Test your riskiest assumption before you build anything.

Background

Eric Ries · The Lean Startup · 2011

Every business model is a stack of assumptions. A Rapid Experiment targets the highest-risk assumption and tests it as cheaply as possible — before you build, before you fundraise, before you commit. The goal is not proof. The goal is evidence.

How to Run This

1. List 5–8 assumptions embedded in your idea.
2. Score each on Confidence (how sure are you?) and Consequence (how fatal if wrong?).
3. Target the assumption with lowest Confidence × highest Consequence.
4. Design the cheapest experiment that would give you real evidence.
5. Set your pass/fail threshold before you run it.

Facilitator Tips

Common mistake

Designing experiments that can only confirm. A test that can't fail is not a test — it's theatre.

What good looks like

An experiment that runs in under a week and costs under $500.

When to move on

When you've run the experiment and can say whether the assumption held or broke.

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Rapid Experiment

THE TEST

1 THE IDEA

What are you testing?

2 ASSUMPTION INVENTORY

List all the things that must be true for this idea to work.

3 RISK MATRIX

Plot assumptions by risk and evidence. High risk + low evidence = test first.

4 CHOSEN ASSUMPTION

Which single assumption are you testing right now? Why this one?

5 EXPERIMENT DESIGN

How will you test it? What method will you use? Who will you talk to?

6 SAMPLE

Who will you test with and how many?

7 SUCCESS METRIC

What number or outcome tells you it passed?

8 TIMELINE

How long will the experiment take?

9 FIRST STEP

What do you do in the next 48 hours to begin?

Project: _____ Date: _____