



## VIRAL<sup>SM</sup> Pathways Overview

Entrepreneurs and investors lack a common language to communicate what they are looking for. What does an investor mean when they say “product-market fit,” “value proposition,” or “scale?” And how can we use these definitions to best match entrepreneurs to investors at the proper stage?

To make things easier, our team at Village Capital has built a framework, the VIRAL (Venture Investment-Readiness and Awareness Levels) Pathway. VIRAL helps entrepreneurs become self-aware and articulate just how ready they are for investment. It allows investors to communicate the point at which they want to invest. We’ve found it a helpful lingua franca to kick off –and sustain–entrepreneur-investor conversations.

The VIRAL framework outlines nine levels that companies go through over the lifetime of the firm (in developing it, the concept of investment readiness was inspired by NASA). It also identifies milestones across a range of categories: team, product, and business model, and others.

Please find our full VIRAL framework inside.

### 1. LEVEL ASSESSMENT BY CATEGORY

Starting with Team, circle highest level completed.

### 2. OVERALL VIRAL LEVEL

Draw line across the lowest circle (may be below circles in other categories). This is your overall Level.

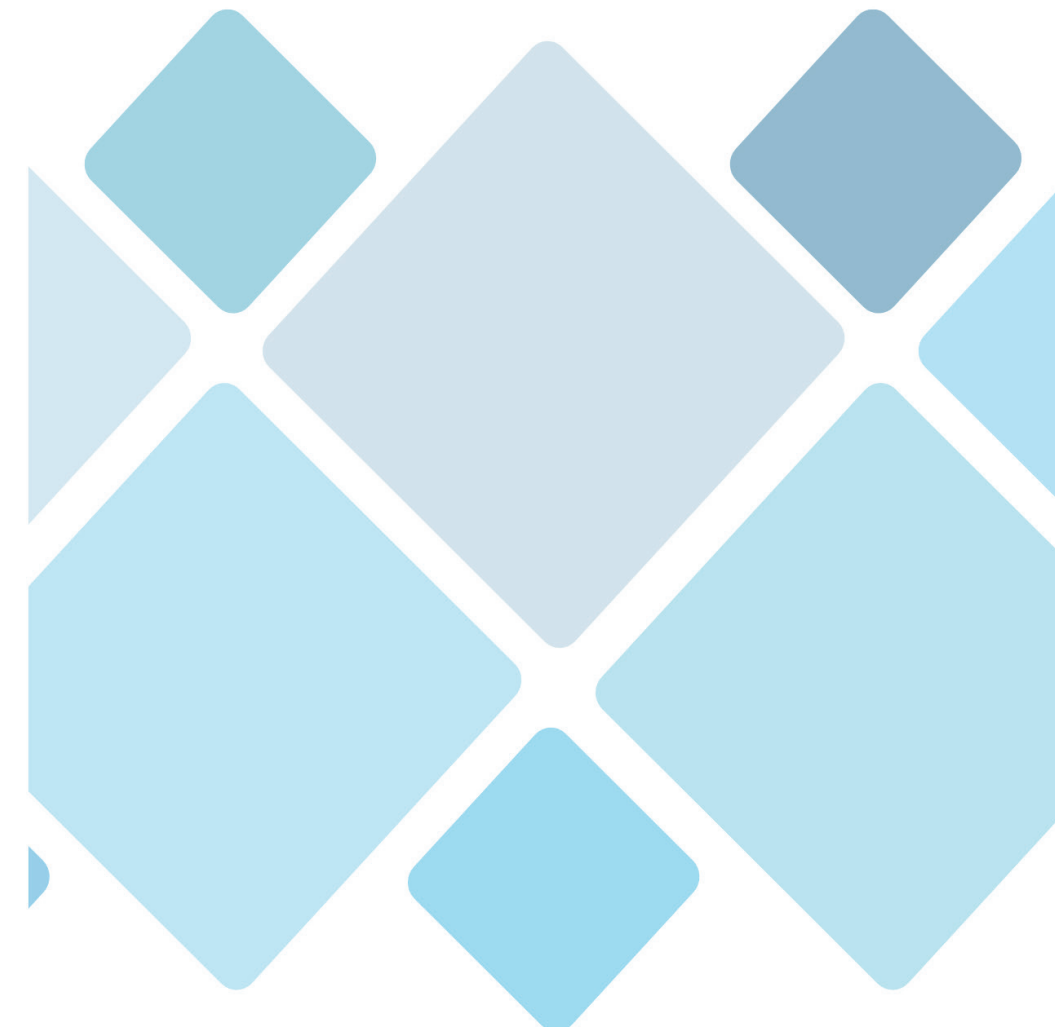
### 3. CRITICAL MILESTONES

Identify 1 to 3 critical milestones that you will focus on next to level up.

Our investments include the following companies.



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Level	Name	Team	Problem & Vision	Value Prop	Product	Market	Business Model	Scale	Exit	Type of funding typically closed at this level
	1	Strong founding team - at least 2 people with differentiated skillsets.	Team has identified a specific, important, and large problem.	Team has identified their hypotheses of their target customer - the specific type of person whose problem they are solving.	Team has ability to develop low-fidelity prototype and has freedom to operate - not blocked by other patents.	Team can clearly articulate total addressable market, will capture, and initial target market.	Team has identified an outline of revenue model.	Team has identified markets or customer segments and has aspiration to scale.	Team understands what an exit is and has a vision for how they will ultimately provide a return for their investors.	<div> <div>Establishing the Founding Team</div> <div>Setting the Vision</div> <div>Solidifying the Value Proposition</div> <div>Validating an Investable Market</div> <div>Proving a Profitable Business Model</div> <div>Moving Beyond Early Adopters</div> <div>Hitting Product-Market Fit</div> <div>Scaling Up</div> <div>Exit in Sight</div> </div>
	2	Team has senior members with lived experience of the problem and/or deep understanding of their target customer's problem.	The team can solve the problem and can articulate its vision at scale - what does the world look like if they succeed?	The team has potential customers who provide evidence that solution solves key pain point - product is a painkiller, not vitamin.	Team has a basic low-fidelity prototype that solves the problem.	Team understands any regulatory hurdles to entering the market and has a strategy to overcome them	Company can point to pricing and business models of similar products in the industry as further evidence that their revenue assumptions hold.	Initial evidence that multiple markets experience this problem.	Vision for growth has company solving a large piece of the global problem in 10 years.	
	3	Team has technical ability to build fully functional product and has a clear understanding of the value chain and cost structures in their industry.	The company can articulate why they're the best ones to solve this problem.	Evidence that customers will pay the target price. For B2C - 100 customers, for B2B - 5 customers and multiple stakeholders in each.	Team has built a working prototype and a product roadmap.	Initial evidence through sales that team can capture initial target market.	Team can articulate projected costs along the value chain and target cost points to reach positive unit economics.	Clear strategy to move to multiple markets.	Initial evidence that the solution already solves the problem better than any incumbents.	
	4	Team has clear understanding of how their target market operates and has strong industry contacts in this market.	The company can articulate system-level change - how this solution would transform the industry.	Evidence of differentiation through initial target customer feedback that the solution solves their problem significantly better than others in the market.	Team has clear understanding of product development costs and how to build the initial product cost-effectively.	Evidence of \$1B+ total addressable market	Team has financial model with cost and revenue projections articulated and a strategy for hitting these projections.	Initial evidence that multiple types of customers find value in the solution or in an extension of the product that the company is well-positioned to develop.	Evidence of growth trajectory that could lead to IPO, acquisition, or self-liquidating exit.	
	5	Team has clear sales/ops understanding and strategy.	Evidence of impact tied to solution-the company has evidence that by growing the business, company solves the problem.	Target customers love the product and want to keep using it.	Fully functional prototype with completion of product for wide commercial distribution in sight.	Team is having conversations with strategic partners to capture their market faster/cheaper than the competition.	Financial model with evidence of valid projections to reach positive unit economics.	Vision and initial evidence of positive unit economics in two markets.	Inbound interest from large strategic.	
	6	Team has proven sales, product dev skills, and management ability to support a growing team for scale.	Sales validate impact tied to solution and grow as solution scales.	Sales beyond initial target customers. Customers love it and are referring the product to others.	Complete product with strong user experience feedback	Supply/distribution partners see their success aligned with the company's success.	Sales begin to map to projections. Evidence of decreasing CAC with growing customer base buying at target price.	Company has cleared regulatory challenges (and if applicable) is implementing a strong IP strategy.	Team has identified specific acquirer(s) or other exit environment.	
	7	C-suite as good or better than founding CEO and can stay with company through its growth and exit phases.	Impact is successfully validated.	Majority of first sales in target market are inbound.	Product is built for scale and additional offerings in progress.	Sales cycles meet or exceed industry standard.	Business model validated - Validation of strong unit economics.	Evidence of strong unit economics across multiple markets.	Team has strong relationships with multiple acquirers.	
	8	Team is recognized as market leaders in the industry	Systems-Level Change validated.	Multiple renewals with low sales effort. Customers in multiple markets love the product.	Strong customer product feedback in multiple markets.	Brand established. Hard-to-beat partnerships for distribution, marketing, and growth.	Month-over-month revenue meets industry standard.	Growth of customer base accelerates month-on-month.	Team has turned down acquisition offer.	
	9	Team positioned to navigate M&A, IPO.	Global leader in stated vision.	Cited as the top solution in the industry solving this problem.	Product recognized as top in industry.	Clear line-of-sight to industry dominance.	Minimum 2x revenue growth for multiple years.	Strong unit economics for multiple customer segments.	Growth with exit.	Acquirers
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