

THE NAKED TRUTH ABOUT YOUR TRACTION

THE EMPEROR HAS NO METRICS

The Partner Program Trap

Programs ≠ Partnerships

"Selected for [Big Company] Startup Program" means:

- Mass newsletter feature
- Basic API access
- Template emails
- Standard cloud credits



Being in "Microsoft for Startups" doesn't mean Microsoft is your customer or partner. It's just a program with 40,000+ other startups.

The Awards Illusion

Awards ≠ Business

- "Top Startup" awards
- Pitch competition wins
- Accelerator badges
- Industry recognition = No correlation with success



Most "Startup of the Year" winners shut down

The Recognition Trap

Personal PR ≠ Company Growth

Your awards are actually red flags:

- "30 Under 30" features
- "Top Innovator" lists
- "Rising Star" awards
- "Young Leader" selections



Every hour spent chasing validation is an hour not spent on real traction.

The Social Proof Mirage

Press ≠ Profits

- TechCrunch articles
- LinkedIn followers
- Conference talks
- Competition wins = Zero revenue impact



90% of featured startups fail within a year

The Pilot Problem

Pilots ≠ Customers

Corporate pilots are experiments, not commitments. Most never convert.



Enterprise pilots: 20% conversion rate
Your "5 pilots" = 1 real customer

The Meeting Mirage

Meetings ≠ Sales

"Interested" corporations take meetings.
Committed ones sign contracts.



Enterprise sales: 100 meetings = 1-2 deals

The Trade Show

Event Booth ≠ Market Validation

"We exhibited at [Major Industry Event]" means:

Paid \$10K for a small booth, collected 200 random business cards, had "great conversations", got "lots of interest" and zero actual customers.

The Download Delusion

Downloads ≠ Users

App stores are graveyards of downloaded-once apps



96% of users never open apps after 30 days

The Free User Trap

Free ≠ Future Paid

Free users rarely convert to paid. Stop counting them as "future revenue."



Typical freemium conversion: 2-3%
Your "10,000 users" = 200-300 real customers



The Waitlist Myth

Signups ≠ Sales

Free waitlist signups rarely convert. They're curiosity, not commitment.



Typical waitlist conversion: 1-2%
Your 10,000 signups = 100-200 potential customers

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The LOI Lie

LOIs = Paper Promises

Letters of Intent are polite maybes. Not committed customers.



LOI to contract conversion: 10% Your
"\$1M in LOIs" = \$100K maybe

The Growth Illusion

Paid Growth ≠ Real Growth

If your growth stops when ads stop, it's not real traction.



Real growth continues without spending

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Celebrity Angel Trap

"Famous actor X is our angel investor!"

Usually means:

- Free shares for future promotion
- No cash invested
- One-time social media post
- Zero strategic involvement
- Pure vanity metric



Startup gave 2% equity to celebrity for "future promotion." Never got the promotion. Lost the equity forever.



Real Traction Signals

What Actually Matters

- Monthly recurring revenue
- Daily active users
- Net revenue retention
- Organic word of mouth
- Customer acquisition cost



Revenue > Recognition

Usage > Awards

Growth > Press

The Truth Test

Calculate your real numbers:

- 10,000 users → Remove all free users
- 5 enterprise pilots → Multiply by 0.2
- \$1M in LOIs → Multiply by 0.1
- 100K followers → Divide by 1000
- 20 partnerships → Count only paid ones



Typical startup claims \$1M ARR potential

After truth test: \$50K actual revenue

The Real Traction Formula

Count only:

- Real revenue
- Active usage
- Paying customers
- Organic growth

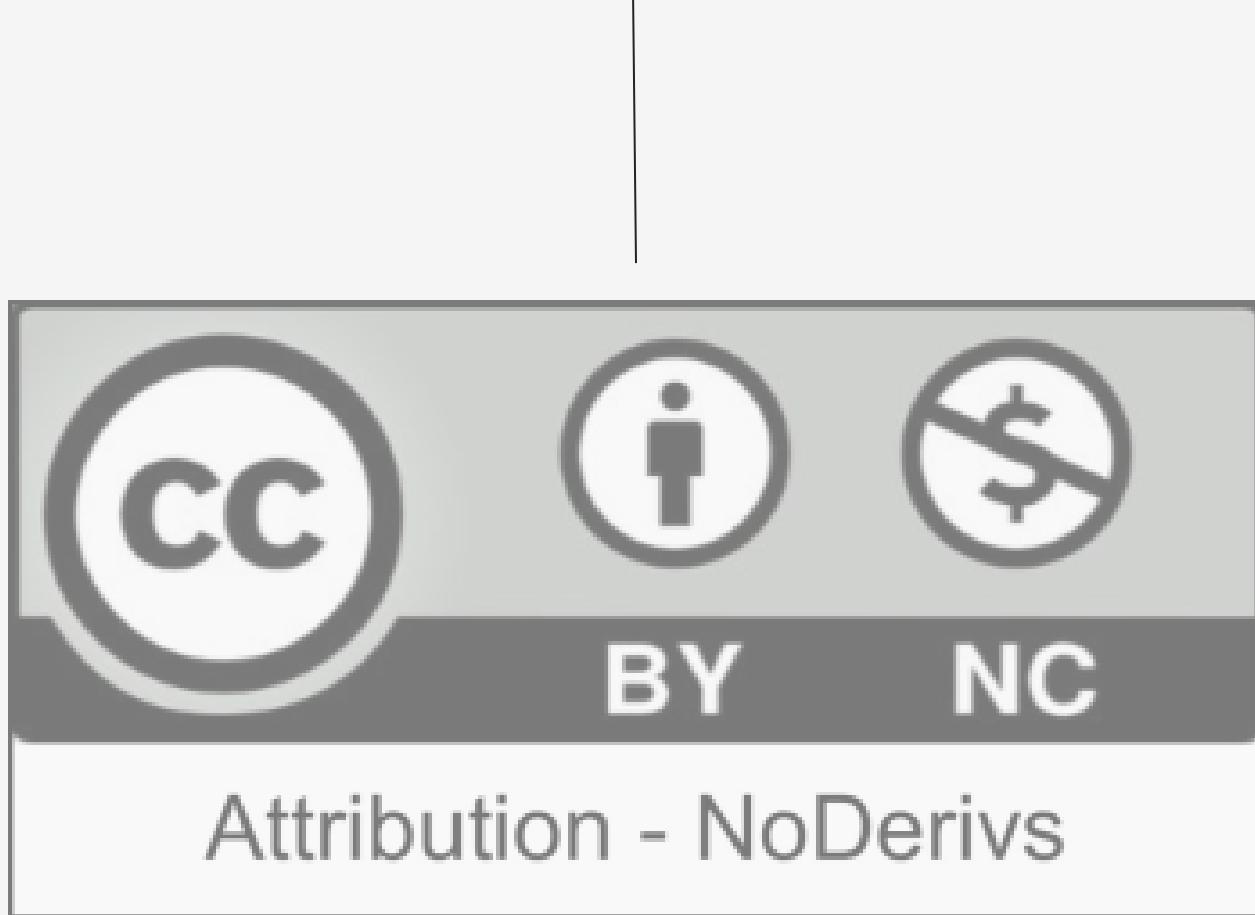
Ignore:

- Press features
- Program selections
- Award wins
- Partner badges

PLAIN LANG UAGE

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B U R A K B U Y U K D E M I R



THE

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