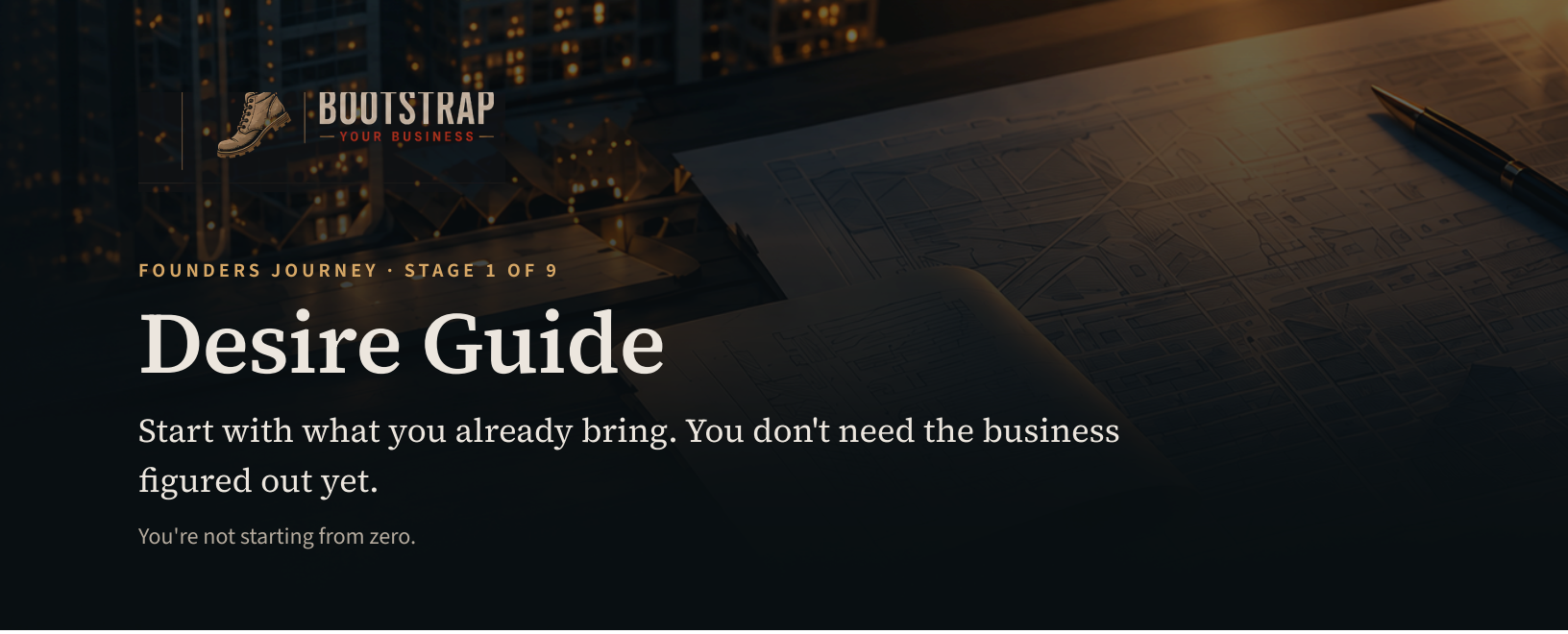


BOOTSTRAP
— YOUR BUSINESS —

FOUNDERS JOURNEY · STAGE 1 OF 9

Desire Guide

Start with what you already bring. You don't need the business figured out yet.

You're not starting from zero.

Desire is where you get clear on why you want to build something and what you already have to work with. The goal isn't to force a business idea. It's to find one or two directions worth a closer look.

WHAT MATTERS NOW	YOUR FIRST STEP	WHAT COMES NEXT
Your reasons, your experience and strengths, the limits you live with, and possible directions.	Notice one or two areas where your experience gives you a reason to look closer.	Discovery: looking outside yourself for real problems and what people actually do about them.

WHAT YOU'LL HAVE BY THE END

- A clearer reason for wanting a business of your own.
- A picture of the experience, skills, judgment, and people you already bring.
- The limits your business has to respect, like time, money, and energy.
- One or two directions worth exploring, without pretending they're proven.

01 Start with you

Before hunting for the perfect idea, take stock of what you already have.

Many founders think they need a completely original idea before they can begin. In reality, your experience gives you better places to look. It helps you notice problems, people, and situations that someone else would miss.

YOUR LIMITS MATTER TOO

- Time, money, energy, location, family, how much risk you can take, and how soon you need income all shape what's realistic right now.
- Limits aren't failures. They're design information. A good direction fits the life you actually have.

WHAT YOU MAY ALREADY BRING

Experience	Work, volunteering, caregiving, hobbies, or life lessons that taught you how something really works.
Skills and know-how	Things you can do, explain, fix, organize, make, or improve.
Problems you've solved	Situations you've learned to handle that other people still struggle with.
Strengths	Ways of working that come naturally to you, or that others rely on you for.
People and trust	Communities, industries, or groups where you already speak the language.
Judgment	Patterns you notice and trade-offs you understand from experience.

> **The core idea**
> Your experience tells you where to look. The real world tells you whether it's worth pursuing.

02 Look for directions

Use what you know about yourself to decide where to pay attention.

A direction isn't a business idea yet. It might be a kind of problem, a group of people, an industry, or a type of work you understand unusually well.

QUESTIONS THAT HELP YOU SPOT A DIRECTION

- What problems have I already learned how to solve?
- What do people often ask me for help with?
- What work or situations do I understand better than a beginner?
- What frustrations do I keep noticing?
- Which people, industries, or communities do I know from the inside?
- What would fit the time, money, energy, and risk I can really give it?

ONE OR TWO DIRECTIONS WORTH EXPLORING

1.

2.

> **This isn't a passion test**
> You don't need to find one perfect calling. A useful direction can come from experience, skill, curiosity, access to people, or a problem that keeps showing up.

03 Choose your first step

Move from thinking about possibilities to learning something useful.

Your first step isn't to build the business. Pick one direction that seems worth learning about, then take the smallest action that teaches you more. You're not committing. You're getting better information.

SIGNS YOU'RE MAKING PROGRESS

- You can explain why building a business matters to you.
- You can name experience or skills you already have.
- You know some limits your business has to respect.
- You can name at least one problem, group of people, or area worth exploring.
- You know a promising direction is still a guess, not proof that people want it.

> **A useful first step**
> Name one problem, group of people, or area of work where your experience gives you a reason to look closer. Then move into Discovery and learn what's true outside your own head.

DO IT FOR LESS

Start free. Pay only at the wall.

Desire costs nothing. Everything this stage needs, you already have.

- Use a free notebook or the notes app on your phone to write down your reasons, skills, and limits.
- Ask two or three people who know you well what they come to you for. It's free, and often surprising.
- Skip the courses, coaches, and paid personality tests for now. Your own history is the best material.
- Don't buy a domain name, logo, or business cards yet. They can wait until you have something worth naming.

There's no wall to hit at this stage. If you feel the urge to spend, that's usually a sign to move on to Discovery instead.

DO IT WITH AI

Let AI do the heavy lifting

Copy these into any free AI tool, like ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini. Fill in the brackets first.

Interview me

I'm thinking about starting a business. Ask me five questions, one at a time, about why I want this, what I'm good at, and what has to stay true in my life. Wait for each answer before asking the next.

Map what I bring

Here's my background: [your work, hobbies, and life experience]*. List the skills, knowledge, and relationships I might be overlooking, and the problems I've probably already learned to solve.*

Suggest directions that fit my life

Based on what I bring, and these limits: [time, money, energy, location]*, suggest three business directions worth exploring that could start with almost no money. For each, tell me what I'd need to learn first.*

Check the answer: AI only knows what you tell it. Treat its suggestions as starting points to explore, not as answers about what will work.

NOT YET

What can wait

- Choosing the final business name or brand.
- Building a full website.
- Setting final prices.
- Buying inventory or equipment.
- Building the whole product or service.
- Running paid ads before you understand the problem and customer.
- Treating excitement, expertise, or a good idea as proof that people will buy.

COMING UP

Discovery

Desire begins with you. Discovery begins with the world outside you. Once you have a direction worth exploring, Discovery helps you learn whether real people have a meaningful problem, what they already do about it, and whether the evidence gives you a reason to keep going.

You're not trying to know everything yet. You're trying to know where it's worth looking next.