THE CUMBERBATCH GROUP

Idea Validation Worksheet

A practical framework for evaluating a business idea before committing significant time, capital, or resources

Business or idea	
Prepared by	
Date started	
Review date	

How to use this worksheet

Work through the sections in order. Record evidence separately from assumptions, cite the source of important findings, and involve the people responsible for research, finance, operations, and customer contact. The final decision should reflect the strength of the evidence, not enthusiasm alone.

Decision	Meaning
PROCEED	Evidence supports moving forward to structured planning or a controlled launch.
REVISE	The opportunity may be viable, but the customer, offer, economics, or delivery model must change.
TEST	Important assumptions remain uncertain and require a defined validation experiment.
STOP	Evidence does not support further investment under the current concept.

01 DEFINE THE CUSTOMER PROBLEM

Describe the problem without presenting your proposed solution. Focus on the condition the customer experiences and why it matters.

What specific problem exists?

Who experiences the problem, and in what situation does it occur?

What measurable consequences result from the problem?

Problem test	Evidence or observation	Strength
Frequent		Low / Medium / High
Urgent		Low / Medium / High
Costly or consequential		Low / Medium / High
Currently unresolved		Low / Medium / High

02 DEFINE THE CUSTOMER

Identify the specific people or organizations most affected. Avoid broad descriptions such as everyone, small businesses, or consumers.

Primary customer segment

Decision maker, buyer, user, and beneficiary

Customer characteristic	Description	Why it matters
Location or market		
Industry or context		
Behavior or trigger		
Ability to pay		
Access or reachability		

What evidence confirms that this segment experiences the problem?

03 EVALUATE MARKET DEMAND

Record what customers do, say, spend, search for, or attempt today. Treat opinions as weak evidence unless behavior supports them.

Evidence source	Finding	Reliability	Implication
Customer interviews			
Observation			
Market research			
Search or inquiry data			
Sales or preorders			
Existing spending			

What indicates sufficient demand to continue?

What evidence would cause you to reject the opportunity?

04 UNDERSTAND CURRENT ALTERNATIVES

A competitor includes any product, service, workaround, internal process, delay, or decision to do nothing that customers use instead.

Alternative	What customers value	Where it falls short	Cost or effort
1			
2			
3			
4			

Why would a customer switch from the strongest alternative?

What advantage can your business credibly defend?

05 ASSESS THE PROPOSED SOLUTION

Define the simplest credible version of the offer and connect each feature to a verified customer need.

Proposed solution and core value proposition

Customer need	Solution element	Expected benefit	Evidence needed

What is the minimum viable offer that can be tested?

What must be excluded from the first test or launch?

06 TEST COMMERCIAL VIABILITY

Use conservative assumptions. Confirm that the expected price and customer volume can support the full cost of acquiring, delivering, and maintaining the offer.

Economic assumption	Estimate	Source	Confidence
Expected selling price			
Direct cost per sale			
Gross contribution			
Customer acquisition cost			
Monthly fixed costs			
Required monthly sales			
Startup investment			

What conditions must be true for the idea to be financially viable?

What is the largest financial uncertainty?

07 PRIORITIZE ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

List the beliefs that must be true. Prioritize those with high impact and weak evidence for immediate testing.

Assumption or risk	Impact	Evidence	Test or response	Owner / date
	H / M / L	Strong / Weak		
	H / M / L	Strong / Weak		
	H / M / L	Strong / Weak		
	H / M / L	Strong / Weak		
	H / M / L	Strong / Weak		
	H / M / L	Strong / Weak		

Which assumption could invalidate the entire concept?

What is the least expensive credible way to test it?

08 DESIGN THE VALIDATION TEST

Choose one test that produces observable evidence about the highest-priority uncertainty.

Test element	Definition
Assumption being tested	
Target participants	
Test method	
Evidence to collect	
Success threshold	
Failure threshold	
Budget and duration	
Owner and deadline	

How will the test avoid leading questions or biased interpretation?

What decision will follow each possible result?

09 MAKE THE VALIDATION DECISION

Summarize the evidence and make an explicit decision. Conditions and next actions should be clear enough for another person to review.

Decision criterion	Finding	Rating
Problem strength		1 2 3 4 5
Customer clarity		1 2 3 4 5
Demand evidence		1 2 3 4 5
Competitive advantage		1 2 3 4 5
Solution fit		1 2 3 4 5
Commercial viability		1 2 3 4 5
Operational feasibility		1 2 3 4 5
Overall evidence		1 2 3 4 5

FINAL DECISION [ ] PROCEED [ ] REVISE [ ] TEST [ ] STOP

Decision rationale

10 ASSIGN NEXT ACTIONS

Convert the decision into clear, owned actions. Do not allow an unresolved decision to become indefinite additional research.

Next action	Owner	Due date	Completion evidence	Status

Conditions that must be satisfied before additional investment

Date and participants for the next formal review