

IE 101 | Innovation and Entrepreneurship 101

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CHAPTER 04 | BUILD AND TEST Execution While Learning: Building, Testing, and Getting Traction

CHAPTER PURPOSE: This chapter turns the project from a story into a cycle of evidence. The team should build, test, observe, revise, and repeat.

Figure 13. Story and execution advance together.

Execution Is Not Only Building

Execution means moving the project toward proof. A team executes when it interviews a real user, runs a test, builds a demo, measures usage, secures a pilot, recruits a partner, or learns that an assumption is wrong. Building slides can support execution, but slides are not execution by themselves.

Build Only What Teaches the Next Lesson

The first build should be small enough to complete and clear enough to test. It may be a manual workflow, clickable mockup, data experiment, prototype, simulation, service trial, or working MVP. The question is not whether it is impressive. The question is whether it produces useful learning.

Figure 14. The project loop: build, test, learn, revise.

MVPs, Demos, and Traction Signals

A demo makes the project believable. An MVP creates useful learning with a real user or stakeholder. A traction signal shows pull from the world. At student scale, traction may include repeated use, sign-ups, pilot interest, a letter of intent, referrals, a technical benchmark, or a stakeholder asking for the next version.

Customer proof: someone has the problem and wants it solved.

Technical proof: the core function can work well enough to matter.

Value proof: the benefit is visible, measurable, or important.

Adoption proof: someone has a path to use, buy, sponsor, or support it.

Traction proof: the world pulls the project forward in some observable way.

The Weekly Execution Rhythm

Each week should produce evidence. The team should decide the highest-risk assumption, choose the smallest useful action, collect evidence, and revise the story and build plan. This rhythm prevents the project from becoming either a slide exercise or an unfocused build.

Example: A useful weekly result can be small: one tested landing page, three expert interviews, one working sensor reading, or a rejected assumption.

The strongest teams connect story and execution every week. The story decides what to test. The test changes the story.

Practice Exercises and Questions

What is the highest-risk assumption in the project right now?

What is the smallest build or test that could change the team's mind?

What evidence would count as traction at this stage?

What did the last build or test prove, and what did it fail to prove?

Project Guide

1. Define the Iteration 0 build target.
2. Run at least one user, customer, stakeholder, or technical test.
3. Record evidence in the project log.
4. Revise the NABC and demo plan based on what was learned.