Beyond the Garage



Building Teams That Actually Work

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PART 5: Founder Fit Toolkit

- Founding Team Assessment
- Co-Founder Fit Quiz
- Co-Founder Agreement
- Foundational Alignment Checklist
- Equity Split Guide
- Investor Readiness Assessment Tool
- Conflict Resolution Worksheet
- Hiring Scorecard for First Employees

Want a printable version of the Startup Team Toolkit?

All eight tools from this section are available as a formatted, fillable PDF—ideal for printing, sharing with your co-founders, or using in workshops.

To download the full toolkit, visit <u>yourwebsite.com/toolkit</u> and enter the access code **WST2025**.

Using This Book with Your Team

This book wasn't meant to sit on a shelf.

It was designed to spark real conversations—the kind that build trust, uncover blind spots, and turn good teams into great ones. The tools in this section aren't just worksheets. They're prompts for reflection, structure for decision-making, and a safety net for hard conversations.

YOU CAN USE THESE TOOLS IN SEVERAL WAYS:

Solo reflection as a founder or leader, to clarify your own thinking.Co-founder workshops to align on roles, equity, and vision.Team offsites to evaluate dynamics, hiring plans, or investor readiness.Accelerator or MBA settings as part of founder development.

EACH TOOL INCLUDES:

Context and guidance for when and why to use it.

Examples to bring abstract questions to life.

Space to write—so you can turn insight into action.

If you're leading a startup, don't just read these tools—print them, share them, and talk through them together. Strong teams aren't built from alignment alone. They're built from the courage to surface what's not aligned—and the commitment to fix it together.

Let's build that kind of team.

Toolkit at a Glance

Beyond the Garage - Startup Team Tools

Tool#	Tool Name	What It Helps You Do
1	Founding Team Assessment	Identify alignment gaps in vision, values, and style
2	Co-Founder Fit Quiz	Self-assess compatibility before making it official
3	Co-Founder Agreement Checklist	Ensure you've covered all critical partnership topics
4	Foundational Alignment Checklist	Reconfirm expectations around roles, equity, and exits
5	Equity Split Guide	Clarify contributions, risk, and future commitment
6	Investor Readiness Assessment	Gauge team clarity before walking into a pitch
7	Conflict Resolution Worksheet	Resolve tough conversations constructively
8	Hiring Scorecard for First Employees	Evaluate early hires for both skill and culture fit

Each tool is:

- Printable and shareable
- Designed to prompt honest dialogue
- Meant to be reused as your team evolves



Tool 1: Founding Team Assessment

THIS self-assessment helps founders evaluate individual personality traits and overall team dynamics using the Big Five model and the Entrepreneurial Success Matrix (ESM). Use it to uncover strengths, blind spots, and alignment issues that may impact your startup's success.

. Why This Tool Matters

Founding teams are a startup's most powerful asset—or its greatest risk. Many teams collapse not because of market failure but because they never took the time to assess their internal dynamics. This assessment helps you pause the chaos, step back, and ask: *Are we built for the journey ahead—or headed for friction?*

Founders who score themselves—and each other—with honesty often uncover blind spots before they become breakdowns. The real goal isn't a perfect score. It's a clearer view of how your team operates under pressure, where trust is strong, and where communication may fray.

Run this early. Run it often. Most importantly, talk about what you find.

Why This Assessment Matters

A startup's success depends not only on the individual strengths of its founders but also on how well the founding team functions as a unit. This assessment is designed to help you:

Understand your own personality traits—your strengths and blind spots

Evaluate compatibility and alignment between co-founders Identify team dynamics that may need attention or development Use the Entrepreneurial Trait & Capabilities (ETC) Framework and the Entrepreneurial Success Matrix (ESM) to inform key leadership decisions

How to Use This Assessment

Each founder should complete the questionnaire individually and honestly.

After completing the assessment, compare results as a team to identify alignment and gaps.

Use the scoring guide and interpretation tables to assess how these traits and team attributes influence your startup's potential for success.

If critical gaps exist, refer to Chapter 9 for leadership hiring and team-building strategies.

SECTION 1: PERSONALITY TRAITS ASSESSMENT

Based on the Big Five Personality Model

This questionnaire assesses five core personality traits linked to entrepreneurial effectiveness. Rate each statement from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Individual Questionnaire

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I enjoy experimenting with new ideas, even if they might fail.					
2	I actively seek out diverse perspectives to challenge my assumptions.					
3	I am comfortable making major pivots if the business requires it.					
4	I follow through on commitments, even under high stress.					
5	I am highly organized and detail-oriented in my work.					
6	I prefer structure and long-term planning over last-minute decision-making.					
7	I am comfortable pitching ideas and networking with investors.					
8	I actively seek out new relationships that can benefit the startup.					
9	I enjoy working in teams and energizing others to action.					
10	I prefer to seek consensus before making important decisions.					

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
11	I listen to others' perspectives, even when I strongly disagree.					
12	I avoid unnecessary conflicts and focus on maintaining strong relationships.					
13	I remain calm and composed in high-pressure situations.					
14	I bounce back quickly from setbacks or failures.					
15	I can manage my emotions without them negatively affecting team dynamics.					

Trait Scoring Table

Trait	Related Questions	Total Score (out of 15)
Openness to Experience	1, 2, 3	
Conscientiousness	4, 5, 6	
Extraversion	7, 8, 9	
Agreeableness	10, 11, 12	
Emotional Stability	13, 14, 15	

Scoring Guide:

- 12–15 = Strong presence of this trait
- 8–11 = Balanced, can be leveraged effectively
- 4–7 = Potential weakness, may require development
- **3 or below** = Risk area, consider role alignment or team augmentation

Trait Interpretation:

Trait	Strengths	Watch Outs
High Openness	Creative, adaptable, innovative	May lack focus or consistency
High Conscientiousness	Reliable, organized, execution-driven	May resist change or spontaneity
High Extraversion	Energetic leader, persuasive	May dominate discussions
High Agreeableness	Collaborative, team- oriented	May avoid necessary conflict
High Emotional Stability	Resilient, calm under pressure	May miss emotional signals in others

SECTION 2: TEAM ATTRIBUTES ASSESSMENT

Assessing Team-Level Strengths and Gaps

Rate your **team as a whole** on each statement from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Team Questionnaire

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Our team quickly adjusts to unexpected challenges and changes.					
2	We embrace new strategies and pivot when necessary.					
3	We persist through setbacks and challenges without losing focus.					
4	Our team remains committed to long-term success, even when progress is slow.					
5	Team members effectively manage their emotions under pressure.					
6	We communicate with empathy and understand each other's perspectives.					
7	Our team actively seeks constructive feedback and applies it for improvement.					
8	We openly share honest feedback without fear of negative consequences.					
9	We take a structured and creative approach to overcoming obstacles.					
10	Our team collaborates to find solutions rather than focusing on blame.					
11	Leadership responsibilities are distributed based on expertise and strengths.					
12	Team members step up to lead when needed, regardless of hierarchy.					

#	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
13	We prioritize the success of the team over individual achievements.					
14	Our team remains committed to supporting each other through challenges.					
15	We work together effectively and value each other's contributions.					
16	Cross-functional collaboration is encouraged and actively practiced.					
17	Our team operates with transparency, honesty, and mutual respect.					
18	We trust each other to follow through on commitments.					
19	Our team has a shared understanding of our mission and long-term goals.					
20	Decisions are made with alignment to our startup's vision and core values.					

Team Attribute Scoring Table

Attribute	Related Questions	Score (out of 10)
Adaptability	1, 2	
Determination	3, 4	
Emotional Intelligence	5, 6	
Feedback Receptiveness	7, 8	
Problem-Solving	9, 10	
Shared Leadership	11, 12	

TOOL 1: FOUNDING TEAM ASSESSMENT

Attribute	Related Questions	Score (out of 10)
Team Loyalty	13, 14	
Teamwork & Collaboration	15, 16	
Trust Building	17, 18	
Vision Alignment	19, 20	

Scoring Guide:

- 9–10 = Strength—leverage it
- 7–8 = Adequate—can improve
- 5–6 = Weakness—requires attention
- 4 or below = Major gap—address immediately

Interpretation Insights

Attribute Combination	Implication	Explanation
High Vision Alignment + Shared Leadership	Strong co-founder dynamic	Clear goals and shared responsibility support startup agility and cohesion
High EI + Feedback Receptiveness	Healthy team culture	These traits build trust and psychological safety
Low Problem-Solving + Weak Execution	Leadership bottlenecks	Operational gaps can stall early- stage growth
High Adaptability + Strong Team Loyalty	Resilient scale-up team	Combines flexibility with commitment
Low Trust + Poor Collaboration	Risk of internal dysfunction	May lead to misalignment and conflict

Founder Reflection:

- 1. What patterns are emerging from your scores?
- 2. Are there areas where your self-rating and your co-founder's rating differ significantly?
- 3. What conversations have you not had yet that this tool reveals?
- 4. If you could only work on one area over the next 30 days, which would move the needle most?

Use these insights to guide an honest discussion. The goal isn't to fix everything at once. The goal is to build awareness—and alignment.

SECTION 3: TEAM STRENGTHS, GAPS & NEXT STEPS

IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS

- Look for high scores (9–10) across multiple founders or attributes.
- Use these as strategic advantages in decision-making and team design.

SPOT THE GAPS

- Any team attribute with a score of 6 or lower signals a potential risk area.
- If the same trait is low across co-founders, consider hiring to fill the gap.

Team Profile Matrix

Profile Type	Key Strengths	Common Risks	Recommended Next Steps
Balanced Team	Well-rounded mix of traits	None major	Continue optimizing leadership across functions
Visionary- Heavy Team	Creativity, big- picture thinking	Weak execution, disorganization	Hire operational or project management talent
Execution- Focused Team	Discipline, reliability	Resistance to change, rigidity	Introduce adaptable thinkers or coaches
Conflict- Prone Team	High ambition, low emotional awareness	Misunderstandings, tension	Focus on EI, feedback culture, and facilitation

Once completed, compare your scores as a team. Use the "Team Profile Matrix" to spot critical gaps—and refer to Chapter IX for leadership hiring strategies that fill those gaps.

Final Reflection & Next Steps

Use this tool as a launchpad—not just for self-reflection but for practical team design and hiring strategy.

- Role Assignments: Align responsibilities with each founder's strengths
- Hiring Priorities: Seek complementary skills and attributes
- Leadership Development: Invest in growing internal capabilities

Optional Signature Section

Name	Signature	Date

Sample Scenario—Not for Scoring

Ella and Ron are co-founders of a B2B SaaS platform. When they took this assessment individually, their scores looked similar—until they compared answers. Ron rated their communication as a 4. Ella gave it a 2. Their follow-up conversation revealed that Ella felt key decisions were being made in informal one-on-one chats that left her out. Ron hadn't realized this dynamic—but now they've added a weekly sync to fix it. The tool didn't fix the issue. But it surfaced it. That changed everything



Tool 2: Co-Founder Fit Quiz

THIS tool evaluates compatibility across key dimensions like shared vision, decision-making under pressure, and leadership chemistry. Use it before committing to a co-founder or as a periodic check-in to maintain alignment as your startup evolves.

Why Fit Matters

Most founders don't launch with a compatibility checklist. They launch with enthusiasm. But enthusiasm fades—and when it does, the cracks in the partnership show.

This quiz isn't a scientific tool. It's a gut check. Are you and your cofounder operating from the same playbook? Can you navigate tension without escalation? Are your personal goals aligned—or quietly clashing?

These questions won't give you a yes/no answer. But they will help you surface assumptions and create space for conversations you might be avoiding.

How to Use:

- Each co-founder should answer individually and then compare responses.
- Rate alignment on each dimension from 1 (not aligned) to 5 (strongly aligned).
- Compare your responses and discuss any major gaps
- Use your total score and section scores to guide alignment conversations.

#	Question	Response (1–5)			
SEC	TION A: VISION ALIGNMENT				
1	What is our shared vision for this startup?				
2	Where do we see this company in 5 years?				
3	Are we aligned on growth ambition (lifestyle business vs. high-scale startup)?				
4	What is our long-term goal—IPO, acquisition, sustainable business, or something else?				
5	How do we define success for this venture?				
SEC	SECTION B: WORK & DECISION FIT				
6	How do we prefer to work—structured schedules vs. flexible hours?				
7	How do we handle high-pressure situations?				
8	What are our preferred decision-making styles—consensus-driven or leader-driven?				

#	Question	Response (1–5)
9	How do we handle conflict—immediate resolution or time to process?	
10	How do we divide responsibilities—formal roles or fluid collaboration?	
SEC	TION C: RISK & FINANCE FIT	
11	How much financial risk are we each comfortable with?	
12	Are we open to taking on debt or raising external funding?	
13	How long are we willing to go without a salary?	
14	If we run out of money, what's our backup plan?	
15	What are our financial expectations for personal compensation and equity?	
SEC	TION D: VALUES FIT	
16	What are our personal values (integrity, speed, quality, collaboration, work-life balance)?	
17	Are there any industries, partnerships, or business practices we refuse to engage in?	
18	How do we handle ethical dilemmas—prioritizing people, profits, or principles?	
19	What behaviors or work styles are non-negotiable for us?	
20	How do we define fair treatment of employees and stakeholders?	

Scoring Guide:

80–100:	Excellent Fit – Highly aligned on key dimensions.
60–79:	Moderate Fit – Discuss any gaps to clarify and align expectations.
Below 60:	Caution – Misalignments may pose a risk. Consider coaching or a trial project first.

What to Do With Your Score

Don't just score it. Talk about it.

Your answers are a starting point for dialogue. Maybe one of you rated "Shared Vision" a 5 and the other a 2. That's not a failure—it's a flashlight. Use it to explore where the disconnect is coming from.

Not every disagreement signals a fatal flaw. But every unspoken misalignment compounds over time. This quiz helps you catch those early—while they're still fixable.

Mini Case: "We Thought We Were Aligned"

Priya and Josh had been best friends since college. When they launched their startup, they assumed their friendship would carry them through. But three months in, they disagreed on nearly everything—growth strategy, how to spend money, even what success looked like.

When they took a version of this quiz, their scores were wildly different. The result? A two-hour conversation they'd never had. And a new operating agreement that saved their partnership.

Sometimes, the best thing a founder can do isn't code. It's talk.



Tool 3: Co-Founder Agreement

THIS checklist ensures co-founders align on critical partnership terms, including equity, roles, IP, compensation, and exit plans. Use it to structure early conversations—and revisit it during major inflection points or before fundraising.

Why Founders Need Agreements—Even if You're Friends

The best time to build an agreement is **before** the friction begins. When the excitement is high, and the stakes feel low, it's tempting to skip the hard conversations. But alignment isn't about trust alone—it's about clarity.

This checklist helps you move beyond verbal agreements and gut feelings. It's a practical way to ensure that your assumptions match—and that you both know how decisions will be made when things get hard.

Whether you've already launched or are just forming your team, revisit this list. Talk through each item. Disagreement here is a gift—it surfaces mismatches early while they're still easy to navigate.

How to Use This Checklist

- Discuss each section with your co-founder(s).
- Use the checkboxes and notes fields to document decisions.
- Ensure all co-founders agree before proceeding.
- Consider drafting a formal Co-Founder Agreement with the help of legal counsel. Tool 3: Co-Founder Agreement

	Agreement Questions	V	Notes	
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES Clarity on "who does what" isn't just for org charts—it's for sanity. This section ensures overlap doesn't become overreach.				
1	Who will serve as CEO or lead key functions?			
2	How will decisions be made—by consensus or individual authority?			
3	Who has the final say on hiring, fundraising, and strategic pivots?			
4	How will performance issues among founders be addressed?			
EQUITY OWNERSHIP & VESTING Who owns what, and how will that evolve? Misunderstood equity splits are a leading cause of resentment between founders. Get clear, early.				
5	What percentage of the company does each founder own?			
6	Will equity vest over time (e.g., 4-year vesting with 1-year cliff)?			

	Agreement Questions	V	Notes		
7	What happens to equity if a founder leaves early?				
8	Can founders sell their shares? Under what conditions?				
From	INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP) OWNERSHIP From IP rights to what happens if someone leaves—these are the terms that protect both the company and the people building it.				
9	Who owns any IP created before forming the company?				
10	Does the company own all new work products and innovations?				
11	How will IP disputes be handled?				
Moi	COMPENSATION & TIME COMMITMENT Money and effort are emotionally charged topics. Be specific. Be honest. Put it in writing.				
12	Will founders take salaries? If so, when and how much?				
13	What is the expected weekly/monthly time commitment?				
14	Are outside projects or part-time work allowed?				

	Agreement Questions	V	Notes	
Who	CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS When there's a fork in the road, who decides? This section ensures you don't discover power struggles at the worst moment.			
15	How will disputes be handled (e.g., mediation, advisor, legal counsel)?			
16	What happens if a founder underperforms or disengages?			
17	Under what circumstances can a founder be removed?			
Ех	EXIT CLAUSES			
18	What happens if a founder chooses to leave?			
19	How is equity handled in cases of departure, death, or disability?			
20	Do the remaining founders have the right to buy out the departing founder?			

Final Step:

- Document decisions in writing and have all founders sign.
- Consult with a startup attorney for legal protection.

Mini Case: The Breakup They Avoided

Mel and Drew were early into their startup—just four clients in and no revenue yet. But a disagreement about a sales hire sparked a bigger conflict: Who actually had the final say? They realized they'd never talked about decision rights, equity vesting, or exit scenarios.

So they paused. Took a weekend. Used a checklist just like this one.

It was uncomfortable. But it surfaced what each founder **assumed** the other had agreed to—and helped them build a written agreement they could both trust. That document became their north star through a messy acquisition two years later.

Lesson? A few hours of structured conversation now can prevent months of painful misunderstanding later.



Tool 4: Foundational Alignment Checklist

THIS checklist ensures your founding team is aligned with the startup mission, decision-making authority, legal setup, and long-term goals. Use it to surface any gaps and revisit alignment before major milestones like product launch or fundraising.

Instructions:

Review each section together. Check off each item when alignment is reached. Use the **Notes** column to capture key decisions or follow-up items.

Alignment Is the Invisible Glue

Most co-founders think alignment means "we agree on the big picture." But that's just the surface.

Real alignment is deeper—it's shared assumptions about what success looks like, how hard you're willing to push, and how you'll handle the unknown. And if you don't uncover misalignments early, they don't go away—they just go underground.

This checklist is designed to bring those invisible tensions to the surface. Use it with your co-founder—or solo, as a self-assessment. Either way, the goal is the same: to align not just on what you're building but how you're building it together.

SECTION 1: VISION & VALUES

Startups fall apart when unspoken assumptions go untested. This section checks for deep alignment on why you're building—and where you're going.

✓	Item	Notes
	We agree on the company's mission and long-term vision.	
	We share similar values around ethics, risk-taking, and leadership.	
	We are aligned on what "success" looks like for this venture.	
	We understand each other's motivations for founding this startup.	

SECTION 2: OWNERSHIP & EQUITY

Equity isn't just numbers—it's trust, clarity, and future-proofing. These questions help surface fairness before resentment sets in.

TOOL 4: FOUNDATIONAL ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

✓	Item	Notes
	We've agreed on our initial equity split.	
	We've discussed and agreed on a vesting schedule.	
	We've documented capital, IP, or asset contributions.	
	We understand how additional co-founders or equity dilution will be handled.	

SECTION 3: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

When everyone does everything, no one is accountable. This section ensures you've mapped ownership clearly—and planned for growth.

V	Item	Notes
	We have clearly defined our initial roles and responsibilities.	
	We've discussed how roles may evolve as the company grows.	
	We've agreed on decision-making authority across key areas.	
	We've identified gaps that may require hiring or external support.	

SECTION 4: COMPENSATION & EXPENSES

Money may be tight now, but expectations grow quickly. These prompts help avoid the quiet tension that builds around pay, tradeoffs, and fairness.

√	Item	Notes
	We've agreed on whether founders will take salaries (and when).	

	We've discussed expense reimbursement policies.	
	We are aligned on future compensation expectations.	
	We've clarified how to balance equity and salary tradeoffs.	

SECTION 5: DECISION-MAKING

How you make decisions now will shape your team's culture. This section aligns your styles before the pressure hits.

✓	Item	Notes
	We have a process for making key strategic decisions.	
	We've agreed on how to resolve disagreements or deadlocks.	
	We know which decisions require joint vs. individual approval.	
	We've discussed the role of advisors, boards, or external input.	

SECTION 6: IP & CONFIDENTIALITY

Founders often skip legal basics—until it's too late. This section ensures your early work is protected and properly assigned.

✓	Item	Notes
	We've clarified ownership of pre-existing IP.	
	We've signed NDAs or IP assignment agreements, if applicable.	
	We agree that all new work belongs to the company.	
	We've aligned on how confidential data will be managed.	

SECTION 7: EXIT SCENARIOS

Every founder leaves eventually—the only question is how. These prompts help you plan for graceful exits before emotion clouds judgment.

√	Item	Notes
	We've discussed what happens if a founder voluntarily exits.	
	We've considered buy-back or clawback clauses.	
	We've planned for emergencies (e.g., illness, relocation, death).	
	We agree on terms for the involuntary removal of a founder.	

SECTION 8: LEGAL & ADMINISTRATIVE

Startups love to delay admin work—but early structure prevents late-stage pain. These checks confirm you're building on solid ground.

√	Item	Notes
	We've agreed on the company's legal structure.	
	We've assigned responsibility for admin and compliance tasks.	
	We've planned to create an operating or co-founder agreement.	
	We've identified legal or tax advisors for future consultation.	

Work through this checklist together and record key decisions in the notes section. Once aligned, document your agreement and consult a startup lawyer to finalize the legal framework.

SIGNATURE SECTION (OPTIONAL)

Founder Name	Signature	Date

Mini Case: The "Unspoken Divergence"

Elena and Priya were aligned on everything—or so they thought. Both had quit their jobs to launch a climate tech startup, and things were moving fast. But when a Series A offer came in with strings attached—long hours, aggressive timelines, and relocation—Priya hesitated.

"I want to build something great," she said, "but I'm not trying to burn out or uproot my family."

It turned out they hadn't really talked about what **ambition** looked like for each of them.

They went back to the alignment checklist. Slowly, they started revisiting assumptions they had skipped. The result wasn't just a better decision—it was a clearer path forward.

They passed on the term sheet. And six months later, raised on their own terms—with a leadership dynamic that worked **for both of them**.

Lesson: Alignment isn't about agreement. It's about understanding what you're each solving for—and making sure that's compatible.



Tool 5: Equity Split Guide

THIS structured guide helps you divide equity based on actual contributions, time commitment, and risk—not guesswork or emotion. Use it to map equity scenarios, justify your splits, and document founder agreements clearly.

Founders often agonize over how to split equity. Some go with a gut feel. Others default to equal shares. But most avoid the hard conversations—until misalignment festers into conflict.

This guide doesn't tell you **how** to split equity. It helps you ask the **right questions** so that whatever you decide feels fair, justified, and resilient over time.

STEP 1: LISTING CONTRIBUTIONS

Equity represents more than ownership. It signals trust, recognition, and future upside. If one founder feels shortchanged—even quietly—it can create lingering resentment.

BEYOND THE GARAGE

Ask yourself: What will feel fair in three years if things go well? What about if they don't?

Question	Your Answer
Who had the original idea?	
Who has already built the product, prototype, or business model?	
Who brings industry expertise, customers, or networks?	

STEP 2: TIME COMMITMENT

It's tempting to anchor equity to past work—but startup success depends on future sweat.

Question	Your Answer
Who is working full-time vs. part-time?	
Who will take the lead in executing key milestones?	
Will time commitment change in the future?	

STEP 3: RISK FACTORS

Different founders carry different levels of risk—and that risk deserves to be acknowledged.

Question	Your Answer

Who invested personal savings or took	
financial risks?	
Who left a stable job to commit to the	
startup?	
Who carries the highest legal or	
financial liability?	

STEP 4: FUTURE VALUE & RESPONSIBILITIES

The company you're building tomorrow should shape the equity you agree on today.

Question	Your Answer
Who will be responsible for fundraising	
and investor relations?	
Who will lead product development,	
hiring, and scaling efforts?	
Who has the skills that are hardest to	
replace?	

STEP 5: ADJUSTING THE SPLIT

You've discussed contributions. Now it's time to model a fair split—and be transparent about how you got there.

Question	Your Answer
Start with an initial percentage split based on contributions.	
Adjust based on future commitments and leadership roles.	

BEYOND THE GARAGE

Document the agreement and revisit it	
periodically.	

EXAMPLE EQUITY SPLIT CALCULATION

Contribution Factor	Weight (%)	Founder A	Founder B	Founder C
Idea & Vision	10%	~	~	×
Initial Product Work	20%	~	×	V
Financial Risk	20%	×	~	V
Full-Time Commitment	30%	▼	▼	×
Future Leadership Role	20%	~	~	×
Total Equity Split	100%	40%	35%	25%

FINAL STEP: FORMALIZE AND VEST

Even if your agreement feels solid now, document it and build in vesting. Standard founder vesting (4 years with a 1-year cliff) protects everyone—and gives the company flexibility if roles evolve or someone steps back.

Revisit equity quarterly during the first year and be willing to recalibrate based on contribution, commitment, and team needs.



Tool 6: Investor Readiness Assessment Tool

THIS self-assessment evaluates your team's readiness to raise capital based on alignment, traction, clarity of story, and founder mindset. Use it before approaching investors to refine your pitch and strengthen internal alignment.

You've probably been told that investors care about traction, TAM, and tech. But the truth? Most early-stage investors fund **teams**—not spreadsheets. They're looking for signals that you're not just chasing hype but building something that can grow, adapt, and lead.

This tool helps you self-assess what investors are really evaluating: your team's **alignment**, **clarity**, **and momentum**. Use it as a pre-pitch gut check or a leadership team reflection.

Instructions:

Rate each item from 1 (Not Yet True) to 5 (Fully True). Discuss your answers as a team. Identify areas that require work before meeting with investors.

SECTION A: TEAM ALIGNMENT

Question	Rating (1–5)
We have a clearly defined leadership team with complementary roles.	
We are aligned on the startup's long-term vision and near-term goals.	
We have a documented agreement outlining roles, equity, and decision rights.	
We've resolved past internal disagreements professionally and transparently.	

Signal investors watch for: If your team can't make decisions internally, how will you handle pressure externally?

SECTION B: EXECUTION AND TRACTION

Question	Rating (1–5)
We have validated product-market fit or have strong early adoption.	
Our metrics show progress (e.g., growth, revenue, retention, engagement).	
Our operating model is clear and executable.	
Our team has a track record of delivering on key milestones.	

Tip: Investors care less about perfect growth and more about momentum + learning velocity.

SECTION C: FUNDRAISING PREPARATION

Question	Rating (1–5)
We can clearly articulate our story: problem, solution, traction, and vision.	
We've prepared a pitch deck with supporting data.	
We understand investor expectations and how they evaluate teams.	
We're aligned on the amount, valuation, & use of funds.	

Investor test: Why now? Why you? Why this problem?

SECTION D: FOUNDER MINDSET

Question	Rating (1–5)
We demonstrate founder-market fit (experience, credibility, insight).	
We've shown emotional resilience and adaptability through past challenges.	
We're coachable and open to feedback.	
We communicate as a team with consistency and mutual respect.	

Insight: Mindset isn't a soft skill. It's a success predictor.

SECTION E: PITCH PREPAREDNESS

Question	Rating (1–5)
Do we have a clear, concise story that fits in 10–12 slides?	
Are we aligned on valuation expectations and raising the amount?	
Have we rehearsed investor Q&A and objection handling?	
Can we explain our use of funds with confidence?	

Reminder: Investors fund momentum, not polish—but the best pitches feel like both.

SCORING YOURSELF (NOT FOR INVESTORS—FOR YOU)

Go back and score each question:

- Yes and strong (✓)
- Sort of, needs work (—)
- No, or unclear (X)

Count up your ✓s. Now look at your —s and **X** s. That's where your team should focus before you walk into the next pitch.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

- Use this tool before key fundraising meetings.
- Have each founder fill it out separately, then compare notes.
- Treat it like a mirror—not a report card. What matters is not perfection but awareness and alignment.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What themes emerged in your lowest-scoring items?
- 2. Are there any major disagreements in how the team scored readiness?
- 3. Which gaps must be addressed before pitching investors?
- 4. Who can support your fundraising readiness—advisor, investor, or coach?



Tool 7: Conflict Resolution Worksheet

THIS worksheet offers a five-step process to resolve interpersonal or strategic conflict in a calm, constructive way. Use it when tensions rise to align around shared goals and avoid damage to trust or momentum.

Conflict isn't the problem. Avoiding it is.

This worksheet guides founders through a structured five-step process to handle interpersonal or strategic conflict constructively and maintain trust and momentum.

Instructions:

Each person involved should first complete this form independently. Then, use it to guide a shared conversation, using structure to reduce emotion and clarify what's really at stake.

STEP 1: DEFINE THE ISSUE

What is the specific disagreement or source of tension?

Avoid generalizations. Focus on observable behaviors, decisions, or outcomes.

Example: "We disagreed about delaying the product launch to build new features."

Your notes:	

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE UNDERLYING CONCERNS

What deeper values,	assumptions,	or pressures	might be
contributing?			

Often, the surface disagreement is about speed or scope—but the root is about trust, fear, or misalignment.

about trust, fear, or misalignment.
Example: "I'm worried we'll lose investor interest if we delay again."
Example: "I don't think we've prioritized customer feedback enough."
Your notes:

STEP 3: SHARE PERSPECTIVES, NOT POSITIONS

Each party should express their views using "I" language. Avoid blame or defensiveness. Focus on impact and intention.

'I felt caught off guard when we changed course mid-week. I'd prefer to revisit these decisions in our Monday check-ins."

Your script/discussion points:				
	-			

STEP 4: EXPLORE OPTIONS TOGETHER

What are 2-3 paths forward that respect both perspectives?

Aim for win-win solutions. Revisit shared goals. Consider short-term experiments or compromises.

Example: "Let's launch to a limited beta group while continuing feature development in parallel."

Your draft options:				
	•			

STEP 5: COMMIT TO A DECISION - AND A FOLLOW-UP

What did you decide together? How will you revisit this?

Your final notes:

Document the outcome, responsibilities, and timeline to revisit. A decision without follow-up is a temporary fix.

Example: "We agreed to proceed with a limited launch by April 1, with a retrospective scheduled two weeks later."

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Tool 8: Hiring Scorecard for First Employees

USE this tool to evaluate candidates across six critical dimensions. You can customize the weight for each category depending on your startup's needs.

STEP 1: DEFINE THE CRITERIA

Category	Description	Weight (%)
Role Fit	Do they have the skills and experience to succeed in this role?	
Startup Mindset	Are they resourceful, proactive, and comfortable with ambiguity?	
Culture Fit	Do their values align with the company's mission and working style?	
Team Chemistry	Can they collaborate well with others on the current team?	
Learning Agility	Do they show curiosity, adaptability, and willingness to learn?	
Founder Confidence	Would you trust this person with critical tasks when you're not in the room?	_

Tip: Assign weights that total up to 100%. You can adjust weights depending on the specific hire (e.g., more technical weight for an engineer, more people focus for a customer success role).

STEP 2: CANDIDATE SCORING TABLE

Score each candidate from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong) on each criterion.

Category	Weight (%)	Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
Role Fit				
Startup Mindset				
Culture Fit				
Team Chemistry				
Learning Agility				
Founder Confidence				
Weighted Total	100%			

STEP 3: DISCUSSION PROMPTS (OPTIONAL FOR TEAM DEBRIEF)

What are we **optimizing for** in this hire?

Which candidate best fits our stage of growth?

Who adds **complementary skills** or perspectives to the current team?

If things go sideways, who do we still want on the team?