



GTM & MARKET FOCUS

Why Deep-Tech Founders Struggle to Define Their ICP

The more technically capable the platform, the harder it can be to choose where to start commercially.



Nathan Hulcoop

Founder, Narrow Commercial Advisory
Published 24 September 2026

**KNOW FIRST. THEN
ACT.**

This Narrow Insight is designed to help technical founders separate commercial signal from noise and identify what is worth repeating.

Technical possibility creates commercial temptation

A deep-tech platform can often solve problems across several industries, use cases and buyer groups. Technically, that flexibility is a strength. Commercially, it can make focus difficult because every promising conversation looks like a possible market.

Founders are understandably reluctant to narrow the opportunity too early. After years spent proving what the technology can do, choosing one commercial starting point can feel like reducing the vision.

But an ICP is not a statement about everything the technology may eventually become. It is a decision about where the business should concentrate scarce commercial attention now.

An ICP is a commercial hypothesis

A useful ICP combines more than sector and company size. It considers the problem, urgency, buying ability, access, decision structure and the conditions that make adoption plausible.

Two companies in the same industry can be completely different commercial prospects. One may have a live operational problem, budget and executive sponsorship. The other may simply find the technology interesting.

That is why a good ICP should be grounded in behaviour, not only demographics.

A narrow starting point gives a broad technology the best chance of becoming a business.

Use evidence, not imagination

Look at the opportunities already in front of you. Who progresses fastest? Who understands the value without excessive education? Which buyers create internal momentum? Where do pilots convert into something larger? Where does budget exist? Which problems are already funded priorities?

Then compare the strongest opportunities with the weakest. The differences often reveal more than a workshop built around hypothetical personas.

Narrowing does not mean closing doors

Choosing a commercial starting point is not the same as abandoning every adjacent market. It means deciding where to place deliberate effort while the company builds evidence.

A focused ICP improves messaging, qualification and pipeline discipline. It also makes experiments easier to interpret because the business is not changing audience, use case and proposition at the same time.

As evidence grows, the ICP can evolve. Expansion should be a decision based on learning, not a reaction to every interesting inbound conversation.

The goal is a repeatable starting point

The strongest ICP is not necessarily the largest theoretical market. It is the place where pain, urgency, access, value and buying ability come together strongly enough for the company to learn and win repeatedly.

A narrow starting point gives a broad technology the best chance of becoming a business.

WHERE NARROW FITS

If the technology is progressing faster than the commercial model, Focus is designed to establish what is actually happening, where the friction sits and what should be prioritised next.

Start a conversation: nathan@narrowgtm.co.uk | narrowgtm.co.uk

© 2026 Nathan Hulcoop trading as Narrow Commercial Advisory. All rights reserved.