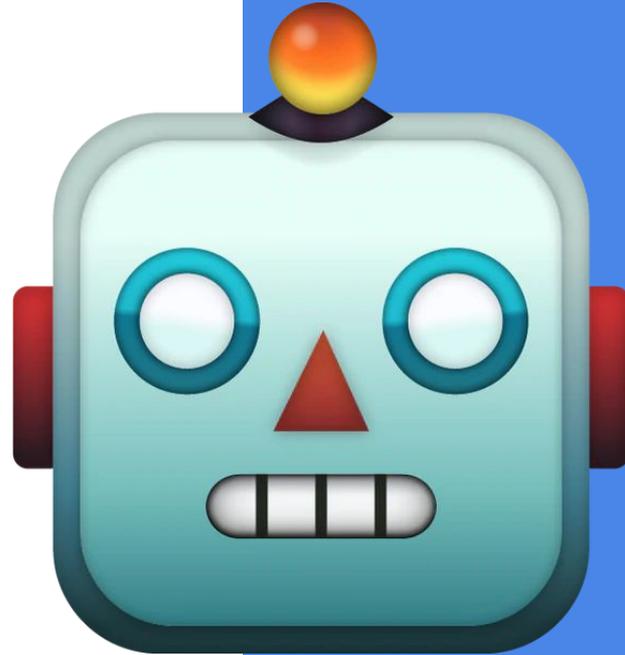


# A Founder's Guide to No Code

Advisor: Prof. Morten Hansen  
Annais J. Paetsch

May 2022



# What is no code? What is low code?

No-code tools are software development platforms that allow people to build and deploy their own applications **without writing a single line of code** often using simple graphical user interfaces.

Low code tools require little programming but for the benefit of more customization.

**The no-code and low-code industry have seen strong advancement in the last 5 years**

23%

market growth for 2021<sup>2</sup>

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of overall application development  
activity in low-code by 2024<sup>2</sup>

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0.03%

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market growth for 2021<sup>2</sup>

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of overall application development  
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1.7x



~~0.03%~~ 0.05%

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# Uncovering the interplay between no code and entrepreneurship in three ways

## 1 What differentiates no code entrepreneurship?

Understand what characterizes the no code entrepreneurship space in terms of industry, product types and founders

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**Quantitative Analysis of 100 No Code Startups**

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**2** For which founders is no code relevant?

Define what founder personas exist, understand their needs and motivations

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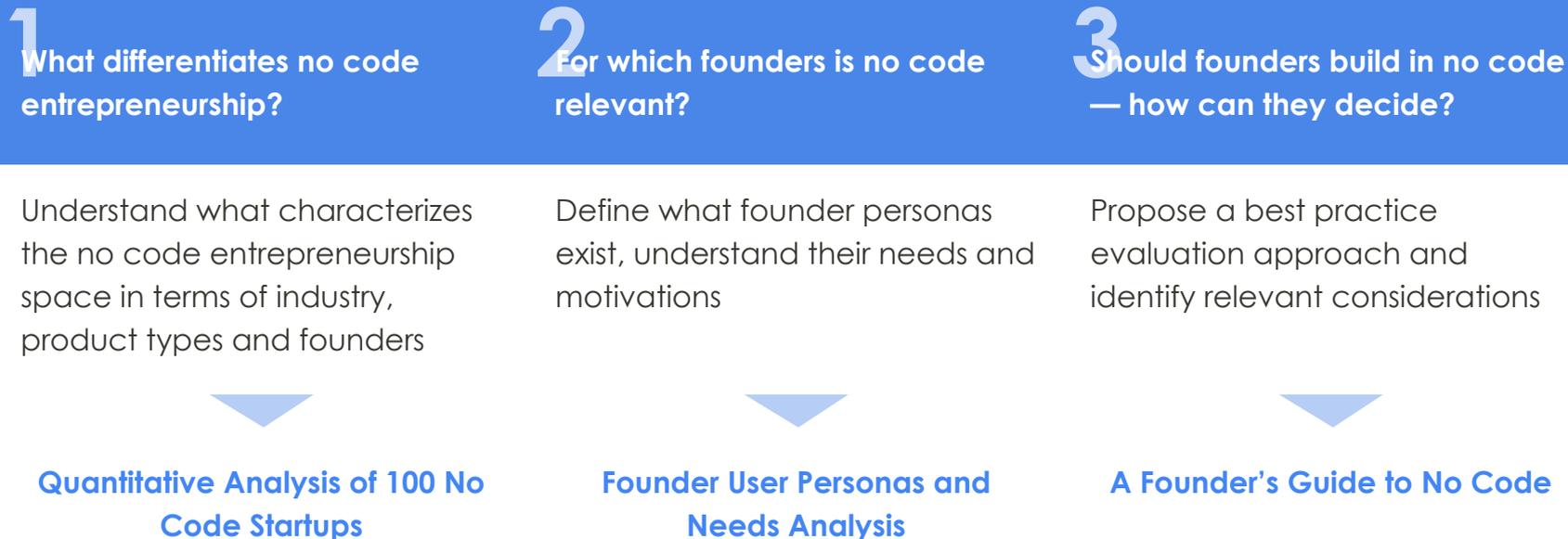


**Founder User Personas and Needs Analysis**

**3** Should founders build in no code — how can they decide?

Propose a best practice evaluation approach and identify relevant considerations

# Uncovering the interplay between no code and entrepreneurship in three ways



# Behind the scenes: What was the research process?

Quantitative Analysis of 100 No  
Code Startups

Founder User Personas and  
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# Behind the scenes: What was the research process?

## Qualitative coding of startups & quantitative analysis

- Dataset: 100 no code startups from nocodefounders.com, YCombinator startups database (for benchmark)
- Researched each startup & qualitatively coded: Industry, product type, lifecycle, founder background



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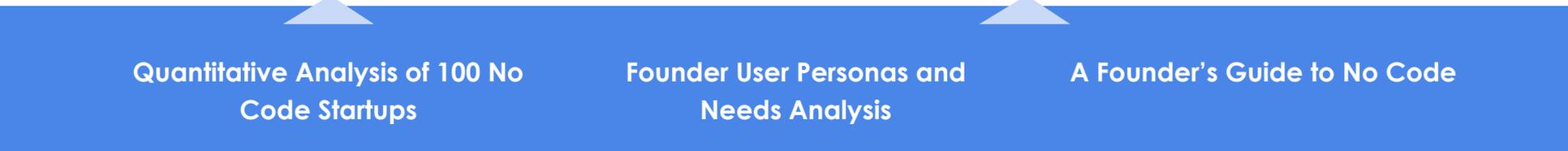
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## User interviews

- 10 interviewees: Founders, CTOs, no code developers
- Global representation (organic): Africa, Asia, Europe, North America
- 30-45 min each, semi structured



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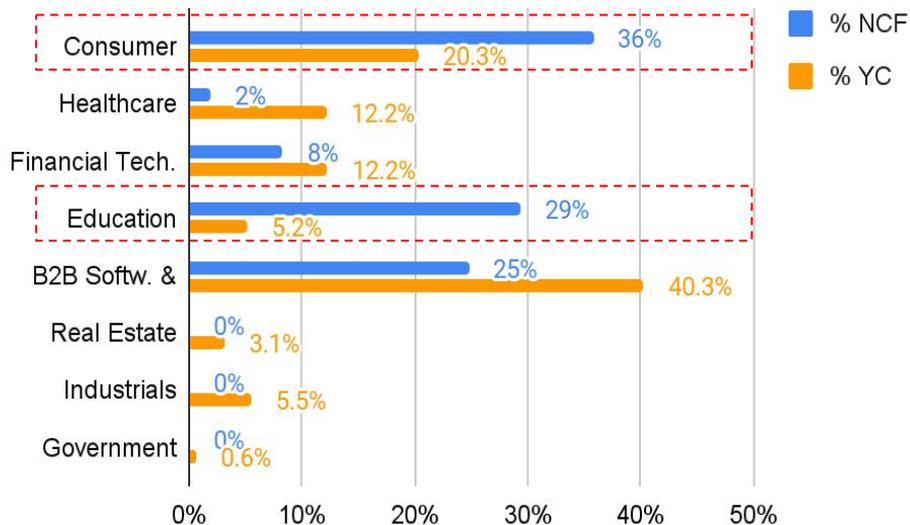
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**1** For which founders is no code relevant?

## **Quantitative Analysis of 100 No Code Startups**

# NC startups with strong consumer and education representation

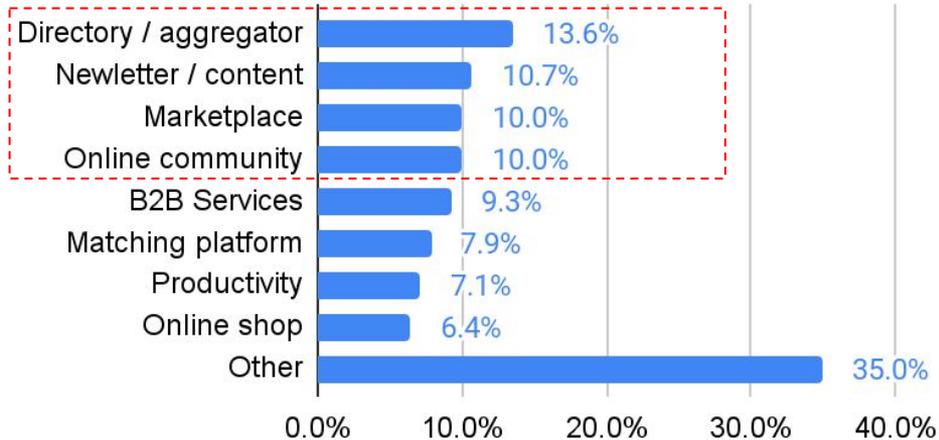
Industry Breakup of NCF vs. YC



- Strongest overrepresentation vs. YC: Consumer, education
- Strongest underrepresentation vs. YC: B2B software, healthcare

# NCF startups had four robust product features

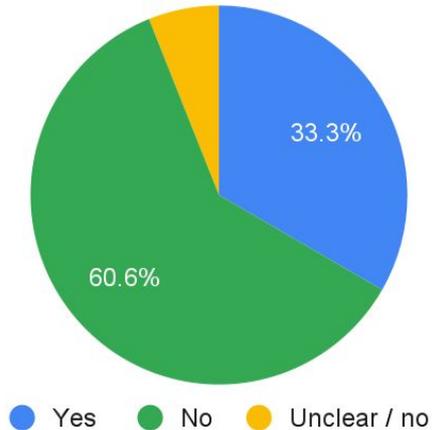
NCF startups by product type/feature



- NCF startups used four robust features
- No code tools strike balance between building use-case specific vs. maximizing modularity

## $\frac{2}{3}$ of founders without CS training speaks for lower barrier

NCF startups by founder with CS background



- Originally no code idea especially common in developer circles
- $\frac{2}{3}$  of founders with CS background speaks for high adoption and democratization
- NCF founders were mostly solo founders, which is typically not the “preferred model”

**2** What differentiates no  
code entrepreneurship?

**Founder User Personas and  
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# Interviews uncovered three decision maker personas

## Side-project founder

### Attributes

---

**Attitude to no code exploration:** Explorative attitude, early adopter of no code

**Technical knowledge:** ●●○

**No code experience:** ●●●

### Motivations

---

Build side project. Build for fun and to learn.  
Grow clout in startup community.

### Core needs

---

Learn about no code to develop new content. Explore new no code tools ongoingly.

### Key research channel

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Ask in online communities (e.g. Twitter).  
Search on Product Hunt.

### Financial objective

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Side-project, potentially business

# Interviews uncovered three decision maker personas

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## Prototype-stage founder

### Attributes

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**Attitude to no code exploration:** Mixed explorative and analytical

**Technical knowledge:** ●●○

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### Motivations

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Validate business idea. Build and iterate product at high speed. Learn to prototype.

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Learn to build in no code efficiently.  
Understand what can be built in no code.  
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## Product-build founder

### Attributes

**Attitude to no code exploration:** Analytical decision maker

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### Motivations

Build scalable product (1-2 years). Build and maintain product with less cost.

### Core needs

Understand key considerations for no code. Evaluate scalability limitations. Evaluate cost of no code vs. raw code development.

### Key research channel

Interview experts in no code. Read online blogs.

### Financial objective

Seed, series A+ funding

# Interviews uncovered three decision maker personas

Focus of Guide

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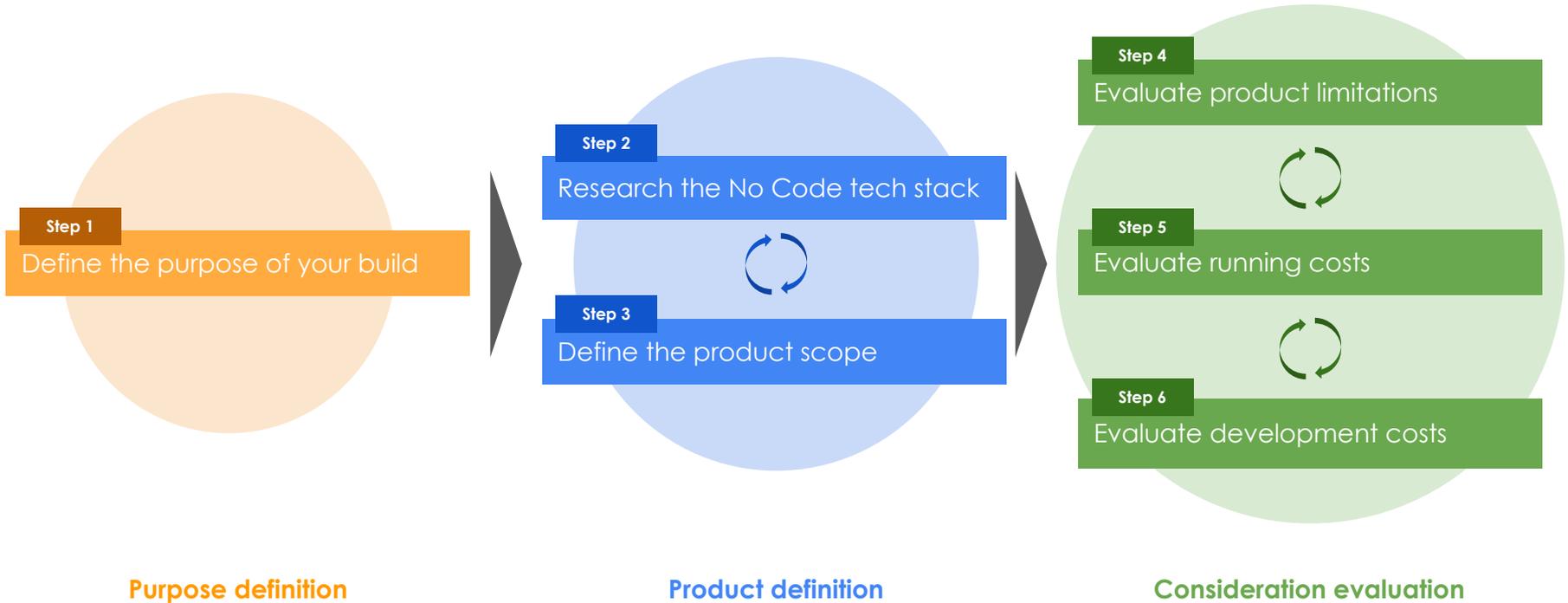
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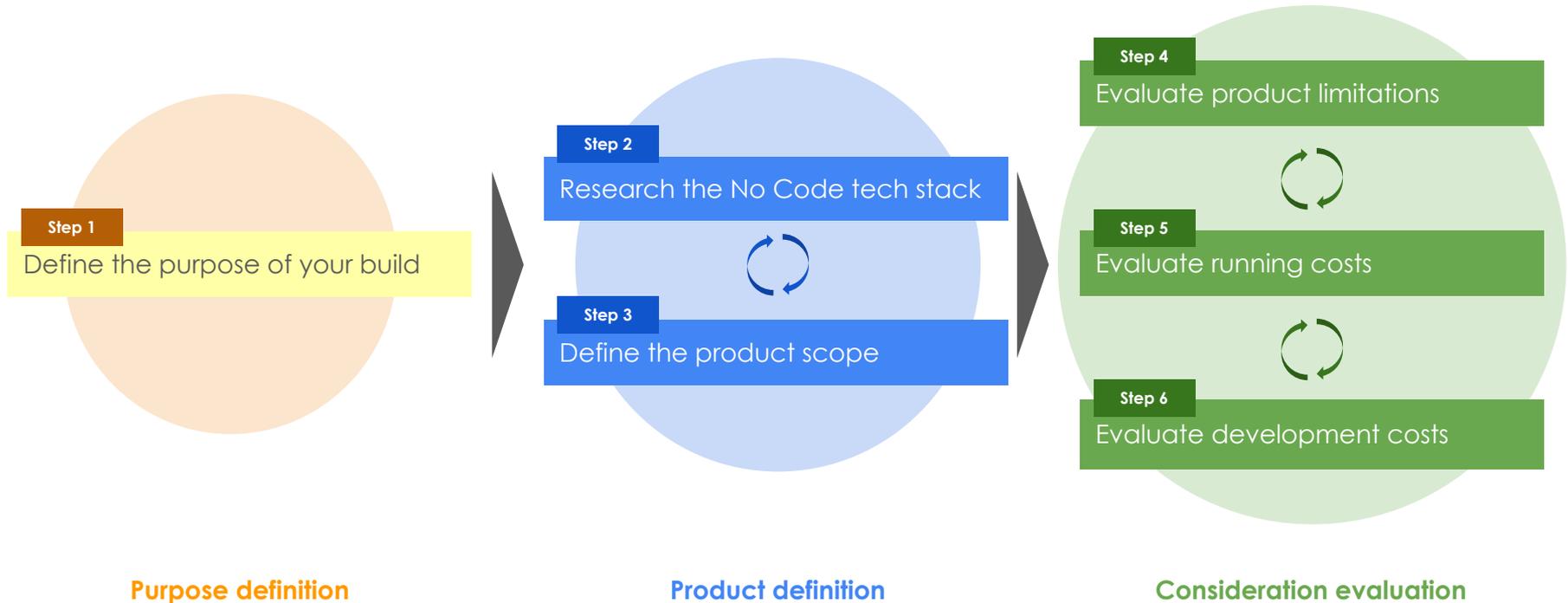
**3** Should founders build in no code — how can they decide?

## A Founder's Guide to No Code

# Founder's approach to no code build decisions



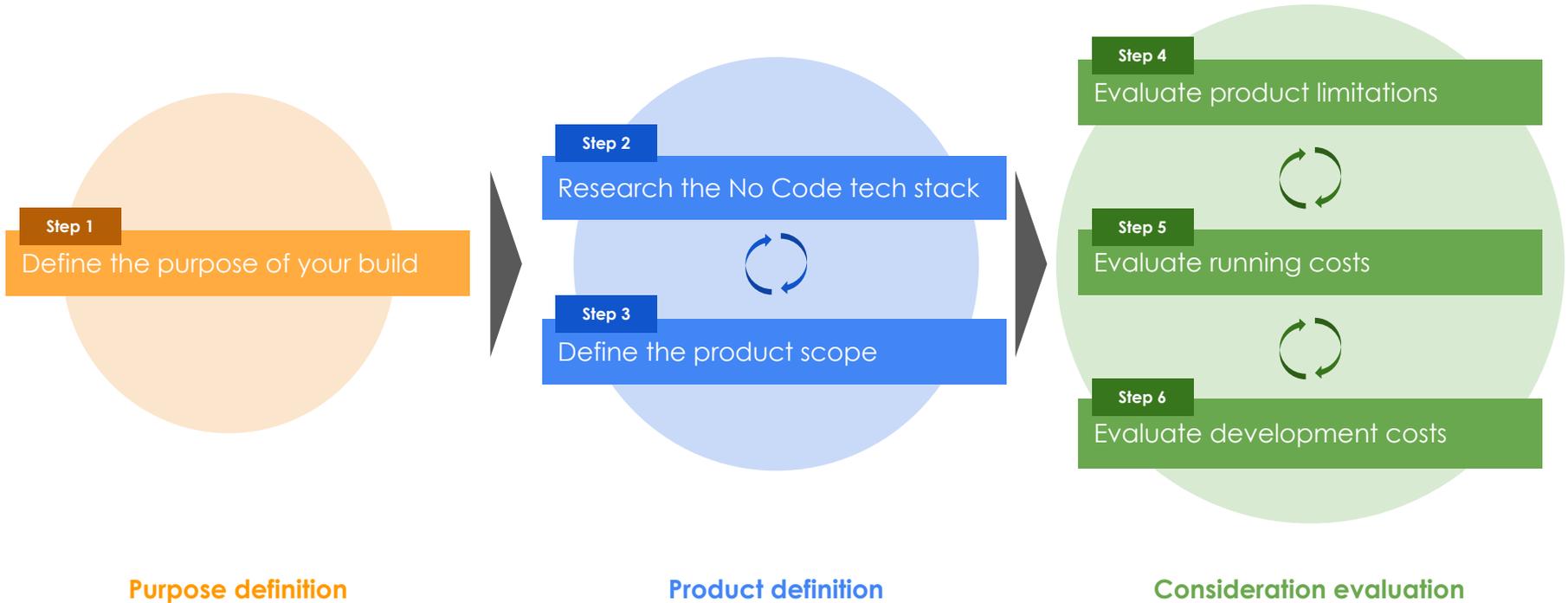
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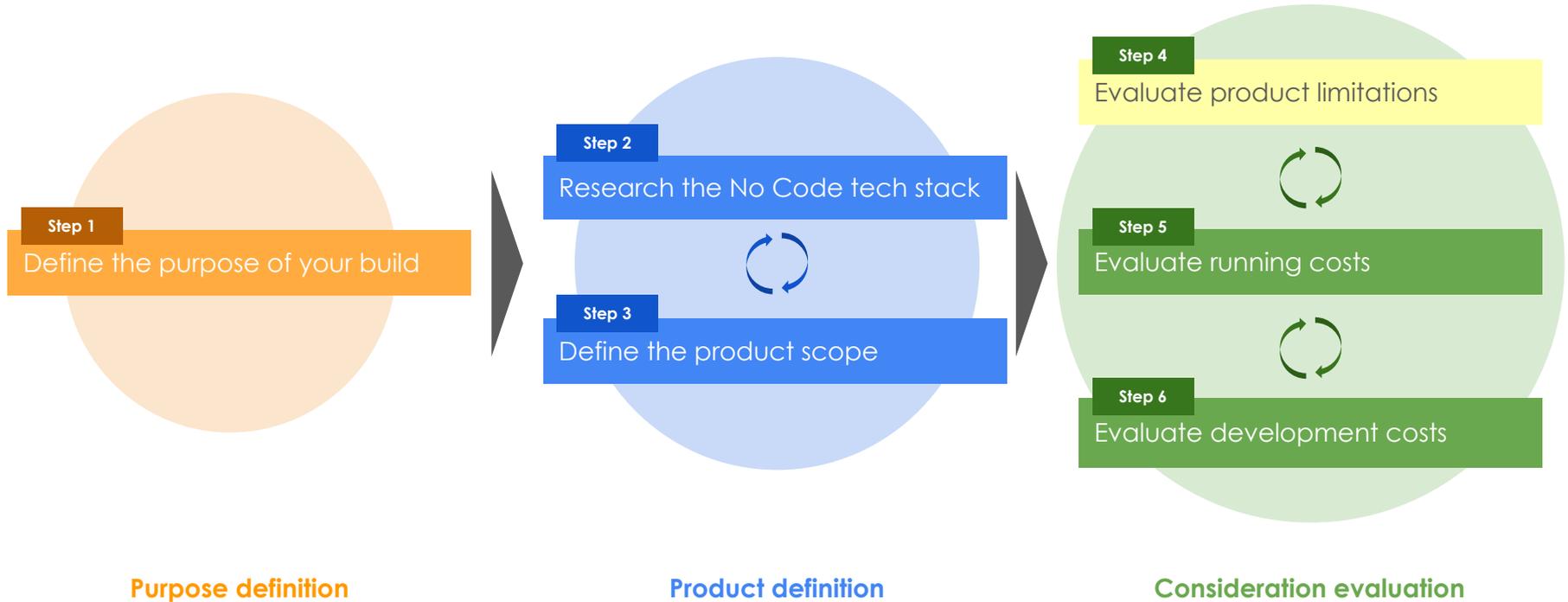
# Step 1 - Define the purpose of your build

	Objective	Alternative
1 Validate your idea	Build first version to visualize and get first user feedback, test basic functionality; <i>Entrepreneurial objective: Raise pre-seed</i>	Mockup/ wireframe
2 Validate product-market fit	Build a product users actually need and can use, quick development, feedback and product iteration key to build something users want; <i>Entrepreneurial objective: Raise seed</i>	Build in raw code
3 Build core product	Build core product for 1-2 year horizon, build extendable product in line with roadmap, runnings costs & maintenance play bigger factor; <i>Entrepreneurial objective: Raise Series A or beyond</i>	Build in raw code

# Founder's approach to no code build decisions



# Founder's approach to no code build decisions



# Step 4 - Evaluate product limitations: Thinking about scale & performance considerations

1

## Hard caps

Scaling works until a fixed, defined point

### Examples

Max. rows (Airtable); max. # CMS items (Webflow)

2

## Costly scaling

Scaling a specific dim. is subject to tiered- pricing leadings to steep increases in running cost

# of tasks execute/month (Zapier), # of people w/ access (Airtable)

3

## Performance-reducing scaling

Scaling hurts performance and cannot be upgraded through higher-tiered plans

# of simultaneous users, # of database calls, # of API calls



## A Founder's Guide to No Code

Welcome. This page was created to share my research on the no code and low code industry's impact on entrepreneurship and to share the guide I created to help founders and early stage teams decide on whether to build in no code / low code or not.

### Guide

-  [A Founder's Guide to No Code](#)

### Research

-  [Research Behind: A Founders' Guide to No Code](#)
-  [Quantitative Analysis of No Code Startups](#)
-  [User persona & needs analysis](#)

### Dataset

-  [Dataset: No code startup database](#)

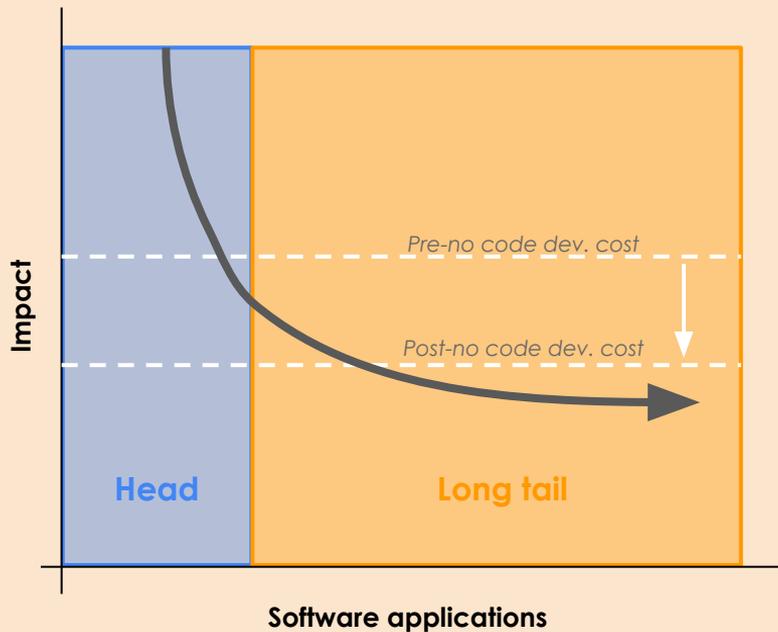
Check out my guide, if you are interested!

<https://a-founders-guide-to-no-code.super.site>

**Thank you!**

~~0.03%~~ 0.05%

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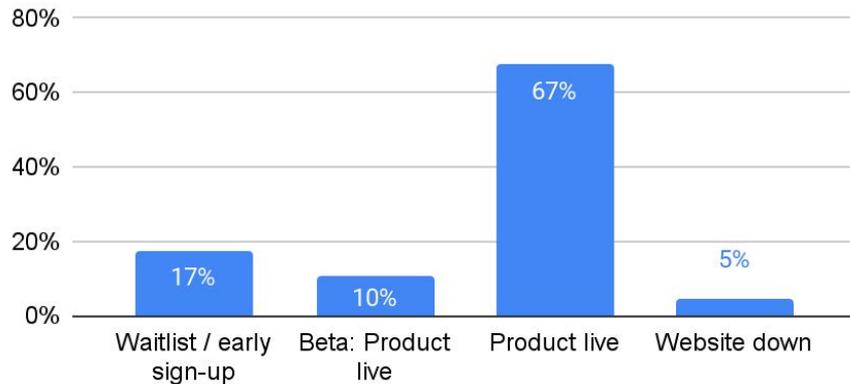


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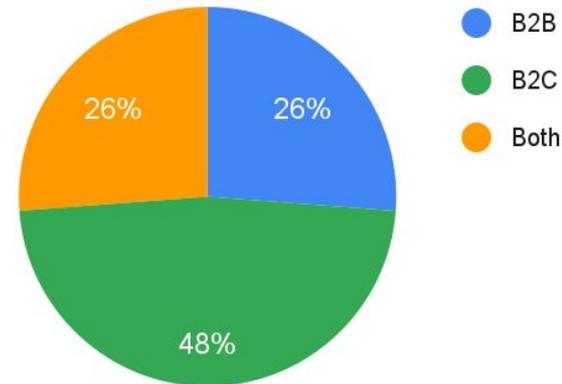
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# NCF startups with $\frac{2}{3}$ live products and strong B2C-focus

NCF startups by lifecycle stage



NCF startups by customer relat.



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