

FOR FOUNDERS WITH A LIVE APP

The founder's *90-day* product plan.

One business outcome, the few pieces of work that move it, the maintenance that keeps the lights on, and a weekly habit of checking the evidence. Includes a filled example and a blank template.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Baseline Know where you are	Build and ship Small pieces, one change at a time							Let it run Read the evidence, then adjust				REVIEW

Pick one outcome.
Say no to the rest in writing.

WHAT TO BRING

Last quarter's numbers from your subscription and analytics dashboards, your list of feature requests, and whoever runs engineering.

WHAT YOU LEAVE WITH

A two-page plan for the quarter: one outcome, a baseline and target, up to three priorities, protected maintenance, a not-this-quarter list, owners, and a weekly review.

INSIDE

The rules 2
Filled example 3 to 4
Blank template 5 to 6

Ninety days. *One outcome.*

I plan in quarters. Ninety days is long enough to ship something that matters and short enough that nobody gets comfortable.

Most product plans go wrong in one of two ways. They try to move five numbers at once, or they treat speed as the goal and add people to get it. More people rarely helps. Nine mothers can't deliver a baby in one month. Every new developer, PM, or coordinator adds onboarding, handoffs, and meetings, and delivery often gets slower, not faster.

The plan that works is smaller than you want it to be. Pick one outcome. Build the few things in your core loop that move it. Protect the maintenance. Then slow down on purpose: ship, give customers time to use it, let the data come in, and make the next call from evidence.

Ken Vermeille, Founder, Vermillion

SEVEN RULES

- 01 **One outcome**, tied to how the business makes money.
- 02 **A baseline before a target**. If you don't know where you are, week one is finding out.
- 03 **Core loop first**. No more than three priorities, each tied to a stage of the loop.
- 04 **Protect the dam**. Reserve time for maintenance before you plan features.
- 05 **Say no in writing**. The not-this-quarter list is part of the plan.
- 06 **One owner for the outcome**, one owner for each piece of work. The founder's time moves outward, toward customers and partners.
- 07 **Review the evidence every week**. Same day, same time, thirty minutes.

THE SHAPE OF THE QUARTER



□ Weeks 1 to 2

Confirm the numbers. Check that tracking works. Test your assumptions cheaply.

■ Weeks 3 to 8

Ship the priorities in small pieces, one at a time where you can, so you know which change did what. Maintenance runs every week.

■ Weeks 9 to 12

Customers need time to use it. Read the evidence and adjust. Don't pile on.

■ Week 13

Review the quarter against the target and set the next outcome.

WHY THE LAST FOUR WEEKS MATTER MOST

Early customers are your paid product testers. What they do after a change ships, in session recordings, in retention, in replies to a founder email, tells you what to build next. That evidence is often worth more than their subscription. The weeks where nothing new ships are the weeks you learn the most, so protect them.

Quillby, a journaling app. *Fictional.*

Quillby, its team, and all numbers are invented for illustration. They are not benchmarks.

1 • THE OUTCOME

Business outcome	More monthly subscribers make a second payment. Quarter: January through March.
How it makes money	Subscriptions after a 7-day trial. Most people pay once, then cancel before month two. Every other growth plan leaks until that is fixed.
Outcome owner The head chef	Product lead
Founder's focus	Talk to 20 subscribers, send the founder emails personally, and open two partnership conversations.

2 • BASELINE AND TARGET

	NUMBER	WHERE IT LIVES
Baseline	58% of monthly subscribers who started in October made a second payment.	Subscription dashboard, cohort by start month
Target	65% for monthly subscribers who start in January and February.	Same report, same definition

3 • ASSUMPTIONS AND HOW WE CHECK THEM

WHAT MUST BE TRUE	HOW WE CHECK	BY	RESULT
People cancel because they stop writing, not because of price.	Read Google Play cancellation surveys. Email 20 recent cancellations.	Wk 2	Mostly true. Price came up rarely.
Users who write three or more entries in week one pay a second time more often.	Cohort query in analytics.	Wk 1	True, by a wide margin.
An evening reminder brings people back without annoying them.	Reminder opt-outs and uninstalls after launch.	Wk 7	Opt-outs low. No change in uninstalls.

4 • CORE-LOOP PRIORITIES (THREE AT MOST)

#	PRIORITY	LOOP STAGE	OWNER	SHIP BY	IT WORKED IF
1	Founder note emails on days 1, 3, and 10, with replies to the founder's inbox.	Repeat use	Founder	Wk 3	Replies tell us why people drift away.
2	Evening reminder at a time the user picks, offered after their first entry.	Repeat use	Mobile lead	Wk 5	More subscribers return in week two.
3	Seven days of guided prompts for new users.	First value	Product lead	Wk 6	More new users write three entries in week one.

5 · PROTECTED MAINTENANCE

WORK	WHY IT CAN'T WAIT	OWNER	WHEN
Upgrade React Native and the navigation library to supported versions	Needed before the next store SDK requirement	Mobile lead	Wk 1 to 4
Fix the three most frequent crashes	They hit new users in their first session	Mobile lead	Wk 2 to 3
Move signing keys into the company password manager	Only one developer can reach them today	Founder and mobile lead	Wk 1

Time reserved: one day a week for maintenance and review. This was Quillby's choice for the quarter, not a rule.

6 · NOT THIS QUARTER

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Android widget Dark mode AI summaries of entries <p>Good ideas. None of them moves second payments this quarter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web version Paywall redesign New pricing test
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7 · DEPENDENCIES

WE NEED	FROM	BY
"Entry saved" analytics event verified	Product lead	Wk 1
Push notification key access	Mobile lead	Wk 1
Email sequence written and loaded	Founder, contractor	Wk 2
App Review for three releases	Apple and Google	Wk 3 to 6

8 · WEEKLY EVIDENCE REVIEW (SELECTED WEEKS)

WK	WHAT SHIPPED	WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS	DECISION
1	Tracking verified. Baseline pulled.	Baseline confirmed at 58%. Three or more entries in week one is the clearest signal of a second payment.	Keep the plan.
3	Founder emails live	About one in five people replied. The most common reply: they forgot the app existed.	Keep. Reminder stays next in line.
5	Evening reminder live	Opt-in is lower on Android than iOS. Too early to read renewals.	Hold still. Fix the Android prompt wording only.
9	Nothing new. Prompts live since week 6.	January cohort is tracking above baseline. Prompt use drops sharply on day 4.	Don't touch it. Log day 4 for next quarter.
13	Nothing new	February cohort is in. Combined result: 62%.	Close the quarter.

9 · END-OF-QUARTER REVIEW

Result vs. target	62% against a target of 65%. Up from 58%, short of the goal.
What we learned	Reminders and founder emails bring people back. Prompts help for three days, then fall off. People who stop writing stop paying.
Next outcome	Same outcome, one more quarter. Fix the day-4 drop-off before starting anything new.

1 · THE OUTCOME

Quarter		Outcome owner The head chef	
Business outcome One, in plain words			
How it connects to how we make money			
Founder's focus Customers, partners, distribution			

2 · BASELINE AND TARGET

	NUMBER, AND HOW IT IS DEFINED	WHERE IT LIVES
Baseline		
Target		

3 · ASSUMPTIONS AND HOW WE CHECK THEM

WHAT MUST BE TRUE	HOW WE CHECK	BY	RESULT

4 · CORE-LOOP PRIORITIES (THREE AT MOST)

#	PRIORITY	LOOP STAGE	OWNER	SHIP BY	IT WORKED IF
1					
2					
3					

5 · PROTECTED MAINTENANCE · TIME RESERVED EACH WEEK: _____

WORK	WHY IT CAN'T WAIT	OWNER	WHEN

6 · NOT THIS QUARTER

7 · DEPENDENCIES

WE NEED	FROM	BY

8 · WEEKLY EVIDENCE REVIEW

Every week: what shipped, what users actually did, what we believe now that we didn't last week, and the next decision. Keep, change, or stop.

WK	WHAT SHIPPED	WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS	DECISION
1			
2			
3			
4			
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10			
11			
12			
13			

9 · END-OF-QUARTER REVIEW

Result vs. target	
What we learned	
Next outcome	

Want help holding the plan? Vermillion owns engineering for live mobile apps and works in 90-day outcomes, so the founder can stay with customers and partners. A 15-minute call is enough to tell whether we fit.

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