

# 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](http://www.yourwebsite.com/services)