lab2sky

founder workbook / 01

startup readiness

turn an idea into a testable business case

creation in motion

what you will leave with

a clear customer problem, an honest evidence map and one experiment worth running

for idea-stage founders and teams choosing their next milestone.

time: 60-90 minutes, then a review after your next test.

bring: your latest customer notes, rough cost assumptions and the person who will own the next test.

02 start with a change that matters

03 make the evidence visible

04 connect the benefit to a business

05 design the smallest useful commitment

06-07 your fillable working pages

download a copy before filling it in. use a pdf reader that supports forms, save it and reopen to check your entries. you can also print it or use the text edition. lab2sky does not receive your entries.

all examples and figures are illustrative, not lab2sky portfolio results or investment thresholds.

field notes / 01

start with a change that matters

choose a narrow problem before describing a large market. the beneficiary, user and buyer may be different people.

name the situation, not the sector

describe one kind of customer, a recurring moment and the current response. this makes recruitment and testing possible. a statement such as "we improve logistics with ai" names a technology and a sector, but leaves the actual decision unclear. ask when the problem last occurred and what happened next.

worked example / illustrative

a hypothetical cold-chain team focuses on small food distributors that learn about a temperature excursion only at delivery. dispatchers call drivers manually; the operations manager decides what happens to the load.

check: replace "everyone" with a first customer group you can actually reach.

separate activity from impact

an activity is something you do; an outcome is something that changes for someone. define the existing position, the intended improvement and a way to measure it. note who could be harmed or excluded. avoid converting a hoped-for benefit into an achieved result.

worked example / illustrative

sending an alert is an activity. reducing the time between an excursion and a response is an operational outcome. reduced spoilage is a further claim that needs separate measurement and a credible comparison.

check: write one measurable outcome and one possible adverse effect.

state what would make you wrong

a useful hypothesis can fail. explain the causal step you are relying on: why would your action improve the outcome? test the weakest link before adding features. interviews can reveal a workflow, but cannot demonstrate the performance of a product that has not been used.

worked example / illustrative

the team assumes a dispatcher can act on an alert during a route. if drivers cannot safely change the route or protect a load, faster alerts may not improve the outcome at all.

check: ask whether the proposed benefit depends on an action the customer can take.

field notes / 02

make the evidence visible

label every important statement as observed, estimated or unknown. the labels describe evidence, not a founder's worth.

record observations with a source and date

observed means you can identify what happened, when, to whom and how you know. distinguish what a person said from what you witnessed. estimates should show the calculation and assumptions. unknowns need a next check, not a confident substitute. keep customer identities and raw records in an appropriate private location.

worked example / illustrative

observed: four of six interviewed dispatchers described a recent delayed response. estimated: the team thinks this happens twice a month. unknown: whether the operations budget can pay for a solution.

check: six interviews do not establish a market-wide frequency.

match the question to your stage

at the build stage, use customer observations to choose a test. an operating startup should explain use, delivery and its current constraint. a series a case needs stronger, dated operating evidence and a capital plan. do not impose mature-company metrics on an idea, or present an idea-stage signal as proof of scale.

worked example / illustrative

build: can a dispatcher use the alert? accelerate: why do pilot customers stop using it? series a: does the same acquisition and delivery process work across successive customer groups?

check: choose the stage by the decision you face, not by the round you hope to raise.

find the uncertainty that changes the decision

list what could prevent progress, then choose the uncertainty with the largest consequence and weakest evidence. separate a missing fact from a known negative result. expensive engineering may be premature if you still cannot obtain access to the buyer or the data needed to test the service.

worked example / illustrative

the team can build a dashboard, but no customer has agreed to share temperature data. the next step is to secure a bounded, authorised pilot, not to add more dashboard screens.

check: name the evidence that would change your next commitment.

field notes / 03

connect the benefit to a business

impact needs a viable way to deliver it repeatedly. a revenue label alone does not explain that mechanism.

identify who pays and why value continues

map the user, budget owner and buying process. explain why value continues after setup: ongoing monitoring, repeated decisions or another recurring need. distinguish a buyer's interest, a signed commitment, an issued invoice and cash received. each tells you something different about demand and payment.

worked example / illustrative

dispatchers use the service, while the operations manager owns the budget. a monthly fee could fund ongoing exception monitoring. a single installation fee pays for setup and is shown separately.

check: ask what the customer would lose if the service stopped next month.

show simple delivery economics

start with the amount received per customer and the costs that change when you serve that customer. state what is excluded before calling the result a margin. include installation, support, partner fees and replacements where relevant. a positive contribution is not the same as company profit.

worked example / illustrative

illustrative monthly price: r2,000. connectivity r300, support r400 and hosting r100 leave r1,200 contribution before salaries, overhead, tax and equipment recovery. a r3,600 setup cost takes three months of that contribution to recover, assuming everything else stays constant.

check: recalculate if support doubles or payment is delayed.

ask what can travel internationally

choose one next customer market and explain which part of the need appears similar. separate reusable technology from relationships, integrations, language, support and permissions that may need rebuilding. international potential is a hypothesis at this stage, not a claim that the business is already export-ready.

worked example / illustrative

the alerting software might travel; device connectivity, food distribution practices and a route to trusted buyers may differ. two conversations in a new market would inform the next test, not establish a launch case.

check: identify one important assumption that your home-market evidence cannot answer.

field notes / 04

design the smallest useful commitment

agree the experiment, limit and decision rule before you see the results. the point is to learn what to do next.

write a test someone else could run

specify the customer group, baseline, intervention, observation period and method of recording the result. include who has permission to participate and who handles operational exceptions. choose a scope that is safe and feasible. a small pilot can reveal a mechanism without proving a durable commercial effect.

worked example / illustrative

for ten authorised routes over two weeks, compare timestamped response delays before and during alerts. log connectivity failures and whether dispatchers could act. no product claim about food safety is made from this operational test.

check: keep the proposed method separate from what actually happened.

set limits and a decision rule

name the owner, budget cap, review date and the result that would justify the next step. thresholds should fit the business decision; they are not universal lab2sky filters. allow a third outcome: inconclusive. a poorly run or incomplete test may require repair rather than either expansion or abandonment.

worked example / illustrative

illustrative rule: if usable alerts arrive on at least eight of ten routes and dispatchers act on six, discuss a paid follow-on test. otherwise examine the constraint before spending beyond the agreed r8,000 cap.

check: agree what missing data would make the result inconclusive.

finish with a decision and an owner

compare the result with the original rule. explain surprises, including negative evidence. choose continue, change, stop or gather missing evidence. assign one next action and a date. this workbook prepares a conversation; completing it is not an investment qualification, approval or promise of support.

worked example / illustrative

if alerts arrived reliably but nobody acted, do not describe the pilot as commercially validated. revisit the workflow with the buyer and decide whether the underlying use case deserves another test.

check: bring the two completed working pages to your next founder discussion.

your working page / 01

your problem and evidence

use a few specific sentences. add a dated source wherever you describe something as observed.

customer, user and buyer

who experiences the problem, who acts and who controls the budget?

current problem and intended impact

describe the last occurrence, the baseline, the improvement and one possible harm.

evidence you have

separate observed, estimated and unknown; add source, date and limitations.

business mechanism

why would customers return, what would they pay and what does delivery require?

your working page / 02

your next commitment

complete this before running the test, then return to the final box after reviewing the results.

critical uncertainty and next-market assumption

which uncertainty changes the decision? what may not transfer to another market?

experiment and permission

customer group, method, baseline, measurement period and agreed access.

owner, resources and decision rule

name the owner, date, cost limit, threshold and what makes a result inconclusive.

result, learning and next decision

record what happened, what did not, and the owner/date of the next action.

continue online: startup readiness >