Cofinder Quiz: How We Pair Founders

A methodology whitepaper on the research behind our founder assessment, how scores are calculated, and how our team uses them to recommend introductions.

> *Most founders pair up on chemistry and break up on conflict. Cofinder Quiz pairs on complementary strengths and shared values: the same compass, different superpowers.*

1. The problem we are solving

Founder relationships are one of the most common sources of early-stage failure. In a study of venture capitalists' portfolio companies, Gorman and Sahlman (1989) found that investors most often attributed company failure to problems with senior management rather than to markets or products. Wasserman's (2012) research on roughly 10,000 founders documents how early, unexamined decisions about who to found with, how to split roles and how to share control create the conflicts that later break teams apart.

At the same time, founders tend to choose partners who resemble them. Ruef, Aldrich and Carter (2003) showed that founding teams form strongly along lines of similarity (homophily) and existing social ties, rather than around the skills the venture needs. The result is teams that are comfortable but lopsided: two product people with no sales owner, or two visionaries with no one running operations.

2. Our core principle: the two kinds of fit

Organizational psychology distinguishes two kinds of person-to-person fit (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005):

Kind of fit	What it means	Where Cofinder looks for it
Supplementary fit (similarity)	People share values, goals and standards.	Ranked non-negotiable values, risk appetite, ambition and partnership expectations.
Complementary fit (difference)	Each person supplies what the other lacks.	Founder type, and the gap between what you can do and what you want to own.

Kristof-Brown et al.'s meta-analysis of 172 studies links good fit with higher satisfaction, commitment and lower intention to leave. Cofinder applies this logic to cofounders: **match on values, complement on roles.**

3. The six founder types

Team-role research shows that effective teams contain distinct, complementary roles rather than many copies of one profile (Belbin, 1981). Practitioner work on leadership pairs, especially the Visionary-Integrator model (Wickman & Winters, 2015), is widely used by operators to divide founder responsibilities. Cofinder's six types are our own synthesis of these ideas for early-stage ventures; they are not a reproduction of Belbin's or Wickman's instruments.

Type	Core orientation	Typical complement
Visionary	Direction, story, new markets	Integrator or Builder
Integrator	Priorities, owners, execution rhythm	Visionary or Catalyst
Builder	Prototyping and shipping	Catalyst or Steward
Catalyst	Relationships, partnerships, sales	Builder or Architect
Architect	Scalable systems and process	Visionary or Catalyst
Steward	Risk, finance, culture, durability	Visionary or Builder

4. What the assessment measures

The pilot assessment has 58 items across eight sections (orientation, capabilities, preferences, collaboration, learning, risk, partnership readiness and real-world scenarios), plus a values-ranking exercise. It uses three kinds of evidence:

a) Self-report statements. Five-point agree/disagree items (Likert, 1932). Some items are reverse-worded so that agreeing with everything does not inflate scores.

b) Scenario choices. Forced-choice dilemmas (for example, launch now vs. finish a security review). Forced choices reduce the tendency to describe oneself in a flattering way (Paulhus, 1991) and show what a founder prioritizes under pressure.

c) Can-do vs. want-to-own. For eight business areas (sales, product, finance, people, operations, marketing, partnerships, fundraising) we ask separately whether you are good at it and whether you want to own it. A strong partner fills the areas you are able to do but do not want to carry.

d) Ranked values. Founders pick and rank their top five from a fixed list. Ranking forces trade-offs, an approach rooted in Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz's (1992) theory of basic human values, which shows that values guide decisions most when they conflict.

5. How scores are calculated

Scoring is deliberately simple and transparent so it can be explained to any attendee:

Step	Rule
Agree/disagree items	An answer of 1-5 becomes 0, 25, 50, 75 or 100. Reverse-worded items are flipped first.
Scenario choices	Each choice adds one 100-point observation to the trait it represents.
Trait score	The average of all observations for that trait (0-100). Unanswered items are skipped, never guessed.
Founder type	Your highest orientation score is your primary type; the second highest is your secondary type.
Skills map	Each business area shows two separate numbers: capability and desire to own.
Values	Stored in your ranked order of five.

Scores are calculated on our server from your answers; attendees cannot edit their own results. A score is a summary of your answers, not a percentile ranking against other people.

6. How introductions are recommended

For the Summit, our team uses a matchmaking tool that reviews attendees' portal profiles (what they need, what they bring, industries, experience, summit goal) together with their Cofinder Quiz results. An AI model drafts a ranked shortlist of up to ten people, each with a short written reason. **Every recommendation is reviewed by a person on our team** before it is shared, and attendees always choose whom they meet. The tool's guidance is the principle above: shared values, complementary types and skills, and a credible fit between one person's needs and another's offers.

We also monitor the overall room, tracking the balance of founder types, experience levels and summit goals (for example, people with ideas vs. operators looking for a venture) so that every attendee has realistic complementary matches available.

7. Limits and honest caveats

Cofinder Quiz is a **pilot**. It is grounded in established research, but the instrument itself has not yet been independently validated for reliability or for predicting venture outcomes, as professional testing standards would require (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014). It should start better conversations, not replace judgment, references or due diligence. It is not a psychological test or a hiring tool.

Our validation roadmap: (1) measure internal consistency of each trait scale once enough attendees have completed it; (2) check whether attendees agree their type describes them; (3) follow up with matched pairs after the Summit to learn which recommendations led to working partnerships; (4) refine items and weights based on that evidence and publish the changes.

8. Questions to ask any potential cofounder

- What would make you walk away from this company in year two?
- Which tasks do you secretly hope I will take off your plate?
- How do we decide when we disagree and neither of us will budge?
- How much personal money and time can you risk, and for how long?
- What does success look like for you in five years: lifestyle, scale or exit?
- How should equity and titles work if one of us contributes more early on?
- Who has the final say on product? On money? On hiring?
- How do you behave when you are stressed, and how should I respond?
- What did you learn from your last partnership or team that did not work?
- What would a fair way to part ways look like if we needed to?

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Appendix: When cofounders share a founder type

Cofinder Quiz favors complement, but two people with the same primary type can build very well together. The tool does not treat them as copies. It explains a same-type pair in three layers.

1. Shared strength (supplementary fit)

Similar values and working styles build trust and speed early decisions (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Ruef et al., 2003). Two Builders, for example, share a bias for action and rarely stall in debate.

2. Different secondary types and skills

Founders with the same primary type usually differ in their secondary type and in the skills map: what each *can* do versus what each *wants to own*. These differences show the natural split of work.

3. Shared blind spots

The risk of a same-type pair is that both neglect the same work (Wasserman, 2012). The tool points to the lowest orientation scores the pair has in common and asks who will cover them on purpose.

Example: two Builders

	Founder A	Founder B
Primary type	Builder	Builder
Secondary type	Catalyst	Architect
Wants to own	Sales, partnerships	Product, operations
Natural split	Customers and deals	Product and systems
Shared gap	Stewardship: cash, contracts, legal risk	Same

Questions for a same-type pair

- Which parts of the work does each of us want to own, and which are we both avoiding?
- Who makes the final call when we both want the same area?
- Who covers our shared gap, or who will we hire or partner with to cover it?
- How will we avoid moving fast in the same direction without a check?

Same-type pairs are reviewed by the Cofinder team like every other match; the tool supports the conversation and does not predict success.