Zara Consulting1

STARTUP STRATEGY & ADVISORY

From business idea to a viable venture.

Strategic clarity. Financial discipline.
Practical support through launch and growth.

A business built around evidence and execution

01 **Validate the idea**

02 **Shape the strategy**

03 **Plan the launch**

04 **Support development**

An idea becomes a business through better decisions.

ZaraConsulting1 connects strategic choices with the financial and organizational work needed to execute them.

01

Where to compete

Which customer has a meaningful problem, and why would they choose your offer over the alternatives?

02

What to prove

Which assumptions need evidence before you commit more cash, people or development time?

03

How to deliver

What capabilities, operating model and funding are required to serve customers reliably?

OUR CONTRIBUTION

An independent challenge to assumptions, a practical plan and support through implementation.

Advice matched to the venture and its stage.

A local service business, a product venture and a technology startup need different operating and funding choices.

01

Before launch

Clarify the opportunity, test the proposition and identify the resources needed for an informed launch decision.

02

Early trading

Understand customer response, margins and cash conversion. Address the operational gaps that emerge after launch.

03

Preparing to grow

Evaluate repeatability, management capacity and financing needs before expanding the cost base.

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLE

Start with the founder’s decision and business model, rather than a standardized business-plan template.

Four phases with explicit decision points.

Each phase links analysis to a business decision, a concrete deliverable and the next resource commitment.

1

Validate

Feasibility and customer evidence

Proceed, test further or revise

2

Position

Market, offer and commercial model

Select the initial route to market

3

Plan

Financial model and launch readiness

Approve the resources and launch scope

4

Develop

Performance reviews and growth support

Adapt, expand or correct the plan

DECISION GATES

Agree on the evidence and resource commitments required before moving to the next phase.

A feasibility review tests the whole business idea.

The customer, the offer and the organization must fit together. A compelling product alone is insufficient.

Commercial feasibility	Assess the problem, alternatives, purchasing process and willingness to pay. Separate evidence from founder expectations.
Operational feasibility	Examine skills, delivery capacity, supply requirements and dependencies that could prevent a reliable launch.
Financial feasibility	Identify investment needs, contribution economics, cash timing and the conditions required to fund the venture.

DELIVERABLE A feasibility memo with assumptions, evidence gaps, major risks and a recommendation on the next step.

Customer behavior is stronger evidence than enthusiasm.

Use research to understand the customer’s existing problem before seeking approval for your proposed solution. [1, 3]

1. **Understand the current reality**
   Ask how customers solve the problem today, what it costs and who controls the purchase decision.
2. **Test a specific proposition**
   Use interviews, demonstrations or pilots suited to the venture. Define what would support or challenge the hypothesis.
3. **Assess the evidence**
   Distinguish positive feedback from concrete commitments, actual purchases and continued use.

DELIVERABLE

An evidence log linking each important assumption to what has been learned and what remains uncertain.

A small test should answer a material question.

The lean approach combines focused experiments with disciplined interpretation, rather than assuming every idea deserves a full launch.

1. **Choose the uncertainty**

   Examples include customer willingness to pay, delivery effort, channel access or the frequency of repeat demand.

2. **Design the smallest useful test**

   Specify the audience, offer, cost limit, success criterion and decision date before running the experiment.

3. **Make the next decision**

   Continue, modify or stop based on the findings. Record the rationale and update the plan.

PRACTICAL OUTPUT

A prioritized experiment plan with owners and spending limits, adapted to the business and its constraints.

A credible opportunity starts with a reachable customer.

Combine external research with a bottom-up assessment of who the venture can realistically serve. [1]

Market context	Examine demand, location, alternatives and barriers to entry. Record sources, dates and limitations.
Initial segment	Define the buyer, use case and purchase trigger. Identify a practical first customer group.
Obtainable demand	Estimate reachable accounts or buyers, expected conversion and available delivery capacity.

AVOID FALSE PRECISION

A large market estimate does not establish achievable revenue. Show the assumptions behind the entry plan.

A clear proposition makes the customer’s choice easier.

Translate insight into an offer that explains the outcome, the evidence and the commercial terms.

01

Value proposition

Explain the problem addressed and the result the customer values. Differentiate from direct competitors and the status quo.

02

Offer design

Define the product or service scope, support, acceptance conditions and promises the venture can deliver.

03

Pricing logic

Test willingness to pay against contribution economics and customer alternatives. Define discount and exception authority.

DELIVERABLE

A positioning brief and initial offer architecture linked to the target customer and delivery model.

The sales plan needs a repeatable path to revenue.

Choose channels that fit the customer’s buying behavior, transaction value and sales cycle.

1. **Acquisition**
   Define how qualified prospects will find or encounter the offer. Test channel access and acquisition cost.
2. **Conversion**
   Map the steps from first contact to purchase. Identify approval requirements, trial terms and reasons for lost opportunities.
3. **Retention**
   Plan onboarding, service and repeat engagement. Track continued use or repeat purchase where relevant.

DELIVERABLE

A channel and sales plan with responsibilities, conversion assumptions and a review cadence.

The business model must work beyond the first sale.

Connect customer value with delivery requirements and the economics of earning and collecting revenue.

Revenue mechanism	Clarify one-time sales, subscriptions, usage charges or project billing. Map how and when customers pay.
Resources and partners	Identify critical skills, technology, suppliers and commercial relationships. Assess concentration and switching risk.
Cost structure	Separate variable delivery costs, fixed operating costs and upfront commitments. Identify the drivers of margin.

DELIVERABLE A concise business model covering customer segments, relationships, channels, activities, resources, partners and economics.

A business plan needs an integrated financial model.

Build forecasts from operating drivers and cash timing, with the level of detail appropriate to the stage. [2]

Revenue and costs	Link volume, price, conversion and retention to delivery costs, hiring and overhead assumptions.
Balance sheet and cash	Model receivables, inventory, payables, capital expenditure and funding. Connect profit with actual liquidity.
Management scenarios	Maintain base and downside cases. Explain the assumptions and the decisions that change when results differ.

DELIVERABLE An integrated P&L;, balance sheet and cash flow forecast, with an assumptions register and scenario analysis.

Growth only helps when the economics support it.

Choose measures that reflect the actual business model and the reliability of the available data.

01

Contribution margin

Identify the revenue and variable costs attributable to a unit, order, project or customer.

02

Acquisition and retention

Assess customer acquisition cost and recovery time where meaningful. Use cohort evidence before relying on lifetime-value estimates.

03

Capacity and delivery

Measure utilization, delivery effort, refunds and support costs. Separate accounting gross margin from cash contribution.

DECISION USE

Pricing, channel spend, customer selection and hiring should reflect the relevant economics, not revenue alone.

Break-even shows what the operating plan must deliver.

Single-product illustration. Monthly fixed costs of $60,000, price of $200 and variable cost of $80 per unit.

500

UNITS PER MONTH

Illustrative operating break-even

Contribution per unit

$200 price − $80 variable cost = $120.

Break-even volume

$60,000 fixed costs ÷ $120 contribution = 500 units.

Commercial test

Can the target market, sales channel and delivery capacity support 500 units each month?

SCOPE OF EXAMPLE

Simplified operating break-even before interest and tax. Cash break-even also depends on timing, capex and financing. [1]

Funding needs depend on timing as much as totals.

A profitable forecast can still conceal a cash shortfall if collections, inventory or investment timing are wrong.

01

Cash commitments

Separate unrestricted cash from restricted funds. Include launch spending, working capital and committed payments.

02

Runway

Use a month-by-month cash forecast. A simple cash-to-burn ratio is only a first approximation when burn varies.

03

Funding milestones

Define what the next funding tranche must achieve. Allow for lead times and keep uncommitted funding outside the operating base case.

DELIVERABLE

A funding requirement, use-of-funds schedule, minimum cash threshold and contingency actions.

The downside case changes the decision deadline.

Assume $300,000 of unrestricted cash and $60,000 of immediate launch spending, leaving $240,000.

Assumption / result	Base case	Downside case
Constant monthly net cash outflow	$40,000	$55,000
Approximate months to zero cash	6.0 months	4.4 months
Approximate time to $80k cash threshold	4.0 months	2.9 months

PLANNING USE

Illustrative constant-burn model with no new funding. Act before the threshold, allowing for financing and execution lead times.

The launch plan must specify who delivers the promise.

Translate strategy into roles, capacity and the processes required to serve the first customers.

Accountability	Define founder responsibilities, decision rights and the work that requires hiring or external support.
Core processes	Map delivery, customer support and supplier coordination. Establish a workable order-to-cash and purchase-to-pay process.
Management tools	Choose systems suited to the stage. Maintain reliable customer, operating and financial records.

DELIVERABLE An organization and process blueprint with key responsibilities, system needs and capacity assumptions.

Basic controls protect scarce cash and founder time.

Prepare a readiness checklist and coordinate specialist work before avoidable issues delay launch.

Financial foundations	Set up banking, accounting records, approval limits and reconciliations. Agree on timely reporting and supporting documentation.
People and agreements	Clarify founder arrangements, contractor or employee needs and ownership of intellectual property with appropriate advisers.
External requirements	Coordinate entity, tax, licensing, insurance, privacy and sector-specific questions with qualified specialists as applicable.

SCOPE DISCIPLINE

ZaraConsulting1 supports planning and coordination. Legal and tax conclusions remain with the appropriate professionals.

A credible funding story makes assumptions visible.

The business plan and pitch materials should tell the same story as the financial model. [2]

Investment rationale	Explain the customer problem, competitive position, evidence and execution plan without overstating traction.
Financial narrative	Show the funding amount, intended use, milestones and downside exposure. Reconcile all headline numbers to the model.
Supporting material	Organize financial records, ownership information, contracts and evidence in a proportionate diligence pack.

DELIVERABLE

An investor or lender presentation and supporting plan. Preparation does not guarantee funding or constitute capital placement.

After launch, the plan becomes a management routine.

An ongoing advisory cadence helps founders respond to evidence while preserving financial control.

1. **Weekly priorities** — Review cash, sales activity, delivery exceptions and decisions requiring immediate action.
2. **Monthly performance** — Compare actual results with the plan. Explain variances and update the forecast and assumptions.
3. **Growth decisions** — Assess retention, contribution economics and delivery reliability before increasing fixed commitments. [3]

DELIVERABLE

A management dashboard, decision log, updated forecast and prioritized action plan.

A focused starting point. A clear scope of work.

Support can begin with one urgent decision or extend across the launch and development journey.

01

Feasibility and strategy

An independent assessment of the idea, customer evidence, business model and key risks.

02

Planning and launch

An integrated financial model, go-to-market plan and operating roadmap with accountable owners.

03

Ongoing founder support

Regular management reviews, forecast updates and implementation support as the venture develops.

FIRST CONVERSATION

Clarify the venture’s stage, available evidence, cash constraints and the decision you need to make next.

A disciplined foundation. A tailored implementation.

Selected external sources support the approach. Examples and service deliverables are illustrative ZaraConsulting1 proposals.

[1] U.S. Small Business Administration	Market research, startup costs and operating break-even.	**OPEN**
[2] U.S. Small Business Administration	Business planning and financial projections.	**OPEN**
[3] Y Combinator	The Real Product Market Fit: customer evidence and scaling discipline.	**OPEN**

SOURCE NOTE

Sources checked October 15, 2026. Scope, timing and deliverables are agreed with the client for each engagement.

Zara Consulting1

Your next decision deserves a clear business case.

Bring your idea, your early evidence or your next growth challenge.
Together, we can define the questions to resolve and the work required.

LET’S DISCUSS YOUR VENTURE

zaraconsulting1@gmail.com

www.zaraconsulting1.com