

Startup Idea Validation Checklist

Test Your Idea Before You Build

Why Validation Matters

Most startups fail not because they build badly, but because they build something nobody wants. This checklist helps you validate demand before investing significant time and money.

Use this before building your MVP.

Phase 1: Problem Validation

✓ I can clearly define the problem

The problem is:

People experience this when:

It costs them (time/money/frustration):

✓ I know exactly who has this problem

My target customer is:

- **Demographics:** (age, location, job title, industry)

- **Psychographics:** (goals, challenges, behaviours)

- **Where they hang out:** (online communities, events, platforms)

✓ I've spoken to real potential customers

Customer interview checklist:

- I've conducted at least 15-20 problem interviews
- I asked about their current solutions (not pitched mine)
- I heard specific, painful examples of the problem
- They're actively looking for better solutions
- They'd be willing to pay for a solution

Red flags I did NOT encounter:

- "That's interesting, but not urgent"
- Vague answers without specifics
- "I might use it someday"
- Polite interest but no real pain

✓ The problem is urgent and costly

Evidence the problem is worth solving:

- People described it as a "top 3 frustration"
- They've tried multiple solutions that failed
- It costs them measurable time/money
- They're currently using painful workarounds
- They'd pay to solve it

Phase 2: Solution Validation

✓ I have a clear solution hypothesis

My solution in one sentence:

It solves the problem by:

It's better than current options because:

✓ I understand the competitive landscape

Current solutions customers use:

| Solution | Pros (why they use it) | Cons (why they're unhappy) |

|-----|-----|-----|

| 1. |||

| 2. |||

| 3. |||

My differentiation:

✓ *I've tested my solution concept (without building it)*

Ways to test before building:

- Created a landing page describing the solution (did people sign up?)
- Showed mockups/wireframes to potential customers (did they get excited?)
- Offered a manual/concierge version (did they use it?)
- Ran a small ad campaign (did people click?)

Results:

- Sign-ups/interest: _____
- Feedback: _____
- Willingness to pay: _____

Phase 3: Market Validation

✓ *The market is big enough*

Market size estimation:

- Total potential customers: _____
- Realistic customers I could reach in Year 1: _____
- Average revenue per customer: £_____
- Potential Year 1 revenue: £_____

Is this market worth pursuing?

- Yes, it's large enough to build a business
- No, it's too niche
- Unsure, need more research

✓ *I can reach my target customers*

My distribution channels:

- Direct outreach (LinkedIn, email)
- Content marketing (SEO, blog)
- Paid advertising (Google, Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Partnerships/referrals
- Communities (Reddit, Slack, forums)
- Events/conferences

I've tested:

- At least 2 channels
- I know the cost to acquire a customer
- I have a repeatable process

✓ *The timing is right*

Market timing check:

- The problem is growing (not shrinking)
- Technology/infrastructure exists to build this
- Customers are ready to adopt (not too early)
- Competitors haven't saturated the market (not too late)

Phase 4: Business Model Validation

✓ *I know how I'll make money*

Revenue model:

- One-time purchase
- Subscription (monthly/annual)
- Freemium
- Commission/marketplace
- Advertising
- Other: _____

Pricing:

- Planned price: £_____
- Customer willingness to pay (from research): £_____
- Competitor pricing: £_____

✓ *The unit economics work*

Basic calculations:

- Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC): £_____
- Lifetime Value (LTV): £_____
- LTV:CAC ratio: _____

Rule of thumb: LTV should be 3x CAC or higher

✓ *I've estimated startup costs*

Costs to build MVP:

- Development/building: £_____
- Tools/software: £_____
- Marketing/testing: £_____
- ****Total:**** £_____

I can afford this:

- Yes, I have the funds
- I need to raise/save: £_____
- I need to find a co-founder to build it

Phase 5: Founder-Market Fit

✓ *I have relevant expertise or passion*

- I have industry experience in this space
- I've personally experienced this problem
- I'm deeply curious about this problem
- I have a unique insight others don't

✓ *I'm committed for the long haul*

- I'm willing to work on this for 2-3 years minimum
- I'm prepared for setbacks and failures
- My life circumstances allow for this commitment
- I've discussed with family/partner (if applicable)

Final Validation Score

Count how many sections you've fully completed:

- Phase 1: Problem Validation (4 checkpoints)
- Phase 2: Solution Validation (3 checkpoints)
- Phase 3: Market Validation (3 checkpoints)
- Phase 4: Business Model Validation (3 checkpoints)
- Phase 5: Founder-Market Fit (2 checkpoints)

Total: _____ / 15

Decision Framework

13-15: Strong Validation ■

→ **Proceed with building MVP**

- You've done thorough validation
- Risk is significantly reduced
- Time to build and test with real customers

10-12: Moderate Validation ■■

→ **Address gaps before building**

- Identify which phases are weak
- Conduct more research/testing
- Strengthen weak areas, then reassess

7-9: Weak Validation ■■

→ **More validation needed**

- Significant unknowns remain
- Spend more time on customer discovery
- Don't build yet

Below 7: Not Validated ■

→ **Pivot or pause**

- Core assumptions aren't validated
- Consider pivoting the idea
- Or pursue validation more rigorously before proceeding

Next Steps Based on Score

If you're validated (13-15):

- Build your MVP (simplest version)
- Get it in front of 10-25 beta users
- Measure: Are they using it? Coming back?

If you need more validation (7-12):

- Focus on your weakest phase
- Conduct more interviews or tests
- Revisit this checklist in 2-4 weeks

If you're not validated (below 7):

- Decide: pivot the idea or stop?
- If pivoting: what did you learn?
- If stopping: extract lessons for next idea

Common Mistakes to Avoid

■ Skipping customer interviews

→ Assumptions aren't validation

■ Asking "Would you use this?"

→ Ask about past behaviour, not hypothetical future

■ Building before validating

→ Validation comes first, building second

■ Confusing interest with commitment

→ "Sounds cool" ≠ "I'll pay for this"

■ Ignoring negative feedback

→ Criticism is more valuable than praise

Resources for Validation

Books:

- *The Mom Test* by Rob Fitzpatrick
- *The Lean Startup* by Eric Ries

- **Running Lean** by Ash Maurya

Tools:

- Landing page builders: Carrd, Webflow
- Survey tools: Typeform, Google Forms
- Interview scheduling: Calendly
- Ad testing: Google Ads, Facebook Ads

Need guidance validating your idea? Book a Startup Coaching session:
www.yourwebsite.com/services