TAM / SAM SOM

JOB TITLES + SENIORITY

INDUSTRY VERTICALS

TECH STACK SIGNALS

PAIN POINTS (ASSUMED)

BUYING COMMITTEE

BUDGET RANGES

USE CASES

...?

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

REVERSE-ENGINEER FROM REAL CONVERSATIONS

For each of your first 5-10 customers, write down:

CUSTOMER #1

CUSTOMER #2

CUSTOMER #3

THE SITUATION THEY WERE IN

WHAT MADE THE PROBLEM URGENT RECENTLY

WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE DECISION

WHAT THEY WERE DOING BEFORE YOU

CUSTOMER #6

CUSTOMER #7

CUSTOMER #10

- ★ Pull top customers by revenue, retention, and expansion.
- ★ Identify what they share across industry, size, tech stack, and buying trigger.

REPEATED ATTRIBUTES

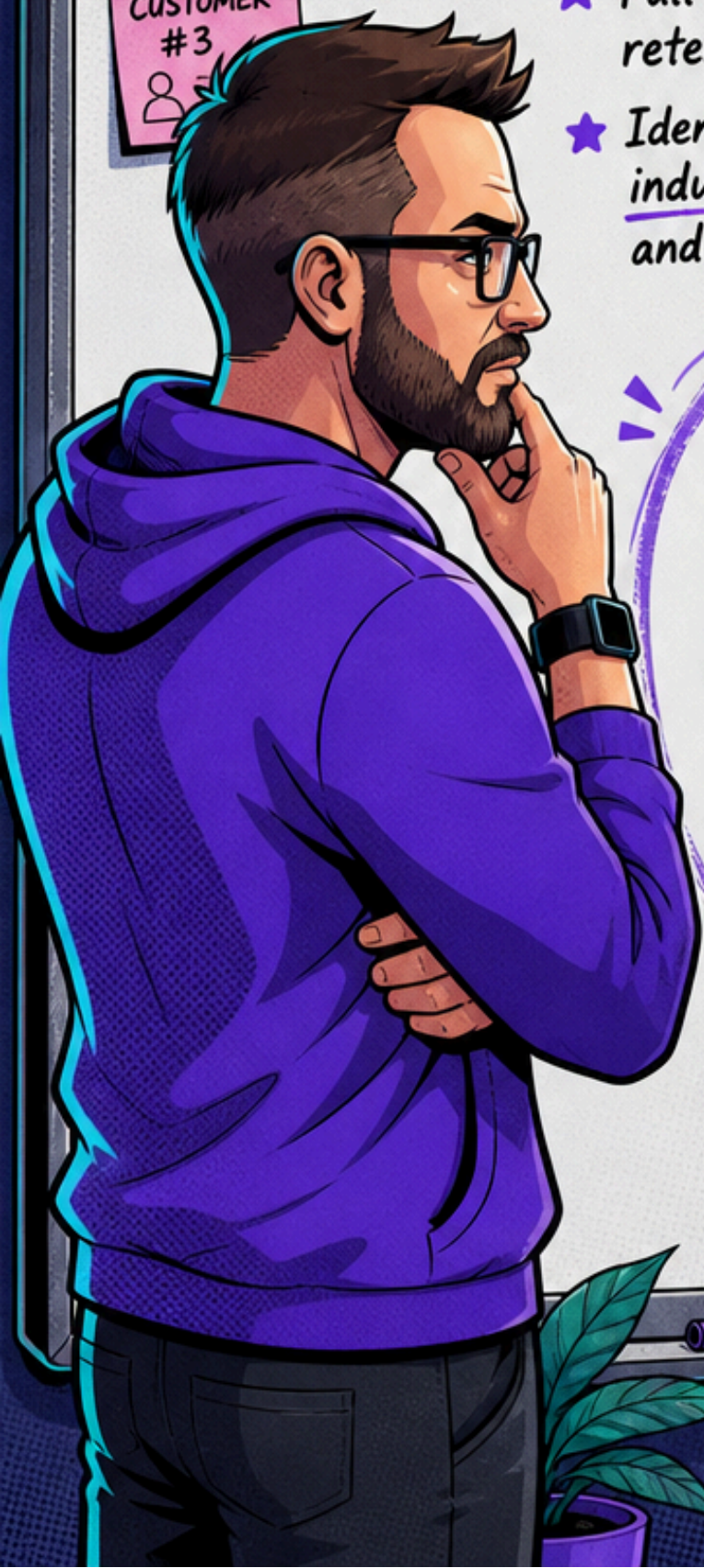
B2B SAAS

11-200 EMPLOYEES

MICROSERVICES + API-FIRST

NEED TO SCALE FAST

- ★ Three or four **REPEATED ATTRIBUTES** are your load-bearing columns.



ICP IS A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL ARTIFACT



The best ICPs aren't built in marketing silos. Sales brings ground truth. Marketing brings audience and competitive insight. *Together they build something real.*



Your first attempt will be wrong – *start with three core attributes*, then sharpen as evidence comes in.



Three attributes grounded in *real data* beats twelve synthesized from a Gartner report.

OUR ICP

FIRMOGRAPHICS

B2B SAAS

11-200 EMPLOYEES

>\$2M ANNUAL REVENUE

PAIN POINTS

MANUAL PROCESSES

DATA SILOS

LACK OF VISIBILITY

BUYING SIGNALS

RECENT FUNDING

HIRING IN PRODUCT & ENG

EVALUATING NEW TOOLS

REAL DATA



BIG REPORTS



WARM INTROS CAN MISLEAD EARLY DEMAND SIGNALS

David Hsu of Retool argues outbound is more useful early:

“If you get a **warm intro**, people will take the call and maybe ask for a demo. It’s very non-committal and vague, and **harmful** to startups because it can make them think they have product-market fit when they don’t.”

WARM
INTRO



Early Interest
(Meetings Booked)



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BUILD
MEASURE
LEARN

FOCUS

- Strategy
- UX Design
- Implementation
- Testing



UNSOLICITED INTEREST FROM A **STRANGER**
IS A **STRONGER** DEMAND SIGNAL
THAN A POLITE MEETING FROM A FAVOR.



DEFINE WHO YOU DON'T WANT

Most ICP documents describe who you want. The best ones also describe who you don't want — the *anti-ICP*.



ACME GLOBAL

Enterprise Software
500+ employees

- Low price sensitive
- Slow decision-making
- High support dependency
- High churn risk
- Drain on resources

These are companies that consistently fail, churn fast, drain support, and make your team *miserable*.

Every hour spent on wrong-fit prospects is an hour not spent on customers who'll *actually succeed*.

WHAT NEGATIVE ICP CRITERIA LOOK LIKE

- REVENUE TOO LOW TO IMPLEMENT PROPERLY
- NO DEDICATED OWNER FOR THE PROBLEM YOU SOLVE
- INDUSTRIES WHERE COMPLIANCE TURNS SMALL DEALS INTO SIX-MONTH PROCUREMENT CYCLES
- ANY SEGMENT WHERE YOUR WIN RATE IS CONSISTENTLY LOW RELATIVE TO OTHER TARGETS

~~Company A~~
~~Company B~~
~~Company C~~
~~Company~~

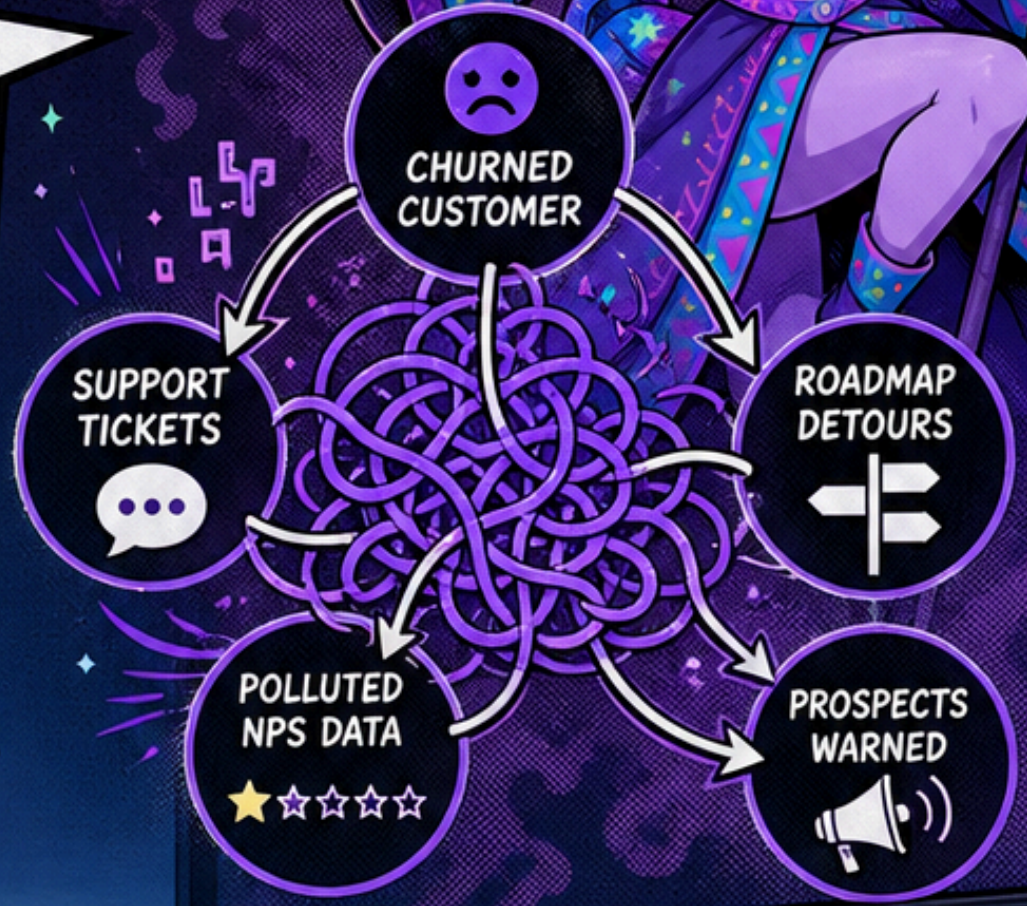
EXPLICITLY NAMING THESE PROTECTS REP FOCUS.



THE HIDDEN COST OF WRONG-FIT CUSTOMERS

A DEAL THAT CLOSES, CHURNS IN 90 DAYS, AND TIES UP SUPPORT FOR WEEKS IS WORSE THAN NO DEAL.

IT DISTORTS YOUR ROADMAP WITH **EDGE-CASE REQUESTS**, **POLLUTES NPS DATA**, AND CREATES A **REFERENCE CUSTOMER** WHO WARNS PROSPECTS ABOUT PROBLEMS YOUR REAL ICP NEVER EXPERIENCES.



WHY THIS PROTECTS THE WHOLE TEAM

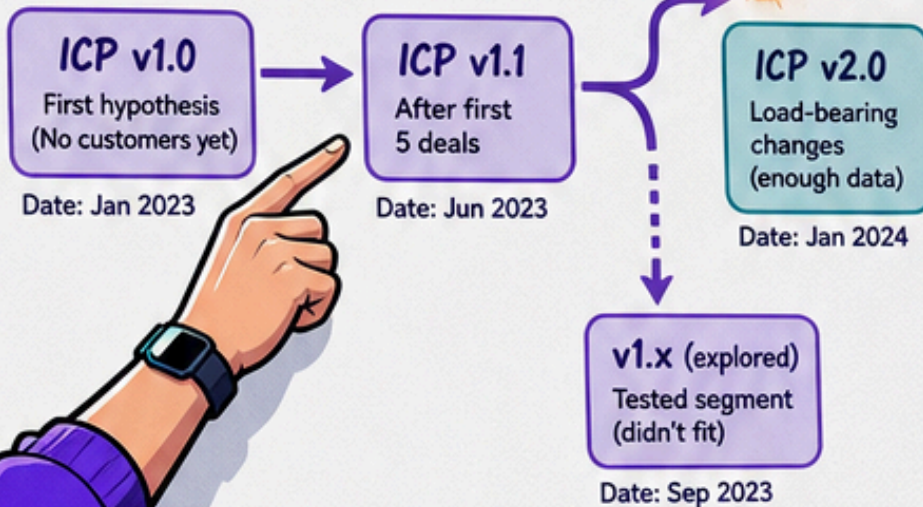
WITHOUT A CLEARLY DEFINED ANTI-ICP, SALES CHASES **UNQUALIFIED LEADS**, MARKETING SPEAKS TO **EVERYONE** AND RESONATES WITH **NO ONE**, AND YOUR ROADMAP GETS PULLED IN **TEN DIRECTIONS** BY CUSTOMERS WHO SHOULDN'T BE CUSTOMERS.

THE ANTI-ICP IS THE MECHANISM THAT LETS EVERY FUNCTION **SAY NO — FAST.**





ICP AS A VERSIONED, LIVING DOCUMENT



WHAT CHANGES THE ICP?



New product capabilities open up customer segments you couldn't serve before.



A competitor enters and takes your easiest wins, forcing you to focus on the segment where your moat is strongest.



Usage data reveals a segment you hadn't prioritized is activating faster and churning less.



Market conditions shift — a regulatory change makes the problem suddenly urgent for a whole category of companies.

VERSION DISCIPLINE (TREAT IT LIKE CODE)

- ✓ Version it explicitly
- ✓ Document what changed
- ✓ Record the evidence
- ✓ Note when it changed
- ✓ Keep the history



History matters — it keeps the team from regressing to earlier assumptions.

REVISIT REGULARLY



EVERY QUARTER

Triggers: product changes, competitive shifts, market events



If you haven't revisited your ICP in the last 6 months, it's likely worth a look.

THINK OF ICP AS A DATA MODEL



An ICP is a structured definition of the company-level attributes that predict which accounts will buy, succeed with the product, and produce above-average lifetime value.

That model needs to be kept in sync with reality, or everything downstream — messaging, outbound targeting, sales qualification, product prioritization — runs on stale assumptions.





PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- 1 START WITH WHAT YOU KNOW.**
 - Write down the three attributes that your three best conversations or customers had in common.
 - Industry, company stage, the specific trigger event that made them move. That's ICP v1.0.
- 2 ADD THE BUYING CONTEXT.**
 - For each attribute, add the corresponding budget authority question (who signs?), urgency signal (what made this urgent now?), and switching cost estimate (what would they have to leave behind?).
 - If you can't answer those three questions for most of your conversations, go have more conversations with those questions in mind.
- 3 DEFINE THE EXCLUSIONS.**
 - Write down two or three account types you've seen fail or drag. Be specific.
 - "Too small" isn't specific enough. "Under \$2M ARR, no dedicated ops hire" is.
- 4 SET A REVIEW DATE.**
 - Literally put it in your calendar. Quarterly works for most early-stage companies.
 - Review your win/loss data, your churn patterns, and any significant market events. Update the document. Commit the version.

“ The logic holds that companies with a well-defined ICP tend to spend less on acquisition, see lower churn, and scale more efficiently — because alignment across teams reduces wasted effort at every stage. **That alignment is the real return on the work.**

Building a product is the part engineers are good at. Getting it in front of the right people, in the right context, at the right moment, is an engineering problem too — it just runs on customer data instead of a codebase. Treat your ICP with the same rigour you'd bring to a schema design or a system architecture, and it'll pay you back every time you talk to a new prospect.



Ready to put your ICP to work? **Supramono** is the AI venture engine that helps founders discover validated opportunities, build production-ready products, and fill the pipeline — without hiring a team.

Start for free and see the full loop from opportunity to revenue.



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Discover. Build. Sell. One AI
Venture Engine.

<https://supramono.com>

