Free tool · Teardown 03

The 40% Test

The one question that tells you whether to scale your business or fix it first. Sean Ellis found it across ~100 startups; Superhuman rode it from 22% to 58% before spending a dollar on growth. This is the exact test — run it on your last 30 customers.

1 The question

"How would you feel if you could no longer use [your product]?"

- [ ] a) Not disappointed
- [ ] b) Somewhat disappointed
- [ ] c) Very disappointed — this is the only answer that counts

Don't ask "do you like it?" — people are polite and the answer is worthless. Asking about the **loss** is what makes the answer honest.

2 Who to ask & how to read it

Answer	What it tells you
"Not disappointed"	Not your buyer — ignore
"Somewhat disappointed"	Nice-to-have — the trap. Not your signal.
"Very disappointed"	Your core — study these people

The 40% rule

If **40% or more** say "very disappointed," you have product-market fit — scale with confidence. **Under 40%**, the product isn't ready, and marketing will only spread a weak product faster. Ask **real buyers** (your last 30), not people who were merely "interested."

3 Run it in 3 steps

1. **Pick your last 30 buyers.**
   Real paying customers — their answers are the ones that matter.
2. **Send them the exact message.**
   Use the template below — copy, paste, fill the product name.
3. **Count the "very disappointed" share.**
   Divide by total replies. That percentage is your answer.

> Quick question — it helps me improve the product:
>
> If you could no longer use **[product]**, how would you feel?
> 1) Not disappointed
> 2) Somewhat disappointed
> 3) Very disappointed

4 Your scorecard

Total replies	________
"Very disappointed" replies	________
% Very disappointed (÷ total × 100)	________

40%+ → Scale

You have fit. Study who said "very disappointed," find what they share, and double down on it.

Under 40% → Fix

The problem isn't marketing. Fix the product and the offer first — or ads burn cash.

5 What to do with the answer

Ignore the "somewhat disappointed" group — chasing them waters the product down. Study the "very disappointed" group instead: what do they have in common, what do they use it for, what would break if you removed it? That is the core you rebuild and scale around. Re-run the test every few months and watch the number climb — that's how Superhuman went from 22% to 58%.

Sources & accuracy. The 40% benchmark was created by **Sean Ellis** after surveying ~100 startups — not by Superhuman, which applied it and built a documented engine around it (score rising from 22% to 58%). See **First Round Review**, "How Superhuman Built an Engine to Find Product-Market Fit," and **Mind the Product**, "The Product-Market Fit Engine" by Rahul Vohra.