Top 10 Product Questions

For Periods of Rapid Change
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As a team devoted to demystifying analytics and accelerating experimentation, we appreciate how Heap gives companies the power to act quickly and make decisions based on data. We’ve seen how useful behavioral data can be for making great products, and we’ve seen how other companies have used it to guide and track marketing efforts, to better allocate customer success resources, and to quickly adapt to changes in the market.

During this pandemic, these imperatives have become even more essential as businesses in all industries are forced to cope with a world of extreme unpredictability. That’s why we’re thrilled that Heap has put together this list of ten key questions for businesses to ask during times of rapid change.

Our hope is that companies can use the information in this book to skillfully navigate this crisis, and to not only survive, but to thrive during this and other periods of uncertainty. We invite you to explore this book and to reach out if you’d like assistance implementing any of the ideas here.

Here’s to a future of resilience and growth.

Jeff Eckman
Founder & CEO, Blue Green
As COVID-19 is rapidly transforming the way companies do business, product companies are faced with a dizzying host of decisions. Primary among these is figuring out how to make sure customers continue to get value from your product, and how to make sure they will continue to pay for that value.

Recently we released The Heap Book of Questions, a 66-page collection of questions, hypotheses, and experiments to run on your product. The goal was to give product teams a set of strategies for gathering critical information about their product, and then using that information to make smarter decisions.

This book orients those questions around decisions essential during COVID, providing the Top 10 questions product organizations can ask to make sure they’re pivoting quickly, adapting their businesses to new circumstances, and using data to make the right decisions. To see how our current customers are using questions like these to navigate the current crisis, feel free to download our COVID-19 Customer Stories ebook.

Read on to learn how to move nimbly in our shared new world.
User Behavior

Are you witnessing changes in user activity, or in user behavior?

COVID-19 is changing the way people use digital products. For businesses, it’s essential to know whether this is producing a change in volume of usage, or if people are behaving differently in your product. The difference can help you know if you should be changing your value proposition, and if so, in which ways.

For eCommerce businesses, for example, customers may be purchasing different items, or purchasing items at a very different rate. Tracking behavior around these purchases can tell you what other items you may want to advertise or suggest. (For example, one Heap eCommerce customer has seen a surge in purchases of a certain product, which—it turns out—people are buying online and then reselling to friends and family. These buyers have become superusers, and the business has started providing special offers to them to retain them.)

For businesses just starting to build out their on-line presences, there may be new frictions around checkout flows or site browsing. Customers may want information around shipping or delivery. It may be worth running experiments that foreground information about availability or delivery processes.

For SaaS companies, the differences may be more subtle. It’s more likely that you’ll see decreases in traffic. But this is not at all a foregone conclusion - as companies contract, they may rely on different features in your product, or need fewer (or more!)
of them. For some companies, this information may be enough to shift your business model, short- or long-term.

In all cases, being clear about what your users are doing right now can help clarify who your market is, both now and after the pandemic ends.

**The bottom line:** COVID is changing the way nearly all businesses work. But simple traffic to your site doesn’t tell you enough about how the pandemic should change your business model.

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**How to measure this in Heap?**

**Period-over-Period** reporting of key activities and flows (sessions, purchases, feature usage, and so on).

- Define key events for features you’re interested in
- Analyze your events
- Graph report: Count of event
- Add any filters to include relevant user cohorts
- Click Add Comparison
- Add a comparison date range to which we’ll compare recent usage
- Analyze differences between recent usage and prior usage
- Optional:
  - Group-by a user cohort
  - Analyze how different types of users are behaving recently compared to a previous period

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To learn more, see our documentation article: [Period Over Period Analysis](#)
Measure changes in activity or behavior
It’s true that COVID is causing companies to contract their spending. The immediate consequence is that for many companies strategy is turning away from conversion and towards retention.

So how can you ensure to focus your retention efforts? Well, the first thing to do is to track how your accounts are using your product.

At Heap we call this “Account Health Analysis.” The goal is to measure how many people in each of your accounts are using your product, and to see how they’re using it. This gives you baseline measures for adoption and engagement. These can be useful in all sorts of ways (do you need to do more training with certain accounts? Can you run a land-and-expand? Are the right people in your accounts using your product?), but in this period in particular, Account Health Analysis can tell you instantly which accounts have significantly dropped in usage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Production</th>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dashboard</td>
<td>General Settings</td>
<td>Account ID Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Account Id</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Teammates</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capture</td>
<td>Teams</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activate</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account</td>
<td>Plan Usage</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adoption
Are you tracking changes in adoption across your accounts?
By tracking these changes, you’ll be able to know, quickly, which accounts need to be saved. Maybe they’ve laid people off. Maybe your champion isn’t there anymore. Maybe they’ve reallocated resources.

In any of these cases, it’s time to send in your CS team and do what needs to be done to retain them.

**How to measure in Heap**

**Account Health Analysis** reporting on usage within accounts

- Define key events for features you’re interested in
- Analyze your events
  - Graph report: **Count Unique** of key event
  - If you are just curious about usage in terms of app logins, use “Session” as your event.
  - Count Unique will display the number of users, not the total number of logins.
- Add any filters to include relevant user cohorts
  - For example, if you want to look at Account Health for a certain territory, CSM, vertical, etc.
  - **Group-by** your account-level property for **Account Name**
  - **Add a Comparison Date Range**
  - Analyze how the number of active users per account has changed in the recent period

To learn more, see our documentation article: [Measuring Account Health](#)
Account Health Analysis

% of Accounts with >5 MQU
Apr 29, 2019 - Apr 27, 2020 by Month

Instantly observe changes in usage
If you’re already measuring account health, you know the rates at which different accounts use your product. There’s another important way to put this data to use: showing customers what kind of value you provide for them.

When finance teams are looking to cut costs, software becomes an immediate candidate. The more you can validate—and quantify—widespread adoption of your product to a customer, however, the more you arm that customer with reasons not to churn. If you can show how many people in an organization use your product, and more importantly what they use it for, you’ll give that organization clear data to bring to the table when they’re figuring out how to reduce spend.

**Heap is especially useful for this.** Other tools can give you overall adoption rates. Heap can show you how teams are using your product, what actions they’re taking in it, and what kinds of results they’re getting. If you have champions in an account, this information can be gold for them as they make the case for keeping you to their managers.
Providing value isn’t always done in your product. Sometimes—especially now—providing value means being able to clearly articulate how you provide value, and making sure customers are aware of the value you give them.

How to measure in Heap

Account Health Analysis reporting on usage within accounts
- Define key events for features you’re interested in
- Analyze your events
  - Graph report: Count Unique of key event
    - If you are just curious about usage in terms of app logins, use “Session” as your event.
    - Count Unique will display the number of users, not the total number of logins.
  - Add a filter for the Account you’re working with
    - Filter on your account-level property for Account Name
  - Add a Comparison Date Range
- Analyze how the number of active users in that account has changed in the recent period.
- Repeat this process as many times as needed for your most relevant and value-driving features to see how feature-level behavior has shifted.
By now most companies have evolved their messaging to accommodate changed circumstances. Outbound emails and inbound-focused content are likely explaining how your company can help people through this difficult period, or how your tool or site are what people need to focus on right now.

The question is: are these things working? And what’s the best way to tell?

New Messaging

Are you tracking the effects of new messaging?

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### 3-Step Funnel by Initial Device Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Device Type</th>
<th>View Sign-up Page</th>
<th>View Sign-up Page</th>
<th>Submit Sign-up</th>
<th>Conversion Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39,892 users</td>
<td>11,058 users (22.71%)</td>
<td>3,119 users (29.93%)</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desktop</td>
<td>20,614 users</td>
<td>5,608 users (27.12%)</td>
<td>3,006 users (50.88%)</td>
<td>10.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>5,387 users</td>
<td>1,872 users (34.09%)</td>
<td>116 users (6.39%)</td>
<td>1.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4,49 users</td>
<td>224 users (50.07%)</td>
<td>00 users (-22.02%)</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablet</td>
<td>445 users</td>
<td>246 users (54.07%)</td>
<td>29 users (6.49%)</td>
<td>4.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many companies will use metrics like open rate (for emails) and page views to see how the new messaging is working. But the better metric is conversion. If you’re bringing more people to your site, but fewer of them are converting, then your new messaging is arguably doing worse than your old messaging.

**At Heap, we believe that you should always be using conversion as the best measure of marketing effectiveness.** In this period, however, you have to move even quicker, and your messaging, outreach, and marketing campaigns may be changing far more rapidly than usual. Behavioral analytics can measure the meaningful effects of these changes.

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**How to measure in Heap**

Measure inbound source and tie to conversion rates
- Define key events for your conversion funnel
- Analyze your events
  - Funnel report: *Include events in the order a user would perform them*
  - Add any filters to include relevant user cohorts
  - Add a [Group-By](#) for “Marketing Channel”
    - Ensure that you are grouping by a property of the first event in the funnel. Also, do not select “Initial Marketing Channel.” We are interested in “last touch.”
    - You can customize Marketing Channel groupings in Properties
  - Analyze how traffic from different channels tends to convert differently. Pay attention to overall conversion rate, as well as step-by-step conversion rate for each channel.
Demand

Are you anticipating shifts in demand?

For eCommerce companies, COVID-19 may be dramatically shifting demand. Heap customers in very different industries have shared stories of new items suddenly becoming important to customers, or having to rapidly modify inventory plans to handle surges in orders.

Of course being able to meet customer needs is one of your primary goals, and in unpredictable times, it can be useful to get advance notice of changes in demand. With Heap, you can.

The key is to keep an eye on not only purchases, but also product views and searches. If you’re measuring visits to certain pages on your site, or product reviews, or other leading indicators of purchases, you can notice when those change, and adjust plans accordingly. Indeed, for eCommerce companies, “user behavior” includes not only purchases, but also browsing patterns. These can be enormously useful, for both inventory management and marketing.

It’s a business truism to say you need to be proactive rather than reactive. Tracking user behavior to figure out purchase intent can be a great way to peer around corners.
How to measure in Heap

- Define an event for View Any Product Detail Page (PDP)
- Analyze your PDP activity
  - Graph Report: Count Unique View Any PDP
  - Add any filters to include relevant user cohorts
  - Add a Group-By for “Path"
    - This will break the report down by the most common product pages that users are viewing.
    - Since we are using Count Unique, we are only looking at the number of people that view each page, and not double counting multiple views by one person.
- Analyze how different products are being viewed to understand which products have potential to be in high demand.

User behavior means not only purchases, but also browsing patterns
To make it easier for consumers and other businesses to conduct business right now, many companies are creating offers that are meant to bring people in during the pandemic. Temporary free offers, delayed payment structures, unlimited downloads for certain periods: these work as gifts to the community and as incentives for people to engage with your product.

The question, as always, is: are they working?

If you’re already using behavioral analytics, you probably know the answer. If not, then figuring out whether these offers are working or not requires a bit of work. As with question #3, site visits, page views, and other standard metrics are not particularly useful. Why not? Because those metrics don’t tell you if people are getting value from your product.

Rather than site visits or other similar metrics, we suggest measuring effectiveness by activation. Activation, quickly, is the “a-ha” moment in your product. It’s the single moment when users realize value.

What “activation” consists of will of course vary between products. In an ecommerce product, it may be adding an item to the cart. In a SaaS product, it may be running a certain process. The important thing is that you define activation, then measure the degree to which your new offer gets people to take that key action.
If you're witnessing a change in user behavior due to COVID-19, of course, you may be busy reevaluating what should count as activation in your product. (See question #1.) But if you’re not measuring the effects of your new offer on activation, you’re not making sure that your offer brings people to the action that is most likely to bring them back to your product.

For more information, you can check out The Heap Guide to Activation *(coming soon!)*.

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**How to do it in Heap**

- Define activation event
- Define event for “engaged with/accepted offer”
- Analyze your activation event
  - Funnel report: *include events in the order a user would perform them, making sure your activation event is the final one.*
    - To start, choose “Session” as your first event, and your activation event as the second
  - Add any filters to include relevant user cohorts
  - Add a [Group-By](#) for “Users who have done”
    - Choose your “engaged with/accepted offer”
  - Analyze how activation differs between users who engaged with/accepted offer and those who did not

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**TIP**

Try our related Suggested Report: *How does conversion rate vary by company size*
For both Saas and ecommerce products, now might be a good time to think about simplifying. By figuring out which features in your product drive the most value and emphasizing them, you can hone in on the market segment that really matters, while coping with potential resource constraints on your end.

If usage is down in your product, analyzing which features people are using can be a great way to gather signal on what customers value the most. If you’re offering part of your product for free right now, too, observing what people do while in your product can provide useful information about what customers value the most.

If your company is forced to eliminate resources right now, directing all your energy towards your key features may be inevitable. But it may also be a great long-term product strategy.

How to measure in Heap

- Define events for key features
- Analyze your events
  - Graph Report: Count events of interest
    - Use the Add Graph option to include multiple events
  - Add any filters to include relevant user cohorts
  - Analyze how usage among different features varies
In question #4 above, we talked about measuring the effectiveness of your new offers. But there’s another way to use these offers to your advantage: treating them as a new channel for product feedback.

Obviously your main goal with a freemium offer is to bring more people into your product. But once they’re in there, you can use their interactions with your product to gain valuable insight. Where do they drop off? Where do they get stuck? What features do they gravitate towards?

For multiple Heap customers, freemium offers have surfaced problem areas that were easily avoided when fewer people were using their app. For some, edge cases that would normally be solved by getting on the phone with a customer were wreaking havoc when hundreds of users started experiencing the same problem. For others, inventory planning became more difficult. For others, test features have turned out to be wildly popular, leading teams to reevaluate the goal of their product.

For the business, freemium offers can be a powerful strategy. For product teams, they can be an extraordinarily useful source of information.
As companies contract their spend, it’s important to continue to market your product. Yet resource constraints can make this difficult.

Here’s an idea: do more with less. Instead of paid advertising, use product data to target the people most likely to use your product. When combined with a freemium or other special offer, this strategy can yield major dividends.

Spend time analyzing usage in your product, and figure out who is using your different features. With analytics, you don’t have to guess - a tool like Heap can tell you which users gravitate towards your product, and what they do while there. You can then use this information to target different user segments, offer pointed messaging, and create incentives tailored for specific use cases.

As described in questions #4 and #6, you can then use product analytics to measure the effectiveness of these focused messages.
Stay the Course

Should you not change course?

For SaaS companies in particular, the impact from COVID-19 may be more indirect. Remote work itself may not be the headwind for SaaS businesses that it is for eCommmerce companies. Companies are still running, and they still need software.

For SaaS companies, the effects are likely to come from general business contraction. Companies everywhere are spending less and keeping their powder dry. But for many companies, the big story may be slight contraction, but continued use. If you’ve already achieved some degree of Product-Market Fit, your issue may be less a product problem than a pricing problem.

While lots of companies are rethinking their product strategy, it’s worth asking if the right strategy for you may in fact be to do nothing with your product. Continue with your roadmap, continue investing in (or at least maintaining) the features that got you to where you are, and continue providing value the way you always have.

In this scenario, strategic decisions may be around pricing. Maybe you reduce prices for a while, or discount deals even more. Maybe you allow customers to delay payments. If you’re a SaaS company, maybe you change nothing about your product, and focus energy on the other parts of your business.
Whether it’s COVID-19, another disruptive period in the business world, or simply your normal course of events as a product team, your ability to navigate periods of rapid change will often be what determines your company’s ability to achieve or sustain product-market fit.

At Heap, we believe that product teams can act most powerfully and be most rigorous when they adopt a scientific approach to product development. This means following the protocols of the scientific method: asking questions, making hypotheses, running experiments, and testing the results. As good scientists we want to continue to ask questions. Why does this work the way it does? What happens if we try X? I wonder if these two things are correlated?

The more you allow yourself to ask probing questions about your product, the better able you’ll be to evolve with changes in the market.

We hope you find the information here useful, and we look forward to connecting with you in a post-COVID world.