

Consumer AI App Growth

UM Pre-College Entrepreneurship Bootcamp

Day 8 = Pitch Day. All work completes by end of Day 7.

Vertical 3: Consumer AI App Growth

Sponsor: Sebastian Cacchione

Mission: Study how consumer AI apps go viral, run at least 2 real experiments, and deliver a growth playbook with actual data. The experiment result is the pitch. Not the plan.

Your KPIs

- House AI case study fully analyzed
- 10 creator interviews completed
- Emotional trigger ranking built from real data
- 3 growth hypotheses designed and logged in Notion
- At least 2 experiments run with real results documented
- Referral mechanic designed and tested
- **Stretch:** A real piece of viral content with measurable engagement

Your Toolbox

Tool	Use
TikTok Center	Creative Research viral trends and hooks (no account needed)
Google Forms	Creator interview intake
Notion	Growth Experiment Log
CapCut	Create short-form test videos
Buffer	Publish and track content
Tally.so	Referral sign-up form
Beehiiv	Creator newsletter or referral page (alternative)

Day 1: Foundations

Read the Glossary. Pay particular attention to Viral Coefficient, UGC, and Referral Loop – those are the concepts you will test this week. Prepare your 2-minute personal pitch.

Day 2: Pitches, Team Reveal, Setup

After pitches: create Slack channel `#team-aigrowth`, set up Notion, watch the founder video, assign roles, read Days 3–4 before leaving.

Days 3–4: Discovery Sprint

Day 3 – Morning

House AI case study (60 min). Ask your instructor or sponsor for the materials. Answer these 7 questions in a Notion page called “Case Study Notes”: What did the product actually do? What was the first mechanism that made it spread – not the feature, the mechanism? Who shared it first and why them specifically? What emotion made someone want to share it? What was the hook? Did it spread through platforms, communities, creators, or word of mouth? What happens if you remove the social element?

TikTok Creative Center research (60 min). Go to ads.tiktok.com/business/creativecenter. Search “AI app,” “AI tool,” “AI creator.” Find 5 viral videos. For each: link or description, hook (first 3 seconds), emotion it creates, CTA or call to share, view count. After 5 videos: what do they have in common?

Day 3 – Afternoon

Build the creator interview form. Eight Google Form questions: content type and platforms, what makes them try a new app, whether they’ve shared an app unprompted and why, what would make them share an AI tool, what made the last shareable content feel shareable, biggest AI tool frustrations, whether they’d try a tool early for a feature slot, optional contact info.

Find 10 creators and send outreach. Target 1,000–50,000 followers posting about tech, AI tools, productivity, or “life hacks.” Use #aitools, #productivityhacks, #creatortools. Prioritize people who actually use the apps they show. DM offering a 10-minute call or quick voice note exchange. Goal: 5 calls scheduled + form sent to 5 async.

Day 3 checkpoint: Case Study Notes complete (7 questions answered). TikTok table with 5 viral videos. Creator form live. Outreach sent to 15+.

Day 4 – Morning

Run creator interviews (target: 10 done). Use the form as a script. Fill it in yourself after each call so data auto-populates the Sheet. Immediately write one insight line in Notion: “Creator [handle] – Key insight: They share when they feel [emotion], specifically when [trigger]. They won’t share if [barrier].”

Map emotional triggers. Once you have 5+ interviews, tally emotions across responses. Build a Notion table: Emotion, Number of Creators Who Mentioned It, Example Quote. Rows: Curiosity, Social proof, Identity/status, Humor, Utility/time-saving, Surprise. Rank them. The #1 emotion is your most important insight this week.

Day 4 – Afternoon

Design 3 growth hypotheses. Create a “Growth Experiment Log” in Notion. Each hypothesis must follow this exact format:

IF we [specific action] THEN [specific result] BECAUSE [emotional trigger from interviews]. How we will measure it: [specific metric with a number]. How we will run the test: [exactly what we will do in the next 48 hours].

Example: IF we post a TikTok showing a surprising AI before/after, THEN viewers will comment asking “what app is this?” BECAUSE curiosity + visible result = demand creation. Measurement: comment count + profile visits in first 24 hours.

Day 4 checkpoint: 10 creator interviews complete. Emotional trigger table ranked. 3 hypotheses written. Ready to execute experiments.

Days 5–6: Execution Sprint

Day 5 – Morning

Create and post test video – Hypothesis 1. In CapCut: 30–60 seconds. Hook in first 3 seconds (bold claim or surprising AI output). Quick how-it-works with music for seconds 3–40. Final 5 seconds: CTA (follow for more, link in bio). Use CapCut’s built-in templates. Max 90 minutes on production.

Post to Instagram Reels or TikTok immediately (not scheduled) for maximum Day 1 data. After 24 hours screenshot: views, likes, comments, profile clicks. Copy-paste any comments asking “what app is this?” Those prove the hypothesis. Log all in Notion under Hypothesis 1.

Day 5 – Afternoon

Build referral sign-up page – Hypothesis 2.

Option A (Tally.so): New form titled “Get Early Access to [Tool Name].” Fields: Name, Email. After-submit text: “Share this link with 2 friends to unlock priority access – [same form URL].” Publish.

Option B (Beehiiv): Create a publication, add a referral page that unlocks a reward after sharing. Share via your own social, DMs to creator interviewees, and relevant communities. Track signups and how many actually share. Log in Notion.

Day 5 checkpoint: Test video posted (H1 live). Referral form live and shared (H2 live). Both logged with start date and baseline numbers.

Day 6 – Morning

Log all experiment results. For each hypothesis: Action Taken, Metric Measured, Result (real number), Learning. The Learning is the most important column. Low results still count: “We got 3 views because we only had 47 followers. This test needs a creator with 10K+ followers to be valid.” That is a real insight.

Day 6 – Afternoon

Build the Growth Playbook in Notion. Seven sections: What We Studied (3 bullets from case study). Who We Talked To (10 creators, top 3 insights). Key Emotional Triggers (ranked table). Experiments We Ran (table with real results). What Works (top 2 recommendations based on evidence). Creator Partnership Framework (who to target, what to offer, how to approach). If We Had 30 More Days (specific next tests).

Day 6 checkpoint: All 3 experiment results logged. Learning written for each. Growth Playbook complete with 7 sections. KPI board updated.

Day 7: Pitch Preparation

Slide	Title	Content
1	Cover	Team + Vertical
2	The Opportunity	Consumer AI apps can go viral overnight – here is the formula
3	How We Studied This	House AI breakdown + TikTok Creative Center research
4	What Creators Told Us	10 interviews, top 3 emotional triggers with quotes
5	Experiment Framework	What a growth hypothesis looks like
6	Experiment 1 Results	Content test – real views, comments, profile clicks
7	Experiment 2 Results	Referral test – signups, share rate
8	The Growth Playbook	Top 5 recommendations from the playbook
9	Creator Partnership	Who to target, what to offer, the approach
10	The Ask	What the sponsor does in the next 30 days

Lead with evidence, not plan. “We tested this. Here is what happened. Here is what it means for your growth.”

Day 8: Pitch Day

Have your Notion Growth Playbook open on a device. Have Buffer analytics screenshots saved on your phone as backup. If asked “did this actually work?” give a number, not a shrug.

Program Syllabus

What This Program Is

Seven working days, 9 AM to 3 PM daily. Day 8 is pitch day. You are placed into a live business vertical with a real sponsor on Day 2. You execute inside that vertical and deliver real, sponsor-ready work by the end of Day 7.

The Execution Formula: Validation + Marketing + Management. “Product” is not in the formula. Build nothing before you validate demand.

Schedule

Day	Focus
Day 1	Startup vocabulary, BMC, VPC, customer discovery, the three costs (time, opportunity, money). Watch DoorDash YC pitch and Snapchat explainer. Homework: prepare your 2-minute personal pitch.
Day 2	Individual pitches (hard 2-minute cutoff). Team reveal. Vertical reveal. Tool setup: Slack channel, Notion workspace (KPI Board, Interview Log, Task List, Pitch Deck Outline), founder video, role assignments.
Days 3–4	Customer discovery sprint. Interviews, research, first KPI check.
Days 5–6	Execution sprint. Build, test, iterate.
Day 7	Pitch prep. Dry runs. All deliverables finalized.
Day 8	Final investor-style panel pitches. Feedback. Debrief.

Assessment

Component	Weight
Individual 2-minute pitch (Day 2)	20%
Team execution vs. KPI board (Days 3–7)	40%
Final investor pitch (Day 8)	30%
Engagement, professionalism, tool use	10%

Three Rules That Apply Every Day

1. **Evidence over opinion.** “I think customers want X” is worth zero. “12 out of 20 people said X” wins.
2. **Done beats perfect.** A live landing page with a typo beats a flawless one that doesn’t exist yet.
3. **Update your KPI board daily.** If it’s not on the board, it didn’t happen.

Pitch Day Rules (Day 8)

- Open with a real number, not a plan.

- Hard 8-minute cutoff. Practice until you know your 7:30 mark.
- Every team member is assigned slides before you walk in. No fumbling.
- Know your 3 hardest numbers without looking at the screen.
- End with a specific Ask – named channel, dollar amount, timeline.
- Export the deck as PDF the night before. Record a Loom backup of any live demo.

If You Get Stuck

Problem	Fix
Can't get interview responses	Post in a different community, change the subject line, offer to share findings
Tool not working	Use the backup tool listed in your toolbox, or ask your TA
Team conflict	5-minute timer, each person states position once, majority vote, document and move on
Behind on KPIs at Day 5	Triage: pick your 1–2 most important KPIs and cut everything else
Sponsor unreachable	Use materials already provided. Document outreach attempts – that's data.

Startup and AI Glossary

Core Startup Terms

Term	What It Means
BMC	Business Model Canvas – your business on one page across 9 blocks. Fill outside-in: start with the customer.
VPC	Value Proposition Canvas – customer jobs/pains/gains vs. your solution. Mismatch = guess, not product.
MVP	Minimum Viable Product – in 8 days this is a landing page, a form, or a manual process. Not code.
PMF	Product-Market Fit – 40%+ of users would be “very disappointed” if your product disappeared.
Pivot	Change one core assumption based on data. Day 4: discipline. Day 7: denial.
CAC	Customer Acquisition Cost – total spend divided by new customers. In this program: hours spent divided by customers converted.
LTV	Lifetime Value – total revenue from one customer over their full relationship with you. Target LTV:CAC of 3:1.
Churn	Customers lost this period divided by customers at start. Fix retention before scaling.
KPI	Metric with a deadline. Red on Day 5 means fixed by Day 6.
Unit Economics	Revenue minus cost per single unit. Negative = scale makes things worse.
WTP	Willingness to Pay – found through interviews, not surveys. Ask: “Have you ever paid for something like this?”
ICP	Ideal Customer Profile – the exact person most likely to convert and retain.
TAM/SAM/SOM	Total market / reachable portion / realistic near-term capture. Investors care about SOM.
NPS	Net Promoter Score – % Promoters minus % Detractors. Positive NPS from real users is strong pitch evidence.
Viral Coefficient	New users each user generates. $K > 1$ = self-sustaining growth.
UGC	User-Generated Content – reviews, videos, social posts created by users. Lowest-cost, most credible marketing.

The Four AI Tools

Rule: Use 3–4 tools in sequence. One tool for everything = mediocre outputs.

Tool	Best Use
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NotebookLM	Upload source documents. Answers cited directly to your sources. Fastest way to turn 40 pages into a 2-page action brief. Not a brainstorming tool.
Gemini	High-volume fast synthesis. Paste 25 interview responses, get a bullet-point summary. Longer free context than most.
Claude	Long-context reasoning and high-quality output. BMC/VPC analysis, pitch deck copy, pricing models. Save for pitch-critical work – daily message limits apply.
ChatGPT	Fast creative volume. 15 taglines, 20 headlines, quick name ideas. Generate options here, polish in Claude.

The Four-Tool Cascade

1. **Ingest (NotebookLM)** – Upload all source docs, get condensed outlines.
2. **Process (Gemini)** – Paste bulk data, synthesize fast.
3. **Reason (Claude)** – Feed outputs in for strategic analysis and high-quality writing.
4. **Ideate (ChatGPT)** – Generate volume fast, bring the best back to Claude to finish.

Context Management – 8 Rules

1. Compress before you paste. Run transcripts through NotebookLM or Gemini first. 90% fewer tokens, same output.
2. Keep a VERTICAL_BRIEF.md – under 400 words, updated daily. Paste at the top of every new AI session.
3. One task per session. Each major task gets its own conversation.
4. Match tool to task. Claude for quality reasoning. Gemini for bulk. ChatGPT for creative volume.
5. Build a Prompt Library in Notion. Save every prompt that produced a great output. By Day 5 you should have 10–15.
6. Specify output format. Weak: “Give me insights.” Strong: “Output a 4-column markdown table sorted by frequency.”
7. When a session degrades, start fresh. Paste your VERTICAL_BRIEF.md and continue. Don’t try to fix a degraded conversation.
8. Rotate tools when one hits its cap. Never stop working because one tool hit its limit.

AI Decision Matrix

Task	Tool
Summarize a 20-page document	NotebookLM
Synthesize 25 interview transcripts	Gemini
Build the BMC or VPC	Claude
Write the pitch deck narrative	Claude
Generate 15 tagline options	ChatGPT
Draft one cold outreach email	Claude
Draft 50 cold emails at scale	ChatGPT
Social captions and short copy	ChatGPT
Financial model from interview data	Claude

Web research synthesis	Gemini or ChatGPT (search on)
Build an automation	Make.com
Add AI to an automation	Make.com HTTP module to Claude API

No-Code Tool Reference

Tool	Use
Notion	KPI board, interview log, task list, pitch outline. Replaces five apps.
Canva	All design. Use the Brand Kit to lock colors and fonts from Day 2 onward.
Carrd.co	Landing page in under 1 hour. Free, no code.
Make.com	No-code automation. 1,000 free operations per month.
Mailchimp	Email marketing. 500 contacts and 1,000 emails per month free.
Buffer / Later	Social media scheduling. Plan content once, post across platforms.
Typeform / Tally	Polished survey forms with better UX than Google Forms.
Miro / Whimsical	Visual mapping. Whimsical for flowcharts, Miro for personas and journey maps.
Apollo.io	Verified B2B email finder. 50 free exports per month.
Hunter.io	Find emails by company domain. 25 free searches per month.
Loom	Record demos. 90 seconds of live demo beats any slide. Record before pitch day.
Similarweb	Competitor website traffic data. Use to validate market size.
Maze	Usability testing platform. Produces a quantified task success rate.
