



GET MORE CLARITY:

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP
ADVICE FROM EXPERIENCED
ENTREPRENEURS

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A GUIDE FOR YOU

From Silicon Valley to Atlantic Canada, and all the way to Dubai, one thing is certain: the best advice comes from those who have been there and done it before. The real, experienced entrepreneurs with valuable stories to tell of learnings, successes and failures.

We put out a call to entrepreneurs around the globe, asking you for your best startup advice - and we have been truly overwhelmed by the response. The volume, diversity, and quality of the submissions that we received from founders has proven (once again) that startup founders are some of the most creative, passionate, and helpful people you can find.

After days spent combing through your submissions, we have narrowed it down to the top 100 submissions. Covering everything from bootstrapping to product launches, this guide will be a landmark resource for new entrepreneurs for years to come.

Starting, launching and growing a business is not easy, and the best way to be successful is to get advice from those who have been there before. Real entrepreneurs with real experience and real advice.

So for all the entrepreneurs out there making it happen each and every day - this one is for you. It's our hope that this guide leaves you inspired, informed, and ready to take on whatever task or project lies ahead.

Enjoy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Martell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dan Martell
CEO & Founder
Clarity

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STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

CUSTOMER ACQUISITION

“ Business goes where it is wanted. Business stays where it is appreciated. Business flourishes where it is nurtured.



Howard H. Thaw

Business Evolutionist - Fixer



“Create advocates and mobilize them. That is the way to market dominance.”

- **Mark Organ** @markorgan

“If you become the doctor of your customers, they’ll become marketers of your business. It’s that simple - solve their actual pain and you won’t have to spend a dime in marketing.”

- **Adeel Vanthaliwala** @adeelv

“You should get the market in, not the product out! Understand the needs of your potential customers and address them in your marketing campaigns and biz dev meetings. You should know what pain you solve for your customers or which need you satisfy. Tell them you have the solution for their need or pain and they will look for you.”

- **Gaia Costantino** @earthgaia88

“Have passion about what you’re selling, or sell something else. Don’t fake it.”

- **Jordan Coeyman** @acoyfellow

“It’s okay to have a long-term goal of wanting to help a wide range of people. It’s important to realize, however, that often, trying to help all of them up front isn’t an efficient customer acquisition approach. Start with a specialized product, on the most focused niche within the larger group that you want to reach. The group that has the biggest pain as a result of the problem you’re trying to solve. Build your product and trust for your brand there. Then expand to other niches within that larger group until eventually, you’ll be helping all of the people that you originally envisioned.”

- **David Spinks** @thecmgr

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STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

“ Building a company is like a woman who is in labor for many, many hours. You push, you rest, you push, you rest, but at the end of the day something great comes from your efforts -- a new idea, a new company, something people want. You got it done because you realized all of the effort, like a pregnant woman, was worth the end result: another life with the potential to bring something great to the world.



Andrew Mastrandonas

Entrepreneur and Co-Founder
of World Makers Inc.



“Whenever you have a rough time in your startup, read the biographies of great achievers and you will know that every single one of them went to the rock bottom before they saw the signs of success. So persevere, work hard and enjoy the roller coaster!”

- **Abdul Munda** @amunda

“One of the most important and powerful tools every entrepreneur possesses is their attitude. How we respond to opportunities and challenges, wins and losses, ups and downs plays a tremendous role in whether we succeed or fail.”

- **Ian Yates** @iwyates

“Trust is everything. When I reflect back on our journey here at OneLobby, it’s clear to me that everything evolves around this one simple fact: building trust with your customers, your team and your investors is paramount to success. Trust with customers is not given, it’s earned. Listen early and often to your customers. They will guide your business to success. In order to grow your business quickly, you need to hire and surround yourself with people you trust. In the early stages, everyone plays a crucial role. Productivity increases dramatically when you know your team will deliver on their end, so you can focus on yours.”

- **Jason Misener** @J_misener

“By all means, push out with your premature version of your product or service as early as possible. Customers see your product or service from a totally different angle, and are keen to provide you with feedback. Identify those early adopters who overcome the hurdles of your buggy and unstable version and contact them personally. Treat them as VIPs. They truly deserve it. Look at this as one of your most valuable customer acquisition channels (AARRR).”

- **Michael Zino** @michaelzino

“Hard work isn’t a competitive advantage, it’s a forgone conclusion.”

- **Victoria MacLean** @ToriMacLean

“Don’t fall into the trap of confusing activity for achievement. Pause during your day and ask: ‘Is this helping us build sh*t or sell sh*t?’ If the answer is no, then you’re working on the wrong things.”

- **Christian MacLean** @FourSlice

“If you were going to sell your business in five years, how would you describe it? What would be its value? Why would someone want to buy it? Now, build your business.”

- **Joyce Fredericks** @inbodytraining

“Learn fast. Test your assumptions. Know thy customer.”

- **Dan Stone** @stonemit

“Know what you get yourself into. Don’t be naive. Go learn something. Soak in your failures. Test often. Iterate all the time. Dream about it. Iterate some more. Convince them to give you funding. Freak out because you got funding. Iterate some more. Stay hungry even if it’s tempting not to. Stay in the ‘let’s build this startup’ frame of mind. You’re just getting started. Entrepreneurship isn’t for everyone. Not even for entrepreneurs.”

- **Eyal Toledano** @EyalToledano

“Work for 5 years like no one else will and you will live the rest of your life like no one else can. As an entrepreneur, it truly is all about that type of hustle. Know that it takes determination, hard work, sacrifice - basically a very strong work ethic in order to be successful. Opportunity recognition is also a key element of success. And know you will make mistakes. The difference between an entrepreneur and an average person is that entrepreneurs call these ‘learning curves’. It’s about adopting the mindset of perpetual learning, which allows your mistakes to motivate you to improve rather than discourage you.”

- **Monica Rivera** @monicaBMH

“Starting is hard, and determining where to start may be the toughest task of all. I frequently encounter people who have good ideas, but no idea how to get them moving - and this is when they often give up. My advice is simply to start, and accept that where you start will likely be wrong, but at least you started. Then take the second step, and third. And accept that these may not be correct either, but you are moving! If you have to go back and re-do or fix some steps along the way, it is OK because you started which is much more than most people with ideas.”

- **Sunny McGaw** @EdithLeaver

“When you start a company, burn your ships and never look back. Don’t give yourself any option but to move forward to build a great company. You will succeed because life rewards and reveres those who persevere.”

- **Adeel Vanthaliawal** @adeelv

“Don’t take rejection personally. Think of everyone who slams a door in your face, whether it is an investor or a customer, as saving you valuable time. It’s a quick no! Move on to the next house, rinse and repeat.”

- **Jordan Smith** @JordanYFC

“As an entrepreneur, you need to embody the perfect balance of patience and speed. Patience to get it right, speed to get it done fast.”

- **Jonathan Kochis** @jonathankochis

“Beware of ‘witches’ broom missions’ (think: Oz in the Wizard of Oz) from prospective investors. Your job is to ruthlessly gut check ALL the ideas people give you. Only execute on the ones you would execute on whether or not anyone told you ‘they would invest if....’ you did x, y and z.”

- **Laura Fitton** @pistachio

“Successful entrepreneurs only surround themselves with hard working, high integrity people. Find co-founders, employees and mentors that are highly skilled and knowledgeable in areas where you are not.”

- **Jonah Lupton** @JonahLupton

“Don’t halfass a dozen ideas. Pick one and kick ass instead!”

- **Devesh Dwivedi** @deveshd

“Persistence and continuous learning together is the only thing you need to do. Improve and keep going!”

- **Sean Fahey** @VidCruiter

“Step number one is getting over the hurdle of fear that, ‘I might look stupid’. Once you are able to face that, you’ll move much faster in moving your company / vision forward. Being uncomfortable is one of the most common feelings you will have...get used to it and embrace it. It’s actually where you need to stay.”

- **Robert Armstrong** @REAIV

“Song lyrics, but I use it in the context of entrepreneurial motivation: ‘The first step is the one you believe in, the second one might be profound’ - Shinedown, I’ll Follow You.”

- **Andrew Cairns** @andrewcairns

“The best thing you can do if you want to become an entrepreneur is just share your ideas with people. Few people can execute on a great idea that you had without you and, contrary to popular belief, ideas are rarely stolen. Instead, they are collaborated on, fleshed out, and brought to life.”

- **Ryan Paugh** @ryanpaugh

“Whether or not you succeed is a decision, not a circumstance.”

- **Paul DeJoe** @PDEJOE

“Stick with it! It takes time for momentum to occur and for traction to take place. Plan for this and have systems in place to handle the periods of slow growth.”

- **Jeff McIntosh** @jrsmcintosh

“Every entrepreneur is different, every path is different. Don’t imitate others, but create your own path, your own way, your own destiny. The goal is yours, so don’t take someone else’s path to it.”

- **Faisal Abid** @FaisalAbid

“When launching a new product or service, you need to focus on doing one thing really, really well and then expanding out. Novices try to build out everything too quickly, and get their offering diluted.”

- **Jeff Goldenberg** @jeff_goldenberg

“Don’t do something for the money, do it ‘cuz it makes your heart beat fast. Success comes from following your passion. Success will come to you if you do the work -- good work for the world. Find the loophole in your desired marketplace, and then do it uniquely.”

- **Erica Diamond** @EricaDiamond

“As an entrepreneur, you do not need to be fearless, you need to calculate your risks. Estimate your personal downside. If you can live with it, then give it all you’ve got. If you can’t handle the risks, then it’s time to go back to the drawing board.”

- **Lalit Sarna** @lalitSarna

“Doubt is born out of fatigue and loneliness, and there is a lot of both when you are running a startup.”

- **Mike McDerment** @MikeMcDerment

“Coworking, a supportive spouse, passion, bite-sized to-do lists and getting your customers in the feedback loop are the best ways to bootstrap away the bootstrapping blues.”

- **Bradley Joyce** @bradleyjoyce

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STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

DESIGN

“ Design is more important than technology in most consumer applications.



Dave McClure

Founding Partner at 500 Startups



“Always remember that less is more. That is what your design should be.”

- **Salman Aslam** @salmanamughal

“Don’t worry about people stealing your design work. Worry about the day they stop.”

- **Jeffrey Zeldman** @zeldman

“Design is a career where you learn creative decision making.”

- **Biz Stone** @biz

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STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

INNOVATION



When choosing a startup idea, the ones that scare the crap out of you in their magnitude are the ones you want to take note of.



Andrew Cross

Co-Founder of GooseChase,
alumni of VeloCity & Startup Chile.



“If you have a great idea, don’t sit on it. Try to reach out to mentors and experts and ask for advice. Be certain, though, that your idea has business potential. There is a clear scale that goes from business to technology innovations to apps. Try to aim somewhere between business and technology innovations, those have the most potential.”

- **Alex Martin** @AMartin2222

“Do not be afraid of competition, as competitors signal that a market opportunity exists. If you find there are no competitors in your market, it is safe to assume on the balance of probabilities that demand may be weak or non-existent. Unless of course you are a true visionary in the Steve Jobs mold!”

- **Alan Gleeson** @AlanGleeson

“While focusing on the finish line, don’t forget to enjoy the journey.”

- **Hesham Fahim** @ampeeza

“Embrace criticism and ask for it. It’s not always easy to take, but you’ll be glad you did.”

- **Ryan Hoover** @rrhoover

“Don’t rush. Don’t rush. Don’t rush. When it comes to finding co-founders, take your time. When it comes to nailing the idea, take your time. When it comes to funding, take your time. Sometimes we mistake action with progress. And it is lonely sitting there all by your (Type A) self, wondering what you should do next. Do whatever you want (eat, go for a run, ping a friend, get depressed), but don’t let the world tell you that you should have figured it out already. If the time has not come, accept the fact that the time has not come.”

- **Nazila Alasti** @nazilaherself

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

LEADERSHIP

“ As you grow, be a pioneer into new areas without spreading yourself too thin. Think like an energy astronaut, leaping into new space while ripping the buttons off of your shirt and letting out war cries. And then bring your gigantic ideas back to homebase with your team and think about what practical conditions must hold true for your vision to be executed and made possible. Get the team aligned by being willing to let the ideas you treasure most be ripped open on the examining table and then stitched back together with precision into a wholly new form.



Jason Lankow

Data Visualization, Infographic Design,
Content Marketing, Startups



“People think being CEO is all bright lights and glamour. They don’t realize that being CEO is working 14 hours a day, every day for three years; waking up at 2 a.m. with your heart pounding, wondering how you are going to make payroll; getting yelled at by your Board for not bringing in that next round fast enough, but still convincing your team that the Board is 100% behind the company; slogging through yet another investor pitch or sales call when you can see on their face that they just don’t get it...yet you keep going. That’s why you are the CEO - not for the bright lights and glamour, but because you hate to lose.”

- **Lyssa Neel** @lyssaneel

“Always make ‘giving back’ a priority, even if you’re just starting out. Yes, you’re incredibly busy building your new venture, but taking the time to give back is an invaluable way to build relationships, raise your profile in your local community, and even invest in your business’s future success.”

- **Kathleen Prasad** @ARS_animalreiki

“We all make mistakes. When it happens, be honest with yourself (and your team) that you messed up. Correct quickly. Learn from it. Don’t ever repeat. The best startup life lessons I’ve learned are those from my own mistakes.”

- **Jeff Thompson** @thomjeff

“You need to love what you do, but make sure your whole team does as well.”

- **Matthew Gardner** @ThatMattGardner

“Find your passion pit. That deep feeling in your gut that makes you feel thrilled to be you, and embrace it. You don’t need to be a leader to everyone. You can only lead those who want to follow you, so decide what kinds of people you want to follow you.”

- **Jordan Coeyman** @acoyefellow

“Want to avoid failures in the future? Learn about post-mortems and incorporate them into your company culture early. Whenever something goes wrong, gather the team together and do not point fingers. Instead, calmly discuss what happened, why it happened, and what action could be taken or processes added to avoid it in the future.”

- **Cass Phillipps** @WebWallflower

“Don’t be a martyr. If you were to get hit by a bus, make sure your company can survive beyond you. If it can’t, then you’ve failed as a leader. While hustle, drive, determination and a kick ass work ethic are key to being successful, acting like a superhero who is the only one capable of saving the day isn’t helping anyone. Find team members that are smarter than you and have strengths that compensate for your weaknesses and complement your strengths. Then delegate and give them autonomy. It will only make your company stronger.”

- **Caitlin MacGregor** @caitmactregor

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

MARKETING

“ Start your marketing from day 1. As your product is developing and you are gaining traction, connect with influencers who can not only share your content and product, but who will also give you real feedback.



John Doherty

Online Marketer at Distilled



“Building a scalable marketing channel is a heck of a lot easier when your product is built to fit a specific pain point in the market. Too many entrepreneurs blame Channel X for not performing when, in reality, it’s their product that’s not yet market ready. P.S. Pricing the product with online marketing channels (a.k.a. user acquisition) in mind is a nice-to-have. Eg. if Product X sells for X, X % of revenue can go to affiliates because we thought about a 50% commission split for this product via Channel X on day 1.”

- **Jason Carvalho** @jcarvy

“Be undeniably good. No marketing effort or social media buzzword can be a substitute for that.”

- **Anthony Volodkin** @fascinated

“Successful social media marketing is not about what time of day you tweet or how often you update your Facebook page. It’s the way you make people feel, it’s the story you share with your community.”

- **Shanelle Mullin** @shanelle_mullin

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STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

MOTIVATION

“ Do something that matters. It takes a ton of time and energy to build a business that lasts. You’ll never get that time back and you don’t know how many chances you’ll have in your life to start something new. So do something that matters. Something great. Something meaningful to you. And something worthy of your life.



David Hassell

Serial entrepreneur, connector



“If you think the formula is as easy as an idea plus capital, you’re dead wrong. The secret is in rolling up your sleeves and executing, day in and day out.”

- **Eric Azran** @Ericwithana

“Regret is a waste of your time, money and confidence. It’s the worst investment you will ever make as an entrepreneur and in life.”

- **Eric Dolan** @Eisforinnovate

“Never be afraid to take risks and lay it all on the line. As Patton once said ‘Pressure makes diamonds.’ As a corollary, thinking about failure will lead to failure, there is no substitute for confidence.”

- **Rich Rines** @richrines

“Create a legacy, not a job. Ask yourself: ‘How do I want to be remembered?’ Your job, habits, and daily activities are important, but focus on the things that build the legacy you want to create. In the end, you’ll be glad you did.”

- **John Meyer** @johntmeyer

“Let history be your guide. Every successful person—from the Wright brothers and Walt Disney to Thomas Edison and Bill Gates—has experienced setbacks, disappointments, and internal doubt. What kept them going more than anything else was a belief in their vision, an ability to focus on their goals, and most importantly, a sense of perseverance that pulled them through when they needed it most. The encouraging thing is that none of these qualities are reserved for a select few; we can all access them. No matter what the world throws at you, you do have the power to push through. So don’t let anything or anyone get between you and your BIG vision!”

- **Adam Toren** @thebizguy

“Taking risks is easy when you have nothing to lose. Walking away from a paycheck and steady 401K contribution isn’t easy. You have to think about the leap as an investment and ask yourself: ‘What will investing in my dreams and passions yield?’”

- **Alexander Sion** @asion1

“It is so important to pick something to work on that is bigger than you, that you need to be in the world. So when you are ready to give up, you don’t have a choice but to keep going.”

- **Perri Gorman** @bethebutterfly

“The biggest enemy you have is your fear of failure. There’s no such thing as failure, only more experience.”

- **Dario Cannizzaro** @weissblut82

“Most startups don’t die in a flame of glory. They simply fizzle out. Those that survive, win.”

- **Wade Foster** @wadefoster

“Convince yourself something’s true. Others will believe it and you’ll be more likely to make it a reality.”

- **Andrew Draper** @andrewdraper

“Don’t rely on the education safety blanket. While you’re in it, it seems warm, comforting and safe. Keep in mind, it’s not bulletproof. Ideas and experience are.”

- **Eric Dolan** @Eisforinnovate

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

NETWORKING

“ The best way to grow a business is through relationships. People don't care as much about how smart you are, or what your grades were in school...the most important thing is showing that you care about them as individuals, and that you are eager to add massive value to their business and life. That's what helps grow your business and get you to where you want to be in your career.



Lewis Howes

Angel Investor. Co-Founder Talent.me



“You never know who you’re talking to...unless you care to find out. The best entrepreneurs will always engage with you. And they all ask you, ‘So how can I help you?’ They don’t worry about you stealing their ideas or taking up their time. They genuinely just want to help. We are all in this entrepreneurial thing together. More of us need to act like it.”

- **Mark Faggiano** @brand5

“Relationships are the currency of life. Spend more time being interested than trying to be interesting. When you help enough other people get what they want, you’ll find that getting what you want is almost effortless. Value creation drives productive relationships.”

- **Lisa Nicole Bell** @LisaNicoleBell

“The average person treats ‘networking’ like ‘collecting’. It’s not about how many contacts you have in your address book, or the number of emails you can get at a conference. That doesn’t create value. Networking should be more about giving before you get. Give your time, your thoughts, your ideas, your help. Giving will result in getting. Oh, and let’s ditch the word ‘networking’ and call it something more accurate: community. Build your community, not your network. There’s a difference.”

- **Daniel Gruneberg** @dang

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

OPERATIONS

“ Some of the best ‘code’ you will ever write in your company are the instructions for your team to service your customers. In today’s technology-powered world, customers appreciate the simple touches like a personal phone call or a handwritten note. Remember, it’s not how fast your website loads or the design interactions on your app -- it’s how much your customer feels like your company is their personal champion.



Eric Koester
Founder of Zaarly.com



“Never leave yourself dependent on a specific person or unscalable process. Putting stock into any one person (including yourself!) is bad for business! Build systems that people use, not systems built around specific people. Always think about ways to automize and systemize your processes. Nothing should ‘just happen’. To get started, create a working process and procedure document that will last long after your employees are gone. Include standard email scripts, sales automation procedures, and list out technology needs and SaaS products you utilize (or should test). The more you scale and set up at the outset, the faster you will be able to grow.”

- **Scott Gerber** [@askgerber](#)

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

PUBLIC RELATIONS

“ Always remember to start with your story. Before asking for media coverage, dig deep and ask yourself: ‘Why is this technology or product so important to me?’ It may sound cliché, but having a strong sense of purpose speaks volumes to the news media. When you know your story and can tell it with meaning - your passion can be contagious.



Heather Carson

Co-Founder at Onboardly



“Guest posting on popular blogs works! I did one guest post that landed me on CNN Newsroom, Kiplinger Personal Finance Magazine, and Yahoo’s homepage twice within 3 months. Journalists are reading blogs. (Even if you don’t get an inquiry from a journalist, you’ll get in front of all of the blog subscribers, it’s a win-win!)”

- **Jaime Tardy** @eventualmillion

“There is always a state of denial before a state of success.”

- **Dan Verhaeghe** @dverhaeg

“Be a connector! One of the best (and cheapest) ways to grow your network is to be that someone who always knows someone else. Connecting your contacts to people and services you know will help them out, even when it has nothing to do with your business, is a great way of getting remembered for all the right reasons. Speak warmly, genuinely and openly about others in your community, and never shy away from introducing two awesome people who would benefit from each other’s company. Be as generous with your time and your advice as your workload allows, and you’ll soon find that these positive actions come back at you thick and fast.”

- **Holly Knowlman** @HollyKnowlman

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STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

“ Launching a 90% complete product will tell you the right way to finish the last 10%, and that last 10% will take you the entire life of your company. Don't wait for perfection- you'll end up getting it wrong!



Josh Merchant

Co-Founder & CTO @lymbix



“When building a product, solve the problem for someone in the cheapest, most rudimentary way before building too much tech. Often this means using spreadsheets, the telephone, or email. You get two benefits. First, by doing the dirty work you understand the problem. Secondly, you can ask them to pay you. People telling you what they’d like in a customer interview does not guarantee they’ll ever pay you or use it. Until someone pays you, you don’t have a customer.”

- **Jon Cartwright** @Jon_Cartwright

“Evaluate your market before you start designing a product. I have seen a few startup companies go all out on design prior to getting feedback from prospective customers or doing a patent search. Having to stop dead in your tracks because of a patent or the laws of classical supply and demand really does a number on your team’s motivation.”

- **Kyle Collier** @K_A_collier

“Get your architecture principles right. Prematurely optimizing for scale is a leading cause of death for startups, but that doesn’t mean you can ignore it. Make good choices around architecture. Use message queues, they provide an easy point of entry later for adding scale, monitoring, and more. Remember to leverage the computing potential of your customers’ devices. It scales linearly with popularity so if you can do work on the customer end instead of on the server, do it.”

- **Joseph Pantuso** @jpantuso

“You can’t outsource your core competence, so get your development team in-house. If you’re contracting out development, you won’t be able to iterate fast enough to keep up with the market and some other team of developers will execute faster than you.”

- **Ian MacKinnon** @imackinn

“Close loops! An open loop is a task that is unfinished. Avoid getting distracted mid-task, as task switching builds anxiety and leeches momentum. Create an overarching strategy to keep you on target then start tackling tasks uninterrupted. Hitting more frequent successes will build momentum. Less open tasks will precipitate better clarity of focus. Your business and your sanity will thank you for it!”

- **Dan Heitbohmer** @heitbohmer

“Choose the one main feature of your product and focus on delivering it. Investors want to see a good idea and that you are capable, not the final product.”

- **Miroslav Jeliaskoff** @MiroJ

“Champion your vision. It’s hard to say no to someone who is passionate and excited about what they do and what they’re going to do. Creating a product is like story telling, except you have to actually make the story a reality. Your vision and excitement for long roadmap items should never be shadowed by the day-to-day grind of existing products. That spark of motivation will be what helps you create through innovation and not necessity.”

- **Debra White** @b3gott3n

“You never hear of startups failing because they asked too many customers for product feedback. You can listen to advice from mentors, advisors and investors all day long, but at the end of the day, it’s the people who take money out of their pockets and put it in yours whose feedback you should ultimately be acting on.”

- **Konrad Listwan-Ciesielski** @klistwan

“Remember that your biggest fear and hardest obstacle is ‘motion’. Without motion you are going nowhere. No matter how many people feed you negative energy or have problems with your ideas, if you have motion, you are pushing through this and going somewhere. Where your startup path takes you doesn’t always matter. The beauty and creative energy lies in the journey and this alone is enough to benefit and prosper from the motion.”

- **Mike Tallent** @abigdreamer

“Never build something before you’ve tested it with real customers. Today it’s possible to mock up or fake almost any product, feature, or user experience before devoting real resources to actual development. Make yourself an expert in identifying ways to sidestep unnecessary resource-spend by employing clever ‘lean learning hacks’ throughout your product and company.”

- **Derek Shanahan** @dshan

“Don’t get caught up in the hype; build a sustainable business, not a startup, that can survive fickle customers, media bias, bubbles, and recessions. At that point you have succeeded.”

- **Zach Jex** @ZachJex

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

SALES AND BUSINESS

“ Our purpose in sales is to seek enlightenment, to fully understand how we can serve our customer and prospect...not by the singular implementation of a generic message script and one-size-fits-all sales process, but in being mindful that every interaction is unique...and requires us to be in the moment and focused on each individual opportunity.



Todd Schnick
Marketing and Business Strategist



“If you have to sell your product hard, you don’t have it right yet. Great products are in demand. Trying to build a company based on awesome sales people who can push any product is a difficult, uphill battle.”

- **Mike Kelland** @mkelland

“Be smart when starting your company! Protect your IP and shares - have a cliff with a vesting schedule in place.”

- **Phil Jacobson** @phil_jacobson

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

TEAM BUILDING

“ Culture is what happens when a group of people discover their shared values and stories. Flowing from that, our actions and words codify and reinforce that culture in others as they join the community/company. Which means, if we don't appreciate and value the culture created by the founding team, it isn't going to magically change or 'get better' as the company grows. So, this time around, I was willing to wait until I found a core group of people who reflect the culture of a company I want to wake up to every day.



Thomas Knoll
Founder clippPR.



“You can’t fly with the eagles if you’re hanging out with turkeys.”

- **Sally Ng** @sallycng

“Hiring? Stop competing on productivity hacks and office perks. Find one thing you can do that shows you were waiting for them. Startup=Family.”

- **Oren Ellenbogen** @orenellenbogen

“Play a game with your potential co-founder or employee and be on the losing team. It’ll be obvious if you match or not!”

- **Piotr Yordanov** @yordaKhof

“Everything that I learned in college about interviewing is essentially worthless: 1. The person interviewing you would rather be doing something else, 2. The person interviewing you will speak to dozens more like you, 3. The person interviewing you knows the textbook garbage, 4. The person interviewing you is not mediocre, 5. The person interviewing you is a salesperson. The worst interviews in the world are the ones where both parties walk away feeling like the hours were completely wasted. No one has the spare time for that.”

- **Max Sobol** @maxsobol

STRAIGHT UP STARTUP ADVICE:

VENTURE CAPITAL



Raising money is not just about finding enough money to execute your immediate plan. It is more about targeting the right investors. Entrepreneurs need to think beyond the current round of funding, and look at their roadmap well into the future. Good investors are those who can bring more than just money, such as domain expertise, experience, connections, and support. Do your homework and find a strong lead investor who can bring you closer to an exit.



Giang Biscan

Founder of TheStartupAngel.com,
Advisor of Mixergy.com



“Barriers to entry matter. Investors want differentiation, sustainable competitive advantage - something that can’t be copied.”

- **Bill Gurley** @bgurley

“Take advice because you value it, not to ingratiate yourself to whoever gave it to you.”

- **Geoffrey McCaleb** @geoffreymccaleb

“Always follow up after initially meeting with a venture capitalist. Think about your first meeting. In addition to pitching your idea, you’re probably also asking if they know anyone who can help you along. Usually they’re pretty forthcoming with this, ‘I’d be happy to put you in touch with so and so, remind me.’ Make sure you remind them. I’ve lost track of how many VCs have told me they do this, but they wait for you to follow up. Why? We’re testing a variety of things. Will you take initiative? How keen are you to succeed? Is the success of your business important to you? If I’m offering to introduce you to someone who can possibly help you and you don’t follow up, it sends the signal that you’re not serious about your business.”

- **Rachel Aaron** @RMAaron

CONCLUSION

While it's true that there is no one-size-fits-all model of entrepreneurship, there is no question that learning from those who came before you can help propel you and your business to new heights of success.

From closing your first round to hiring the best possible team, entrepreneurs are expected to make difficult decisions every single day. And while learning from your mistakes might be valuable, it's definitely not the most efficient way to learn. The best way to be successful is to get clear, actionable advice from those who have been there before. Real entrepreneurs with real experience and real advice.

Don't forget - this guide is a living, breathing document. For every piece of advice featured on the page, there is an entrepreneur out there who took time out of their busy day to share their knowledge with you.

So next time you find yourself faced with a difficult decision or looking for a fresh perspective, take the time to reach out to your fellow founders and ask for advice. Whether it's a ten minute call on Clarity or a half hour huddle at a meetup, a small investment of time can have major returns for your business.

So, [what do you want to ask?](#)

