# BasePay Strategic Risk Assessment

Converted from the provided memo text

Looking at BasePay as it exists today, the biggest risk is not the code, Stripe, Supabase, maps, or AI. The biggest risk is that you may be solving a problem that users do not care enough about to change their behavior for.

## 1. Your hardest problem is data acquisition, not software

**BasePay only becomes valuable if:**

- Wage data is accurate
- Benefit data is accurate
- Reviews are accurate
- Coverage is broad

But you're launching with none of those.

**Think about the chicken-and-egg problem:**

Users won't contribute because there isn't enough data.

There isn't enough data because users won't contribute.

This is where most community-driven marketplaces die.

**Red flag:**

You currently depend on user submissions to create the value proposition.

That's the same trap that killed thousands of review sites, salary sites, and local community apps.

## 2. Why would someone pay $59/year?

This is the question investors, users, and competitors will ask.

**Current user value:**

See nearby jobs

See pay

See benefits

Read reviews

**Most people can already do some version of that on:**

- Indeed
- Glassdoor
- LinkedIn

**The question isn't:**

> *"Is BasePay useful?"*

**The question is:**

> *"Is BasePay 10x better?"*

Right now I don't think it is.

The map is visually different.

But visual differences don't create businesses.

Information advantages create businesses.

## 3. You're targeting users with very little money

This is a massive strategic issue.

**Your target customer:**

- Fast food worker
- Retail worker
- Grocery worker
- Entry-level employee
- Student

Those are exactly the people least likely to pay subscriptions.

You have chosen one of the hardest customer groups to monetize.

**Compare:**

Software engineers pay for tools

Recruiters pay for tools

Salespeople pay for tools

Entry-level workers often won't.

**Many users will simply:**

- Open app
- Look up wages
- Leave forever

That may be useful, but it is not necessarily a business.

## 4. Your biggest competitor is not Indeed

Your biggest competitor is Google.

**A user asks:**

> *"What's the highest paying Starbucks near me?"*

**In the future:**

AI search engines will answer that instantly.

No app install.

No account.

No subscription.

You need a moat that survives AI.

Right now most of your information could eventually become an AI search query.

## 5. Reviews create legal risk

This is a bigger problem than most founders realize.

**Imagine:**

> *"Manager sexually harassed me."*
>
> *"Store commits wage theft."*
>
> *"Owner is racist."*

You now host accusations.

Even if true.

Even if anonymous.

You will need moderation systems eventually.

Otherwise businesses may complain, demand removals, or create headaches.

Not impossible.

Just expensive.

## 6. Employers may hate you

This is simultaneously a risk and an opportunity.

**You are exposing:**

- Wages
- Reviews
- Benefits
- Comparisons

Some employers will love that. Many will not.

Particularly low-paying employers.

**You should expect:**

- Complaints
- Requests for removal
- Threats
- Attempts to manipulate reviews

Eventually.

## 7. Data quality can collapse surprisingly fast

**Imagine a business has:**

1 real wage submission

**Then:**

2 fake submissions

Now your averages are wrong.

Users stop trusting data.

The entire value proposition is trust.

Trust is very difficult to earn and very easy to lose.

## 8. You're focusing on features before proving demand

**Looking through your roadmap, I see:**

- Premium
- Saved searches
- Student plan
- Alerts
- Interview prep
- Resume help

- Analytics
- Benefits
- Reviews

That's a lot.

**The danger:**

You build 100 features before confirming users desperately want feature #1.

A common founder mistake is optimizing a product nobody needs.

## 9. Maps may not actually be the best interface

This is a subtle but important point.

You love the map. I understand why. It feels unique. But ask: How do users actually job hunt?

**Usually:**

Highest pay

Closest commute

Best benefits

**That is often better represented by:**

- Pay
- Distance
- Company

not a map.

The map may be your branding.

It may not be your strongest UX.

## 10. The real opportunity may be different than you think

The strongest thing about BasePay isn't jobs.

It's compensation transparency.

That's the truly interesting piece.

**If I were attacking this market from scratch, I'd probably focus on:**

> *"Find the highest-paying entry-level employers within 15 minutes of me."*

**Not:**

> *"Map of jobs."*

One is a problem.

The other is a feature.

## What I would be most worried about

**In order:**

### 1. Data acquisition

Without data, nothing else matters.

### 2. Retention

Will anyone return after day one?

### 3. Trust

Can users believe the wage numbers?

### 4. Monetization

Can entry-level workers actually be converted into paying subscribers?

### 5. AI disruption

Can ChatGPT, Google, or future assistants answer the same question instantly?

## What would make me more optimistic

**If you can prove one thing:**

Users are actively submitting wages because they want compensation transparency.

If people willingly contribute wage information, then you might be building a network-effect business.

If they don't, then you're essentially building a prettier job board, and job boards are an extremely difficult market because you're competing with companies that already have billions of dollars, millions of listings, and decades of brand recognition.

That is the question I would try to answer before adding many more features.