

THE PAPER LAUNCH

Working Backwards (PR-FAQ) + Smoke Testing (MVP)

1. The Two Frameworks Used:

WORKING BACKWARDS (PR-FAQ)

Before building anything, write the press release and the customer FAQ as if the product already exists. If the release is boring, the product will be too.

SMOKE TESTING (MVP)

Advertise the product before it exists and see if anyone actually clicks, signs up, or pays.
Real behaviour, not opinions.

How the Two Connect (Fusion Logic)

The PR-FAQ tests whether the idea is **worth** building by forcing you to describe the benefit in plain customer language. Smoke testing checks whether people actually **want** it. One tests the story, the other tests the demand — both before you spend a rupee on engineering.

2. Application: AMAZON (USA)

Background — What Happened and Why

- Building the wrong product is the most expensive mistake in tech — the cost is months of engineering time.
- Internal enthusiasm is a terrible predictor: teams fall in love with ideas that customers don't want.
- Feature specs written in technical language hide the fact that no customer benefit exists.
- Amazon wanted the argument about value to happen **before** the build, not after the launch.

What They Did

- Required teams to write a press release and FAQ for the product before writing any code.
- Wrote it in plain customer language — if the benefit couldn't be stated simply, the idea wasn't ready.
- Iterated on the document, killing weak ideas cheaply on paper.

- Only approved engineering resources once the written story was genuinely compelling.

Applying the Fusion — Step by Step

1

Write the promise first, in plain words

Before building anything, the team writes the press release and customer FAQ as if the product already exists. If the benefit can't be stated simply, the idea isn't ready.

2

Answer the hard questions on paper

The FAQ forces the team to answer tough questions — why this, what about cost, what about security — before a single line of real code is written.

3

Iterate and kill weak ideas cheaply

The team improves the document and drops weak ideas on paper, where changing course costs nothing.

4

Only build once the story is compelling

Engineering effort is approved only after the written promise is genuinely convincing, so effort goes to things customers actually want.

The Result

Products get killed on paper — cheaply — instead of being killed in the market, expensively. The Working Backwards process became a core Amazon practice and is now widely copied.

3. Key Takeaways

- Test the promise before funding the product — demand for the story predicts demand for the thing.
- Behavior (sign-ups, deposits, clicks) is evidence; opinions are noise.
- The PR-FAQ tells you what to smoke-test; the smoke test tells the PR-FAQ what's true.
- Use before any expensive build where the risk is 'will anyone care?' rather than 'can we build it?'

