The Idea Check

The questions I answer before I build anything

Building is the easy part now. With Claude Code you can build almost anything in a weekend, and that includes the wrong thing.

Most products fail because someone picked the idea first and then went looking for a person who needed it. This guide flips the order. You start with the person and the exact moment they feel the problem, and the idea comes out of that.

I built LockedIN this way. I'm a dad with a full-time job, and I kept falling off my training and starting over. Every app I tried gave me a plan and left me to do it alone. That moment is the whole reason the app exists.

There are two ways to use this:

1. **Answer the questions yourself**, on paper or in a voice note. Be honest. Short answers are fine.
2. **Let AI interview you.** Copy the prompt at the end into Claude or ChatGPT, and it will ask you these questions one at a time and push back when your answers are vague.

Part 1: The person

If you can't describe one real person, you don't have an idea yet. You have a feature.

1. Who is the one person this is for? Describe them like a friend you could introduce, not a market segment.
2. Is that person you? If not, how many people like them do you actually know?
3. What does their normal week look like, and where does this problem show up in it?
4. What do they care about more than solving this problem?

Part 2: The moment

The moment is the exact point where the problem hurts. It's the most important answer in this guide.

5. When exactly do they feel this problem? Name the day, the place, or what just happened.
6. What do they say to themselves in that moment?
7. How often does that moment happen: every day, every week, a few times a year?
8. What does it cost them when it happens? Think time, money, stress, or giving up.

Part 3: What they do today

People already deal with their problems somehow. Your real competition is whatever they do now.

9. What do they do today when the moment hits?
10. What have they already tried, and why did they stop?
11. Have they ever paid to fix this? How much, and for what?
12. If your product didn't exist, what would they keep doing?

Part 4: Proof

This is where most ideas should stop or change. That's a good thing. It's much cheaper to find out now.

13. Have you described the moment to ten people like this? How many said "that's me" without you explaining it?
14. Did anyone ask when they can use it, or offer to pay?
15. What's the smallest version you could put in front of them this week?
16. What would you need to see in the first month to know it's working?

Part 5: You

The best ideas fit the person building them. You're going to live with this for a long time.

17. Why are you the right person to build this?

18. Would you still use it or care about it if nobody paid you for a year?

19. Could you explain the problem in one sentence to someone who has never felt it?

20. What would make you stop, and are you honest enough to stop if it happens?

How to read your answers

Build it if you can name the person, describe their moment in detail, and at least a few of your ten people said "that's me" without being led.

Change the person if the moment is real for you but other people don't recognise it. Usually the idea is fine and you're talking to the wrong people.

Drop it if you struggled with Part 2. If you can't find the moment, the problem probably isn't painful enough for anyone to change what they do.

The prompt: let Claude or ChatGPT interview you

Copy everything in the box below into a new chat.

> *I want to test a product idea before I build anything. Act as an experienced founder and interviewer. Ask me the questions below one at a time, in order. Wait for my answer before moving on. If an answer is vague or I describe a market instead of a real person, push back and ask me to be more specific. Do not suggest features or write code.*
>
> *When we've finished all five parts, give me: (1) a one-sentence description of the person and their moment, (2) the weakest part of my answers, (3) your verdict: build it, change the person, or drop it, with your reasoning, and (4) the smallest test I could run this week.*

> *Part 1, the person: Who is the one person this is for? Is that person me? What does their normal week look like? What do they care about more than solving this?*
>
> *Part 2, the moment: When exactly do they feel the problem? What do they say to themselves then? How often does it happen? What does it cost them?*
>
> *Part 3, today: What do they do now when it happens? What have they tried and why did they stop? Have they paid to fix it? What would they keep doing if my product didn't exist?*
>
> *Part 4, proof: How many of ten people like this said "that's me"? Did anyone ask to use it or pay? What's the smallest version I could show them this week? What would I need to see in the first month?*
>
> *Part 5, me: Why am I the right person to build this? Would I still care if nobody paid me for a year? Can I explain the problem in one sentence? What would make me stop?*
>
> *Start with the first question.*

When you've got a "build it", you're ready for the next step: turning your answers into a design brief. That's exactly where my mobile app workflow starts.

Blessing