

Bring in an Entrepreneur — Library Event Guide (Value Lab)

What this is

A simple “guest founder night” that brings a local entrepreneur into the library for a practical talk + Q&A that feels approachable (not intimidating).

Who this is for

- Libraries that already run community talks and want to add entrepreneurship
- Teens, adults, and mixed audiences

What success looks like

Participants leave with: - 3–5 practical lessons about how entrepreneurship actually works - 1 written action they can take in the next 7 days - Optional: a new connection to a local mentor/community member

Quickstart setup (30–60 minutes total)

Guest selection (keep it library-friendly)

Choose someone who is: - Local and relatable - Comfortable with beginners - Willing to share failures and lessons (not just a highlight reel)

Outreach email (copy/paste)

Subject: Invitation to speak at [Library Name] — Entrepreneurship Night

Hi [Name],

I'm [Your Name] from [Library]. We're running a community entrepreneurship night for teens and adults who are exploring ideas and early-stage businesses. Would you be open to a 30–40 minute talk + 15 minutes of Q&A at the library?

We're aiming for practical takeaways: how you started, what was hard, what you learned, and what you'd do differently.

If you're interested, we can share dates and a simple run-of-show.

Thank you,
[Signature]

Materials checklist

- Microphone (optional), projector (optional)
- Timer

- Note-catcher handouts or QR form
 - “No recording without consent” sign (recommended)
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Run of show (60 minutes — default)

Before you start (2 minutes of setup)

- Put the note-catcher on chairs (or display a QR code).
- Decide how you’ll take questions:
 - Option A (best): attendees write questions on paper during the talk; host selects a few.
 - Option B: open mic / raised hands.
- If recording/photos are possible: post “No recording without consent” and say it out loud.
- Quick accessibility check: captions on (if showing anything), microphone ready, seating space for mobility devices.

0–5 min: Welcome + framing

Host script (copy/paste):

“Welcome. Tonight is about making entrepreneurship feel real and accessible. Our guest will share their story—especially the constraints, the mistakes, and the lessons—so everyone leaves with one practical next step.”

Host housekeeping (say this quickly): - “Restrooms are [location]. Please feel free to step out as needed.” - “If you have a question, you can write it down anytime—I’ll collect a few for Q&A.” - “Please don’t record or take close-up photos without the speaker’s consent.”

5–35 min: Guest talk (keep it structured)

Ask the guest to cover: 1) What they built (plain language) 2) The first 3 steps they took 3) The biggest mistake / pivot 4) How they found customers 5) One lesson for beginners

Host tip (makes this work): - Ask the speaker in advance to include 1 “tiny version” story (the smallest first step they took) and 1 customer story (how they found/served an early customer). - Keep this section to ~25–30 minutes so Q&A and reflection don’t get squeezed out. - If the talk runs long, you can cut in with: “I’m going to pause you there so we leave time for Q&A and your best beginner advice.”

35–50 min: Q&A (guided)

Start with 2 warm questions to reduce silence: - “What was your very first ‘tiny version’?” - “What was hardest in the first month?”

Common but powerful questions (copy/paste): - “What surprised you most after you started?” - “What did you try that *didn't* work—and what did you change because of it?” - “What was the very first signal that real people wanted this?” - “How did you get your first customer/user (even if it was small)?” - “What’s a common misconception beginners have about this kind of work?” - “What’s one decision you wish you made earlier?” - “If you had to start again with 5 hours/week, what would you do first?” - “What’s one tool/resource you’d recommend to a complete beginner?” - “What’s one next step someone here could take this week (even without money or a team)?”

Guidelines (helps librarians facilitate): - Keep questions beginner-friendly and specific (avoid “tell us everything about...”). - If someone asks for legal/tax/financial advice, redirect: “We can’t give professional advice here, but you can share what you did and what resources helped.” - If one person is dominating, use: “Let’s take one more question from someone who hasn’t spoken yet.” - If the room is quiet, read 2–3 written questions (or use the list above).

Then open to the room (or read a few submitted questions).

50–60 min: Reflection + close

Have everyone write: - One takeaway I’ll apply: - One action in the next 7 days:

Close script (copy/paste):

“Thank you for coming. The goal is momentum—one small move this week beats big inspiration with no follow-through.”

Run of show (90 minutes — adds interaction)

- 0–10: Welcome + icebreaker
- 10–45: Guest talk
- 45–65: Q&A
- 65–80: Small-group “next step circles”
- 80–90: Share-outs + close

0–10 min: Welcome + icebreaker (optional but recommended)

Purpose: reduce intimidation and make it easier for people to ask questions later.

Host script (copy/paste):

“Quick intro: you don’t need a business or a polished idea to be here. We’re here to learn practical lessons and leave with one small next step.”

Pick one icebreaker (5 minutes): - “One word check-in”: “When you hear ‘entrepreneurship,’ what’s one word that comes to mind?” (Pass is allowed.) - “What I’m curious about”: Name + “I’m curious about _____” (ideas, side

hustles, job change, making something, etc.). - “Skill swap”: “One skill I have is ; *one skill I want to learn is* .”

Facilitation tip: keep it moving—don’t let it become a long round of speeches.

Next step circles (15 minutes)

Goal: help patrons turn inspiration into one concrete next step (without needing a full business plan).

How to set it up (host): - Ask attendees to form groups of 3 near them. (If you have an uneven number: make a group of 2 or 4—still works.) - Give everyone the same structure and keep it moving with a visible timer. - Remind the room: “You can pass if you’d rather listen.”

Host script (copy/paste):

“We’re going to do ‘next step circles.’ In small groups, each person will share one idea and one blocker. The group’s job is to offer *one specific, doable next step*—something you can try in the next 7 days.”

Round format (5 minutes per person, 3 rounds total): - Person A shares:
- Idea (1 sentence) - Who it’s for (1 sentence) - Blocker (choose 1) (1 sentence)
- (2 minutes total) - Clarifying questions (1 minute): group asks up to 2 quick questions. - Suggestions (2 minutes): each other person gives **one** suggestion framed as: - “A tiny version you could try is ” - “**A customer conversation you could have this week is** ” - “A simple way to test that assumption is _____” - Person A commits (15 seconds): writes their 7-day action. - Rotate to Person B, then Person C.

Common blockers (prompt list): - “I don’t know who my customer is.” - “I’m not sure what to build first.” - “I don’t know how to find people to talk to.” - “I’m worried it already exists.” - “I don’t have money/time/a team.”

80–90 min: Share-outs + close (keep it fast)

Option A (fast): each group shares 1 sentence: - “One next step we heard that was strong is _____.”

Option B (slightly deeper): each group shares: - One “7-day action” theme (talk to customers, prototype, research competitors, etc.) - One mindset lesson from the speaker (constraints, iteration, clarity)

Close script (copy/paste):

“Your best next step is the smallest one you’ll actually do. If you wrote a 7-day action tonight, schedule it before you leave.”

Note-catcher (copy/paste)

- What constraint did the guest face?
 - What decision did they make?
 - What happened next?
 - What's one lesson I can apply?
 - My 7-day action:
-

Outcomes to track (library-friendly)

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attendees

- % who completed the “7-day next step” reflection
 - 1–3 anonymized “lesson themes” (optional)
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Ways to thank the speaker (library-friendly)

- Send a same-day thank-you email with 2–3 specific takeaways you heard (shows respect and care).
- Give a handwritten card from staff (and optionally a few attendee notes/quotes, anonymized).
- Offer a small token: library swag, a book, or (if policy allows) a modest gift card/honorarium.
- Share a photo and/or social post only with explicit consent (and offer to tag their business if they want).
- Provide a simple “Speaker appreciation” certificate they can use for their portfolio.
- Make an introduction to 1–2 relevant community partners (only if mutually helpful and permissioned).
- Invite them back for a future format (panel, workshop, office hours) if they enjoyed it.

After the event: keep momentum going (where Value Lab enhances the journey)

Guest talks can spark motivation—but patrons often leave with inspiration and no clear pathway.

Value Lab helps your library turn “great talk” into **continued progress**: - Participants can keep moving immediately with a structured journey that turns lessons into actions and tangible outputs over time. - Libraries can follow this

event with repeatable sessions (drop-in lab, short cohort, showcase) so programming stays consistent even with limited staff time. - Patrons stay on an upward trajectory by continuing to learn, build, and find next opportunities—rather than stopping at the event.