

1. Context: What & Why

Executive Summary

As CEO of FindHope, I built **Khushi**, a WhatsApp-based AI therapy chatbot to improve top-of-funnel acquisition by giving users a “trial experience” of therapy. While it scaled rapidly to ~20,000 users, I shut it down due to low engagement quality, poor retention, and unsustainable economics.

The Problem

After solving retention, the next bottleneck was:

1. **Low awareness & trust in therapy**
 - Users thought therapy = advice
 - Didn't understand how it works
 2. **High friction to first session**
 - Hesitation to commit time + money
 - No “try before you buy”
 3. **Need for scalable growth**
 - Paid marketing not viable (impact startup constraints)
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The Goal

- Create a **zero-cost, scalable entry point** into therapy
- Convert users by:

“Let them experience therapy → they'll opt for real sessions”

2. Discovery & Insights: Why This Matters

User Research

- Built **human-in-the-loop MVP**:
 - Therapists manually followed chatbot scripts
 - Tested with **~70 users**
 - High engagement:
 - Users completed full sessions
 - Reported feeling better
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Initial Insight (Misleading — important)

“If users experience therapy-like flows, they will convert.”

This turned out to be **context-dependent and flawed**.

Real Insights (Post-launch — the actual gold)

1. Human presence ≠ replicable via static workflows

- Same content:
 - Works with human
 - Fails with bot
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2. Users don't respect free automated support

- Treated bot as:
 - Toy
 - Experiment
 - Behavior:
 - Skipping content
 - Testing edge cases
 - Abusing inputs
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3. Venting ≠ structured therapy

- Users wanted:
 - Free-flow venting
- Rejected:

- Exercises
 - Videos
 - CBT modules
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4. Expectations from bots are different

- Users expected:
 - Dynamic, intelligent probing
 - Static workflows felt:
 - Repetitive
 - Inauthentic
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3. The Solution: The “What”

Product Definition

Built **Khushi**, a WhatsApp-based conversational therapy bot that:

- Mimicked therapy sessions using structured workflows
 - Delivered CBT-based modules via chat + media
 - Nudged users toward real therapy
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Core Features

1. Therapy Workflow Engine (400+ page logic system)

→ Structured flows based on:

- Emotion
 - Problem type
 - Therapy techniques
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2. Conversational UI (WhatsApp-first)

→ Short, alternating messages

→ Designed using conversational UX principles

3. Multimedia Interventions

→ Videos + audio explanations (animated persona “Khushi”)

4. Conversion Nudges

→ After modules:

- “Try real therapy now”
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5. Viral Loop (PLG)

→ Users prompted to share

→ Avg ~2 referrals/user

4. Execution & GTM: The “How”

Go-To-Market (Very Strong)

- Ran **on-ground ideathons across 9 colleges**
 - Reached:
 - **~6,000 users in 1 month**
 - Incentives:
 - ₹70–80K prize pool
 - Participation from:
 - Top institutes (IIMs, etc.)
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Growth

- Total users: **~20,000 (2 months)**
 - Strong organic spread via WhatsApp
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Technical Implementation

- Built using:
 - Wati
 - Twilio

- Tracked:
 - Click paths
 - Drop-offs
 - Free-text inputs
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5. The Result: What Happened?

Metrics

- **High acquisition:** 20,000 users
 - **Strong virality:** ~2 shares/user
 - **Poor engagement:**
 - Majority didn't complete even 1 module
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Why it failed

1. Engagement quality mismatch

- Users didn't treat it seriously

2. Content ≠ experience

- Same therapy logic failed without human context

3. Wrong product-market fit

- Built:
 - Structured therapy tool
- Users wanted:
 - Free-form emotional outlet

4. Cost constraints

- LLM-based version → ₹2.5L/month cost
- Not viable for early-stage startup

5. Market timing

- Competitors like YourDOST scaling fast
- Needed focus on core offering

6. Lessons Learned (This is elite-level)

1. Human-in-the-loop MVPs can give false positives

- Users behave differently with humans vs bots

2. Behavior ≠ feedback

- Users said they liked it
- But didn't use it

3. Free products change user psychology

- Lower perceived value
- Lower seriousness

4. Distribution ≠ product-market fit

- 20K users ≠ success
- Engagement quality matters more

5. Kill fast, even if growth looks good

- Avoid vanity metrics trap