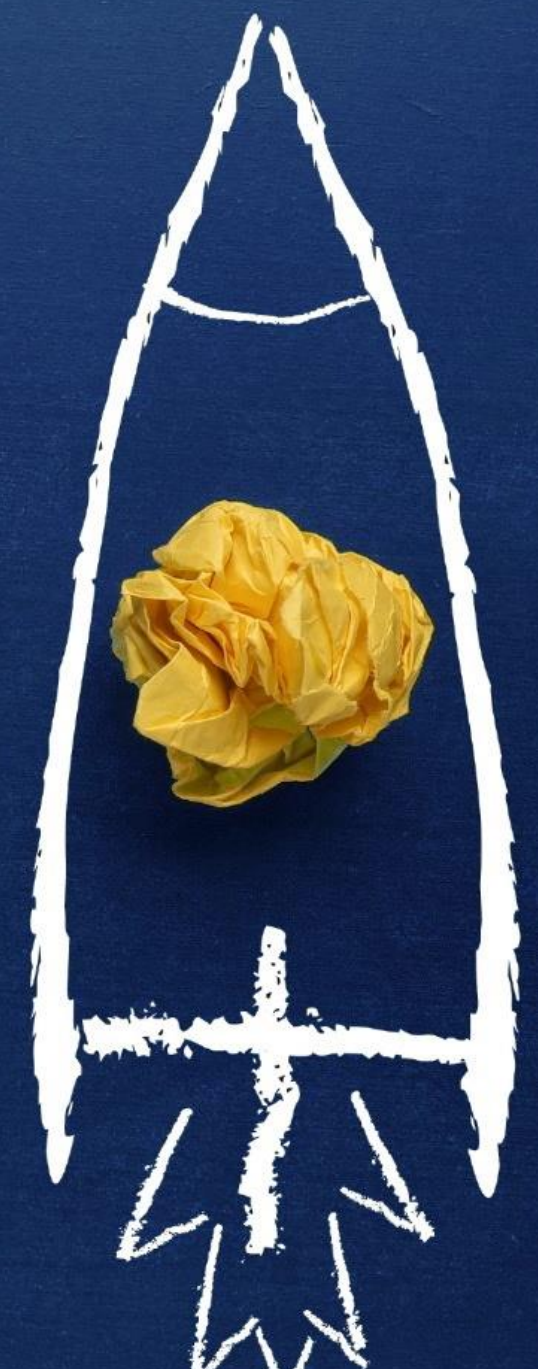




VALIDATING A STARTUP WITH 0\$





WHO THIS IS FOR

- Dreamers
- Builders
- People with ideas
- Crazy people
- Curious business people
- Those with limited or no business/startup experience



WHO'S THIS GUY

- Filled many roles from retail sales to VP since 1995
- Worked in small organizations to global enterprises
- Had own startup (Walk Today) and grew one (Elfiq Networks)
- Learned many things along the way (the hard way)
- Try not to be boring





Mitch Garber ✓
@mitchgarber



Make sure your idea/product has a market fit and can be competitive ...and not just a great or passionate idea. There's a difference . Most failed entrepreneurs fall in love with their idea without doing the requisite work.



PlanDaff @PlanDaff1 · Jul 5

Replying to @mitchgarber

Hi M.Garber! What is the single best advice for existing or aspiring entrepreneurs that you would give?

11:44 PM · Jul 5, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

1 Retweet 27 Likes



Tweet your reply

Reply



Harley Finkelstein ✓ @harleyf · Jul 6
Replying to @mitchgarber
Amen.





ELFIQ NETWORKS

- Joined at growth (scaling) stage
- 1st “commercially-focused” employee
- Title: VP Business Development
- Roles:
 - Sales, sales management, sales engineer
 - Channel partner program builder, partner recruiter/manager/marketing
 - Marketing / PR / alliances / events / web / social demand generation / content marketing
 - Product management, roadmap (help)
 - Personnel recruitment, training, management
 - Mop the floor when needed





WALK TODAY

- Built from scratch
- CEO: Chief Everything Officer
- Many, many pivots (dizzy)
- Qualified project before building with:
 - National grocery chain
 - North American footwear retail leader
 - North American food & beverage leader
- Paid new talent with equity (bootstrap)
- Left for family reasons





SO YOU HAVE AN IDEA

Your idea is worthless until it becomes real.

How do you make sure this idea is actually worth it without going broke?



VALUE OF PROBLEMS

Problems = Opportunities

Understand & quantify your customer's problem(s)

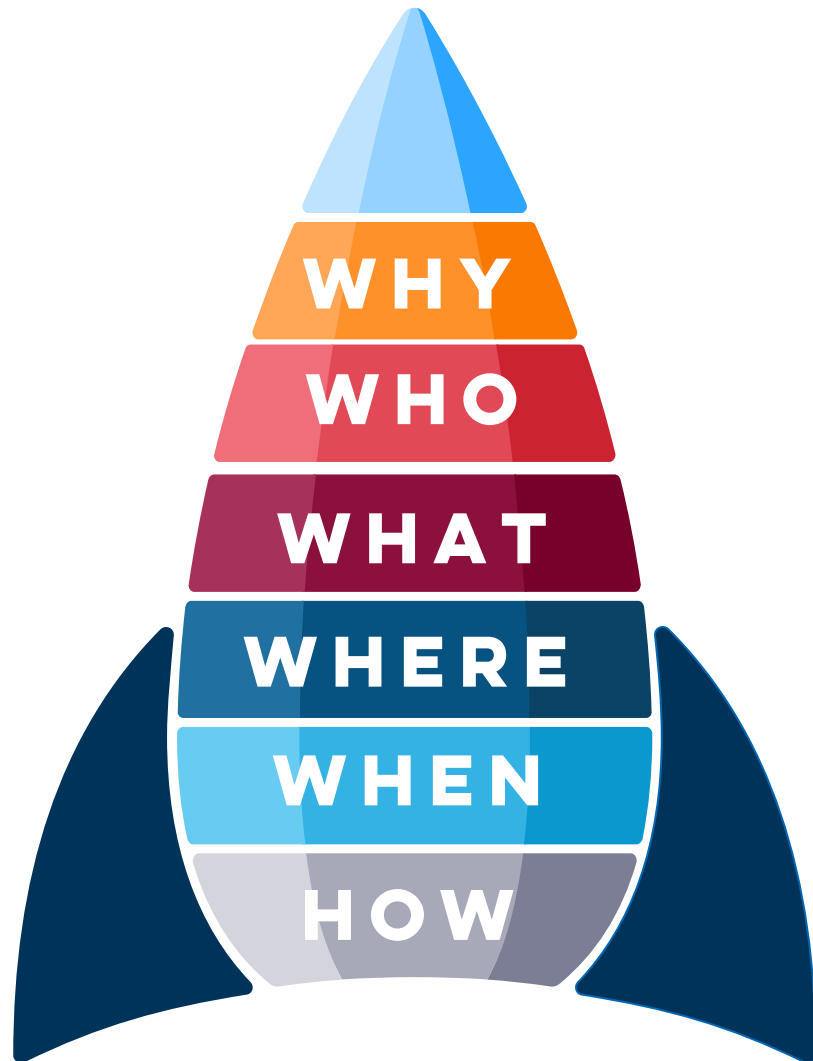
- Costs, ROI, pricing & your assumed competition

Your solution needs to:

- Save the customer money
- Make the customer money
- Both! (best case scenario)



THE BASIC 6 QUESTIONS



How much is the customer's pain point worth?

Which vertical(s)? Executives? Managers?

Clearly define your offering on a specific result

Where are your customers? Physical or digital offering?

Seasonality, business standards and certifications, etc.

What's the plan? Team? Resources? Funding?



VALIDATION AUDIENCE

- Who would you sell to? Ask for their expert opinion
 - Who has something to gain from your offering? Reach out to that list
 - DO NOT SELL, look for advice, guidance & conversation
 - Try to understand their business beforehand
- The higher in the org chart, the better
- PREPARE your questions & content but have a conversation
- Where to find them:
 - Existing contacts / customers
 - LinkedIn
 - Networking events / industry groups / user groups
 - B2C: where they go (grocery store, etc.)



BASIC TOOLS FOR 0\$

Free Google account: 0\$

- Use Google Sites to make a free site
 - Others: HubSpot, Wix, WordPress, MailChimp
- Logo: Does not need to be final, use free tools like Canva
- Email address from Google account
 - (project name)@gmail.com
- Google Drive: document storage and sharing, forms, etc.
- Phone #s (Mobile ok!)



SAME FOR A FEW \$\$

Digitally dress to kill for under 70\$

- Company name & domain
 - .com = 5\$/year, .co = 10\$/year
 - Does not need to be final
- Logo (Does not need to be final, use free tools like Canva)
- Website (will not be final use free templates)
 - Low-cost WordPress ok! \$2+USD/month on yearly plan & free domain?
- Email addresses (WordPress hosting plans can include 10+ addresses)
- Free Google account for document sharing & storage
- Phone #s (Mobile ok!)



DESIGN FOR 0\$



rock8fuel.com/budgetsoftware

- App prototyping tools

- Graphics tools

- Flowchart tools



VALIDATE & REPEAT

1. Identify your initial audience list
2. Reach out. More = better
3. Ask for their professional input
4. Aggregate data
5. Rethink your life
6. Repeat until you have the data you need,
add more contacts at each round of validation



PIVOT TIME?

- Change = good
- Learn to adapt, growth pains = good pains
- Potential changes at each validation phase / customer

- Examples:
 - Netflix (from DVDs to streaming)
 - Twitter (originally Odeo, for podcasts)
 - PayPal (from PDA to PDA payments to eBay payments)
 - Play-Doh (originally a wall cleaner)
 - Starbucks (from coffee roaster & coffee maker sales to coffee shops)
 - Sony (from failed rice cookers to tape recorders and recording media)



PROTOTYPE TIME?

- Prospective customer: “Yeah, I’d use that”
- You: “I can get you a product in X days can you put it in a lab and/or production”?
- Prospective customer: “Sure!”
- You: get some form of commitment
 - Letter of intent
 - Basic contract
 - Deposit
- Can you get 3+?
- You: go back to not sleeping



MVP: ALWAYS CHARGE

- Free = bad
 - We'll give you free publicity: run
 - No guarantee of usage at all
 - Unless they are the product! (Google, Facebook, etc.)
- Paid = good
 - If they pay they commit
 - They will (most likely) use your offering
 - They fund your business so they get support and longevity
 - Discounting is OK (launch customers)
 - Always list % off or \$ off for future expectations

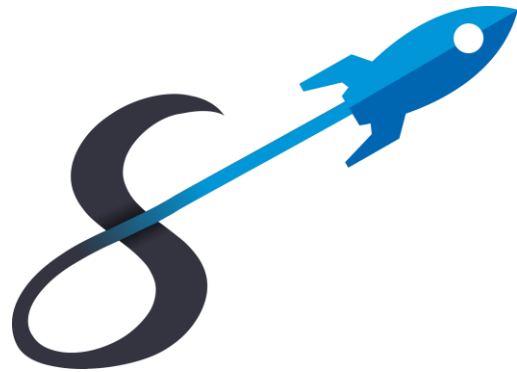


ALLIES & NEXT STEPS

- Startup programs:
 - Incubators (initial phase, product design/built)
 - Accelerators (growth)
 - Read the fine print (% of ownership, expectations, timelines, conditions, etc.)
- Colleges & Universities
- Entrepreneur banks (BDC in Canada)
- People!
 - DO NOT PARTNER WITH THOSE YOU CAN'T FIRE (family, friends, neighbors, etc.)
 - Track records matter
 - Be wary of “startup consultants” & “serial entrepreneurs”



THANK YOU



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