

QUESTIONS THAT WILL BRING CLARITY TO YOUR STARTUP



6 questions to answer in the first 6 months of starting a new business. Written for the busy entrepreneur by a fellow entrepreneur.

Prioritize gaining clarity in the early days of your startup

Before you spend precious time and resources designing pretty graphics or tweaking your company logo for the 5th time, carve out some space in your calendar to answer the 6 questions below – they will set the foundation you need to succeed in your first 6 months of business.

Remember, your MVP (minimum viable product) needs a nimble MVP marketing plan; one that can pivot and evolve with your product. *Your work does not have to be perfect, it just needs to be clear.*

1 - Can your friends and parents articulate what your business does?

Call them. Literally get them on the phone right now and ask 'what problem does my business solve?' Businesses with the most clarity will WIN in the marketplace. You may have a better product than your competitor but if they are easier to understand, users will spend with them. If your friends and parents do not understand what you do, continue working on the wording and strip away the jargon until they can communicate the problem your business solves back to you.

2- Who is the hero on your landing page?

Most businesses think they are the heroes of the story when in fact – the customer is the hero and should be at the center of the story. What does this mean? Rather than using space on your homepage to talk about how you developed your proprietary tech or how long you've been in business, use this real estate to empathize with what the customer is currently facing. Articulate the problems that they are experiencing better than they could articulate it themselves. This will create an immediate sense of trust.

3. Does everyone on your team know who 'Taylor' is and how to speak to him?

If you've mapped out your personas correctly, then they have personalities and names that can come to life in everyone's minds. When you're designing a graphic for social media or a new piece of functionality for your product, everyone on the team should be thinking about your persona's name (let's use Taylor as an example) and wearing their 'Taylor' hat. When someone says 'would Taylor relate to this' or 'would Taylor see himself in this image' – everyone on your team should know exactly what characteristics and adjectives are being used to describe Taylor.



4 - "What does your business do?"

OK, this one's a quick fix that will go a long way! Founders often have a hard time answering the question 'what does your business do' in a concise way. Follow the template below to create the perfect one-liner:

For (Target audience), (Brand name) is the (Service/product) that delivers (Outcome) to (your why).

Once you have this nailed down, share it with your team and encourage everyone to speak the exact same language. From your marketing team to your sales team, there will be clarity and consistency in describing why you exist as a business.

5- What do your images communicate?

Go back to your persona. Does Taylor need to see himself in your brand? If so, it will make more sense for the header to represent someone like him rather than a visual mock up of your platform. If you're hoping to communicate a human-centric tone, use real images of humans. If you're an AI platform that organizes calendars, show the simplest and cleanest screenshot that will communicate how easy Taylor's life will be once he downloads your platform.

6 - Are you accidentally creating moments of frustration for your end user?

I promise, once you map out your user journey, you'll notice a gap that will cause frustration in your user's experience. Perhaps it's a missing email, a faulty link or a 'forgot password' prompt that doesn't actually lead anywhere. The goal is to remove any barriers that may cause frustration and lead your user to give up. Your user map doesn't need to be complicated – it just needs to consider every step of your users potential journey.

Remember – you and your team have something called 'the curse of knowledge'. In the process of building your business, you've become incredibly knowledgeable – but your users and investors are learning something brand new for the first time. When you write content for your business, you're bringing the level of expertise down from a 10 (your level of knowledge) to a 6 (what you *believe* your user's level of knowledge might be) but in reality, you need to bring the level down to a 2. This strips away any frustration or confusion and inspires your user to stick with you.

It's not about perfection, it's about clarity. Go get em'!

Liane Coulahan
CEO and founder of Narrative
www.narra-tive.com

