

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/focus-on-a-hesitant-customer>

When an early potential customer is hesitant, frame it as an opportunity to solve their problems rather than an excuse to walk away. If you push past the initial obstacles, explains Z\_m founder and CEO Ritu Narayan, you can end up with a much more useful and scalable product. She demonstrates how persevering with a single potential client revealed an underserved market that transformed Z\_m's business model.



## Transcript

- So your passion can not only help you kick start in your start up, but it also gives you unique insights into the area that you are trying to solve.. Our passion to solve this problem has led us to ask deeper questions.. To get one step deeper into the whole problem and see how we can solve it at its core.. For example, at a very beginning stage we realize that doing digital marketing and getting customers or acquiring customers, was a very cost prohibitive thing.. If we had treated it as a wall that we cannot surmount, I would not be standing here today.. Instead, we started asking who else would be willing to pay for these rights? How can we subsidize these rights and acquire customers for cheaper? And in that discussion we realized that kids go to school every single day and they commute from school at least twice every day.. So they need at least two rides from school every single day.. So we thought why don't we go to school and find out if school would be willing to promote us.. I still remember the cold call I had made to the Assistant Dean of Harker.. It's a large private school in San Jose..

I asked him, "Hey would you be willing to promote "Zoom to your parents?" He said, "Sorry I can't do that because "we are a non-profit." I said, "Okay then, how do you promote "other services to the parents?" He said, "Because school is using those services "and they are paying for those services so "I'm allowed to do that." I said, "Okay, "so how do you do your school transportation?" That one question led us to an amazing \$35 billion market which nobody was attacking using technology.. It was an antiquated market which was stuck in 70 year old infrastructure and nobody was addressing it.. So what we started doing was we pivoted our business model and started serving schools as part of our business model and signed multiyear, multimillion dollar contract.. That insight and unique insight actually led us to grow three times year over year and led to successes that we have today...