

THE SKIP LIST

Thirteen things that feel like progress before validation — and validate nothing. I did almost all of them, so this list exists. For each one: why I did it, what it actually cost, and what I'd do now, one product wiser.

01 Hiring lawyers for privacy policies & terms before the first customer

WHY I DID IT	I wanted to start "properly" — professional, safe, unattackable. Legal documents felt like a foundation.
WHAT IT COST	Weeks of back-and-forth and real money — for documents written for a product that pivoted twice before anyone used it. All redone.
SMARTER NOW	A template privacy page on day one. Real lawyers when there's a real, paying customer whose data actually flows.

02 Interviewing without ever testing willingness to pay

WHY I DID IT	Interviews felt like validation, and asking for money felt rude — I didn't want to "ruin" warm conversations.
WHAT IT COST	Months of building for people who loved the idea for free. Enthusiasm is not a purchase; I confused the two.
SMARTER NOW	Ask for the pre-order, the deposit, the calendar commitment — inside the interview. A kind no today is cheaper than a polite maybe for a year.

03 Quantitative surveys before qualitative understanding

WHY I DID IT	"Data-driven" sounded rigorous — a survey with numbers felt more serious than ten conversations.
WHAT IT COST	I asked the wrong questions at scale. The answers looked like insight and were noise; the survey was redone after the interviews I should have started with.
SMARTER NOW	Ten deep qualitative conversations first. Quantify only what those conversations taught me to ask.

04 Pitch decks with no investor in the room

WHY IT'S HERE	Confession: this scar isn't mine — I've never had the pleasure of investors. This item is borrowed from my founder program's collective pain, and it earns its place.
WHAT IT COSTS	Fluffy slides without a concrete audience or intent — recreated from scratch the moment a real conversation exists.
SMARTER	Build the deck when meetings are scheduled, for those specific people. Until then: build the product they'd invest in.

05 Automating customer acquisition before acquiring customers by hand

WHY I DID IT	The scale fantasy: build the machine first, then turn it on. Manual outreach felt inefficient — and, honestly, scarier.
WHAT IT COST	Systems built on unvalidated messaging — redone later, and worse: they stood in the way of learning what actually convinces a real person.
SMARTER NOW	Ten customers by hand, one awkward conversation at a time. Manual first IS the validation. Automate what already worked.

06 Polishing a corporate identity for more than an hour

WHY I DID IT	To look established — and because branding is fun. Logos are a wonderful way to feel productive.
WHAT IT COST	Days and real money on identities that changed after validation anyway. Conversion never noticed the difference.
SMARTER NOW	One hour, one template, done. (My branding-tool idea exists precisely to make the one hour a good one.)

07 Feeding a social-media obsession

WHY I DID IT	It feels like marketing and pays out instant applause. And once you've started, it's hard to stop – that would be bad for the algorithm ;)
WHAT IT COST	Daily hours that validated nothing. Followers clapped; customers stayed hypothetical. Reach is not revenue.
SMARTER NOW	Socials serve launches, not the other way around – which is exactly why I'm building Sendely to do my part of it for me.

08 Perfectionism about, well, everything

WHY I DID IT	My quality bar is part of my identity – showing the ugly version felt like showing up to a keynote in pajamas.
WHAT IT COST	Every round of polish delayed real feedback by a week – on details no user ever noticed, on products nobody had validated.
SMARTER NOW	The ugly version meets a real person first. Polish is a reward for surviving validation, not the entry ticket.

09 Hunting scholarships & incubators to be able to quit the job

WHY I DID IT	The dream of going all-in. Every application felt like a step toward the day the startup would be my only job.
WHAT IT COST	Weeks of application prose with zero customer contact – and the realization that the job was never the bottleneck. Focus was.
SMARTER NOW	Customers fund conviction better than juries do. The day job is runway, the evenings are for shipping – that combination is a feature, not a compromise.

10 Designing pricing for customers I wasn't signing tomorrow

WHY I DID IT	Readiness again – tiers, plans, a beautiful pricing page for a future that felt closer than it was.
WHAT IT COST	Theoretical models nobody ever bought. Pricing designed around research instead of people prices for an audience of zero.
SMARTER NOW	Price with the first real customer, out loud, in the conversation. Their flinch teaches more than any comparison table.

11 Vibecoding features "to understand the product better"

WHY I DID IT	Because it's pure joy – and it feels exactly like progress. Yes, I know exactly who's writing this.
WHAT IT COST	Prototypes I rebuilt completely after real feedback arrived. The understanding I gained was of my assumptions, not of my customers.
SMARTER NOW	Vibecode only what a real person will touch this week. Build laps around users, not around clarity.

12 Building a multi-page website to look established

WHY I DID IT	Credibility. A "real" company has a real website, right?
WHAT IT COST	Redone after validation – a bad website harms you, no website works fine. (Says the woman whose personal site waited until the products were real.)
SMARTER NOW	A demo beats a website. If a store submission forces one: a single landing-page template, one hour.

13 Boss level: believing I know better than the process

WHY I DID IT	"You just don't understand my niche." My half-knowledge felt like expertise because I cared so much.
WHAT IT COST	Every single item above. This one is the parent of the other twelve.
SMARTER NOW	Trust the process, suppress the half-knowledge, and let real customers overrule me. Hardest one to unlearn – still practicing.