



Create Your Own Startup by Just Going Up the Stairs

Trainer's guide

Learning outcomes

The main topic

The main topic is Entrepreneurship and Startup Development

A startup is a young company created to develop a unique product or service, usually under conditions of high uncertainty and with the goal of rapid growth. Unlike traditional businesses, startups are often focused on solving a specific problem in a new or more efficient way, using innovative ideas, technologies, or business models. What makes a startup innovative is its ability to challenge the status quo – introducing something novel or significantly improved that meets a need in a way others haven't tried. This could involve applying emerging technologies, finding smarter processes, or addressing urgent social or environmental issues creatively.

The Escape Room structure follows the thematic progression of startup building from initial idea to pitching to the "Boss investor". Throughout this experience,



participants will go through the fundamental stages of startup creation, from idea generation to final pitching, mirroring real-world practices seen in business incubators and startup competitions.

Pedagogical objectives

- Foster creativity and innovation.
- Develop market research and customer targeting skills.
- Teach startup structure and business modelling.
- Build teamwork and leadership capacity.
- Practice pitching and communication skills.

Frame

Type

Physical - Traditional Escape Room with multi-phase challenges

Timeframe

60-90 minutes (including briefing and debriefing)

Time depends on the number of teams participating.



Participants

Depending on the situation, the number of participants can be adapted.

Minimum: 3 participants

Maximum: 12 participants (divided into teams).

Note: If there is the maximum number of participants, it is recommended to divide them into 4 groups of 3 participants. The best-case scenario is to keep the number of participants in one group to no more than 3.

Topics

Entrepreneurship, Startups, Business Planning

Skills required

Game Master

- Basic knowledge of startup development
- Facilitation and observation skills

Participant

- Basic teamwork skills
- Creative thinking (no business background required)



Game Master's role

Game Master's role act as the "Accelerator Manager," the Game Master plays a crucial and dynamic role throughout the escape room. At the start, the Accelerator Manager sets the scene by explaining the storyline, the startup journey, and the objectives. Throughout the game, the Game Master observes the teams' interactions, provides subtle hints when necessary (especially if a team is stuck on a puzzle for more than 5 minutes), ensures fair play, and manages the pacing to keep all groups moving forward.

In addition to facilitating progression, the Game Master acts as an evaluator, monitoring how teams apply creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration during the tasks. During the final pitch phase, the Game Master steps into the role of the "Boss Investor," (this can be done by changing appearance or any other way) listening to each team's pitch, asking probing questions, and offering constructive feedback based on the startup's feasibility, innovation, and clarity. The Game Master also ensures that learning outcomes are achieved by guiding a reflective debrief at the end, helping participants understand what entrepreneurial skills they developed during the session.

Instructions for conducting the game as a Game Master:

1. Start with a briefing explaining the context, objectives, and time limits.
2. Encourage teams to assign roles: Leader, Writer, Designer, Presenter.
3. Monitor team dynamics subtly: if needed, provide motivational or clarifying hints.



4. Transition teams between phases by congratulating successful completion and setting new expectations.
5. Be flexible: if teams are stuck too long, offer layered hints, starting broad and becoming more specific.
6. Ensure each phase ends with tangible outcomes (refined idea, customer match, business canvas, brand design, pitch).



Inclusivity check

To ensure this escape game is inclusive and accessible for participants with learning disorders or disabilities, consider the following key elements:

- ✓ **Physical accessibility:** Ensure the venue is wheelchair accessible and that all the necessary items are reachable (not too high or far to access).
- ✓ **Visual and auditory support:** Ensure that the materials use large print, high contrast, or digital formats compatible with screen readers. If videos are involved, provide subtitles or interpretation.
- ✓ **Simple and clear instructions:** Use clear, concise language and visuals. Avoid complex wording to support participants with learning disorders.
- ✓ **Flexible participation:** Offer varied roles that cater to different strengths, allowing participants to choose tasks that suit their abilities and foster responsibility without becoming overwhelming.
- ✓ **Sensory considerations:** Avoid sensory triggers like loud noises or flashing lights. Provide a quiet space for participants needing breaks to refocus.
- ✓ **Support and adjustments:** Be ready to offer extra assistance, specific hints and guidance or tailored support based on individual needs.
- ✓ **Feedback loop:** Collect feedback from participants to continuously improve adaptability, accessibility and inclusivity.



Hints and solutions

Phase A

Hints

- Think about combining ideas across different industries.
- Think outside traditional categories.
- Great innovations often mix two unexpected concepts.
- If stuck, consider how one technology could solve a problem in an unrelated field.

Solutions

- Solve a riddle like "What starts as a dream, grows with a plan, and survives with a team?" (Answer: Startup).
- Unlock the Creativity Box and use contents like mind maps and prompts to refine the idea.

Phase B

Hints

- Don't just look at age or location.
- Think deeper: what are their habits, needs, desires?
- Try to "walk in their shoes."
- What frustrates them daily?
- What would make their life easier?



Solutions

- Find and correctly decode the hidden customer profiles.
- Match the right audience to the startup idea by focusing on their true needs, not just surface demographics.
- Consider more than one possible customer group if necessary.

Phase C

Hints

- Think of the story your startup tells—what is the journey from identifying a problem to providing a solution?
- Link the stages logically.
- Start from "what issue exists" and build towards "how we solve it and get paid."

Solutions

- Correctly match puzzle pieces: (Problem -> Solution -> Customer Segment -> Value Proposition -> Revenue Stream).
- Unlock the folder containing the Business Model Canvas.

Phase D

Hints

- Branding is the "personality" of the startup. It should emotionally connect with your target audience.



- Think about the feelings your startup wants to inspire (trust, excitement, safety, etc.).

Solutions

- Complete the marketing crossword (terms like 'branding,' 'campaign,' 'target audience,' 'logo').
- Use unlocked templates to design a logo, slogan, and marketing approach that reflect the startup's core values.

Phase E

Hints

- Imagine explaining your idea to an investor you meet in an elevator, conference or somewhere, where he has only couple of minutes to spare: short, energetic, convincing.
- Focus on the most important elements: problem, solution, customer, why now.
- Start with a hook or bold opening statement.

Solutions

- Deliver a compelling from 60 seconds to 3 minutes pitch including: the identified problem, a concise solution, the specific customer targeted, and a hint of how the startup will make money.
- Bonus points for confidence and storytelling.



Brief and Debrief

Brief (before the game)

The Game Master (Accelerator Manager) gathers all participants and sets the atmosphere by introducing the story: they are young entrepreneurs entering a startup accelerator housed in a multi-story building, with each floor representing a stage in creating a successful startup. Explain the importance of creativity, collaboration, and strategy to succeed in the journey. Set clear ground rules: respect each other's ideas, communicate openly, and manage time wisely. Specify the total time limit (e.g., 90 minutes) and explain that to "win" they must successfully pitch their startup idea to secure "funding" from the investors at the end. Remind them that creativity and teamwork are key judging criteria, not just speed.

Debrief (after the game)

Once the Escape Room is completed, gather the participants for a structured debriefing session. Begin by congratulating them on their effort and creativity. Lead a discussion about the main entrepreneurial lessons learned: identifying problems, designing solutions, understanding customers, teamwork, and pitching. Ask participants to reflect: What stages were the most challenging? What strategies helped them the most? How did they collaborate under pressure? Encourage them to think about how these startup principles apply in real life. Collect verbal



feedback or distribute a short feedback form to capture their impressions and suggestions for improvement. Emphasise that both successes and difficulties are valuable learning experiences.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project code: 2023-2-LT02-KA220-YOU-0001831156

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