

ASSUMPTIONS, COHERENCE & PRESSURE CANVAS

STRATEGIC WORKSHEET

Stress-Test the Logic of Your Business Model

6 SECTIONS

CANVAS FORMAT

STRATEGY TOOL

ACP

Introduction

Every startup operates on a set of assumptions. Some are validated through customer behavior and market signals. Others remain untested — but they still shape major decisions about product, pricing, hiring, and capital.

This canvas helps founders do four things:

IDENTIFY	Surface the critical assumptions the business depends on.
TEST	Check whether the business model is internally coherent.
EXPOSE	Identify where pressure builds and where the model may break.
PRIORITIZ E	Determine which assumptions to validate first — and how.

The goal is not perfection — it is clarity and resilience. A founder who has stress-tested their assumptions is far better prepared for investor questions, operational pressure, and strategic pivots.

How to use this canvas: Work through each section honestly. Flag every item you cannot answer confidently — those gaps are your highest-priority work. Return to this canvas quarterly as the business evolves.

SECTION 1

Core Business Assumptions

List every major assumption the business depends on. For each, identify why it must be true, what evidence exists today, and how you will test it.

ASSUMPTION	WHY THIS MUST BE TRUE	EVIDENCE TODAY	CONFIDENCE	HOW IT WILL BE TESTED
Customer Demand			<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High	
Customer Willingness to Pay			<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High	
Acquisition Channel Effectiveness			<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High	
Product Value Delivery			<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High	
Market Size			<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High	
Competitive Response			<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High	
Operational Capacity			<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High	

Tip: Any assumption marked Low confidence with no testing plan is a strategic liability. Prioritize closing those gaps before making large capital or hiring decisions.

SECTION 2

Business Model Coherence Check

A coherent business model means the major pieces of the company support each other logically. Incoherence — even in one area — creates drag, confusion, and capital inefficiency.

CUSTOMER SEGMENT

What customer are you actually serving? Be specific about who they are and what they need.

VALUE PROPOSITION

What specific value do they receive? What does your product do for them that nothing else does?

REVENUE MODEL

How does the company capture value? What is the mechanism that turns customer value into revenue?

COST STRUCTURE

What are the major cost drivers? Which costs are fixed vs variable as you scale?

GROWTH ENGINE

How does the business scale? What drives growth — and does it get more or less efficient over time?

SECTION 3

Pressure Points

Every business has areas where pressure builds as it grows. Identifying pressure points in advance allows you to build mitigation strategies before they become crises.

PRESSURE AREA	TRIGGER CONDITION	POTENTIAL IMPACT	MITIGATION STRATEGY
Customer Acquisition Cost			
Operational Capacity			
Product Complexity			
Cash Flow / Burn Rate			
Customer Support Load			
Infrastructure / Technology			
Regulatory or Compliance Risk			

Pressure mapping principle: A pressure point is not a problem today — it is a place where the business could break under the stress of growth. The best time to address it is before that stress arrives.

SECTION 4

Assumption Stress Test

Now pressure-test your assumptions. The goal here is to find the ones that, if wrong, could fundamentally change or end the business.

What assumption would most damage the business if it turned out to be wrong?

What assumption has the least supporting evidence right now?

What assumption are you most emotionally attached to — and could that bias your judgment?

What assumption should be tested first, and why?

SECTION 5

Coherence Gaps

A coherence gap is a place where the business model depends on multiple uncertain assumptions aligning simultaneously. These are your highest-risk areas.

Signs of a coherence gap: Your revenue model requires customer behavior that your acquisition strategy doesn't attract · Your pricing assumes a margin your cost structure cannot deliver · Your growth engine relies on a channel you haven't yet proven works at scale.

Where does the business model feel most fragile or fragmented?

What part of the model depends on multiple uncertain assumptions aligning at once?

What must be proven before the business is ready to scale?

SECTION 6

Priority Tests

Turn your highest-risk assumptions into a concrete testing plan. Each test should be specific, time-bound, and tied to a clear success criterion.

TEST	WHAT IT VALIDATES	METHOD	TIMELINE	SUCCESS CRITERIA

Tip: The best tests are cheap, fast, and produce clear signal. Avoid designing tests that are so complex they take months to generate an answer. Speed of learning is a competitive advantage.

Strategic Reflection

Use this page to synthesize your thinking from across the canvas. These three questions — answered honestly — define your most urgent strategic priorities.

What is the single biggest risk in this business model today?

Be specific — name the assumption, gap, or pressure point.

What evidence would most strengthen the model?

What proof, if you had it, would change how you and investors see the business?

What experiment should happen next?

Define the fastest, cheapest way to reduce the biggest uncertainty.

Founder Signature

Date

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