



by holly brister

Hey, welcome to episode 2 of Idea to Business. I'm so pleased to have you, and I'm so excited to take you on a journey of actually turning your idea into a viable business.

I'm the founder of Regen Digital, a B2B digital marketing agency. I started the agency 3 years ago with my best friend, and I have been taken on a complete journey of learning every element that comes with building a business, whether that's sales, finance, marketing, or operations. We'll become an expert in everything.

First, how to decide whether your idea is actually a viable business. You can do this whole thing in one day. If you find that it could be viable, great. If it isn't, that's not a reason to stop. It just means there's another way of finding what works.

The biggest lesson I've learned is to pivot, especially with AI, and how rapidly the industry is changing. Pivoting can be one of the most important things you can do. It doesn't mean things are going wrong. It means things are going right.

Let's get started. This is a task you can complete in one day, and understand whether or not this will be a viable business, through a set of questions and tasks that are really easy to do.

From this task, you will have:

- 01 A few sentences on what your idea is, who it's for, the problem it solves, where you'd sell it, and what it costs
- 02 The exact customer you'd target first
- 03 Proof of whether people already pay for this, and roughly how much
- 04 Five real conversations, in your customers' own words
- 05 A viable offer on paper, with a price that stands up against what people already pay
- 06 A decision. Go, change one thing, or stop

your schedule

what the ideal day looks like

Block out one day to prioritise completing these tasks. This doesn't have to be done in one sitting. It can be done over time, but this is what the ideal day would look like. Each block is broken down step by step on the next pages, with a prompt to copy into a new chat.

I know starting your own business can feel overwhelming. On social media, you see people starting new businesses all the time. It looks like a quick, easy task, but it does take some time and perseverance to put the hours in. It will be worth it in the end, and if you're willing to take on the challenge, it'll be one of the best things you do.

9:00**Identify your business**

A few sentences on what the idea is, who it speaks to, the problem you solve, where you'd sell it, and what you'd charge.

STEP 1**9:45****Will people pay for it?**

Check what people already spend on this problem.

STEP 2**10:45****Short break****11:00****Sense-check your idea with five people**

Message friends, old colleagues and people in your network on WhatsApp, text or DM. Then have the chats however they come, a quick call, a WhatsApp, a voice note. Be flexible, and fit lunch around the replies.

STEP 3**3:30****Shape your offer**

Package what you've learned into one offer with a price, on paper. You won't send it today.

STEP 4**4:15****Decide**

Go, change one thing, or stop. Finish by 5:00.

STEP 5**BEFORE YOU START**

Don't ask anyone "would you buy this?" Ask about the last time they had the problem. Friends are a great place to start, as long as you're asking about their real experience. And before you price anything, look at what people already pay.

step 1 · 9:00

identify your business

WHEN

9:00 to 9:45

YOU NEED

The idea, in your words

YOU FINISH WITH

A few clear sentences

Right now, your idea is probably a bit loose. That's completely fine. In this section, you'll consolidate it into a few clear sentences that cover:

- **What the idea is.** The product or service, in plain words.
- **Who it speaks to.** One specific type of person, not "everyone".
- **The problem you solve.** What's annoying, costly or hard for them right now.
- **Where you'd sell it.** Instagram, LinkedIn, word of mouth, a local shop, a website.
- **What you'd charge.** A real number, even if it's a guess.

In marketing, these are the four Ps. Product is what you sell. Price is what you charge. Place is where someone finds you. Promotion is how they hear about you. Businesses that don't know these often struggle to say what they actually do. These sentences are you saying them.

Paste the prompt on the next page into a new chat, and tell it the idea in your own words. It will ask you questions until all five are clear. Keep what it gives you. You'll need it in every step after this.

YOU'RE DONE WHEN

You can read it out loud to someone who's never heard the idea, and they understand what it is, who it's for, the problem, where you'd sell it, and the price. You also know the one thing that would make you stop.

FOR EXAMPLE

I make training plans for women running their first half marathon. They work full time, and the free apps don't fit around their week, so they fall behind or get injured and give up. I'd build a 12-week plan around their actual schedule, with a check-in every Sunday, for £45. I'd find them through local running clubs, Strava groups and Instagram.

step 1 · the prompt

please copy everything below

THE PROMPT · COPY EVERYTHING BELOW

Please help me turn a business idea into a few clear sentences I can test today.

Please be plain and direct. Please don't hype the idea, and please don't tell me yet if it will work.

When I describe the idea, I'd like you to:

1. A FEW CLEAR SENTENCES

Cover: what the idea is, who it speaks to, the problem it solves, where I'd sell it, and what I'd charge.
If something is missing, please ask me one question at a time.

2. WHO IT IS NOT

Please name two groups who look close, but are the wrong customer, and say why.

3. THE THING THAT WOULD MAKE ME STOP

Please list 3 things this idea needs to be true.

Mark the one that, if it is wrong, means I should stop.

That is the only thing I am testing today.

4. WHAT I KEEP

Please give me those sentences, that one assumption, and the country I want to sell in, ready to paste into the next step.

Please don't suggest a product, a brand, a logo, or a website.

A few rules:

- Short sentences. No jargon.
- If I say "everyone", "busy people", or "small businesses", please make me pick one person.
- If I don't have a price, please suggest one number and say why.
- Please don't call the idea good or bad yet. We don't know.

Please ask me for the idea in my own words, who I think it's for, and what I imagine charging.

step 2 · 9:45

will people pay for it?

WHEN

9:45 to 10:45

YOU NEED

Your sentences from step 1

YOU FINISH WITH

Yes, no, or not enough

Before you speak to anyone, check whether people already spend money or time on this problem. If they do, that's a good sign. In this section, you'll find out:

- **Who already solves it.** The products, services, freelancers or workarounds people use today.
- **What they pay.** A rough price for each, and whether it's real or a guess.
- **What people complain about.** The gaps in what's already out there, in their words.
- **What they search for.** The exact phrases someone types when they have this problem.

Paste the prompt on the next page into a new chat, along with your sentences from step 1. Then check what it finds yourself, using the sources below.

Harvard Business School Online calls this market validation. Catherine Cote writes that it is "the process of determining if there's a need for your product in your target market." She says to do it early, "to ensure you don't waste time and resources creating a product that isn't a good fit." And she describes entrepreneurship as a "process of discovery." You find out by asking.

Catherine Cote, "5 Steps to Validate Your Business Idea", Harvard Business School Online, 18 August 2020. online.hbs.edu/blog/post/market-validation

YOU'RE DONE WHEN

You can answer one question. Is there already money, or serious time, spent on this problem? Yes, no, or not enough to tell. And you can point to where you found it.

CHECK IT YOURSELF, TOO

AI can point you in the right direction, but look at the real thing before you decide. Search the problem on Google and Google Trends. Read what people complain about on Reddit, and in reviews on Amazon, Trustpilot or Google. See what freelancers charge on Fiverr or Upwork. And use TikTok Creator Search Insights to see what people are actually searching for.

FOR EXAMPLE

Running coaches charge £80 to £150 for a 12-week plan. The free apps are popular, but the reviews say they don't adapt when you miss a session. That's the gap. Found on coaching websites and app store reviews, not a guess.

step 2 · the prompt

please copy everything below

THE PROMPT · COPY EVERYTHING BELOW

Please check whether people already spend time or money on this problem.

Please separate what you found from what you are guessing. If you can't look something up, please say so.

I will paste my sentences from step 1, the assumption I am testing, and the country I want to sell in.

I'd like you to:

1. WHO ALREADY PAYS

- 5 ways people already deal with this. A product, a service, a freelancer, a workaround, or doing nothing.
- A rough price for each. Please label every price as found or estimated.
- What buyers complain about, in their words where you can. Please label those as found or estimated.

2. WHAT THEY TYPE

- 8 phrases a real person would search when they have this problem.
- Please mark which ones sound like they want to buy, and which are just curious.
- If you can't see search data, please give me the exact searches to run myself.

3. THE GAP

- What already looks crowded.
- What looks thin, if anything.
- One reason this might be late, and one reason it might be early.

4. THIS STEP ONLY

Please answer: is there already money, or serious time, spent on this problem?

Yes, no, or not enough to tell.

Five bullets. No essays. No market-size numbers.

Please don't tell me to build anything.

A few rules:

- Please don't say "the market is growing".
- If the only proof is your opinion, please say "this is a guess".
- Please keep it short enough that I can read it in five minutes.

Please ask me for my sentences from step 1, the country, and any competitors I already know.

step 3 · 11:00

sense-check your idea with five people

WHEN

11:00 to 3:30

YOU NEED

Five people with the problem

YOU FINISH WITH

Five rows of notes

This is the bit AI can't do for you. In this section, you'll speak to five real people who have the problem, and find out:

- **Whether the problem is real.** When it last happened to them, and what they did about it.
- **What it costs them.** In time, money or stress.
- **What they've already tried.** And why it didn't work.
- **The words they use.** Write down exactly what they say. You'll use it in your offer.

Message five people first thing. Friends, old colleagues, people in your network. WhatsApp, text or DM, whatever's normal for you. Then have the chats however they come, a quick call, a voice note or a WhatsApp back and forth. Be flexible, and fit lunch around the replies.

The prompt two pages on will write your message and help you pick who to ask. Don't pitch the idea. Talk less than they do. A compliment is not a yes.

ASK THESE, IN THIS ORDER

1. Walk me through the last time this happened.
2. What did you do about it?
3. What did that cost you, in time or money?
4. What have you already tried?
5. What happens if you leave it?

YOU'RE DONE WHEN

You've spoken to five people, and written down what each one actually said on the notes page. You can see whether the problem came up more than once.

FOR EXAMPLE

Sarah, a friend from work: "I downloaded an app, missed two runs when work got busy, and it just carried on like nothing happened. I gave up in week four."

step 3 · your notes

their words, not your summary

Fill this in after each conversation. You're done when there are five names, and none of them are just being nice.

NAME	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY SAID	WHAT THEY ALREADY SPEND	REAL PROBLEM?
1			yes / sort of / no
2			yes / sort of / no
3			yes / sort of / no
4			yes / sort of / no
5			yes / sort of / no

The prompt for the message, and who to ask, is on the next page. Copy that before you fill the table.

step 3 · the prompt

please copy everything below

THE PROMPT · COPY EVERYTHING BELOW

Please write the conversations. I will have them. A chat with you is not a customer.

I will paste my sentences from step 1, and the assumption I am testing.

I'd like you to:

1. WHO TO TALK TO

- 5 kinds of person, specific enough that I could message one today.
- Where I might already know them, or find them.
- Who not to ask. People who don't have the problem.

2. THE MESSAGE

Please write one short message I can send on WhatsApp, text or DM. It asks if they have 10 minutes to chat, or reply, today. It does not pitch the idea.

3. THE FIVE QUESTIONS

Please only ask about their last real experience, in this order:

- Walk me through the last time this happened.
- What did you do about it?
- What did that cost you, in time or money?
- What have you already tried?
- What happens if you leave it?

Please don't add "would you use this?" or "what do you think of my idea?"

4. HOW I LISTEN

- I talk less than they do.
- I write their exact words, not my summary.
- I don't explain the idea unless they ask. If they ask, I ask one more question before I answer.

5. THE NOTES

Please give me a simple line for after each chat: name, their words, what they already spend, and whether this is a real problem (yes / sort of / no).

A few rules:

- Please assume I have never done this.
- Five conversations. Not fifty.
- Friends are fine. Please help me ask about their real experience, so they can't just be nice.
- "Sounds great" is not evidence. Their last Tuesday is.

Please ask me for my sentences from step 1, the assumption, and who I already know.

step 4 · 3:30

shape your offer

WHEN

3:30 to 4:15

YOU NEED

What you found so far

YOU FINISH WITH

Your offer, on paper

You're not selling anything today. In this section, you'll use what you found in steps 2 and 3 to package your idea into one offer, and check it stands up on paper. You'll work out:

- **The outcome.** What changes for them, in the words they used in step 3. Not a list of features.
- **What's included.** The smallest version you could deliver yourself, and what you're leaving out.
- **The price.** Where you sit against what people already pay, from step 2.
- **Why yours.** What makes it different from what they use now.

In tech, this smallest version is called an MVP, a minimum viable product. It isn't the finished business. It's the smallest thing you could put in front of someone, with a price. Today you're designing it, not launching it.

Paste the prompt on the next page into a new chat, with your sentences from step 1 and your notes from steps 2 and 3.

TIPS FOR A VIABLE OFFER

- **Price against the market, not your nerves.** Look at what people already pay. Being the cheapest is rarely why someone buys.
- **Use their words.** If three people said "I gave up in week four", that's your headline.
- **Find the gap in the reviews.** What competitors' customers complain about is often your offer.
- **Do the maths.** Price, minus costs, divided by the hours it takes you. If that's less than you'd earn elsewhere, it isn't viable yet.
- **One offer, not a menu.** One clear option is easier to say yes to.

YOU'RE DONE WHEN

You can describe your offer in a few lines. Who it's for, the outcome, what's included, the price, and why it's different. And the numbers work for you.

FOR EXAMPLE

For women training for their first half marathon who've given up on an app before. A 12-week plan built around your actual week, with a Sunday check-in that moves your runs when life gets busy. £45. Coaches charge £80 to £150, and the apps don't adapt. It takes me about two hours per person, so around £22 an hour.

step 4 · the prompt

please copy everything below

THE PROMPT · COPY EVERYTHING BELOW

Please help me package my idea into one offer that could work. I am not sending it today. I want to know if it stands up on paper.

I will paste my sentences from step 1, what I found about who already pays, and my notes from five conversations.

I'd like you to:

1. THE OUTCOME

What changes for the customer, using their words from my notes.
One sentence. Not a list of features.

2. WHAT'S INCLUDED

The smallest version I could deliver myself.
What I am not including, and why.

3. THE PRICE

Where this sits against what people already pay.
Please suggest one price and say why. Label anything that is a guess.

4. THE MATHS

Price, minus any costs, divided by the hours it takes me per customer.
Please show the working. Tell me plainly if it isn't worth my time yet.

5. WHY THIS, NOT THE ALTERNATIVE

What makes this different from what they use now, based on what people complained about.

6. THE OFFER ON ONE PAGE

Who it is for, the outcome, what's included, the price, and why it's different.
Under 100 words.

A few rules:

- One offer. Not a menu.
- Please don't compete on being the cheapest unless the evidence says price is the problem.
- No logo, no brand name, no colour palette, no website.
- Please don't write a sales message. I am not sending it today.

Please ask me for my sentences from step 1, what I found in step 2, and my notes from step 3.

step 5 · 4:15

decide

WHEN

4:15 to 5:00

YOU NEED

Everything from today

YOU FINISH WITH

One decision

This is the final step, where you bring everything together and decide what to do next. The aim is to look honestly at what you actually found today, rather than what you hoped you'd find. In this section, you'll gather:

- **Your sentences from step 1.** These remind you what the idea is, who it's for, and what you'd charge.
- **What you found in step 2.** Whether people are already spending money or time on this problem.
- **Your five conversations.** The notes you took in step 3, in their own words.
- **Your offer from step 4.** Whether it stands up on paper, and whether the numbers work for you.

Paste all of this into the prompt on the next page. It's tempting to ask it whether the idea is good, but try not to. You want it to weigh up the evidence and come back with a clear answer, not encouragement.

THE FOUR ANSWERS

- **Go.** The problem came up in more than one conversation, people already pay for something similar, and your numbers work. Your idea is ready to test with real people.
- **Change.** Something is there, but one part isn't quite right. Keep either the person or the problem, and change just one thing, whether that's the offer, the price, or who it's for.
- **Stop.** The evidence isn't strong enough yet, so don't build it. That isn't failure. You've saved yourself months of work.
- **Not yet.** You've skipped a step, usually the conversations, or you can't say what you'd charge. Go back and fill that gap first.

YOU'RE DONE WHEN

You can say which of the four answers applies to your idea, ideally by 5pm. Whatever it is, you'll know far more than you did this morning, and that makes it a useful day.

FOR EXAMPLE

Four of the five people I spoke to had already given up on a training plan, so the problem is real. Coaches charge a lot more than £45, and the free apps don't adapt when you miss a run, so there's a clear gap. At £45, the plan works out at around £22 an hour for me. That's a Go, and the next step is to test it with real people.

step 5 · the prompt

please copy everything below

THE PROMPT · COPY EVERYTHING BELOW

Please help me decide from the evidence, not from encouragement. Please use only what I paste. If something is missing, ask for that thing only.

I will paste:

- my sentences from step 1
- the market check: yes, no, or not enough to tell
- notes from the five conversations
- my offer from step 4, including the maths

I'd like you to:

1. THE SCORE

Three lines. Each is yes or no, with the evidence next to it.

- Did at least 3 people describe the same problem, without me leading them?
- Do people already spend money or serious time on this?
- Does my price stand up against what people already pay, and is it worth my time?

2. THE DECISION

One word, then two sentences.

- GO. The problem showed up more than once, people already pay, and the numbers work. Please tell me the smallest way to test it with real people next.
- CHANGE. Keep either the person or the problem. Change one thing only: the offer, the price, or who it is for. Please name which.
- STOP. The evidence isn't there. Please say what I would need to see before I pick this up again. Please tell me not to build it.

3. THIS WEEK

If GO or CHANGE: three actions, each something I can do in a day.

If STOP: one question worth sitting with, and nothing to build.

If I skipped the conversations or don't have a price: the decision is NOT YET. Please name the step I skipped. Please don't score a guess.

A few rules:

- Likes, compliments, and "this is a great idea" score as zero.
- Please don't soften a STOP.
- Please don't invent a new idea unless the decision is CHANGE, and then only one change.
- No speeches. I should be able to read this in two minutes.

Please ask me to paste the four things above.

THANK YOU

Thank you so much for following along with episode 2 of Idea to Business. Whatever your decision is today, you now know more about your idea than most people ever find out. I hope it's the start of something good, and I'll see you in the next one.

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