

The Three-P Decision Check

People. Problem. Pay.

Use this before committing more time to an idea, a side project or a new role. Write what you know, surface your assumptions and choose a useful next step.

A five-minute first pass. Spend about a minute on each P. Use the last two minutes to identify the weakest answer and choose what to do next. Type in the shaded spaces or print and write.

The decision I am considering

1 People

Who specifically needs this work? What do I know about their situation?

The person or group, and the evidence I have

2 Problem

What does the unresolved problem cost them in time, money or effort?

The problem, its cost and a recent real example

3 Pay

How could this return value through money, fulfillment or both?

The return that would make the work worthwhile

My weakest answer

My next small step

For a startup or side project

Work through one idea at a time. Keep evidence and assumptions separate. A missing answer points to the next conversation or test.

1 People

Name a specific, reachable group and describe their situation in their words. Who uses the product? Who pays? Do you understand and want to work with them?

Recent conversation, observed behavior or recurring request

The assumption I need to test

2 Problem

What workaround do people use now? How often does the problem happen? What happens if it stays unresolved? Ask about a recent real example and what improvement would matter to them.

Evidence I have, and the smallest useful test

3 Pay

Who could pay, for what outcome and through what payment mechanism? Distinguish interest, a waitlist signup, a commitment and an actual payment. Include the learning or fulfillment that would make the effort worthwhile.

Financial and personal return, with current evidence

Time budget for this test

Date I will review the evidence

If the financial return is unresolved, decide how much time you are willing to commit.

For a job offer or a new team

Use these questions to make the opportunity concrete. Confirm important expectations directly and record what is still unknown.

1 People

Did I feel listened to during the interview? Can I see myself working with these people every day?

Ask: "Who would I work with most closely, and how does the team work together?"

What I learned, and what I still need to ask

2 Problem

Why does the role exist now? Clarify the problems, responsibility, authority and support. Does the work fit what you want to solve?

Ask: "What would make this hire successful after the first three months?"

What I learned, and what I still need to ask

3 Pay

Confirm compensation and working expectations. Consider learning, fulfillment and the effect on your time, family, health and other commitments.

Ask: "What does a normal week look like, including the difficult parts?"

Confirmed return, expectations and remaining uncertainty

Make the decision explicit. Proceed with a bounded commitment, gather more evidence or park the opportunity.

My next step, the risk I accept and my review date

This framework supports judgment. It cannot guarantee a successful business or a good job fit. The useful outcome is a clearer reason for your next step.