RUN InnoBoost

bioeconomy, future industries, and social innovation

Your guide to

Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and early stage Go to Market strategies

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MVP and early stage Go to Market Strategies

- ✓ MVP
- ✓ Go to market for start-ups

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General principles of Lean - Startup

Customer-centricity

Focuses on identifying and understanding the needs and wants of customers.

Rapid experimentation

Involves testing assumptions and ideas quickly and at a low cost.

Minimum viable product (MVP)

Involves creating a basic version of the product or service that includes only the essential features needed to solve the customer problem.

Pivot and persevere

Involves being open to changing course if necessary, based on customer feedback and market insights.

These principles are designed to help entrepreneurs create products and services that are more likely to meet the needs of customers, and to do so in a way that is efficient, cost-effective, and adaptable to changing circumstances.

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Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

The Lean Startup begins with an approach of design, build, measure, learn, cycle with an appreciation that **“You can’t just build things without talking to people”**

It then becomes **“you can’t just keep talking to people without building something”**

MVP experimentation to see how potential customers **would react if an ‘idea / product’ existed.**

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Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

- The minimum viable product (MVP), which is a version of the product with only the core features necessary to meet the needs of early customers
- Entrepreneurs should focus on developing an MVP quickly and getting it into the hands of customers as soon as possible
- This allows for feedback and iteration on the product, helping to refine it based on actual customer needs

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“If you are not embarrassed by the first version of your product, you’ve launched too late.”

Reid Hoffman, LinkedIn

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Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

Should be **based on evidence** from customers, testing and experimentation:

Launch something bad quickly. Don't try to perfect an MVP.

- **MVP:** A basic version of the product that focuses on the core function (highest order problem)
- Launched to a small group of **early adopters** / a test audience quickly. Gather feedback based on **real user experiences**.
- **Define some key metrics** that align with the hypotheses and measure them rigorously.
- Be open to **making changes** and **improvements**.
- Conduct user testing sessions to identify **areas for improvement.**
- **Assess the results** of the experiments, user feedback, and metrics. **Pivot or persevere**.

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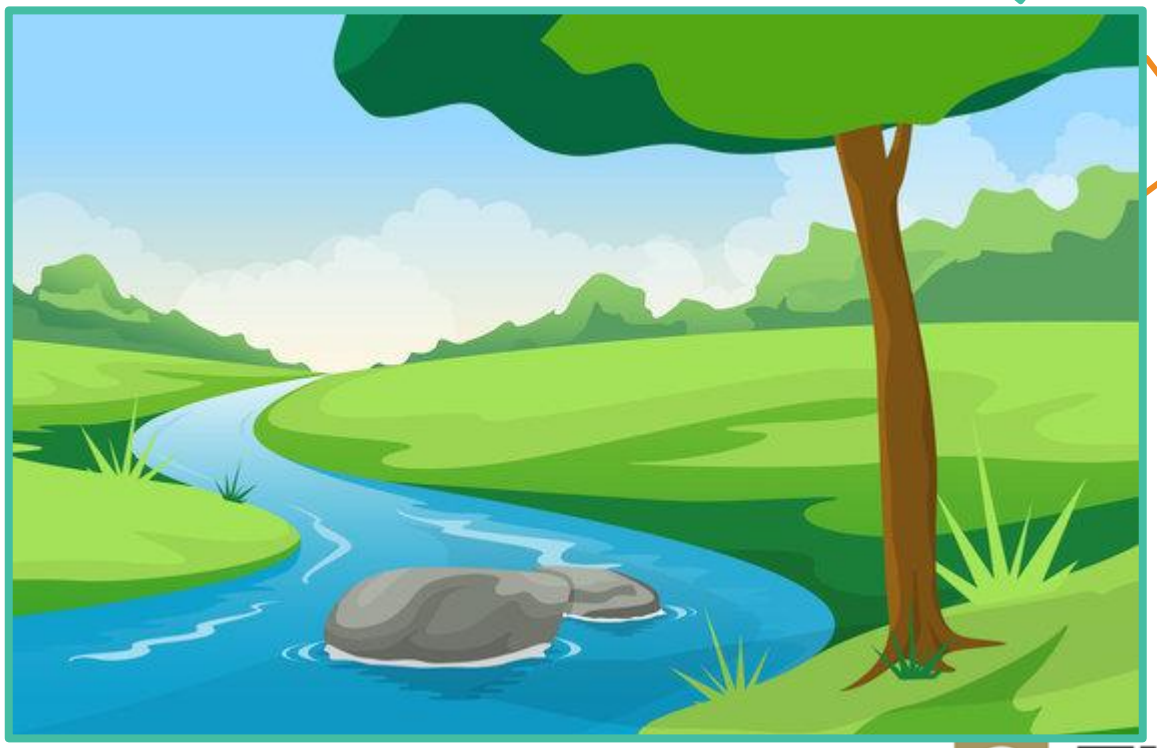
Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

We need to cross a river!

🌲 **Fallen logs** → crude, fast, but worked.
🪨 **Stepping stones** → uneven, risky, but progress.
🚣 **Rafts or ferries** → more effort, but moved people.
⚓ **Rope or pontoon bridges** → temporary, fragile, but enough.



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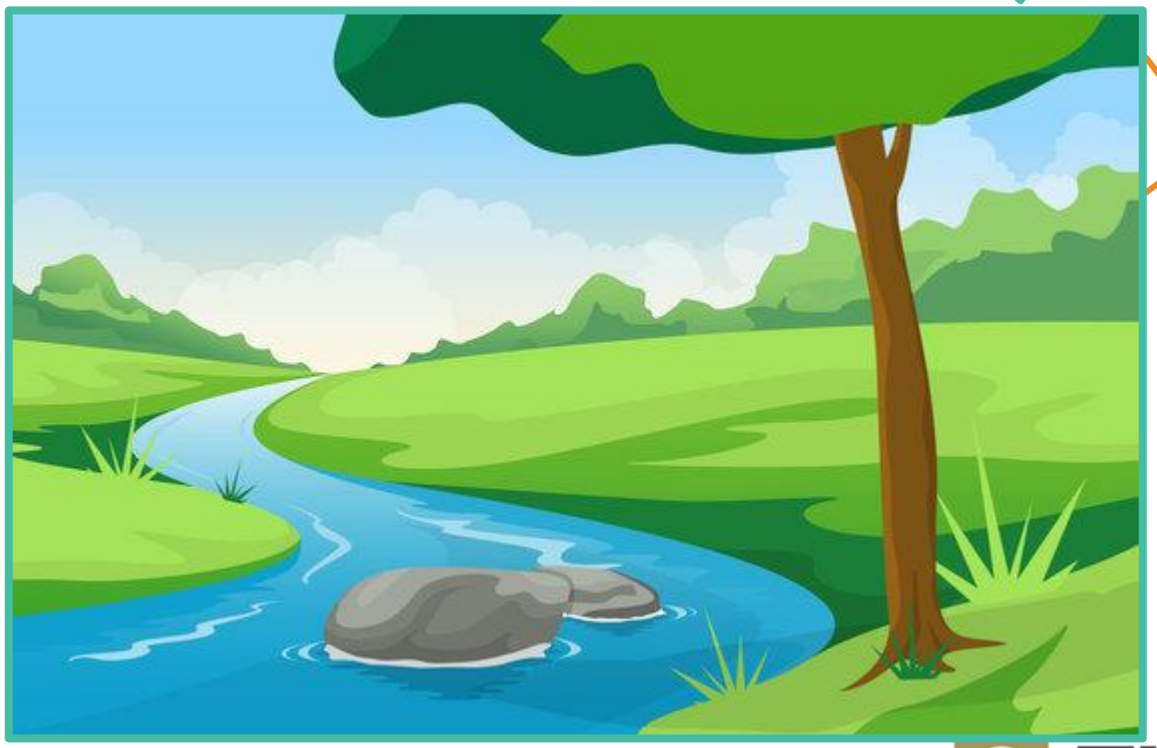
Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

Your #MVP is the same.

- It doesn't have to be #pretty.
- It doesn't have to last #forever.

It just has to #prove:

People #can and #will cross.
There's #demand on the other #side.
What #type of bridge is truly needed.



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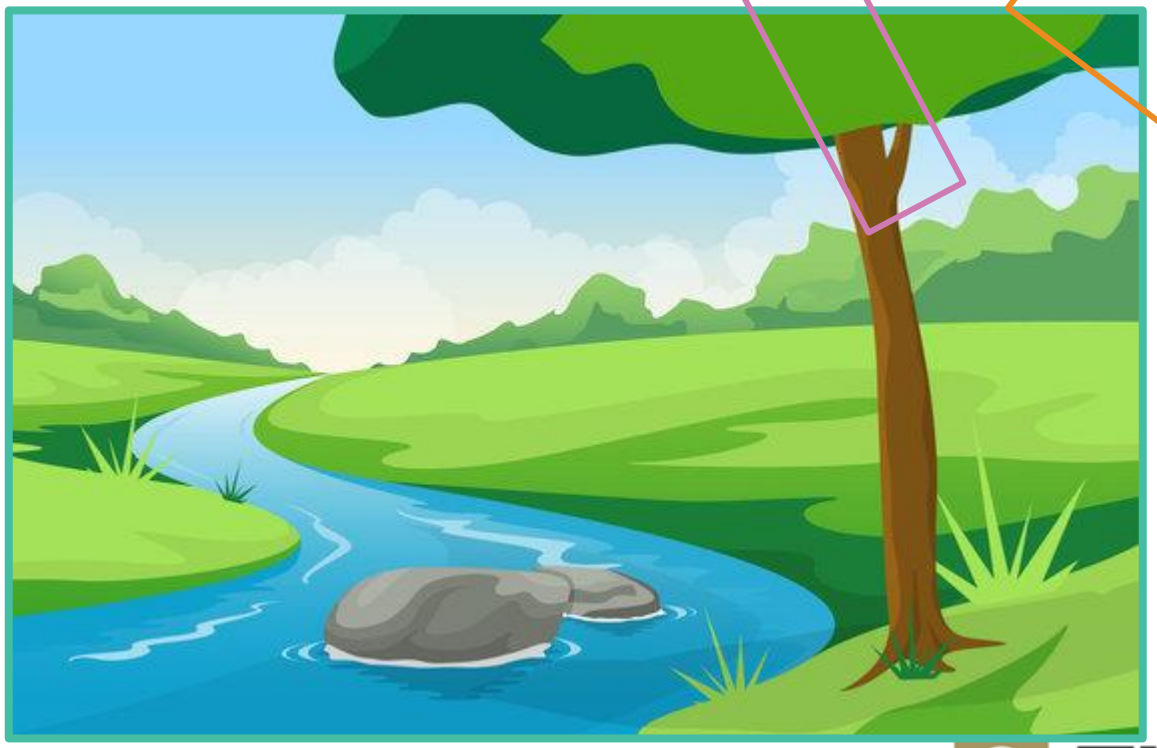
Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

Why #Founders Get Stuck 🚨

Waiting for a "perfect bridge."
Arguing over the color of the bridge, the size, the weight limits.
Meanwhile, customers are still stranded on the bank.

The #MVP is the boundary object.
It speaks #customer (pain solved).
It speaks #business (value tested).
It speaks #design (Minimum experience visible).
It speaks #tech (buildable scope with the least effort and most accessible resources.



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MVP

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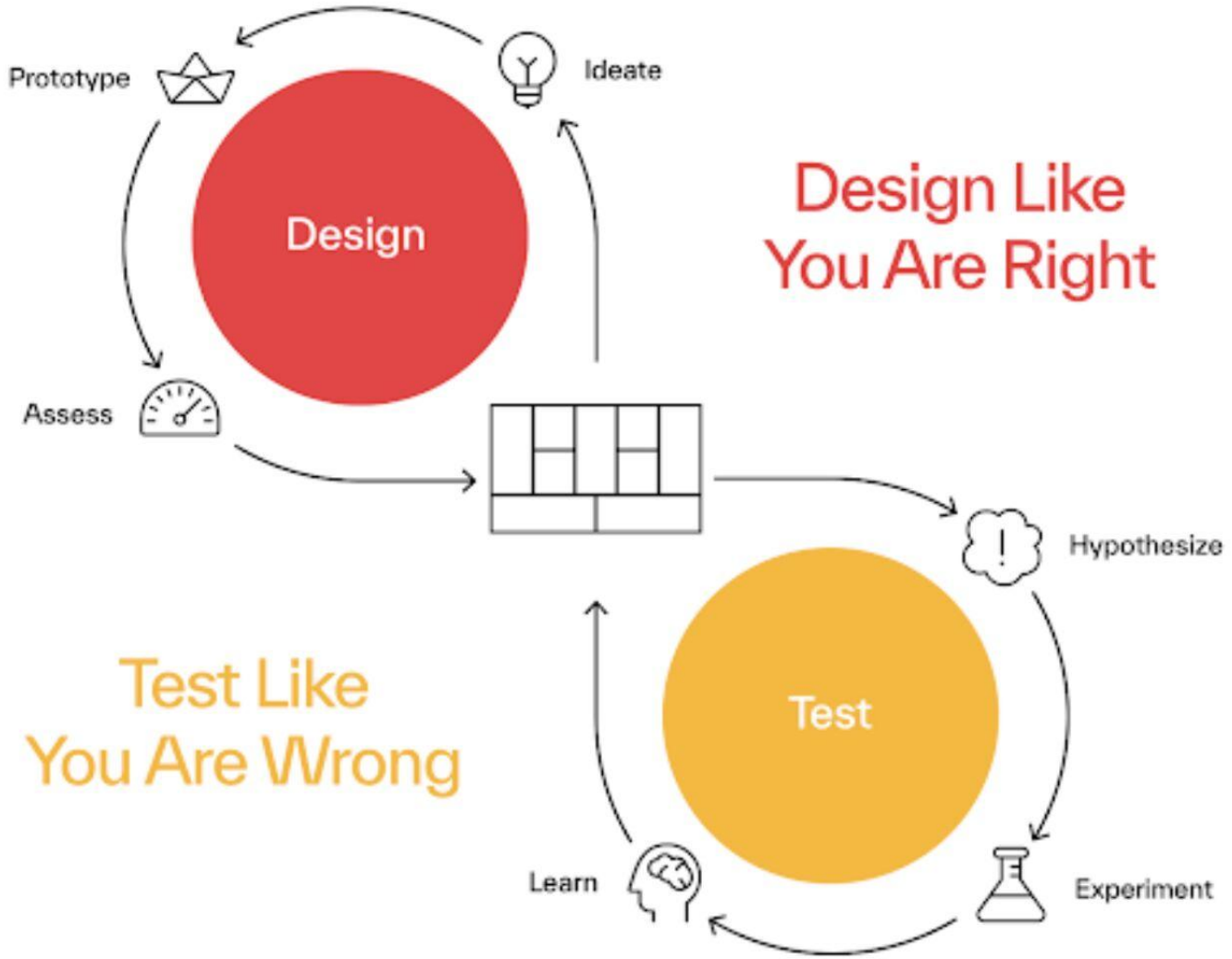

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Minimum Viable Product (MVP)

Treat as a continuous learning loop. Use feedback and insights to inform the next iterations.

Any new feature need should be scrutinised – have enough customers asked for it? Is there an ROI? etc.

Hold the problem you are solving closely.

Hold the customer closely.

Hold the solution loosely.

Build it fast – with extremely limited functionality.

It's just a base to iterate from.

Don't fall in love with your MVP.

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MVP Strategies?

Product Design – sketches, wireframes, mockups.
Landing Pages / A/B - webpage that encourages visitors to perform a desired action, e.g., QuickMVP, Unbounce, Leadpages, etc.
Demo Videos - describing what a product does in detail.
Piecemeal MVP - a collection of mini-features designed to gather feedback to improve overall product.
Wizard of Oz - looks functional from the outside, operated manually by "wizards" behind the curtain.
Concierge - Creating a customer experience and delivering value manually, where people involved are obvious to the customer.
Crowdfunding - receiving donations before the release of the app or product to assess interest / demand
Prototypes - first working product version to test viability.

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MVP Strategies?

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Example: Dropbox MVP Strategy

- **Dropbox** created a short **demo video** (3 minutes).
- Video showed how **seamless file syncing** would work, with **simple use cases** like saving to one folder and **accessing instantly** on another computer.
- The team targeted **early adopters** on forums like **Hacker News** and **Digg**.

Example: Dropbox MVP Strategy

What It Achieved

- Clearly communicated the value proposition without coding a full product
- Generated a surge of interest and a waiting list of **tens of thousands** of sign-ups overnight
- Validated **strong demand** and proved the **problem was real**
- Provided the **traction and confidence** to raise funding and build the full product

Key Lesson

- A **simple, well-crafted demonstration** can be enough to **validate product-market fit** before writing major code

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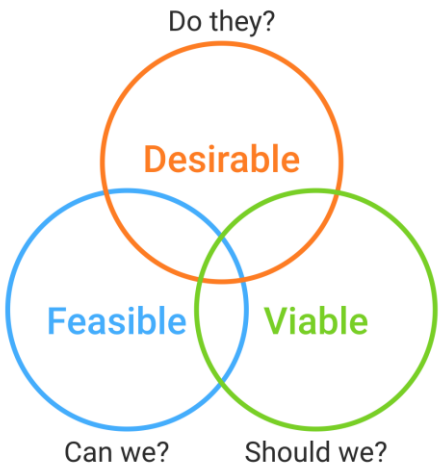
Assumptions Mapping

- Behind every new product or service
- If proven false, can make or break your initiative.
- Assumptions need to be deconstructed into specific areas to help focus experimentation.
- The entrepreneur / team needs to make these assumptions explicit and then challenge them.
- Mapping out assumptions is better when it involves cross-functional team; technical; commercial etc.
- Helps define what needs to be true for an idea to work



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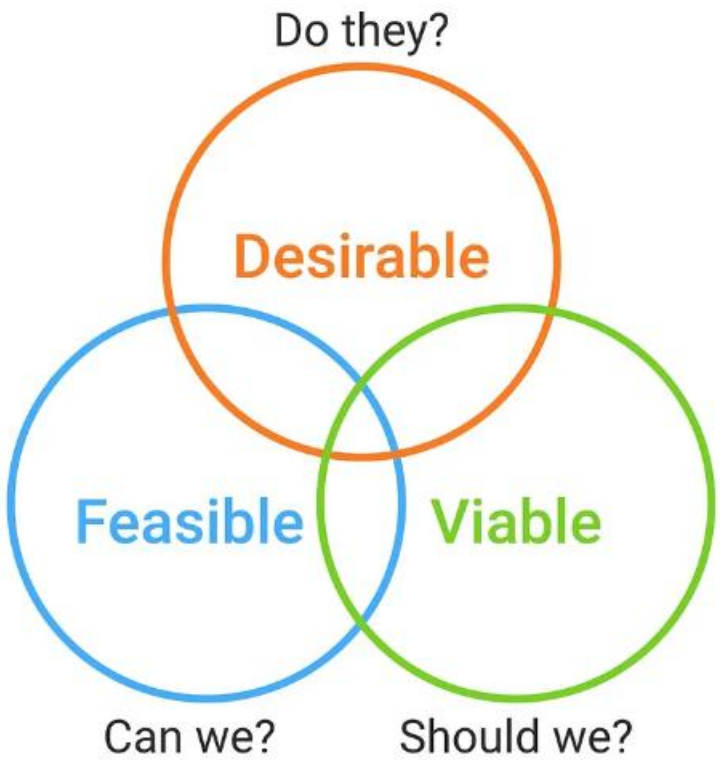
The Business Model Canvas is built upon the IDEO three lenses of human-centered design



Desirability - a product that people want or need.

Feasibility - a product that can be created with new or existing technology

Viability - a product that will be profitable

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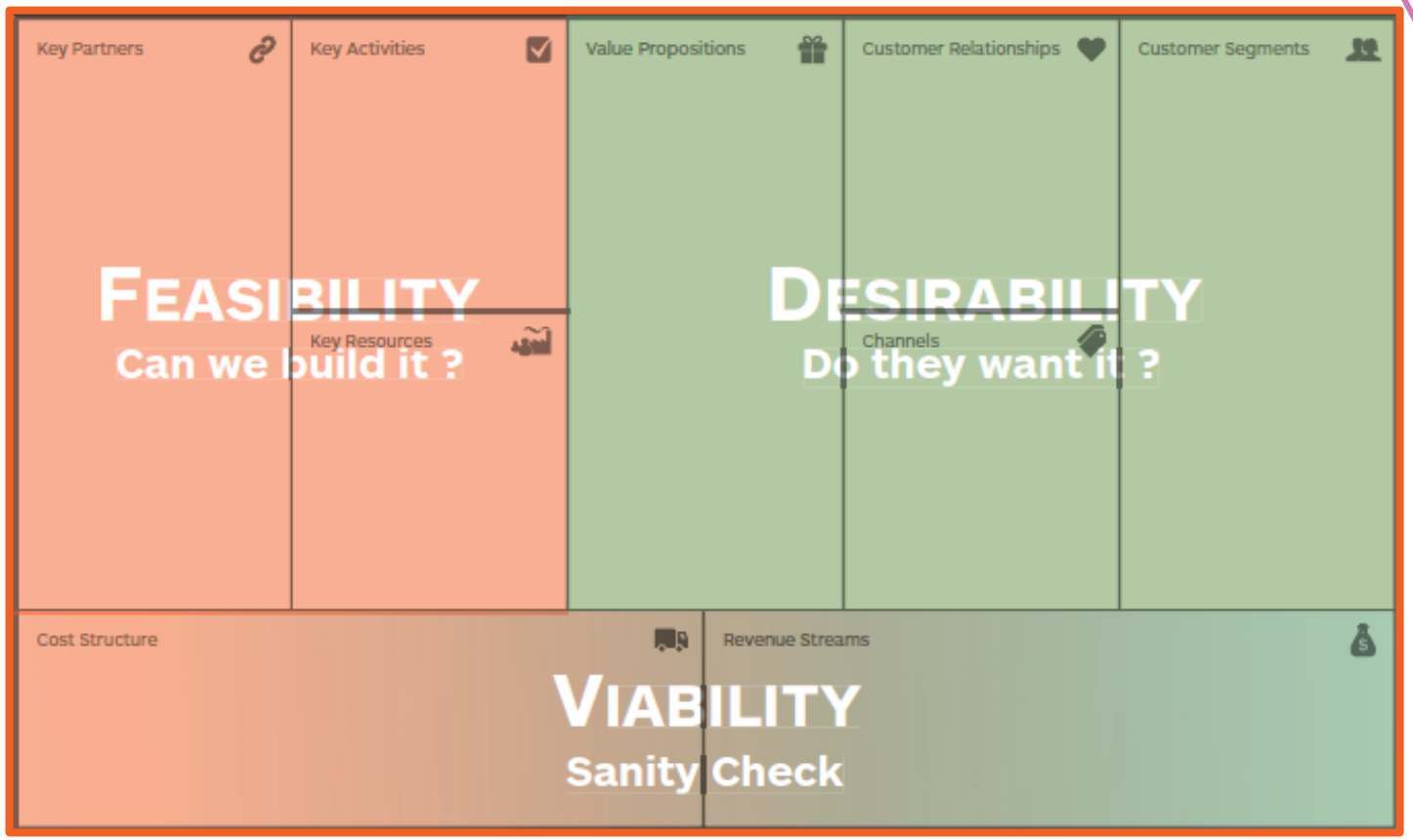
Mapping the Business Model Canvas on to the IDEO three lenses of human-centered design thinking



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Assumptions Mapping to Develop Falsifiable Hypotheses

1 Do they want this?

Write each answer on orange stickies

- Who are the target customers for our solution?
- Why can't our customers solve this problem today?
- What problem do our customers want to solve?
- What is the outcome our customers want to achieve?
- How do our customers solve this problem today?
- Why will our customers stop using their current solution?

2 Can we do this?

Write each answer on blue stickies

- What are our biggest technical or engineering challenges?
- What are our biggest legal or regulatory risks?
- What are our internal governance or policy hurdles?
- Why does our leadership team support this solution?
- Where does our funding for this solution come from?
- Why is our team is uniquely positioned to win?

3 Should we do this?

Write each answer on green stickies

- What are our main acquisition channels for obtaining customers?
- How will our customers repeatedly use our solution?
- Why will our customers refer us to new customers?
- How does this solution support our company vision?
- Who are our primary competitors to our solution?
- How will our solution generate revenue?

4 Assumptions Mapping

Map your answers from the left onto the graph below. Create evaluative experiments from the top right. Create generative experiments from the bottom right. Check the top left against your plan. Defer commitment on the bottom left.

David J Bland

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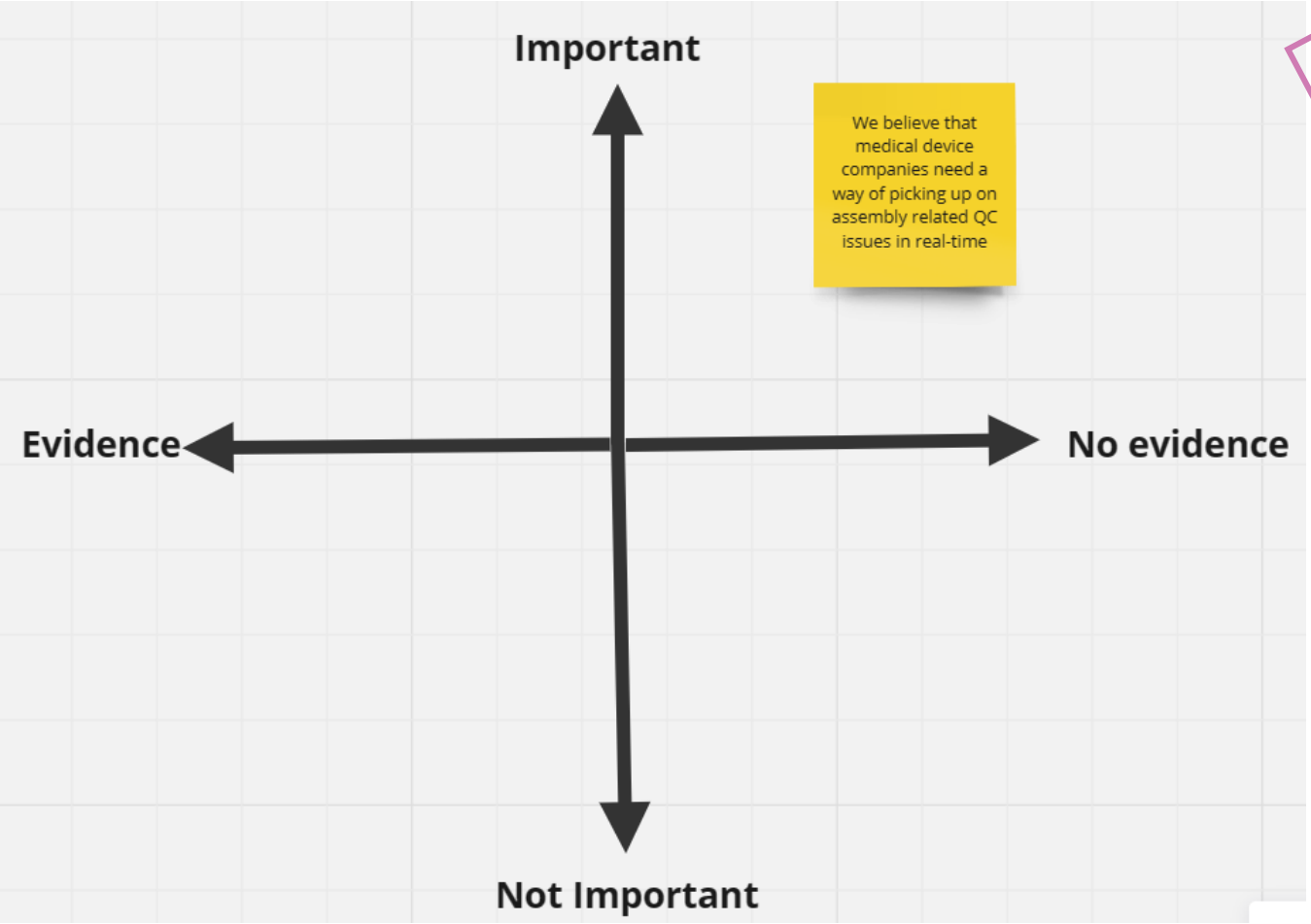
Assumptions Mapping



Creating assumptions that can be converted into testable hypotheses.

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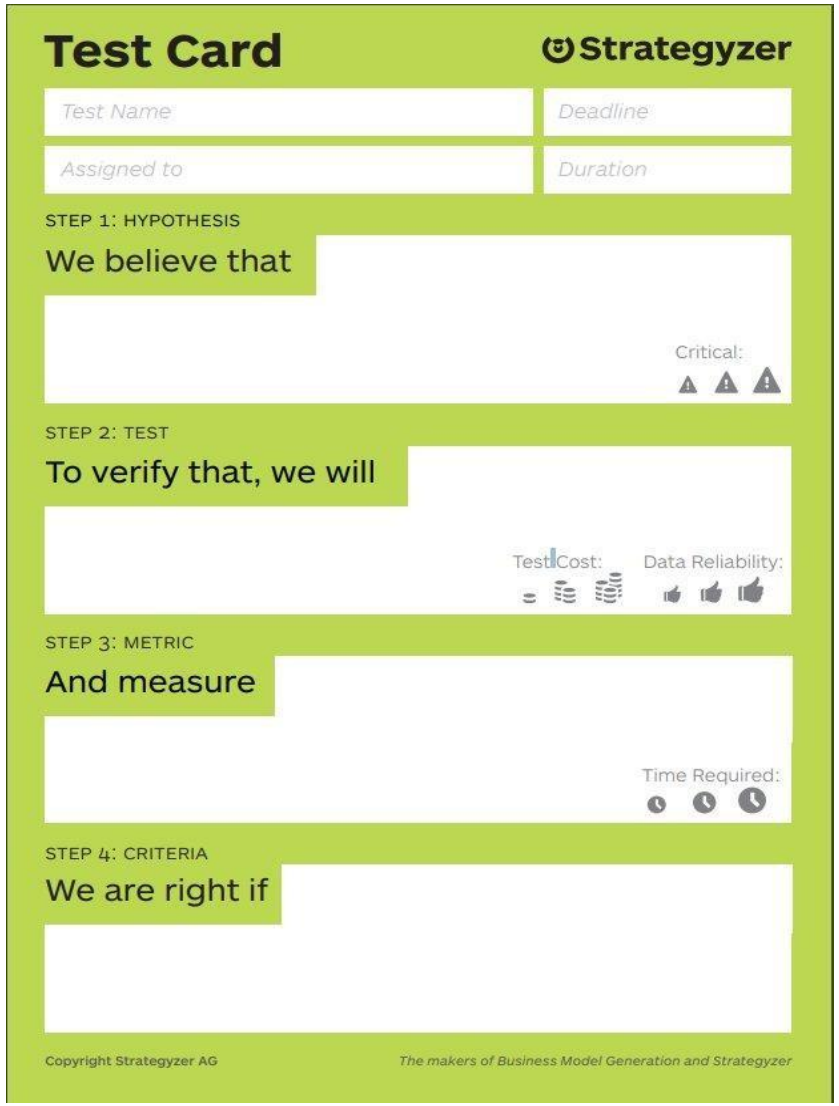
Strategyzer Test card

To determine 'What needs to be true for an idea to work'



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Running experiments

Start performing experiments at the top of the list in order of critical importance.

"What needs to be true for your idea to work?"

If the first experiments invalidate the most critical hypothesis, you might need to go back to the drawing board and rethink your ideas.

Early experiments should be *fast*!

As well as Testable, Precise and Discrete.

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Commercialisation Fund Network Event 1-Customer Discovery, November 23rd 2023.

Project Code: CF-2022-1986-I

3D Structured Hollow Microneedle Array Device for Transdermal Drug Delivery

Jufan Zhang, Lorcan O'Toole, Haixia Li, Fengzhou Fang, Wenxin Wang
Centre of Micro/Nano Manufacturing Technology, University College Dublin

Eimear O'Keeffe - Senior Commercialisation Specialist, EI
Hugh Hayden – UCD Technology Transfer Officer

I. Unmet Needs

- Safe & reliable self-administration
- Dosing errors
- Accidental needlestick injuries
- Safe disposal & recycle of needles
- Needle phobia

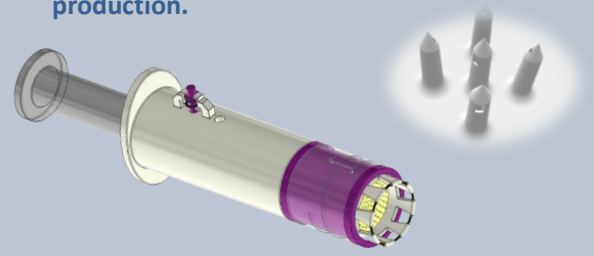
II. Limitations of Current Microneedles

- Current devices low volume, <2mL in 4-5 mins,
- Need for patient self-administration,
- Underdeveloped manufacturing process chain.

Drug/Type	Viscosity	Volume (mL)	Injection Time
Cimzia®*	~80 cp	0.5-0.9 mL	1-2 minutes
Monoclonal AB	~20 cp	1 mL	3-5 minutes
Protein	~20 cp	2 mL	2-4 minutes

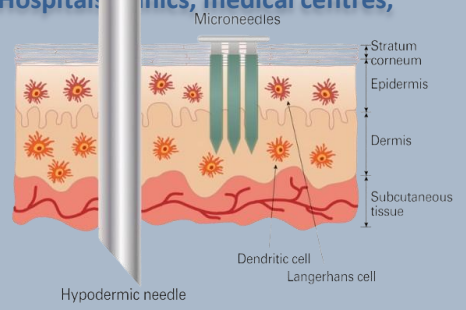
III. Solution

- An innovative 3D-structured hollow microneedle device for improving the liquid delivery and mitigate skin saturation.
- Modeling and analysis of microneedle-skin interactions and liquid diffusion in skin tissues for optimizing the injection process.
- Cost-effective micro injection molding and modular assembly process chain for mass production.



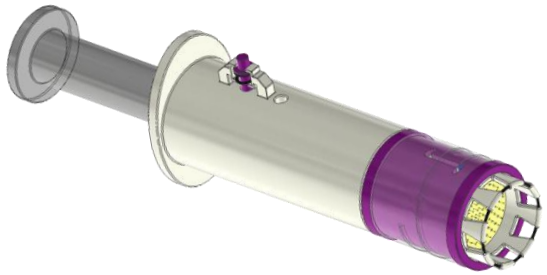
IV. End Users

- Patients requiring frequent self-administration,
- Parents for taking care of children at home,
- Needle phobia sufferers,
- Self-injection of vaccines during pandemic to prevent virus spreading,
- Pharmaceutical companies for customized injection solutions,
- Healthcare personnel for easier and better practice (less accidental needle injury, higher dose accuracy, easier waster management),
- Hospitals, clinics, medical centres,



Test Card for 3D Structured Microneedle Device?

What needs to be true for this business idea to work?



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Test Card for 3D Structured Microneedle Device?

Test Card - Patient Acceptance
HYPOTHESIS
We believe that Patients (type) experience self-administration safety issues, dosing errors and accidental needlestick injuries.
TEST
To verify that, we will produce a landing page asking if patients are experiencing these explicit issues and inviting Email signup to a solution that addresses them.
METRIC
This will be measured by the number of visitors that the landing page will receive and the number of Email signups.
CRITERIA
We will know this is true when 15 out of every 100 Patients who visit the landing page sign up with a valid Email address. (Interview them as a follow up)

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Test Card Examples for Wastewater Heat Recovery (WWHR)?

Test Card – Food Companies Adoption
HYPOTHESIS
We believe that food processing businesses have a strong desire to reduce their CO2 emissions associated with hot water discharge and are actively seeking solutions.
TEST
To verify that, we will perform keyword research in the key UK geographic markets.
METRIC
This will be measured by the number of online searches on selected keywords and phrases each month on search engines.
CRITERIA
We are right if the search volume for related keywords and phrases is over 50 searches per month.

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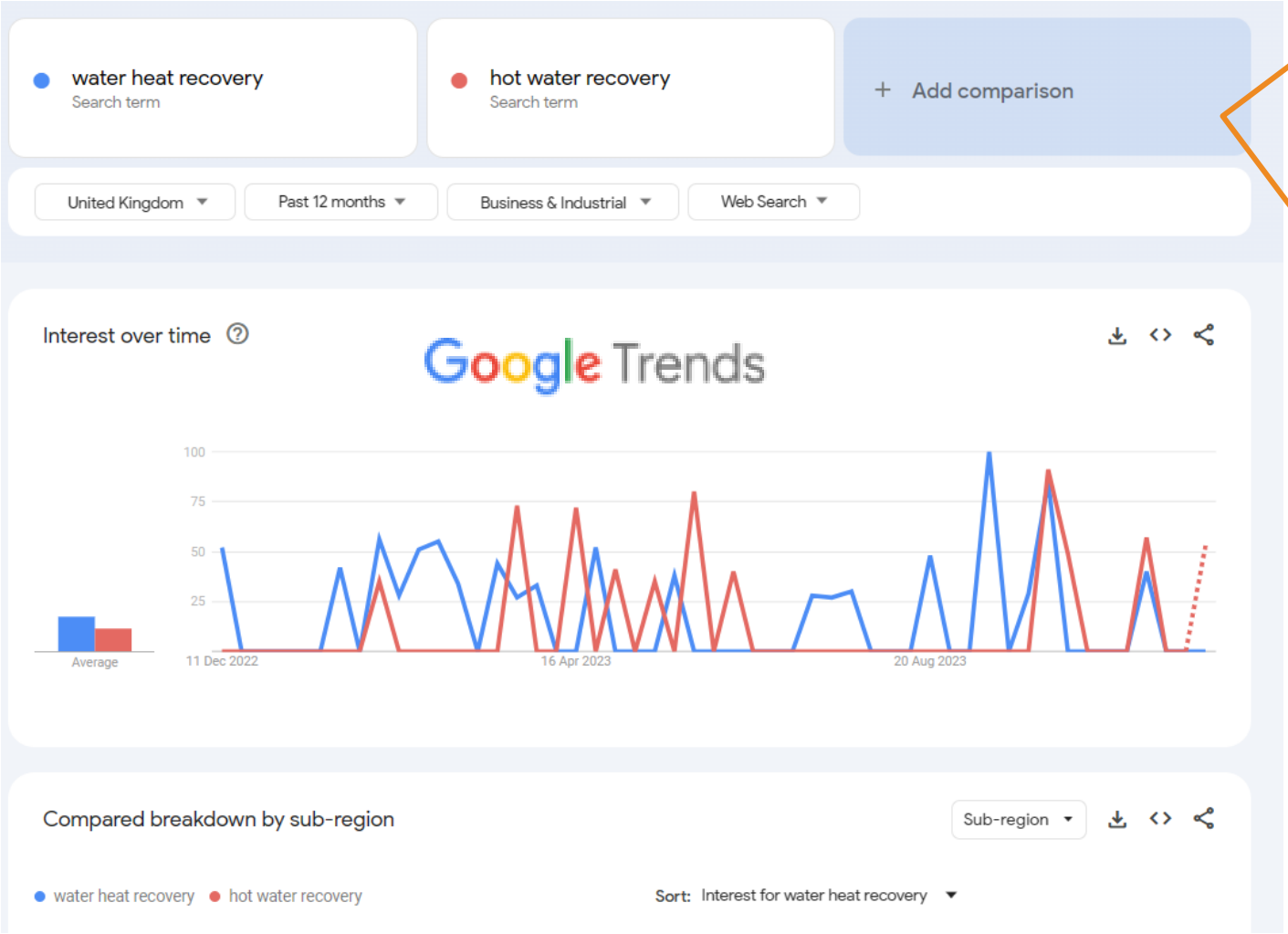
Google trends – key word search



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Experiments need to be: Testable

A hypothesis is testable when it can be shown true (validated) or false (invalidated), based on evidence (and guided by experience).

🙈

We believe that Generation Z prefers pop-up stores over branches.

😀

We believe that young adults between 18-24 will spend more time in temporary pop-up stores that are placed in co-working spaces, compared to traditional banking branches.

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Experiments need to be: Precise

Your hypothesis is precise when you know what success looks like. Ideally, it describes the precise what, who, and when of your assumptions.

🙈

We believe that young adults don’t plan for their future.

😀

We believe that the majority of young adults between 18-24 don’t save more than $100 per month for their retirement.

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Experiments need to be: Discrete

Your hypothesis is discrete when it describes only one distinct, testable, and precise thing you want to investigate.

🙈

We believe that our digital platform helps us increase conversion rates and save money in call centres.

😀

1. **We believe that** our digital platform will help us increase conversion rates by 25%.
2. **We believe that** our digital platform will help us save $200M in call centres over 3 years.

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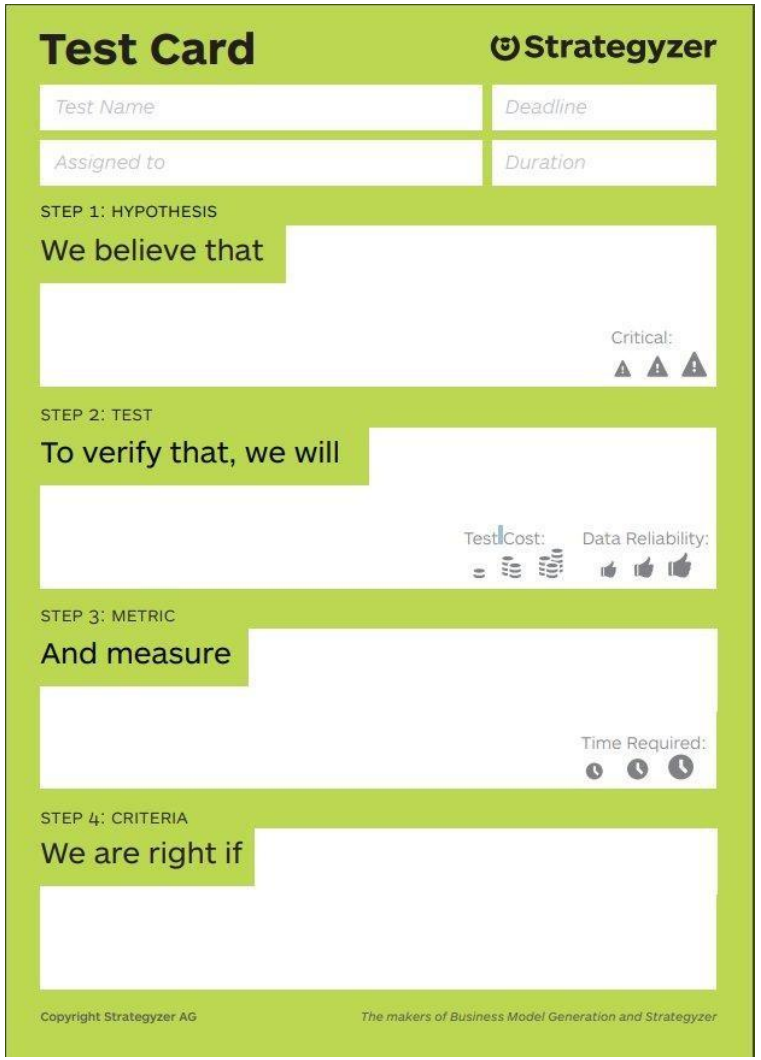
Test card

Exercise:

"What needs to be true for your idea to work?"



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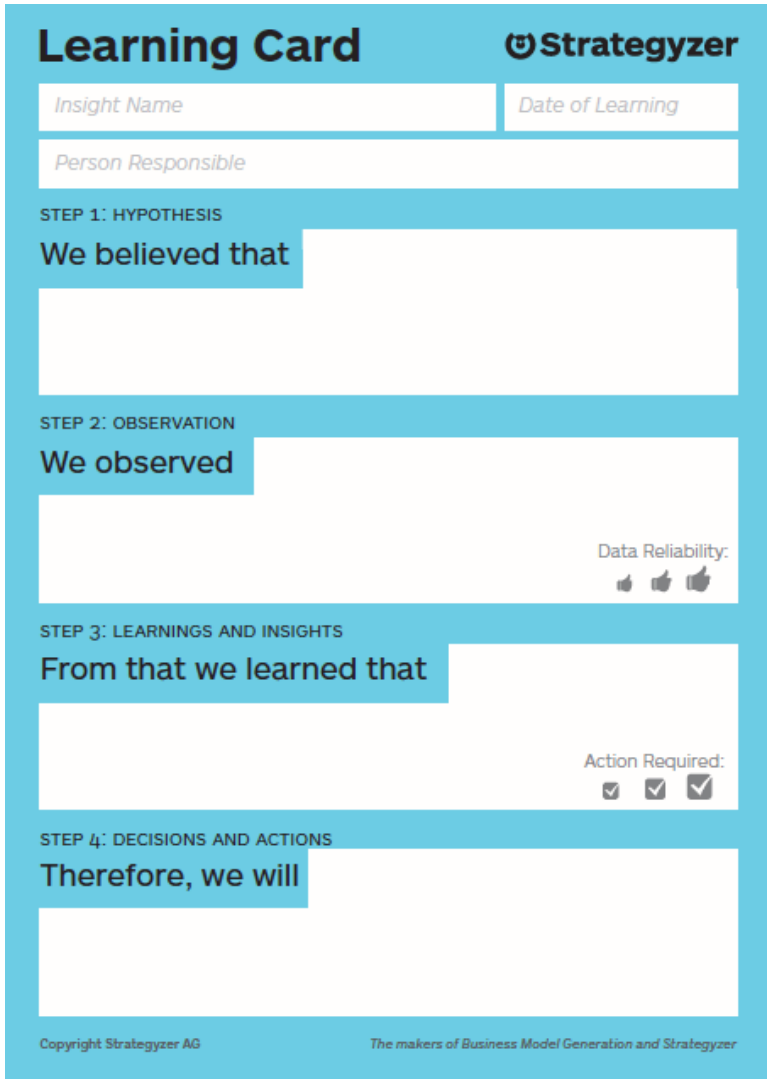
Learning card

For reporting back to a team, the Strategyzer Learning Card is a nice summary of findings.


Learning Card

Strategyzer

Insight Name

Date of Learning

Person Responsible

STEP 1: HYPOTHESIS

We believed that

STEP 2: OBSERVATION

We observed

Data Reliability:

STEP 3: LEARNINGS AND INSIGHTS

From that we learned that

Action Required:

STEP 4: DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

Therefore, we will

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The makers of Business Model Generation and Strategyzer

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Early-Stage Customer Acquisition Reality

- There is no such thing as inbound sales for an early-stage startup.
- Early customers are **won, not found** through active outreach and personal selling.
- Brand recognition, SEO, and inbound marketing won't deliver meaningful leads at the start.
- Founders must be the driving force in getting the first customers.

Early-stage success depends on **hunting, not waiting**. Combine founder-led outreach, clear messaging, and targeted trial partners to validate, refine, and prove your solution before scaling acquisition.

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Founder-Led Sales Are Critical at the early stage.

Authentic Product-Market Fit Discovery: Only founders can pivot quickly based on conversations.

Unfiltered Market Feedback: Direct contact gives insights that scripted sales teams often miss.

Credibility and Vision: Prospects buy the founder's belief in solving their evolving problems.

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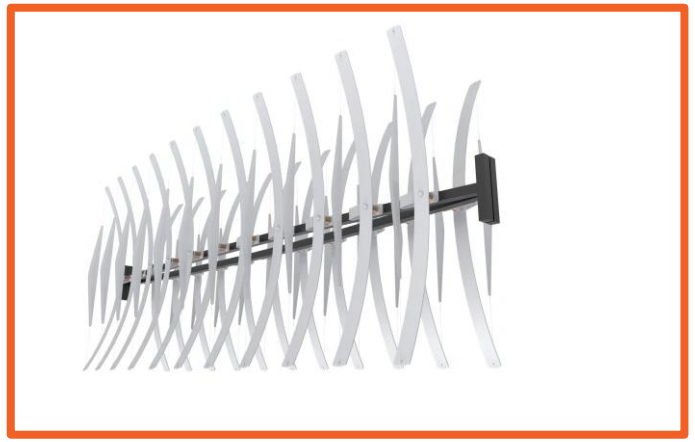
Phases of Early Customer Work

Phase 1 – Problem Validation

50–100 conversations about customer pains before you build.
Consultative tone, not a sales pitch.
Goal: confirm that the problem is urgent and valuable to solve.

Phase 2 – Solution Validation

Present an MVP to the same contacts.
Invite them to test and shape the solution.
Sell the *vision* and partnership, not just features.



Phase 3 – Commercial Validation

Convert interest into paying customers.
Product only needs to be “good enough” to deliver value.
Keep founder at the center of sales until the process is repeatable.

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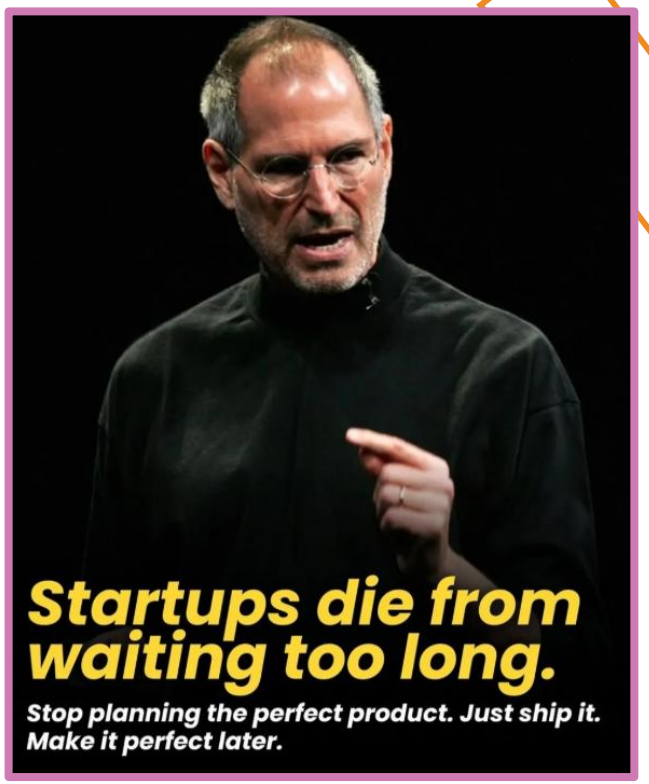
Common Early-Stage Sales Mistakes

- Waiting for **product perfection before selling.**
- Delegating sales **too early**.
- **Confusing interest with buying intent.**
- Spending **too long on lukewarm prospects.**
- Selling features **instead of business outcomes.**



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Customer Acquisition Channels (Early)

Direct founder outreach (email, LinkedIn, calls, events).

Warm intros via investors, advisors, early champions.

Industry communities, forums, and **niche events**.

Targeted pilots or **trial partner** programmes.

Select PR or thought leadership **ONLY after early traction**.

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Messaging Principles for Early Sales

- Focus on the **customer's pain and outcomes**, not product specs.
- Keep messages short, specific, and **framed around value**.
- Use **stories and examples** from early pilots or trials.
- Always link conversations to **measurable benefits.**

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Trial Partner Strategy

- Recruit a small set of **early users willing to co-create** with you.
- Offer **early access, influence on roadmap**, and **close support**.
- Use **structured pilots** to **prove value quickly**.
- Aim for **referenceable results** you can share with prospects.
- Keep agreements clear: **scope**, timeline, **expectations**, and **mutual benefits**.

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Trial partners

A **trial partner** is an early, carefully chosen customer who agrees to work closely with you while you're still shaping your product.

Collaborates with the founding team to:

Validate the problem and solution – confirm that the pain is real and your proposed fix works.

Co-create features – give candid feedback on prototypes, workflows, and priorities.

Prove value – run early pilots or trials and help measure impact in their environment.

Build credibility – become a reference customer or case study once results are delivered.

A good trial-partner arrangement is time-boxed and clearly scoped: they get early access and influence; you get fast learning and proof.

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Transitioning to Scalable Sales

Only involve salespeople after:

- The founder has **closed multiple deals** directly.
- The Ideal **Customer Profile is clear** and documented.
- The buyer journey is **mapped from first contact to close**.
- **Key messages** and **proof points** are validated.
- Then teach others to **replicate what already works**
- Early-stage success depends on **hunting, not waiting**.

Combine **founder-led outreach**, **clear messaging**, and **targeted trial partners** to validate, refine, and prove your solution **before** transitioning to scalable sales.

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