WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Test the Need Before You Build

A customer hypothesis, a small test, and a decision rule agreed before the results.

25 minutes | Lean Startup · Build / Measure / Learn

Use it in three moves

1. Write the uncertain claim about a customer and a need. Say what evidence would make you reconsider it.

2. Choose the smallest test that can answer that question. Explain what is real or simulated to participants.

3. Compare the result with the decision rule you chose beforehand. Continue, revise, or stop before spending more.

Name the customer and the risky assumption

What must be true for the idea to work? Separate need, use, willingness to pay, and feasibility.

Decide what evidence would matter

Choose observable behavior, a threshold, and a time window before building. Small samples provide learning, not certainty.

Build the smallest honest test

Use a prototype, manual service, or usable slice. Explain its limits; do not pretend an unavailable service is ready.

Test the Need Before You Build

YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Measure what actually happens

Record use, questions, costs, and surprises. Compliments alone are weak evidence.

Learn · Continue, change, or stop?

Compare results with the prior rule. Explain a changed hypothesis instead of quietly moving the threshold.

Limit the next commitment

Name owner, cost cap, participants, consent, and review date.

A question for me

What result would make us genuinely change our minds?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

Name the customer and the risky assumption

Small team leads need a quicker way to prepare onboarding and will use a one-page checklist with a new starter.

Decide what evidence would matter

In five voluntary trials, at least three leads use the checklist in a real onboarding conversation and identify a useful step it enabled.

Build the smallest honest test

A printable draft and a short walkthrough, clearly marked as a trial. No account, automation, or sensitive employee data required.

Measure what actually happens

Four leads opened the file; two used it. Three said the initial setup was too long. Record that rather than counting downloads as adoption.

Learn · Continue, change, or stop?

The initial use threshold was not met. Simplify setup and test again; do not call the model validated.

Limit the next commitment

One editor, half a day, five new volunteers. Review after the next onboarding week and stop if the need is still weak.

The thinking behind it

The people in a test are collaborators, not just conversion events. Make participation, limits, and use of their feedback clear.

Eric Ries's Lean Startup centers on validated learning through Build-Measure-Learn. This original test planner starts by deciding what to learn and measure, then chooses a small build. A minimum viable product is a learning vehicle, not permission to expose people to an unreliable promise.

Eric Ries · Lean Startup principles

Read You Have a Culture Problem by Nic Payne