



WEEK 9 CLASS ACTIVITY — “ALPHA LAB”

AI Applications in Business · LO2, LO5 · pair with another team · 60 minutes

You can't alpha-test your own product objectively — you know where to click. So today you **swap**: another team becomes your first real user, and you become theirs. Watch each other struggle, triage what breaks, and advise each other like industry pros.

THE ONE RULE (KEEP IT IN MIND THE WHOLE TIME)

Give them a real task. Ask them to talk out loud. Then DON'T help. Every time you bite your tongue while they struggle, you learn exactly where your product is broken. No explaining, no defending, no “oh, you just click there.” Write down precisely where they got stuck.

PART 1 — THINK-ALoud TEST (20 MIN)

Pair with another team. **Team B uses Team A's MVP; Team A observes silently. Then swap.** For each session:

1. **Set a real task** — “apply for a loan,” “find and save a product,” “get an answer to X.” Not a tour — a task.
2. **They narrate** — the user says out loud: *what am I looking at? what do I expect to happen? what's confusing?*
3. **You stay silent** — observers do not help, explain, or rescue. Just watch.
4. **Log the stuck points** — exactly where they hesitated, mis-clicked, misunderstood, or gave up.

Aim for ~8 minutes per direction. The observing team writes everything down — that's the raw data.

PART 2 — TRIAGE (20 MIN)

Now take the findings about **your** product and sort every issue on two axes — *how bad?* (blocks the core task vs cosmetic) × *how often?* (everyone vs one person):

Bucket	Means	Action
FIX NOW	high-severity + high-frequency — blocks your core promise	fix it before the pitch
FIX LATER	real, but survivable for now	log it, move on
WON'T FIX	rare + cosmetic, or out of scope	consciously say no

Write your **top 3 “fix-now” items** where the whole team can see them — that's your build list for the rest of this week.



PART 3 — INDUSTRY ADVISOR SWAP (20 MIN)

Put on an “industry advisor” hat for the team you tested. Give them **three honest things**:

1. **The one thing** — “If I were your user, the single biggest reason I’d stop using this is...”
2. **The demo-to-real gap** — “This works in the demo, but in the real world it would break when...”
3. **The trust question** — “Before I’d trust this, I’d need to know... (accuracy? privacy? who’s accountable when it’s wrong?)”

Be kind, be specific, be honest — exactly the feedback you’d want before pitching to real judges next week.

DEBRIEF (WITH THE WHOLE CLASS)

- Each team names the **one thing a real user did that you didn’t expect**. (If nothing surprised you, you watched too gently.)
- The habit to keep: **your product is what real users experience, not what you intended**. Watch, stay quiet, triage, fix the few that matter.

WHAT YOU WALK OUT WITH

- Honest findings from people who aren’t your friends.
- A ranked **fix-now** list for the rest of the week.
- A pitch-ready story: “*we tested it with real users, found X, and fixed it.*”

AFTER CLASS (THIS IS THE REAL WORK)

Run your **own** alpha with **3–5 real target users** (not just the in-class swap) — think-aloud, observed. Then do the post-class **alpha note** and act on your fix-now list. **The pitch is next week.**
