

Before You Build Checklist

10 decisions to clarify before spending money on software, developers, AI tools, vendors, or a dev house

PRODUCT / OPERATIONS / TECHNOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

You probably understand your business better than anyone.

You know the customers, the daily work, the problems, and the opportunities. The difficult part is often turning that knowledge into the right product and build decision.

A useful opportunity can still have open questions about scope, timing, technology, team, operations, or cost. These questions are easier and cheaper to resolve before the build starts.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Read each statement and check the ones that feel clear and supported today.

Leave a box empty when the decision still needs discussion, evidence, or comparison.

You do not need every box checked. The empty boxes may show where more clarity is needed before you commit money or build effort.

10 DECISIONS

Before You Build Checklist

Check the statements that feel clear and supported today.

- ☐ We can point to a real customer, business, or operational problem that is important enough to address now.
- ☐ We have repeated signs that the need is real, such as customer requests, delays, errors, lost revenue, or heavy manual work.
- ☐ We know which problem should be solved first, even if the wider idea includes more opportunities.
- ☐ We know who will use the product, who will own it inside the business, and who will support it after launch.
- ☐ We know what the launch-ready version must help the customer, user, or business achieve.
- ☐ We have decided what belongs in the first version, what can wait, what can stay manual, and what should remain outside the product.
- ☐ The main steps, roles, rules, and exceptions are clear enough before we digitize or automate them.
- ☐ We have compared the main build paths based on our business stage, cost, speed, team, risk, and future dependence.
- ☐ We have considered support, maintenance, data, reporting, payments, security, operating cost, and future improvements.
- ☐ We can name the decision that would create the most cost, delay, or rework if we get it wrong.

You are not back at the beginning. You may have identified the next decision that needs clarity.

THE PRINCIPLES

The thinking behind this checklist

01 Start with the result

Be clear about the customer or business result before discussing features and technology.

02 Test important assumptions early

Questions are easier to change before they become software, integrations, and ongoing costs.

03 Simplify before automating

A digital system works better when the operation, roles, and rules around it are reasonably clear.

04 Keep the launch-ready version focused

The first version should prove a useful result without carrying the full future vision.

05 Plan how the product will operate

Support, ownership, reporting, payments, maintenance, and improvement should be considered before launch.

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

FREE ASSESSMENT

Take the Free Decision Clarity Assessment

Explore the open areas in more detail and identify which product decision may need the most attention.

beforebuild.digital/assessment

BEFORE YOU BUILD AUDIT

The checklist helps you notice what may still be unclear.

The Before You Build Audit applies product and operations judgment to your actual product, workflow, business stage, team, risks, costs, and build options.

You receive clear direction on what to build or improve, what can wait, what the launch-ready version should look like, and which build path fits your situation.

beforebuild.digital/audit

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Informed by practical ideas from lean experimentation, Jobs to Be Done, working backwards, service design, product shaping, and operations mapping.