

# 3M FRAMEWORK

Make sure you are solving a worthy problem















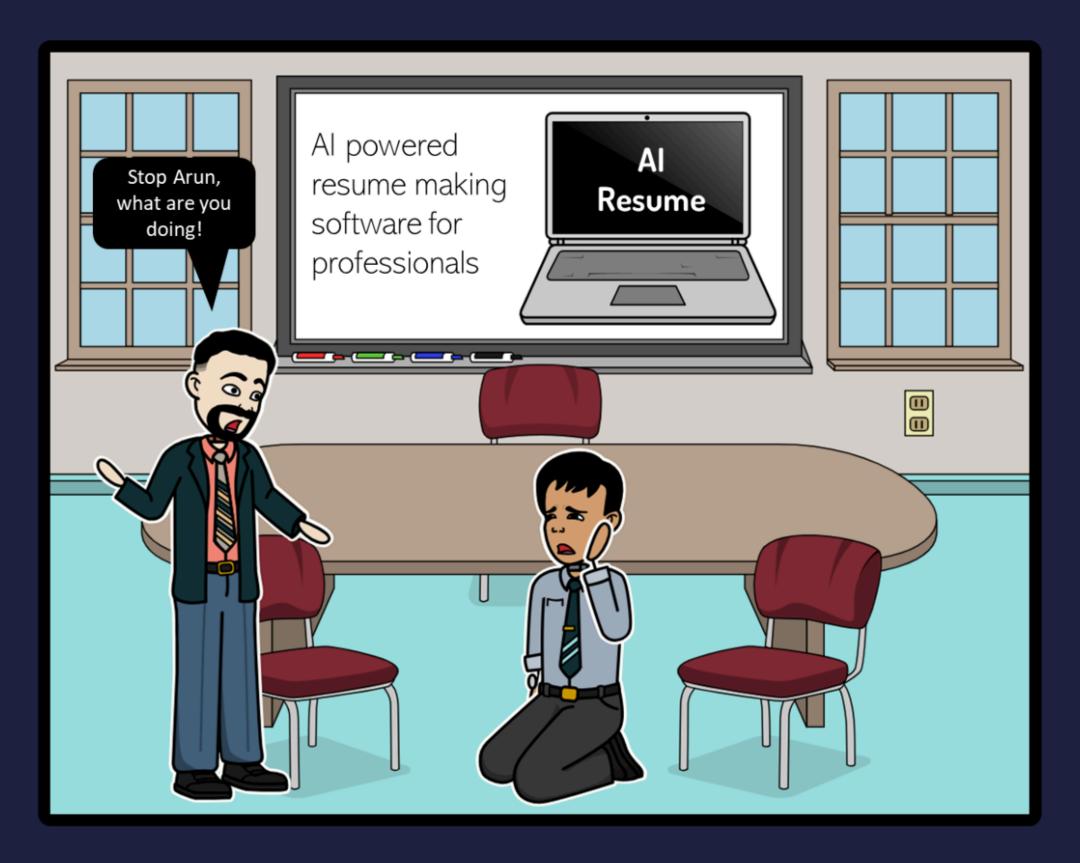


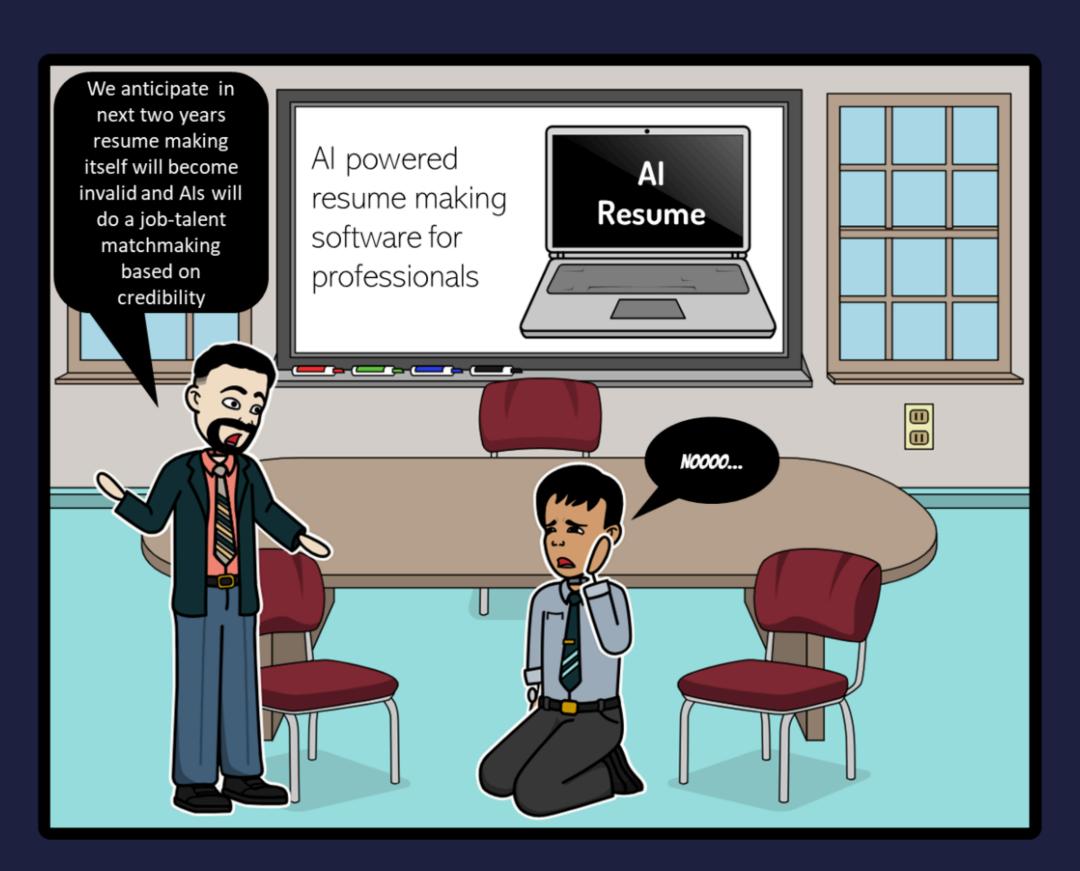












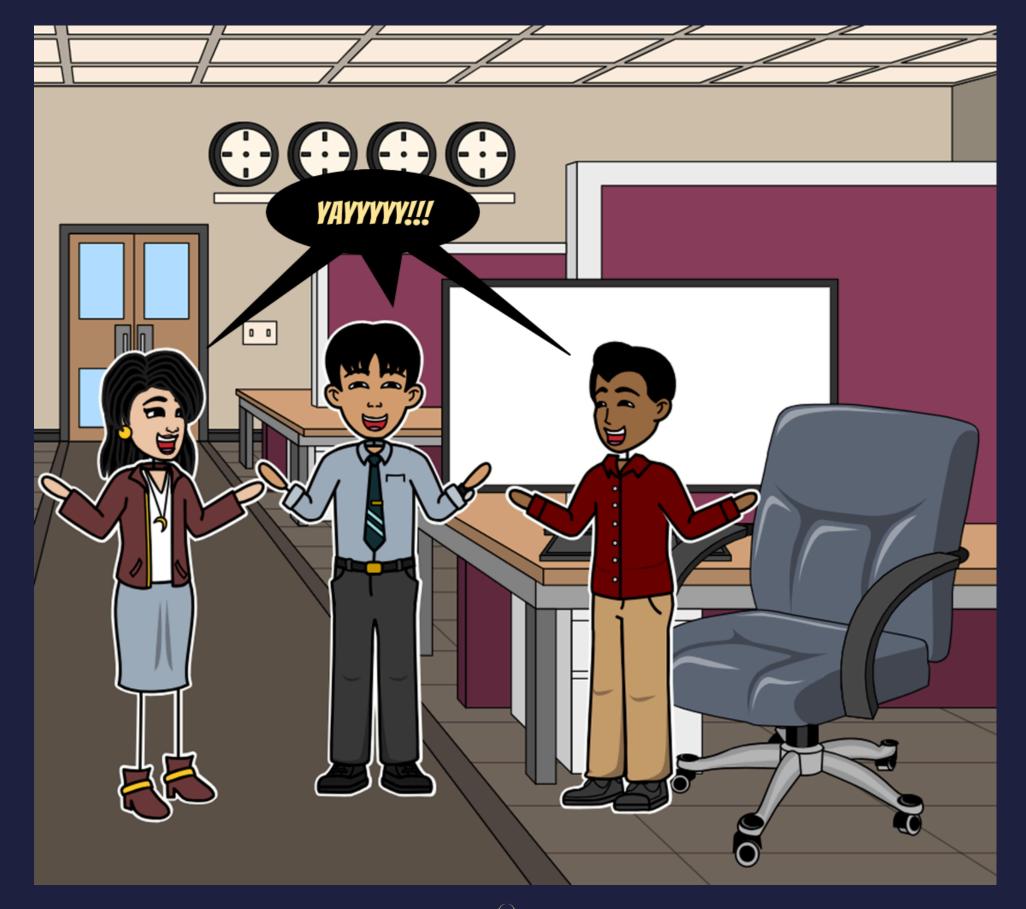






## THE INNOVATORS' GARAGE® ON A QUEST TO DEMOCRATIZE INNOVATION®







### Opportunity Validation

The first step for any innovator or entrepreneur before developing a product is to identify the right opportunity to work on. While it may seem simple, many startups and even large corporations have faced significant losses by choosing the wrong problem to work on.

Take Juicero, for example—it had an impressive engineering design but failed because it was solving a non-viable problem. Similarly, Segway struggled because it addressed a problem that didn't have enough demand.

This is why validating the opportunity is crucial even before diving into user research.

Here, we introduce a powerful framework called 3M – Mass, Money, Momentum, which helps innovators assess whether an opportunity is worth pursuing. Each 'M' comes with a set of thought-provoking questions to ensure proper validation, making it easier for innovators and decision-makers to identify opportunities worth investing in.

### 3M Framework - Mass Money Momentum

When coming up with a new business idea or product offering, many entrepreneurs and corporate innovation leads jump straight into designing the solution. However, before investing time and resources, it is crucial to ensure that the opportunity is worth pursuing. This is where the 3M Framework comes in—Mass, Money, and Momentum—three essential factors that help assess whether an idea has the potential to succeed in the market.

Entrepreneurs can use the 3M Framework to evaluate whether an opportunity is worth exploring long before they start working on a solution or investing resources. Corporates and incubators can use this framework to screen ideas effectively, making it easier to decide which ones are strong enough to move forward with and allocate further investment of time, funding, and talent. By thinking deeply about these three aspects, innovators can avoid working on ideas that seem promising on the surface but lack long-term viability.



### M1: Mass (Is there a large enough market?)

Before working on a solution, the first step is to identify how big the opportunity really is. If only a small group of people face the problem, then even the best solution might not turn into a viable business. You need to validate that the opportunity is significant and widely experienced.

For example, if you plan to develop a high-end gadget for left-handed people, you must first check how many left-handed individuals actually experience the problem you are solving. If only a small subset of left-handed individuals struggle with the issue, your business might be too niche to be sustainable.

#### Key questions to reflect on

- 1. How many people struggle with this problem today, and how often do they face it?
- 2. Is this problem being actively talked about, searched for, or discussed in forums, communities, and reports?

- 3. Are people already trying to solve this problem in their own way (e.g., workarounds, hacks, or existing but suboptimal solutions)?
- 4. Does this problem affect multiple industries or is it specific to a single niche?
- 5. Have recent social, economic, or technological changes made this problem more urgent or widespread?
- 6. Are people frustrated enough with the problem that they would be motivated to look for a better solution?
- 7. Does this problem exist only in certain locations or demographics, or does it have a more universal appeal?
- 8. If left unsolved, will this problem get worse over time or cause further inefficiencies?
- 9. Have surveys, interviews, or existing data shown that people consider this a real problem worth solving?
- 10. What is the cost of inaction—if no one solves this problem, what negative impact does it continue to have?



# M2: Money (Is there a clear pathway to financial viability?)

Once you confirm that a large group of people face the problem, the next step is to evaluate whether any solution you come up with could eventually be monetized. At this stage, you may not know exactly what your solution will look like, but you need to ask whether people would be willing to pay to solve this problem in some way and check whether potential business models exist.

For example, if your idea is about reducing food waste in urban households, you may not yet know the exact solution, but you need to assess whether people currently spend money on products or services that attempt to solve this problem. Understand that this is not about the money itself but the willingness to spend it to solve the problem.

#### Key questions to reflect on

1. Are people currently spending money or resources to deal with this problem, even in inefficient ways?

- 2. How much of a priority is this problem in the daily lives or operations of your target users?
- 3. If someone were to solve this problem effectively, who would benefit the most, and who would be willing to pay for that benefit?
- 4. Are there existing business models (e.g., subscription, one-time purchase, licensing, service-based) that could work for a potential solution?
- 5. Would solving this problem help people save money, time, or effort or create measurable value (e.g., increased productivity, improved well-being, risk reduction) making them more willing to pay for it?
- 6. Are governments, institutions, or large organizations already investing in solutions related to this problem?
- 8. If a free solution already exists, what gaps does it have that people might pay to improve?
- 9. Are there industries or stakeholders that could sponsor, fund, or subsidize solutions to this problem?



# M3: Momentum (Will this problem still exist in the future?)

Even if there is a large market and financial viability today, you must assess whether the problem will remain relevant in the future. Sometimes new trends in customer preference or advancements of technology and infrastructure tend to make certain problems irrelevant in the future. A business that solves a temporary issue may not be sustainable in the long run.

For example, launching a rental service for DVDs would have made sense in the early 2000s, but with the rise of Netflix and digital streaming, such a business would no longer be viable. Similarly, investing in typical fossil fuel vehicles today might not be the best idea given the shift toward electric and autonomous cars.

#### Key questions to reflect on

1. Is this problem growing or shrinking over time based on industry trends and consumer behavior?

- 2. Are there major technological advancements on the horizon that could eliminate the problem entirely?
- 3. Are new regulations, policies, or market shifts likely to affect the demand for solutions in this space?
- 4. If this problem is solved at scale, what secondary problems might emerge that could make it obsolete or less urgent?
- 5. How has this problem evolved over the past 5 to 10 years, and is there a pattern indicating its future relevance?
- 6. Are any large companies, research institutions, or government bodies working on alternative ways to solve this issue?
- 7. Could this problem be replaced by another, bigger challenge that shifts the focus elsewhere?
- 8. Does the solution to this problem depend on scarce or unsustainable resources that might create risks for long-term success?
- 9. Will demographic or generational changes affect how people perceive and prioritize this problem?



### 3M Framework: TLDR

Before building a product or launching a startup, applying the 3M Framework helps ensure you are heading in the right direction. The check should be done in sequence: first validate for Mass, then for Money and finally for Momentum. If an idea fails to meet even one of the three Ms, it is worth reconsidering before investing further. Mass, Money, and Momentum together provide a strong foundation for sustainable innovation.

- ightharpoonup If the Mass exists ightharpoonup You have a problem worth solving.
- ightharpoonup If the Money checks out ightharpoonup There is a viable way to create value and monetize the solution.
- ightharpoonup If the Momentum is strong <math>
  ightharpoonup The problem will remain relevant in the future.

Only when all three 'M's align should you move forward with to the next important part of the innovation journey, understanding the challenge form the target user's perspective. Use this template as a self-checklist of validating the opportunity before diving into execution!