

Validate Your Business Idea

An original, practical workbook from Readrr.ai

Test the idea before the big commitment.

A seven-day research sprint for checking the problem, speaking to potential customers and choosing the next small test.

What you will leave with

A customer interview record, an evidence scorecard and a continue, change or pause decision.

A manageable commitment

Seven days; allow time to recruit and speak with customers

Seven guided exercises. A completed example. Two reusable templates. Fillable spaces for your own work.

Keep a blank master copy. Save a new copy for each project or month.

Start here

Use one real task or decision throughout. Work in order the first time, then reuse the templates.

For first-time founders and side-project builders deciding whether an idea deserves more time and money.

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How to use the fields

Open the downloaded file in a PDF reader that supports forms. Type into a box, save a copy, close it and reopen it to confirm your answers were saved. If your reader does not support forms, print the worksheet or keep answers in a separate private document.

A useful standard

Write a first version, test it against reality and revise. A short specific answer beats a polished answer that avoids the hard question.

A small research sprint reduces some uncertainty; it cannot prove market demand or guarantee a viable business.

Should Arun build a booking tool?

Worked example | fictional people and illustrative numbers, not a customer result or testimonial.

The assumption

Arun thinks independent tutors lose paid lessons because rescheduling across messages is difficult. He has not yet established that the problem is frequent or costly.

The test before the tool

He writes a falsifiable claim: among six tutors interviewed, at least three will describe two or more recent rescheduling problems and show an existing workaround. This is an exploratory threshold chosen in advance, not a market statistic.

The conversations

He asks about the last rescheduled lesson, the steps involved and what happened next. He does not start by describing his app. He requests permission before recording or keeping identifiable notes.

Mixed illustrative evidence

Two report frequent scheduling problems, three say current calendar links work well, and one mainly struggles with cancellations. The sample is small and recruited through Arun's network.

A smaller next step

Rather than building, Arun proposes a manual rescheduling service to the two tutors with the problem, with explicit scope and consent. One agrees to try it; the other declines because parents would need to change habits.

The decision

Change the segment and investigate parent participation. Do not claim the idea is validated. Keep the contradictory evidence and set a two-week limit for the next experiment.

Write the risky assumption

Exercise 1 of 7 | Day 1

An idea contains several assumptions: a customer exists, a problem matters, your approach helps, someone will pay and you can deliver economically. Test the assumption that would make the rest irrelevant if it were false.

1. List five assumptions about customer, problem, current alternative, willingness to act and delivery.
2. Mark which are supported by direct observation and which are guesses.
3. Choose one high-impact, weakly supported assumption and describe what would contradict it.

A concrete example

If tutors already solve rescheduling cheaply and easily, a new booking interface may not matter. That deserves a test before the feature list.

My five assumptions

The riskiest assumption and existing evidence

An observation that would contradict it

Ready to move on: Your first test could change your mind.

Recruit for relevance

Exercise 2 of 7 | Day 2

Relevant participants have recently experienced the situation you are investigating. Friends who want to encourage you are convenient but can hide the weak points. Record how you recruited so you can interpret the bias later.

1. Describe a narrow participant profile and a recent qualifying behavior.
2. Identify two places to find people; prepare a short research invitation without promising a solution.
3. Aim for five or six exploratory conversations. Track nonresponses and avoid claiming the sample represents the whole market.

A concrete example

Invite tutors who personally handled at least one schedule change in the past month, rather than anyone interested in education apps.

Who qualifies and why

Where I will recruit; invitation draft

Recruitment log and likely sample bias

Ready to move on: Your participants have direct experience of the situation.

Ask about the last time

Exercise 3 of 7 | Day 3

Stories about actual behavior reveal steps, workarounds and consequences. Predictions about a hypothetical future are easier to flatter. Ask permission, keep questions neutral and allow someone to say the problem does not matter.

1. Open with purpose, expected duration, voluntary participation and note-taking permission.
2. Ask: "Tell me about the last time [event] happened." Follow with steps, consequence, frequency and what they tried.
3. Ask what works well today and what they would keep. Do not pitch until the problem conversation is finished.

A concrete example

"How did you handle your last schedule change?" is more useful than "Would you use an app that saves hours?"

Interview opener and consent note

Five neutral questions about recent behavior

What I will avoid leading them toward

Ready to move on: Your questions allow answers that undermine the idea.

Keep an evidence record

Exercise 4 of 7 | Day 4

A useful research note separates a participant's statement, an observed behavior and your interpretation. Preserve contradictions. Several similar opinions from one social circle still offer limited evidence.

1. For each conversation, log the situation, last occurrence, workaround and consequence.
2. Label each note as observed, reported or inferred. Keep identifiers only where necessary and with consent.
3. Summarize repeating patterns and counterexamples. Mark missing information explicitly.

A concrete example

"Uses a calendar link" is reported behavior. "Would pay for automation" is an inference unless they actually commit under clear terms.

Strongest supporting observations

Contradictory evidence and missing information

What is reported vs observed vs inferred

Ready to move on: A second person could see how you reached your interpretation.

Test a smaller commitment

Exercise 5 of 7 | Day 5

Choose the least costly experiment that probes the assumption you still do not understand. A manual demonstration, a scheduled pilot or a clearly labeled interest page may be enough. Do not collect money for an unavailable product without explicit terms and a fulfillment plan.

1. Choose one assumption and an observable next action from a relevant customer.
2. Set the experiment scope, time limit, cost cap and success/failure signal in advance.
3. Explain honestly what exists, what is experimental, what data you keep and any pilot terms.

A concrete example

A tutor agrees to a scheduled manual trial next Tuesday and provides the minimum needed schedule details with consent. This is stronger than an anonymous "sounds good".

Experiment and customer action

Time limit, cost cap and decision threshold

What I will explain to participants

Ready to move on: The experiment is small enough to stop and clear enough to interpret.

Check the delivery reality

Exercise 6 of 7 | Day 6

Interest is only one part of a business. A simple delivery check can expose a service that costs more to provide than it earns or requires permissions you cannot obtain. Use ranges when the numbers are uncertain.

1. Estimate a plausible test price, direct cost, time per customer and likely support burden.
2. Calculate contribution before overhead: price minus variable costs and transaction fees. Show assumptions and currency.
3. List operational dependencies, data needs and any specialist advice or permissions required before a paid launch.

A concrete example

Illustrative pilot: \$30 price minus \$3 fees/tools leaves \$27 before labor, overhead and tax. At two hours per customer, the manual version is a research expense rather than a proven scalable model.

Price, variable costs and time estimate

Contribution calculation and uncertainties

Dependencies and issues to resolve before launch

Ready to move on: You know which delivery assumption needs testing next.

Decide: continue, change or pause

Exercise 7 of 7 | Day 7

The purpose of a sprint is a better next decision, not a validation badge. Compare evidence with the rule you wrote before the test. If you change the rule, document why so optimism does not silently move the finish line.

1. Review supporting evidence, contradictions, behavior and delivery feasibility separately.
2. Choose continue, change or pause; write the strongest reason against your own decision.
3. Set a bounded next experiment with a date, spend cap and stop condition. If evidence is weak, say so.

A concrete example

Arun changes the segment and tests parent participation for two weeks. He does not begin a three-month build based on one trial.

My decision and the evidence behind it

Strongest counterargument and remaining uncertainty

Next test, date, budget and stop rule

Ready to move on: You have a bounded next step, including a credible reason to stop.

Your customer interview script

Allow 20 minutes. Ask follow-ups about concrete events. Participation and note-taking should be voluntary.

Opening

I am researching [situation], not selling today. Is now still a good time? May I take notes? You may skip any question.

Your notes: Opening

Recent experience

Tell me about the last time [event]. What happened first? Then what? How often has that happened recently?

Your notes: Recent experience

Alternatives and consequences

What did you try? What worked? What did it cost in time or money? What happens if you leave it as it is?

Your notes: Alternatives and consequences

Close and record

What have I missed? May I follow up about [specific next step]? Log date / segment / reported behavior / observation / inference.

Your notes: Close and record

Your evidence scorecard

Use Strong, Mixed or Weak as a prompt for judgment; do not add the labels into a pseudo-scientific score.

Problem evidence

Recent repeated behavior / costly consequence / current workaround / contrary cases

Your notes: Problem evidence

Commitment evidence

Specific actions taken / terms understood / follow-through / reasons for declining

Your notes: Commitment evidence

Delivery evidence

Cost range / time range / support needs / key dependencies / uncertainty

Your notes: Delivery evidence

Decision rule

Continue/change/pause / reason / strongest counterargument / next test / deadline / stop condition

Your notes: Decision rule

Finish with a useful next step

Return to the output you wanted at the beginning. What can you actually use now?

☐ Did I preserve evidence against my idea?

☐ Did anyone take a concrete next step?

☐ Does my next commitment match the strength of the evidence?

The useful thing I produced; where it is saved

One uncertainty or limitation I should keep in view

My next action, date and evidence I will review

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Reading, use and context

The exercises, examples and templates in this workbook are original Readrr.ai editorial material.

This is a practical companion, not a reproduction of the books listed below. The reading suggestions offer broader context; they do not endorse this product or establish that these particular exercises produce a guaranteed result.

Optional further reading

Rob Fitzpatrick, The Mom Test - further reading on customer interviews.

Eric Ries, The Lean Startup - further reading on bounded experiments.

Steve Blank and Bob Dorf, The Startup Owner's Manual - further reading on customer discovery.

Use the right tool for the decision

A small research sprint reduces some uncertainty; it cannot prove market demand or guarantee a viable business.

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