

Small Business Boot Camp

March 24 - 26, 2026



Raising Capital

In an AI-Labeled World: Systems First. Capital Follows.

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GROWTH

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Operators. Advisors. Investors.



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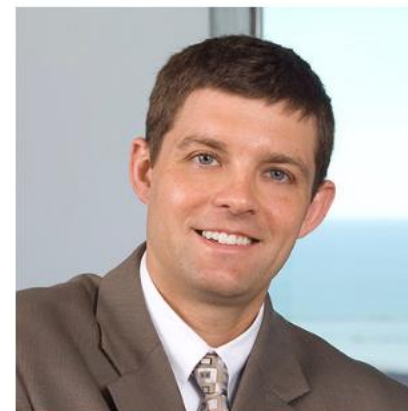
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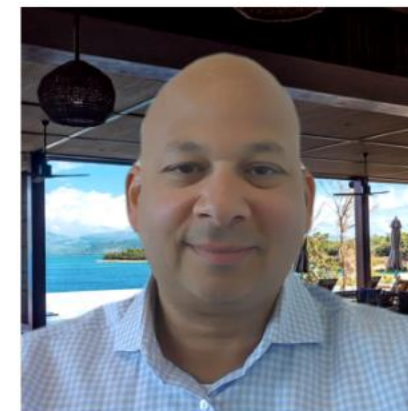
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Different lenses. One truth: Systems drive scale.

Do You Really Need Capital?

Raising capital is hard — and it should be.

Before asking *how*, ask:

- What problem does capital solve right now?
- What breaks in my business without it?
- Am I scaling something... or searching for something?

If capital is the strategy, you don't have a strategy.

Reality check:

- Customers are still the best source of validation
- Cash flow buys time
- Lean beats premature scale

Types of Capital

Grants | Customers | Debt | Equity

- **Grants** → Require structured innovation
- **Customers** → Validate your value system
- **Debt** → Requires predictable cash flow
- **Equity** → Bets on scalable systems

The stronger your systems, the more options you unlock.

Ask Better Questions. Get Better Outcomes.

- What systems must exist for this to scale?
- Where does the business break under pressure?
- What must be true for revenue to be repeatable?
- What risks would an investor see immediately?

**Better questions reduce risk.
Reduced risk attracts capital.**

Investors Fund Systems, Not Ideas

- **Financial Health**

Cash flow, revenue, unit economics, projections

- **Operational Maturity**

Team, systems, technology, quality, performance tracking

- **Market Position**

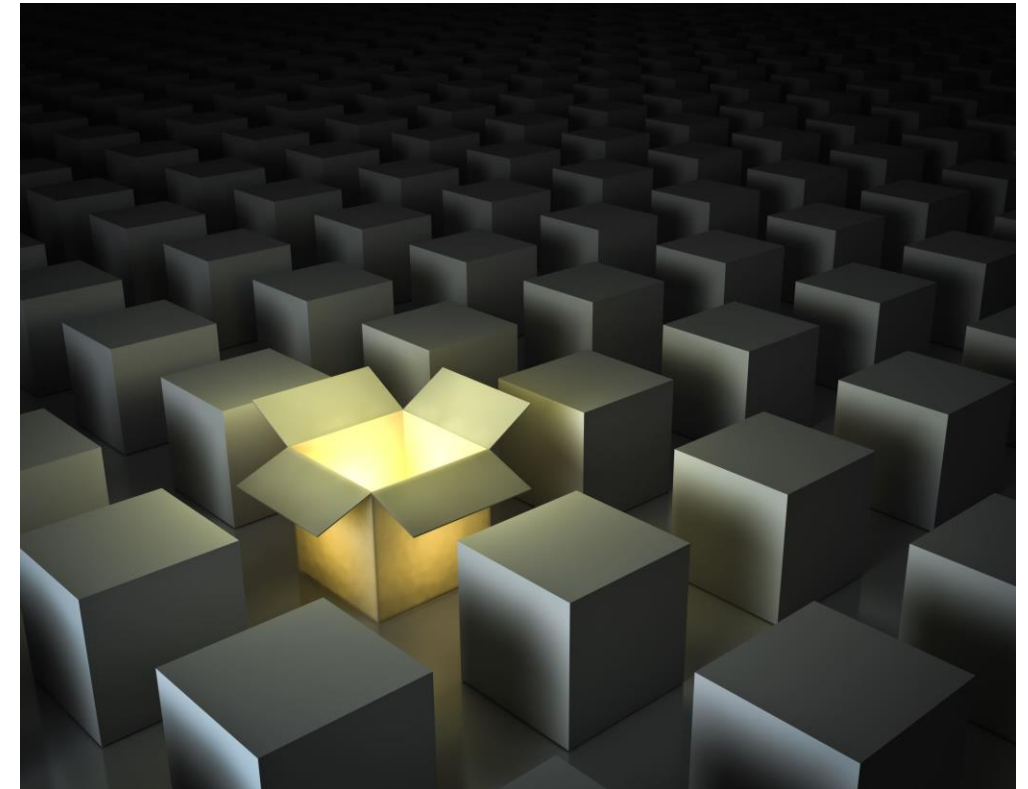
Target market, product-market fit, competition, acquisition

- **Governance & Compliance**

Legal structure, IP, compliance, equity, risk management

- **Traction**

Growth, validation, partnerships, recognition, momentum



Your job is not to pitch. Your job is to reduce uncertainty.

Capital Doesn't Build the Business: It Amplifies It

Traditional timeline (Idea → Exit) still applies, but what matters more:

Strong systems → predictable outcomes → capital attraction

If systems are weak:

- Capital accelerates failure

If systems are strong:

- Capital accelerates growth

You Can Not
Automate a Void

Where Are You — Really?

Not just stage... **system maturity**

- **Idea** → No system yet
- **Pre-seed** → Testing assumptions
- **Seed** → Early repeatability
- **Growth** → Scaling systems
- **Expansion** → Optimizing systems

Capital should match your system maturity — not your ambition.



When Should You Raise Capital?

Raise when:

- You've proven something works
- You can repeat it
- Capital will accelerate — not discover
- Timing matters (market, competition, opportunity)

Raise to scale certainty — not to find it.

Learn the Language: Terms of the Deal

Terms of the Deal | Resources | Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP

<https://www.taftlaw.com/resources/terms-of-the-deal/>



When You Should NOT Raise

Do not raise if:

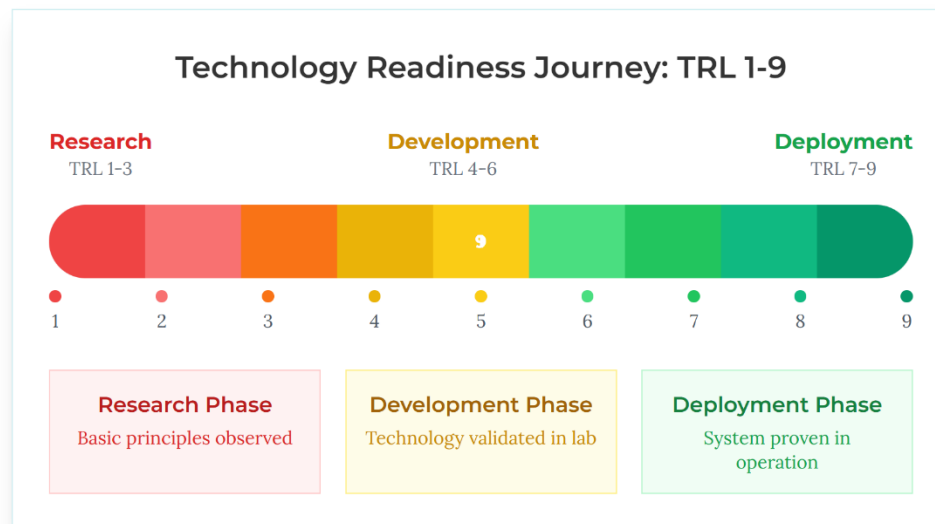
- You don't have product-market fit
- Your process only works because of you
- Your financial model is unclear
- You're chasing validation, not execution

**Capital doesn't fix broken systems.
It exposes them.**

The Benefits of Standardized Assessments

What is Technology Readiness Level (TRL)?

TRL is a systematic measurement system used to assess the maturity level of a particular technology, providing a common understanding of technology status.



Standardized Communication

Provides a common language for discussing technology maturity across organizations, investors, and stakeholders.



Risk Assessment

Helps identify development risks and resource requirements for advancing technology to higher readiness levels.



Investment Decisions

Enables informed decision-making for technology investments, partnerships, and commercialization strategies.

Validate Your Technology Readiness Level

Available as of April 1, 2026

Assess Your Technology Maturity

- ✓ Comprehensive TRL evaluation
- ✓ Identify development risks
- ✓ Guide investment decisions
- ✓ Standardized framework

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Stories & Questions: When it Works and When it Doesn't

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