Startup Moat Builder

How defensible is your idea? Work through each section as a team.

AI has made it faster than ever to copy a good idea. A real moat comes from a deliberate, multi-layered strategy — not a single feature. Use this worksheet to turn each strategy from the guide into something concrete for your company.

1 Build Faster Than Anyone Else

Vague goals slow you down. Turn each milestone below into something specific, actionable, and achievable.

Fundraising target
e.g. amount, round type, close date

Product launch date
e.g. public launch, beta launch

Customer acquisition number
e.g. number of customers by a given date

Other key milestone

Why this milestone matters right now:

2 Build a Healthy Co-Founder Relationship

Check the practices your founding team already has in place. Anything unchecked is your next conversation.

- [ ] We matched on values and ideals, not just a shared idea.
- [ ] We communicate constantly and honestly — we don't let small frustrations build into resentment.
- [ ] We are genuinely supportive of each other, not just professionally aligned.
- [ ] We've considered (or used) outside help, like founder therapy or coaching.
- [ ] We have a clear, agreed-upon process for handling disagreements.

Our process for resolving disagreements:

3 Stay Curious

Every piece of feedback is a chance to build a better product. Log a recent example.

Recent critical feedback we received:

What we learned or changed as a result:

- [ ] We have a well-defined MVP.
- [ ] We have a beta testing strategy.

4 Build a Solid Marketing & Positioning Plan

Marketing has to be built in parallel with the product, not bolted on after. Work through these questions.

Is this something a customer would pay us to build specifically for them?

Does the value only become obvious with a real-world use case? If so, which one?

Who is an early customer willing to serve as a case study or reference?

We solve these problems better than our competitors:

Position around what you solve well, not what competitors get wrong.

5 Understand Your Barriers to Entry

AI has lowered the technical barrier to building a product. Real defensibility now comes from things that are harder to replicate. For each, note your current advantage — or your plan to build one.

Brand trust

Customer relationships

Proprietary data

Execution speed

6 Consider Being a Values-Forward Company

Customers increasingly choose the product that aligns with their values, not just the best spec sheet.

Our core value(s):

How we make these values visible to customers:

One sentence describing our moat today: