

PRODUCTQUANT.DEV | JAKE MCMAHON

PLG Scorecard

Diagnose the broken pillar before your free tier scales
the wrong motion.

Executive Summary

A sample diagnosis from the PLG Scorecard kit

A B2B SaaS team at **\$3M ARR** decided to "go PLG." They launched a free tier, added pricing to the site, and pushed a self-serve checkout. Six months later, they had **14,000 free signups**, a **2.1% activation rate**, and only **0.3% free-to-paid conversion**. Self-serve revenue sat at **\$4,200/month** while support cost **\$11,000/month**.

The problem was not that PLG failed. The problem was that they optimized one pillar, partially addressed another, and ignored the rest. Time-to-value was too slow, virality was absent, PQLs did not exist, and the team had no shared diagnostic model for deciding what to fix first.

The PLG Scorecard exists to make the broken pillar visible before you spend six months building a free-tier motion on a cracked foundation.

45 min

Time-to-value was far too slow

Users did not reach the aha moment quickly enough for a product-led motion to work.

Zero

Natural virality was missing

No shared outputs, no collaboration requirement, no embedded distribution path.

None

There was no PQL system

Sales had no reliable way to tell which free users were ready to buy.

1 system

PLG is the system, not the feature

One broken pillar can make the free tier behave like a cost center instead of a growth engine.

CORE FRAMEWORK

The 8-Pillar PLG Diagnostic

The system is useful because it diagnoses the failure mode, not because it names the trend.

01

Time-to-Value

How quickly a new user reaches the first meaningful outcome. If this is slow, activation falls apart before growth can compound.

02

Self-Serve Capability

Whether users can discover, try, buy, and get help without a human in the loop. Weak self-serve turns PLG into a support burden.

03

Natural Virality

Whether product usage exposes non-users to the product. No virality means all growth must be purchased or manually sourced.

04

Usage-Value Alignment

Whether pricing scales with the value delivered. Misalignment creates friction, confusion, and upgrade hesitation.

05

Product-Qualified Leads

Whether the product can identify buyers inside the free user base. Without PQLs, product signals never become revenue.

06

Expansion Revenue

Whether customers naturally spend more over time. Weak expansion makes PLG plateau even when acquisition works.

07

Community & Content Moat

Whether the ecosystem around the product creates defensibility and repeat attention, or whether the product is easy to ignore.

08

Data-Driven Iteration

Whether the team runs experiments, learns from the product, and compounds improvements instead of guessing.

The goal of the scorecard is not to prove that PLG is good. The goal is to show which parts of the system are underdeveloped, so the team can fix the right bottleneck first.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Illustrative Diagnosis View

A sample score pattern from the case described in the teaser, shown to make the failure mode visible.

1 / 5**Time-to-Value**

Users did not reach the aha moment quickly enough. The first experience was too slow for PLG to compound.

2 / 5**Self-Serve Capability**

The product supported self-serve in principle, but help, guidance, and flow design were still friction-heavy.

1 / 5**Natural Virality**

No shared outputs, no collaboration hook, and no built-in mechanism to expose the product to non-users.

1 / 5**Product-Qualified Leads**

Free users were not being surfaced to sales in a disciplined way, so product signals never became pipeline.

14,000 free signups, **2.1%** activation, **0.3%** free-to-paid conversion, and **\$11,000/month** in support cost.

Observed signals

14,000 free signups, **2.1%** activation, **0.3%** free-to-paid conversion, and **\$11,000/month** in support cost.

What the score pattern says

The company did not have a single PLG problem. It had a broken first experience, weak discovery mechanics, and no reliable bridge from product usage to revenue.

This is what the kit is for: turning a vague "PLG isn't working" complaint into a concrete list of broken pillars and a prioritized fix order.

FULL KIT

What You Get in the Full System

The teaser is the diagnosis. The full kit is the operating system that fixes it.

DOCUMENT	ROLE
00_METHODODOLOGY_GUIDE.md	The engine. Full 8-pillar framework, scoring logic, myths, examples, and implementation roadmap.
01_PLG_SCORECARD_TEMPLATE.md	The blank scorecard. Score all 8 pillars, calculate maturity, and map the weak spots.
02_TIME_TO_VALUE_OPTIMIZER.md	Deep dive on the first experience. Aha moment, friction audit, and experiment patterns.
03_SELF_SERVE_READINESS.md	Audit signup, billing, docs, and support paths so self-serve stops leaking margin.
04_VIRALITY_ENGINE_DESIGNER.md	Design the loops that let the product expose itself without buying every impression.
05_PQL_FRAMEWORK.md	Define and calibrate the product-qualified lead system so sales knows who to contact.
06_PLG_METRICS_DASHBOARD.md	Measure the full PLG stack, set alerting rules, and make iteration visible to the team.
07_QUICK_START_CHECKLIST.md	The 5-day path, with a faster 2-hour entry point for teams that need immediate direction.

Best use case

If your free tier is growing but revenue is not, start with the scorecard and the TTV / PQL deep dives.

Best fit

This is strongest for SaaS founders, product leaders, and growth teams that need a disciplined PLG diagnosis.

ProductQuant Close

The teaser is the sample. The full kit is the system.

If your PLG motion feels busy but not compounding, the problem is usually not "PLG in general." It is one or two broken pillars hiding inside the system.

This preview shows the diagnosis. The full PLG Scorecard & Optimization Kit gives you the scorecard, the worksheets, the dashboard, and the implementation path to fix it.

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