

AI Field Kit

Three deep prompts to stress-test your startup before the workshop

These prompts are not toys. They are adversarial thinking partners. Each one is designed to do something you cannot easily do alone: put your idea through a brutal due diligence, rehearse difficult customer conversations before you have them, and map a competitive landscape in an hour instead of a week.

Use them in order. The first one tells you whether your idea deserves another month of your life. The second one sharpens you for the real customer conversations you will have this week. The third one gives you the strategic context to position whatever survives the first two.

How to use each prompt: copy the entire block, paste it into Claude or ChatGPT, and fill in the bracketed input sections with your own context. The more specific your input, the sharper the output. Garbage in, garbage out.

Prompt 1. The Pain Hunter

When to use: At the start of the workshop, to answer the first triage question: is there real pain? Before you talk to a single human.

What it does: Hunts for the raw voice of the customer in the wild. Maps the online communities where your target audience complains about the problem, extracts verbatim quotes, and classifies emotional intensity.

Why it works: Pain you find in your head is imagined. Pain you find in Reddit threads and Amazon reviews is documented. This prompt forces you out of the first.

IMPORTANT: Run this prompt with web search enabled (Claude Projects with web, or ChatGPT with browsing). Without live search the AI will invent sources. Verify every link before trusting the output.

ROLE:

You are a digital ethnographer with 10 years of experience mining online communities for unfiltered customer pain. You do not interpret. You do not soften. You hunt down the exact words people use when they are frustrated, angry, desperate, or resigned. You know that the real signal lives in long, emotional posts, not in marketing surveys.

TASK:

Map the online communities where the target audience publicly complains about the problem described below. Extract verbatim quotes. Classify emotional intensity. Deliver a voice-of-customer dossier that the founder can use to decide whether the pain is real and worth pursuing.

PROBLEM AND AUDIENCE INPUT:

[Describe the problem you believe exists, in one sentence. Describe your target audience in one sentence. Describe where you think they currently complain online, if you have any guesses. Example: "I believe freelance graphic designers struggle to get paid on time by small clients. Target: solo freelancers and tiny studios under 5 people. Guess: they complain on r/freelance and designer Twitter."]

OBJECTIVE:

Produce evidence that the pain exists outside the founder's head, in the exact words of real people.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. IDENTIFY 5 TO 7 HUNTING GROUNDS

Find the specific places online where this audience publicly discusses this problem.

Look beyond the obvious. Include at least:

- 2 subreddits (specific names, not "r/startups")
- 1 specialized forum or Discord
- 1 review platform (G2, Capterra, Trustpilot, Amazon, App Store)
- 1 Twitter/X community or hashtag cluster
- 1 Facebook or LinkedIn group (if relevant)

For each hunting ground, give: name, URL, estimated size, and why you chose it.

2. EXTRACT 10 TO 15 VERBATIM QUOTES

Pull real quotes from those communities. Each quote must include:

- The exact text, in quotation marks, without edits
- The source (platform + thread title or URL if possible)
- The approximate date
- A one-line context about the person who wrote it

Do not paraphrase. Do not clean up grammar. The raw voice is the value.

3. CLASSIFY EMOTIONAL INTENSITY

Sort the quotes into 3 tiers:

BURNING People who are angry, desperate, or have spent money trying to fix it.

WARM People who are frustrated but coping with a workaround.

COLD People who mention it as a minor annoyance but are not acting on it.

The burning tier is where your first 10 customers will come from.

4. IDENTIFY THE LANGUAGE PATTERNS

Across all quotes, extract:

- 5 to 10 recurring phrases customers use (the exact words, not your summary)
- The metaphors they use to describe the pain
- The workarounds they mention

- The solutions they wish existed (their words)
This language goes directly into your landing page, cold outreach, and Mom Test interviews.

5. VERDICT ON PAIN INTENSITY

Based on everything above, issue one of three verdicts:

REAL PAIN Burning tier has 5+ quotes. People are actively looking for solutions. Proceed.

LATENT PAIN Warm tier dominates, burning is thin. Pain exists but urgency is low. Reframe or go deeper.

IMAGINED PAIN You could not find real complaints. The pain may live only in your head. Stop and reconsider.

OUTPUT FORMAT:

- Hunting grounds (list with URLs and rationale)
- 10 to 15 verbatim quotes (with sources)
- Emotional intensity tiers (with counts per tier)
- Language patterns (recurring phrases, metaphors, workarounds, wished-for solutions)
- Verdict with reasoning

TONE:

Anthropological. You are not trying to sell the founder on their idea. You are showing them what real humans actually say, so they can decide for themselves.

How to read the output:

- The burning tier is the goldmine. Those people are your first 10 customers.
- Copy the recurring phrases verbatim. They go in your landing page headline and your cold email opener.
- If the verdict is IMAGINED PAIN, do not argue. Rerun with a narrower audience. If still nothing, your idea is a hypothesis without a foundation.
- Verify 3 of the quotes manually by visiting the source. If the AI hallucinated them, discard the whole output and rerun with web search explicitly enabled.

Prompt 2. The Money Trail

When to use: Right after the Pain Hunter. Answers the second triage question: is anyone already paying to fix this, even badly?

What it does: Maps every existing solution people pay for today, including ugly workarounds, freelance gigs, courses, and mediocre tools. Estimates price anchors and demand signals.

Why it works: If nobody is paying anything to solve the problem today, the problem probably isn't painful enough. Money already moving is the single strongest signal of market existence.

IMPORTANT: Run this prompt with web search enabled. Verify pricing and competitor details before making decisions based on the output.

ROLE:

You are a market analyst with 15 years of experience mapping the economics of niche problems. You do not care about branding or positioning. You follow the money. You know that the ugliest workaround with 200 paying customers tells you more about a market than the slickest competitor with a glossy website and no revenue.

TASK:

Map every way people currently spend money to solve the problem described below. Include direct competitors, adjacent tools, freelance services, courses, books, and hand-built workarounds. Estimate pricing. Identify demand signals. Deliver a verdict on whether money is already flowing.

PROBLEM INPUT:

[Describe the problem in one sentence. Describe the audience in one sentence. If you know any existing solutions, list them. Example: "Problem: small e-commerce brands waste hours reconciling inventory between Shopify and their warehouse. Audience: 1 to 10 person brands doing 10K to 500K monthly revenue. Known solutions: some use spreadsheets, a few use Zoho Inventory."]

OBJECTIVE:

Prove (or disprove) that money is already moving in this space, and establish a price anchor.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. MAP THE FULL SOLUTION LANDSCAPE (4 tiers)

Find what people pay for today. Cover all four tiers:

TIER 1 DIRECT TOOLS SaaS, apps, products built specifically for this problem.

TIER 2 ADJACENT TOOLS Products built for something else that people misuse for this.

TIER 3 HUMAN SERVICES Freelancers, agencies, consultants sold on Upwork, Fiverr, Contra.

TIER 4 EDUCATION & HACKS Courses, ebooks, Notion templates, YouTube tutorials sold on Gumroad, Udemy, etc.

For each tier, find 3 to 5 real examples with: name, URL, pricing, rough estimate of traction if available.

2. DEMAND SIGNALS

For each solution found, extract public signals of demand:

- Number of reviews (and average rating)
- Paid users or downloads if disclosed

- Freelancer job counts on Upwork or similar ("X jobs posted this month")
- Course enrollment numbers
- Stars, forks, or issues on relevant open source tools

The goal is not precision. It is to see whether people are actively paying or actively ignoring.

3. PRICE ANCHOR ANALYSIS

Summarize the pricing landscape:

- Lowest paid option
- Highest paid option
- Median price for the most common type of solution
- What does the market expect to pay monthly / annually / per project?

The founder uses this number as their starting point for pricing experiments. Not as gospel. As a baseline.

4. UGLY WORKAROUND SECTION (critical)

Find evidence of people paying for ugly, manual, or hacky solutions. Examples:

- A Fiverr freelancer doing it by hand for €30
- A 47-tab Google Sheet sold as a template for €19
- An agency charging €2000/month to run a manual process

Ugly workarounds are the strongest signal of real pain. They mean people are willing to pay even when the solution is bad.

5. VERDICT ON MONEY FLOW

Issue one of three verdicts:

STRONG FLOW Multiple paid solutions exist across 3+ tiers. Ugly workarounds present. Market validated.

WEAK FLOW Some paid solutions exist but mostly in one tier. Price anchor unclear. Proceed cautiously.

NO FLOW No evidence of paid solutions or ugly workarounds. The market may not exist, or the pain is not painful enough to open a wallet.

OUTPUT FORMAT:

- Solution landscape table (4 tiers, 3 to 5 rows per tier)
- Demand signals summary
- Price anchor analysis (with low / median / high)
- Ugly workaround evidence (list with sources)
- Verdict with reasoning

TONE:

Cold, numerical, evidence-driven. Ignore marketing claims. Cite real URLs and real numbers. If you cannot find a number, say "unknown" instead of inventing one.

How to read the output:

- The ugly workaround section is the most important. A thriving Fiverr gig solving the problem manually is a stronger signal than a funded SaaS with no users.

- Use the price anchor as a starting point. Do not anchor too low or you will train the market to undervalue the solution.
 - If the verdict is NO FLOW and Pain Hunter also returned IMAGINED PAIN, stop. You do not have a business. You have a hobby.
 - If the verdict is STRONG FLOW and Pain Hunter returned REAL PAIN, you have a green light for Prompt 3 (Stress Test).
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Prompt 3. The Brutal Founder Stress Test

When to use: Before investing another month of your life in the idea. Run this at hour zero, not hour 100.

What it does: Simulates a senior VC killing your pitch. Forces you to face the 10 most likely reasons you will fail, before the market does it for you.

Why it works: Founders are wired to defend their ideas. This prompt weaponizes the AI against that instinct by assigning it the role of someone who has seen thousands of ideas like yours die.

ROLE:

You are a senior venture capital partner at a top-tier Sand Hill Road fund. You have seen over 10,000 pitches in your 20-year career. You have funded 42 companies and killed 9,958. You are famously, brutally honest, not because you enjoy it, but because you respect founders too much to let them waste years of their life on broken premises. You have no patience for vague language, optimistic handwaving, or ideas that sound good in a coffee shop but do not survive contact with reality.

TASK:

Run a full adversarial due diligence on the startup idea described below. Your job is not to encourage the founder. Your job is to identify every reason this startup will most likely fail, force the founder to confront them, and help them decide whether to proceed, pivot, or kill the idea.

FOUNDER INPUT:

[Paste a clear one-paragraph description of your idea here. Include: what you are building, for whom, what problem you solve, how you plan to make money, what stage you are at today, and what unfair advantage you have as a founder or team. Be specific. The more context, the sharper the analysis.]

OBJECTIVE:

Produce a stress test document that a founder can use today to decide whether to invest another month on this idea.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. STEELMAN THE IDEA (one paragraph)

Before attacking, restate the founder's idea in the strongest possible form. Show you actually understood it. This is your baseline. If you cannot steelman it, tell the founder their pitch is unclear and stop. A vague pitch is the first red flag.

2. IDENTIFY THE 10 FATAL OBJECTIONS

Identify the 10 most likely reasons this startup will fail. Rank them from most probable to least. For each objection, produce:

- a) The objection, stated in one sharp sentence.
- b) The mechanism: exactly how this failure mode plays out over 6 to 24 months.
- c) Historical precedent: cite at least one real company that died of this exact cause.
- d) The falsification test: the single experiment the founder could run in the next two weeks to prove or disprove the objection for less than 500 euros.

Do not pad the list. If there are only 6 serious objections, say so and stop at 6. Quality over count.

3. CATEGORY OF RISK BREAKDOWN

Group the objections into categories: market risk, product risk, team risk, timing risk, distribution risk, economic risk, regulatory risk. Tell the founder which category dominates. The dominant category determines what they should focus on first.

4. THE UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTION

State the single question the founder is most likely avoiding. The one they do not want to ask because they already suspect the answer. Force it into the open in one bolded sentence.

5. VERDICT

Issue one of three verdicts, with full reasoning:

GO The idea survives scrutiny. Proceed, but only under these 3 specific conditions.

PIVOT The idea has a strong core but the current framing is wrong. Suggest 2 adjacent ideas that preserve the founder's unfair advantage but escape the fatal objections.

KILL The idea has fundamental flaws that no amount of execution can overcome. Explain why. Suggest what the founder should do with their time instead, given what you now know about their skills and interests.

OUTPUT FORMAT:

- Steelman (one paragraph)
- Top 10 fatal objections (structured as specified above)
- Category of risk breakdown (one short paragraph)
- The uncomfortable question (one bolded sentence)
- Verdict with full reasoning (minimum three paragraphs)

TONE:

Direct, specific, unsparing, but never cruel. You are trying to save the founder months of wasted life, not make them feel bad. Cite numbers and real examples wherever possible.

Avoid consultant speak, buzzwords, and vague phrases like "it depends" or "interesting idea". If you catch yourself about to use a cliché, stop and rewrite the sentence.

How to read the output:

- The Steelman tells you whether the AI actually understood your idea. If it did not, your pitch is too vague. Fix that first, then rerun the prompt.
- The top 3 objections are the ones to take most seriously. The bottom 7 are still useful, but if you cannot answer the top 3, the rest is noise.
- A KILL verdict is data, not failure. It is the prompt doing its job.
- Run this prompt 2 or 3 times with slightly different phrasings of your input. LLMs sample from a distribution, so one run is one observation. The objections that show up in every run are the real ones.

Prompt 4. Simulated Customer Discovery

When to use: Before your first round of real customer interviews. Not as a substitute for them, but as a dry run.

What it does: Generates 5 personas from your target segment and simulates Mom Test compliant interviews with each. Surfaces the questions, objections, and patterns you will face in real life, so you do not learn them the expensive way.

Why it works: Real customer interviews cost time and social capital. A simulated round costs neither. Use it to rehearse, not to validate. The output is never a substitute for talking to real humans.

ROLE:

You are simulating 5 distinct customers from the target segment described below. Each persona must be a fully formed human being with a name, age, job, daily context, relationship to the problem, and a specific attitude toward it. You are also a coach who, after running the 5 interviews, analyzes the patterns and hands the founder a field ready interview plan for the real conversations they are about to have.

TASK:

Simulate 5 Mom Test compliant customer discovery interviews. After the interviews, produce a pattern analysis and a list of 5 field questions the founder should ask real customers this week.

TARGET CUSTOMER AND PROBLEM INPUT:

[Describe your target customer with specificity: job, age, context, tools they already use. Describe the problem you believe they have. Describe what they currently do to solve it, if anything. Finally, describe your proposed solution, but only for your own

reference: the personas will not be told about it, because real customers do not care about your solution, only their own life.]

OBJECTIVE:

Surface the real objections, the real language customers use, and the behavioral patterns that matter, before the founder burns 20 real interviews learning the same things the hard way.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. GENERATE 5 PERSONAS

Produce 5 distinct personas from the target segment. Each must represent a different attitude toward the problem. Use this spectrum:

Persona A The enthusiast: has the problem, actively looking for solutions, high willingness to pay.

Persona B The skeptic: has the problem but has tried and failed with past solutions, distrustful.

Persona C The indifferent: technically has the problem but does not care enough to fix it.

Persona D The angry workaround: has the problem, built their own hack, fiercely loyal to it.

Persona E The pragmatist: has the problem, evaluates solutions purely on ROI, no emotion.

For each persona, include: name, age, role, a 2-sentence life context, their current solution to the problem, and their dominant emotion about it.

2. SIMULATE 5 INTERVIEWS

For each persona, simulate a 10-exchange interview following strict Mom Test rules:

- Never mention the proposed solution.
- Never ask hypothetical future questions ("would you", "could you", "might you").
- Always anchor questions to specific past events ("when was the last time", "walk me through").
- Dig into emotions, workarounds, money already spent, time already spent.
- End each interview with a push for commitment: an introduction to someone, a follow-up meeting, a willingness to try a prototype, or a clear no.

Each interview should read like a real transcript. The persona's answers must reflect their attitude from step 1 and must include specific numbers, tools, and frustrations. Do not sanitize the answers. If the persona is angry, let them be angry. If they are indifferent, let them be boring.

3. PATTERN ANALYSIS

After the 5 interviews, produce a structured analysis:

- Recurring pain points (what came up in 3 or more interviews).
- Recurring workarounds (what are people already doing to solve the problem themselves).
- The exact phrases and language customers use (collect 5 to 10 direct quotes).

- Objections the founder will face, ranked by frequency.
- Willingness to pay signals (who hinted at price, and what price range).
- Red flags: patterns that suggest the problem is not real, not valued, or not urgent.

4. THE 5 FIELD QUESTIONS

Based on the pattern analysis, produce the 5 most important questions the founder should ask real customers this week. These must pass the Mom Test: anchored to past behavior, not hypothetical, not about the founder's idea. Each question must be designed to disprove a specific assumption the founder is making.

OUTPUT FORMAT:

- 5 persona cards (structured as above)
- 5 interview transcripts (clear dialogue format, labeled by persona)
- Pattern analysis (structured as above)
- 5 field questions for real customer interviews

CRITICAL:

The simulated interviews are a rehearsal, not a substitute for real conversations. The value is in the patterns and the field questions, not in the specific answers. The founder will still go talk to real humans. This prompt just makes sure they walk in sharper.

How to read the output:

- Do not trust the specific answers. They are synthetic. Trust the patterns that emerge across all 5 interviews.
- The direct quotes section is the most valuable part. Copy them. They are the language your real customers will use, and they belong in your landing page, your pitch, and your marketing copy.
- The 5 field questions at the bottom go straight into your list of 3 for real interviews (see the Mom Test guide in the Field Kit).
- If all 5 personas end up sounding the same, your target segment is too narrow. Widen the input and rerun.

Prompt 5. Deep Competitive and Market Intelligence

When to use: After you have validated that the problem is real. Not before. Competitive intelligence on a problem nobody has is useless.

What it does: Produces a full GTM intelligence briefing: positioning, competitive landscape, narrative analysis, white space, strategic risks, and three GTM hypotheses to test in the next 30 days.

Why it works: Most competitive analyses are lists of features in a table. This one is structured like a weapon: it tells you where the market is not looking, what will kill you in year 2, and which experiments to run first.

ROLE:

You are a top-tier go-to-market strategist with over 15 years of experience building 100M euro plus B2B growth engines. You have worked on both sides of the table: as a founder, as an operator, and as an advisor. You know how to read a market before the market knows itself. You do not produce generic competitive research. You produce strategic weapons.

TASK:

Produce a comprehensive competitive and market intelligence briefing for the company described below. The output will be used to inform ICP modeling, targeting logic, and messaging strategy. Treat this as a document that will drive real decisions.

COMPANY INPUT:

[Insert company name, website, product description, target audience, pricing model, and current positioning. Be specific. If the company is early stage and does not yet have a website or published positioning, describe the intended positioning and target customer even if it is still internal.]

OBJECTIVE:

Create a foundational GTM intelligence document that informs ICP modeling, targeting logic, and messaging strategy. This is not a research report. It is a strategic weapon.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. POSITIONING ANALYSIS

Dissect the company's stated and implied positioning.

- What do they claim to be?
- What category do they actually operate in (not the one they claim)?
- What is their angle of differentiation, and is it defensible?
- Who is their implicit ICP, even if they have not named it?
- What price sensitivity is baked into their current positioning?

2. COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE (three rings)

Map competition across three rings. Do not stop at ring one. Most founders miss ring three and lose to it.

Ring 1 Direct competitors: same category, same buyer, same pitch.

Ring 2 Adjacent competitors: same problem, different approach.

Ring 3 Substitutes: the status quo behavior customers use today (spreadsheets, manual processes, doing nothing, using a hack).

For each ring, list 3 to 5 entries with a one-line description and their key strength and weakness.

3. MARKET NARRATIVE PATTERNS

Identify the narrative landscape of this market.

- What framing positions is everyone using? (for example: "the X for Y")
- What promises are repeated until they become background noise?
- What complaints are over-served in the public discourse?
- What pain points are narratively underserved, meaning real customers feel them but nobody is talking about them publicly?
- Which emotional levers are currently winning? (fear, envy, FOMO, belonging, identity, efficiency, pride, anger)

4. WHITE SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

Identify where the market is not looking. This is the highest-value section.

- Underserved customer segments: who is being treated as a footnote and why.
- Underserved use cases: what do customers use existing tools for that nobody has optimized for.
- Emerging buying triggers: what new events are creating demand that existing vendors have not noticed yet.
- Category reframing opportunities: where could this company rename the game in its favor.

5. STRATEGIC RISKS

Identify the existential threats the company must stay ahead of.

- Commoditization risk: what parts of the offering are becoming table stakes.
- AI displacement risk: what parts of the value chain could be absorbed by a general-purpose AI agent in 24 months.
- Platform dependency risk: what distribution channels or infrastructures could change the rules overnight.
- Regulatory exposure: what laws, frameworks, or compliance shifts could break the model.

6. THREE GTM HYPOTHESES TO TEST

Based on everything above, produce 3 falsifiable GTM hypotheses the company should test in the next 30 days. Each hypothesis must:

- Be specific. Not "we should target SMBs" but "CFOs at 50 to 200 person SaaS companies that just closed a Series B in the last 6 months".
- Be testable. Include the specific experiment, the channel to reach the segment, and the success metric.
- Be tied to a white space opportunity or strategic risk identified in the sections above.

OUTPUT FORMAT:

- Executive Summary (max 300 words)
- Positioning Analysis (structured as above)
- Competitive Landscape Table (three rings, 3 to 5 entries each)
- Market Narrative Analysis (structured as above)
- White Space Opportunities (3 to 5 openings, ranked by strategic value)
- Strategic Risk Assessment (ranked by urgency)
- 3 GTM Hypotheses to Test (structured as above)

TONE:

Strategic, specific, allergic to buzzwords. Assume the reader is a smart operator with limited time. Every sentence must either give them new information or sharpen something they already suspected. If a section is not giving the founder something they can act on this week, rewrite it until it does.

How to read the output:

- White space is the most actionable section. Start there. It will often reshape your positioning before you ever read the rest.
- Strategic risks tell you what will kill you in year 2, not year 0. Do not panic. Use them to stress test your 12-month plan.
- The 3 GTM hypotheses at the bottom should go straight into your test backlog for the next 30 days. If you cannot commit to testing at least one, you did not take the prompt seriously.
- Verify the competitive landscape entries. The AI may hallucinate companies that do not exist. Spot check every entry before using it in a real decision.

A note on prompt hygiene

These prompts are only as good as the context you feed them. Three rules:

- Always give the AI your specific context. Generic inputs produce generic outputs, and generic outputs produce no decisions.
- Run each prompt 2 or 3 times with slightly different phrasings of your input. LLMs sample from a distribution. One run is one observation. The patterns that repeat across runs are the signal.
- Challenge every output. If the AI agrees with you too easily, you either got lucky or you biased the prompt. Either way, rerun it with a tougher framing.

The goal of these prompts is not to replace thinking. It is to compress a week of thinking into an hour, so you have 7 times more tries.