

Investor Mindset & Q&A Preparation Worksheet



STARTUP 

pitch coach

If you're a founder, you're likely fueled by vision, drive, and a willingness to outwork the odds. But when you step into a room with investors—especially high net worth individuals, angel investors, family office managers, or VCs—you'll quickly find that hustle isn't what gets their attention.

They Think in Leverage, Not Labour

These people think in terms of leverage, not labour. They're not looking for someone who works harder—they're looking for a founder who understands how to build systems, teams, capital structures, and intellectual property that will work for them. Investors are assessing how your business multiplies value, not how much you can personally grind.

They're calm, methodical, and rarely the loudest person in the room. They ask sharp, unexpected questions that get to the heart of risk and control. When they do speak, it's with clarity and conviction. Presence matters more than performance.

If your meeting, your pitch, or your follow-up isn't a high-ROI use of their time—measured in money, peace, or legacy—it's a no.



Understanding this mindset helps you show up differently. It shifts how you prepare, how you pitch, and how you follow through. You're not just telling your story—you're showing that you know how to play the game at their level.

Advanced Q&A Prep: Risk-Focused Investor Questions

These are the questions that come from investors who've seen things go sideways—and don't plan on it happening again. They may not ask all of them out loud, but they're always thinking them.

Use these questions to strengthen your readiness, tighten your operations, and prepare for the kind of scrutiny that separates serious founders from the rest.

Bonus! We've added some coach's commentary to each question, helping you assess what they are looking for - the *meaning* behind the question.

Due Diligence & Trustworthiness

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Have you ever failed at a venture? What did you learn?

- They want to know how you handle failure. Can you take accountability? Did you learn anything that would protect this next venture?

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Who audits your financials, and how often?

- Even if you're early-stage, a clear and responsible approach to financials builds trust.

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Do you have a data room prepared? What's in it?

- Investors look for professionalism. A clean, well-organized data room shows you're not just pitching—you're operating.

Founder Tip

Investors are scanning for ***leverage***. Show them how your systems, team, and IP work without you. Speak with clarity. Think in terms of control, not effort. And remember—if it's not high-ROI, it's a no.

How much of your own time or money is in this?

If you haven't invested significantly yourself, they'll wonder why they should. This doesn't mean you have to be rich or invest as much as they do, but they will want to see some skin in the game, and a real level of commitment to the venture.



Who owns the IP, and is it properly protected?

Loose IP is a dealbreaker. They need confidence that the core asset isn't vulnerable.

Even if you don't have full protection, show there is a plan in place and the preliminaries done.

Risk Mitigation and Blind Spots

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What assumptions—if proven wrong—would break your model?

- They want to know you've pressure-tested your own thinking and aren't building on unchecked optimism.

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What's the biggest risk in your business that you can't control?

- Shows whether you're attuned to external threats like regulatory changes, platform dependencies, or global supply shifts.



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Who do you call when you're stuck?

- A founder without a support system is a liability. They want to know you have mentors, advisors, or experienced peer founders you trust.

Operational Rigor

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What's your burn rate? What happens if you don't raise this round?

- You need a solid grasp on cashflow and a backup plan that doesn't rely on blind optimism.

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If you had to cut 30% of your budget tomorrow, what would you cut—and what would you protect?

- This shows your values, resourcefulness, and understanding of what's truly driving the business forward (and that you've planned for the unexpected).

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How do you measure success internally?

- Beyond vanity metrics. They're looking for real indicators of value creation—retention, cohort performance, LTV/CAC ratio, etc.

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Who on your team would you bet your house on—and why? Who's your ride-or-die?

- They want to hear about character, not just skills. It reveals how you build and lead.

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How are you handling data privacy, infrastructure, and security as you scale?

- This is a silent risk most startups overlook until it's too late. Investors want to know you're not collecting sensitive data without proper controls.

Ethics, Character, Judgement

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Tell me about a time you made a decision that hurt in the short term but was right in the long term.

- They're testing your ethical compass, your discipline, and your ability to delay gratification.

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Have you ever turned down revenue? Why?

- Not all money is good money. Investors love founders who can say no when the deal doesn't align with the vision.

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What would your ex-cofounder or ex-boss say about you?

- This question tests self-awareness, humility, and how you handle tough relationships. Avoiding the question is itself a red flag.

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Tell me about XXX ... what happened there?

- If you have something in your past or something that you are trying to hide, they will know about it and will ask you. Be prepared, don't hide and tell the truth.

Are You Pitch Ready?

There's nothing worse than being in the middle of pitching and realizing you're not ready.



Want Help Prepping for Those Tough Questions?

Book a **1:1 coaching session** or check out more founder-tested tools and resources at **Startup Pitch Coach**.

