

Starter Checklist: Launch a Business in 8 Weeks

A printable companion to our starting-a-business guides. Work through the six stages below in order , validate, register, build, operate, sell, plan.

1. Validate the idea (Week 1)

Before spending money, prove someone will pay. Interview at least 10 potential customers.

- ☐ Write a one-sentence problem statement
Who has the problem, what does it cost them, when does it happen?
- ☐ Interview 10 potential customers
No leading questions. Ask about the last time they hit the problem.
- ☐ Draft a one-line value proposition
'I help [who] do [what] so they get [outcome]'.
- ☐ Pick a price point and test it verbally
If nobody flinches, price is too low. If everyone walks, too high.
- ☐ Collect 3 letters of intent or pre-orders
Money, signature, or scheduled pilot , not just 'sounds cool'.

2. Choose a legal structure (Week 2)

The right structure depends on liability, taxes, and who you plan to raise from.

- ☐ Compare sole proprietor, LLC/limited company, and corporation
Cost, paperwork, liability exposure, tax treatment.
- ☐ Reserve a business name and check trademarks
Search national trademark registry and available domain.
- ☐ Register with the appropriate authority
National business registrar, tax office, and any sector licence.
- ☐ Get a tax ID and open a separate business bank account
Never commingle personal and business funds from day one.
- ☐ Set up basic bookkeeping (spreadsheet or Wave/Zoho)
Track every rand, dinar, hryvnia, leone, or dollar.

3. Build the minimum viable offer (Weeks 3-4)

Ship a version customers can actually buy. Not a prototype , a real service or product.

- ☐ Define what is in scope and out of scope
Written in one paragraph. Everything else is a future release.
- ☐ Create your simplest delivery workflow
Google Forms + WhatsApp + spreadsheet counts. Automate later.

- ☐ Draft a one-page contract or terms of service
Cover scope, price, payment terms, refunds, and IP.
- ☐ Set up payments (Stripe, Paystack, Wise, mobile money)
Match the rail your customers actually use.
- ☐ Serve your first paying customer end-to-end
Discovery → delivery → invoice → collection → follow-up.

4. Set up basic operations (Weeks 5-6)

Boring plumbing that prevents customer churn and tax headaches later.

- ☐ Business email on your own domain
Free tier of Zoho or Google Workspace, not a personal Gmail.
- ☐ Simple website with offer, price, and contact
One page is fine. Speed matters more than design.
- ☐ Customer records in one place (CRM or spreadsheet)
Name, contact, source, stage, next action, notes.
- ☐ Recurring calendar for invoicing and tax deadlines
Missed VAT/GST filings are the fastest way to lose money.
- ☐ Backup for files and financial records
Cloud storage plus one export per month you keep offline.

5. Get your first 10 customers (Weeks 7-8)

Distribution beats product at this stage. Do things that don't scale.

- ☐ List every warm channel: personal network, past employers, community groups
At least 30 names before you start outreach.
- ☐ Write a short outreach message per channel
Personal, specific to them, one clear ask, no attachments.
- ☐ Ask every happy customer for one introduction
Best time to ask is right after they thank you.
- ☐ Track conversion at each stage
Leads → conversations → proposals → paid. Fix the leakiest step.
- ☐ Ship one case study or testimonial
Even one credible story shortens every future sales cycle.

6. Plan the next 90 days

Move from launch mode to a repeatable operating rhythm.

- ☐ Set one revenue target and one learning target
E.g., 15 paying customers and clarity on best channel.

☐ Choose the single metric you will watch weekly

MRR, active customers, gross margin , pick one.

☐ Decide what you will not do this quarter

Every yes is a no to something else. Write both lists.

☐ Book one mentor call per month

One founder ahead of you, one operator, one investor.

☐ Diarise a monthly personal-finances check

Confirm you can still pay yourself, or plan for it.