Growth Hacking & Experiments in 8 Steps



Founders Hive

Step 1: Introduction & Goal

Turn your business model into repeatable growth by testing one assumption at a time.

Why Experiment Now?

Step 7 of Business Model Design covered validation. Here you go deeper: growth hacking means many small, measurable tests that show which channels, offers and prices move customers.

Your Path Through the 8 Steps

- Steps 2 to 4: write hypotheses, choose signals, run tests
- Steps 5 to 7: channels, pricing and platforms; use what fits
- Step 8: decide what to scale, iterate or stop

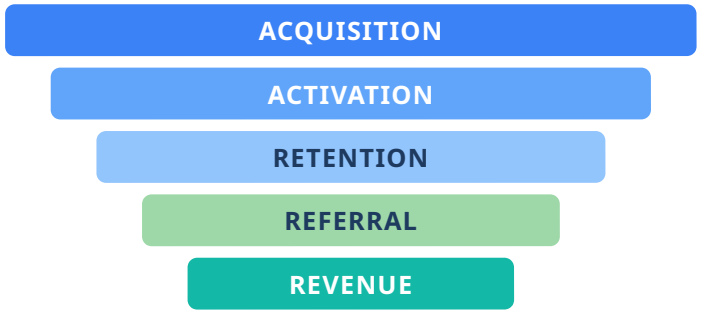
What is the one growth question you must answer next? Add two backups.

Founder Insight

"After every event we try to create some kind of narrative, like a free product, and we look at how many people are downloading the QR code, how many people are saying: yes, I would love to try. But unless the person has paid for it, it's still zero. The person has to pay, even if it's one franc."

Govinda Upadhyay, SmartHelio

PIRATE METRICS (AARRR)



Where do prospects drop out?

Pro Tip

Read the AARRR stages in B2B terms: first meeting, pilot agreed, pilot extended, introduction to another site, contract. Run your first experiments where prospects stall.

Growth Question

Question	Metric	Target	Deadline
e.g. Will customers pay for a pilot?	*Signed paid pilots*	*2*	*Within 3 months*

Step 2: Formulate Testable Hypotheses

Turn assumptions into statements that a test can prove wrong.

Build Your Hypothesis

We believe: the customer, the problem and the behavior you expect
We test: the cheapest action that shows this behavior
We know when: the metric, the threshold and what counts as close

Make It Testable

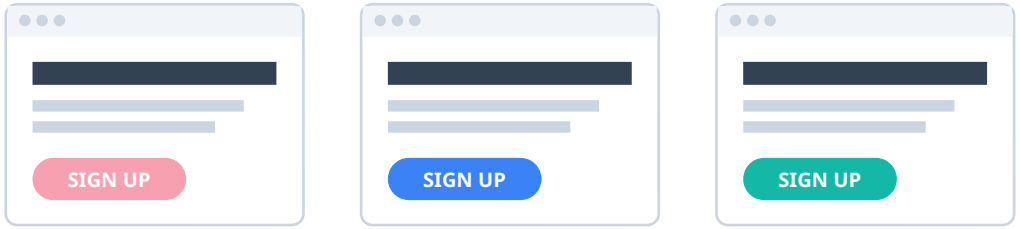
- One hypothesis, one segment, one variable
- Fix the threshold before the test starts
- Few buyers? Use one pitch or one-pager per segment or indication

Founder Insight

"The large players have such big portfolios that they can't make specific, activity-centered landing pages per indication. When you are able to do that and you have existed for a couple of months with those landing pages, and the user starts to feel a need, the user looks: I have this deficiency, I look for kayaking. Then you find us."

Myriam Lingg, macu4

ONE PAGE OR PITCH PER SEGMENT



Segment A | Segment B | Segment C

Pro Tip

Write the success threshold on the card before you launch, for example "8 demo requests from segment A within six weeks". A threshold set after the results tempts you to read any outcome as success.

Hypothesis Card

We believe	We test	We know when
e.g. Lab managers lose hours on manual sample tracking	*Landing page with a demo request button*	*8 demo requests in 6 weeks (5 to 7: iterate)*

Step 3: Pick Signals That Count

Measure what customers do, not what they say.

The Signal Ladder

Click: cheap interest, easy to give
Meeting: they invest time and bring colleagues
Pilot: they commit staff, data and site access
Payment: they commit budget

Avoid Vanity Metrics

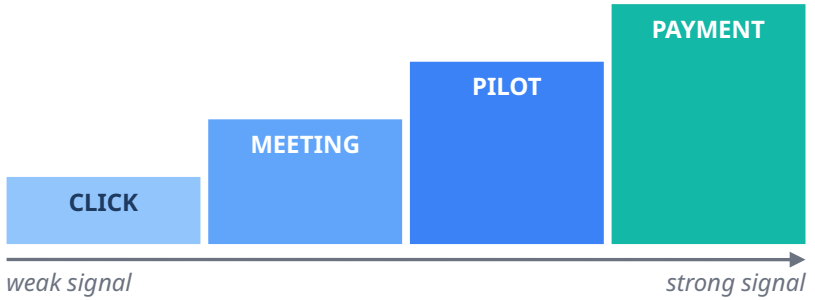
- Vanity metrics such as likes, views and followers look good but rarely predict revenue
- Track the conversion from one rung to the next

Founder Insight

"At one point it's the sale. But in the last months, it was about having clients or potential adopters that test the solution and exchange knowledge: whether we have a good fit, where we can add value. We look at all the people we talked to and how much output into pilots and POCs is coming. That's the major metric."

Jonas Wüst, Tethys Robotics

SIGNAL LADDER



Pro Tip

Rank every signal by what it costs the buyer: time, data, reputation or money. In B2B, a pilot request from a decision maker outweighs any number of clicks.

Signal Ladder

Signal	Count	% of Prior Rung	Target (Step 1)
Click			
Meeting			
Pilot			
Payment			

Step 4: Run Low-Cost Experiments

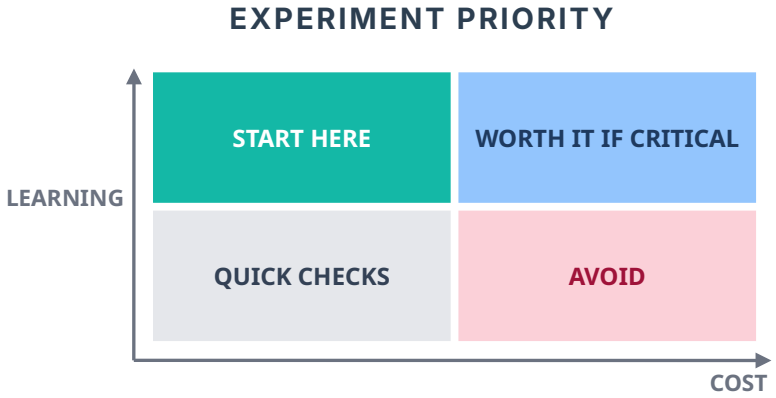
Learn fast and cheaply before you spend money on scale.

Low-Cost Experiment Types

Smoke test: a page or offer for a product that is not built yet
Concierge test: deliver the service by hand to a few customers
Event test: present at a niche event and count follow-ups
Earned media: press, associations and challenges instead of paid ads

Keep It Small

- Fixed budget and a fixed time box
- One owner, plus a regulatory check for any public claim



Pro Tip

Score each idea with ICE: Impact if it works, Confidence that it will work, Ease of running it, each 1 to 10, then multiply. Start top left in the matrix and cap every test, for example two weeks for a call series.

Founder Insight

"We never paid for an ad in any newspaper. We were invited for this interview, that interview. That helped a lot, because it ended up on everyone's desk as a front page. Then we became part of all those big organizations and were active there. They see you a second, third, fourth time, and they realize you're from here."

Mateusz Wojdylo, Stellos AG

Experiment Canvas

Experiment	Step 2 Hypothesis	Cost & Time	ICE Score
e.g. Talk at a niche industry event	*Ward leads want early alerts*	*CHF 500, 2 weeks*	*7 x 6 x 8 = 336*

Step 5: Learn from Failed Channels

A channel that fails shows you how your customers really buy.

Why Channels Fail

Wrong audience: you reach users, but not the people who sign: clinical lead, procurement, IT

Wrong trust level: the market buys on reputation, which a cold message cannot build

Wrong story: release news where the audience needs a broader topic

Run a Post-Mortem

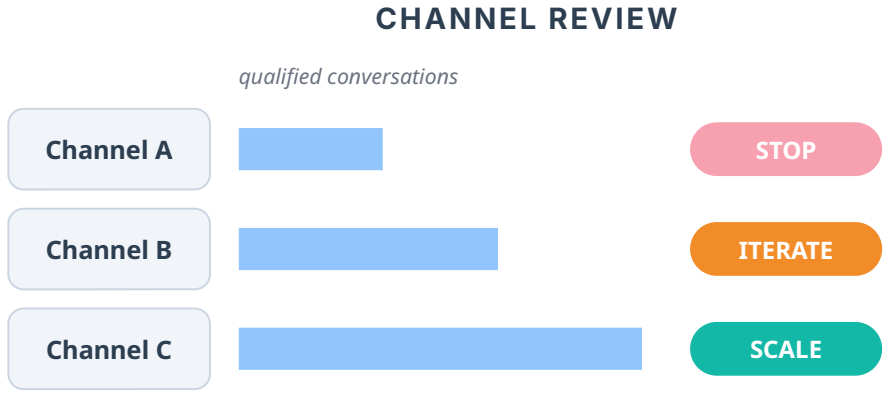
- Note what you expected, what happened and why
- Keep the insight, drop the channel

No channel tested yet? Fill in the sheet for your next channel and its stop rule.

Founder Insight

"We worked very heavily on very advanced technical blog posts around a given release, but then it just doesn't go anywhere. If it's very product-focused, very tied to our ICP and our product, it's very hard to get organic coverage. You will not get TechCrunch writing about your latest release just because you had the release."

Petar Tsankov, LatticeFlow AI



Pro Tip

Give every channel a stop rule before you start, such as a minimum number of qualified conversations after a fixed effort. When the rule triggers, stop and write the post-mortem the same week.

Channel Post-Mortem

Channel	Expected	Result	Lesson
e.g. Cold email to CTOs	*5 meetings*	*0 meetings*	*Buyers want trust first; meet them at events*

Step 6: Test Free vs. Paid

Find out early whether customers will pay, not only whether they will try.

Offer Formats

Freemium: a basic version stays free, premium features cost

Co-funded pilot: the customer pays a share; a grant or innovation budget covers the rest

Paid pilot: a small, priced engagement with a clear scope

Symbolic price: a low fee that filters out curiosity

What Each Test Tells You

- Free sign-ups measure interest
- A payment measures trust and budget

Founder Insight

"Whenever we gave something for free, it failed. We tried multiple times to create a freemium version, and it always failed. What is important here is that people need to trust you, trust the software first, and then they are happy to pay whatever the price. Whenever we tried freemium, we did very badly."

Govinda Upadhyay, SmartHelio

WHAT EACH OFFER TELLS YOU

FREE	vs.	PAID
Shows interest Low commitment Many sign-ups		Shows budget High commitment Fewer, stronger leads

Pro Tip

In B2B, test willingness to pay with a paid pilot or a symbolic price before you give anything away. If your product is not yet certified, ask your regulatory advisor which pilot formats you may charge for.

Pricing Experiment Sheet

Offer	Price	Conversions	Learning
e.g. 3-month paid pilot	*CHF 5,000*	*2 of 10 offers*	*Budget sits with operations*

Step 7: Use Platforms as Growth Engines

Let existing platforms and partners carry your product to new customers.

Platform Options

Marketplaces: cloud or industry stores where buyers already purchase

Partner ecosystems: integrations with software your customers use

Distributors and purchasing groups: partners already on your buyers' supplier lists

Before You Commit

- Check fees, listing rules and who holds the customer relationship
- Track leads per platform like any other channel

Founder Insight

"The Microsoft Marketplace is a huge tool for us, because with that we are purchasable on a global scale. We don't have to go through separate procurement. A customer in England can just purchase our solution and pay Microsoft directly, and we get paid from them. That is a huge enabler."

Matthias Spühler, heyPatient



Pro Tip

List your product where your buyers already buy, such as a cloud marketplace or a partner ecosystem. If buyers can pay through an existing contract, you skip a separate procurement process.

Platform Checklist

Platform	Who Buys There	Fees & Rules	Status
e.g. Cloud marketplace	*Customers with an existing cloud contract*	*Listing rules, revenue share*	*Applied*

Step 8: Decide to Scale, Iterate or Stop

Turn results into decisions and record every one of them.

Three Decisions

Scale: the result clears your threshold; add budget

Iterate: the result is close (define how close in advance); change one variable

Stop: the result misses clearly; note why and move on

Keep an Experiment Log

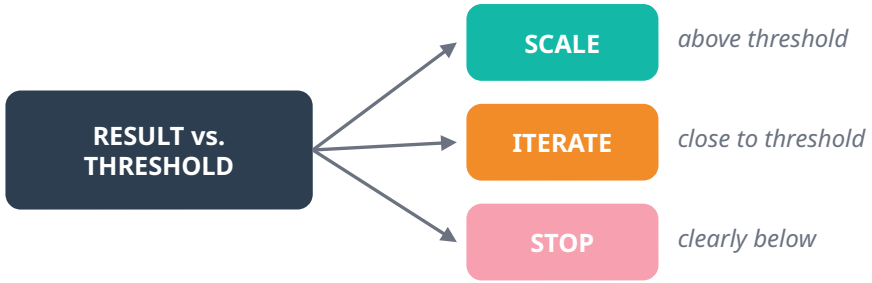
- Log hypothesis, result and decision in your CRM
- Review the log with your team at a fixed rhythm

Founder Insight

"You definitely need a CRM from day one, even if you don't have a product. You are talking to a lot of people, and you need to capture all your contacts in an organized way. Our email is directly connected to our CRM, so we know what happened with that client, the status, the next action and the timeline."

Dr. Poorya Amini, Risklick

DECISION RULE



Pro Tip

Hold a monthly review of your experiment log with the people who sell and the people who build. Decide on every open test in that meeting; no test stays open for more than two review cycles.

Experiment Log

Date	Hypothesis & Threshold	Result	Decision
e.g. Mar 15	*20% demo-to-pilot rate*	*12%*	*Iterate: shorter pilot*

Next Steps



Start Your Experiment Log

Pick one growth question and fill in your first three hypothesis cards. Log every test from day one.



Iterate & Refine

Rerun what almost worked with one change. Retire every channel that missed its stop rule.



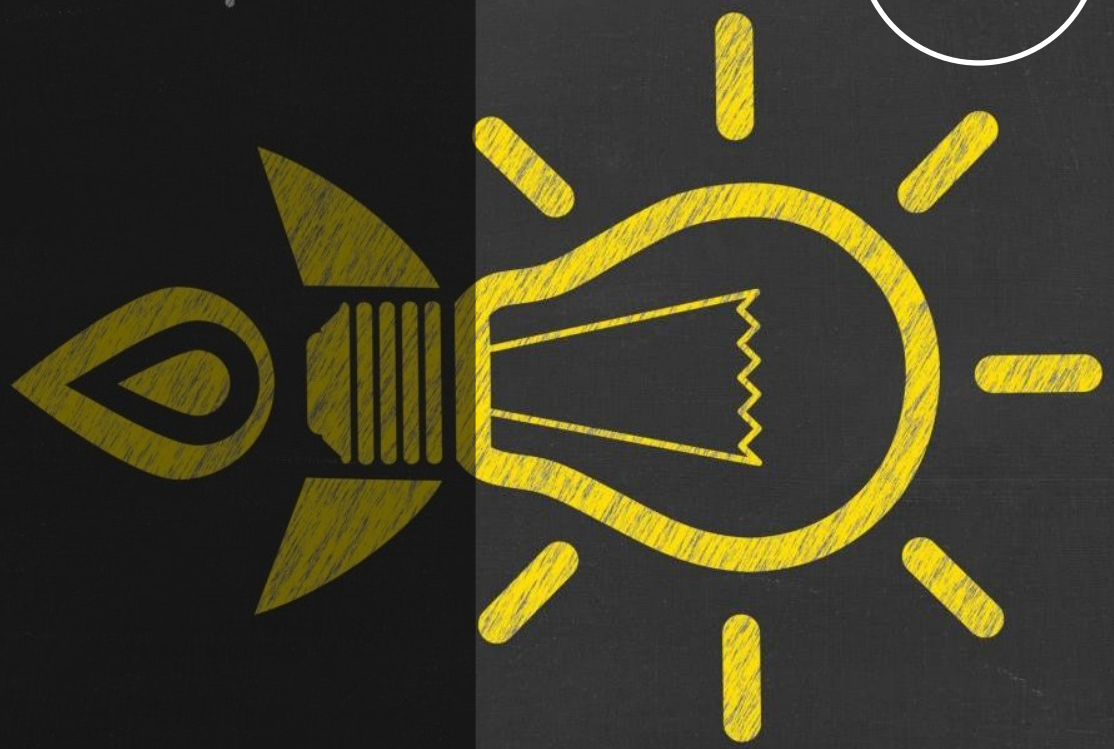
Seek Feedback

Share your log with mentors, coaches and early customers. Ask them which signal they would trust.

Additional Resources

Business Model Design Go-to-Market Strategy Market & Customer Definition Sales Funnel & Lead Qualification Innosuisse Training

Let's Bring Your Idea to Life



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