3 Ways to Validate Your Startup Ideas

This guide is available on the **Startups With No Code** website created by Eric Pannell. Be sure to follow me on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **Twitter**.

Be sure to download or print this out and use as a guide to validate your business idea to eliminate wasting time and money. Email me at eric@startupswithnocode.com let me know how it's going.

Feel free to share it using this link to help others: CLICK HERE

The traditional way of starting a business with an extensive business plan has proven to be a thing of the past (for most businesses).

Taking the approach of working backwards by "validating" your business idea (or customer problem) by finding customers first will allow you to eliminate wasting time and money. I've made this awful and frustrating mistake in the past.

So I've created this for you so that you don't make the same mistakes I did. Enjoy!

Here are the 6 different ways we will discuss:

1. Face-to-Face
2. Landing Pages
3. Meetup.com

Face-to-Face Interviews

Tools Needed:

- Running Lean - by Ash Maurya
- Customer Development by Cindy Alvarez
- Interview Script Template
- Customer Development Tracker

Where can I find early customers to talk to?

I know what you're thinking right now…. In your mind you're saying 1 of 2 things (probably both). 1- where am I going to find people to talk to or 2 – you're saying I'm not good at sales.

Let me take a lot of weight off you now… you're not selling anything at this stage because you don't have anything to sell and this is just a validation conversation. Keep this in mind.

Friends & Family

Whenever I come up with an idea the very first thing I do is call up my friends and family. I've been doing this long enough now that they pretty much expect this call.

VERY IMPORTANT: Focus on the problem your idea solves NOT the idea or solution itself.

When I first started validating a furniture moving company, I called my friends/family and asked them flat out…

The problem we are solving is helping customers save time, money, and frustration with moving furniture from their home.

"How do you go out about moving furniture today?" I got different type of answers

- *Oh… I have when I have to do this – I usually rent a U-Haul which I hate*
- *I use my own truck*
- *I call my friend or someone in my family to use their truck.*

Can you guess which response lets me know that I'm on to something with my idea?

But here is the truth…. You're never going to truly validate your idea just by talking to friends and family. You MUST talk to people you don't know as well.

Your mom will tell you everything you do is great and not tell you the truth, people that don't know you will tell you the truth and tell you your idea sucks and they don't need it…… that's a good thing

So here is how you find people to talk to:

- ✓ Coffee Shops
- ✓ Networking events
- ✓ Niche events with customers that can use your idea (accountants, attorneys, etc)
- ✓ Strike up a conversation in the store

The books above that I provided in the tools section completely helped me to not only get over my fears of face-to-face customer development (which I now love) but also gave me the tools to execute and know EXACTLY what to do!

What do I say to the people I'm talking to:

Shift your mindset from a selling and telling mindset to that of a mindset of listening and learning.

Your job at this stage is asking the "right" questions that will help you get the useful information you need to validate if your customers are facing the problem you've identified – PERIOD!

After you've gotten past the small talk, let's dive into the first and important question to set the tone.

What's the hardest part about xxxxx?

The importance of this question is it's open-ended, and allows the customer to tell you how difficult it is to do a task, etc.

Let's say you're validating if people that love craft beer have a hard time choosing the beer when they go to the bar.

Your question would be – "What's the hardest part about choosing a craft beer when you go to the bar?"

The response you hear from this question sets everything up for the rest of the interview.

If they say, I really don't have a problem I choose the same beer every time... then they are likely not in your target market.

However... if they say things like, "I feel so stupid and embarrassed because I want to be more knowledgeable when I order, or just choose based on cost, or ask my friends"

Now you're onto something.

Use the template that I attached above as a guide for the types of questions you should ask.

Take-aways:

- Grab the books Running Lean and Customer Development
- Use the Customer Development Interview Template
- Use the Customer Development Tracker

Landing Pages

Tools:

- Strikingly
- Bubble Visual Programming
- Snappa or Canva
- **OPTIONAL:** Aweber or Mailchimp

CAUTION: Landing pages by itself, in most cases will NOT give you the information you need to validate your business idea.

Things that will validate your idea is customer credit/debit purchases and looping back to the previous section is meeting face-to-face or even on the phone.

There are tons of options out that but I'm going to share what I personally use and what has worked for me and I'm still using today.

Benefit of using Landing Pages

Little to no technical skills needed, fast set-up, little to no cost, and because it's on the internet so you can reach a massive amount of potential customers that your idea could serve.

You can collect emails, redirect your users to a survey (we will get into this later) and/or set up a loop to get them on the phone (major plus).

There are some other factors like the right copy to put on our landing pages but I will not dive deep into that for this guide.

Your landing page should look professional

There are tons of landing pages on the internet so you will need to make sure your page stands out with designs and

This means your designs or images need to look appealing to those that visit your page.

Option 1 – Do it Yourself

I'm all about doing things myself – faster turnaround for me and cheaper which allows me to keep things lean. Remember we're not spending a lot of time and money on these ideas initially.

I personally love to use Snapp and Canva. These are drag-n-drop platforms to create images that looks professional and will get the job done to validate your idea.

Option 2 – Outsource very cheap

If you're not comfortable with creating your own design or images, you can always get cheap and quick work done by using Fiverr. This platform has a collection of talent to get things done for $5 or a little more, things like logos, fix a website, video production and more.

I still use Fiverr today to save myself some time, but for the most part I create images myself.

Where should I place my landing page?

Very simple, you want to place your landing page where your ideal customers are congregating

Places to share your landing page (free and low cost):

- Your email list
- Facebook timeline
- Facebook groups (great for niche ideas)
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Reddit
- Qura
- Facebook Ads (we will talk more about this)
- Blog posts (SEO – a little advanced)

Keys to posting in these forums:

Be sure not to spam people your link all over the place. Focus on being interactive in the group and not just focused on your idea.

Looking for openings to share your like based on the types of questions being asked. Trust me I've made this mistake and gotten booted out of forums before….. trust me you don't want that to happen to you.

Cool….so how do I get started using Landing Pages:

1. Sign up with Strikingly
2. Set up a Snappa and Canva account
   a. I use the paid version for both – gives me more functionality

You will get better with these sites by repetition. Hop in and play around with them. Create some images, create some landing pages.

Step out there and get your idea out there for people to respond to.

How do I know my idea is validated with a landing page

The landing page is meant to attract your ideal customers with the purpose of getting them on the phone. REMEMBER: collect names and emails are great but you MUST get people on the phone.

Strikingly gives allows you to see a full list of the people that have provided their name and email address. Additionally you can send an email to get them on the phone.

Take-aways:

- Set up your accounts
- Hop in and play around
- Choose 1 or 2 platforms to post your landing page into
- Remember be interactive, and contribute to the groups – DON'T SPAM
- Get people on the phone

Sample pages I've created:

The V Sports Bar

Virtual Sports Bar Coming Soon... Sign Up Now!

Never watch the BIG GAME alone with our virtual sports bar. Talk trash, cheer, & earn cash!

| Name | Email | **REQUEST INVITE** |

FITNEXT

FITNESS PROFESSIONALS!

FITNESS PROFESSIONALS!

Join this simple solution to generate more income and add more customers to your fitness business... without paying money out of pocket!

| Name | Email | **GET NOTIFIED!** |

FOODIO

Home Cooking Professionals!

You do the cooking and allow us to bring you the customers looking for your meals!

FOODIO

| Name | Email | **Request Access!** |

Meetup.com

Anyone that's looking to launch a startup should definitely have a Meetup account – *YES YOU INCLUDED.*

I attend at least one Meetup group meeting a week for the sole purpose to expand my network.

Joining Meetups and attending meetup group meetings is a great way to not only validate your current idea but to generate new ideas as well. There are all different industry people that attend these meetings…

Attorneys, doctors, accountants, different business owners.

Get in the habit of asking the following questions:

- What do you do?
- How is business overall?
- What area would you like to improve or do your job better.

If you haven't noticed…. These are all problem identification and validation questions.

I'm always validating ideas so I use Meetup.com to set up my own groups as well. So I've found this to be a good way to easily connect with your target market.

When I was validating an idea in the health & beauty industry. I created a group for Health & Beauty professionals in the Charlotte, NC area.

To attract those types of professionals I didn't simply say I'm validating an idea… I instead said that "this group helps health & beauty professionals get more customers and share best practices"

Now if you owned a barbershop, hair or nail salon… would you show up – ABSOULTELY!

How do I get started:

1 – If you haven't already done so yet, set up a Meetup.com account – NOW!

2 – Start joining some groups… especially those congruent with the people you want to network with.

3 – Create a group that will attract the ideal customers that you can validate your idea with.

NOTE: *When creating your own group there is a free version and paid version based.*

Success Tips – when joining Meetups:

- I hate business cards, don't use them; exchange numbers and set appointments
- Be more interested in the person you're talking to instead of your own agenda
- Get people on your calendar

Success Tips – when creating your own Meetup:

- Describe your group in a way to help people.
- Focus on their problems first
- Make it clear why they should join and keep attending
- Get people on your calendar to talk