

The First 90 Days

A structured 90-day plan covering customer discovery, first build, first revenue and the weekly operating rhythm that keeps a new company honest.

Overview

The first ninety days decide whether a company is built on evidence or on assumptions. This plan is deliberately sequenced: understand before you build, build small, and charge early. Each phase ends with a decision, not a status update.

Days 1-30 — Evidence

- Write the problem statement naming the person, the frequency and the cost.
- Run 20 customer conversations. Ask what they did last time, never what they would do.
- Document current workarounds and what each costs in money, tools or hours.
- Incorporate, open the bank account, sign the founder agreement with vesting.
- Decision at day 30: does a majority describe an active, expensive workaround?

Days 31-60 — Smallest working thing

- Define the single core action the product must make easy.
- Ship a version that delivers it — a manual, human-powered service counts.
- Put it in front of 5-10 users and watch them use it without help.
- Instrument the core action, activation and week-two return rate from day one.
- Decision at day 60: is anyone returning unprompted?

Days 61-90 — Money

- Quote a real price and ask for payment. Letters of intent are not evidence.
- Close the first three to five paying customers yourself, no sales hire.
- Record every objection verbatim and rank them by frequency.
- Build the metrics one-pager: revenue, users, activation, retention, burn, runway.
- Decision at day 90: has money changed hands, and do you know why it did?

The weekly operating rhythm

- Monday: pick one metric to move this week and one experiment to move it.

- Daily: 15-minute standup — shipped, blocked, next.
- Wednesday: two customer conversations, minimum, every single week.
- Friday: update the metrics sheet and write a five-line investor-style summary, even with no investors.
- Monthly: recompute runway as a date, and review whether the segment definition still holds.

Traps in the first 90 days

- Building for six months before showing anyone.
- Hiring before the founders have done the job themselves.
- Raising before there is anything to underwrite.
- Optimising a brand, website or pitch deck instead of talking to buyers.
- Treating encouragement from non-buyers as validation.

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