The Gurus Had It Backwards

The 72-Hour Idea-to-Income Test

How to find out if real people will pay you real money. Before you build anything. Before you spend anything. Before you waste another weekend on something nobody wants.

by Donny Farmer

Made my first million in 90 days selling grocery coupons. $112.3 Million in Career Revenue. 35-Year Entrepreneur. High School Dropout. Proud Graduate of Kindergarten.

Start Here

Read This First (Seriously)

You know that feeling. You find a business idea that actually excites you. You spend a weekend picking a niche. Then a week choosing a platform. Then a month building something. You buy a course. Then another course. You set up a website nobody visits. You tell your spouse, “This one is different.”

Then you launch. And nothing happens.

Not because the idea was bad. Not because you were lazy. Not because you’re too old, too non-technical, or too late to the game.

Because every course, every guru, every YouTube expert told you the same thing: pick a niche, build a product, set up a funnel, then go find buyers. They had it backwards. And you paid for their mistake.

That’s not your fault. You followed the instructions you were given. The instructions were wrong. This guide exists to make sure it never happens again.

> **Don’t build anything until someone pays you for it.**
>
> Sell first. Build later. Let the market tell you what it wants. Then build it with the buyer’s money already in your pocket.

I’ve been building businesses for 35 years. My first real one sold grocery coupons, and it made me a millionaire in 90 days. After that: calling card companies, a mobile health screening company, and a silicone wristband company that sold over 100 million units. $112.3 million in career revenue. And I still Google embarrassingly basic things at least twice a week.

The one thing I’ve gotten right, every single time, is this: I never built anything people didn’t already want to buy. I found the buyers first. Every time.

This guide gives you the same test I use. Five steps. 72 hours. You’ll know if you have something real. Not an opinion. Not a theory. Proof.

The Method

The 72-Hour Test: Five Steps

Each step takes 2 to 4 hours. You don't need to do them all in one sitting. But finish all five within 72 hours, because speed is the point. The longer you think about it, the less likely you are to do it. Your brain is going to tell you to do more research first. That's the same brain that convinced you to buy three courses before selling anything. Don't listen to it.

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Step One

Find the Hungry Crowd

Before you pick a product, you pick a crowd. Specifically, you're looking for people who are already spending money to solve a problem.

This is backwards from what most courses teach. They say find your passion, then find an audience. That's how you end up with a beautiful product nobody buys. Instead: find the buyers first. Then figure out what to sell them.

Where to look: Amazon bestseller lists. Etsy trending searches. Facebook groups where people ask for recommendations. Google "best [product] for [audience]" and read the comments. Reddit threads where people complain about existing solutions. Whatnot, eBay, or marketplace sold listings, which are proof of actual purchases.

> **Your Action** Spend 60 to 90 minutes researching. Write down three hungry crowds you found. For each one, write what they're already buying and where.

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Step Two

Pick Your Offer Type

You've found hungry buyers. Now decide what to put in front of them. There are only three types of offers in the world. Physical products they can hold. Services you do for them. Digital products they download or access online.

Pick the one that fits your hungry crowd. Not the one you think is best. The one where the buyers you found in Step 1 are already spending money. Don't overthink it. You're testing, not committing for life.

> **Your Action** Pick one hungry crowd from Step 1. Pick one offer type. Write one sentence: "I'm going to sell [offer type] to [hungry crowd]." That's it.

Step Three

3 Build the Minimum Sellable Version

Here's where most people screw up. They spend weeks perfecting something before a single buyer sees it. Don't do that. Your minimum sellable version is the smallest thing you can put in front of a buyer that solves their problem well enough to charge for.

Physical: source a small batch or use existing inventory. Services: write a one-paragraph description of what you do and the result you deliver. Digital: write the outline and sell that as a pre-order. If people buy, you build it. If they don't, you just saved yourself weeks of wasted work.

"But I don't know how to write copy that sells." You don't need to. Not yet. Right now you're testing, not selling at scale. When the time comes to write real sales copy, build the offer, and set up your follow-up, that's exactly the part the Idiot Engine takes off your plate. More on that at the end of this guide.

This is the sell-first, build-later principle. It feels uncomfortable. That's how you know you're doing it right.

> **Your Action** Create your minimum sellable version. Physical: source or identify the product. Service: write the one-paragraph offer. Digital: write the outline and a description of the result.

Step Four

4 Put It In Front of Buyers (Today)

This step separates the people who make money from the people who make plans. You have a hungry crowd. You have an offer. Now put it where the buyers can see it.

Physical: list it on a marketplace or go live on a selling platform. Services: send 10 direct messages and post in 3 to 5 groups where your buyers hang out. Digital: post in communities where your buyers are, or run a small $10 to $20 ad to your description page. Pre-sell even one copy and you've validated.

"But I don't have a sales page or a checkout system." You don't need one for validation. A PayPal link, a Venmo request, or a marketplace listing works fine right now. The professional sales pages and automated checkout come later. That part is a solved problem, and I'll show you where it gets handled.

Your brain is going to tell you you're not ready. That you need to learn more. Recognize that voice. That's the same voice that got you to spend $1,500 on courses you never finished. Ignore it. Post the offer. The goal is not to make a fortune in one day. The goal is to find out if anyone will pay for what you're offering. If the answer is yes, even once, you have something real.

> **Your Action** Put your offer in front of at least 50 real people within 24 hours. Track how many see it, how many respond, and how many buy or express serious interest.

> **Proof This Works**
>
> My daughter Jennifer had never sold anything on Whatnot, a live selling platform. Never used the app. Never been on camera pitching products to strangers. She didn't spend weeks planning. She sourced a rack of women's clothing she could get fast, pointed a camera at herself, and went live. Two hours later she'd sold $4,000 worth of clothes to complete strangers. Within four weeks she was doing over $25,000. Day one, zero experience, zero perfect setup. She put something in front of hungry buyers and let them decide. That's the entire method.

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Step Five

Read the Scoreboard

72 hours have passed. Time to look at what happened. There are only three outcomes.

Outcome A: People bought. You have a validated offer. That puts you ahead of 90% of aspiring entrepreneurs who never get this far. Now you build the full version and scale it. (That's exactly what comes next. Keep reading.)

Outcome B: Interested but didn't buy. Your crowd is right, your offer needs adjusting. Price, clarity, or the product itself. Good data. Adjust and test again. You spent 72 hours and maybe $20, not six months and $5,000.

Outcome C: Nobody cared. Also good data. You just saved yourself months building something nobody wants. Go back to Step 1. The cost of being wrong is 72 hours. The cost of not testing is a year of your life.

> **Your Action** Be honest about which outcome you got. If A, you're ready for the next step. If B, adjust and retest. If C, pick a new direction and test again. No outcome is failure. Only not testing.

The Next Step

You Proved People Will Pay. Now What?

If you ran the five steps, you found out something most people never do. Whether real people will hand you real money for what you're selling. That's the hard part, and most folks never clear it. You did.

But proving someone will buy is the starting line, not the finish.

You've got a validated idea and a drawer full of half-finished skills. A Facebook ads course you didn't finish. An email course you bought and forgot. A funnel that didn't convert. Each one taught you 80% of a single piece. Not one taught you how the pieces fit together. That's the trap. They sell you pieces. They never sell you the sequence. So you end up with a garage full of parts and no engine.

The Sequence Has a Name

Meet the Idiot Engine

It's the order of operations I've used for 35 years, built for people who Google embarrassingly basic things and consider copy and paste an advanced computer maneuver. It takes a validated idea, the kind you just learned to find, and walks you move by move from "people will buy this" to "people are buying this."

How much do I trust it? A few years back I spent 18 days in a hospital bed. Unconscious. Couldn't make a call, couldn't lift a finger for the business. While I was out, it deposited $126,970. The sequence did that. Not me.

The whole story is on one page. The coma, the numbers, what's actually inside the Engine, and what it costs. No video wall, no webinar, no call to book. You read it at your own pace and decide for yourself. You already did the hard part. Go see what you build with what you proved.

See the Whole Story →

Or type it in your browser: **income-4-idiots.com/idiot-engine-coma**

Donny Farmer has been building businesses with direct marketing and direct response for over 35 years. First business sold grocery coupons and made him a millionaire in 90 days. $112.3 million in career revenue. High school dropout. Proud graduate of kindergarten. Still Googles how to add a page break in Word.