



# The Veterinarian Entrepreneur

*A Manual of Exponential Startups  
for Veterinarians*

DVM & lawyer Sergio Armando Cortina Egea · PhD Bernardo Cortina-Ceballos

# El Veterinario Emprendedor

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Bernardo Cortina-Ceballos, PhD

First edition · 2026

## **The Veterinarian Entrepreneur**

A Manual of **Exponential Startups** for Veterinarians

First edition, 2026.

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# Author's Preface

*It's three in the morning. You're knee-deep in the mud of a Veracruz pasture, flashlight clenched between your teeth, helping a Zebu calf into the world that came badly positioned. At that very hour, in an air-conditioned office, someone who has never smelled a barn scales a server for a hundred thousand users with two clicks, without breaking a sweat. Two worlds that seem never to touch. This book is about why the future belongs to whoever learns to live in both.*

If that scene is yours —or soon will be— this letter is for you.

Dear colleague, whether you're about to graduate or already in practice, here or on the other side of the world:

For years we have prepared you to diagnose a sick animal, to assist a difficult birth, to calculate a ration, and to recognize the signs of a disease before the producer even notices them. You have learned physiology, nutrition, reproduction, animal health, and production. It is extraordinary, deep knowledge. But I want to ask you an uncomfortable question: **what are you going to do with it?**

The traditional answer —open a clinic, take a job at a slaughterhouse or a feed company, or serve the ranches in your region— is honorable and necessary. But there is another answer, one that almost no veterinary school —in Mexico or wherever you study— still teaches you, and one that in the coming decade may mean the difference between being a well-paid technician and being someone who transforms an entire industry: **you can found a startup.**

I'm not talking about «starting a business.» I'm talking about something radically different, with a financial architecture all its own, capable of growing exponentially and of solving —from a single point in the Veracruz tropics— problems that affect millions of animals and families. I'm talking about using your veterinary knowledge —which is scarce, valuable, and hard to replicate— as the raw material of a technology company.

This manual is born of a conviction: **the next great entrepreneur of the field won't be a Silicon Valley programmer who has never touched a cow. It will be you,** who understand the animal, the pasture, and the producer from the inside, and who will now learn to orchestrate technology to multiply that

knowledge. I write to you from Veracruz —which produces more beef than any other state in Mexico— but this holds for any corner of the world where there is livestock and inefficiency. The question is not whether there is opportunity. The question is whether there will be someone ready to seize it. Wherever you are. Let it be you.

*DVM and Lic. Sergio Armando Cortina Egea  
Professor of Livestock Production Systems, FMVZ-UV*

# About the Authors

## DVM and Lic. Sergio Armando Cortina Egea

*The teacher — the domain authority*

For 47 years he has walked each morning into a classroom at the School of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science of the Universidad Veracruzana to do the same thing: train veterinarians. He has taught Biology, Physiology, Anatomy and their labs, Social and Economic Problems of Mexico, and Livestock Resources and Needs; but his home has been, above all, **Livestock Production Systems**, the course where he has watched whole generations of students pass through. In 2026, FESAPAUV formally recognized that career.

From so many years in front of the blackboard a conviction was born: that veterinary knowledge, well used, can transform not only the health of a herd, but the life of whoever possesses it and the economy of their region. This book is the natural extension of his classroom. With it he seeks to reach many more veterinarians —inside and outside Veracruz— to plant in them an idea almost no one offers them: that their degree is not a ceiling, but a lever; that they too can be founders.

## PhD. Bernardo José Cortina Ceballos

*From the lab to the startup — the bridge, made person*

He is, in large part, the thesis of this book made person. A biologist from UABC and a master in Marine Biotechnology from CICESE, he earned his doctorate in Public Health Sciences —with an emphasis on infectious diseases— at the INSP. But his work never fit within a single discipline: he co-directed and programmed **ImmuneDiveRsity**, an open-source tool for analyzing the antibody repertoire; he published in journals such as *Genome Medicine*, *mAbs*, and *PLoS One*; and he built a private biotechnology lab to develop cancer therapies, with several patentable products.

Today he is a founder. He launched his first startup, *MiGaceta*, and is building deep-tech companies: artificial-intelligence models for 3D reconstructions of

astrophysical phenomena and quantum-computing projects. Son of the veterinary teacher who signs these pages, Bernardo embodies the bridge this manual invites you to cross: the one that runs from scientific knowledge to the exponential company.

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*A professor who has trained veterinarians for nearly half a century and a scientist who became a technology entrepreneur. Father and son: together they are, in a single family, the formula this book proposes to you —master your field and turn it into a company with no ceiling.*

## Roadmap: How this manual is organized

This book takes you from mindset to action in **eleven chapters**. The five at the center are the method: an arc of five stations —**see, validate, build, capture, scale**— for turning your knowledge into a company.

1. **Your knowledge is the asset** — why the ceiling is your vision, not your resources.
2. **The one red line** — the non-negotiable rule: stop being a **price-taker**, stop selling *commodity*.
3. **See** — find the opportunity in your own field, where the shared data is worth more than the animal.
4. **Validate** — prove that someone pays **before** you build, with very little money.
5. **Build** — raise the asset, of atoms or of bits, solo or in a team, leveraged with AI.
6. **Capture** — set the moat (physical, digital, brand, or data) so they can't copy you.
7. **Scale** — choose your model —exponential rocket or profitable niche— and how to finance it without falling into debt.
8. **Five tomographies and the map of the territory** — five real cases —living and dead— dissected with the Tomography Method, and where the sector's money flows.
9. **Your first beachhead** — the niche where your domain is unbeatable, and a method to find your own.
10. **Honest objections** — the harshest criticisms of this project, with their answer, unvarnished.
11. **The call** — why this is your moment and what to do on Monday morning.

Each chapter opens with its **objectives** and closes with its **key points**. The words in **color** are clickable and take you to the glossary. And whenever a new technical term appears, a clinical analogy —from

the clinic to the code— translates it into the language you’ve always spoken: that of the animal, the clinic, and the field.

**Taking it as a course, or teaching it as one?** Read it as your **field manual** —the exercises are your project, not exam homework—. At the end of the book is how to make the most of it in the classroom, and the full course lives at [serieemprendedor.com/recursos](http://serieemprendedor.com/recursos).

✓ **This book is a living document: let's improve it together**

No manual is born perfect, least of all one that speaks of a world — AI, markets, the technology of the field— that changes every season. That’s why this is a **living document**: we refine it with you, edition after edition.

It helps us —a great deal— if you let us know about three things. **One: errors.** A fact, a figure, a citation, or a typo that slipped past us; we’d a thousand times rather you correct us than let a wrong number through. **Two: what wasn’t clear.** If an explanation was hard for you, it probably was for another reader too, and knowing it tells us what to rewrite. **Three: examples from your own country, species, or corner of the profession.** This book has Mexican roots but global reach; every case you share with us —from your clinic, your lab, your hive, your herd— makes it more useful for whoever comes after you.

We read it all, correct what needs correcting, and add it to the next version; we keep a **living errata** and, if you wish, your name goes in the acknowledgments. Write to us at [hola@serieemprendedor.com](mailto:hola@serieemprendedor.com) with the subject “Improvements to the book”. Thank you for building this, too, with us.

**And you don’t walk it alone.** Building need not mean doing it in solitude. Behind this book there is a community —the **Founder’s Circle**— where veterinarians, biologists, agronomists, and computer scientists meet, share what they’re building and, when the pieces fit, form a team. Whether you have a partner or not, there are peers there who give you honest criticism and

company so you don't abandon the attempt. We'll be waiting for you at [serieemprededor.com/comunidad](http://serieemprededor.com/comunidad).

And one last thing before we begin: **this book isn't read, it's used**. Treat it as your field manual, not as an exam text —underline it, argue with it and, above all, do the exercises with a real project of your own—. Our goal is not for you to finish it: it's for you to **build**. If a single idea in these pages pushes you to take the first step —validating a hunch, charging for what you know, daring to do more— the book will have done its part. The rest is on you. Let's begin.



# 1 Your knowledge is the asset: why your ceiling is your vision, not your resources

PART I · THE ASSET AND THE ENEMY

*“The land belongs to the one who sweats it, not the one who codes it.”  
— the old paradigm this chapter sets out to topple*

## □ Objectives: From this chapter

- Recognize that your veterinary knowledge —of whatever species and field— is the **asset**, and that the ceiling is set by your **vision**, not your resources.
- Clearly tell a **startup** apart from a micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME).
- Understand why a startup’s revenue **decouples** from its costs.
- Grasp **Metcalf’s Law** and why knowledge, not land, is the new raw material.

On a campus of the Universidad Veracruzana, a veterinarian decided that his domain wasn’t cattle: it was bees. Dr. Sóstenes Rodríguez Dehaibes—a professor at the same faculty where this book was born— turned his knowledge of bee health into a business, built a bee laboratory, and today presides over the national association of veterinarians specializing in bees.<sup>1</sup> No one gave him permission to choose his species. He chose it.

I’m telling you this on the first page for a reason. Maybe your domain isn’t cattle: maybe it’s the small-animal clinic, the diagnostic lab, aquaculture, equines, wildlife, or a drug that only you know how to formulate. It makes absolutely no difference. This book isn’t about cows: it’s about turning what you already know —of whatever species and field— into a business that grows. Tropical livestock will be our worked-through example, because that’s where

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<sup>1</sup>Asociación Nacional de Médicos Veterinarios Especialistas en Abejas (ANMVEA), [anmvea.org.mx](http://anmvea.org.mx); academic profile of Dr. Rodríguez Dehaibes at [uv.mx/personal/sorodriguez](http://uv.mx/personal/sorodriguez).

the waste of value is plain to the naked eye; but the method is yours, wherever you apply it.

And the promise of this chapter, in one sentence: **today the ceiling on what you can build is not money or technology —it’s your creativity and your business vision.**

## 1.1 The conceptual mistake almost everyone makes

There’s a very common mental trap: believing that any business that uses a computer or an app is a «startup.» It isn’t. Digitizing an operation doesn’t turn it into a startup. The real difference isn’t in the software you use, but in your **financial architecture** — in how your money behaves when you grow.

### ★ **Insight: The bakery and the app**

Picture a traditional bakery. If you want to sell twice as much bread, you need nearly twice the flour, twice the bakers and, sooner or later, to rent another shop. Your costs rise **at the same pace** as your sales. That’s **linear** growth.

Now picture an app that computes a herd’s optimal diet from a satellite photo of the pasture. Programming it the first time costs, let’s say, a lot of effort. But serving producer number 2, number 100 or number 100,000 costs **fractions of a cent** in servers. Your sales take off while your costs barely move. That’s **exponential** growth.

### ↳ **From the clinic to the code — growth with a ceiling and growth without one**

Think of it in biological terms. A **low-ceiling** business is like a steer: no matter how much feed you give it, its size tops out at a limit dictated by genetics —there comes a point where it no longer grows, it just fattens. A startup aims to look more like a bacterial culture in a Petri dish with nutrients to spare: one cell splits into two, two into four,

four into eight. The SME (linear) is the steer; the startup (exponential), the Petri dish.<sup>2</sup>

A **startup** is, formally, a human organization designed from day one to create a product or service under conditions of **extreme uncertainty**, in search of a business model that can be **repeated and scaled** massively by leaning on technology. It is not a small version of a big company: it's an experiment designed to find, within a few years, a repeatable way to create value at large scale.

## 1.2 The three curves: where do you set your ceiling?

The difference between a business that stalls and one that takes off can be written with equations —and you don't need to be a mathematician to read them: each letter is a simple idea. A **linear** business grows by **adding**:

$$I(t) = mt + b \quad (1)$$

Read it slowly:  $I$  is your **revenue**;  $t$  is **time**, the years that pass;  $b$  is your **starting point**, what you already earn today; and  $m$  is the **pace**: how much your revenue rises for each year of work. The whole trap lives in  $m$ : it only grows if you **add more inputs** —more hours, more land, more hands—, and that hits a physical limit. And because time  $t$  is **multiplying**, each year adds the **same step**: to earn double, you have to put in double. Effort and reward are bound together, one to one. A **startup** grows another way: by **multiplying**.

$$I(t) = I_0 e^{kt} \quad (2)$$

The same pieces, rearranged:  $I_0$  is your **starting point** (what you earn on day one);  $k$  is your **growth rate**, how fast you multiply; and  $e$  —Euler's constant,  $\approx 2.72$ — is just a fixed number that shows up **whenever** something grows on top of what it already grew, like compound interest: you don't have to compute it. What's decisive is **where time sits**: here  $t$  no longer multiplies, it has moved

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<sup>2</sup>To be fair to the biology: neither the steer grows in a straight line nor the bacteria grow forever —both follow curves that plateau (the logistic curve)—. What matters in the analogy is the contrast of **ceilings**: the steer's is low and rigid; the dish's, sky-high. That's why a startup lives its explosive phase only during a window: you'll see it in "the ten-year question".

**up, to the exponent.** That small change of place changes everything: instead of adding a fixed step, each period **multiplies** what you already had. The difference is not one of degree: it's one of nature.

★ **Insight: add it versus multiply it, with numbers**

Set them both to start at 100, advancing one step per year. The **linear** one always adds the same (+100): 100, 200, 300, 400, 500... The **exponential** one **multiplies** it (here,  $\times 2$  each year): 100, 200, 400, 800, 1,600... Notice the trick: at the first step they **run even** — 200 and 200—, and that's why at the start the exponential seems slow, even disappointing. But two or three steps later it «turns the corner» and there's no way to catch it. Adding takes you **in a straight line**; multiplying takes you **upward, with no ceiling**. That leap —from adding to multiplying— is what this book is after.

So far we've put two **extremes** on the table: the straight line that grows by adding and the curve that grows by multiplying. But the deep question of this chapter isn't "add or multiply", it's **where you set your ceiling** —and to that there aren't two answers, there are three. When the slope  $m$  of the line flattens, you have the worst fate: the **commodity**, an almost horizontal line that goes nowhere —you sell the same thing as anyone, at the price someone else dictates. At the other extreme is the exponential: **no ceiling**. And between the two lives a third path, very real: the **profitable niche**, which starts climbing hard, like the exponential... but settles at a respectable ceiling and stays there. That's why the chart has **three** curves, not two: the commodity at the bottom, the niche in the middle, the startup on top.

The middle one was missing its equation. It's a **logistic**: the exponential, but with a **ceiling** built in.

$$I(t) = \frac{K}{1 + Ae^{-kt}} \quad (3)$$

Don't let its size scare you: to what you already know it adds only **one** new piece.  $K$  is the **ceiling** —the maximum size your brand or your niche manages to capture—;  $k$  is the same **growth rate** as before; and  $A$  just sets **how far below** that ceiling you start. The beauty is in how it behaves: while you're far

from the ceiling, it grows by **multiplying**, almost identical to the exponential; but as it nears  $K$  it **brakes on its own** and settles there —100, 200, 400, 700, 850, 920, 950..., ever closer to the ceiling, without ever crossing it. The only difference from the startup is that  $K$ : the niche **chooses** (or accepts) its ceiling; the exponential bet is to keep  $K$  so high that, in practice, it can't be seen — there's no ceiling in sight.

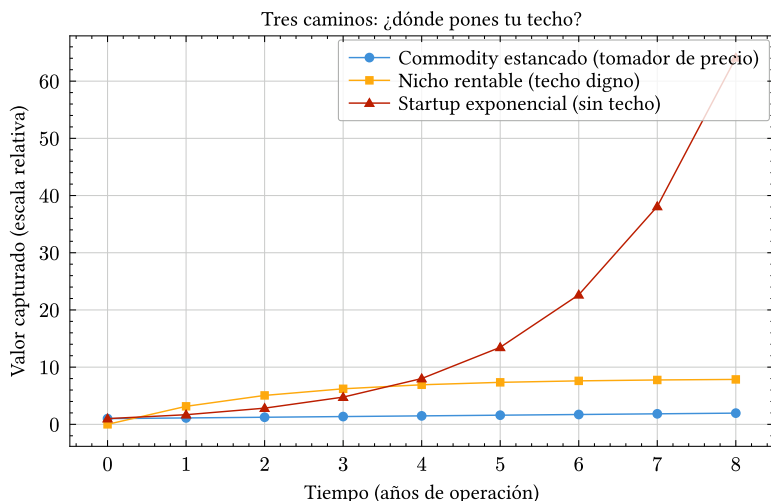


Figura 1: Three paths for your time. At the bottom, flat, the **commodity**: you sell the same thing as anyone at the price someone else dictates and, no matter how many years pass, you never take off —the **price-taker's** trap. In the middle, the **profitable niche**: a business with a brand or differentiation that climbs to a respectable ceiling and settles there; a free and respectable choice. At the top, the **exponential startup**: it starts out even with the niche, but once it «turns the corner» it has no ceiling.

The three curves trace the only decision that truly matters. The **floor** —the commodity, the passive role of **price-taker**— is unacceptable: there you hand your best years to a business that never takes off. From there upward, **you choose your height**. The profitable niche is a worthy destination: there are veterinarians who make a very good living from a brand, a specialized practice or a product of their own, and this book respects them. But its goal —the reason it exists— is to convince you that the top curve, the exponential one, is within your reach if you want it. That's why, when we later put the sector's giants

under the scanner, it won't be to imitate them: it will be to see **where they top out** —and break that ceiling.

What's powerful about the exponential model isn't only that it reaches higher, but that its **costs stay flat** while revenue rises. This is called **decoupling**: your expense line goes almost horizontal while your revenue line takes a parabolic trajectory. That **decoupling** is your best armor against bankruptcy by debt.

It's worth grounding this, because it's the heart of this book. Picture two businesses that start the same day, with the same effort and the same sleepless nights. The first fattens calves: to earn double it needs double of everything — double the pastures, the feed, the labor—, and even so it slams into a biological wall, because an animal grows only as far as its genetics dictate and not a kilo more. It grows by **adding**, and each addition costs more than the last. The second turned its knowledge into a service that runs on software: serving customer number one thousand costs it almost the same as serving the first, and each new customer doesn't drain its capacity —it **multiplies** it. One hauls bricks uphill; the other rolls downhill, picking up speed. The difference wasn't how hard they worked, but which ceiling they slammed into.



**Figura 2:** A steer has a **ceiling**: no matter how well you care for it, its value grows up to a natural limit and there it stops —and if you only sell live cattle at the market price, not even that: you stall. A Petri dish, like a startup, has no top: every cell that divides yields more cells that divide. Between those two extremes there's room for a worthy niche, with a ceiling you decide whether it's enough for you. That leap from the linear to the exponential is the reason your revenue can take off while your costs stay almost flat.

### 1.3 The new raw material: knowledge

In an SME, the raw material is physical: working capital, inventory, labor. In a startup, the raw material is **knowledge, software and intellectual property**. This explains why in high-growth startups the **vast majority of the team** are deep technical and scientific profiles. And here is your hidden advantage as a veterinarian: **you already possess a scarce raw material**. Depending on your field, you know how to read an animal's body condition, calculate a forage balance, read a cytology, design a vaccination protocol or recognize a parasitosis at a glance. That judgment —clinical, zootechnical, laboratory— is exactly the input a tech-based business needs, and that a software engineer neither has nor can buy quickly.

Artificial intelligence is today the newest and most powerful lever for multiplying that judgment —but not the only one—: a brand, a patent, a **designation of origin** or a network of producers also multiply it. AI will get its own chapter in this book; your vision, every one of them.

When knowledge becomes the main input, the most important economic phenomenon of all appears: the **marginal cost** —what it costs you to serve one more customer— tends toward zero. And when that happens, **Metcalf's Law** comes into play.

#### § Definition: Metcalfe's Law

The value of a network grows in proportion to the **square** of the number of its users:

$$V \propto n^2 \quad (4)$$

A network of 2 producers is a curiosity. A network of 10,000 interconnected producers —each one contributing and receiving data on management, prices, health— becomes a platform with disproportionate value, almost impossible to copy. That's why startups chase networks: each new user makes the network more valuable to everyone else.

- **Subtle point: The data moat**

There's a business reason behind that pursuit of a network. Every producer who joins contributes data on forage, health and management that make your predictive model more accurate **for everyone**; and that model, tuned with thousands of tropical herds, is something no competitor can copy by buying servers: they'd have to gather the data one by one, ranch by ranch. That cumulative, irreplicable advantage is called a **moat**: it's not the app that protects you, it's the data that only you have. The «10,000» above is illustrative, not a promise; the principle, though, is real.



**Figura 3:** The value of a network grows with the square of those who use it: each new ranch connected makes your model more accurate **for everyone**, and the mesh grows denser and brighter. That accumulated data —impossible to copy by buying servers— is your true moat: your advantage isn't the app, it's the data that only you have.

### ▲ The ten-year question

A startup lives under this category for about ten years at most. After that, it either reaches maturity and becomes an established company, or it's acquired, or it disappears. It's not a permanent state: it's a stage of intense search. This frees you from a paralyzing idea —«I have to found the company of my whole life»— and replaces it with a healthier one: «I have to find, fast and cheap, a model that works.»

Parameter	Exponential startup	Traditional SME
Revenue equation	Exponential: $I = I_0 e^{kt}$	Linear: $I = mt + b$
Raw material	Knowledge, software, intellectual property	Capital, physical assets, labor
Marginal cost	Tends toward zero ( $\rightarrow 0$ )	Persistent, rises with scale
Team	Mostly technical/scientific specialists	Operational, hands-on labor
Financing	Venture capital, convertible notes	Bank credit, savings, subsidies
Market	Global or regional from day one	Local, with physical limits
Founder's time	The same hours and years, but with an <b>unlimited</b> revenue ceiling	The same hours and years, with a <b>fixed, low</b> ceiling

Table 1: The differences aren't of size, but of nature. A startup and an SME are different machines by design.

### ✓ Is your idea really a startup? Three quick tests

Before going on, put any idea through three questions. If it doesn't pass all three, it may be a good business, but not an **exponential startup**:

1. **Extreme uncertainty:** are you searching for a model no one has confirmed yet, or copying one that already exists? (One more clinic is a known model.)
2. **Repeatable:** can what you do for the first customer be repeated almost identically for customer one thousand?
3. **Scalable:** can you serve many more without adding costs in the same proportion?

Uncertainty, repeatability and scale: that's the signature of a startup.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.4 Your scarcest resource isn't money: it's time

There's an argument few people will tell you, and I want you to understand it before this chapter closes. Setting up a veterinary clinic, or raising a few head of cattle, will cost you early mornings, weekends, years of sustained effort. Building a livestock startup will cost you... **exactly the same**. The same early mornings, the same weekends, the same years. The difference isn't in how much time you invest, but in **what kind of machine you're feeding with that time**.

### ★ Golden Rule: The opportunity-cost question

The time you invest in a linear business —a clinic, a small herd— is **the same time** you would invest in a startup with the potential to grow exponentially. In both cases you hand over your best years, your energy and your talent. But one has a low, fixed ceiling, while the other has no ceiling.

So the real question isn't «do I have enough money?» —you've already seen that to start you need almost none. The question is: **with your time, which is your most valuable and irretrievable resource,**

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<sup>3</sup>The three conditions sum up Steve Blank and Eric Ries's definition of a startup —the search for a repeatable and scalable business model under extreme uncertainty—; they are not an original criterion of this manual.

**what would you rather build: a machine that grows by adding, or one that grows by multiplying?**

Let it be clear: there's nothing wrong with a clinic or a well-run ranch. They are worthy paths, and your country —whichever it is— needs them. But if you're going to hand over your time either way —and you will hand it over—, it's worth pausing to **consciously** choose the vehicle, instead of climbing onto the first one that comes along out of habit or fear.

## 1.5 From diagnosis to design: classify your own idea

No competent veterinarian prescribes a dewormer because the animal «looks thin.» First you observe, then you reason from the sign to the cause, and only then do you decide. That same clinical discipline —not treating the symptom, but diagnosing the nature of the problem— is the one almost no one applies to their own business idea. People fall in love with the **appearance** («I'm going to make an app», «I'm going to use AI») and skip the underlying diagnosis: what kind of machine am I about to build? An idea with the face of technology can be, underneath, a thoroughly linear business —and that isn't cured by adding a screen.

So before turning the page, become for a moment the clinician of your own idea. It's not enough to **want** it to be exponential; you have to examine it honestly, the way you'd examine a patient who can't lie to you.

### ⇒ What would you do?

Across this book you'll make **four decisions** about your business — and respect a **single rule** that's non-negotiable. Start examining your idea along these axes, as honest as you'd be reading a radiograph:

1. **Your field.** In what area of your domain will you play? The herd, the small-animal clinic, the lab, the hive, the water... wherever you have a decisive advantage (the SEE station).

2. **Your model.** Do you build it alone —backed by technology—, with family, in a cooperative or with cofounders? (the BUILD station).
3. **Your form.** Will your asset be digital, physical, or both? A piece of software, a branded product, a **designation of origin**, a biodigester (also BUILD).
4. **Your ambition.** A profitable niche with a respectable ceiling, or an exponential bet with no ceiling? Both are valid; the book pushes you to believe the second is within your reach (the SCALE station).

And the non-negotiable rule, the one that runs through all four: **in whatever choice you make, don't stay a price-taker.** If you end up selling the same thing as anyone at the price someone else dictates, you failed —even if you grow. That's exactly what the next chapter is about.

Pay special attention to **your model** and **your ambition**, because together they hide the distinction that's hardest to see. If the business stops the day you stop tending it, you didn't found a company: you **self-employed** —you created a job with a single employee, you. There's nothing dishonorable about it, but it's linear by design: your ceiling is your own working day, because the business **is your hands**. A startup is built the other way around, so the model keeps working even when you're not running it. That's almost the entire mental move of this chapter.

### 🕒 Key points: From Chapter 1

- Your veterinary knowledge —of whatever species and field— is an **asset** convertible into a business; the ceiling is set by your **vision**, not your resources.
- A **startup** is not a small company: it's a machine with a different financial architecture, one that grows exponentially ( $I = I_0 e^{kt}$ ) with costs that **decouple** from revenue.
- There are **three curves**: the stalled **commodity** (the floor, unacceptable), the **profitable niche** with a respectable ceiling (a free

choice) and the **exponential startup** with no ceiling (the north star of this book).

- The raw material is no longer land, it's **knowledge**, and you already have it; **Metcalf's Law** ( $V \propto n^2$ ) explains why networked platforms capture enormous value.
- You'll make **four decisions** —field, model, form and ambition— and respect a **single rule**: don't stay a **price-taker**.