

Extra  rdinary Standard

THE MANUAL NO. 1

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# Is Your Idea Actually Worth Building?

*An honest first look, in eight chapters.*

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*By the editors at The ExtraOrdinary Standard*



CHAPTER ONE

## THE FIRST HONEST LOOK

**THE WORK**

Read this guide once through, fast, before you fill in a single worksheet. Then come back and do the work, one chapter at a time.

Most ideas don't die because they were bad. They die because nobody asked the simple questions first. By the time the questions become urgent, ten months are gone. Ten thousand dollars are gone. The idea was probably fine. You just skipped the part that would have told you so.

This guide is the first honest look.

It is not a business plan. A business plan is what you write when you already know the answer and you're trying to convince someone (a bank, a partner, your spouse) that you do. It's a sales document.

This is not a pitch deck either. A pitch deck is for raising money from people who care about logos and traction slides. Most of the people reading this won't be raising money. They'll be putting in their own — their savings, their nights, their unrenovated kitchen.

A feasibility analysis is for the founder, not for the audience. It's the conversation you have with yourself, on paper, before you commit. Done well, it costs you a few weekends. Done not at all, it costs you a year or three.

### **What this guide is**

Eight short chapters. A worksheet at the end of most of them. A companion spreadsheet that does the math so you don't have to fight with formulas.

You can finish the reading in one sitting. The work, if you do it right, will take you a few weekends. That's the trade.

### **Who it's for**

Three kinds of people.

The first-time founder with an idea you can't shake. You've been turning it over in your head at red lights for six months. You're ready to start, or you're scared to start, or both.

The second-or-third-time founder who knows better than to skip this step but never has the patience to do it the long way. You've shipped before. You've also walked away from things you should have killed sooner.

The corporate intrapreneur with a side initiative or an internal pitch. The math is the same; the company politics are not.

### **What it isn't**

This isn't a guide to *what to build*. We have nothing to say about whether you should sell sandwiches or software. The questions in here apply equally well to a bookshop in Macon and a software company in Atlanta.

This isn't a guide to *how to grow*. Growth is a problem you earn the right to have, after you've answered whether the thing is worth doing in the first place.

This isn't a guide to *how to raise money*. We assume, as a default, you won't. Most things worth building don't need outside capital.

### **The four pillars**

Every honest feasibility analysis sits on four legs. Take one away and the analysis falls.

**Demand.** Is anyone going to buy this? Not "would they like it." Not "would they say it's interesting." *Buy.* With money they currently have or could conceivably have. We'll figure out how to test this without spending more than fifty dollars and ten conversations.

**Economics.** When they buy it, do you make money? Not at scale. Not after some funding round. On the next unit you sell. Most ideas die here. The math just doesn't work and nobody bothered to do it.

**Execution.** Can *you* — specifically you, with your skills, your hours, your savings — actually build it? Most feasibility books skip this and pretend it's universal. It isn't. The feasibility of an idea is partly the feasibility of the founder. We'll be honest about that.

**Founder-fit.** Should you? Even if the answer to the first three is yes, the answer to this one might still be no. Some businesses are good ideas badly suited to their

founders. There's no shame in that. There's enormous shame in finding it out after five years.

### **A note on honesty**

The hardest part of this work is not the analysis. It's the honesty.

You will lie to yourself. You'll round up the demand signal. You'll be optimistic about the conversion rate. You'll assume your skills will fill in the gaps. You'll tell yourself the math works out at scale.

None of that is true. Catch yourself doing it.

The reward for honesty is that you save yourself a year of your life if the idea is bad. The cost of dishonesty is that you don't. That's the whole transaction.

### **How to use this guide**

Read it once through. Don't stop. Don't take notes. Don't fill in the worksheets. Just read. The chapters build on each other and you'll write better answers in chapter three if you've already read chapter six.

Then go back and do the work, one chapter at a time. The worksheets are designed to be filled out, either in the PDF or printed. Use a pen. Pen makes you commit.

Set a deadline. Two weekends. Four. Eight. Whatever your life allows. But put it on a calendar. Work without a deadline doesn't get done.

At the end, in chapter eight, you'll arrive at one of three verdicts.

**Go.** Your idea cleared four real tests. Start.

**Pivot.** Most of it works. One pillar is wrong. Reshape the idea and run it through again.

**Kill.** The math doesn't work. The market doesn't care. The skills aren't there. Or you don't actually want to do it. Walk away with relief and a year of your life back.

All three are wins. Especially kill, sometimes — there's a year of your life on the other side of that decision.



## CHAPTER TWO

## THE IDEA, STATED PLAINLY

### THE WORK

Write your idea in exactly four sentences. Read it aloud. Rewrite it. Repeat until a stranger, hearing it once, could repeat it back to you correctly.

You can't analyze something you haven't named.

Ask most founders what they're building. You'll get a paragraph. It'll depend on context. It'll change shape over the course of a single dinner. That's fine in casual conversation. It is not fine here.

Before you can ask whether your idea is feasible, you have to write it down in a form so plain that someone could repeat it back to you accurately after hearing it once. If you can't get it that small, you don't have an idea yet — you have a vibe.

This chapter gives you the format. Use it.

### The four sentences

A feasibility-grade idea statement has exactly four sentences. No more.

**Sentence 1: The promise.** What does the customer get when they pay you? In one sentence. No adjectives that haven't earned their place.

**Sentence 2: The customer.** Who specifically. Not "people," not "small businesses," not "everyone who eats food." Specifically. As specifically as you can without lying.

**Sentence 3: The problem you're solving.** What were they doing before, and what was wrong with it? If they weren't doing anything, what made them suddenly start?

**Sentence 4: Why now.** Why does this idea make sense in this year and not five years ago or five years from now? If the answer is "no particular reason," that's a real answer worth examining.

That's it. Four sentences, between fifty and a hundred words total. If yours runs longer, you have more than one idea and you need to pick one.

## Examples

Three different kinds of businesses, so you have something to imitate.

### **A small bookshop in a college town.**

1. We sell hardback books, hand-picked, with a strong opinion about which ones are worth your time.
2. For readers thirty-five and up in this college town who already know they like reading and don't trust algorithms.
3. They were buying books on Amazon and getting an algorithm-shaped reading list that left them dissatisfied.
4. Independent bookshops have come back into demand as readers tire of recommendation engines that all surface the same dozen titles.

### **A handmade-knife maker.**

1. We make kitchen knives, one at a time, that hold an edge for years and look better the more you use them.
2. For home cooks who already own one nice knife and want their next one to last forever.
3. They were buying eighty-dollar chef's knives that go dull in a year and feel disposable; they want an heirloom.
4. The "buy it once" sensibility has expanded out from boots and bags into kitchen tools.

### **A small software company doing something boring.**

1. We replace the spreadsheet that small dental practices use to track hygienist appointments with software that doesn't break when the front-desk person quits.
2. For owner-operated dental practices in the US with two to four chairs.
3. They were tracking everything in a single Excel file that nobody understood after the office manager left.
4. Post-pandemic labor turnover at small medical practices made the spreadsheet-handover problem unignorable.

Notice what these have in common: short sentences, specific nouns, no adjectives that don't earn their keep, and a "why now" that names a real change in the world rather than a generic "people care about quality" platitude.

Notice also what's missing: the words *innovative*, *disruptive*, *AI-powered*, *seamlessly*, and *experience*. None of them help you think clearly. All of them let you avoid thinking clearly.

WORKSHEET 2-A

# THE FOUR SENTENCES

Fill these in. Now. Don't read past this page until you have. Use a pen. The first version is almost never right; that's why we keep doing it.

**1. The promise**

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**2. The customer**

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**3. The problem you're solving**

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**4. Why now**

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Now read your four sentences out loud.

If you stumbled, rewrite them.

If a friend, hearing them, would say “what does that mean?” — rewrite them.

If they could be true of any number of other businesses (substitute the noun and they still fit), rewrite them.

You’ll be back here multiple times. That’s the work. The first version is almost never right. The seventh usually is.

### **What’s coming next**

You now have an idea, stated plainly. Good.

The next four chapters take that statement apart and ask whether each piece of it survives contact with the real world.

*Demand* — is the customer in sentence two actually going to buy what you described in sentence one?

*Economics* — when they do, can you sell it for more than it costs to make and deliver?

*Execution* — can you, specifically, build it given your skills, your hours, and your savings?

*Founder-fit* — should you, even if you can?

Each chapter has its own worksheets and its own way of being honest with you. The guide gets harder from here. That’s by design. The honesty was the easy part.



## CHAPTER THREE

# DEMAND

### THE WORK

Talk to ten real people who match the customer in your sentence two. Ask about behavior, not opinions. Try to take money from five of them before you build a thing.

Demand is not an opinion poll. It is a behavior test.

Most founders confuse the two. They post a question on LinkedIn (“Would you use a tool that did X?”) and read the comments as evidence. They buy a survey panel. They run a Google Form past their friends. They get sixty enthusiastic “yes” responses and conclude there’s a market.

There isn’t. There’s only a market when people pay you. Everything before that is theater.

This chapter teaches you the cheapest version of a real demand test. It costs about fifty dollars and ten conversations.

### **The interview rule**

Never ask a customer what they would do. Always ask what they have done.

Hypothetical questions get hypothetical answers, and people are generous with hypothetical answers. They will tell you, with a straight face, that yes they would absolutely pay forty dollars a month for a service they will never sign up for in real life. They aren’t lying. They’re imagining a version of themselves that is more disciplined, more health-conscious, and has more disposable income than the actual version of themselves who is reading their phone in line at the pharmacy.

Past behavior is the only honest signal. Ask only about that.

### **Five questions to ask ten people**

These five questions are the whole interview. They take about twenty minutes per person. You’re going to ask them ten times.

**1.** Walk me through the last time you ran into this problem. What did you do?

2. How much have you already spent — money or time — trying to solve it?
3. What did you try that didn't work? What was wrong with it?
4. Who else have you talked to about this? Have they tried anything?
5. If I built something for this and it cost [your price], who would I send it to first?

Notice what you don't ask. You don't ask if they like your idea. You don't describe your idea in detail. You don't pitch. You ask about the past, the spending, the workarounds, and the network. The interview is for you, not for them.

### **Demand signals that lie**

These four signals feel like demand. They aren't.

**"I love it."** Polite people compliment ideas the way they compliment haircuts. It costs them nothing. Unless they pull out a credit card, it isn't signal.

**Social media reactions.** A LinkedIn post with two hundred likes has not produced one customer. Likes are not money.

**"We'd be interested if..."** Conditional interest is fantasy interest. The conditions never resolve. Move on.

**Big-name advisors.** Famous people will agree to advise almost anything for free equity. Their endorsement is not a customer.

### **Demand signals that don't lie**

These four signals are the real thing.

**Cash.** Someone gave you money before you built the product. A pre-sale, a deposit, a paid pilot. This is the signal. Everything else aspires to be this.

**Calendar time.** A potential customer agrees to a follow-up call, on their calendar, with a specific date. People's calendars are honest.

**Specific introductions.** "My cousin runs a business that has this exact problem. Let me text her." Followed by an actual text. That's real.

**Existing spend.** They're already spending money on a worse solution. The question is no longer whether the budget exists. The question is whether you can take it.

WORKSHEET 3-A

# CUSTOMER INTERVIEW LOG

Ten people. Five questions each. Date, name (or initials), one-line summary of what they actually told you, and whether they gave you a real signal — cash, calendar, intro, or existing spend.

**1. Person / date**

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**2. Person / date**

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**3. Person / date**

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**4. Person / date**

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**5. Person / date**

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**6. Person / date**

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**7. Person / date**

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**8. Person / date**

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**9. Person / date**

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**10. Person / date**

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After interview ten, count how many gave you a real signal. If the number is below three, your idea has a demand problem you do not get to skip. Go back to chapter two and reshape.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# ECONOMICS

## THE WORK

Calculate what each unit costs to produce, market, and deliver. Calculate what you can charge. Subtract. If the answer isn't enough to live on, none of the rest of this guide matters.

Most ideas die at the math.

Founders skip this chapter because the math feels like the boring part. It isn't. It is the part. Demand without economics is a hobby. Execution without economics is a slow-motion bankruptcy. The question of whether the math works is the entire question.

Here's the good news. The math is simple. Most of it is fifth-grade arithmetic. The hard part is the honesty.

### Unit economics in plain language

"Unit economics" means: when you sell one of the thing, what happens to the money?

Three numbers tell you everything.

**Price.** What does the customer hand you for one unit?

**Cost of goods sold (COGS).** What does it cost you to make and deliver that one unit? Materials, labor, packaging, shipping, payment processing — every dollar that goes out the door because you sold this one unit.

**Customer acquisition cost (CAC).** What did it cost you to find this customer in the first place? Ads, content time, the dinner you bought them. Average across many customers.

Subtract:  $\text{Price} - \text{COGS} - \text{CAC} = \text{your margin per unit.}$

If that number is negative, you have no business. You are paying customers to take your product.

If it's small (under five dollars on a fifty-dollar product, say), you have a business that requires enormous volume to make a living. Possible. Brutal.

If it's healthy (say, fifteen dollars on a fifty-dollar product, a 30% margin), you have something to work with.

### **Three pricing approaches**

**Cost-plus.** Calculate your cost. Multiply by 3 or 4 or 5. That's your price. Used for physical goods where margins are thin and the customer expects fairness.

**Value-based.** Charge a fraction of the value the customer captures. If your software saves a dental practice \$30,000 a year, charging \$300 a month is a no-brainer for them. Used for B2B services and software.

**Market-comparison.** Look at what comparable products charge. Charge in that range. The reason this is on the list is that customers shop in reference frames. The reason it's last is that the comparison is often wrong and you end up commodified.

Most products use some blend. The handmade-knife maker uses cost-plus for materials but value-based for the brand premium. The dental software uses value-based pricing anchored against the spreadsheet it replaces.

### **The 10x rule**

If you're replacing something the customer is already doing, you usually need to be 10x cheaper, 10x better, or change a behavior they already wanted to change.

Less than 10x and you're a marginal upgrade. Marginal upgrades don't convert. Switching is expensive — new account, new login, new habit, retraining the office manager. The pain of switching has to be much smaller than the gain.

Be honest about your number. If you're charging the same as the incumbent and offering "a slightly nicer experience," you do not have a business. You have a hobby with a logo.

WORKSHEET 4-A

# UNIT ECONOMICS

Fill these in. The companion spreadsheet does the math automatically; this worksheet is for committing to your assumptions in pen first. Pen is honest. Spreadsheets are too easy to fudge.

**1. Price (what one unit sells for)**

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**2. COGS (cost to produce + deliver one unit)**

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**3. CAC (cost to acquire one customer, averaged)**

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**4. Margin per unit (Price – COGS – CAC)**

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**5. Units per year you'll realistically sell in year one**

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**6. Year-one gross profit (Margin × Units)**

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Now look at line 6. Is that number enough to justify the year of your life this will cost? If yes, keep going. If no, the idea has an economics problem. Reshape — raise the price, cut the cost, or pick a different customer who can afford more.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# EXECUTION

## THE WORK

List what skills, time, and cash you actually have. List what the business will demand. Find the gap. Decide if you can close it before you run out of any of the three.

Here's the part most feasibility books pretend doesn't exist.

An idea is feasible only in the context of a specific founder. The same business idea — a curated bookshop, say — is feasible for someone who has run a shop before, has \$40,000 in savings, knows three suppliers personally, and has fifteen Saturdays a year of free time. It is not feasible for someone who has none of those things, no matter how good the idea is.

This chapter is about you, specifically. What you have. What you don't. Whether the gap is bridgeable.

### The skill audit

List, plainly, the skills the business will need. Not optional skills. Required ones.

For the bookshop: inventory management, customer service, basic merchandising, vendor negotiation, retail bookkeeping, point-of-sale systems, social media posting consistent enough to matter.

For the knife maker: forging, heat treatment, handle work, sharpening, photography, e-commerce, shipping logistics, tax registration in multiple states.

For the dental software: software development, UX design, sales calls with skeptical office managers, customer support, billing, HIPAA-adjacent compliance.

Now, against each skill, mark one of three things. (1) I can already do this. (2) I can learn it in 30 days. (3) I'll need to hire or partner for it.

If your "hire or partner" list is longer than three items, you don't have an execution plan. You have an HR problem you can't afford yet.

## **The time audit**

There are 168 hours in a week. Not negotiable.

Subtract 56 for sleep. Subtract 40 for a job, if you have one. Subtract 21 for cooking, eating, errands. Subtract whatever your family or partner needs. Subtract 14 for social, exercise, the things that keep you from going dark.

Add up what you've got left. That is the budget.

Most founders find they have between five and twenty hours a week of real, focused, available time. That is the entire fuel tank. Plan accordingly.

## **The one-dollar test**

Before you commit a year, run the smallest possible version of the business this week. Not a polished version. The smallest one.

Sell one knife on Etsy. Sell one cutting board on Facebook Marketplace. Take one paid feasibility consult. Get one paying customer for the dental software, even if “the software” is you opening a spreadsheet on a Zoom call.

If you can earn one dollar of revenue this week, you have a business that exists. If you can't, you have an idea, not a business — and the gap between them is the gap most ideas die in.

WORKSHEET 5-A

# SKILL GAP & TIME AUDIT

Two short audits. Be unflattering. The point is to spot what you're missing before it costs you.

## Skills the business needs

**1. Skill needed / Have it (1), can learn (2), need to hire (3)**

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**2. Skill needed / Have it (1), can learn (2), need to hire (3)**

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**3. Skill needed / Have it (1), can learn (2), need to hire (3)**

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**4. Skill needed / Have it (1), can learn (2), need to hire (3)**

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**5. Skill needed / Have it (1), can learn (2), need to hire (3)**

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**6. Skill needed / Have it (1), can learn (2), need to hire (3)**

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## Hours per week available for the business

168 total — sleep — work — life — sanity = real available hours.

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If your skill audit has more than three “need to hire” items, or your hours-available number is below five, the business has an execution problem. Don’t hide from this. Reshape it now or kill it later, harder.



CHAPTER SIX

## FOUNDER-FIT

### THE WORK

Answer two questions in writing. The 5-year question and the 2am question. Don't move past this chapter without honest answers, even if it costs you the idea.

Even if demand is real and the math works and you can execute, the answer to whether you should build this might still be no.

There's no shame in that answer. There's a lot of shame in arriving at it after five years.

### **The 5-year question**

Imagine the business worked. Not “unicorn worked.” Not “acquired by Google worked.” Just normal, working: the thing exists, customers buy it, you're running it, it pays the bills.

Now picture your average Tuesday five years from now. What are you doing at 10am? At 3pm? At 7pm?

Is that the life you want?

If you're building a bookshop, your Tuesday involves inventory, vendor calls, and cleaning the bathroom. If you're building a software company, your Tuesday involves customer support tickets, hiring meetings, and explaining contracts to lawyers. If you're building a knife shop, your Tuesday involves a forge, a grinder, a packaging station, and the post office.

Most founders fall in love with the idea of a business and recoil from the actual daily work of one. The 5-year question filters for that.

### **The 2am question**

Now imagine the business is in trouble. A big customer cancels. A supplier goes out of business. Your most reliable employee quits. You have ten thousand dollars to make payroll and the bank account has eight thousand.

It is 2am and you cannot sleep.

Are you still in?

Some businesses produce more 2am moments than others. Some founders are built for them; others aren't. Neither is wrong. But know which you are before you take the leap.

### **Opportunity cost**

The honest version of founder-fit also asks: what aren't you doing if you do this?

A year of nights and weekends spent on a business is a year not spent on the other things — the kids, the relationship, the photography hobby that keeps you sane, the second career you keep almost-starting. The cost of building isn't just the dollars. It's the years.

If the answer to "what else could I have done with this year" is something you'll regret giving up, that's a real input to the decision. Write it down.

WORKSHEET 6-A

## **FOUNDER-FIT REFLECTION**

Write the honest answers in pen. Nobody's reading this but you.

**1. Average Tuesday five years from now — what are you actually doing?**

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**2. When the business hits a 2am moment — and it will — are you still in? Why?**

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**3. What are you NOT doing in your life if you do this for the next year?**

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# KILL CRITERIA

## THE WORK

Write down the conditions under which you will quit, before you start. Sign and date them. Keep the page where you can find it in twelve months.

This is the most important chapter in the guide. It is also the one you will be most tempted to skip. Don't.

Founders die not from the bad ideas. They die from the inability to admit a bad idea. They keep going. They throw more money in. They tell themselves the next quarter will be different. Sometimes they're right; usually they're not. The founders who survive are the ones who made the kill decision early enough to start over.

The way to make that decision in time is to write it down before you start. While you're still calm. While the dream hasn't cost you anything yet.

### Three kill triggers

Pick three. Be specific. Use numbers and dates.

**Revenue trigger.** "If I have not done \$X in revenue by [date], I stop." \$X should be small enough to be a real test (not "if I'm not at \$1M") and big enough to mean something (not "if I haven't made \$1"). For most bootstrap businesses, \$X is in the \$500-\$5,000 range and the date is 3-6 months out.

**Time trigger.** "If I am still not enjoying the work after [N months], I stop." Some businesses get harder before they get easier; that's normal. But there's a difference between hard and miserable. Founders generally know the difference; they just don't admit it.

**Energy trigger.** "If my partner / health / sleep is in worse shape after [date] because of this, I stop." The cost of a business should not be the rest of your life. People who don't set this trigger lose both the business and the rest of their life simultaneously.

## **The mercy of the rule**

Kill criteria are not a punishment. They are a mercy.

Without them, you don't actually know when to quit. The signals are noisy in the moment; you're tired; the next month always looks like it might be the breakthrough. Without a pre-committed line, you keep walking past the cliff.

With them, the decision is already made. You only have to be honest about the data.

WORKSHEET 7-A

# KILL CRITERIA PRE-COMMIT

Write three triggers. Sign and date the page. Take a photo. Put it on your fridge or in a drawer you'll check.

**1. Revenue trigger**

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**2. Time / enjoyment trigger**

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**3. Energy / life trigger**

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Signed:

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Date:

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE VERDICT

## THE WORK

Score yourself across the four pillars. Add it up. Make the call: Go, Pivot, or Kill. Do it today.

You've done the work. Now you make the call.

This chapter gives you the scoring page and three short instructions for what to do next, depending on the verdict. It will not make the decision for you. Nobody can. But it will line the inputs up so the decision is honest.

### Score yourself

Each pillar gets a score from 1 to 10. Be honest. The grade you give yourself here is the grade your idea actually earned.

**Demand (1-10).** How real are the signals from chapter 3? Did three or more interviews give you cash, calendar, intros, or existing spend? 10 means yes, with overflow. 1 means you skipped the interviews.

**Economics (1-10).** Does the math from chapter 4 produce a margin per unit you can live on at realistic volume? 10 means yes, comfortably. 1 means the unit economics are negative or paper-thin.

**Execution (1-10).** Can you, with your current skills, time, and savings, ship a real version in 90 days? 10 means yes. 1 means no, and you know it.

**Founder-fit (1-10).** Did your 5-year and 2am answers feel like "yes, in"? 10 means a clear yes. 1 means you hesitated.

### What the totals mean

**4-14 — Kill.** Walk away. The math, the demand, the fit, or some combination is wrong, and the cost of pretending otherwise is going to be higher than the cost of stopping now.

**15-24 — Pivot.** The bones are real, but at least one pillar is broken. Reshape the idea. Then run it through the guide again. Most ideas need at least one pivot before they're ready.

**25-32 — Build.** You have something real. Start. Set your kill criteria from chapter 7 on the fridge. Begin.

**33-40 — Build, and watch out.** If you scored above 32, either the idea is exceptional or you weren't honest. Take a day. Reread chapter one. Score again. If you still land here, you have a strong idea. Move.

WORKSHEET 8-A

# THE VERDICT PAGE

Pen. Final answer. Commit.

**1. Demand score (1-10)**

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**2. Economics score (1-10)**

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**3. Execution score (1-10)**

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**4. Founder-fit score (1-10)**

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**5. Total**

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**6. Verdict (circle one): GO / PIVOT / KILL**

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**7. First three actions in the next 30 days**

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Signed and dated:

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## APPENDIX

# WHEN YOU'RE STUCK

A few things worth keeping near the desk.

### **Common founder mistakes**

Skipping chapter three because the interviews felt awkward. The interviews are always awkward. The discomfort is the test, not a reason to skip it.

Treating a successful pre-order from your network as proof of demand at scale. Twenty pre-orders from your network is a signal. It is not the same signal as twenty pre-orders from strangers.

Picking a price that feels comfortable. Comfortable prices are usually too low. The price that makes you slightly nervous is often the right one.

Hiring before product-market fit. If the work is too much for one person to do, the answer is not always more people. Sometimes it's less business.

Treating the kill criteria as optional. They aren't.

### **Recommended reading**

The Mom Test, by Rob Fitzpatrick. The best book on customer interviews. Short. Read it before chapter three.

Anything by Patrick McKenzie (patio11) on pricing. He's written ten thousand words on why you're charging too little. He's right.

Company of One, by Paul Jarvis. The case for staying small on purpose.

### **The companion spreadsheet**

The unit economics calculator that pairs with chapter four lives at [theextraordinarystandard.com/the-manual-1](http://theextraordinarystandard.com/the-manual-1). Free with this guide. Use it to stress-test your assumptions across multiple price points and volumes.

### **What's next in the series**

The Manual No. 2: Pricing — when and how to raise it without losing customers.

The Manual No. 3: Customer Discovery — beyond ten interviews, how to keep listening as the business grows.

The Manual No. 4: Killing Things Well — the founder's guide to the graceful end.

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The ExtraOrdinary Standard — The Manual No. 1.

*Now go do the work.*