

MVP Feature Set & Pricing Strategy for Your CA Platform

Launching a **minimum viable product (MVP)** focused on connecting customers with Chartered Accountants (CAs) is a smart way to validate your idea given your limited time and resources. The goal is to include only the *essential features* needed to allow CAs and clients to find each other and interact, without overbuilding upfront ¹. Below is a breakdown of the core features to focus on (to attract both customers and CAs), followed by a suggested monetization strategy that starts free and gradually introduces pricing.

Essential MVP Features

Your platform's **core functionality** should revolve around discovery and basic interaction between clients and CAs. Here are the minimum features to implement for a viable launch:

- **User Registration & Profiles:** Provide simple sign-up for both CAs (service providers) and customers. CAs should be able to create a basic **profile listing** their qualifications, expertise (e.g. tax filing, auditing, GST, etc.), location, and a short bio. This helps clients evaluate them. Keep onboarding friction low – perhaps allow customers to browse without logging in, requiring sign-up only when they want to contact a CA. *(Tip: focus on capturing just the key details – you can skip fancy profile customization initially.)*
- **Service Listings & Discovery:** Implement a straightforward way for clients to **discover CAs** by specialty or location. This could be as simple as a list or directory of CAs with search filters (e.g. by service type or city). You don't need an elaborate search engine at first; even basic category filtering or keyword search will suffice ². The main goal is to let users find relevant CAs easily. Make sure each listing displays important info at a glance (name, specialty, maybe years of experience or "CA verified" badge). If possible, allow CAs to list key services or a **"starting from" price** for common tasks – this transparency can attract cost-conscious customers.
- **Inquiry/Communication Mechanism:** Enable a **simple way for customers to contact CAs or request a service**. For MVP, this could be a basic contact form or messaging system. For example, a client clicks "Contact this CA" or "Request Consultation," fills out their requirements, and the platform notifies the CA (via email or in-app message). You don't need to build a complex chat system right away; even an email notification to the CA with the client's details, or a very simple messaging interface, is enough to get started. The key is to facilitate that initial connection between the two parties ³. *(Ensure you capture the client's contact info and inquiry details and send confirmation so both sides can follow up.)*
- **Booking/Job Tracking (Basic):** In the simplest terms, once a client reaches out, the service details and payment can be handled offline for now. If time permits, you might include a basic way for CAs to **accept an engagement or mark a job as taken** on the platform, so other users know their availability. This could be as simple as updating a status or sending a confirmation message. A fully-

fledged scheduling or payment system is nice-to-have but **not required in the MVP**. Initially, focus on making the connection; you can manually coordinate or let them handle the rest off-platform until you validate demand. (Many early marketplaces do things manually behind the scenes to start – which is feasible since you’ll have few users at first.)

- **Trust & Verification:** To attract customers, build trust by **verifying your CAs** if possible. For MVP, this might mean you manually check a CA’s credentials (like their registered CA number or certificate) and then label their profile as “Verified CA.” This feature is minimal effort (just a flag in the database once you’ve verified documents via email), but it adds huge value – clients will be more likely to use the platform knowing the professionals are genuine. It also appeals to CAs, since being verified on a niche platform gives them credibility. In addition, include a basic **review or rating system** (even if it’s just a stars and comment field) so that as soon as you get some transactions, users can leave feedback. Reviews can be a powerful draw for future users, though it’s okay if this section is empty at launch. *(If building reviews is too much initially, plan to add it once you have a few clients – you’ll want it eventually for trust building.)*
- **Minimal Admin Tools:** Since you’re solo, you’ll want a rudimentary admin interface or routine for overseeing activity. Ensure you can **approve CA profiles** (to maintain quality) and moderate any content if needed. This doesn’t need to be a full dashboard in the MVP; it could be as simple as using your database (Supabase UI) to flip a “approved” flag on a new signup, or a quick script to remove problematic listings. Keeping quality high (only qualified CAs, no spam) will make the platform more attractive to users. Also, track basic metrics (number of signups, inquiries sent) so you have data to learn from early usage.

Why only these features? An MVP marketplace should **“focus on core marketplace functionality”** – the bare minimum to let users connect and transact ¹. Typical workflows include things like account setup, listings, search/discovery, payments, and communication ⁴, but each can be implemented in a *very simplified* form at first. For example, **resist adding** fancy personalization, complex matching algorithms, or extensive automation in the beginning ². Your limited time means every feature must earn its keep. The above essentials are enough to start getting CAs and clients on board and validating that they find value in the platform. You can always iterate later based on real user feedback, adding the most requested features once the core idea is proven.

Attracting Customers and CAs with Your MVP

With the above feature set, here are a few tactics to make the platform appealing to both sides from day one:

- **Highlight the Niche Focus:** Emphasize that this platform is **specifically for Chartered Accountants and their clients**. This focused approach means a more curated, high-quality experience for users. CAs will appreciate that they aren’t lost in a sea of unrelated professionals, and clients will come knowing they can find *qualified* experts (unlike general freelance sites). This niche positioning can be a selling point in your marketing – for example, “The go-to platform to discover **verified CAs** for your financial and tax needs.” A focused audience can drive higher engagement since everyone on the platform is looking for (or offering) essentially the same category of service.

- **Ease of Use & Onboarding:** Given you're targeting busy professionals and consumers, make the sign-up and usage **as frictionless as possible**. Offer social or email login for CAs, and keep the profile setup short (they can always fill more details later). For customers, allow browsing of CA listings without immediate sign-up to encourage exploration. When they do need to register (e.g. to send an inquiry), clearly explain the benefit ("Sign up to contact this CA directly") to reduce drop-off. Simplicity in the UI/UX will be a big draw, especially since you're building this on weekends – lean on known design patterns or template components to save time. Even using a basic Next.js template and Supabase auth out-of-the-box is fine; polish can come later. **Fast and easy access** to find or list a service is key to hooking early users.
- **Trust Signals:** Build trust from the start to overcome the chicken-and-egg challenge of a new marketplace. We already mentioned verifying CAs' credentials – make that **visible** on profiles (e.g., a checkmark or "Verified by [YourPlatform]"). Also, seed the platform with content if you can: perhaps reach out to a few CAs in your network to be **early adopters** so that new customers see some real profiles on day one. Even 5–10 chartered accountants in the directory at launch (maybe colleagues or contacts willing to support you) can make the site feel alive. For customers, if you can gather any testimonials or have a friend act as a first "client" who leaves a review, that social proof helps. These trust signals will make both CAs and clients more willing to try the service. *(As a solo founder, you might personally onboard a handful of CAs during your free time – it's worth the effort to manually curate initial listings.)*
- **Personalized Support (Early On):** Leverage your one-man-show status as a *feature*, not a bug. In early stages, you can give highly personalized support to anyone who signs up. For example, if a client posts a request and you have no automation to match it, you can manually reach out to a suitable CA in your database to ensure the client gets a response. This kind of hand-holding can create great user experiences that lead to word-of-mouth. Make it a selling point: early users get white-glove treatment. CAs might value any leads you send their way (even if manually), and clients will value not being left hanging. As you're only working weekends, plan this strategically so it doesn't overwhelm you – maybe limit the geographic area or type of service at first so you can manage the matchmaking. The goal is to **ensure initial users succeed** on the platform, which will generate positive feedback and momentum.

By focusing on a clean, **user-friendly MVP** with the above features, you make the platform immediately useful. Both customers and CAs will be attracted to a site that is easy to navigate, clearly specialized for their needs, and already has a bit of activity and trustworthiness. Remember, at this stage *"less is more"* – it's better to have a few features done well (with some personal touch) than an overloaded platform with half-baked functionality. This approach will also conserve your limited development time and help avoid burnout.

Monetization Plan & Initial Pricing Strategy

For the **revenue model**, it's wise to **start with free or minimal costs** to build your user base, then introduce monetization once you gain traction ⁵. Here's a step-by-step strategy:

1. Launch Phase – Free to Use: Initially, keep the platform **free for both CAs and customers**. This lowers any barrier to signing up, which is crucial when you have no users yet ⁶. Promote the fact that there are **"no commissions or fees for early users"** – CAs especially will be happy to try it if they can potentially gain

clients at no cost. The early stage is all about populating the marketplace and proving its value; revenue is secondary. Many successful marketplaces deliberately **start with zero or very low fees** to attract users and build liquidity, then monetize later once the value proposition is proven ⁵. You can adopt this approach: for example, consider your first few months or the first X number of connections as a free trial period for everyone.

2. Transition to Paid Model: After you start seeing engagement (e.g. a decent number of inquiries or a few successful matches), plan a **gradual rollout of monetization**. Transparency is key here – communicate any upcoming fees clearly and make sure users understand the value they’re getting for the price ⁷. Since you mentioned possibly keeping it free initially and then charging, a **freemium model** or low commission model would fit well. In a freemium approach, you continue to offer the basic service free to all while adding paid perks for those who need more. *For example:* you might let all CAs have a free basic listing indefinitely, but introduce a **premium subscription tier** that, say, boosts their visibility in search results or allows them to appear as “Featured CA of the week.” This way you **“attract a large user base by offering basic services for free while charging for premium features”** ⁸ – an approach that has proven effective in many online marketplaces.

3. Monetization Options (Commission vs Subscription): There are a couple of models you can consider – you might even combine them over time:

- **Commission on Transactions:** If your platform facilitates payments or deals directly, a **commission fee** is a classic way to earn revenue. This means you take a percentage cut of any payment made through your platform between a client and a CA. The beauty of this model is that it aligns your earnings with the success of your users (you make money only when they do) ⁹. It also keeps the service free to join, which **“lowers entry barriers for new vendors” (CAs)** ⁶. You’ll want to keep the commission **fair and competitive** so CAs don’t feel squeezed ¹⁰. In practice, commission rates in online service marketplaces typically range from about **5% up to 30%** of the transaction, varying by industry ¹¹. Highly specialized, high-value services tend to use the **lower end (around 5–10%)** because each transaction is large and providers wouldn’t tolerate a huge cut ¹². Given chartered accountancy is a specialized professional service, you might start with a modest commission – for example, **~10%** of each completed job – or even a flat fee per transaction (whatever seems reasonable for the size of projects on your platform). *Tip: Start low* to attract users, and you can adjust later. As one guide notes, *“early stage: initially lower commission rates may be necessary to attract users and build marketplace liquidity”* ⁵. Over time, if your platform delivers lots of value (i.e. a CA is getting many clients), you could consider increasing the commission or introducing tiered rates. But any increases should be gradual and coupled with clear communication of the added value they get (e.g. more clients, platform tools, etc.).
- **Subscriptions / Premium Listings:** Another straightforward approach is charging a **subscription fee for CAs** – essentially a paid plan for being listed or for accessing certain features. This could work well once you have some demand on the platform. For instance, you could offer a **basic free tier** (profile visible in standard listings, can respond to inquiries) and a **premium tier** that might include features like appearing at the top of search results, receiving priority customer inquiries, or access to analytics (like how many people viewed their profile). The subscription might be a **monthly or annual fee**. The pricing should be low enough that independent CAs or small firms find it affordable – perhaps an entry-level plan in the range of, say, ₹500 to ₹1000 per month (around \$10–\$15 USD) as a starting point, depending on the value provided. You can adjust this as you gauge willingness to

pay. To ease the transition, consider **offering a free trial period** for the subscription or introductory discounts ⁷. For example, “First month free, cancel anytime” or “Founding members get premium features free for 3 months.” This trial builds trust and lets CAs experience the benefits before committing to payment ⁷. The **freemium model** here means you won’t alienate users who only want free usage, while creating a path to revenue from power-users or those keen on extra exposure ⁸.

- **Other Monetization Ideas (Future):** As the platform grows, you can explore additional revenue streams. One common avenue in marketplaces is **paid featured listings or ads** – e.g. a CA pays a one-time fee to be featured on the homepage or top of a category for a week. This is essentially an advertising model and can be high-margin once you have lots of CAs (in early stages it’s less relevant). Another idea is charging for **lead generation**: some platforms let clients post a request and then charge CAs a small fee to respond or unlock that lead’s contact info. However, use caution with lead fees at the start, because if CAs are paying for leads that don’t convert, it could frustrate them. That model might work later when you have abundant client requests. Finally, if you facilitate payments, you could earn from **payment processing markups or transaction fees** (for example, slightly marking up a payment gateway fee), but this is a minor tweak. Initially, **focus on either a commission or subscription model** as your primary monetization, since those are easiest to implement and understand.

4. Deciding When and How Much to Charge: The **timing** of introducing pricing is crucial. You don’t want to turn on fees too early (when the platform’s value is unproven), but you also want to start generating revenue once there’s consistent usage. A good rule of thumb: when you start seeing that CAs have gotten a few successful client connections or when clients are routinely posting inquiries, that’s a signal the platform is delivering value – at this point, **gradually introduce charges**. You might announce that **new sign-ups after a certain date will be subject to the pricing, but existing early users get a grace period or discount** (reward your early adopters for helping you grow). As for **minimum pricing**, err on the low side initially. For example, if you go with a commission, even something like **5–10% commission** on a job can be a starting point that you later adjust ¹². If opting for subscriptions, you could set a **base plan at a nominal rate** (perhaps a few hundred rupees per month, or a small per-lead fee like ₹50-₹100 per lead) just to test willingness to pay. The idea is not to rake in huge profits immediately, but to ensure people will pay *something* for the value you provide – this validates your business model. You can then incrementally increase prices or add higher tiers as the platform’s network effect (and your feature set) grows.

Freemium to Paid in Practice: A lot of platforms follow the pattern you’re considering – free early on, then gradually monetized. The key to doing this successfully is to **clearly separate which features are free and which are paid**, and to keep the free part useful enough that new users join. As one guide on marketplace monetization explains, *“the freemium model lowers the barrier to entry to build a large user base, then upsells premium features that are too valuable to pass up”* ⁸. In your case, the **“compelling free experience”** is that anyone can find a CA and make contact without charge. The premium or paid aspect (commission or subscription) kicks in as users derive tangible value (a job done or a new client acquired). Make sure when you introduce pricing, you **show the value**: for example, *“Hire trusted CAs easily – a small commission applies only when you successfully hire someone”* or *“Pro Plan – ₹XXX/mo – get featured placement and 5x more client leads”*. By aligning the fees with clear benefits, users will be more willing to accept them.

In summary, **start lean and free**, and focus on growing your user base and engagement. Once you have users who love the platform, implement a **lightweight monetization**: perhaps a modest commission on each successful match or a low-cost premium tier for CAs. Keep the pricing **transparent and fair** – this will be appreciated by professionals and will set you up for positive long-term relationships ¹⁰ ¹³ . For instance, if you choose a commission model, be upfront about the percentage and consider offering extras like an easy payments system or client management tools to **justify your cut** (as the platform matures) ¹⁰ . If you choose subscriptions, provide real value at each tier and use free trials so CAs can “feel” the benefit before paying ⁷ .

Next Steps: Given you’re developing solo on weekends, prioritize the features that matter most (profiles, discovery, contact) and use existing services (Netlify, Supabase, etc.) to save time on infrastructure. Deploy the MVP and maybe onboard a few initial CAs manually. Observe how users use it and gather feedback. This will guide you on what to improve or add. As traction grows, roll out the monetization in stages – perhaps start with a **small commission on new jobs or a premium listing option** once you have enough activity. Always communicate changes to your users; since you have no co-founder or team, building user trust through transparency is vital. With a solid niche focus and a careful balance of free value and paid upgrades, you’ll be on a path to not only help people find CAs easily but also **start generating revenue** in a sustainable way. Good luck with your rollout!

Sources:

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4. Shipturtle Blog – *Ways to Monetize Your Marketplace* (2025) – highlights commission aligning with success and subscription model best practices (tiered pricing, free trials, value per tier) ¹⁰ ⁷ .

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