

BOOTSTRAP
— YOUR BUSINESS —

FOUNDERS JOURNEY · STAGE 6 OF 9

First Customers Guide

Turn a ready business into real customer commitments. Start small, then sell, deliver, and learn.

One real customer teaches more than a hundred imaginary ones.

First Customers is where the business meets real buyers. The goal isn't to grow sales fast. It's to earn a small number of real commitments, deliver what you promised, and learn what to improve next.

WHAT MATTERS NOW	YOUR FIRST STEP	WHAT COMES NEXT
The right people, a clear offer, direct conversations, real commitments, delivery, and learning.	Put your offer in front of one person who fits, and ask for a clear next step.	Early Operations: turning repeated customer work into simple, dependable habits.

WHAT YOU'LL HAVE BY THE END

- Real experience asking people to become customers.
- What helps people understand, trust, and say yes, and what makes them hesitate.
- Lessons from actually delivering, getting paid, and seeing how customers respond.
- A clear next step to improve your offer, your sales conversation, or how you deliver.

01 Get in front of real customers

Move from preparing the business to asking real people to buy, book, or try it.

You can't learn selling by planning it. Early customers show you whether the offer makes sense, whether the problem matters enough to act on, what questions come up, and whether you can deliver. Keep the first tries small enough that each one teaches you something.

WHAT EARLY CUSTOMERS CAN TEACH YOU

Who responds	Which people or situations care most about the problem and your offer.
What matters	Which results, details, or risks are most important to them.
What stops a yes	The questions, doubts, timing, or trust gaps that hold people back.
What delivery takes	What has to happen for the customer to actually get the value you promised.

> **The core idea**
> Your first customers aren't just income. They show you who commits, why, what delivery really takes, and what to improve next.

02 Sell, deliver, learn

Treat your first customers as a learning loop, not a race for numbers.

“That sounds great” is encouraging, but this stage is about what happens when a real choice is required. A deposit, a purchase, a signed agreement, a booked appointment, or a trial that takes real effort tells you more than compliments.

QUESTIONS THAT HELP YOU LEARN

- Who responds most strongly, and what do they have in common?
- What part of the offer is easy to understand, and what still needs explaining?
- What questions or doubts come up before someone commits?
- What happened during delivery that you didn't expect?
- What would make the next customer's experience clearer, easier, or better?

A SIMPLE FIRST-CUSTOMER LOOP

1. Reach	Talk with a small number of people who truly fit the problem and offer.
2. Offer	Make a clear, specific invitation they can say yes or no to.
3. Commit	Notice what happens when you ask for payment, a booking, or an agreement.
4. Deliver	Do what you promised, and watch what the customer actually needs and values.
5. Learn	Use what happened to improve the next conversation, offer, or delivery before doing more.

Learn from the no, not just the yes

A no, a hesitation, or a lost sale can show you a poor fit, an unclear offer, bad timing, or a trust gap. That's still useful progress.

03 Choose your first step

Take one action that starts a real customer conversation.

Don't build a big sales system before you've had enough real conversations to know what works. Pick one small action that gives the right person a clear chance to respond.

GOOD FIRST STEPS CAN BE

- Contacting one person who likely has the problem you solve.
- Asking someone you know for one introduction to a person who fits.
- Making one clear offer with a specific next step and price.
- Following up with someone who was interested but didn't decide.
- Delivering one small paid job and watching what the customer really needs.
- Writing down, after each customer, what worked, what confused them, and what you'd change.

SIGNS YOU'RE MAKING PROGRESS

- You're talking with people who might actually buy.
- You can tell polite interest from a real commitment.
- You're learning what makes the offer easier to accept.
- You've delivered value to at least one real customer.
- You know what to improve before doing it again.

SIGNS TO SLOW DOWN

- You stop at interest and never ask for a commitment.
- You're adding unrelated services because one customer asked.
- You're chasing volume so fast you've stopped learning.
- One sale feels like proof the business will grow.

DO IT FOR LESS

Start free. Pay only at the wall.

Your first customers usually come from people you can reach directly, for free.

- Start with your own contacts, past coworkers, and local groups. Ask each person for one introduction.
- Post in free online communities and on your own social accounts where your customers already spend time.
- Take payment with a simple payment link or a free invoice tool. No store or monthly fee needed yet.
- Track every conversation in a free spreadsheet instead of a paid sales tool.

Hold off on paid ads until you know which customers and which words make people say yes. When free outreach keeps working but you run out of people to reach, that's the wall. Then test a small ad budget, not a big one.

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.

Write my outreach message

I sell [your offer] *to* [your customer]*. Write a short, friendly message I could send to people I know, asking if they or someone they know might need it. Keep it under 80 words and don't make it pushy.*

Get ready for their questions

List the five questions or doubts a [your customer] *is most likely to have before buying* [your offer]*, with honest, plain answers I can give.*

Learn from each customer

Here's what happened with my last customer: [what happened, including any no or hesitation]*. Tell me what this suggests about my offer, my message, or my delivery, and one thing to try differently next time.*

Check the answer: rewrite any AI message in your own voice before you send it. People buy from people, and they can tell when words aren't yours.

NOT YET

What can wait

- Spending on ads before you know which customer and message work.
- Hiring a salesperson before you know how your first sales happen.
- A complicated sales system for a handful of conversations.
- Expanding the offer because one customer asked for something unrelated.
- Assuming one sale proves the business will grow.

COMING UP

Early Operations

First Customers teaches you how real people respond, commit, pay, and experience your work. Early Operations is where you start turning repeated customer work into simple, dependable habits. You move forward when repeat customers create a real need for those habits, not when you hit a number.

Do one small round. Watch. Improve. Repeat before you grow.