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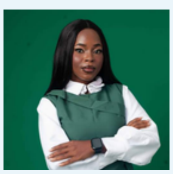

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From Idea to MVP: What Founders Should Do Before Building

Introduction

Every startup begins with an idea. But an idea is not yet a business. Between having an idea and building a product lies an important stage that founders often overlook: validation.

This is where the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) becomes relevant. An MVP is the simplest version of a product that delivers its core value while allowing the founder to test assumptions and learn from real users. The objective is not simply to build a cheaper version of the final product. It is to determine whether the product is worth building at all.

Before writing a single line of code, there are several things founders should consider.

1.Start With the Problem

The first question should not be, "What should I build?" It should be, "What problem am I solving?"

Founders can become so attached to their proposed solution that they fail to establish whether the underlying problem is real. A good idea must address a problem that people actually experience, preferably one that is frequent, costly or frustrating enough to make them seek a solution.

Talk to potential users. Understand how they currently deal with the problem and what alternatives they already use. Existing behaviour is often stronger evidence than compliments about how "great" an idea sounds.

2.Know Your Customer

A product designed for "everyone" is usually designed for no one in particular.

Before building, founders should identify their target customer and understand their needs, behaviour and purchasing decisions. The more clearly the initial customer is defined, the easier it becomes to build a focused MVP and interpret feedback.

For example, rather than creating "a financial management app for everyone," a founder might focus on helping small businesses manage daily cash flow. A specific customer creates a clearer product and a more meaningful test.

3.**Identify What You Need to Prove**

Every startup is built on assumptions. You may assume that customers have the problem, that they will use your solution, that they will trust it or that they will pay for it.

Before building, identify the assumptions that pose the greatest risk to the business.

The MVP should be designed around testing these assumptions. If the biggest uncertainty is whether customers will pay, the MVP should test willingness to pay. If the concern is whether users understand the product, user testing should come first.

The question is not simply, "Can we build it?" but, "What do we need to learn before investing more?"

4.**Define the Core Value**

An MVP should solve one important problem well.

Founders should identify the core value they want the customer to receive and build around it. Not every feature imagined for the final product belongs in the MVP.

Extra features can increase development costs, delay the launch and make it difficult to determine what customers actually value. If a feature does not contribute to the core solution or help test an important assumption, it can probably wait.

Minimal does not mean poor quality. It means focused.

5.Test Before You Build

Sometimes, the best MVP is not software.

A landing page, clickable prototype, explainer video, waitlist, pre-order, manual service or small pilot can provide valuable information before significant resources are committed. Hostinger's examples of early MVPs show how companies such as Dropbox, Airbnb and Zappos tested demand through simple versions of their eventual businesses before building more sophisticated products.

The principle is simple: learn first, build further later.

6.Consider the Legal Side Early

Founders should also consider the legal and regulatory implications of the idea before building.

Depending on the sector, the business may require licences, registrations or regulatory approvals. There may also be issues relating to intellectual property, data protection, contracts, consumer protection, taxation and ownership of the product being developed.

For example, founders should establish who owns the code, designs and other intellectual property created by developers or contractors. They should also consider how customer data will be collected and processed and whether the proposed business model is permitted within its industry.

Legal review should not necessarily become a bureaucratic exercise at the idea stage. Its purpose is to identify significant legal risks before the founder invests heavily in a product that may later face regulatory or contractual problems.

7.Build the Brand, But Keep It Lean

Branding is important, but an MVP does not require a complete brand identity system.

A basic name, logo, colour palette, typography and clear value proposition may be sufficient to give the product credibility while it is being tested. Turbologo's discussion of MVP branding similarly recommends keeping the initial brand system simple and focused on helping the product communicate effectively.

The priority at this stage is not perfection. It is clarity and credibility.

8.Define What Success Looks Like

Before launching, founders should decide what they are looking for.

Is success measured by sign-ups, active users, completed transactions, customer retention, referrals or willingness to pay?

These metrics should connect to the assumptions being tested. Ten thousand visitors mean little if nobody uses the product. Conversely, a small number of highly engaged users may provide strong evidence that the solution is valuable.

The MVP should generate learning, not just numbers.

The MVP Is the Beginning, Not the Finish Line

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After the MVP is launched, founders should study what users actually do, what they struggle with and what they are willing to pay for.

The findings may confirm the original idea. They may also require the founder to change the product, target a different customer, adjust the pricing or abandon the idea altogether.

That is not failure. It is the purpose of validation.

The most expensive mistake a founder can make is building an elaborate product before discovering that nobody needs it.

The journey from idea to MVP should therefore begin with research, not code. Understand the problem. Know the customer. Test the assumptions. Define the core value. Consider the legal requirements. Build only what is necessary to learn.

The goal of an MVP is not to prove that you can build the product. It is to discover whether the product deserves to be built.

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