The Mainstreet **50**

50 Essential Questions Every Company Serving SMBs Should Be Asking

A strategic framework for understanding SMB customers across **Product, Price, Place, Promotion, and People.**

PRODUCT	PRICE	PLACE	PROMOTION	PEOPLE

Know the businesses behind the numbers.

Preference Analytics | Mainstreet - Intelligence for America's Backbone

WHY THE MAINSTREET 50

SMBs are different. The questions should be, too.

Small and midsized businesses are not simply smaller versions of large enterprises. Owners wear multiple hats, time and resources are constrained, purchasing decisions can be deeply personal, and trust in the provider often matters almost as much as the product itself.

The Mainstreet 50 distills the most important questions into a practical executive framework. It is designed to help product, marketing, sales, customer experience, research, and strategy teams identify what they need to understand before making decisions about SMB customers.

01

Start with the customer

Focus first on how SMBs operate, what they value, where they feel friction, and what earns trust.

02

Use the 5P lens

Examine the full relationship through Product, Price, Place, Promotion, and People - not one dimension in isolation.

03

Go deeper as needed

The 50 are strategic starting points. Mainstreet can explore hundreds of more detailed follow-ups and entirely new questions.

The 5P SMB Framework

PRODUCT	What should we build - and what will SMBs actually value and use?
PRICE	What will SMBs pay - and how do they decide whether something is worth it?
PLACE	Where and how do SMBs want to discover, evaluate, buy, and get support?
PROMOTION	What earns attention, credibility, and action?
PEOPLE	Who decides, influences, uses, resists - and ultimately determines whether trust is built?

PRODUCT

What SMBs need, value, use, and reject.

01
What business problems are SMBs most urgently trying to solve - and which are merely nice to solve?

02
How are SMBs solving those problems today, including the workarounds and fragmented workflows they rely on?

03
What outcomes matter most: saving time, making money, reducing risk, improving quality, or simplifying work?

04
Which capabilities are essential, which are attractive but nonessential, and what would actually motivate a switch?

05
How do needs differ by business size, industry, business maturity, and technical sophistication?

06
What level of automation and AI do SMBs trust - and which tasks would they never want to fully automate?

07
What privacy, security, data-sharing, or control concerns could block adoption?

08
What integrations, onboarding, and training are required for the product to fit naturally into existing workflows?

09
What proof, trial experience, or early success would convince SMBs the product works and is worth adopting?

10
What would drive sustained usage, habit, recommendation - or abandonment?

These are strategic entry points. Mainstreet can explore each one in much greater detail - or address entirely new questions specific to a market, segment, industry, product, or decision.

PRICE

How SMBs judge value, risk, fairness, and willingness to pay.

01
How do SMBs think about spending in this category: cost, investment, necessity, or luxury?

02
What price range feels acceptable, expensive but justifiable, too cheap to trust, or simply too high?

03
Which pricing model feels most natural: monthly, annual, usage-based, project-based, one-time, or something else?

04
What role should free trials, free tiers, or introductory offers play in reducing perceived risk?

05
What ROI matters most - revenue gained, time saved, errors reduced, customers retained, or risk avoided - and how quickly must value appear?

06
How does price sensitivity differ by business size, industry, maturity, or financial condition?

07
What would SMBs pay more for: customization, human support, industry expertise, or benchmarking?

08
When do discounts, bundles, or packaging increase value - and when do they create confusion?

09
What pricing, billing, payment, and cancellation practices make the offer feel transparent and fair?

10
How do SMBs compare the price not only with competitors, but with switching costs and the cost of doing nothing?

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PLACE

Where SMBs discover, evaluate, buy, access, and receive support.

01 Where do SMBs first learn about solutions in this category, and which sources do they trust most?	**06** What buying journey do SMBs follow from awareness to evaluation, trial, purchase, onboarding, and renewal?
02 What role do peers, accountants, consultants, IT providers, banks, associations, and community organizations play in discovery and validation?	**07** What information do they need before agreeing to a demo, beginning a trial, or paying?
03 Do SMBs prefer to buy directly, through platforms they already use, or through marketplaces, resellers, agencies, and other intermediaries?	**08** Where and how do they expect support to be available - chat, phone, email, knowledge base, community, or live advisor?
04 Which digital and offline channels are most effective for reaching different types of SMBs?	**09** At what point do SMBs want self-service - and when do they expect to interact with a real person?
05 How do SMBs prefer to engage: email, webinars, workshops, podcasts, social media, direct outreach, or other channels?	**10** What friction across channels, purchase, onboarding, or support is most likely to cause abandonment or switching?

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PROMOTION

How messages, proof, relevance, and experience earn attention and action.

01
What message immediately gets SMB attention - and what language sounds too corporate, generic, or irrelevant?

02
What words do SMBs themselves use to describe the problem, and what emotional pain is attached to it?

03
Which benefit claims feel believable - and which sound exaggerated or too good to be true?

04
What proof is most persuasive: testimonials, case studies, demos, guarantees, reviews, benchmarks, or expert endorsements?

05
What positioning makes the solution feel genuinely designed for SMBs rather than adapted from an enterprise offering?

06
How should messaging change by business size, industry, maturity, or stage of the customer journey?

07
How should culture, language, tone, imagery, and representation be reflected so communications feel relevant and authentic?

08
What content formats and customer stories are most useful for building understanding and credibility?

09
What offer, call to action, lead experience, and follow-up process best moves an SMB from interest to action?

10
How can communications continue to reinforce value and trust after the purchase - not just before it?

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PEOPLE

Who decides, uses, influences, supports, resists, and ultimately builds or blocks trust.

01 Who is the true decision-maker - and who influences the decision even without making the final call?	**06** What human support do SMBs expect from the provider: self-service, live help, onboarding, coaching, or done-for-you assistance?
02 Who will actually use the solution, who benefits, and who may feel disrupted or threatened by adoption?	**07** Which outside advisors, peer owners, local networks, industry groups, or endorsements shape trust and purchase decisions?
03 Who inside the business is most open to new technology - and who is most resistant to change?	**08** How do culture, language, generation, identity, community, and lived experience influence trust in providers?
04 Who will own implementation, and what skills, training, time, and support can the business realistically absorb?	**09** What makes a provider feel like a good partner - human, accessible, credible, and trustworthy - rather than just another vendor?
05 How will automation, AI, or a new tool affect employee workload, roles, authority, routines, and confidence?	**10** How will adoption affect employees, customers, owner stress, delegation, service quality, and long-term retention?

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PUT THE FRAMEWORK TO WORK

Use the Mainstreet 50 to sharpen the decisions that matter.

The questions are most useful when they are applied to a real business decision. Teams can use the framework to identify what they already know, where assumptions are being made, and where deeper intelligence or new research is required.

PRODUCT PLANNING

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Pressure-test customer problems, features, adoption barriers, workflows, and product-market fit.

GO-TO-MARKET

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Align pricing, channels, positioning, offers, proof points, and conversion strategy.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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Identify moments of friction, support expectations, trust drivers, and retention opportunities.

SALES ENABLEMENT

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Help teams understand how SMBs decide, what they fear, what they value, and who influences the sale.

SEGMENTATION & TARGETING

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Move beyond "the SMB market" to understand meaningful differences across business types and decision-makers.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

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Surface blind spots, assumptions, growth opportunities, and the questions that require deeper evidence.

THE 50 ARE THE STARTING POINT - NOT THE ENDPOINT.

Mainstreet can go much deeper.

Each question can lead to more detailed exploration by market, segment, industry, business size, customer type, product, channel, or decision. Users can also ask entirely new questions that are not part of the Mainstreet 50.

MAINSTREET

From questions to practical SMB intelligence.

Mainstreet combines accumulated SMB knowledge with AI-enabled access, interactive perspectives, and new research when the answer does not already exist.

AI SMB INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM

Ask questions. Get practical SMB guidance.

Conversational AI grounded in years of proprietary SMB research, interviews, frameworks, and experience. Ask about how SMBs operate, what they need from the companies they buy from, what builds or erodes trust, how different SMB segments behave, and much more.

DIGITAL TWIN SMB PERSONAS

Bring SMB perspectives into the conversation.

Interactive digital twin personas grounded in real interviews and research with SMB owners. Explore how different types of businesses think, what they value, how they make decisions, what concerns them, and how they may respond to products, services, messages, and new ideas.

CUSTOM SMB RESEARCH

Research what is unique to you.

Custom qualitative, quantitative, and choice-based research with SMB owners and decision-makers to answer questions unique to your business - about needs, products, pricing, messaging, segmentation, market opportunities, and more.

ASK THE INTELLIGENCE. EXPLORE THE PERSPECTIVES. RESEARCH WHAT WE DO NOT YET KNOW.

PREFERENCE ANALYTICS

Understand people. Make better decisions.

Preference Analytics is a human-centered intelligence company that combines research, human wisdom, proprietary knowledge, and AI to help people understand what matters, decide what to do, and communicate it effectively.

MAINSTREET

Know the businesses behind the numbers.

Mainstreet turns years of proprietary SMB research and experience into practical intelligence for organizations serving small and midsized businesses.

Intelligence for America's Backbone.

Have an SMB question?

Bring us the question you are trying to answer. Start with the Mainstreet 50, ask the intelligence platform, explore SMB perspectives, or conduct new research when deeper evidence is needed.

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