12 questions to answer before an innovation project gets its 2027 budget.

A good pitch is not evidence. Check what is.



MaxScale.ai

A good pitch proves the team can tell a story.

It does not prove that customers will pay, or that the business unit will take the result on.

Pick one project that has tested its solution with customers. Tick a question only if you can point to a document, a measurement, or a decision.

REMEMBER

A good answer in a meeting does not count without hard evidence.

Based on the Scale Maturity Model (GROW), level 4: Business Validation.

Problem & Vision

☐ Have customers confirmed that solving this problem would matter to their business?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ A concept pitch: problem, value proposition and pricing
- ✓ Feedback from customers, stakeholders, and funders
- ✓ Customers naming the business impact themselves

DOESN'T COUNT

The steering group liked the slides

Value Prop

☐ Do customers say the solution beats their next best alternative by a clear margin?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ A product-market fit survey: for example 40%+ would be very disappointed without it
- ✓ A competitor comparison that customers confirmed
- ✓ Customers comparing it with what they use today

DOESN'T COUNT

“Interesting, keep us posted.”

Solution

☐ Do you know what the MVP will cost to build, and how it gets into a real pilot?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ An MVP budget in person-hours and external costs
- ✓ A plan with a timeline and resources
- ✓ Cost estimates for the iterations after the MVP

DOESN'T COUNT

A feature list without a price tag

Market

☐ Is the market big enough, and is the value proposition confirmed where you can sell?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ Interviews confirming it in at least two distinct target markets
- ✓ A SOM calculation backed by those interviews
- ✓ Pilots ready to start with different types of customers

DOESN'T COUNT

A market size from an analyst report

Sales

☐ Has a first customer committed money or people to co-develop it with you?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ A signed co-development agreement with a real commitment
- ✓ B2B: 5+ customers engaged, several stakeholders in each
- ✓ Price tests where customers accepted the target price

DOESN'T COUNT

A letter of intent with no commitment

Team Composition

☐ Is there a core team that works mostly on this, with clear roles and industry contacts in use?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ 3–5 core people, each 60%+ on the project
- ✓ Defined roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Industry contacts already used for validation or hiring

DOESN'T COUNT

Ten people at 10% each

Operations

☐ Do you know how you will run a pilot with customers: roles, support, and invoicing?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ A pilot plan with roles, responsibilities, and communication
- ✓ Basic documentation for deployment, users, and incidents
- ✓ A first invoicing process for pilot customers

DOESN'T COUNT

“We’ll figure it out once a customer signs.”

Value Chain

☐ Are suppliers, partners, and channels helping to shape the MVP?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ Feedback logs from players in the value chain
- ✓ A first pricing model that uses their cost input
- ✓ A plan for those relationships after the MVP

DOESN'T COUNT

A slide of partner logos

Financial Model

☐ Have you chosen how to capture value, together with your co-development customers?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ Co-development customers endorsing the pricing and the model
- ✓ Customers saying they would sign at this price
- ✓ A rough estimate of the value it creates, with the assumptions written down

DOESN'T COUNT

A revenue forecast with no assumptions behind it

Sustainability

☐ Have you measured the sustainability impact with data?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ A life cycle assessment (LCA)
- ✓ Test results showing less energy, waste, or emissions
- ✓ Verification by a third party

DOESN'T COUNT

A sustainability slide with icons

Risk & Legal

☐ Are co-development contracts signed, and is there a first IPR strategy?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ Signed contracts that cover IPR and data ownership
- ✓ An IPR strategy: patents, trademarks, and names
- ✓ A risk assessment done before MVP development

DOESN'T COUNT

“Legal will look at it later.”

Business Unit Commitment

☐ Is the business unit building the MVP with you, not just watching?

COUNTS AS EVIDENCE

- ✓ A joint plan or statement of work with the BU's contributions
- ✓ Regular progress meetings with BU people
- ✓ Shared documents and communication channels

DOESN'T COUNT

A sponsor who attends the quarterly review

YOUR SCORE 15 / 15

How many did you tick?



Every unticked question is a risk you are about to fund.

Now answer the same twelve questions for every project in your portfolio. Then ask your AI assistant to do it.

Max reads the materials your teams already have, scores every project against the same levels, and keeps the evidence where both your teams and your AI tools can use it.

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