PART I

20 MINUTE READ

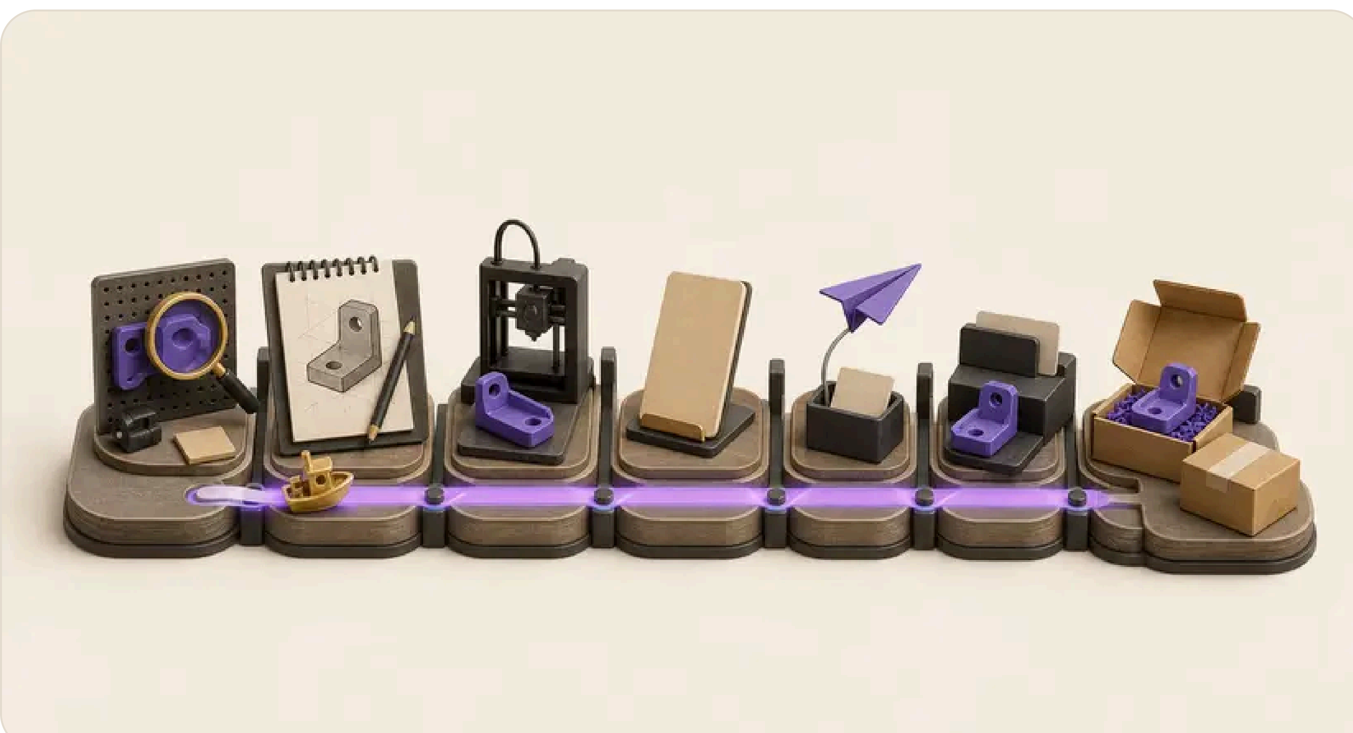
7 DAY PLAN

Find the first thing worth selling in seven days

Choose one reachable buyer. Shape one clear offer. Calculate an honest price. Then ask the market for a real commitment before you buy more capacity.

By day seven: you will have a named buyer, a one-page offer, a planning price floor, and enough evidence to choose the next test.

No new printer. No inventory. No perfect brand.



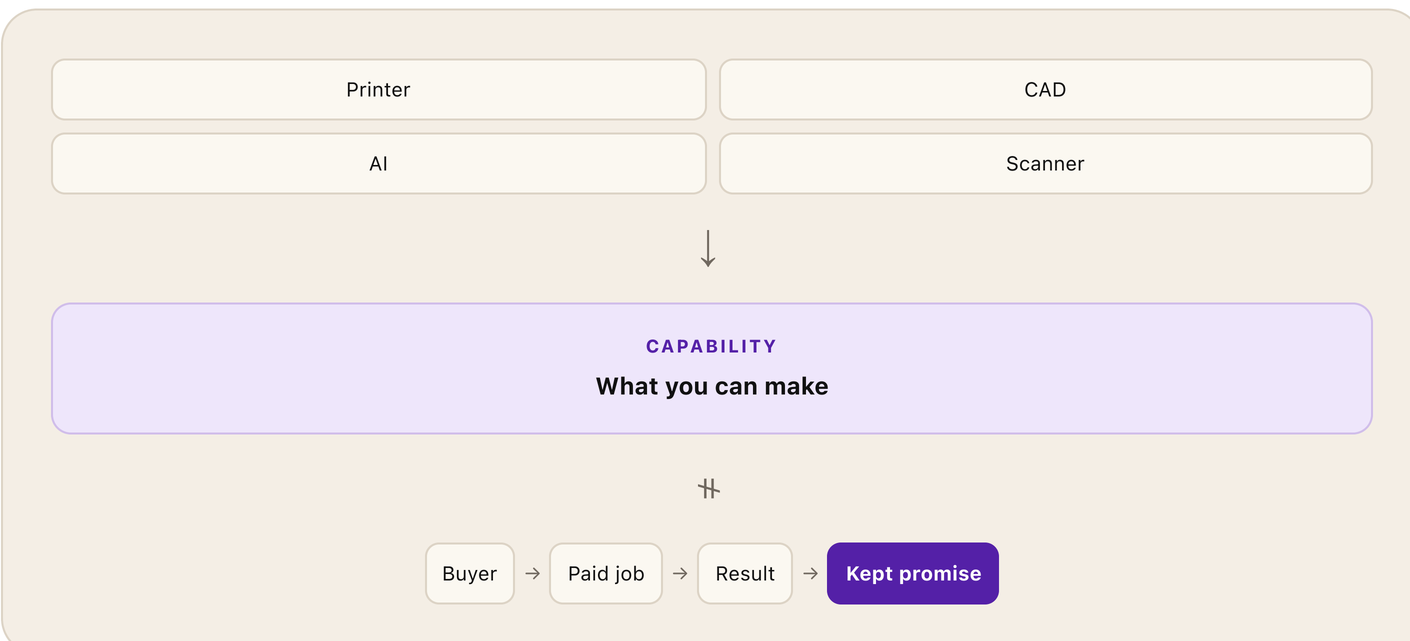
Start here

A capability is not a business

3D is a capability. A business is a promise.

A printer, CAD tool, scanner, AI workflow, production partner, or audience can help you keep that promise. None of them is the promise. Customers buy a result: a prototype that makes a decision easier, a replacement that gets equipment back into service, a display that helps a shop look professional, or a gift that could only have been made for one person.

Start with the result. Then choose the tool. This one reversal prevents the most expensive beginner mistake: buying equipment first and searching for demand later.



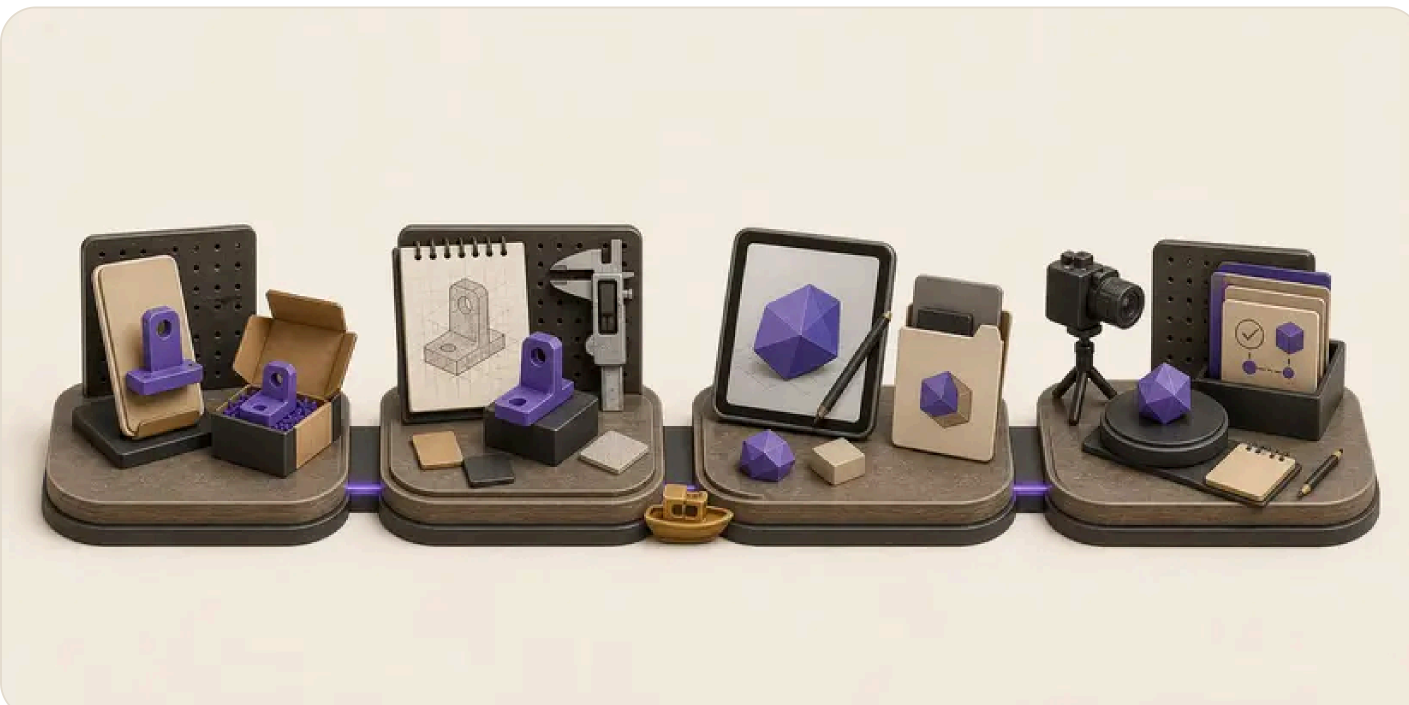
You do not need to own every tool in the chain. A designer can validate with a render and fulfill through a production partner. A maker can sell a service before turning it into a product. An educator can document a workflow after proving it in real work. Ownership matters less than whether you can reliably deliver what you sold.

Own a job, not a technology. Sell a kept promise, not layer height.

Choose the vehicle

Choose your business lane

A “3D business” can begin in several ways. Pick the lane you can test with the skills, tools, credibility, and buyer access you already have. You can combine lanes later. This week, choose one.



01

Finished products

Original, personalized, functional, or giftable physical goods. You own the product definition and deliver the finished item.

02

Services

Design, scanning, prototyping, customization, visualization, or small-batch fabrication for a specific client job.

Best when the outcome is easy to see and repeat.

Best when each buyer brings context or files.

03

Digital products

Original models, templates, fixtures, parametric systems, or documented workflows sold with clear usage and commercial rights.

Best when one solution can serve many buyers.

04

Enablement

Teaching, tools, AI/CAD workflows, community, or software that helps other people produce a result more reliably.

Strongest after you have first-hand proof.

A useful sequence

Service → product → system

Repeated service requests can reveal a standard product. Repeated product work can reveal a template, license, or teaching system. Let paid work show you what deserves to become repeatable.

Worksheet 01

Choose your starting lane

Write before you optimize. The point is a testable choice, not a permanent identity.

What can I deliver with tools and skills I already have?

What have people already asked me to make, design, explain, or fix?

Which lane can I test without buying capacity?

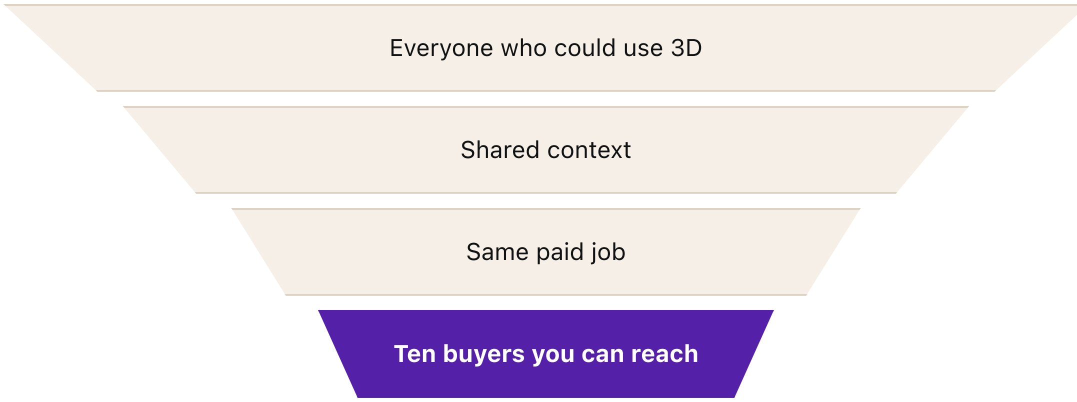
The one lane I will test this week

Choose the buyer

Pick a wedge customer

“People who like 3D printing” is not a customer. Neither is “small business.” A useful starting market is small enough to name, reach, and understand. It shares a context, a recognizable job, and a reason to act.

Starting narrow is not thinking small. It is how you learn faster than broad competitors. Win a specific job for a specific buyer. The adjacent markets become visible after that.



A strong wedge has five properties

- The buyers share enough context that one offer makes sense.
- The job is recurring, urgent, expensive, or emotionally important.
- You can reach ten of them in one or two places.
- They can authorize a purchase or introduce you to the person who can.
- A good result can lead to a reorder, referral, or adjacent job.

Hypothetical example

~~"I make custom 3D printed things for businesses."~~

"I help independent market vendors get fitted countertop display stands before their next event, without ordering a large batch."

The second version identifies a buyer, an outcome, a timing trigger, and a reason to choose a small operator. It can be tested in a real conversation.

Worksheet 02

Your wedge card

Buyer

A group specific enough to find today.

Trigger

What happens just before they look for help?

Current workaround

What do they do because your offer does not exist?

Cost of leaving it unsolved

Money, time, delay, risk, or lost opportunity.

Where I can reach ten of them

Why I can serve them credibly

One-sentence hypothesis

I’m testing whether **[buyer]** needs a better way to **[job]** when **[trigger]**. Today they **[workaround]**.

Find evidence

Find a job worth paying for

Do not ask people what you should make. Ask what they already do when the problem happens. Past behavior is more useful than a hypothetical opinion.

01	Tell me about the last time this happened.

02	What did you do instead?
03	What did that cost in time, money, delay, or lost sales?
04	What was hardest about the workaround?
05	Who decides whether this gets fixed?

Stay curious. Do not pitch while you are learning. When you hear a problem, ask for the story behind it. A deadline, a workaround, a budget, a file shared for review, or money spent on an imperfect substitute is evidence. A compliment is not.

Attention

“That is a cool idea.”

No cost, urgency, or next action.

Problem evidence

“We rebuilt this by hand twice last month.”

A repeated workaround worth investigating.

Buying signal

“Send a quote. We need it before Friday.”

A buyer, timing, and concrete next step.

Compare opportunities without fake precision

Use low, medium, or high. The goal is not a scientific score. It is a visible set of tradeoffs you can challenge with evidence.

Urgency	Low	Medium	High
Frequency	Low	Medium	High
Ability to pay	Low	Medium	High
Buyer access	Low	Medium	High
Ease of showing proof	Low	Medium	High
Repeat or referral potential	Low	Medium	High
Delivery, safety, or rights risk	Low	Medium	High

Worksheet 03

Evidence ledger

One claim per row. Write the source and the next cheapest test.

Claim

Evidence observed + source

Assumption + next test

Claim

Evidence observed + source

Assumption + next test

Claim

Evidence observed + source

Assumption + next test

Claim

Evidence observed + source

Assumption + next test

Package the promise

Shape one clear offer

An offer turns a messy capability into a decision a buyer can understand. It names the result, boundary, timing, proof, price, and next step. If every order requires a blank-page negotiation, the offer is not clear yet.

For **[buyer]** | we deliver **[result]** | by **[time]**. | It includes **[scope]**, | costs **[price]**, | and starts with **[next step]**.

Four levers make an offer stronger

Outcome

Make the result more useful

Connect the work to a job the buyer already values.

Confidence

Make the promise easier to believe

Show relevant proof, acceptance criteria, and a credible process.

Speed

Reduce avoidable delay

Set a real turnaround and a fast approval path you can keep.

Ease

Reduce work and uncertainty

Make measurements, revisions, files, delivery, and support explicit.

Do not add bonuses to hide a weak core. One useful add-on is plenty. Clear exclusions are part of the value because they protect the deadline and prevent surprise.

Hypothetical offer

"For independent market vendors, I deliver one fitted countertop sign holder from your measurements within five business days. One labeled digital proof and one revision are included. A deposit books the slot; final approval starts production."

This is an example of structure, not proof that this buyer or product has demand.

Worksheet 04

The one-offer card

Result

What changes for the buyer?

Included

Not included

Turnaround + approval point

Proof + acceptance criteria

Pilot price + standard price

Deposit, payment timing, revisions, and reprint terms

One next step

Protect the business

Price it so it can survive

Job costs find the floor. Customer value helps find the price.

Filament, resin, or outsourced production is only one line. A job also consumes active labor, machine time, failed attempts, finishing, packaging, fees, delivery, software, and support. If those costs are invisible, the business is borrowing from your unpaid time.

- Materials + consumables
- Machine-time allowance
- Active labor at a sustainable rate
- Expected failure + rework
- Finishing + packaging + included delivery
- Fees + outsourced work + overhead allocation

Planning price floor

The floor is not automatically the final price. Buyers may pay more for saved time, avoided delay, trustworthy fit, personalization, documentation, convenience, or a result that reduces risk. Price the result, but do not make below-floor pricing your normal price. If you deliberately subsidize a pilot, name the subsidy, limit it, and record what the pilot must teach you.

For an uncertain custom job, a paid pilot or deposit can fund the learning. State what the pilot proves, what happens next, and when the balance is due. Never promise an unlimited revision loop.

Digital products and enablement offers have a different cost shape, not zero cost. Count creation, licensing, platform and payment fees, updates, support, refunds, and the active time required to deliver each sale. Choose a deliberate way to recover one-time creation work; do not rely on an invented volume forecast to make the price look viable.

Interactive worksheet

Your price-floor calculator

Use one currency throughout. Nothing leaves this page, and no universal markup is assumed.

Materials + consumables

Include supports, inserts, adhesives, and test pieces.

Machine-time allowance

Power, wear, maintenance, or depreciation—count each once.

Expected failure + rework

Use your own observed allowance when you have it.

Finishing

Sanding, paint, assembly, inspection, and cleanup supplies.

Packaging

Box, protection, label, insert, and tape.

Payment + platform fees

Enter the amount allocated to this job.

Included delivery

Only the amount you absorb, not buyer-paid shipping.

Outsourced work

Production partner, scanning, design, or specialist finishing.

Overhead allocation

A deliberate share of software, rent, insurance, and admin.

Active labor hours

Hands-on design, setup, finishing, packing, and support time.

×

Sustainable rate per hour

The rate the business must support—not zero because it is your time.

=

Labor allowance

—

Planning price floor

—

Listed job costs plus your labor allowance.

Candidate selling price

Room above the floor

—

Not net profit; taxes and unlisted costs remain.

Keep the accounting words honest

Selling price – the listed per-job costs = job contribution after listed costs.

That is not net profit. Taxes, unlisted costs, refunds, fixed costs, and your local accounting treatment still matter. Machine depreciation and maintenance may be allocated per hour or treated as fixed costs—do not count them twice.

Keep the promise safely

Rights, safety, and claims

Fast validation does not mean careless selling. Before taking payment, confirm that you can legally make and sell the work, that the buyer understands the intended use, and that your claims match what you have actually tested.

Rights

Know what you may sell

Use original work, files with the required commercial permission, or customer-supplied files only after the customer represents in writing that they own or control the rights needed for the job. That representation is a record, not a magic shield. A file being available online does not make every use commercial, and a license does not erase trademark, privacy, or other rights.

Safety

Know the intended use

Material, process, orientation, environment, load, inspection, and jurisdiction all matter. Do not casually launch medical, children's, protective, structural, electrical, food-contact, or other regulated or safety-critical products.

Claims

Show what exists

Label a render as a render and a prototype as a prototype. AI and CAD can speed exploration. Check commercial-use terms, protect confidential customer files, label synthetic proof, and subject every output to human review, inspection, and validation.

The minimum order brief

Capture this before you quote or produce custom work:

- Intended use
- Critical dimensions + tolerances
- Material + finish
- Quantity + deadline
- Environment + expected load
- Approval method
- Inspection method
- Source file + asset rights
- Buyer license / ownership
- Revision + reprint terms

For files, software, AI workflows, or education, also capture file formats, compatibility, access period, updates, support boundary, data handling, AI inputs, and the license the buyer receives.

This sprint can validate a buyer problem; it does not validate a safety-critical product. Do not accept a delivery commitment until qualified review, testing, and applicable compliance are in place.

Business registration, taxes, product rules, insurance, and consumer obligations vary by location and product. Check the authorities and a qualified local professional for your situation. This guide is a demand-validation framework, not legal, tax, or engineering certification advice.

The plan

Run the seven-day proof sprint

Aim for one focused hour a day. Conversations can happen asynchronously; this is a sequence of seven working sessions, not a promise that strangers answer on schedule. Buyer comes before offer, offer before proof, price before outreach, and commitment before capacity.

The activity counts are constraints, not conversion benchmarks. If a physical sample takes longer, use an honest work-in-progress image or clearly labeled render. Do not fake completion to keep the calendar tidy.

Problem conversation

Hi [name] — I'm looking into how [buyer group] handles [specific job]. I'm not selling anything in this conversation. Could I ask five questions about the last time it came up? Fifteen minutes; would [time A] or [time B] work?

Paid pilot ask

Hi [name] — you mentioned [observed problem]. I shaped a small pilot: [result and scope] by [time] for [price], including [boundary]. Here is [honest proof]. If it is useful, the next step is [deposit or booking]. Want the one-page brief?

Respect community rules, consent, and the outreach and privacy laws that apply where you and the recipient operate. Personal means relevant and welcome—not automated.

Action progress

0 of 7 days complete

1

Day 1 · Choose

Choose one lane and one reachable buyer

Start narrow enough that you can find real people today. Do not buy capacity for an idea you have not tested.

Finished when

A one-sentence wedge and three interview requests sent.

Today's checklist

- [ ] Pick one business lane for this test.
- [ ] Name one buyer group you can reach directly.
- [ ] Write the job or result you think matters to them.
- [ ] Invite at least three people to a short problem conversation.

- [ ] **Mark day 1 complete**

Only mark the work, not the reading

2

Day 2 · Listen

Collect evidence from past behavior

Ask about the last time the problem happened. Listen for workarounds, deadlines, money already spent, and consequences.

Finished when

An evidence ledger with three to five named observations.

Today's checklist

- [ ] Hold any conversations that are already scheduled.
- [ ] Record exact workarounds, costs, and deadlines.
- [ ] If replies are pending, log relevant behavior from reviews or communities your buyer uses.
- [ ] Separate what you observed from what you still assume.

- [ ] **Mark day 2 complete**

Only mark the work, not the reading

3

Day 3 · Offer

Turn one paid job into a bounded promise

Choose the job with the clearest pain and strongest access. Define the result, scope, timing, proof, and next step.

Finished when

One offer card and a list of ten qualified prospects.

Today's checklist

- [ ] Choose one job with observed evidence.
- [ ] Write what is included and explicitly not included.
- [ ] Set a turnaround and revision boundary.
- [ ] Run the rights, intended-use, safety, and claims gate.
- [ ] List ten people or businesses that fit the buyer definition.

- [ ] **Mark day 3 complete** Only mark the work, not the reading

4

Day 4 · Price

Calculate the floor before you name the price

Give every direct cost a home, pay for your active time, and remove scope that cannot support a healthy transaction.

Finished when

A pilot price, a standard price, and clear payment timing.

Today's checklist

- [ ] Enter every job cost in the price-floor calculator.
- [ ] Choose a sustainable rate for active labor.
- [ ] Decide what deposit or prepayment the job requires.
- [ ] Check that the price leaves room for the next mistake.

- [ ] **Mark day 4 complete** Only mark the work, not the reading

5

Day 5 · Prove

Build proof, not inventory

Use the cheapest honest artifact that makes the promised result believable: a sketch, labeled render, sample, or short demonstration.

Finished when

One shareable proof asset and one obvious response path.

Today's checklist

- [ ] Create one honest proof asset.
- [ ] Label renders and prototypes accurately.
- [ ] Put the offer, timing, and next step on one simple page or document.
- [ ] Test the contact, booking, or payment path yourself.

- [ ] **Mark day 5 complete**

Only mark the work, not the reading

6

Day 6 · Ask

Ask qualified buyers for a real commitment

Send personal notes that connect a specific buyer, a problem you observed, your proof, and one low-friction next step.

Finished when

Ten personal asks and an outreach tracker with follow-up dates.

Today's checklist

- [ ] Send ten relevant, personal messages.
- [ ] Ask for a paid pilot, deposit, or scheduled decision—not feedback.
- [ ] Record each response and specific objection.
- [ ] Schedule the next follow-up while the conversation is fresh.

- [ ] **Mark day 6 complete**

Only mark the work, not the reading

7

Day 7 · Decide

Close the pilot or design the next test

Follow up, classify the evidence, and change one variable at a time. One week is a decision loop, not a verdict on your potential.

Finished when

A paid commitment or one clearly defined next experiment.

Today's checklist

- [ ] Follow up with every prospect who engaged.
- [ ] Classify the strongest evidence you received.
- [ ] Choose keep, adjust one thing, or change the wedge.
- [ ] Write the next seven-day experiment before buying new capacity.

- [ ] **Mark day 7 complete**

Only mark the work, not the reading

Make the decision

Know what the evidence means

One week does not prove a market. It gives you enough signal to choose the next experiment. Read commitment from strongest to weakest.

Strongest	**Payment or deposit** The buyer accepts the offer and exchanges money.
Strong	**Scheduled paid pilot** A named person, date, scope, and decision path.

Useful	**Quote request or buyer introduction** A concrete next step with the person who can decide.
Useful	**Specific objection** Price, proof, timing, or scope can guide the next test.
Weak	**General interest** No cost, deadline, or commitment yet.
Weakest	**Compliment, like, or view** Attention is not purchase evidence.

Keep

A buyer volunteers the next step

A deposit, paid pilot, confirmed start date, or repeated buyer-initiated request supports another cycle with the same wedge and offer.

Adjust one thing

The problem repeats, but one objection clusters

Change price, proof, scope, timing, or the ask—one variable at a time—so the next test teaches you something.

Change the wedge

Relevant buyers do not report the job

Change the wedge when reached, relevant buyers consistently do not report the job or are satisfied with their current solution. If they never saw or answered the ask, test access or messaging first.

Worksheet 05

My one-page business

This is a current hypothesis backed by named evidence—not a five-year plan.

Buyer

Paid job

Offer + fulfillment boundary

Pilot price + price floor

Proof

Acquisition channel

Evidence collected

Next seven-day test

Capacity I will not buy yet

End of Part I

Make the next week earn the next machine.

Keep the offer narrow. Keep the proof honest. Keep asking for a commitment. When real demand repeats, Part II will turn this proof into the smallest operation that can take an order and reliably keep its promise.

Continue at benchy.studio/how-to/start

Claim ledger

Sources and boundaries

No earnings, conversion, market-size, or equipment-performance claims are used here. Hypothetical examples are labeled, and every market conclusion is left for the reader to test. The practical guardrails below ground the chapter's research, pricing, commercial-rights, consumer-product, and additive-manufacturing claims.

U.S. Small Business Administration — market research ↗

U.S. Small Business Administration — break-even point ↗

Creative Commons — license conditions ↗

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office — trademark basics ↗

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission — small-business resources ↗

NIST — measurement science for additive manufacturing ↗

Strategic influences and further reading

Peter Thiel and Blake Masters — Zero to One ↗

Alex Hormozi — $100M Offers ↗

Eric Ries — The Lean Startup ↗

David J. Bland and Alexander Osterwalder — Testing Business Ideas ↗

Paul Graham — Do Things That Don't Scale ↗

Sources checked July 15, 2026.