

ChatGPT 5.2 ▾

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i have many residential builders in contact. I wonder if we should build a system (not sure if hosted or locally installable or some other model), that is specific to the residential builders small and medium to help streamline their work, mainly increase their efficiency and profitability. Do you think there is a need in market, (nearest builders are in south west Sydney that are in my circle through a partner who is sells ABM windows to these builders). If yes, how should we proceed. Note that we have a team of developers in India, but obviously don't want to directly start engaging them. Help me with this. Be somewhat precise.



Yes — there is a real need.

But **not for a generic “builder management system.”**

That market is crowded and dominated by tools like:

- [Buildertrend](#)
- [Procore](#)
- [CoConstruct](#)
- [SimPRO](#)

Small–medium residential builders in South West Sydney often:

- Don't fully use these tools (too complex, too expensive)
- Still rely on Excel + email + WhatsApp + Xero
- Lose margin through variations, delays, trade misalignment, and poor job costing

So the opportunity is **niche + simple + margin-focused**.

1. Is There a Real Gap?

For small residential builders (5–25 homes/year):

Biggest pain points typically are:

1. Variation tracking & margin leakage
2. Trade scheduling coordination
3. Cashflow visibility per project
4. Client communication overload
5. Site-to-office information lag

They don't need enterprise software.

They need **clarity + control + profit visibility**.

If you solve margin leakage → they will pay.

2. Do NOT Start With Development

First step is validation. Not coding.

Step 1: Interview 10 builders (through ABM window partner)

Ask precise questions:

- Where do you lose money most often?

- How do you track variations?
- How do you schedule trades?
- How do you know job profitability mid-project?
- What software do you pay for?
- What do you hate about it?
- If I solved X, would you pay \$200–\$500/month?

Don't pitch. Just extract pain.

If 6+ out of 10 express same pain → that's your wedge.

3. Likely Best Entry Point (Strategic Decision)

Do NOT try to build "everything."

Best wedge for small builders in your geography:

Option A – Variation & Margin Control System (High Probability Winner)

Focus:

- Quote vs variation tracking
- Builder margin protection
- Client approval tracking
- Real-time margin impact per job

Why this works:

- Builders understand money.
- Easy ROI to demonstrate.

- Direct profitability angle.
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Option B – Trade Scheduling + Cashflow Sync

Focus:

- Gantt scheduling simplified
- Trade reminders
- Stage payment forecasting

Harder sell than margin control.

4. Product Strategy (Critical)

Do NOT:

- Build desktop software
- Build locally installable
- Over-engineer

Build:

- Cloud-based SaaS
- Mobile-friendly web app
- Very narrow feature set initially

You want:

- Fast iteration
- Subscription model

- Recurring revenue
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5. Monetization Model

For small builders:

- \$149–\$299/month
- Or per active project pricing
- Or % of variation value tracked (risky but interesting)

If tool saves \$20k margin leakage per project, \$300/month is cheap.

6. Execution Roadmap (Without Engaging Devs Yet)

Phase 1 – Market Proof (4–6 weeks)

- Interview 10–15 builders
- Identify 1 dominant pain
- Mock up solution in Figma
- Show clickable prototype
- Ask: "Would you pay for this?"

If yes → collect 3–5 LOIs (letters of intent)

Phase 2 – MVP (Lean)

Only then engage India team.

Build:

- Login
- Project creation
- Variation tracking
- Margin impact calculator
- Export PDF for client approval

Nothing else.

Phase 3 – Land and Expand

After 5–10 paying builders:

- Add scheduling
 - Add trade portal
 - Add dashboard reporting
 - Add cost tracking
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7. Competitive Advantage You Already Have

You:

- Are building property yourself
- Understand margins
- Are financially analytical
- Have access to real builders through partner

Most SaaS founders lack direct industry access.

That is your leverage.

8. Biggest Risk

You might drift into:

"One-stop shop for everything."

That kills focus.

Pick one:

- Margin control system
- OR
- Trade scheduling control system

Not both initially.

9. Should You Do This?

If:

- 6+ builders confirm same pain
- They show willingness to pay
- They currently use messy spreadsheets

Then yes — strong opportunity.

If:

- They're happy with Buildertrend/Procore
- They resist subscription software

Then pivot early.

If you want next step:

I can help you design the exact 15-question validation script to use with the builders.



ok. For phase 1, you said Figma. What is this. Is this like Odoo? I was hoping to start with what I already know and build a high level demo product somehow, so that builders can visualize the benefit and get excited. Something like giving them a taste of what good could happen with actual software when it's ready, and also get them excited by the demo and not go empty handed just to interview.



No — Figma is not like Odoo.

What Figma Is

Figma is a browser-based UI design and prototyping tool.

It does **not** build software.

It creates **interactive mockups** that look real but have no backend.

Think:

- Clickable screens
- Buttons that move to next screen
- Clean dashboard visuals
- Feels like real software

But it's just a visual prototype.

What Odoo Is

Odoo is a full ERP system.

Heavy. Modular. Operational.

Not suitable for:

- Fast validation
 - Narrow builder-specific wedge
 - Clean margin-focused product
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Your Instinct Is Correct

Do NOT go empty-handed.

Builders don't respond well to abstract interviews.

They respond to:

"Look what this could do for your job margin."

You need something tangible.

Best Approach For You

Instead of coding or building backend, do this:

Step 1 — Build a “High-Impact Demo” (No Backend)

Options ranked for you:

Option A (Recommended): Figma Clickable Demo

- Looks like finished SaaS
- Takes 5–7 days to design properly
- Very professional
- High perceived value
- Cheap

This is the cleanest validation tool.

Option B: Advanced Google Sheet (Fastest)

Build:

- Variation tracker
- Margin impact auto-calc
- Dashboard summary
- Project profitability view

Then wrap it in:

- Clean branding
- Protected formulas
- Demo project data

This is extremely practical for builders.

Downside: feels like "just another spreadsheet."

Option C: No-Code MVP (Glide / Bubble)

You can use:

- Glide
- Bubble

This builds a semi-real web app quickly.

More work than Figma.

Higher commitment.

Not necessary for phase 1.

What I Recommend For You Specifically

Given:

- You're analytical
- You like structured systems
- You don't want premature dev involvement

Do this:

Build a 4-Screen Figma Demo Focused on Margin Leakage

Screens:

1. Project Dashboard (shows projected vs actual margin)
2. Variation Entry Screen
3. Client Approval Tracker
4. Margin Impact Summary

When builder sees:

"Your margin just dropped from 18% to 14% because of this variation."

That hits emotionally.

Important Strategic Point

Do NOT demo "software."

Demo:

"This tool will protect \$40k margin per project."

Position it as:

- Profit protection system
 - Not project management software
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How to Use It in Meetings

1. Show demo
2. Say: "Currently how do you track this?"
3. Show live margin change when variation added
4. Ask: "If this prevented 1 margin mistake per job, what is that worth?"

Then ask:

"If this existed properly built, would you pay \$250/month?"

That's validation.

Critical Warning

If you build real software first:

- You will overbuild
- You will solve wrong problem
- You will burn time

Prototype first.

Excite second.

Validate third.

Build fourth.

If you want, I can outline exactly what those 4 demo screens should contain so you can either:

- Design them in Figma yourself
- or
- Brief a designer clearly

Which route do you want?

