



Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative

Includes:

- A structured, in-depth article: 'Elevating Entrepreneurial Potential'
- A section featuring advice from 150+ Global Experts

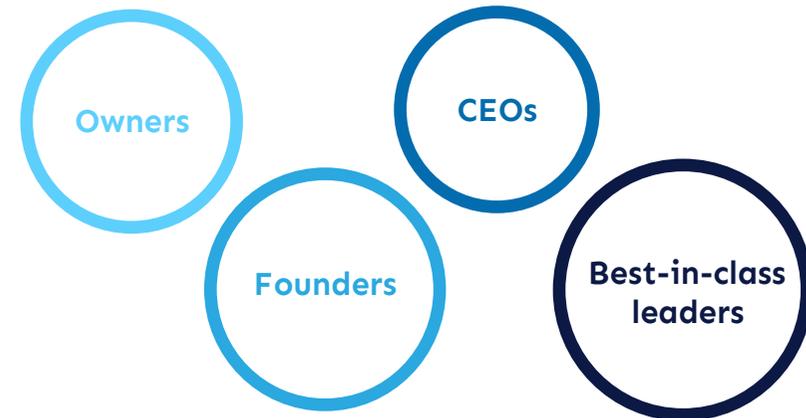
About Our Initiative

At Optimod, we recognize that entrepreneurship is a unique and often challenging journey. Simply relying on theory isn't enough to prepare for the dynamic and ever-evolving business landscape.

Our **'Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative'** aims to provide valuable resources for both aspiring and experienced entrepreneurs.

Each year, we connect with over 100 global experts who generously share their insights based on their knowledge and experiences.

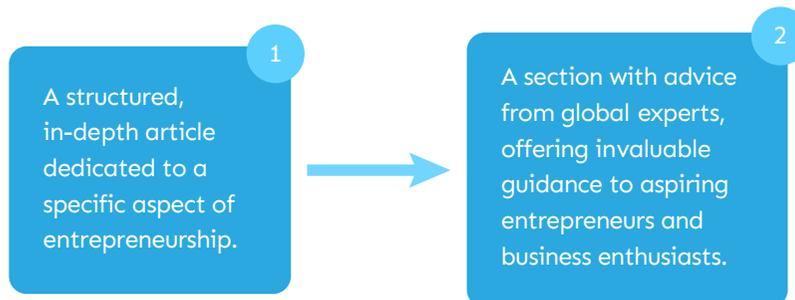
Through this initiative, individuals from diverse roles unite to form a dynamic group known for providing valuable advice rooted in their extensive backgrounds.



We ask each participant a simple question:

"What advice would you give yourself if you were starting your entrepreneurial journey all over again, armed with the knowledge and experiences you have today?"

Each brochure features:



Our Dual Approach

The initiative was born out of a desire to bridge the gap between theory and real-world practice.

With this dual approach, we combine comprehensive articles with subjects focused on current trends with the wisdom of accomplished leaders to create holistic and enriching resources to assist individuals on their entrepreneurial journey.

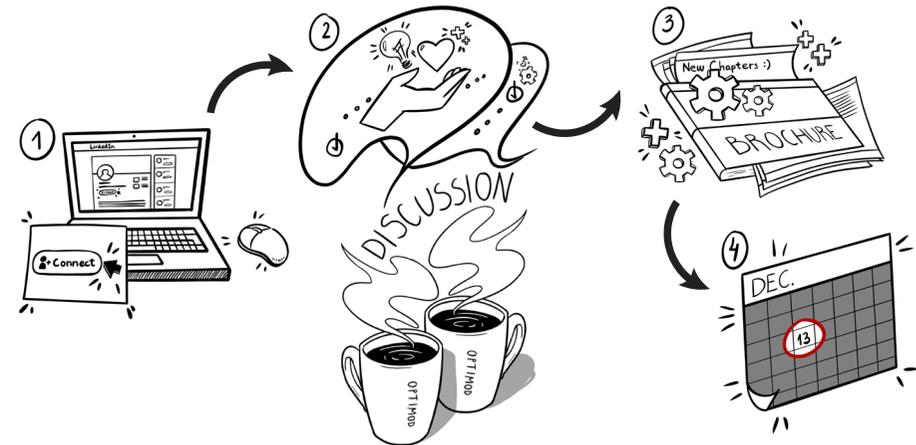
Initiative Purpose

We are committed to supporting, inspiring, and guiding entrepreneurs as they navigate the dynamic challenges of entrepreneurship.

Our goal is to provide valuable guidance to both aspiring and experienced entrepreneurs facing diverse challenges on their entrepreneurial journey.

We firmly believe that collective wisdom and shared experiences can light their way towards optimum success.

**Our initiative goes beyond mere words on paper.
It's a commitment to empower and inspire.**



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Initiative Origins

Our initiative sprouted from the recognition of LinkedIn networking's potential in 2021. Conversations with industry experts sparked valuable insights, leading to the creation of an accessible blog post.

By September 2022, the project "Challenges of The Entrepreneurial World" gained traction, evolving into a comprehensive brochure.

The release of our brochure in December 2022 marked a pivotal moment, as we received substantial support from the entrepreneurial community. This overwhelming response fueled the official launch of our initiative in February 2023.

Our annual brochure is a direct product of our IEJI (Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative).

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Topic Introduction

1.0

Topic Introduction

1.0

Overview of the brochure's topic

Last year in **Brochure Vol. 1 (2022)**, we explored the theme of 'Embarking on the Entrepreneurial Journey.' This year in **Brochure Vol. 2 (2023)**, we've decided to expand on that and center our focus on the theme of '**Elevating Entrepreneurial Potential**'.

We chose this theme because entrepreneurship is not typically a tale of swift success but rather a challenging journey marked by its fair share of obstacles and hardships, and the key to achieving success lies in enhancing your entrepreneurial potential.

Starting a business isn't just about getting it off the ground; it's about making sure you can flourish in a constantly changing environment.

For many, entrepreneurship is a demanding and lengthy journey. Some might achieve early victories, but most face trials and setbacks. It's like taking a leap of faith, and while there are strategies and perspectives that can improve your odds, there are no guarantees.

It is important to realize that elevating your entrepreneurial potential requires a mental shift, understanding that success isn't a one-time thing; it's an ongoing process that involves learning, adapting, and generating new ideas. This shift in focus turns entrepreneurship into a continuous journey, emphasizing resilience and growth when facing challenges.

The path to success in entrepreneurship isn't one-size-fits-all; it's as unique as each person taking it.

In this brochure, we delve into three pivotal aspects that can elevate your entrepreneurial potential, focusing on: 1) achieving strategic clarity, 2) embracing leadership for innovative practices, and 3) fostering an inclusive and creative environment.

We recognize that theory doesn't always align perfectly with practical use. Therefore, to address this, we consulted with over 150 global experts, seeking their valuable insights. Through this dual approach, our aim is to bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering guidance to navigate challenges on your way towards optimum success.

You can find this advice in Section 3: '**Advice from Global Experts**'

Article Overview

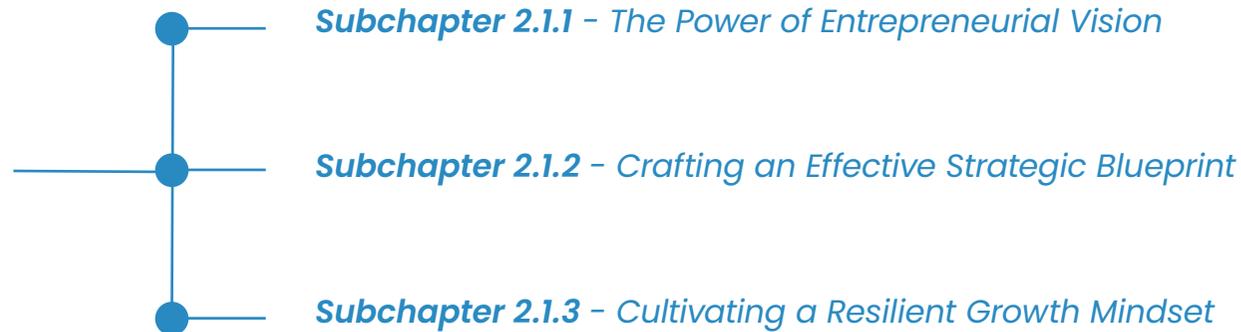
2.0

Article on the topic of 'Elevating Entrepreneurial Potential' divided into 3 chapters

Vision & Strategy

First Chapter

2.1



Starting a business is a bit like taking a leap into the unknown, a journey where your potential navigates through unexplored territory. It's not just about the idea; it's about knowing where you want to go. Successful entrepreneurs aren't just dreamers; they spot opportunities in everyday things. However, having a vision isn't enough – you need to have a practical plan. Crafting a strategy is like figuring out the steps, understanding what you have, where you're headed, and how to get there. Together, vision and strategy open the door to turning dreams into reality. But, to do that, you need a resilient mindset and a focus on growth to boost your entrepreneurial potential.

The Power of Entrepreneurial Vision

2.1.1

First Chapter - Subchapter 1/3

Every business journey starts with someone's idea, like the spark that lights up a purposeful adventure. Think of this idea as the heart of your business journey, not just a goal but a guiding force. It gives purpose to every step, turning each move into a practical action that brings this idea to life.

In the fast-paced world of entrepreneurship, where every decision matters, that initial idea is the starting point for success. Launching a business begins with an idea, but having one isn't enough.

To truly elevate your entrepreneurial potential, you require determination and a genuine passion for what you do.

Consider determination as the fuel propelling you forward, regardless of challenges. Now, add passion to your work – the element that makes your tasks meaningful. Together, determination and passion work hand in hand, supporting you through the highs and lows of business, all while keeping your focus on turning your vision into reality.

But what if your vision isn't set for success from the start? There are many cases where entrepreneurs need to adjust their vision because it's too narrow or overshadowed by the ever-changing market.

Sure, determination and passion are crucial, but having tunnel vision can hold back success.

Visionary business leaders welcome change while holding onto their core values and staying flexible in their strategies. This flexibility ensures that their vision stays relevant amid changes in the market, technology, and customer preferences. It enables them to make adjustments as necessary, seize new opportunities, and fosters a culture of ongoing learning and innovation

Crafting an Effective Strategic Blueprint

2.1.2

First Chapter - Subchapter 2/3

Let's say that you do have drive and passion fueling you forward. But what if the steps you're taking aren't leading you in the right direction? Having a vision, an idea without a clear plan, simply won't be enough to navigate the complexities and sustain success in the long run.

A vision, no matter how inspiring, needs a roadmap to be brought to life and to ensure it stays sustainable.

Surprises are bound to happen on your entrepreneurial journey sooner or later, and being flexible is a must! If you're aiming to take your entrepreneurial potential to new heights, you've got to focus on having a clear strategy, clearly defined objectives, and tactics. In other words, you need to have a strategic blueprint.

This blueprint becomes your dynamic road-map, seamlessly translating your passion and drive into purposeful actions. It forms the practical backbone of your business strategy, offering not just clarity but also a flexible and organized structure that propels your energy towards a specific goal on your entrepreneurial journey. When executed correctly, the strategic blueprint isn't just a guide; it transforms into a forward-thinking tool, assisting you not only in navigating but also in anticipating and overcoming potential challenges along the way.

The hard truth is that even with a strategy all mapped out, it does not guarantee long-term success. Embarking on the entrepreneurial journey feels a lot like riding a roller-coaster, full of thrilling highs and challenging lows.

Life throws curve-balls, markets do their unpredictable dance, and technology keeps evolving.

In the unpredictable journey of entrepreneurship, a solid plan helps you navigate through challenges and stay on course, regardless of the unexpected twists and turns. However, it's essential not to follow it blindly. Both internal and external factors can influence its effectiveness, so always be ready to adapt, make necessary changes, and pivot.

Cultivating a Resilient Growth Mindset

First Chapter - Subchapter 3/3

2.1.3

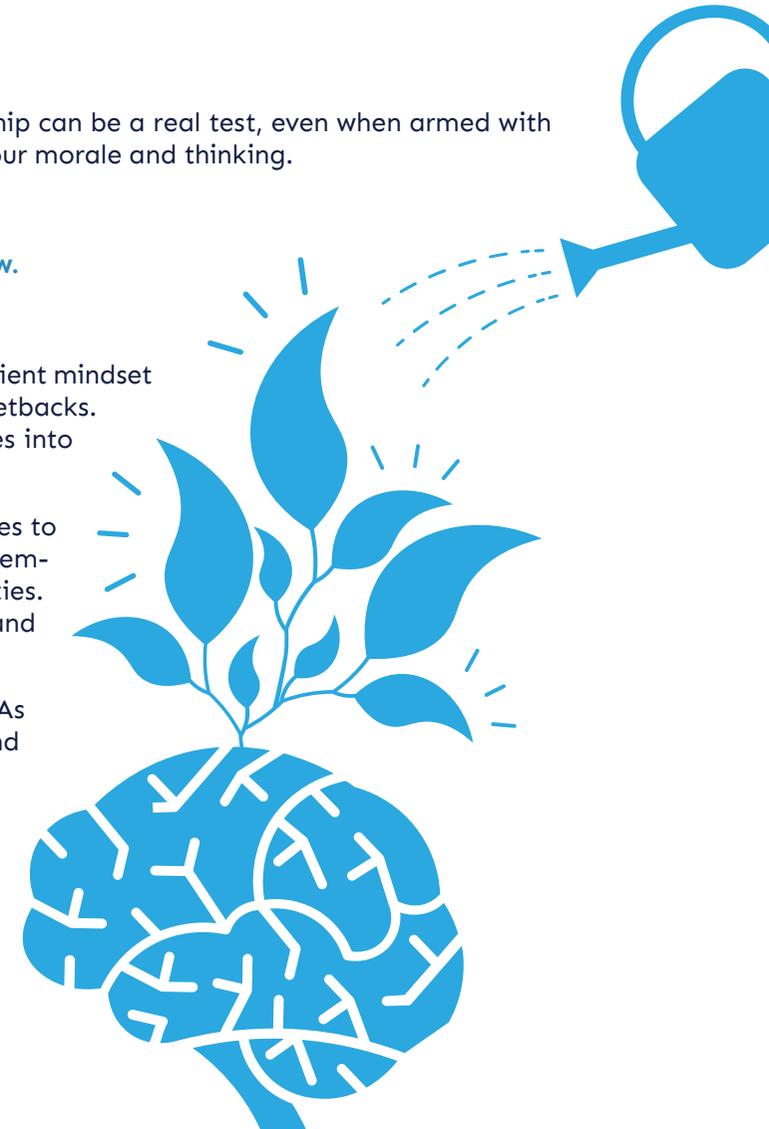
Starting an entrepreneurial journey means understanding that not everything will go as planned. Entrepreneurship can be a real test, even when armed with passion, vision, clarity, and a roadmap. Challenges are an inevitable part of this journey, and they can impact your morale and thinking.

Instead of seeing setbacks as roadblocks, think of them as chances to learn and grow.

When you're faced with challenges on your entrepreneurial journey, having a resilient growth mindset is key. A resilient mindset means embracing change, adapting to unexpected situations, and persistently pursuing your goals despite setbacks. Cultivating this mindset gives you the mental strength to navigate uncertainties in business, turning tough times into opportunities for innovation and growth.

A resilient growth mindset is all about bouncing back when things don't go as planned and learning from mistakes to move forward. It's like building inner strength and confidence by facing challenges head-on with a positive problem-solving attitude. Resilient individuals actively seek ways to fix or improve situations instead of dwelling on difficulties. They channel their energy into finding solutions and embrace change, becoming even stronger through life's ups and downs.

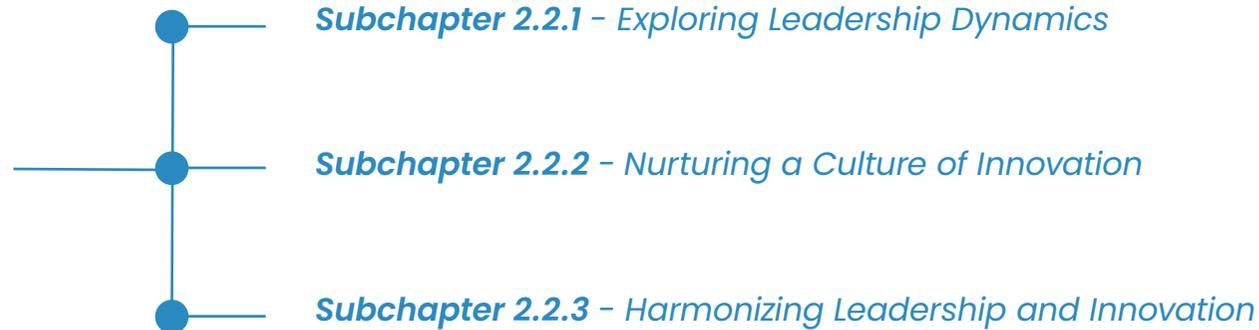
Of course, putting all of this into practice is easier said than done, especially when you're no longer a solo act. As your entrepreneurial journey expands to involve more people, each with their unique characteristics, ways, and skills, the challenge shifts to ensuring cohesive teamwork and effective collaboration.



Leadership & Innovation

2.2

Second Chapter



Entrepreneurial success relies heavily on strong leadership and innovation. Successful entrepreneurs use these elements to drive growth, bring about change, and leave a lasting impact. Managing diverse teams requires clear communication, a shared understanding of goals, and a collaborative culture that values diverse perspectives. The synergy of leadership and innovation goes beyond the conventional, fostering a culture that embraces forward-thinking ideas. Innovation is crucial for progress, turning ideas into impactful solutions that propel businesses forward. This interplay not only benefits individual entrepreneurs but also uplifts the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem, creating a community where groundbreaking ideas are encouraged.

Exploring Leadership Dynamics

2.2.1

Second Chapter - Subchapter 1/3

When you're starting your own business, especially if you're flying solo, managing a team might not be the first thing on your mind. However, as you shift from being a one-person show to leading a growing team, how you handle leadership and team dynamics becomes crucial. So, when this shift starts happening, take a moment to consider its implications. Recognizing the importance of managing people and refining leadership skills early on can set a strong base for your business to succeed in the long run.

Leadership manifests in various styles, each with its unique dynamics.

While there is no right or wrong approach to leadership, leaders should go beyond traditional management methods to elevate entrepreneurial potential. Leadership and management, though often used interchangeably, entail distinct roles.

Management refers to the process of planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling resources and activities within an organization to achieve specific goals and objectives. It involves making decisions, allocating resources, and overseeing the efforts of individuals or teams to ensure the efficient and effective attainment of predetermined outcomes.

Leadership is the ability to inspire, influence, and guide individuals or a group toward achieving common goals. It involves providing direction, making informed decisions, fostering collaboration, and motivating others to maximize their potential. Effective leadership encompasses qualities such as vision, communication, integrity, empathy, and adaptability.

It's all about finding a leadership style that clicks with your team, emphasizing the importance of a shared vision, cultivating a resilient growth mindset, and fostering a culture that supports creativity and innovation. This approach not only enhances leadership effectiveness but also strengthens the foundation for long-term success in the dynamic world of entrepreneurship.

Nurturing a Culture of Innovation

2.2.2

Second Chapter - Subchapter 2/3

Company culture is the heartbeat of an organization, shaping how individuals collaborate and work towards shared goals. It goes beyond a set of values on walls; it's the daily interactions, mutual support, and celebrations of success that cultivate a thriving workplace.

Nurturing a culture of innovation consists of fostering an environment where creativity, forward-thinking, and adaptability aren't just encouraged but embedded in the organizational DNA. It involves creating a workplace atmosphere that values new ideas, embraces calculated risks, and promotes continuous learning and improvement.

Organizations should work towards creating a culture where employees feel connected, motivated and inspired.

Innovative cultures are the breeding ground for free-thinking individuals, encouraging them to go beyond the conventional, experiment with new ideas, and challenge the status quo. This means providing the freedom to explore, make mistakes, learn, and constantly improve. Such an approach not only sparks creativity among team members but also cultivates mindset that sees challenges not as roadblocks but as opportunities for growth.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in nurturing such an innovative culture within an organization. It not only provides direction, resources, and support but also embodies the values and behaviors that encourage creativity and forward-thinking. The strength and innovativeness of a culture frequently mirror the vision and actions of its leaders.

When leaders prioritize the cultivation of an innovative culture, it helps them stay ahead in dynamic markets, equipping them to navigate change seamlessly, uncover new opportunities, and foster a collaborative and open-minded atmosphere. This, in turn, empowers every team member to contribute their unique perspectives, ultimately elevating the overall entrepreneurial potential.

Harmonizing Leadership and Innovation

2.2.3

Second Chapter - Subchapter 3/3

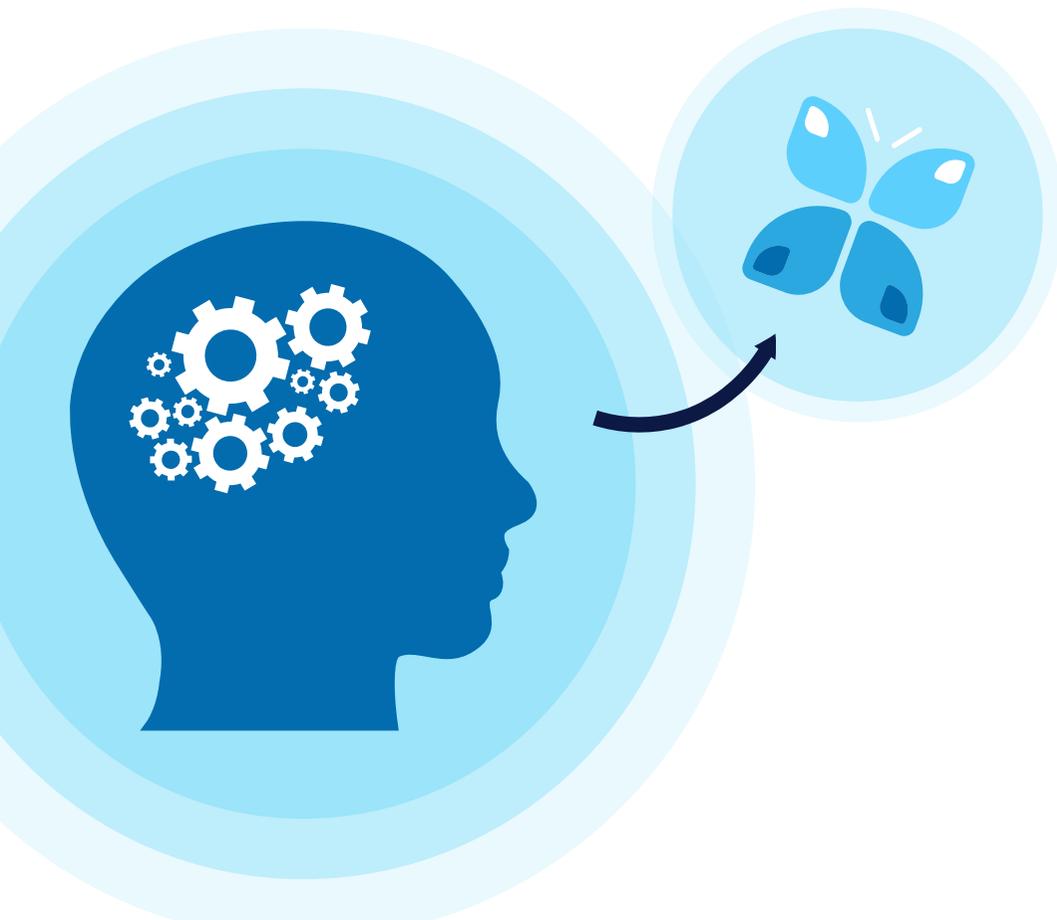
Promoting a culture of innovation can be challenging, even when your leadership style (for example, servant leadership) perfectly aligns with fostering innovation. It's easy to get caught up in daily routines and immediate challenges, losing focus on cultivating an innovative culture.

During busy routines, the focus on innovation can quickly fade.

To truly foster innovation, leaders must consciously redirect their attention, breaking free from routine and prioritizing the long-term goal of creating an environment where creativity thrives. This involves strategically allocating resources, creating dedicated spaces for generating ideas, and providing support for the team to explore new concepts without the fear of failure.

As you elevate your entrepreneurial potential, harmonizing leadership and innovation is crucial to achieving organizational excellence. Great leaders create a work environment that encourages new ideas, leveraging the entrepreneurial spirit by boosting confidence, providing clear direction, and allowing the team to try new things. This blend of leadership and innovation is an ongoing journey, with leaders staying aware of the continuous changes happening in the business landscape.

Innovation should be more than just a word tossed around. It should be treated as a strategic necessity for organizations wishing to thrive in today's dynamic and competitive world. Innovation not only drives growth but also helps organizations adapt to changes and solve problems in more creative ways. It fuels success, guiding organizations towards a future characterized by resilience, relevance, and impactful contributions to society.



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

2.3

Third Chapter



As your company expands and welcomes new members, it becomes clear that success requires more than just hard skills. Now, the significance of soft skills, particularly people skills, becomes evident, and awareness of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) takes center stage. Moving past basic politeness, embracing DEI in entrepreneurship not only sparks fresh ideas and creativity but also nurtures an environment where everyone feels valued and included. In an environment that fosters DEI, the blend of different viewpoints and skills doesn't just exist, but it powers up, crafting an environment that's ideal for coming up with creative and innovative solutions.

Overview & Understanding of DEI

2.3.1

Third Chapter - Subchapter 1/3

There are many definitions out there explaining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Most of them state that DEI is a term used to describe policies and programs promoting the representation and participation of different groups of individuals. They also focus on differentiating people by age, race, ethnicity, abilities, disabilities, genders, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations.

However, trying to understand and truly grasp the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is far from being that simple.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) represent a fundamental paradigm shift in how organizations approach their internal dynamics and external interactions. It's a commitment to creating spaces where differences are not only acknowledged but celebrated, fostering a dynamic and resilient organizational ecosystem. This paradigm shift is a journey not just to meet standards but to exceed them. It is a journey towards creating workplaces and communities that thrive on the richness of diversity.

Diversity

... embraces the beauty of our differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, abilities, and backgrounds, accepting the unique qualities of each individual.

Equity

... ensures that everyone in the organization has equal opportunities and is treated fairly, irrespective of their diverse characteristics.

Inclusion

... nurtures an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and embraced for who they are, fostering a sense of belonging regardless of any differences.

We could say that DEI is more than a set of initiatives; it's a cultural transformation that reshapes the very core of organizational identity.

Fostering DEI for Entrepreneurial Excellence

2.3.2

Third Chapter - Subchapter 2/3

While trying to elevate your entrepreneurial potential, there comes a time when you need to reassess the goals you set at the beginning or along the way. These goals, known as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), often grow and evolve as your business does. As you work towards meeting these goals, you should not forget to create a workplace where people feel safe, free to be themselves, and respected for it.

Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) requires the realization that growing your business is not only about hitting specific targets but also about making your workplace a better, more inclusive environment. But none of it matters if you only do it for show or simply because it's trendy and important. Always ensure that your efforts to include everyone are real and lasting.



Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) does not mean a quick fix but requires genuine and continuous efforts.

It might seem that DEI is creating increased pressure for organizations to demonstrate commitment to these efforts. However, efforts to foster Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion should not be forced. It's important to remember that real change takes time, and this is definitely not something to be achieved overnight.

Remember, even with the best intentions, it's wise to take a few steps back if you don't fully grasp the DEI concept. Rather than rushing to meet targets, prioritize building strong relationships and collaborating with others. Your primary focus should be on establishing a workplace where everyone feels welcome, is treated fairly, and is an integral part of the team.

Steps in Implementing DEI

2.3.3

Third Chapter - Subchapter 3/3

Embarking on the journey of implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in a company has its challenges, but making it work smoothly involves multiple steps. The first and most crucial step is recognizing that DEI is not just a social responsibility but a fundamental human principle essential for business success. It underscores the importance of creating an inclusive culture across the entire organization.

Once companies fully embrace this principle, the next important step is to ensure having the right people, especially in leadership roles. As your team grows, actively look for individuals who not only understand but also actively support DEI principles. Seek those who bring and appreciate diverse perspectives, contributing to creating a culture that fosters DEI. This way, the organization doesn't just recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion but actively integrates these values into its operations.

Embracing DEI as a fundamental human principle, not just a social responsibility, and having the right people by your side puts you on the right track.

Listening and learning sessions play a significant role in initiating DEI. It's not just about hosting lectures, workshops, and training; it's about building real and lasting connections. Taking the time to understand each person within your company, grasping their backgrounds, and appreciating who they are lays the foundation for creating an environment where people feel genuinely heard and valued.

Ensure that everything you do is genuine and not forced. Incorporate continuous engagement, as it is key. Simply saying, "I see you, and I hear you," goes a long way in making individuals feel like they belong. Encourage open conversations. Having a policy where questions are welcome promotes dialogue and allows ideas to flow freely. Sharing stories and real-life examples, both inside and outside of work, makes DEI principles relatable to everyone's experiences.

These are straightforward yet powerful acts that foster an environment where everyone feels acknowledged and respected. Keep in mind that the journey towards DEI is not a checklist to be completed quickly. It's a continuous effort that demands a commitment to building relationships, fostering open communication, and promoting a culture of inclusion.

Article Summary

Quick summary of previous chapters & the Author's insights

Entrepreneurship is an unpredictable journey marked by its highs and lows, yet undeniably a forward moving adventure that requires constant adaptation to change. In this rapidly changing business environment, stagnation is simply not an option. Elevating your entrepreneurial potential involves three key elements: Vision & Strategy, Leadership & Innovation, and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI). Think of them as essential tools working in harmony, guiding you through challenges and propelling you towards optimum success.

As we conclude, it's important to recognize that success extends beyond these three key elements; it relies on essential skills such as effective communication and adaptability. These skills serve as the foundation, navigating your entrepreneurial journey through collaborative challenges and unforeseen obstacles. Embracing continuous growth and improving your entrepreneurial skills is crucial for navigating the ever-changing world of entrepreneurship. Remember that entrepreneurship is a personalized adventure, where each step adds to the picture of success, highlighting resilience, vision, and inclusivity.

Author's insights:

Change can be quite scary, but if you wish to elevate your entrepreneurial potential, change needs to happen. We, as people, are continuously evolving, growing, and so is the market, which is even more dynamic than ever before. When you are taking your next steps on your entrepreneurial journey, remember – nobody knows how things will turn out.

There will always be a certain amount of risk. Every business is different, and each carries its own risks, opportunities, and rewards. You should be cautious, but do not be scared! Do your research, prepare for the journey as best as you can, and make it your own journey! There is no magic wand to acquire all the knowledge in the world and fully prepare you for what is to come. For that reason, the best I can do is offer you direct advice from the people who have been there and done that.

So, whether you are just beginning your entrepreneurial journey or already navigating your way through it, in the following section (3), you will find advice that over 150 global experts would give their younger selves if they started their journey again with all the knowledge and experiences they have today.

Advice from Global Experts

Over 150 participant sections, each filled with advice and insights

3.0

Advice from Global Experts

Over 150 participant sections, each filled with advice and insights

In the following pages, you will find advice and insights from over 150 global experts. This year, we had the pleasure of welcoming **179 outstanding individuals** to our initiative, a noticeable increase from the 127 contributors we had last year in **Brochure Vol. 1 (2022)**. We're sincerely grateful for the growing interest and engagement, as it brings a diverse range of experiences and perspectives to our community.

Each participant was asked a simple question:

"What advice would you give yourself if you were starting your entrepreneurial journey all over again, armed with the knowledge and experiences you have today?"

[View Advice from 179 Global Experts](#)

Notes & Disclaimers:

* Images (profile pictures and company logos) are clickable and lead to personal and/or company profiles/websites.

** The participants listed are presented in no specific order. The arrangement does not reflect any ranking, preference, or hierarchical order among them.

*** Each participant has granted permission for the use of their personal information, including but not limited to their name, title, provided advice, profile picture, logo picture, personal LinkedIn link, company LinkedIn link, or company website link. The information is utilized solely for the purpose of the Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative and related activities.



Yves Bernaert

Group CEO at Atos - France

A curious mindset is crucial in today's world. Curiosity is essential for embracing and even anticipating new technological waves and constantly reinventing oneself. Curiosity goes together with taking risks, which is a driver of progress and a source of success.

For success, never consider business as a one-man show. It is essential to know how to get support and build a team capable of collaborating effectively.

Atos | Group



John Caudwell

Founder & CEO of Caudwell - UK

Don't underestimate the value of your working-class background. It's a source of resilience and a unique perspective that can be a strength in business. Keep pursuing education and skill development. The foundation you build early on can be crucial. Continuously look for gaps in the market. Identifying opportunities is key to success. Rapid growth is exciting but can come with challenges. Scale your business strategically and maintain a sustainable model. From the start, integrate philanthropic values into your business. It's possible to make a difference while building a successful venture. Aim to be remembered for your charity work and positive impact on people's lives. Commit to giving back throughout your lifetime, addressing pressing humanitarian issues. Share your experiences and insights. Your story can inspire and support your philanthropic causes.

To summarize it all in eight points:

1) Embrace Your Background, 2) Never Stop Learning, 3) Spot Market Gaps, 4) Scale Wisely, 5) Balance Business and Philanthropy, 6) Focus on Legacy, 7) Keep Giving Generously, 8) Document Your Journey

JOHN CAUDWELL



Steve Rawlingson

Founder & Group CEO of Samuel Knight International - UK

Stand tall, stand proud and tackle every challenge you're going to face over the coming years head-on with the heart of a lion and remember, adversity creates champions.

Be sure to surround yourself with good people, always keep your eyes open for opportunities to elevate, and make sure you continue your self-development. Lastly, remember to build the right solid foundations for your business. The last thing you want to do is build your house on sand. Don't be afraid – It's going to be an amazing journey. If you stick to your plan, you'll achieve great things.

SAMUEL KNIGHT
INTERNATIONAL



Oliver Yonchev

Co-Founder & CEO of Flight Story - UK

First and foremost, I'd encourage you to take more risks. When you're young, you have freedoms and choices, and it's easy to overestimate how much risk is involved in business. My advice is to condition yourself to take what feels like risks and just go for it. If you don't try, you'll never know.

Secondly, ensure you're working on something you have an interest in or passion for. Whether that's a business, a service or a product. I won't gloss over the fact that entrepreneurship is HARD – it is filled with many lows (but also highs), so when you enjoy what you do, it keeps you motivated to get through challenging times.

Lastly, a business is fundamentally a group of people. Make sure that you invest in working with people who share your values and ambition – ultimately, you'll enjoy the process much more with a like-minded team around you.

flightstory



Jason Fisher

Co-Founder & Global Studio Director at Flight Story - UK

flightstory

If we rewind the clock five years while scaling the business, I recall tremendous pressure to stop doing creative work. My creative expertise had opened the door to building the studio division at a marketing agency, and it seemed like to climb the ladder, all my focus needed to be on the business side. I see this a lot within teams, too; everywhere you go, employees are looking for ways to grow their careers, and for many, that means turning away from execution and towards management as a way to move up.

I wish I knew then that wasn't the case – that isn't the only way to grow. In fact, many great executors learn they hate the business or management side of things and go from enjoying their work to dreading getting out of bed. I was on this path myself. So, after a few years, I'd built a successful team, but I wasn't enjoying myself anymore. I'd lost the passion for what I do, and as a result, my entrepreneurial spirit was fading. I was safer in my decisions, and I was coasting.

I started asking myself how I'd do it differently if I started over and built from the ground up. Could I start a business, build an exceptional team, and still create things? More than that, could I offer the same to the team I was building and offer growth opportunities for not just natural leaders but also great executors?

This way of thinking relit my entrepreneurial flame and led to co-founding Flight Story. Today, I'm still an entrepreneur, but my contributions to our business are based on where I can add the most value.

My advice? **Don't lose sight of that thing that makes you love what you do** because, without it, you're at risk of losing what made you an entrepreneur in the first place.



Brian Baptista

CEO at COPUBLICA - Denmark



1) **Understand Your Market In-Depth:** When I first launched my company, I was well-versed in public affairs and had a good grasp of the general landscape in the education space. However, with the benefit of hindsight, I would tell myself to go deeper. Each market – be it Africa, Asia, or Eastern Europe – has its unique dynamics, challenges, and opportunities. The more granular your understanding of these individual markets, the better you can tailor your services and solutions to fit their unique needs.

2) **Cultivate Relationships:** The success we've had in connecting the right projects and people with the right solutions was built on relationships. Strong relationships in this industry are paramount, and I would advise my younger self to invest even more time in fostering those connections. It's through these relationships that you understand the nuanced needs of your partners and clients, enabling you to provide truly effective solutions.

3) **Embrace Change and Innovate Constantly:** The education space, like many others, is constantly evolving. New technologies, pedagogical strategies, and policy shifts can quickly alter the landscape. If I were starting again, I'd remind myself to remain agile, embrace these changes, and always be ready to innovate. Standing still is not an option.

4) **Know When to Let Go:** One of the hardest lessons I've learned is knowing when to let go or step back. Selling parts of the company was never easy, but it was necessary to grow and bring in new expertise.

5) **Trust Your Team:** It's essential to hire people smarter than yourself and give them the freedom to do what they do best. This has been a cornerstone of our success.

6) **Keep the Passion Alive:** Last but not least, I would tell myself to hold on to the passion that initially sparked this journey. It's this passion for education and for making a real difference in people's lives that will fuel the challenging times and inspire others to join you on this journey.



Michael Chaffe

CEO at Wolves Summit - Poland

Wolves Summit

- 1) **Embrace the power of adaptability:** In today's rapidly changing world, the ability to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and pivot your strategies is vital for success. It is the entrepreneurs who are flexible, innovative, and quick to learn from their experiences who ultimately thrive.
- 2) **Be selfish:** You're of no use to your team or other stakeholders if you're operating at suboptimal levels. Religiously make time for healthy routines like exercise, rest, self-development etc. to deliver the best version of you each day.
- 3) **Remember, the road to entrepreneurship is paved with setbacks and obstacles:** There will be times when things don't go as planned, and you may even doubt yourself. But it's essential to view each challenge as an opportunity to grow and learn. Don't let fear of failure hold you back; instead, face it head-on and develop a resilient mindset that pushes you to move forward, no matter the odds.
- 4) **Surround yourself with people who share your passion and drive:** Surround yourself with those who understand the highs and lows of entrepreneurship. They will become your support system, providing invaluable feedback, encouragement, and connections to help you achieve your goals.
- 5) **Never underestimate the importance of staying true to your core values:** In a world of constant change, it is your principles that will guide you and help you make decisions that align with your long-term vision. Cultivating a strong moral compass will not only contribute to your personal growth but also garner respect and trust from your team, customers, and partners.



John Barrows

CEO at JB Sales - USA



Prioritize continuous learning and adaptability. The business landscape is ever-evolving, and success often hinges on your ability to stay updated, pivot when necessary, and embrace change. Invest in expanding your knowledge, seek mentorship, and be open to feedback. Additionally, don't underestimate the importance of resilience.

Entrepreneurship can be challenging, and setbacks are inevitable. However, it's your ability to persevere through adversity and learn from failures that will ultimately lead to long-term success. So, stay curious, stay adaptable, and stay resilient on your entrepreneurial journey.



Manuel Soriano

CEO at W Executive - Spain



1) **Focus on the people you choose.** In other words, before deciding where you want to go, decide with whom you want to go.

2) **Have a clear idea of what you want** to undertake because a clear vision provides the necessary energy. If you lack the energy, you'll stumble along the way.

In my view, these two points are the most critical because the people you bring on board will greatly help in tough times, and having vital energy is indispensable. No matter how good the idea is, if you lack one of these two things, it won't work. I would also advise my past self to be honest with myself. Ask questions like, "Do I possess the necessary technical skills?" If I lack those skills but have the first two points, then I would invest more time in my education.



Jouko Ahvenainen

Founder & Chairman of Prifina - USA | Co-Founder of Mission Grey - UK
Serial-entrepreneur and investor

I probably know many things better than when I started my first businesses. But I'm not sure if it makes sense to think about what to do in another way. The most important thing, anyway, is that you **just start to do things, and you have dreams and targets you want to make concrete**. It is more important than specific skills. I have started to do many things that I didn't know too much about them. I started my first software business when I was 16 years old and lived at my parents' farm in the middle of nowhere in Finland.

I also wanted to do business in the US, London, and Asia and just found a way to do so. I know if I had more information on business, startups, and careers, maybe I would have known better how to do certain things, where to get the right contacts, and also have more social skills. But it doesn't help to think about what you don't have. **It is just better to try to do what you want.**

For me, education has always been important when I have wanted to understand and learn many things correctly. **Some people make big things without formal education.** Maybe the most important learning has been that there are no special people who make big things; they are normal human beings who just do it.

Some people can make a lot of things for money. I believe people who also have other motivations can make more of an impact on the world, and it often also means good business. Not always, you also need luck. You must be motivated to do things you want to do. I don't think it is always fun and easy. **To build a startup is not just to make things you like; it is to do whatever is needed to make your targets concrete.**

It is important you are able to take your own way. Social pressure can stop people from doing many things. You must think about what you really want, not what you think others might expect. **You are responsible for yourself.**

prifina





Mike Kaeding

CEO at Norhart - USA

If I had to narrow it down to one thing, it would be this: **"Hire the very best people."**

Many managers believe that they can't afford to hire the best as on a cost per person, those people are expensive. But what most managers fail to understand is that the best people outperform the average by 2 to 5 to 10 times as much. So when you look at it as a cost per unit produced, the best people are actually inexpensive. So what I say to managers who believe they can't afford to hire the best and pay top of the market is that you can't afford not to.



Romana Girandon

CEO at Loterija Slovenije - Slovenia
President at The European Lotteries - Belgium

I am very fortunate to sometimes find people with whom we invisibly connect and support. One of them, a wise and respectable man who is no longer with us today, said to me in a very challenging situation: **"There are only two things: Don't take it personally. And you have to endure it."**

I failed to tell him how much this advice has come in handy over the years, though I would have loved to. It's so simple and challenging at the same time. And above all, so very true.





Catalina Valentino

Co-Founder & CEO of ELIXR - UK

Honestly, I would say **trust your instincts**. Everything happens the way it should. Life's a journey, not a rush from A to Z. As an entrepreneur, highs are great, but they're followed by tough times. Nothing's perfect.

If I were to offer some practical advice, I'd say:

- 1) Be okay with being broke for 3+ years.
- 2) Make genuine friends; don't network. People are your new currency.
- 3) Trust yourself, not others. Learn the law.
- 4) Success becomes more likely with more time invested. Keep going.
- 5) People are dumber than you think. Don't let your imposter syndrome win.
- 6) Don't be afraid to say no. Everyone demands chunks of your time; calculate the ROI.
- 7) Keep learning, especially if you're young or different; knowledge reduces underestimation.
- 8) Build your brand; online reputation matters, no matter its size. It's how I've been invited to judge awards, speak at TEDx events, and participate in Forbes events, among others.
- 9) Don't ask family members for advice.
- 10) No one supports you at the start. Don't be afraid to use smoky mirrors to get started, but have some substance to back it up with.
- 11) Resilience has to be your middle name. You'll fall learning to walk, but as long as you remember to keep getting back up. Remember, it's what everyone has been through to achieve success.
- 12) Be fearless in pursuing what you want.





Jamie Shanks

CEO at Pipeline Signals - Canada

The best quote that has stuck in my head since I was in university and really does play out for 99% of entrepreneurs **can be summarized in the following two points:**

- 1) The definition of an entrepreneur is someone who will work many years like most people won't so that they can live the rest of their lives like most people can't.
- 2) If, at 70 years old, you could look back at your career and made only half of what you could have made as a top employee of a company but are still genuinely happy with your independent journey, you are ready to be an entrepreneur.



Mirgen Hoxha

Founder & CEO of Motomtech - USA

Entrepreneurship is like an adventure. No matter what the outcome is, you will always remember and cherish it. Make sure that this adventure is related to your purpose. Otherwise, you will dislike yourself and life. When you identify and follow your purpose, there is no such thing as failure.





Maxim Behar

CEO & Chairman of the Board at M3 Communications Group - Bulgaria

At first glance, I would say my favorite slogan, which has been with me throughout my life, is: **“If your dreams don’t scare you, they are not big enough.”** But... it is not as simple as it looks.

To be honest – you don’t have to have big dreams, but you must have dreams, definitely. You can be a taxi driver, a waiter in a restaurant, a big manager of an international company, or a very successful banker... it does not matter. **First and foremost, you must have dreams!**

If you have them – it is much easier to work 24/7/365 to reach them and be the best at whatever you do. This is something that each of us must achieve. The world would be a much better place for all of us if we could do it.

And one more thing – My formula for success is the following: **abilities, efforts, and concentration.** You must cultivate some abilities before you start your career, then you must put in all possible efforts to develop them and maintain full concentration. But pay attention, this is multiplication – If one of those three parts is zero, then the whole result is zero. It’s a great guideline for how to survive in the modern business jungle, and you all must follow it.





Sascha Mornell

Co-Founder & CEO of GetMyBoat - USA

What I would tell myself, and what I tell all aspiring entrepreneurs, is to **enjoy the journey... because it's incredibly hard**. Contrary to what you read in the press, the entrepreneurial journey is nearly insurmountable, so you need to truly enjoy the process itself.

Does that mean every day will be filled with happiness and joy? No. Most will be difficult and filled with nos or doors closed in your face (perhaps virtually). **But relish the fact you are building or creating something new, and instead of focusing on the outcome, focus on the process itself.**



Rolf Westgeest

Founder of EuroStocks - Netherlands

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives but the most adaptable." – Darwin

That means that both you and your company must be as adaptable, agile, and lean as possible to survive every wave, be it positive or negative. Build your best team and treat them as you would like to be treated. Be authentic and enjoy the ride. Don't prioritize money, but bring and spread positive energy. Also, pay sincere attention to sustainability. Focus on reviews from your client base rather than just financial numbers. If your clients are happy and proud, the company will be too. It could be small, medium, or big, which is all good, as long as you add value to your chain.





Pedro Castro Henriques

Co-Founder & CEO of Strongstep - Portugal
Partner of IPBN (Ireland Portugal Business Network) - Portugal



The entrepreneurial journey for future CEOs is a continuous learning experience. By cultivating resilience, honing leadership skills, fostering innovation, and embracing lifelong learning, aspiring CEOs can navigate the challenges and opportunities of entrepreneurship while making a positive impact on their organizations and society as a whole.

- 1) **Embrace Lifelong Learning:** The entrepreneurial landscape is dynamic and ever-evolving. Future CEOs should commit to continuous learning and self-improvement. This includes staying updated on industry trends, acquiring new skills, and seeking mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs.
- 2) **Develop Resilience:** Entrepreneurship can be a rollercoaster ride with both highs and lows. Building resilience is crucial. Learn to bounce back from setbacks, adapt to change, and view failures as opportunities for growth.
- 3) **Cultivate a Growth Mindset:** A growth mindset fosters a willingness to take on challenges and view obstacles as stepping stones (to yourself and to your team). Embrace a mindset that thrives on learning and development.
- 4) **Network Effectively:** Building a strong trust network is essential. It provides access to resources, advice, and potential partnerships. Attend industry events, join professional organizations, and use social media to connect with like-minded individuals.
- 5) **Hone Leadership Skills:** CEOs must be effective leaders. Develop skills in communication, team building, and conflict resolution. Lead by example and inspire your team to achieve shared goals.
- 6) **Foster Innovation:** Encourage a culture of innovation within your organization – and with other ecosystem partners. Invest in research and development, and be open to new ideas. Innovation is often the key to staying ahead in competitive markets.
- 7) **Manage Risk:** Entrepreneurship inherently involves risk. CEOs must make informed decisions while understanding and managing these risks. Consider seeking advice from financial experts and legal counsel.
- 8) **Value Customer Feedback:** Your customers are your most valuable asset. Listen to customer feedback, make improvements, and tailor your products or services to meet their needs.
- 9) **Strategic Planning:** Develop a clear business strategy and set achievable goals. Create a business plan that outlines your mission, vision, and how you plan to reach your objectives – and business model canvas.
- 10) **Sustainability and Social Responsibility:** Consider the impact your business has on the environment and society. Embrace sustainable practices and give back to the community. Being a socially responsible CEO can enhance your brand's reputation.
- 11) **Adapt to Technology:** Stay updated on technological advancements that can streamline your business operations. Embrace digital transformation and leverage technology to gain a competitive edge.
- 12) **Work-Life Balance:** Don't neglect your well-being. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is essential for sustained success. Ensure you take time for relaxation, exercise, and quality time with loved ones.

My final advice would be to follow these 9 steps I mention in the **TED video**.



Maja Brelih Lotrič

CEO at LOTRIČ Metrology - Slovenia

My father always told me not to make promises when I'm happy and not to make decisions when I'm sad. I recall this advice whenever some emotion stirs within me. I remember that the mind is consistently stronger than the highs and lows. **The duty of leaders is to make decisions when we have all the necessary information and are influenced by fewer emotions.**

There's another saying that may not be as popular. It goes: **"Birds typically fly in flocks, but eagles soar alone."** Sometimes in entrepreneurship, you may experience moments of solitude. I don't mean to suggest that you lack support, but rather that at times, you must venture higher and more boldly to achieve success.



Mitchell Levy

Founder & Global Credibility Expert at Credibility Nation - USA

Clarity changes everything! Try to ignore all the marketing BS and focus on who you'd want to serve and what pain point they think they have or what pleasure point they would like to reach. I call that a CPoP, the Customer Point of Possibilities. A CPoP acts like a compass that guides you in everything you do.

When you have clarity through your CPoP, you're able to make better decisions, communicate more effectively, build trust and credibility with your stakeholders, and achieve your goals and objectives more efficiently and effectively.





Siegmar Haasis

Founder & CEO of HaasisDEC Digital Engineering Consulting - Germany

HaasisDEC
Digital Engineering Consulting

- 1) Strengthen your strengths, give and get feedback, be a lifelong learner and do it with passion.
- 2) Go abroad as early as possible, gain international and intercultural experience and appreciate diversity.
- 3) Start each project and initiative by addressing the business or customer value, describe the measurable value and prioritize activities accordingly.
- 4) Speed, Speed, Speed: Customer first, start with a minimal valuable product, make decisions quickly, and learn continuously.
- 5) The basis of good cooperation is openness, honesty and mutual trust.
- 6) Be pro-active, solution-oriented, with a positive outlook on life and willing to take responsibility.
- 7) Build the team like a soccer team: Best line-up, strength-based, clear distribution of roles, a clear north star with a winning and singing team atmosphere.
- 8) Be courageous in decisions, try new things and do it with passion and joy.
- 9) Be thankful for every day, big and small, and don't go to sleep until you have put away or forgiven the incriminating things.
- 10) Live your dream.



Christian Baltzer

Group CFO at Falck - Denmark



- 1) **Choose the people** you will work with over the job you can get. If your boss holds you back or puts you down, move on.
- 2) **Make sure you have fun.** If you do not have fun, you are in the wrong place. Fun can also be hard work, but work where you feel a reward.
- 3) **Be honest with yourself** and follow your gut; it is more often right than you will give it credit for.
- 4) Make sure to help others and support the team. Contributing to someone else's success can be even more rewarding.
- 5) **Listen and help others;** then, when you need someone to listen to or need help, someone will be there for you.
- 6) **Network,** both internally and externally. The world is full of wonderful people you can learn from.



Laurent Puons

CEO at Monaco Mediac | Co-Founder of Fight-Nation - Monaco



- 1) Continuously self-reflect and embrace self-assessment. Perpetually question what you do; it's a constant quest for improvement.
- 2) Don't fear failure, but fear stagnation; only those who do nothing never make mistakes. Stagnation leads any organization to bankruptcy!
- 3) There is nothing more honorable than change when it's intelligent.
- 4) Don't be afraid to be unpopular when you believe you're making the right decisions.
- 5) Never be afraid to step out of your circle (i.e. comfort zone). If you fall down you just pick yourself up and try again!



Russ Bates

Founder of NXTGEN Clean Energy Solutions - USA



My advice would be to **really consider what your workday will consist of**. The minutia of business is often a grind, so you should really weigh whether this is something you will love not only in the beginning but also months and years down the line. It's like any relationship – **there are ups and downs, times of boredom and times of excitement..** times of famine and times of feast.

But **every worthwhile relationship is worth the work**, the positives and the negatives. Is this business worth all the sweat and tears of the day-to-day? For me, it's a resounding yes! However, that wasn't always the case.

With one of my earlier ventures, I liked the idea and business but didn't love it, and it wore me down over time. I closed that business down after one year and was so relieved when it was over.

The work I do now is not only something I love but something I am an expert in. This gives me the confidence needed to succeed and also means that I can't wait to get up in the morning to start my day, and I end the day thinking about it when falling asleep at night.



Mario Peshev

CEO at DevriX & Rush - Bulgaria

During my career, I've had the privilege of co-founding numerous business ventures. Starting today, I would prioritize recurring revenue opportunities as a go-to-market proposition. This includes retainers, support, maintenance, regular reviews, membership plans, communities – anything of a subscription model that builds a strong audience of clients and combats the feast and famine cycle.

For service firms, this is my most practical tip of them all: **“Increase the velocity of the business by incorporating recurring revenue streams and maximizing the productivity of your services.”**



Stephen Kenwright

Exited Founder of Rise at Seven - UK

Something that didn't really click with me for the first ten years of my career is that **trends are often undeniable, but they happen way more slowly** than the internet would have you believe. Sometimes the internet says, "This discipline is dead!" – and it is in decline, but it won't be dead for 20 years. For example, "TikTok is replacing Google for search!" – some people search on TikTok, but it's nowhere near as prevalent as you might hear.

You can build a profitable business in a declining industry, and you can build one in a growing niche. But you should know where you are because those businesses operate very differently. Don't constantly knee-jerk into the next big thing, and don't be surprised if the niche you're in doesn't become the dominant trend.





Thomas Smale

CEO at FE International - USA



The most critical advice I would give myself is to **seek advice and expertise** from others and not hesitate to **hire team members and delegate tasks**.

In the beginning, like many entrepreneurs, I believed that I could handle everything on my own. I wore multiple hats and took on every responsibility, thinking that self-reliance was the key to success. However, I now understand the **importance of building a team and leveraging the skills and expertise of others**.

Looking back on my entrepreneurial journey, I wish I had sought advice and expertise earlier and actively built a team from the outset. Fortunately, after working independently for some time, I brought on our Executive Chairman as a business partner. This collaboration proved invaluable as we **combined our knowledge and skills to drive the business forward**.

Expanding our executive team was another significant step towards success. We recently hired a highly experienced Head of Investment Banking with over 25 years of industry experience. The addition of such expertise has opened up new opportunities and provided valuable insights into our strategic decision-making process.

As an entrepreneur, time is often a limited commodity. **Trying to master every aspect of the business is not only time-consuming but also inefficient**.

This sentiment is frequently echoed by my clients who have successfully exited their businesses. They often realize that delegating tasks, for example, by hiring a CEO or investing in team members to better document internal processes or handle bookkeeping from the early stages, would have allowed them to invest their time in the aspects of the business they enjoyed more. Taking such steps earlier in building their businesses could have **saved them time and resources** when they started planning their exit strategy.



Kate Waterfall Hill

Founder & Leadership Coach at Waterfall Hill Consulting - UK

Kate Waterfall Hill
Leadership Coach



If I were starting my journey again, **I would be more intentional about my career.** I would regularly ask myself, "What do you enjoy doing the most? And how can you do more of that?"

It's easy to just take opportunities as they arise. It's easy to be busy all the time. If I had my time again, **I'd stop once in a while and identify the things I love the most,** and then make a plan to do those things.

We all have choices, even though we often think we don't. We think that life happens to us, that our success is due to luck, and that we can't escape from the path we've been assigned. But with determination and hard work, resilience, the odd risk, some networking, working with a trusted partner, a focus on using your time well and having a goal in mind, it is possible to change your path and enjoy what you do every day.

Take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously. Keep a sense of humor. Be kind to others and yourself. **Remember, we are all human.**



Chris Williams

Founder & CEO of CLWill - USA

CLWILL

I tell young people the same thing all the time. **Invest in your personal network of connections.** There is no greater asset you can develop than a rich network of people. I advise them to make a clear, intentional effort to connect with people through the business world. Other people in your company, in your industry, from your schooling, in your neighborhood, wherever. Connect to people at events, conferences, and even meetings in your company, people at your peer level and at levels even well above you.

It doesn't have to be hard, just ask to have a coffee or lunch. Make the conversation all about them. Ask them what they do, what's interesting or challenging about what they do, what's easy, and what's surprising. Bring up things about the company in the news and ask what they think. **Show genuine interest, listen carefully and ask great questions.** People love to talk about themselves, so let them run.

These connections will serve you well. You'll learn things you wouldn't guess, maybe find a job area of interest and connections to other people. These people can **help you solve problems, find answers, and enhance your business knowledge.** You'll maybe even find a job. Most great jobs are made through connections. "Gee, we need a new person for that job." "I've got a great idea, that person I had lunch with last month."

Sometimes, these relationships develop into informal mentorships. Sometimes, they're just fun people to know. They'll always be an asset. And once you know people, check in at least a couple of times a year. Just "What's new?" Keep the connection fresh. An ever-growing personal network is easily the best asset you can develop. And anyone can start it, even in school.



Adriaan Romijn

Founder & Business Coach at Clear-Path - Netherlands

Embrace curiosity and agility. Throughout my career, I've learned that curiosity fuels innovation and personal growth. Never stop asking questions, exploring new ideas, and seeking fresh perspectives. Curiosity is the catalyst for creativity and adaptability.

Adaptability is another key lesson. For example, the Tech and SaaS industries are ever-evolving, and the ability to pivot swiftly and confidently is invaluable. Embrace change as an opportunity, not a challenge. Networking, mentorship, and business coaching have played pivotal roles in my journey. Building strong relationships and seeking guidance from mentors and business coaches can fast-track success and offer invaluable insights.

Lastly, always prioritize integrity. Trust is the foundation of any enduring career. Maintain honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct in all your endeavors. These principles, grounded in my experiences, would guide me on a clear path to success, continuous growth and fulfillment in any career journey.



Ihor Nikolenko

Founder & CEO of LinkedIn Mentoring by Ihor Nikolenko - Ukraine

Get acquainted with yourself and find your strengths. The best instrument for me is a super combo of gestalt psychotherapy + Red Bull Test Wingfinder.

After getting practical information about yourself and your superpower – **just take action.** And leverage your network (LinkedIn) to get better every day! Just do it!





Jareer Oweimrin

Co-Founder & Executive Director at fluidmeet - UAE



Entrepreneurship will test every part of one's soul. The journey will be very tough for you and probably everyone you know. You'll probably lose people along the way. You'll have feelings that you thought you would never have. You'll interact with people whose values and actions are at opposite ends of the spectrum of life, so be adept and cautious. You will most likely do this alone without anyone to confide in because you'll be analyzing and understanding agendas.

You could be left behind if you're not constantly learning and growing. You will field requests that will make you rethink your whole business from the bottom up and you'll have to be ready to adapt if it means survival. At times, you will be on the brink of either success or bankruptcy, but you'll have to maintain your composure and concentration and continue plowing through all the gunk that gets thrown at you. You will fail and fail many times and get rejected so many times you'll question your resolve. The business world is cruel and there's only one objective: value (and most of the time, measured economically). If these words already scare you, save yourself the hassle. But if all this excites and you're up for the challenge of a lifetime, read on.

On the bright side, if you think you can handle all the above, then a few positive moments will compensate for all the misery and disappointment. You will need to use those moments as further ammunition as the battle progresses. Yes, you'll lose people, but you'll also gain some new people who will push you towards new goals and directions. **Keep an eye out for the good ones because they're needles in a haystack.**

The feelings that come can push you to paranoia, especially around the what-ifs, but you'll learn to manage your emotions, adapt based on context, and develop a heightened sense of active listening and surgical responses. **You'll learn that your time is valuable and you'll have to sacrifice based on your priorities.** If that means less time with your loved ones, then that's the decision you'll have to own and no one else. Be ready to be on the receiving end of those complaints and you will be expected to manage it if you choose to do so. If you're not setting the right expectations with family, friends, or colleagues, that's also on you. As you grow your business, you will know that you'll be the chief fixer after it's gone through many iterations of fixes and you'll have to be the one who nurtures a team that fixes things but also be ready to jump in in case they can't for whatever reason.

Entrepreneurship is not for the faint of heart. We have plenty of examples and stats that the vast majority of them fail. And if they succeed, many of them have done so to great detriment. Some of them have even crossed the legal line to arrive at a point of no return. They carry mental and emotional scars that run deep, sometimes more than any broken bones. But know this: there are those who want you to succeed. Hold those thoughts near and dear and keep at it.



Michéle Booyesen

Co-CEO at Pétanque NXT - Netherlands

Pétanque **NXT**
SINCE 2002 your abundance. our aim

Starting a business is exciting. In fact, it's exhilarating. Securing that first, second, and even third client is what kicks off a celebration! Experiencing growth, expanding your team, and dealing with new challenges leads to accelerated learning and improved people skills. With up to five people in the business, profit is good, clients are happy and systems cope. By the time ten people have joined your team, the business has changed and will continue to do so.

With 21 years as a CEO and more than a year as a Co-CEO, here are 8 compass points I would navigate by:

- 1) **Be clear on the purpose of the business – the 'why'.** Reflect on the purpose of the company brand. If either changes, be sure why, but don't be afraid to change, especially your brand. Let your purpose, values, and culture be your guiding path – there will be times when you question those. If you need to adjust those, do so with conviction.
- 2) **State the meaning of your values and culture** from day one to your 'people'.
- 3) **Choose your shareholders, partners, and team well** – trust your instinct and do your due diligence. When a team member or client does not fit well with your business values, be decisive in managing the situation and take action.
- 4) **Keep your service or product relevant** in the best way possible and continuously learn and innovate, keeping up with the times.
- 5) **See and treat each new client with the same excitement and commitment** as you did right from the beginning.
- 6) **Respect, acknowledge, and appreciate:** say thank you and well done.
- 7) **See the low times as part of the yin and yang of being in business.** Lean on people you trust for a moment, and return the kindness when it is time.
- 8) **Build your network** and give more than what you ask for.



Vincent Labuschagne

Co-CEO at Pétanque NXT - Netherlands



To take hold of any opportunity, you need capital, and there are two forms of capital that you can use:

1. Relationship Capital:

This is built on two main factors:

- firstly, by **establishing a personal brand as a competent, results-oriented individual**,
- and secondly, by **developing a network of people who recognize your ability to deliver**.

Building your own brand is simple enough, and you're probably already doing it: dress professionally, deliver on your promises, go the extra mile, study and expand your knowledge and expertise, and genuinely care about those around you. When it comes to building a network, it may seem like you need to attend networking events and be in the public eye, but that's not the case. Throughout your career, you'll come into contact with peers, seniors, customers, and suppliers (you'll literally meet them in your workplace, school, or university. These individuals will grow and expand their business capacity (whether by starting their own businesses or climbing the corporate ladder). Make sure you work on connecting with everyone and maintain that connection.

You use relationship capital when you embark on the entrepreneurial journey. Relationship capital enables you to quickly secure your first and second customers, gain access to a network of suppliers, and even create opportunities to access investor funds (which are part of financial capital).

2. Financial Capital:

This is created through saving or borrowing. When you start as an entrepreneur, it can be challenging to secure loans, so you need relationship capital for that purpose. Alternatively, you can start saving.

The bottom line is that it's much easier to seize a good business opportunity with financial capital. So, when starting on your journey, **resist the urge to splurge**.

To sum it up. Put more effort into cementing the relationships that are right in front of you (yes, the person may be a student now, but they will be a corporate exec one day and a potential customer). Aim to save 30% of your after-tax income – you don't just want to be saving up for retirement. You want to save up to take hold of a business opportunity when it arises. **You'll learn how to run a business as you go but set yourself up for success by creating these two forms of capital.**



Shane Barker

CEO at Shane Barker Consulting - USA



As a digital marketing consultant for numerous businesses and an entrepreneur myself, here are the five lessons I'd like to pass on from my 25-year journey:

- 1) **Passion fuels success.** When you're genuinely passionate about your venture, it shines through in your work.
- 2) **Never stop learning.** In the ever-evolving digital landscape, staying updated is essential. Read, attend seminars, and learn from industry experts.
- 3) **Build meaningful relationships in your industry.** Networking can open doors to collaborations, mentorships, and valuable insights.
- 4) **Be ready to pivot.** Markets change, and so should your strategy when necessary. Flexibility is a hallmark of successful entrepreneurs.
- 5) **Fail forward.** Mistakes are part of the journey. Learn from them, adapt, and keep moving forward. Resilience is a trait shared by many successful entrepreneurs.

Remember, entrepreneurship is a marathon, not a sprint. Stay true to your vision, stay informed, and stay passionate. Your journey has the potential to inspire others and leave a lasting impact.



Hans Elmegaard

CEO at Moddule - Denmark



If you have taken the first and most encouraging step to becoming an entrepreneur, you have taken the most important step of them all. Congratulations!

- 1) Have your vision backed up with a business plan that allows mistakes because mistakes will happen.
- 2) Think big, but stay humble.
- 3) Your dream and vision drive you. But like air gives life to humans, money gives life to business.
- 4) Secure funding when you can, and don't wait until you really need them.
- 5) Be adaptable to change and input from others. You may have had the greatest idea from the start, but it likely won't be that same idea that will make you successful.
- 6) Don't be afraid to ask for help. You are surrounded by more knowledgeable people than you think.
- 7) Be patient, although it can be the hardest thing.
- 8) Use customer feedback to build and improve your product.
- 9) Take risks and learn from your mistakes. It contributes to your self-awareness.
- 10) Embed the company values into the business from the start and practice them regularly.
- 11) Values will help you keep your head straight and make the right decisions, also when you feel you are on a lonely path with many headwinds.
- 12) Surround yourself with people you can trust and who can do things you cannot.
- 13) Get support from a coach who can challenge and support you objectively.
- 14) Use your network.
- 15) Use your experience from the past to make wise decisions, but do it with respect to the changing future.
- 16) Keep things simple and prioritize those tasks that bring the most value.
- 17) Remind yourself why you decided to become an entrepreneur when things are tough.



Rafael Sarim Özdemir

Founder & CEO of Zendog Labs - Switzerland



- 1) **Prioritize your health** by engaging in regular physical activities like going to the gym or practicing yoga for overall well-being.
- 2) **Think long-term** by setting ambitious goals but avoiding burning out due to excessive competitiveness.
- 3) **Treat your life like a lab** where you try different things. Most things will fail, but some may succeed.
- 4) **Take measured steps** by surrounding yourself with smarter people, learn from them, and outwork them.
- 5) **Explore side projects** while maintaining a stable income.
- 6) **Don't forget to enjoy the present.** The past can make us sad, and the future often brings anxiety.
- 7) **Learn content creation**, especially video and audio.



Marko Bitenc

Founder & CEO of GenePlanet - Slovenia



In your journey, you might face moments where giving up could have crossed your mind ten times within the first five years, but remember that **unwavering perseverance leads to success.**



Kasim Aslam

Co-Founder & CEO of Solutions 8 - USA

SOLUTIONS 8
THE GOOGLE ADS AGENCY

Lesson #1: Entrepreneurship is NOT fulfillment.

One of the biggest mistakes entrepreneurs make is thinking they need to do the things they're selling – which puts them at a disadvantage and actually limits their ability to scale. Why? Because they become too focused on managing expectations and thinking about all the reasons an idea is not going to work. If you're currently performing fulfillment yourself, go replace yourself in that role first before you do anything else. And if you're not exactly sure how to do that, try white labeling (reselling) someone else's stuff because the entrepreneurial piece is actually everything after the fulfillment.

Lesson #2: Get really good at systems.

People say all the time that they want their business to run like a “well-oiled machine.” Well, that machine is nothing more than a collection of components tethered together by systems. While it's true that the entrepreneur shouldn't be doing most of what's happening inside a business, you should be really good at the systems piece and know enough to lead and direct the systems you want. This allows you to see the bigger picture and not be burdened by the smaller components.

Lesson #3: Recruiter and a banker.

This lesson comes from my long-time friend and mentor, Ryan Deiss, founder of Idea Incubator LP and DigitalMarketer.com. The general idea is that given enough time, everybody in business just becomes a recruiter and a banker – meaning you end up spending most of your time either trying to find qualified people or managing the money.

The lesson? Either get really good at those roles or find a partner who is really good at those roles and learn to delegate.



Matt Janaway

CEO at Marketing Labs - UK



Having started a business at 16 and being in the business world for 23 years, you can imagine the mistakes I have made along the way. **Mistakes are the best possible way of learning and crafting your experience.**

If I were to give my younger self some advice, I would emphasize **the importance of always being open to learning and testing, taking calculated risks, and fostering meaningful relationships.**

I'd encourage young entrepreneurs to **embrace continuous learning and stay curious.** Never assume you know everything. As the business landscape evolves, it's crucial to keep yourself updated with new trends and technologies to stay ahead of the curve. Test everything!

Take calculated risks and don't be afraid to make bold decisions, but always weigh the pros and cons. This will help you grow personally and professionally while minimizing potential pitfalls.

Build a strong network and foster relationships with like-minded individuals, mentors, and industry experts. A strong network can open up opportunities, provide invaluable advice, and help you navigate. Surround yourself with amazing people and seek out individuals with diverse skills and expertise that complement your own. Trust them to excel in their roles and provide them with the support and resources they need. Remember, your team is invaluable, and taking care of them is vital for your business's success.

Focus on customer needs. Understanding your target audience and addressing their needs is the key to creating a successful business. Make sure to gather feedback and refine your offerings accordingly continually.

Don't be too hard on yourself when things don't go to plan. It sounds cliché, but every failure is just a great lesson. Use it as fuel to improve and get better. Entrepreneurship can be a rollercoaster of ups and downs. Embrace setbacks as opportunities to learn and grow.



Ashley Louise

Co-Founder & CEO of Ladies Get Paid - USA



My advice to my younger self is **to fear less and try more**. What do I mean by that? I used to run my business from a place of fear (fear of failure, fear of public failure, fear of financial failure). I was always worrying about doing the wrong thing.

Fear caused me to say no often. Fear held me back from doing so many things that would have helped my business grow. Fear slowed our progress. Fear put me in a constant state of stress and anxiety. **Fear took away the space I needed for experimentation, creativity and joy in running my company.**

Through a lot of personal development work, introspection and self-improvement, I've learned that not doing something because of what people may or may not think of me is no way to live or run a business. And really, **there's no such thing as failure**. By developing a growth mindset, I now know that every experience teaches me something that will help me become a better entrepreneur and run a more successful company.

If I were starting again, I'd try way more new things, ship more, do more and say yes more.



Federico Cesconi

Founder & CEO of SANDSIV - Switzerland

sandsiv+
customer intelligence made in switzerland

- 1) **Not Starting Sooner:** Procrastination and overthinking can delay the start of a potentially successful venture. Often, entrepreneurs wish they had started earlier when the market was less saturated or when they had more energy and time.
- 2) **Hiring Too Fast and Firing Too Slow:** Finding the right balance in team size is crucial. Hiring too quickly can lead to unnecessary expenses and potential culture problems, while firing too slowly can put the cash flow in danger.
- 3) **Neglecting Company Culture:** Failing to establish a strong, positive company culture from the beginning can lead to internal conflicts, reduced productivity, and high turnover rates.
- 4) **Lack of Focus:** Trying to do everything at once or pivoting too frequently can be detrimental. It's essential to have a clear vision and to stick to it, making adjustments when necessary but not getting distracted by every new opportunity or idea.
- 5) **Not Validating the Market:** Failing to validate product-market fit before investing significant resources can waste time and money.
- 6) **Avoiding Difficult Conversations:** Whether it's with co-founders, employees, or investors, avoiding tough conversations can lead to larger issues down the road. It's important to address problems head-on.
- 7) **Underestimating Costs:** Many startups fail because they run out of money. Proper budgeting and financial forecasting are essential.
- 8) **Not Prioritizing Sales and Marketing:** Even the best product won't succeed without a solid strategy to get it into customers' hands.
- 9) **Scaling Too Quickly:** Rapid expansion can be exciting, but if it's not sustainable, it can lead to even quicker failure.
- 10) **Being Overly Attached to an Idea:** Sometimes, the initial idea must evolve based on feedback and market demand. Being too rigid can prevent necessary adaptation.
- 11) **Neglecting Customer Feedback:** The users are often the best source of feedback. Ignoring them or failing to adapt based on their needs and concerns can spell disaster.
- 12) **Poor Co-founder Dynamics:** Not having clear roles, expectations, and communication between co-founders can lead to conflict and potential business collapse.
- 13) **Failing to Protect the Business Legally:** This includes not setting up the right business structure, not having clear contracts, or neglecting intellectual property protection.
- 14) **Lack of Persistence:** Giving up too easily after facing hurdles or failures. Resilience is a critical trait in successful entrepreneurs.

Remember, mistakes are a natural part of the entrepreneurial journey. While it's good to be aware of these common pitfalls, it's equally important to recognize that some mistakes offer invaluable learning experiences that can shape the success of a startup in the long run.



Giuseppe Andò

*Partner at Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching - Italy
Partner at Global Coach Group - Italy*

Reflecting on my journey as an entrepreneur, I have discovered the importance of embracing failure to achieve success. At first, it is normal to feel afraid of failing and aim for perfection. Nonetheless, **failure shouldn't be viewed as the ultimate defeat but rather as a chance to learn and develop**. Every setback and mistake can offer valuable insights that shape us into more resilient and knowledgeable business owners.

If allowed to embark on my entrepreneurial journey again, I would remind myself to **embrace failure as a valuable teacher**. I would encourage myself to take risks, experiment, and avoid being afraid of making mistakes. Rather than seeing failure as a setback, I view it as an integral component of the learning process.

It's essential for me to **seek feedback and learn from those around me** actively. I can gain valuable insights and guidance by building a network of mentors, peers, and advisors. Surrounding myself with knowledgeable individuals who have already experienced what I am about to embark on will allow me to tap into their wisdom and avoid common mistakes.

In conclusion, I **always remember the importance of balancing a long-term vision with adaptability to changing circumstances**. The business world is constantly evolving, and it is essential to be receptive to fresh ideas and opportunities to ensure continued growth. Being flexible and able to pivot when faced with challenges will allow for successful navigation and the ability to seize emerging prospects.

To summarise: embracing failure, seeking guidance from others, and staying adaptable. These lessons gained through experience have influenced my outlook and helped me grow as an entrepreneur.





Wen Zhang

Founder & CEO of INNW Institute - USA

If I could go back in time and tell my younger self one thing, it would be this: **"Go for it, don't wait for permission."**

In today's entrepreneurial world, women are rising with determination and vision. **Life is too short to seek approval;** the world eagerly awaits your unique contributions. This mindset is about recognizing how powerful you truly are and giving yourself permission to start the journey. It's never about the project, the next raise, or the next big IPO; it's about who you are becoming along the journey. Friends, stop asking for permission, whether you are starting a business, deciding to take dance lessons, or simply beginning a new workout routine. **Go for whatever is in your heart.** You've got this. Deep down, the wiser version of you has always known the answer all along. Don't ask for permission. Go for it!



Gianluca Busato

CEO at Enkronos - Estonia

With the wealth of knowledge and experience that I possess today, I would advise the young me who were to start my own journey today to, first of all, **have greater self-confidence** and give myself more time to face every step of my own adventure, secondly to keep **always looking high towards the horizon** and never being discouraged by the difficulties of daily challenges.

With these premises, you should, therefore, refine the management part of the activities, knowing that every mission, even the most incredible, is not impossible but only requires finding the people and resources necessary to be accomplished. If you know how to combine the courage that comes from correct self-esteem with the wisdom of your actions and the foresight of your vision, **success will only be a matter of time and of never giving up.**





Loukas Tzitzis

*Managing Director for International Business at
Innovation and Digital Development Agency - Azerbaijan*

The world is going to be changing faster than you could possibly imagine. Get ready to run!

Do not worry too much about academic excellence and do not focus on being the most intelligent person in a room. If anything, you will only grow when you are not the most intelligent, most experienced and most accomplished person in any given situation.

Learn how to build and maintain bridges because your network will be the most important asset and the best source of word-of-mouth you can find. Become the best communicator you can be and learn how to sharpen your delivery by adjusting and adapting on the fly, if necessary, to the situation.

The only intelligence you will have to really worry about is emotional intelligence and finding a way to maintain that ultra-competitive drive while becoming a servant leader is what will truly set you apart. Dressing for success does exist – better get two great suits, two white shirts and three power ties than a whole bunch of ill-fitted clothes in your wardrobe.

Put 110% in everything you do, but make sure you keep at it! Consistency will beat talent every time and hard work does pay off, as long as you are also making the right moves and putting yourself in situations where you will be noticed, appreciated and eventually be given a chance to go onwards and upwards.

No company will ever be your family. A company is, at best, like a sports team and just like in sports, the only thing that matters are results! Your success will depend not only on you but also on the people on your team and the support you will get from the ones you love. Being globally mobile and changing teams for the right reasons will be key towards achieving global success throughout your career.

Bottom line: The cold hard truth is that “participation does not matter”. **Winning is the only thing that matters**, and if you want to be one of the best then find ways to win the right way because no one will remember you for trying hard.



**Innovation and Digital
Development Agency**



Victor Dantas

Founder & Director of Software Development at Eyedeas - Canada



- 1) **Never Stop Learning:** Stay updated with the ever-evolving tech landscape through workshops, webinars, and courses.
- 2) **Build Your Network:** Engage in local and international tech communities, fostering relationships for insights and opportunities.
- 3) **Give Back:** Share your knowledge through blogs, tutorials, or speaking engagements to strengthen your expertise.
- 4) **Embrace Diversity:** Learn from people with diverse backgrounds and experiences; collaboration often sparks innovation.
- 5) **Mentorship Matters:** Seek mentors for accelerated growth, and be a mentor to reinforce your knowledge and skills.
- 6) **Develop Soft Skills:** Enhance communication, leadership, and adaptability, crucial for effective community involvement.
- 7) **Maintain Work-Life Balance:** Balance personal well-being with your career, enhancing your impact in the tech community.
- 8) **Stay Globally Aware:** Keep tabs on global tech trends for a broader perspective and fresh insights.
- 9) **Adapt to Change:** Be open to change and calculated risks as innovation often arises from new challenges.
- 10) **Measure Your Impact:** Continuously assess your contributions to the tech community and adjust your strategies.
- 11) **Patience and Persistence:** Building influence takes time; be patient and persistent, as success is not instant.
- 12) **Follow Your Passion:** Stay true to your tech industry passion and purpose, inspiring others to follow your lead.

In this dynamic and supportive tech ecosystem, active participation, contribution, and lifelong learning can help you continue to be a luminary in the field.



Thomas Schroeck

Founder & CEO of The Natural Gem - Austria

After 32 years of working as an entrepreneur, **here are some of my thoughts:**

- 1) Accept that all people, all employees are different and think and act differently.
- 2) Be careful whom to hire. Fire early. If it is not a match, get rid of toxic people.
- 3) Know your goal, know your processes, know your figures, be in control, have the overview.
- 4) If you think you are right, go for it!
- 5) Believe in your business idea, burn for it, run for it.
- 6) Do not listen to people telling you "it will not work," but take feedback.
- 7) Take care of yourself. You are the most important resource!
- 8) Set priorities: number one in a company is to make money, liquidity first, profit second, especially at the beginning.
- 9) Think differently.

And one at the end, which I was told by one of my most important mentors: **"Less than full support is sabotage!"**



THE NATURAL GEM

NATURAL COLORED GEMSTONES
FINE AND FANCY DIAMONDS



Ariadna Masó

Founder & CEO of SANNO - UK

SANNO.

In my journey as a founder, I've discovered two crucial lessons that I'd like to share with you.

First and foremost, it's all about focus, focus, focus. As the CEO and founder, you often find yourself juggling multiple roles, and that's just part of the game – something I personally enjoy. However, I've come to realize the power of the Pareto principle: 20% of my focus generated the most impactful outcomes for my company. Initially, I was deeply engrossed in product development, hiring, and customer support. However, as I began to understand the significance of organic sales growth, I decided to shift more of my attention to sales to boost our revenue. Looking back, I wish I had prioritized sales earlier, even though it can be challenging to balance with product development.

The second valuable lesson I've learned is the importance of surrounding yourself with the right people. Don't rush into hiring just to fill a gap because hiring the wrong individuals can harm your company in the long run. For instance, it took me six months to find the perfect tech lead. At one point, I was tempted to make an offer to someone who was less qualified, but my intuition urged me to hold off, and it turned out to be the right call because I eventually met the perfect fit for our company. So, never hire out of desperation for an immediate need.

Additionally, I discovered that advisors solely motivated by money can be toxic for early-stage startups, as they prioritize their own interests. Fortunately, I found the right advisors and investors, but I also encountered some opportunistic advisors who were challenging to deal with. **When someone doesn't align with your company's culture and goals, it's crucial to step back and find a constructive way to part ways.**

In this entrepreneurial journey, there will undoubtedly be ups and downs. Still, what matters most is that you relish the entire experience because building a successful company is a marathon, not a sprint. **So, embrace the journey, learn from each step, and keep moving forward.**



John Caswell

Founder & CEO of Group Partners - UK



My knowledge and experience now applied to when I started out would have been a complete head#*@k – a time traveler waking up in a past era so different from now. But it's such a powerful question.

- 1) **I would tell myself to write more.** It improves thought to the point where you change your mind, improve your idea and stop you from making stupid mistakes.
- 2) **I would be considerably more careful about who and where I spent my time.** Experience helps you spot those just sucking your life and contribution out of you, knowing they will never do anything useful in return.
- 3) **I would tell myself to have more confidence in myself** and that financial success results from integrity, caring about the good people around you, delivering the best solutions to your clients and always being honest. Financial success is never the aim. It's the outcome.
- 4) **I would suggest spending even more time codifying my IP** and building on it through tools and technologies that accelerate and improve the capacities and capabilities of my organization.
- 5) **I would implore me to focus on the important stuff** – to know what good design is and how it makes a difference to your success, being able to string a sentence together, to be able to stand up and deliver an idea in front of 100 people, to be able to debate intelligently and not just listen but hear what's being said, to deal with the causes, not the effects, to make sure we don't solve the wrong problem really well. I would understand the power and meaning of fixed mindsets and what's involved in changing one. To remain curious, interested and awake to everything around me.

And finally – yes, there's always the need to define the vision and purpose, mission and plan, but frankly, these things have a habit of evolving daily as you pursue that instinct inside.



Chibuzo Opara

Co-Founder & CEO of DrugStoc - Nigeria

- 1) **Get a mentor early**, especially in areas where you're weak.
- 2) It's never too early to **engage lawyers** for company governance.
- 3) Another piece of advice that's great and helped me early in my career is to **mix passion with mission, discipline, and action**, and you will have a great career, start-up, or project.



Nicolás Seguro

Co-Founder of Mayah - Argentina

Embrace vision, communicate effectively, foster continuous learning, support team growth, measure progress, stay authentic, follow your passion, and remember – **Fall in love with the problem, not the solution.**





Nils Berger

Founder & CEO of Viewpointssystem - Austria

First and foremost, choose your co-owners or founding partners with utmost care. They may not always share the same ethical and moral compass or values as you do. Ensuring alignment in these areas can prevent future conflicts.

Secondly, keep your commitments diligently. Trust is paramount in business relationships. Maintain your humanity and empathy, even in the face of adversity. Negative experiences can test your character, but staying grounded in your compassion will help you navigate challenges with integrity.

Always have a contract in place when embarking on new ventures. While you may start with the best intentions, circumstances can change, and having a clear agreement protects your interests. Keep constantly asking yourself whether you would do it again. Don't fight just to avoid giving up; fight because you believe in your vision and your success!

Learn to differentiate well-intentioned criticism from manipulation. You may not always have people around you who mean well. Don't let everything deeply affect you, but remain open to constructive feedback that can help you grow.

Stay true to yourself. Don't ignore nagging doubts; trust your instincts and take action to address concerns immediately. Ultimately, your success in business is closely tied to your ability to stay true to your values and vision.



Alex Orap

Founder & Chief of Growth at YouScan Social Listening - Ukraine



Entrepreneurship is super hard, but it's also fun! In fact, once you step on the entrepreneurial path, it's hard to look back. You get addicted to the thrill of making bold decisions, taking risks, plunging into the unknown, and charting your own path. And nothing compares to the joy of seeing happy customers who buy your new products or services and give you positive feedback.

But, as fun as it is, **you must be prepared to fail, fall down (sometimes), and be stressed (most of the time).**

When I say 'fail,' I mean two types of failures.

- First, micro-failures: many of your decisions will turn out to be wrong. Some new product features will fail, some new hires won't be a good fit for your team, and so on. That's OK – if you don't try and experiment, you won't make any progress, so micro-failures are totally expected.
- But then there's the potential that your whole new enterprise might not work out as expected. Don't define your worth by your business's success. You're bigger than it. Don't give up easily; even if your enterprise fails, you will have other opportunities and ideas to pursue.

So, the choice is yours! Not everyone needs to be an entrepreneur – after all, the world needs professionals who join entrepreneurs on their journey and help realize their vision. But if you choose to become one, **be prepared for the wild ride with all its hardships and rewards.**



Sylvia Georgieva

Founder of PropTech Bulgaria & CSEE PropTech

When one starts one's own business, one has very few things to put into the game: **one's capacity, knowledge, network and limited personal funds.**

At the same time, the **startup must move very fast and under the radar as long as possible** in order to cut the risk of being copied by stronger companies. Speed is increased only by fuelling more and more regularly. There are a number of ways to do so. Some start searching for external funding. The preferred way for entrepreneurs who don't want to become dependent on external funding to increase their speed is to add partners. When you select partners, it is of utmost importance that your capacities, network, and knowledge synergies with their capacities, network and knowledge and that you complement each other.

However, the utmost priority of yours when choosing your business partner must be if they are ethical and trustworthy enough.

The earlier you are in your entrepreneurial journey, the more partners you need. However, this also increases the risk of stumbling across an unethical partner. You must always bear in mind that your partners today can be your most severe competitors tomorrow. So, be careful about what type of information you reveal, and be ready to face a situation when all this information is used against you.

A mindset you need to appropriate is to change often and change fast. If a business model doesn't work, or if your business model has just been stolen by some (former) partners of yours, you must change immediately. One important principle to bear in mind when carrying this change out is to always step on what you have already achieved with your previous business models. Never start from scratch because this means a thorough waste of time, resources, and effort thus far. You also lose the lessons learned. Always step up on what is already done and move forward. Don't get discouraged if you need to change more than once or twice. In the first 2 years of our operation, we changed our business model more than 20 times. This is the only way to find the Product/ Market Fit you need to scale up your business.





Robert Gauvreau

CEO at Gauvreau Accounting Tax Law Advisory - Canada

If I had to do it all over again, armed with what I know now, I would have started my journey by finding **someone who's already gone through the same journey**, learning from them and making sure that I don't have to go through the same failures and setbacks as they did building the exact same thing.

Learning from somebody who's gone through the process and has already realized failures and setbacks along the journey is the easiest and fastest way to find the path to avoiding those and achieving the outcome at a faster pace.

I would also say to **find your community**. It's so difficult for business owners to have conversations with people who don't understand them. Business owners are unique people; their journeys are unique, and people don't appreciate the amount of difficulties that revolve around experiencing this journey.

Therefore, finding your community is very important for you to share wins with and failures without fear of judgment. **Finding that safe space in the community will help support you along the journey because it is not going to be easy**; even finding someone who has gone through what you want to build is a great start, but finding your community, the ones that will continue to be there no matter what, people who get, is going to be the number 1 combo of your ultimate success.





Joaquim Mach Apolo

Co-Founder & Co-CEO of Incapto - Spain

1) **Pick the correct partners and founders:**

You will live turbulent and uncertain moments and need to be aligned to avoid social problems.

2) **Test your product market fit:**

Go outside and sell your product. Test if people or customers are okay to pay a reasonable price for it. If not, move fast and pivot.

3) **As a founder, you're in control of your business:**

Investors will try to help, but you have the last word. Remember that you're the one thinking 24 hours on your business.

4) **Cash is king:**

Anticipate your cash flow needs before you think. Financial rounds will take more time than expected. Try to arrive at the final decisions always with 2-3 different options to pick the best for the company and generate positive competition.

INCAPTO



Shaun Els

Co-Founder & CEO of nanopage.co - UK

Always think in terms of years, not weeks or months. Five years of focused work and stacking skills can achieve almost any goal – but constant fumbling with new and shiny objects resets you to zero every time. With consistency and time, a river can carve away the earth. Imagine what it can do for your business.

nanopage 



Kayla Castañeda

Founder & CEO of Agua Bonita - USA

Grow slower and with less outside investment.

agua bonita



Elena Aono

Founder & CEO of FinTech4Funds - USA

I would value my time in the corporate world ten times more if I had to start over. What I mean is that I have always secretly had the ambition to run my own business. However, I struggled to come up with the concept for my firm and its underlying model. Consequently, I settled on emphasizing the special knowledge I had gained while working for several investment banking organizations and fund management firms. The fact that I was noticing the same group of problems everywhere with few answers inspired me to compile this.

As a result, I now source tailor-made solutions for my clientele from all over the globe. What would have benefited me even more is to keep track of the issues I encountered while working in investment banking and hedge funds. Unfortunately, after 15 years in the business, some of the information has faded from my memory, but it's invaluable. **Reasoning is quite unimportant.** It is not uncommon for technology companies to develop solutions for the financial services industry without first fully understanding the industry, the business processes of their clients, the obstacles they face, or the methods they use to overcome them.

People in the tech industry think in an entirely different way. The most important thing is to **keep a diary or journal of your professional development**, in which you record all the systems, software, approaches, and procedures you learn. If you can identify problem areas and put them in writing, you can better assess them and plan how to solve them.

Another piece of guidance I have is basic. **Connect with others, even if you do not always feel like it.** Do not pass up the chance to learn the key to a person's success in making connections when you meet them. Give the most praise to the people in your circle who have been there for you as you've progressed. Your network is your net worth. Additionally, maintain cordial ties with all former coworkers. Situations and employment come and go for everyone. Today's junior colleague could be tomorrow's client.





Annelize Booysen

Founder & Architect of Your Global Village - USA

- 1) **Pay attention to the idea that doesn't want to go away.** That is the one that wants to come to life, and you're the one to do it.
- 2) **Develop enough of your product** so that others can experience value, but don't try to perfect it before seeing the light of day.
- 3) **Listen to what your users and your peers say.** It's a valuable clue for your next steps. (Also, listen to what they're not saying but are doing.)
- 4) **Community is important,** but choose carefully. Don't waste your time in places that don't serve you.
- 5) **Nothing is a waste.** Nothing that you've done in your life up till now has been a waste. One thing leads to another. It always does.
- 6) **Don't compare yourself to others.** Don't doubt yourself. Instead, ask, what am I not seeing?
- 7) **You're allowed to feel despondent** at times. Go for a walk and then take a pen and paper and come up with a better plan.
- 8) **Know that things take time.** But in the end, it all adds up. Have patience.
- 9) **Focus on only a handful of things.** Give it your best effort for a set period of time. Then pause, assess and tweak.
- 10) **Help others** to achieve their goal. Therefore, make it your job to know their goal.





Luca Arrigo

Co-Founder of Metaverse Architects - Malta

- 1) **Embrace learning**, especially those hours spent online researching different subjects and engaging with intelligent people around the world.
- 2) **Be kind and empathetic**, even during challenging times when it may seem easier not to.
- 3) **Embrace mistakes** as invaluable learning opportunities, for they are the stepping stones to personal growth.
- 4) **Focus on the present**, though I understand your mind may sometimes wander to the past or future.
- 5) **Cherish the relationships** you build, and avoid burning bridges.
- 6) **Practice self-compassion**, as you tend to be hard on yourself despite the abundance of positive aspects in your life to be grateful for.
- 7) **Stay open-minded**, continuously exploring new ideas and perspectives, unveiling the vast playground of the world.
- 8) **Prioritize your physical and mental health**, for it will grant you the courage to take risks and seize opportunities globally.
- 9) **Treasure the simple joys**, like the calming sea, and utilize technology wisely, being mindful of the time spent online.

Embrace these lessons, and your journey through life will be all the more rewarding.





Jon Lindén

CEO at Ekkono Solutions – Sweden

I'll use **three quotes** to summarize my thoughts and advice.

Groucho Marx said, **"Those are my principles, and if you don't like them... well, I have others."** You should have a business plan, but you should be ready to adapt and change it. There's a reason why most start-ups pivot at least once when they find a new or niche application for their solution.

To find these opportunities, you need to be around and about yourself, and like Woody Allen said, **"80% of success is showing up."** You must be everywhere, presenting your offer, meeting potential customers, and always selling.

And then, serendipity will play tricks on you. This leads to my third quote by the Swedish downhill skier Ingemar Stenmark who said, **"The more I train, the luckier I get."** In entrepreneurial terms, he's saying that you'll have to work hard, then work harder, and be lucky – but this hard work will expose you to luck.

So, good luck! Go get them!





Boris Sovič

Former CEO at Elektro Maribor – Slovenia



ELEKTRO MARIBOR d.d.

In my business career, I have worked in different periods, activities, and environments, from the 80s of the last century to the 20s of this century, in the economy and in the public sector, at home and abroad. The activities were different, but the values were the same: **professionalism, agility and integrity.**

There were times of great technological, economic, political and climatic changes, peace and war, prosperity, and crises, natural disasters. These were also times of astonishing achievement. Never a dull moment. All activities, places and times had one thing in common: the predictability of the unpredictable, which confirms the relevance of the quote from Hamlet: **“The readiness is all.”**

Strong values are key to successfully navigating the imminent whirlwind of change. Competence for business excellence, agility for responsiveness to opportunities and risks and integrity for a positive corporate culture. In the foreground is responsibility and respect for employees, users and the community.



Dominic Price

Founder of Domprice.me - Australia

DomPrice.

Recognize that the world's greatest achievements are often the result of effective teamwork, but also understand that teamwork can be challenging. **Embrace your personal mission** to make the journey of teamwork smoother. **Continue your exploration** with distributed teams around the world, always seeking better ways of collaboration.

Share your discoveries generously with the world, as knowledge is a powerful force for positive change. Remember the Team Health Monitor, a valuable tool to assess and enhance how teams work together. Finally, treasure the realization that extraordinary accomplishments can be achieved when you collaborate with diverse individuals and harness the collective potential of your team.



Gordan Lauc

Founder & CEO of Genos - Croatia



Perhaps the best advice I could give to myself is to be a bit more cautious in trusting that people will do what they say they will do.

However, without trust, not much progress can be made. Thus, the best advice I could give myself is to **be wise in trusting people.**



Rama Alsheikh

Co-Founder & Chief Strategy Officer at Hiro Health - UAE



- 1) **Embrace Courage and Authenticity:** Trust that gut feeling when a spark of an idea ignites within you. Be bold and true to yourself.
- 2) **Fear Regret, Not Failure:** Don't let the fear of failure hold you back; instead, fear the regret of leaving your dreams unfulfilled.
- 3) **Nurture Your Ideas:** Treat mediocrity as your true adversary. Learn from failure; it's a valuable teacher, but first, Learn how to fail.
- 4) **Swiftly Share Good News, Acknowledge Limitations, Defy the Impossible:** Be quick to share success stories, be honest about your limitations, and dare to challenge the impossible.
- 5) **Fearlessness and Risk-Taking:** Don't be afraid to take calculated risks. Success will naturally follow when you embrace change and take action.
- 6) **Encourage Innovation:** Get things done, foster initiative, and create a space where mistakes are allowed. This is the space where innovation thrives.
- 7) **The Golden Rule:** Treat others as you wish to be treated. A thriving company culture is built on this foundation of respect and consideration.
- 8) **Focus on Sales and Revenue:** Prioritize having a core product and focus on generating sales and revenue from day one. Your business should depend on sales, not just fundraising.
- 9) **Team Harmony:** Surround yourself with a team that shares your 'vision,' not necessarily your personality. In the end, it's the team that breathes life into your dream.



Adem Gursoy

CEO at YG International - UK

Procrastination is the enemy of progress, and time is your most precious resource. Don't wait too long; the sooner you begin, the sooner you can learn, grow and achieve your goals. "Go ahead! Start as soon as possible."

Maintain a positive outlook throughout your journey. Challenges will arise, but a positive attitude will be your guiding light, helping you overcome obstacles and inspiring those around you.

One crucial piece of advice is to **focus and ensure you have funds available.** Without adequate financial resources, your dreams and ambitions may remain out of reach. So, prioritize building a strong financial foundation to support your aspirations.

Remember to double-check everything, especially if you're selling products. Quality should always take precedence over quantity. Consistently delivering high-quality goods or services will build trust and loyalty, ultimately propelling your journey to success.





Mariya Zasheva

CEO at ZigiWave - Bulgaria



If I could impart the wisdom I possess today to my past self when embarking on my journey, my initial counsel would be: **"Practice patience."**

Though it may seem cliché, **the most rewarding aspects of life and career unfold gradually**, requiring unwavering dedication and a steadfast commitment to success. There is no need to put yourself in people's eyes, act arrogant and praise yourself. Whoever is wise enough will see what you are made of and give you the opportunity when the time is right.

Don't try to screw coworkers or friends to climb the ladder faster. This won't end well and will never make you a good leader. Instead, focus on helping people, assisting whenever possible without publicly taking the credit.

People often want to grow to a managerial position within 1-2 years. This is not possible, and if it happens, it rarely lasts long. **You need to walk your path – walk, not run!** Only then will you be able to gain the confidence, courage, and strength to lead. So, have patience in the process, don't give up, learn and strive every day.

One last thing that has always guided me: **"What's meant for you will always find its way to you."**



Jason Barnard

Founder & CEO of Kalicube & The Brand SERP Guy - France



Jason Barnard
The Brand SERP Guy

Always be faithful to who you are and what you stand for. I've built three highly successful businesses across three industry sectors by following my own advice.

When starting out, staying true to your beliefs and building a personal brand around your business is the difference between success and failure.

Staying true to who you are and what you stand for is essential because:

- Your business has personality from the get-go.
- That personality makes partnerships easier to build.
- The personality attracts customers who align with your values.
- And the personality and brand help you keep them because your customers see their values reflected in your business.

As you grow your business and the team, ensure the team and the people you surround yourself with align with your values. As CEO, it means:

- You are comfortable with the business personality and authenticity of the brand.
- You can relate to your team, making motivation easier.
- You can leverage your team to build your personal and business brand, propelling your business further.

And finally, **always be kind and courageous and have fun.**



Oliver Bartl

CEO at collana hive - Germany



As a start-up entrepreneur, you are embarking on an exciting yet challenging journey. Here are some pieces of advice that can help pave your way to success:

- 1) **Define your vision:** Start with a clear vision and mission for your company. Understand the problem you want to solve and the values your company represents. It's not about a product. It's about solving a real problem!
- 2) **Know your target audience:** Identify your target audience precisely. Understand their needs, desires, and challenges to develop a product or service that is truly relevant and valuable. If you are unsure at the beginning – try out, test, fail and sharpen the target audience.
- 3) **Create a business plan:** Set goals and create a detailed business plan. Plan your budget, marketing strategies and milestones. A solid plan will help you stay focused and convince potential investors.
- 4) **It is easy to estimate the costs, but damn difficult to estimate the revenue** at the beginning of a business setup when there is no history yet. Forecast ambitious revenue goals, but don't exaggerate. They should be realistic and justifiable.
- 5) **Build a team and network:** Surround yourself with talented and dedicated employees who share your vision. A strong team can significantly influence your company's success. Also, build a supportive network of mentors, investors, and industry peers.
- 6) **Adopt an agile approach:** Start-ups require flexibility and adaptability. Be ready to listen to feedback, correct mistakes, and respond quickly to changes.
- 7) **Customer-centric approach:** Customer feedback is invaluable. Listen to your customers, improve your product or service based on their needs and build long-term relationships.
- 8) **Marketing and online presence:** Utilize digital marketing strategies to make your company known. Social media platforms, content marketing and influencer collaborations can help you reach your target audience. Once you've acquired the first customers, create references and customer success stories.
- 9) **Consider legal aspects:** Pay attention to legal matters such as company formation, contracts, and intellectual property. Avoid potential legal issues from the beginning.
- 10) **Believe in yourself:** The road to success is often rocky, but believing in your company and your abilities will carry you through tough times. Stay motivated and maintain your passion for your project.



Marko Krčmar

Co-Founder & CEO of LIVMARK - Croatia

- 1) Start networking from day ONE. Contact interesting people on LinkedIn, join networking events and make quality connections.
- 2) Be fast with making decisions.
- 3) Don't chase perfection in your projects.

LIVMARK AGENCY



Alex Hermann

Co-Founder & CEO of Don't Panic IT Recruiting Agency - Ukraine

Never give up. You'll figure it out – that would be my general advice to any business owner.





Mark Kalin

CEO at ABC Accelerator - Slovenia



Better than advice, I would like to present my guiding principles that I try to adhere to. I have **ten principles** that have encouraged and motivated me in various phases of life.

- 1) **Start each day with purpose.** Set a goal and achieve it.
- 2) **Be better and bolder than you were yesterday.** This applies to all areas. If you had a successful meeting, have two the next day. If you did 10 push-ups, do 11 the next day.
- 3) **Take risks and innovate.** Along your career path, you have the opportunity to explore and take risks. Try new things and discover what brings you joy.
- 4) **Celebrate small victories.** Life is fast-paced, and the tempo we live in is exceptional, so celebrate small victories every day.
- 5) **Meet new people and network.** Be curious and make new acquaintances and friendships.
- 6) **Explore life and be adventurous.** Discover new knowledge, new jobs, and new adventures.
- 7) **Make mistakes.** In life, we are often afraid to make mistakes. Every mistake or challenge brings new discoveries or simply tells us that this path is not the right one, and we should go another way.
- 8) **Don't stop when you hear the word NO.** It may simply mean not today. Ask, explore and communicate honestly.
- 9) **Surround yourself with successful people.** The people you surround yourself with in some way define you. I know the saying, look at the people around you, and I'll tell you what you are like.
- 10) **Build your knowledge, experience, and credibility.**



Adam Wright

Founder & CEO of Jackson Swiss Partners - UK



Surround yourself with incredible people, both personally and professionally.

You will quickly realize that many people can change their attitude towards you when they start to think you are successful. Even if you just change your title on LinkedIn to 'Founder', you will come across those who think you have "made it," and they can quickly behave differently around you. Unfortunately, in life, there are many 'takers' who hope to benefit from your acquaintance, whether financially or socially. Little do they know or care that you may be struggling to pay the bills in your first year or so. Conversely, some amazing people on the planet are "net givers," and they can make your journey a lot easier if you surround yourself with them. They spend time with you because they genuinely like and care about you and your success. These kinds of relationships are more sustainable. In business, you quickly learn that good people are truly special, while bad people can become a real problem. So, choose your friends, acquaintances and colleagues wisely!

Be a 'Big-Chunker' and Prioritise, Prioritise, Prioritise!

There are only 24 hours in a day, and you can't do everything perfectly. Don't waste time on the details, don't get lost in systems, processes and data and don't overthink things. All of this will slow you down. You must have the ability to understand your priorities and act on them in the most appropriate order. You cannot itemize your tasks on a list and tick them off one by one. You absolutely must re-order your tasks in real-time as tasks become more or less important.

JFDI

One of my own personal mentors, a super successful, self-made billionaire from a Northern English Council estate, just like me, used to say this incessantly, and it was his go-to piece of advice. It stands for "Just <expletive> Do It", and it means exactly what it says. Deep down, I always knew I could be super successful, but I was nervous, anxious and apprehensive, and I had to take 10 steps back to make 10,000 steps forward, which I am so glad I did but was very difficult at the time. Essentially, my only regret was that I didn't JFDI much sooner!

Understand your 'WHY', create a USP and deliver it with absolute confidence, passion and single-track-mindedness.

Firstly, if you haven't read Simon Sinek's "Start with Why," I would recommend doing so immediately. My team and I don't get out of bed each morning to come to work for our jobs. We get out of bed, nice and early, to come and build one of the most incredible businesses in the Financial Service sector, to make a genuine and significant difference to our client's businesses and lives, and to implement best practices that will remain long into the future, whilst building incredible, life-long relationships and friendships with our clients. Further, we have created a USP in the oldest profession in human history by thinking outside the box, working backwards from our objectives, and simply doing the absolute best thing for our clients, at every opportunity.



Michael Haynes

Founder & CEO of Listen Innovate Grow - Australia



- 1) **You can work FOR YOURSELF, but you cannot work BY YOURSELF.** Know your strengths and zones of genius. Get help for those non-core/weak areas; consider virtual assistants, freelancers, and university interns.
- 2) **Get a Business Advisor** to help you grow your business and guide you in key areas such as marketing and sales, which are the true lifeblood and 'oxygen' for your business. Unfortunately, sales, in particular, is not taught in school.
- 3) **Have your core team help you on your journey.** For me, this includes a lawyer (to handle all contractual legal matters), an accountant (to ensure compliance with financial regulations and obligations and optimize your position from a tax perspective).
- 4) **Build a support network** of friends, family and colleagues to help you get through tough times.
- 5) **Continually work on your MINDSET.** To succeed as an entrepreneur, we must have a GROWTH mindset, meaning we undertake new (and potentially risky) endeavors. Hence, we must have the mental toughness and confidence to back ourselves, take action, and move forward. To work on your mindset, undertake a variety of activities. I read books by various mindset experts – one of my favorites is "It's All Possible" by Rob Hartnett. I also listen to many podcasts and work with two advisors: one for my overall business (Chris Colt) and a Speaking Coach (Brian Hilliard) as I aim to get onto more stages internationally. Both incorporate mindset as part of their coaching.
- 6) **Things won't go according to plan,** and at times you will fail – that's OK and part of the entrepreneurial journey. You will learn a lot from those experiences, including what to do, what NOT to do, how you want to be as a person, and also how you don't.
- 7) **Find your people and join a community** and/ or mastermind group. Your support network is great, but often they will not fully understand. It's great to have peers to exchange ideas, perspectives, gain tips, and even collaborate with. It may take you a while to find the right group (or groups), but eventually, you will. I am a member of a couple of communities – they are truly fantastic. Both groups are "my people" (similar ambitions, goals, values, and perspectives) but serve different purposes, e.g., ClubPF is all about being with fellow B2B Go-to-Market strategists with a like-minded vision and purpose, while being part of the Challenge Champion community serves other broader mindset, community-driven, and business-building goals.
- 8) **Always be learning!** This can be done through reading, listening to tons of podcasts, on the job (probably the best form of learning there is), and being involved in groups and communities.
- 9) **Be open to opportunities** – especially those seemingly coming from "left field," as they say. Don't be too hasty to say NO. Think about how the opportunity may align/help you achieve further goals, develop, and/or 'stretch' you.
- 10) **When times get particularly tough and/or some negative mindset sets in, focus on three things:**
 - a. What's your ultimate goal/destination?
 - b. What's the very next step to help you get to that destination (it could be as simple as sending an email to a colleague asking for help)?
 - c. Focus on how you want things to be when you reach that ultimate goal/destination. How does it feel? How would you think, behave and act?



Guilherme João de Sousa Fernandes

Co-Founder & COO of Nordensa - Romania

NORDENSA

In a world overflowing with advice on startup do's and don'ts, **I've chosen to share two specific lessons** that have been instrumental in my entrepreneurial journey.

As a young entrepreneur, I've come to appreciate that cultivating a balanced perspective and gaining a deep understanding of the market you're entering are valuable stepping stones on the path to success. While these are important, they are just a part of the broader landscape contributing to entrepreneurial achievement. My journey could've been a roller coaster of emotions. In the beginning, success led to excessive celebration, while setbacks resulted in some despair. Over time, I came to understand that entrepreneurship is a journey of duality. Balancing emotions is essential. Celebrate your achievements, but remain focused. Acknowledge setbacks, but don't be consumed by them. **Use both victories and losses as stepping stones to reach greater heights.**

Another lesson I had to learn through experience was the importance of understanding my market. When I started the Nordensa journey, I underestimated the complexities of my chosen market. It wasn't until I faced challenges that I realized the significance of market knowledge. Though market research is vital, **it's only when you dive into the workings behind the scenes that you truly grasp its intricacies.**

To aspiring young entrepreneurs, my advice is this: **Embrace the duality of entrepreneurship.** Celebrate your victories, but stay grounded. Learn from your losses without letting them define you. Second, aim to develop a thorough understanding of your market. It's only when you're immersed in it that you can fully comprehend it, which will significantly aid in addressing challenges and making well-informed decisions.

Entrepreneurship can be both challenging and rewarding. It requires time, effort and resilience. The experiences, lessons and growth you gain will make it all worthwhile. So keep pushing forward, maintain a balanced perspective and be well-informed about your market. Entrepreneurship is a marathon, not a sprint. With a balanced mindset and a deep understanding of your market, you can navigate the challenges and find success.



Rami El-Ashi

Founder & Chairman of Ashi Holding - China

- 1) **Embrace Continuous Learning:** Acknowledge that learning is an ongoing process. Stay open to new ideas, remain curious, and dedicate time to continuous learning. This will ensure staying updated and adapting to changes in the field.
- 2) **Emphasize Networking and Building Relationships:** Invest time in building a strong professional network. Foster meaningful relationships with mentors, colleagues and industry peers. Networking opens doors to opportunities, collaborations and invaluable guidance.
- 3) **Prioritize Work-Life Balance:** Remember that burning out is counterproductive. Balancing personal life and work is crucial for sustained success. Prioritize self-care, allocate time for hobbies and maintain boundaries to prevent burnout.
- 4) **Take Calculated Risks:** Don't fear taking risks, but ensure they're calculated and based on thorough research and understanding. Risk-taking often leads to growth and new opportunities.
- 5) **Adaptability is Key:** The world and industries evolve rapidly. Be flexible and adaptable. Embrace change and be willing to pivot, learn new skills and explore new horizons as necessary.
- 6) **Persist Through Challenges:** Challenges are inevitable. They present opportunities for growth and learning. Persevere through tough times, as they often lead to valuable lessons and personal development.
- 7) **Invest in Personal Development:** Besides professional skills, invest in personal growth. Leadership, communication and emotional intelligence are as essential as technical skills in many instances.
- 8) **Set Clear Goals:** Define both short-term and long-term goals. They act as a roadmap guiding your journey. Ensure these goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).
- 9) **Celebrate Milestones and Successes:** Acknowledge achievements along the way. Celebrating milestones, no matter how small, keeps motivation high and encourages continued progress.
- 10) **Give Back and Mentor:** As I learn and grow, I should remember to give back to the community or mentor those who are just starting. Sharing knowledge and experiences is a rewarding part of personal and professional growth.

Reflecting on past experiences and gaining wisdom from them, I'd approach this new journey armed with a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive perspective.





Ben Samocha

Founder & CEO of CryptoJungle - Israel

- 1) **Focus on a few things at a time.** Although in my path, it was hard to do so, there were junctions in which I could've chosen not to expand further and, rather, focus on optimizing existing monetization channels and customer acquisition.
- 2) **Find mentors early on and consult** as much as you can while also focusing on the mental side of things – how to maintain a life outside of work and deal with the pressure and responsibility.
- 3) **Set goals that are measurable, realistic, and within a time frame.** Ask yourself in advance what trade-offs you'll have to face in order to reach them – so you can accommodate them when they happen, as you made the decision prior.



Cai Felip

Co-Founder & CEO of Union Avatars - Spain

I would suggest thinking a lot about the idea before implementing any actual solutions. Once you have a clear view of the vision and direction, start with a small MVP where you don't spend too much budget just to test out the solution. Invest a bit in marketing and see the traction you generate so you can pivot as much as you need before building the actual first product.

Ask, ask, always ask questions as much as you can to understand the pain points and needs of your clients. **Most people don't succeed on the first try, and most people don't fail forever.**





Sunkanmi Ola

Co-Founder & CEO of Propel - Germany



If I were to embark on this journey again, armed with my current wisdom, I would prioritize three core things: **clarity, consistency, and self-belief.**

It is vital to establish a clear and concise path in whatever structure you are building because it will facilitate formal processes. When you have a clear idea of what you want and where you're headed, it is easier to build up from there, to restructure, realign and capture every aspect of the process. The uncomplicated directive is to remain resolute in prioritizing stakeholder needs.

In the beginning stages of Propel, we started with a simple idea and built upon it. It wasn't always this complex, but the thing about solving a problem is as you move forward, you begin to notice other aspects of the situation that can be improved. That's how we got to this point in our journey.

Furthermore, an unwavering commitment to the process is crucial because it will not be easy. **There will be a lot of 'no's' and many obstacles, but remember that all you need is one 'yes'** to give you that boost while restructuring and learning from your experience. At a point, we were battle-worn from trying and failing in our applications, in our structure, from investing personal funds and funds from family and friends. There was pressure to build and not fail. So when we eventually got the break to move the business forward, registering it in Germany with the laws and regulations, when we got the first funding, the first thing on our minds was: So what's next? What do we build next? Where do we need to direct these funds?

Lastly, **you need to believe in yourself.** Invest in yourself, acknowledge your own value first, and with time and experience, you will learn how to package and market your value, gaining the support you need. We had to invest in ourselves – money, time, sleepless nights – modeling our regular everyday life to embody what we do and what we are about. This way, we already have the belief in ourselves and the confidence to move forward, knowing the value we have and how to package and market ourselves to get what we want.



Drita Memisi

*Founder & CEO of Less Fashion - Denmark
Board Member at Women In Tech - Denmark*

Don't be afraid of failure; it's an essential part of growth and learning. Trust in yourself and believe in your story and what you can do. Love the journey, for it's in the process that you truly discover your potential and passions.

Remember that nothing turns out exactly as planned, but that's okay; it's the unexpected turns that often lead to the most valuable experiences and insights. Go with your gut feeling; it's the most important compass you have!

Surround yourself with people and loved ones who inspire you and maintain a positive outlook. Their support and optimism can fuel your determination. Always manifest your dreams and desires; it's this powerful visualization that has gotten me to where I am today.

Take chances and be curious in both life and work. Don't wait; just do it and trust that you will figure it out along the way. Embrace the unknown and seize opportunities with confidence, knowing that each experience is a stepping stone on your unique journey.





Marko Podgornik Verdev

CEO at Mikro+Polo - Slovenia



Don't hesitate to embrace your uniqueness – stand out from the crowd and discover your own distinctive approach, offering something truly special. By doing so, you'll capture attention and establish a strong presence.

Embracing boldness and innovation will set you apart, elevating you above the ordinary and leaving a lasting impact on both your clients and competitors. That's why I encourage you to embark on your journey towards business success with unwavering courage and a fearless spirit.

Stay resolute and fully committed to your goals, all while relishing the journey itself. Remember, despite the obstacles that may cross your path, prioritizing enjoyment is key. Summon the courage to step beyond your comfort zone – after all, as the saying goes, "bravery paves the way to fortune."

Dare to bring your dreams to fruition, regardless of how daunting or implausible they may appear initially. Embrace risks, persist in your endeavors, and never let challenges deter you. It's these very trials and tribulations that shape us, offering opportunities for personal and professional development.



Oksana Gorbunova

Co-Founder of BazalT - Ukraine

- 1) Seize every possible opportunity to acquire new knowledge and study.
- 2) Work on your communication skills.
- 3) Uphold and have strong values.



Cristiano Coretti

Co-Founder & CPO at laiout - Norway

I think the biggest advice I would give to myself is to **believe more in your skills**. Most people struggle a lot with the impostor syndrome. I struggled with it my whole life, making me wait a lot before starting my own business.

Another one was to **avoid family and friends for your first business**. People who are not related to you are people that you're not worried about fighting with or won't make things easier because they love you. They will keep you in check to get the best out of your business, challenge you and so on.

I would say also challenge the status quo. Many things, in particular in the field where I work, are very static. I changed country three times to find someone who believed in me as in the other places, people didn't believe in the idea or that something could disrupt the way things are commonly done.





David Antonijević

Founder & CEO of Friendly HR | Co-Founder & CEO of Match IT - Serbia
 Founder & CEO of Youth Career Center Belgrade - Serbia

When I reflect on my early days as an entrepreneur, I wish I could have shared key advice with my younger self. While I can't turn back time, I can pass on valuable lessons from my entrepreneurial journey. Success demands patience, perseverance, and learning from your own mistakes. With these guidelines, you can avoid common pitfalls.

- 1) **Carefully Choose Your Co-Founders:** Be meticulous in selecting co-founders. Seek partners whose expertise complements your own, ensuring shared values and responsibilities. Prior collaborations can gauge compatibility.
- 2) **Define Procedures Early:** Avoid procrastination and establish work conditions, job descriptions, and responsibilities from the start to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts.
- 3) **Hiring: No Need to Rush:** Take your time when expanding your team, evaluating the actual need for new members.
- 4) **Stay on Target:** Maintain focus on essential tasks rather than scattering your efforts. Collaboration is vital, but retain a firm grip on the steering wheel.
- 5) **Don't Forget to Rest:** Allocate at least one day a week to rest for your well-being and to avoid burnout.
- 6) **Startup Capital Is Key:** Adequate initial capital is the lifeline of your business, ensuring a smoother journey.
- 7) **Founders Come First:** Remind your team, especially founders, that their tasks take priority, demonstrating commitment.
- 8) **Reinvest Profits:** When earnings arrive, resist impulsive spending. Reinvest in your business for growth.
- 9) **Clear Collaboration Terms:** Establish clear terms with partners and other stakeholders in advance to prevent misunderstandings.
- 10) **Persistence Pays Off:** There's no 'perfect' time to start; any moment is right. Keep pursuing your dreams one step at a time.
- 11) **Plan Ahead, Act Now:** Balance long-term planning with immediate action, as today's steps build tomorrow's success.
- 12) **Teamwork Strength:** Surround yourself with those who share your vision and bring positive energy. Team synergy helps overcome challenges.
- 13) **Prepared for Sacrifice:** Entrepreneurship may demand sacrifices; be ready to let go of certain things in pursuit of success.

Success in entrepreneurship doesn't solely depend on the idea but also on how you tackle challenges, assemble your team, and wisely manage resources. These are the key elements that enable growth and prosperity in entrepreneurship.

Friendly
HR





Jovan Jovanović

Co-Founder & COO of Match IT - Serbia

I believe there is a reason why we went through everything in our past, but if there were some magic trickery or a time machine through which I could send myself a letter, this would be it.

"Dear me,

No matter what I tell you now, it's not going to be easy, but **don't let your doubts stop you from moving forward**. Create a GRAND goal. Find ways and solutions on the go and START TODAY!

Don't try to plan too many steps ahead; **go one step at a time**. Do not, and I repeat, DO NOT procrastinate and overthink if you can do it. YOU CAN!

The most important thing I will tell you is the following. **Surround yourself with people you respect** and who are better than you in at least something in life. Make your partners, colleagues, friends, and even your future mentees your mentors. Be hungry for knowledge, but also be there for those people. Without good people around you, your business is just another pointless job.

Also, remember, business is not only about how well you are at your job. Learn about business economics as soon as possible; we are going to need that. **Learn everything you can** about agile, LEAN, and other people, business, and product-building methodologies.

Network and be great!"





Nina Mueller

Executive Director of Business Operations at Moodley - Germany

moodley

Reflecting on the past, I'd offer myself three pieces of advice that now hold significant meaning for me:

- 1) **Your growth and potential hide in the areas of discomfort.** Challenge yourself within reason, and don't shy away from the things that scare you. These opportunities are the catalysts that can unlock your potential and propel you to the next level that you seek.
- 2) **Fear will hold you back.** Don't be afraid to sound stupid, and don't be afraid to ask questions. My own fear of this inhibited my progress in learning and understanding things at a deep level, which would have helped me become a subject matter expert sooner. I battled imposter syndrome without recognizing it, but as Adam Grant eloquently puts it, "Imposter syndrome is not a clue that you're unqualified. It's a sign of hidden potential. When you think others are overestimating you, it's more likely that you're underestimating yourself. Those people have an outside view. They can see the capacity for growth that is not yet visible to you. So when multiple people believe in you, it's probably time to believe them."
- 3) **I would also advise my younger self to consistently surround myself with individuals who inspire awe.** There's nothing more motivating than collaborating closely with brilliant minds, kind-hearted people, and fostering a positive work environment. I made it a practice to hire individuals who surpassed my knowledge, and I supported their growth and vision. This approach not only led to my personal success but also contributed to the success of the companies I worked for.



Andre Kempe

CEO at Admiral Media - Spain

Do not be a coward and try to execute your idea if you believe in it, even if you think you might lose all your money. If you are a hard worker and love what you do, you will find a way to make a living, and the money will find you.



Raquella Raiz

Co-Founder & CMO of Cray - Israel

I would tell my younger self, "**You deserve to be in that room**, so enter it and don't be afraid to be audacious!"





Stéphanie Lesage

Co-Founder & CEO of Oxford Silk Phage Technologies - UK



Some 15 years ago, I entered the world of biomedical entrepreneurship. While there is so much practical knowledge that can only be learned as we go, I would happily give my younger self the following pieces of advice:

1) **Be confident:** If you do not feel confident, act confident. It will eventually lead to confidence. A lack of confidence makes us hesitate, stall and avoid risks. It stops us from moving forward, taking action quickly enough, or connecting with the right people. I spent too many years doubting. While I still do, I do my best to bulldoze my way through these doubts.

2) **Find a mentor or coach to guide you from the start:** It will help build confidence by understanding ourselves better and seeing ourselves from a more objective external point of view. A mentor is critical to overcoming the obstacles that will inevitably come our way, particularly in HR matters! Having someone as a sounding board to guide our capacity to handle interpersonal situations is crucial.

3) **Surround yourself with a network of like-minded people** who will understand and support you: People are the most powerful route to success. I have found that the moment I started to isolate myself from my network, my head was going under the water. One small discussion with someone who lifts us up can change our world.

4) **Follow your instinct:**

- When it comes to hiring, every single time it has not felt entirely right, I have had regrets.
- When it comes to challenges, don't stress over every little problem. There will be issues, and there will be solutions. If your instinct tells you to keep going, keep going. If you see no solution and your instinct is telling you it's time to move on, it's a good time to reflect on the path taken and actions forward.

One of my favorite quotes is, "**Don't wait for the storm to pass; learn how to dance in the rain.**" I have learned that over the years, but it has taken time.



Dale R. Johnson

CEO & President at Greene Lyon Group - USA

Greene Lyon Group 

I would have started sooner. I was a very comfortable partner in a Boston law firm with an exotic and financially rewarding practice. But I always wondered what it would be like to be on the other side, i.e., the one who receives professional advice and then has to make decisions that affect the success, maybe the very existence, of a business.

Yet, I didn't get involved in my first startup until I was in my late 40s and then only because three clients asked me to become part of their startup team for a new business. Within six years, we grew that business to an annual revenue rate of \$1 Billion and took it public.

I've learned through three startups now that one of **the most valuable attributes an entrepreneur can have is resilience.** There are so many times it would have been easy to follow the old advice: "Fail quickly." But I always saw some way and some reason to continue, and I'm glad I did. I also believe that if you're happy where you are, don't second guess the decisions that got you there. Life's too short.



Eric Miller

CEO at JLT Mobile Computers - USA

Learn how to execute or, simply put, **learn to get things done and done well**. Everyone can offer opinions, spot problems, or provide suggestions. True value comes from taking on tasks and projects, executing them and getting results. This will get you noticed.

Additionally, **consistency is the key!** Be on time, be there every day, be ready to work and let employers know you can be counted on.



Antti Heikkilä

CEO at Acceler8 Venture Builder - Malta

I have noticed one big change over the years. In the beginning, I was thinking about structure, i.e., that there needs to be a company, and then you can really start. However, **it is all about your offering**, how it matches the market need, and what type of business model you base the activity on. Then, the rest will follow.

If you are well connected, you can sell immediately and then deliver, for example, in partnership. Naturally, this is very much true with services but could be applicable elsewhere. The great benefit is that you can quickly test your offering and, in the best case, get business immediately.





Bo Bach Boddum

CEO at Re-Zip - Denmark

RE-ZIP

Make sure your business benefits both people and the planet. Having a long-term sustainable perspective will serve your business in the long run, and the planet needs your resources working for positive change!

Think big, test your ideas and make sure they can scale. Next, get things done, don't be afraid to fail and enjoy the ride. You do this by always keeping your eyes on the ball, being bold enough to publish early concepts and making sure that whatever you do, it aligns with your own values. So, stick to your vision and believe in yourself, but make sure to listen to your surroundings and be prepared to adapt.

Finally, **surround yourself with people who have different perspectives and competencies** and make sure they thrive and share your vision. The journey is just as important as the destination, so make sure your team is set up for success and support them when they fail.



Kristian Hauge Solheim

Founder & CEO of Cutters - Norway

Cutters.

- 1) **Start your own company as early as possible:** The earlier you start, the less you have to risk. As life becomes filled with family, a house, a car, and other obligations, it becomes more challenging to take risks. Starting at a young age gives you the opportunity to experiment without fear of significant losses. The worst-case scenario is that you gain an incredible amount of knowledge.
- 2) **You don't need to reinvent the wheel:** Think simple. It is allowed to draw inspiration from successful concepts abroad and bring them to your own country. We ourselves were inspired by a company from Japan.
- 3) **Surround yourself with people who have already succeeded:** Keep in mind that you become the average of the five people closest to you. Therefore, surround yourself with people who have succeeded in what you want to achieve.
- 4) **Always say yes to media opportunities:** It's incredible how underrated the effect of this is, especially if you run a B2C company. Even if you're not always prepared or have the perfect answers, it's much better to show up than to decline. We have built much of our brand on PR and our ability to serve as an example in matters that resonate with a broader audience.



George Arfaras

Co-Founder of OpenCars - Greece



There is no 'one size fits all' advice. I am still making mistakes and learning new things! So here is some very generic advice:

1) **Make sure that you always have:**

- A clear business model: Address a proven 'need' in a large market by offering a functional solution at a satisfactory price.
- A strong team: Build both trust and a mix of complementary skills and knowledge.
- A high-level plan: Understand your milestones, marketing actions to take, forecasted cash flows, and a clear exit strategy.
- Lots of determination!

2) **Should you wish to attract investors:**

- Be clear about your ultimate goals from the start. Do you aim to build a large company or a small venture? Do you wish to keep control of your startup forever or perform an impressive exit in the future? Be clear to your co-founders about these.
- Be careful about the timing of your next round. Monitor macroeconomic factors that may affect the outcome, achieve as much growth as you can before entering negotiations, but don't risk the emergence of new entrants.

3) **And when you grow enough:**

- Know when to start acting as a 'navy' instead of a 'pirate'.
- Understand when it is time to value survival more than expansion. Build solid and lasting castles.

The journey will be rewarding, no matter the final outcome.



Daniel Monge

Founder of Syndicate X - UAE

Business plays out how it NEEDS to, not how you WANT to. The market is unemotional, yet having emotional awareness is what will lead to any description of success. Embrace the entire process and lean into self-awareness first. Understand your world to understand others.

In this journey, you can provide value with no expectations and develop the skills that will attract the right people in your life.



Luc Derksen

Founder of New Generation Leads - Netherlands

Embrace innovation and digital methods from the very beginning. I would emphasize the importance of leveraging platforms like LinkedIn for efficient lead generation, customer outreach, automation, and AI to complete more tasks efficiently.

Additionally, I would encourage myself to prioritize unpleasant or challenging tasks early in the day, leveraging my sharpest and most disciplined mindset to tackle them head-on. This approach would set a positive tone for the day and make subsequent tasks more manageable.

Overall, my advice would revolve around **staying ahead of the curve, fostering customer loyalty through consistent quality, and continuously seeking new opportunities for growth and innovation.**





Milan Krajnc

CEO at US Profiling Institute - USA

I would never again listen to people with advice who don't know exactly what they want in life. **I would always listen to my feelings** in order to be able to finish the collaboration in time. Above all, I would always put my personal goals first, and with business ones, I would decide whether they support my personal goals or not.

For sure, **I would no longer set material goals for myself** (house, car, status...), but rather, I would exclusively follow the feeling I want because then all the support will automatically come with it (house, car, status...). But I certainly wouldn't change the topic I deal with.

Maybe I would attend more international conferences in my field to exchange as much experience as possible with similar people. I would have started publishing manuals and books much earlier. I would not be ashamed to speak out loud, even if I had no formal education yet. **I would have started working with the whole world much sooner.**





Rasmus Haven Eriksen

Co-Founder of Noly Food - Denmark

NOLY

I would definitely have invested a little faster in the first employee to secure faster growth. Not many, but only one or two. All the energy you have in the beginning can really push the growth and keep you focused on your core. Still, see the first month, but do all you can to make an economical and practical plan for onboarding the first one or two employees quite fast.

Then, focus all you can on sales. It's not the hardest for me since it's my core, but sometimes, I can still miss a little focus on that. But never forget who's paying the bills. The last thing: Be sure that your supply chain, in general, is strong, and your suppliers know your plan and your strategy so they're ready for the growth. Keep them close and informed.

Keep in mind – I would do it all over again, and the most important thing is to **keep up your energy!**



Jarco Penning

Founder & Sales Coach at The Sales Coach / European IT Reseller Academy - Netherlands

THE SALES COACH

- 1) Determine your ideal customer profile first. Ask yourself: "Who's life or which type of business am I going to serve in the coming ten years?" Stick to it.
- 2) Become the best in your niche market. Focus on quality. It pays off in the long run.
- 3) Ask for ongoing advice from inspiring, successful people.
- 4) Hire a senior (business) coach every year. Take deep dives in your own development.
- 5) Exercise. A healthy, energetic body and mind will take you to the top.
- 6) Listen to podcasts, read books, watch great quality movies and videos.
- 7) Take time off. Silence breeds inspiration.
- 8) Smile and enjoy the ride!



Ben Stirling

Co-Founder & UX Lead at Made with Maturity - UK

Continually learn from others, especially at the start of your career. Many entrepreneurs want to be lone warriors and do everything themselves. But take the time to work with others, get employed and learn from more experienced people. Then, at the right time, make the decision to go it alone. But keep your network of relationships strong, don't burn bridges, use your network to fill the gaps that you can't do.



Brage W. Johansen

Co-Founder & CEO of Spectrum Blue - Norway

Find a mentor with business experience that you can discuss with and seek advice. Maybe even be your once-in-a-while therapist.





Yogesh Raj Buliya

Founder & CEO of DigitaleMantra - India



I have always been ambitious and dreamed of starting my own business, particularly in the field of IT. In 2013, I took the leap and started my first venture in the hardware business, investing all of my savings into it. Unfortunately, despite my best efforts, the business failed to take off, leaving me heartbroken and disillusioned.

However, I refused to give up. Instead, **I learned from my mistakes** and started my second business, an offshore consulting company. Although it had some success, fate had other plans, and it, too, ultimately failed, leaving me feeling even more defeated.

But I was determined to try again. This time, I founded DigitaleMantra, which turned out to be a success. Finally, I had achieved my goal of building a thriving business. Reflecting on my journey, I realized that my two failed startups had been invaluable learning experiences that taught me the importance of patience, focus and perseverance.

My advice to entrepreneurs is that **entrepreneurship is not for the faint of heart**. It is a journey filled with ups and downs, successes and failures. However, if you remain patient, focused and learn from your mistakes, you can achieve your goals and make your dreams a reality.



Nathan Williams

Founder & CEO of Minespider - Germany

 MINESPIDER

Make it easy for people to buy your service.

Innovative technology, smart people, great ideas, and hard work only matter if you can get people to pay you. Your customers cannot help you by telling you the right price, how best to pay, or what you should offer. They only know their pain points, and you must be the doctor. You must tell them, "This is what my services cost."

When you start your business, focusing on product, innovation, features and problem-solving is tempting. It can be really difficult to know how much money to charge for your product or service at first. But at some point, people need to pay, so you need to just make a decision. Otherwise, it will make it difficult to become your customer.

Imagine sitting down in a restaurant that has no menus or prices, but the server tells you, "We have a great kitchen. We can make you anything." It's just so much better to have a menu.

The easier you make it to understand what they pay and what they get for the price, the easier starting your business will be.



Chernet Mequanent

Founder & CEO of Medstore.et - Ethiopia

For me, the entrepreneurial journey is like traveling through mountains and valleys that no other or rare people went through. The journey is not easy but challenging and, at the same time, rewarding – sometimes, it is even an adventure.

Some key takeaway lessons from my journey would be:

- 1) Execution is what makes a difference. Getting things done is completely different from ideation or imagination.
- 2) Working on oneself is much more effective than working on the venture itself.
- 3) You can't do it all by yourself; getting the right people around makes your life easier.
- 4) Listening to a customer and having a will to adapt and learn is crucial.
- 5) The word 'give up' should not be found in your dictionary. Have passion and a deeper cause to relate to the business.
- 6) As a leader, care for the people around you and make sure you always inspire.





Alex Osmichenko

CEO at IT Monks Agency - Poland

Embarking on my business journey, the intricate dance with systems became a prominent, unwavering challenge. Pioneering your business-building systems and meticulously refining them through hands-on practice is not merely an option; it's a quintessential step to guarantee scalable growth.

With well-orchestrated business systems in place, you not only pave a smooth path for newcomers but also lay out a crystal-clear roadmap for C-level executives, ensuring they navigate skillfully through the expansive seas of business scaling.



IT_MONKS



Jaka Berdnik

Co-Founder & CMO of Automatic Content - UK

The challenges we tackle are directly tied to our ambition. There's this quote I came across recently: "If you want to do great things, you need to solve great problems, and you can only do that by connecting with great people." It resonates so deeply with me. **We can't exist in isolation and expect to move mountains.**

True greatness emerges from collaboration, from the shared knowledge of people who bring different perspectives and strengths. A single note can't make a symphony. **We need to connect, learn and grow with others to create impactful solutions.**

 **Automatic Content**



Aleksandra Kozera

Founder & CEO of THE VILLAGE - Poland

Remember, it's not about how fancy your LinkedIn looks, how many "success points" you rack up on your CV, or even those Caribbean vacations that will make you happy. I know literally nobody who achieved a state of happiness or serenity thanks to career success.

Dive into entrepreneurship with genuine joy because loving what you do is the real win. Surround yourself with great people and believe deeply in your mission – that's how you'll attract others who share your passion.

And while building a business is a big deal, **never forget life's true joys: family, friends, and those quirky hobbies that make you, YOU.** Handle stress with a dose of humor, find your unique recharge ritual, and always trust and lean on your team. Keep it real, and keep it fun!

Also invest time in sanctuaries and rituals which recharge you! Those walks in the park, alone time with a cup of tea and genuinely anything creating the hygge moments is what truly adds up to your life memories.





Mories M. Atoki

CEO at ABC Health (African Business Coalition for Health) - Nigeria



I would do some things the same way and some things differently. The things I would do the same way include ensuring I leverage formal education as far as I could. At that time, and I believe till now, it strikes me as the one opportunity that is open to all, regardless of class, status, or where you find yourself as a youth. It is the one pass that could take you to high places.

What I would do differently, I would insist on my hunch and mentoring received to always be a step ahead of my peers or not see myself in a place where there are too many people competing with the same thing...

In a nutshell, I would have pursued my professional accounting qualification to completion with the law degree I had. That way, very few lawyers could compete with me and very few accountants as well.



Franci Pliberšek

Owner & General Manager at MIK Celje - Slovenia

To succeed in your endeavors, **work passionately and embrace challenges**, as passion makes even the most daunting tasks feel effortless. As you expand your horizons, remember that maintaining the accustomed level of service becomes increasingly challenging with time.

When building a team, **prioritize belief in your vision** and the effectiveness of your simple, successful suggestions, leading to greater achievements. Always see your goals through to the end. Embrace change, as transforming lives goes hand in hand with reshaping your team. Pursue diverse ventures, favoring simplicity to yield superior results, and remember that actions speak louder than words.

Establish a positive environment for everyone, diligently track results on both weekly and monthly scales, and be resilient during challenging weeks. Keep a close eye on 3-4 key performance indicators for each sector weekly and maintain effective communication with employees and suppliers.

Prioritize your efforts based on their importance (A, B, C). Sharing knowledge benefits individuals and employees alike. Despite its difficulty, transparency is key to success, and timely responses to market changes are crucial on a weekly basis





Al Kingsley

CEO at NetSupport - UK

A good bit of advice I got early on was that you are born with 2 ears, 2 eyes and 1 mouth and to use them in appropriate proportions.

When I was young and eager, I wanted to endorse to dive in at a meeting and share my opinion to show I could add value. Over time, **you learn you don't have to always 'prove' yourself**, and the smart approach is to assimilate the views of those around the table first. Probably rather obvious, but it's always worked for me.



Jenny Nirs

CEO at Qrew - Sweden

My advice is to be prepared to work hard but also smart. Put the energy where it matters.





Leigh Doyle

Founder & CEO of Thinkify - Australia



If I could hop into a time machine and sit down with my younger self, just setting out on the vast, uncharted waters of the media landscape, I'd offer two pearls of wisdom. Each echoes with the resonance of lessons learned through years of steering radio stations, maneuvering print publications, and now running the digital performance agency that is Thinkify in Australia.

Firstly, to young Leigh, bubbling with ideas and innovative solutions: "Beware of the imposter lurking within."

Imposter syndrome is a shadowy figure that tiptoed behind me at various crossroads of my journey. It whispered in my ear that perhaps my ideas weren't valuable enough or that I wasn't truly fit for the leadership mantle. In retrospect, there were moments of pure brilliance, missed opportunities, where I allowed that whisper to hold me back, to second-guess those sparks of creativity. Be conscious of it. Acknowledge its presence, but don't let it dictate your actions. Your ideas have merit; trust in them.

The second piece of advice: "Patience, Leigh."

In our fast-paced world, it's tempting to chase the horizon, always focusing on what's next, what we don't yet have. But here's the truth I've come to realize: success is not about reaching a far-off destination. It's about the journey itself, every bump and twist, every high and low. If you're constantly gazing into the distance, you risk tripping on the present. The rollercoaster of life, especially in the volatile media sector, demands that you stay present, grounded, and patient. Only with patience can you truly navigate the complexities of each moment and savor the joys of the journey.

So, young Leigh, armed with this wisdom, venture forth with confidence in your ideas... **have patience, and let your journey be your true measure of success.**



Wojtek Rokosz

Co-Founder & CEO of Plenti - Poland

plenti

Reflecting on my journey and aligning it with my leadership principles, the advice I would give myself would be:

- 1) **Feel Inspired:** Seize the moment when inspiration strikes. It's perishable, and acting on it promptly is key. Execution trumps excessive planning, and a bias towards action defines our pace.
- 2) **Stay Focused:** Maintain unwavering focus on the vision and mission. Exercise ruthless selectivity and execute chosen tasks with undivided attention. This focus nurtures abundance and fuels our journey towards success.
- 3) **Keep Shipping:** Be the architects of your fate. Embrace a 'can-do' attitude and turn intention into action. Celebrate each problem solved as a landmark on the journey, making ideas a reality.
- 4) **Seek Truth:** Ground decisions in real data and customer feedback. Embrace transparency and adjust the course when needed. This commitment to truth fosters continuous learning and evolution.
- 5) **Build Trust:** Foster authentic relationships and align actions with stakeholders' interests. Create a supportive environment, value dialogue, and work collectively towards solutions. Trust is the foundation of collective success.



Anne Hartslief

Co-Founder of Lockstep - South Africa & UK



- 1) **Check your Optimism Bias:** It's great to be optimistic, but it's equally important to balance that optimism with a healthy dose of realism.
- 2) **Prioritize Personal Growth:** Invest in your personal growth as much as your professional development. Learning, growing, and evolving as an individual will benefit not only your career but also your life.
- 3) **Build a Supportive Business Community:** Surround yourself with a community of like-minded individuals who believe in you and your goals. Having a network that backs you and roots for your success can be a tremendous source of motivation and support.
- 4) **Work-Life Integration, Not Balance:** Instead of chasing an elusive work-life balance, focus on work-life integration. This means finding ways to harmonize your personal and professional life, allowing for flexibility and adaptability as circumstances change.
- 5) **Clarify Your Priorities:** Get crystal clear about what truly matters to you personally and professionally. Knowing your priorities will guide your decision-making and keep you aligned with your goals.
- 6) **Awareness of Knowledge Gaps:** You don't have to have all the answers, but you do need to be aware of what you don't know.
- 7) **Play to Win, Not to Lose:** Don't just play it safe; play to win. Taking calculated risks and pushing boundaries can lead to significant growth and achievement.
- 8) **View Challenges as Opportunities:** Be real about your challenges, but always see them through the lens of opportunity. Every obstacle you face is a chance to learn, adapt, and become stronger.
- 9) **Recognize Your Constant Impact:** Remember that you're always creating an impact, whether positive or otherwise. Be mindful of your influence on others and make it a force for good.
- 10) **Know Your Identity and Values:** Understand who you are and what you stand for. Live your values authentically and unapologetically, both personally and professionally.



Faisal Fakhoury

Founder & CEO of Luxury Bookings - USA

Always keep in mind that:

- 1) Your network is your net worth.
- 2) You are the average of the five people you hang out with most.
- 3) Doing whatever you want, whenever you want, with whoever you want is the ultimate flex.
- 4) Your reputation speaks for itself.
- 5) Honesty is the best policy.



Benjamin Breeden

Founder & CEO of Caf2Code - USA

I have two pieces of advice for entrepreneurs:

- 1) Develop a working sales process and always, always add new opportunities to the top of the funnel. That will solve most challenges in a new business.
- 2) Be decisive. Make the difficult decision, implement it and move forward.





Domenico Mangiacapra

Founder-Board Member & Executive Growth Manager at Henshin Group - UK



My focus is always on uniqueness – the stronger the uniqueness, the easier it is to penetrate the market.

Uniqueness is not only represented by the features of your product/service but also by the ability to foster and tell a new culture of innovation that contributes to building a more sustainable, equitable and inclusive world.

When you start from scratch, concentrate on understanding the market and design an evolution model that allows you to involve bigger players as allies in your business.

When assessing and looking at the competition, think about the difference between your product/service and that of your competitor, with the ultimate goal in mind: turning your competitor into your best customer or partner!



Mary Rummyantzeva

Co-Founder & CEO of Pythia World - USA

What I wish I had told myself a long ago:

- 1) **Gift yourself time:** You need a gap year for your startup. Save money for this period. People buy cars, flats and houses. It is less common to buy the time for your dream. You are allowed to do uncommon things.
- 2) **Be brave enough to face reality:** Be brave, even when it's painful, hard to accept, or not in your plan. When you see things, you can do something about them. When you hide from them, you can't. Facing reality is the only way to cultivate courage.
- 3) **Stabilize yourself:** Don't allow panic and anxiety to interfere with your business. Find a way daily to prepare yourself for the challenges of life and business. For me, it is martial arts and meditation. In critical moments, you will need your strength, clear mind and will. Invest time to cultivate them.

I tell myself daily while practicing martial arts: "How else can we forge our own path if not through the pain?"

Pythia



Edoardo Ceffa

Co-Founder of inNavi.it - Italy

Founding a start-up is certainly risky but very exciting. It means setting off towards a destination that is unknown, whose path is neither defined nor definable. That's why I absolutely believe that (after my experiences) anyone who wants to become a founder, must have these three crucial steps in mind: **think and try, validate and scale.**

A start-up must focus on a real problem, solving it through an impactful solution. You don't need to develop a revolutionary technology from day one. Just ask your target audience if that solution can solve their problem. If their feedback is positive, then you can think about creating a strong team, looking for partners, etc. and starting your venture.

Today, it's possible to validate any idea very easily, starting with AI tools and promoting it through certain target communities. These are the foundations for a truly successful strategy for anyone who wants to start a new business without committing from day one money, too much time or getting caught up in the euphoria of becoming an entrepreneur.

To this end, I believe that having senior partners in the company is very important: you can have the support of those who have already embarked on this path, helping to clarify the way forward.





Alex Zhukevich

Founder & CEO of NFT Moon Metaverse - UAE



The most important thing is to **continue to act despite difficulties or obstacles**. I would like to make a comparison: We live thanks to the fact that the heart beats. If it stops beating, death will happen. So, in business, keep beating like a heart.

The second tip: keep learning, don't consider yourself the smartest and that you know everything. **Be a student in life**. All the money in this world somehow comes from people. Build relationships with people in the first place, and do not put money in the first place. You will see that your results in life will be much greater, both in money and other aspects of life.



Robert Stockley

Co-Founder of Opzer - Estonia



Move fast, and don't be afraid to fail. You will learn much faster with practice than with theory. Find a market you are passionate about or interested in. Identify a problem that they face, one that enough people encounter to make it a viable business. Then, learn the required skills to fix it. Always provide as much value as you can. Value builds trust and credibility and will allow you to get noticed earlier on.



Isaac Cruz Perdomo

Co-Founder of Opzer - Estonia

If you want to grow a business, focus on its current constraints. Here's why that matters: There's always a reason a business isn't growing. Earlier in my career, I didn't have the ability to easily identify what the constraint of my businesses was. Or I simply didn't have the skill or talent to solve the constraint. That got me stuck for years.

For most entrepreneurs, two constraints matter most:

- the ability to acquire customers and
- the ability to retain them (aka, make them stay or buy again).

Master (or hire someone good at) marketing and sales until you get so good that it isn't the constraint of the business. Then, master (or hire someone good at) customer experience and retention. There are other things you'll have to learn (or hire for) along the way, but if you get these right, business becomes much easier.





Tina Baznik

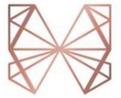
CEO at INNO Legal - Slovenia

If I were to start again, I would always **keep in mind that good things take time and be less anxious and worried about the results.** I would find a niche expertise, excel at it, educate myself constantly, and let the world know that I am truly an expert in this specific area. And never distance myself from that, even when money was tight.

Taking on every project may make you good at many things but not great at any of them. By doing so, you risk getting lost in mediocrity and in the crowd. Stand out, work hard, pick your winning expertise, be the best in it, and stick to it. **The world recognizes you sooner or later; just be patient.**

On a more personal note (because ultimately, you are dealing with people, regardless of the industry), **never burn bridges, because kindness can take you far.** Sometimes, you cannot find mutual understanding with someone. Take your part of accountability for it, say sorry, be respectful – you may meet them at some other occasion, and then it's up to your past behavior whether he/she offers you a new opportunity or not.

Keep your integrity intact and never compromise it. This also applies to your values. You always have to be able to sleep calmly at night, look at yourself or someone else in the eyes, and have a clear conscience – in the end, that is all that matters.



INNO LEGAL
legal transformation for your innovation



Andrew Choi

Co-Founder & CEO of SuperBooking AI - USA

Starting with networking: Begin by building a strong professional network early; it's a crucial step. It's not just what you know but also who you know that matters. Using your connections can help you find opportunities, collaborate on projects, and seek advice.

Next, diverse skill set: Reflecting on my diverse experience as a tech lead at companies like Coinbase, Microsoft, LinkedIn, Snapchat, IBM, and BlackBerry, I emphasize exploring various technologies and industries. This diversification keeps your skills relevant and prepares you for changing trends.

Continuous learning is key: In the dynamic fields of tech and finance, staying updated is vital. Commit to lifelong learning, whether through formal education or self-study, to stay innovative.

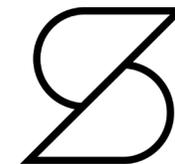
Risk-Taking is critical: Drawing from my experience as the CEO of SuperNormal (which also created SuperBooking), a top-grossing web3 IP brand in Korea backed by Rich Miner, I advise my younger self not to shy away from calculated risks. Evaluate opportunities carefully, but don't let fear hold you back.

Investment strategy: My role as a General Partner at an SV growth equity fund taught me the importance of sound investment strategies. Maintain a diversified portfolio and watch for emerging trends, as seen in our investments in companies like SpaceX, Anthropic, Consensys, Discord, and others.

Emphasize academic excellence: Graduating as the top-ranked student in the University of Waterloo's computer engineering program was a significant achievement. A strong academic foundation is crucial for future success.

Lastly, stress work-life balance: Amidst ambitious career pursuits, don't neglect personal well-being. Balance between work and life is vital for mental and physical health and long-term success.

In summary, my advice to my younger self revolves around networking, skill diversity, continuous learning, calculated risk-taking, investment strategies, academic excellence and work-life balance. These principles have guided my journey and contributed to my success in tech and investment.





Godfrey Tundube

Founder of GrowthZulu - Netherlands

Prioritise high-impact activities that can significantly propel your business forward. Often, other tasks may seem important but are merely distractions. If you feel fear or hesitation about a particular task, it's a strong indication that tackling it could lead to substantial growth.

Your brain's instinct to avoid discomfort might be holding you back, so push through that fear and focus on the activities that truly matter for your business's success.



Mladen Fernežir

Co-Founder & Lead Data Scientist at Velebit AI - Croatia

From the top of my head, I'd say it like this: Start networking early, share what you learn, surround yourself with great people, find your role models, and dive deep into your goals and interests!





Damjan Blagojević

Founder of Resulting / Results-oriented Consulting – Slovenia



Entrepreneurship is not a sprint – it's an exhausting marathon with many obstacles on the path to the finish line. Only to find out there is no finish line!

It's definitely not a 'sport' for everyone as it requires enormous amounts of dedication, hard work, long hours in the office and outside of it, vision, the pure power of will, rising above self-doubt, continuously battling inner battles and a bit of good fortune to top it all.

What is the main advice I would give to future entrepreneurs? Well, for starters, don't become one! – joking.

On a serious note, though, **I believe the key is not to think about the process too much but to try to enjoy the process instead.** Because if you don't enjoy the process, if you don't enjoy the road, you will probably never reach the destination.

Also, to be very pragmatic – have an exit plan. Lots of entrepreneurs get caught up in a lifetime of hustle. I don't believe that is the reason why anyone starts their own company and it's certainly not the best reason. The main motive should be to create a prosperous life and future for yourself and your family.

Last but not least, when things get really tough and rough always remember why you have started in the first place!



David Amir

Co-Founder & CEO of PAteam - Israel

In my opinion, the best advice I would give myself is this: **as the owner of the business, think of it as a business and not just a job.**

Allow me to elaborate on the difference:

As a business owner, you have specific financial goals to accomplish. These objectives should be pursued through a structured business plan, considering various variables. On the other hand, recognize that you also function as an employee within the business. In this capacity, it's essential to clearly define goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for that role – and then rigorously maintain them.

Regarding the employee aspect, I like to ask myself this objective question: If the situation were such that I were a different person managing myself as an employee, would I hire them? Would I fire them? And for the rest – always monitor what you are doing and seek ways to improve and structure it.

PA
TEAM



Harsh Gautam

Co-Founder & CEO of Workwall - USA



Reflecting on my journey with Workwall Inc., the advice I would impart to my younger self, embarking on the entrepreneurial path with the foresight I've gained, would center around three core principles: resilience, focus and empathy.

- 1) **Resilience:** The road to building a successful company is never linear. I would advise myself to embrace every setback as a stepping stone towards greater achievements. Each challenge is an opportunity to learn and grow, not just as a leader but as an individual.
- 2) **Focus:** In the early stages of a startup, resources are limited, and time is of the essence. I would encourage my younger self to maintain a laser focus on the core product offerings and customer satisfaction, ensuring that every decision aligns with the company's mission and long-term goals.
- 3) **Empathy:** Building a company is not just about product development and market penetration; it's about the people and its human aspect. Fostering a culture of empathy within the team, understanding the customers' needs deeply, and building genuine connections within the industry is necessary for sustainable growth.



Boško Prastalo

Founder & CEO of Business Networking & Sellution - Slovenia

If I were to start my business journey again, I would advise myself **not to be afraid to admit my vulnerability and seek help from others**. Strategically partnering and collaborating with people who are more experienced is crucial for success. Building strong relationships and learning from the experiences of others are invaluable in business. I would dedicate much more time to strategic networking.



Susan Roberts

Founder & CEO of The 1182 Group - USA

Every minute you spend networking will pay you back tenfold. You never know when a connection will have valuable inputs or connections that will catapult you forward.



THE 1182
—GROUP—





Mike Amato

Founder of The Better Way to Win - USA

My career spans almost 40 years, mostly in financial services. I started answering the phone as a temporary employee for a regional bank, and 24 years later, I was the president of that bank, which had grown to be the 6th largest in the US. Along the way, I learned so much about myself, how to accelerate a career, recover from failure and transition from an execution-focused manager into a strategic, inspirational leader. The following are a few of the themes that I would like to share with anyone just beginning their career.

The first thing to understand is that building a business involves taking risks. And taking risks means that failure is not only possible, it's highly likely. While you certainly want to reduce that risk and you don't plan to fail, the key takeaway is that the best lessons are learned through failure. This is the difference between Knowledge and Wisdom. Experience makes you wise, and challenges make you wiser. Take the lessons learned from a failed business, product or strategy, document the wisdom gained and go at it again. You will be much likelier to succeed.

Second, building a business is not just about creating a product. The product dominates one's decision to launch a business, but a business involves many other aspects to succeed. An entrepreneur needs a comprehensive strategy that includes knowing your target customer, the size of the market, financial resources, sales/marketing plans and financial projections. This leads to creating a solid plan. As your business grows, you will spend more time managing business performance through the plan vs a myopic focus on product.

The last thing I will mention here is the culture eats strategy for breakfast. After you've built the strategy, it's your culture that will determine your success. Since culture is the manifestation of all human interactions in your company, it's your shared values that inform these interactions and become the most important driver of a functional, high-performing culture. Never ever forget this, no matter how large your company grows.





Reece Wilson

Co-Founder & Head of Marketing at Utime - USA

While I am early in my career, I have learned a lot as a startup founder and would offer the following advice to those getting started in business:

- 1) **Choose your co-founders and partners wisely!** Prioritize character, not ability, when building your team. If you get the wrong people on the bus, it can destroy the best businesses.
- 2) **Leave your ego at the door.** Collaboration is crucial, and you must be willing to accept advice and feedback.
- 3) **Be a generalist!** In the age of A.I., being a generalist has never been so important. Understanding enough to communicate with all members of your team effectively is important. You don't have to be the expert at everything, but you must be able to recruit the experts and understand them enough to ask the right questions and establish realistic goals. As a founder or leader, you must be able to wear multiple hats!
- 4) **Finally, I want to encourage you to enjoy the process.** Running a startup is no easy task, and it may very well fail, but the people you'll meet, the things you'll learn, and the places you'll go make it transformative.





Sari Abdo

Co-Founder & CEO of hungerhub - Canada



Embrace what comes your way: having a diverse background isn't a limitation. Let it foster your creativity. Your academic background might not align with your entrepreneurial venture, and that's okay. I went to one of Canada's highest-rated schools and studied something entirely unrelated to my profession. Diverse experiences can provide unique perspectives and solutions. Embrace your journey, no matter how winding the path may seem.

Fall in love with the problem: Instead of focusing solely on products or solutions, fall in love with a problem. Your genuine desire to solve it will drive innovation and keep you motivated during challenging times.

The startup conundrum: Starting from scratch is no easy feat, especially when faced with stiff competition. It demands resilience, persistence and a vision that goes beyond immediate challenges.

Sustainability over hype: While many startups rush to secure funding and hope to find profitability later, I set out with a different mindset. I believed in creating a company that was profitable and sustainable from the outset. Bootstrapping might be challenging, but it brings discipline, focus, and a deep understanding of your business's core values. Bootstrap for as long as you can (it also increases your valuation), and don't follow a path prescribed by others.

Patience is more than a virtue: If I could whisper one thing to my younger self as I embarked on this journey, it would be this: patience is paramount. Entrepreneurship is a marathon, not a sprint. Celebrate small victories, learn from setbacks, and always remember that enduring success takes time.

To all budding entrepreneurs: Trust in your vision, value your unique journey, and remember that every challenge brings with it a lesson. Your path might not be straightforward, but with passion and patience, it will undoubtedly be rewarding.



Jekabs Endzins

Founder & CEO of Roibox - Latvia

Mission, vision, and culture are not mere buzzwords; they are the essence of your success. In particular, culture is not some abstract concept taught in business schools; it's the heart and soul of your organization. Expand your network! Remember, "If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room." Prioritize your well-being, both physical and mental. Don't wait – launch quicker! Aim to launch at least twice as fast as you initially thought was possible.



Jay Rajagopalan Aiyar

Co-Founder & CEO of BrainTribes - USA

After being a successful SAP Solution Architect and a Managing Consultant for more than 25 years, I've recently embarked on a journey of co-founding an AI/ML/NLP product start-up. Our product 'apta' results from my thinking about how to ease customer pain after listening to similar issue-related questions from every customer I've been at over the years.

The advice I'd give myself if I were to start all over again is that I should have jumped on the product bandwagon to ease my customer's pain a long while ago. In addition, I should have honed my storytelling abilities up front.





Jennifer L. Ferrari

CEO & President at Education Research & Development Institute - USA



If I could offer advice to my younger self embarking on this entrepreneurial journey once more, I'd remind myself of the following:

- 1) **Core values are your best compass.** Never waver from your beliefs; they'll always steer you in the right direction.
- 2) **Embrace deep listening as a cornerstone of leadership.** It's critical to really hear and understand diverse perspectives to effectively design and solve.
- 3) **The best ideas come from the synergy, collective wisdom, creativity, and will of your team.** Bring diverse perspectives and skills to the table and nurture and protect relationships.
- 4) **Your personal network has more power and influence than you ever imagined.** Lean into your people.
- 5) **Think broadly, keep an open mind, and always ask the question, "How might we?"** Embrace the "genius of and" and reject the "tyranny of or."
- 6) **Stay positive.** Optimism is contagious and makes all the difference when overcoming obstacles.
- 7) **Love what you do and be bold.** Actively seek and find joy in your work. It makes the journey so much sweeter.



Abelardo Cruz Osorio

Founder & CEO of DEFTEKK - USA

DEFTEKK

There are several points to consider before starting a business and during the process. Even before you start, it's a good idea to ask yourself: "Why do it?" If your answer is "to get rich, to be your own boss, or that you don't like to be managed by anyone," then maybe you probably shouldn't do it.

Starting this path is an avalanche of responsibilities and emotions that can sometimes be very difficult to cope with. Responsibility is not always for everyone. My most recurrent advice is "stay logical and even-tempered," along with some other points that I will discuss below:

- 1) **You have to learn to work with concentration and practice patience.** Consider the perspectives of others, as they bring great contributions to our path of entrepreneurship.
- 2) **Eliminate any trace of arrogance that may prevent you from valuing and understanding different points of view,** especially when you do not agree with them due to your own way of thinking or doing things.
- 3) **Always keep moving and avoid inert states in all areas of your organization.** In a world in constant movement, standing still is the same as being left behind.
- 4) **Do not cling to what does not produce.** Do not fall platonically in love with your own ideas and concepts if they are not producing results.
- 5) **Have the ability to self-examine yourself and know that the road is full of stones.** The road to success is full of difficulties, and never be afraid to pivot the initial idea. Pivoting is a way to perfect a product.
- 6) **You must always be in touch with your team and your customers.** That will give you the exact coordinates of where you are and where you need to go.
- 7) **Being a kind and flexible leader is not synonymous with weakness.** A weak leader is one who, when faced with difficult decisions, does not make them.
- 8) **Better done than perfect.** Moving forward despite all the difficulties should be the priority of a leader. Advancing a little, despite how steep the road gets, is better than not doing it since, in real life, the inertia of the slope will likely make you fall if you do not move even a little.

By following the above recommendations, success will eventually come. However, success is not the goal; it is the start of the race where you are with those you need to be with to become even greater. I think these are my most important recommendations on the way to what you are willing to do to get where you plan to go. It applies to both life and entrepreneurship.



Christian Sørstrøm

Founder of LalaToys & Woodstein - Denmark

LALATOYS
woodstein

Embrace diversity and collaborate with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Strategically build a lean startup team that encompasses a broad range of expertise to effectively address all critical areas of the startup.

Start when you are young! Recognize the advantages of pursuing startup aspirations during your university years, as the balance between time, energy, and focus may evolve with life's changing circumstances.

Most people will help you – just ask. Tap into the collective wisdom and experience of those around you. Experienced individuals often find it rewarding to mentor young entrepreneurs, so seek out the most suitable advisor for your specific needs.

Seek opportunities, influence and impact. Seek out mentors and role models who have achieved success in your field. Successful people did something right – make sure to learn from that.

Be a learner – prioritize time for educating yourself. Challenge yourself to break free from repetitive patterns and embrace a path of continuous growth and development. Set ambitious goals and devise strategies to achieve them, constantly seeking new challenges and opportunities.



Dino Karic

Co-Founder & CEO of FLOK (formerly WalQinn) - Switzerland

Stay adaptable and open-minded. Realize that change is not just inevitable but also a potent catalyst for growth. Also, try to remember that you always need to strive to find the perfect mix of seeing the big picture and pushing the company forward while realizing that the devil is in the details and that you need to go to every pore of the company and make it optimized.

I would also remind myself that **setbacks are just stepping stones to success.** Every challenge and mistake contributes to personal and professional growth, and it's essential to approach them with patience and resilience.



Gregor Kosi

Founder & CEO of Great Leadership Solutions - Slovenia

Be the source of inspiration for the world, and your source will never dry. Remember that what you see in the world is nothing but a reflection of your own thoughts, feelings and actions. See life as the ultimate game! Never stop learning the rules and improving your game to enjoy life even more. The best games in life can't be won – relationships, love, health, art, and business are all games without an end goal.

So, all you can do is **always play at your best!** Play games motivated by your heart, not by obligation, fear, guilt, or shame. And always remember – in the end, whatever you do or do not do, you can't make it out alive.





Debbie Monthy

CEO at James Michel Foundation - The Republic of Seychelles



Purse your passion: Yes, this is a common phrase, but a very true one! When you're passionate about the work you do, you feel more excited – you are more motivated to put your best foot forward and WILL continue to do so.

Networking: This is not only about trading information. It is an avenue for creating long-term relationships with mutual benefits. You'll get visibility, a strong support network and grow both personally and professionally through other people's experiences!

"Rip off that band-aid!": Expose yourself to situations and opportunities you find daunting and intimidating. This will build your confidence, and the more you do it, the more it becomes second nature. A great example of this is public speaking and taking risks that have the potential to succeed.

Have a life motto: A phrase to remind yourself of the reason you do what you do. Through reassurance, especially self-reassurance, you will empower yourself to face obstacles and guide your career. It will help you focus on your goals and values and have a positive impact on your overall well-being and satisfaction in your career.

Know your numbers: This is more career-specific and varies with types of businesses, BUT numbers are meaningful data that are extremely powerful when used correctly. The ability to share key numbers easily and confidently will allow you to make sound judgments and decisions based on evidence.



Yael Rodriguez

Founder & CEO of Artekz - USA | Leading Partner at BDO Digital - Mexico

Most founders and entrepreneurs believe that the process is secondary and that you should focus on generating profits. **The reality is that the process comes first.** As you analyze the process, from lead acquisition to customer service, you will realize many things that you might not have considered from the beginning. It will help you close gaps before they even exist, understand your own business model from an advanced perspective, and optimize it preventatively.

However, it is very important not to get stuck in the world of ideas. **Execution is crucial.** As you plan your process and link steps, you should implement and at least simulate the workflow. This involves the use of technology from start to finish. An ERP is ideal even if you are in the initial phases of your project. It will increase your confidence and commitment, and will save you a lot of time when it goes live. The same principle applies to anything if you want to accelerate your growth: Position yourself in the future and understand how things work in a successful environment, then come back to the present and execute with strength to create the future you visualize.

Most people will advise you to “focus on your specialty”. The truth is that in the 21st century, a strong-willed multi-skill profile outstands any probability, especially as a founder, because you will develop an elevated sense of empathy towards different stakeholders, which in turn will help you develop the growth and a roadmap for the people that will make your business grow. **Don't be afraid to learn and execute things out of your “professional zone”.** Embrace it with grace and develop yourself as much as you can. Take responsibility of your own process and remember that things don't happen by 'luck.'

Just as technology is important, the **focus on the experience is of utmost importance**, and I'm not talking about “customer experience”. I'm referring to “human experience”. Every human being involved in any step of the process should have the best experience possible: your employees, customers, providers, applicants, etc. Every human being who acts at any step of your process holds a special key to unlocking your true potential. Give them an elevated experience and they will elevate themselves, others, and your company.





Nicoline Spruijt

CEO at Milestones - Belgium

I would have done two things sooner:

- 1) **Actively create a (small) network of diverse people** (not only in your field and business) to support, inspire and motivate you. You have to maintain, nurture, and share not only “with a purpose” but especially just for the energy and dynamics it brings.
- 2) **Make an Insight Profile** to understand yourself, your color mix, and how you affect others, as well as how others see you. Knowing yourself and understanding how your presence, energy, and behavior can inspire and affect individuals and teams is crucial in whatever role you pursue in your career/life.



James C. Stone Jr.

Founder of SkyDog Social Digital Entertainment - USA

- 1) **Trust your instincts.** Don't let societal expectations or your parents' opinions guide your career choices. Follow your intuition.
- 2) **Mistakes are part of the journey** and paramount in the learning process.
- 3) **Don't be afraid to follow your dreams.** Be in control of your own destiny. Your friends and colleagues want you to be successful; however, by human nature, not more successful than them. As a result, don't be discouraged by their lack of enthusiasm.





Žiga Patačko Koderman

Co-Founder & CTO of zerodays - Slovenia



Looking back at my professional journey over the past few years, I would say that embracing a culture of innovation and adopting a people-focused approach have been the core elements contributing to zerodays' success.

So here are a few tips I would give myself or others starting their professional journey:

- 1) **Communication is Key:** A good software developer is only as good as their communication skills. Don't underestimate the importance of soft skills.
- 2) **Share Your Knowledge:** Invest in expanding your knowledge but ensure that it's not hoarded. Actively work on knowledge sharing within a team.
- 3) **Embrace Exploration:** Don't be afraid to explore, learn, and try new technologies and to make mistakes in the process – just make sure to learn something from them.
- 4) **Innovation with Purpose:** While it's important to do things differently, avoid change for the sake of being different. Innovate with purpose and ensure that you are actually creating value with your actions.
- 5) **Have Fun:** Taking a few extra minutes for team bonding and enjoyment is never wasted.



Luka Debevec

Founder & CEO of Kauch - Slovenia

The most important thing of all is to put yourself first, in the sense of working on yourself to mature personally. To realize that you are not the best version of yourself yet, that you still have potential, and that you are willing to change in order to become that. When you have the right mindset, you are able to understand and execute the tasks needed to take you further in business. This then also reflects in other areas in your life.

The second most important thing is consistency and focus. In today's world, there are so many distractions at every turn that it's very difficult to maintain focus. When you manage to maintain focus and stay consistent or persistent, you are a winner.

KAUCH



Irene Giani

Co-Founder & CEO of Deeva - Italy

Believe in your capabilities, ask yourself the right questions, and when you feel you are limiting yourself due to fear, confront that fear.

DEEVA
IL SALONE, DA TE



Joanna Abeyie

Founder & Director of Blue Moon - UK

I would tell myself to recognise the value of the work I do. In the early days, I offered many of our services for free or for a fee that didn't cover the cost of time, execution, or expertise. Therefore, my first piece of advice would be to **be confident about the value your business adds and the problem you solve.**

The second piece of advice would be to really **consider the value and purpose of partnerships.** Be clear on the role and need of the partnership you are considering. Do you really need that partnership? Are your values aligned? Is the decision you're making coming from a place of fear? i.e. Are you lacking the confidence in your own ability to scale, and is that potentially driving your business decisions?

When seeking investment, spend as much time as possible with potential stakeholders or the organization in which a merger or acquisition might take place. The most uncomfortable feeling is signing on the dotted line and suddenly, some months later, feeling that dread that this wasn't the right move. The more time you spend getting to know an organization or person, the less likely you will make a hasty decision. You only start to really know the values of both individuals and/or organizations in times of challenge and hardship.

My third piece of advice is to **be careful of measuring others on your own level of understanding or heart/values;** you leave yourself open to huge disappointment. When someone shows you their values and principles the first time, believe them. So much emotional turmoil in business can be avoided if we remember that everyone is different, and you can't expect you from others.

Finally, **trust your gut.** It will always tell you – often immediately – that something isn't right. Trust it the first time.

Embrace the journey – it's fulfilling, liberating and is a constant learning process.





Miloš Čanković

Co-Founder & CEO of Brilliant Buttons - Northern Ireland

 **Brilliant Buttons**

Starting again on this entrepreneurial adventure armed with knowledge and experience from these past three years, I'd tell myself this: Clarity is power. Have a super clear picture of where you want to go and what you stand for and don't let other people derail you.

First thing first, **don't rush into hiring and marketing**. Plan them carefully and test your strategies. Patience is your ally; let things unfold at the right pace.

But here's the big secret: **Embrace failure**. Don't let fear hold you back from trying bold ideas. Sometimes, the craziest-sounding plans turn out to be the best. Failure is your teacher; it's a step closer to the right path. Don't let fear be a blocker but a motivation to push you forward.

Being a leader means being ready to stumble, learn, and keep moving forward. **Resilience and determination will be your best friends on this rollercoaster ride**. Find ways to support your mindset and learn what puts you in a negative mindset so you can understand it and overcome it and what keeps you in a positive mindset. This can be key when hard days come.

Your vision is like a lighthouse guiding your ship through stormy seas. Make it sharp, make it bright. Let it light up the way for you and your team. Revisit it often to keep you on track.

Yet, a vision needs companions – values and a mission. These are the roots that will anchor your team and attract the right people. Look for people who share your values and believe in your mission; together, you'll achieve wonders. When building your team, remember that it's not just about skills; it's about fitting into your culture and believing in your mission. This will motivate and engage your team to grow and achieve more.

So, don't fear a stumble, dream big, and stay true to your values. That's the magic potion for this adventure. Trust it, and let it guide you to a story of success worth telling. You've got this!



Grace Law

Founder & CEO of GL Success - Singapore

Starting a business can be tough, but leading a team that provides excellent services and receives positive feedback is incredibly encouraging. When my team stays happy, achieves financial stability, and keeps improving, it reaffirms that we are on the right path. With this perspective, the struggles we face seem insignificant, spurring me on to pursue my goals.

To achieve success in business, consider the following:

- 1) **Proper Planning and Proposal:** Dedicate time to thorough planning and create a well-thought-out business proposal. Don't shy away from taking calculated risks and seeking advice from experienced entrepreneurs. Embrace new ideas; they might lead to incredible outcomes!
- 2) **Supportive Network:** Surround yourself with a supportive network of mentors, colleagues, and friends. Collaborating with like-minded individuals provides invaluable insights and encouragement during both successes and challenges. A strong support system is vital for maintaining motivation and focus on your goals.
- 3) **Continuous Learning:** Never underestimate the power of continuous learning. Stay curious and open to acquiring new knowledge. Read books, attend seminars, and keep an eye on industry trends. Adapting to the changing landscape keeps your business relevant and competitive. Remember, staying humble is crucial; it allows you to keep learning and growing.
- 4) **Self-Care:** Remember to take care of yourself as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship can be demanding, so find a balance between work and personal life. Prioritize self-care, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and make time for hobbies and loved ones. Being happy and well-rested will equip you to tackle challenges effectively as an entrepreneur.

By following these principles, we can increase the chances of success and fulfillment as entrepreneurs. Every journey is unique, so embrace challenges and learn from your experiences along the way.

Always remember that entrepreneurship is a journey of growth and discovery. By persistently pushing forward, you will bring success within your reach. Challenges are opportunities for learning and growth, leading you closer to achieving your dreams. With dedication and perseverance, you can overcome any obstacle and build a thriving business that makes a positive impact on the world. Keep striving for excellence, and success will be within your reach.





Jaka Klemenčič

CEO at Valkyrie Global - Cyprus



I am currently in the most important role of my life as the CEO of Valkyrie Global, and I am building a successful story for our new brand, Valkyrie. I still have a lot to learn, but my past experiences have taught me valuable lessons. I adhere to four guidelines in my role, which also apply to most management positions in other companies.

Firstly, there is trust in your team. You must be connected and open to your team members, be direct, and encourage open and heated discussions. You have a team so they can do their job, and you must trust them. Great leaders listen to their team, empower them, and make them feel important in the journey.

Secondly, there are risks and fast decisions. As a CEO, you sometimes have to take significant risks, and it is essential to prioritize clarity over certainty when making decisions. You will never be 100% sure if your decision is the right one, but good leaders have some kind of instinct that guides them. When you do not have 100% certainty about your decision, it is important to follow your instinct and make a fast decision. The decisions you make impact your brand, your team, and your success. If you love what you do, your clarity will come naturally.

The next thing is to believe in your story, your team, and never give up. Persistence is one of the beautiful qualities of great leaders that helps them push forward their story and their team. Even when everything is going wrong, and there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel, where your team is not seeing through, persistence will get you there.

Lastly, there is technology. As we learn from history, technology is always evolving, and it is important to follow, learn, and adapt to the latest technology. We must read, learn, be aware of what is happening around us, and take an interest in the latest technology. You never know when a technological development that may not interest you or 90% of other people will become an essential part of future business practices. After all, we know that technological progress is always a few steps ahead of us, just like the goal of any ambitious entrepreneur.



Gift Braundi

Founder & CEO of Southern Pacific Group | Founder of The Braundi Foundation - South Africa

The journey of entrepreneurship is not a smooth one; you will be tried and tested by the harsh markets, environment, and politics.

Starting off in Africa was my only choice because I believed in transforming our supply chain and increasing productivity to enjoy the fruits of our land, which are the vast minerals underground. Infrastructure was and still is the biggest challenge we face, but it has made Southern Pacific Group a favorite among clients because we managed to break barriers one step at a time, ensuring the supply of working tools and resources is delivered on time and in good shape and quality. If you decide to embark on the journey to financial freedom, be very flexible and be willing to learn – quickly.



Hana Sirco

Founder of Kreativa404 | Head of Marketing & Sales at Solution404 - BiH

If I could go back, I'd tell myself two key things:

Firstly, to invest in mastering one high-income skill and hone it until I excel. It's about depth over breadth. Becoming exceptionally good at one thing can really set you apart in the business realm.

Secondly, I would emphasize leveraging social media to work in my favor. The opportunities provided by social media platforms today are endless, and they can significantly amplify your reach and impact.





Denis Bornšek

Founder & CEO of Vitalno Podjetje - Slovenia

Enthusiasm is very welcome and a really good fuel to start your ambitious project off, but you have to keep your feet on the ground and stay level-headed in the approach to building a business. To make any idea or business thrive, it needs a lot of humility, being open to new ideas, learning, trial and error and, above all else, patience.

I would advise myself to make sure your company has one product and that it's good and selling and then move on to new ideas, development, recruiting etc. Start positive and enthusiastic but with reasonable expectations. Mine certainly weren't, and that cost me a lot of sleepless nights and unnecessary stress.

Good business is like a tree. It can't grow to its full size in one year; it takes decades to see it in its full glory, and the same is with the majority of ideas or businesses.





Ryszard Szczepaniak

CEO at Galvo - Poland



The perspective of every person working in business is different. There is certainly no universal method or recipe for success, nor that ideal path that guarantees success in business.

If I were to start my career again with today's knowledge, **I would definitely focus on three important things with even greater care:**

- 1) Thorough education, especially in languages, communication, general knowledge, more literature, mathematics, and physics.
- 2) I would start working early but only as a freelancer at my own expense and risk in the field of trade and relationships with other people.
- 3) In my case, it was important to work in consulting, especially in companies like the big four or other equally recognized ones, to get a foundation in the way of operation and administration in a purely pragmatic dimension.

Moreover, you need to have dreams and a passion for creating. You wouldn't be afraid to dream big. Clearly set goals without fearing they might be hard to achieve. There are no such things. **Everything that is in the human mind is achievable.**

You also need to live more in the present, not worry so much about the future and not dwell on the past. I would like to be a realized stoic and live by the ideas of Epictetus. But all in all, I wouldn't change anything other than to travel more and meet wonderful people all over the world!!!



Igor Bidenko

Founder of IBV CLOUD OÜ - Ukraine & Estonia



Don't overthink things. Sometimes, it just doesn't make sense. Embrace opportunities to learn, for no one knows everything. Stay focused on your goals, yet be open to new experiences; they might change your life for the better. Surround yourself with responsibilities; don't shy away from them, as business thrives on accountability.

Understand that your situation is your own responsibility; it's your lifestyle, after all. Don't let fear hold you back; instead, let it drive you to seek safety through knowledge and courage. Stay curious about the journey and the perspectives of others.

Remember, in life, losses can occur, but they're just a chance to start anew. During good times, prepare for the bad; it's a wise strategy. It's wiser to invest in training and preparation than to face battles unprepared and strive to be financially responsible.

In your journey, discipline and persistence will be your steadfast companions, guiding you towards success.



Sarra Maatallah

Founder of eCommense - Luxembourg



- 1) **Trust Your Gut:** Always listen to your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. Your inner compass often knows what's best for you.
- 2) **Embrace Mistakes:** Mistakes are inevitable. Rather than fearing them, accept them as a part of growth. Each error is a lesson, guiding you closer to success.
- 3) **Set Boundaries:** Learn to assertively say 'no'. Not every opportunity aligns with your path. Prioritize what truly resonates with you and your goals.
- 4) **Seek Wisdom:** Actively listen to those who have walked the path before you. Their experiences can offer invaluable insights, saving you time and potential missteps.
- 5) **Find a Mentor:** Having a trusted mentor provides not just guidance but also encouragement and support. Their perspective can be instrumental in shaping your strategies.
- 6) **Take Calculated Risks:** Perfection is a myth. Regardless of age or stage in your entrepreneurial journey, there's always something new to learn. Welcome every "Day One" with a new skill or insight.
- 7) **Surround Yourself with Positivity:** Engage with those who inspire and uplift you. A network of like-minded, enthusiastic individuals can greatly enrich your journey and keep you motivated.

Remember, every step, every decision, and every experience contributes to your unique story. Embrace it all with grace and resilience.



Jaka Ažman

CEO at J&A Marsian - Slovenia



Considering that I've been running my own startup for a year and a half and I'm still on quite a thorny path, I'm not sure if I'm the right person at this stage to talk about success... Because, in reality, we are currently struggling for success in this phase.

However, I can certainly tell you what motivated me to choose this path and why I persist despite all the sacrifices, challenges, and numerous problems. That is because I love what I do. This sentiment has also been stated by the brilliant Steve Jobs and many other successful entrepreneurs. **Doing what you love gives one the stamina to move forward while facing adversity, even though every sane person would already stop and quit.**

Of course, it is also related to the fact that you actually have to work on yourself, acquire knowledge, and develop a thick skin to live and work in the zone of discomfort. What drives you forward is the vision, which is something that is non-negotiable, while operational steps can be adjusted. The vision holds the leader and the team together until the end.



Ani Eliashvili

Co-Founder of Staffilo.com - Georgia

In the dynamic landscape of the professional world, we understand that hesitation can be the biggest barrier to success. At Staffilo, we champion the belief that boundaries are often self-imposed and can be overcome with clarity and conviction. When facing decisions, we weigh the benefits, acknowledge the risks, and focus on the practical outcomes. This balanced approach helps us avoid second-guessing and keeps us aligned with our goals.

To the trailblazers and the ambitious at the threshold of their careers: **aim for excellence and maintain a clear vision.** Let your goals guide you, informed by your intuition and a practical understanding of your path. Appreciate the allure of big dreams but also pay attention to the essential details that bring them to life.

Expect challenges. Every path to innovation is littered with hidden lessons. Welcome these experiences as they refine your resilience and enrich your journey. The value of community is immense. Connect with peers who share your fervor and learn from those with different expertise. Such connections are a wellspring of insight and motivation.

Be adaptable. With a steadfast vision, let new knowledge shape your strategies. Agility is a treasured trait in our ever-evolving world. And when it comes to passion – it's the heartbeat of your career. Nurture your enthusiasm; it's the energy that propels you towards achievement.

In my experience, **the future is remote, and it is transformative.** Geographic limits are becoming obsolete, paving the way for a landscape where efficiency reigns and strategic outstaffing is essential. At Staffilo, facilitating optimization isn't just a service – it's the vanguard of our vision. In this new era, where ambition knows no bounds, it is the agile, the adaptable, and the forward-thinkers who will flourish. Set your sights on that horizon – Staffilo is here to pioneer this remote renaissance with you.



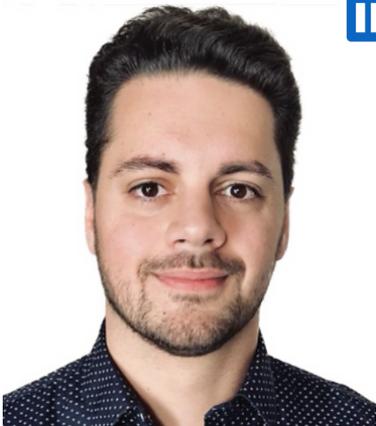


Ashish Janiani

Founder & CEO of SalesDiaries & MotivationalDiaries - USA

Don't go to school. It's often designed to make you conform, instill fear, and forget your dreams. It's as if schools were created to suppress your unlimited potential. Instead, be true to yourself. Speak your mind. Embrace being different. Learn to confront your fears by facing them head-on and doing what scares you.

Remember, you can never please everyone – relatives, friends, and colleagues. You are an individual. So, don't be burdened by "social guilt." Even if society regards you as a "great human being," there may still be people saying unfavorable things about you behind your back.



Adam Yousfi

Founder & CEO of KAY Design - Poland

Don't stop selling, even when you're fully booked – build a waiting list and prepare for a 'winter' by doing this. Don't stretch yourself too thin – my personal limit is 2-3 projects at a time. Don't expect everything to be fun and exciting – no matter how much you love what you're doing, there will always be things you hate about it that still need to be done.

If you have a feeling the project/client isn't worth it – don't take it. I had a bad feeling about all of my (later) dissatisfied customers – whether the project wasn't worthwhile or the relationship wasn't what I'd like it to be from the get-go.

Always remain calm and patient, or you will make the worst possible decisions under pressure. Be very diligent when tracking your time and budget, and conduct quarterly and annual reviews of them – even if you're still in the freelancer phase.





Lovelesh Beeharry

CEO at A4Q - Mauritius

A4Q Alliance for
Qualification

Going back in time to advise myself has always been a cherished fantasy. There are so many skills that I could have developed earlier if I had been armed with the knowledge and experiences that I have today.

A few important pieces of advice to myself, over a decade earlier, would firstly be to **embrace failures, celebrate them and enjoy the learning process afterward**. Fall, learn and rise. What failure can teach you, success cannot. Having this mindset already opens you to take initiatives and be fully engaged in them.

The second piece of advice would be to **keep the passion lighted up for what you love doing the most** and never doubt about being able to make your passion your full-time job, irrespective of what others may say to you. There were many times when I was about to give up, as others felt that I was off track. So, do not let other's words divert you from what you like the most.

Do not fear the unknown. Challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone, be curious, learn and focus on embellishing your competencies. Break your isolation bubble of introversion and connect with like-minded people, talk, and grow your network. In the end, your net worth will be your network. Step up and grab opportunities to speak in public early on to develop the most crucial skill that is now your bread and butter.

I would also advise my younger self to **take calculated risks**. I was too prudent when it came to capital investment. I had the right intuition, but the actions did not follow, as opportunities were overshadowed when I magnified all risks in my mind. So, invest in cryptocurrency and the stock market. The riskiest strategy is not taking calculated risks.

Do not overthink or over-analyze. It makes you doubt yourself, and then you become your worst enemy. So, in a nutshell, follow your passion, break out of your comfort zone, look for and take the initiative, make the most of failures, learn full-heartedly, develop skills and connect with like-minded people. Success will come to you faster.



Ramiro Aponte Monroy

CEO & President at Xeducation - Colombia



If you have the soul of an entrepreneur, **follow your dreams**. Don't look for the industry or the trending topic, even if it's supposed to make money. Follow what makes you tick when you do it.

For sure, you will be happy along the way, and when you get really good at it, then it will also give you the financial results you were looking for. It is similar to when you are choosing a university career; **follow your heart more than your reason**.

When you are passionate about what you do, you don't care about the long hours of work or the nights without sleep or food. You just think about the result, and everything else loses importance. Then you will know that you are on the right path. **The rest, you learn or find along the way**. Resources appear when they are needed. The right people cross your path. And the results finally come. As time goes by, you will look back and say, like Pablo Neruda, "I confess that I have lived."



Sabina Ivanković

CEO of Delos Employment - Slovenia



Be brave, dare yourself! True luck is always on the side of the brave; this has proven itself to me in business many times over.



Luca Campo

Co-Founder of Antone Padel - UK

ANTONE
PADEL

Embrace the Chaos: In the tumultuous world of entrepreneurship, Murphy's Law seems to be in full effect - everything that can go wrong will go wrong. Yet, I implore you to see these moments not as setbacks but as invaluable learning opportunities. Each challenge is a hidden lesson waiting to fortify your business acumen and resilience.

Time is of the Essence: In business, time is not just money; it is opportunity, momentum, and progress. Procrastination and delays can be the silent killers of your venture. Act swiftly, make decisions promptly, and never let the grass grow under your feet. The longer you wait, the more you risk losing out on potential growth and success.

Choose Your Allies Wisely: The journey of entrepreneurship is seldom a solitary one. The people you choose to bring on board can make or break your venture. Select individuals who share your vision, passion and work ethic. Cultivate a team that complements your skills and brings diverse perspectives to the table. Remember, the strength of your network is as crucial as your own personal strength.



Amen Allah Ksouri

Founder of Freelancers Club - Tunisia



Start by embracing failure, recognizing it as a natural part of the entrepreneurial journey. It's important to learn from mistakes and adapt quickly. Surround yourself with like-minded individuals to build a strong support network offering guidance and mentorship.

Prioritize continuous learning by investing in knowledge and skills. This can be achieved by seeking out mentors, reading books, taking courses and staying up to date with relevant information. It's crucial to always be in a learning mindset.

Simultaneously, highlight the importance of customer experience, placing them at the core of your efforts. Placing customers at the center of everything you do is key. Happy and satisfied customers are more likely to become repeat customers and refer your business to others. Prioritizing their needs and providing exceptional service is essential for long-term success.

Lastly, enjoy the journey. Building a business is not solely about reaching the destination; it's about the experiences, lessons learned, and personal growth along the way. It's important to celebrate small wins, take breaks when needed and find joy in the process.



Nivedita Candade

Founder & Principal of Manda - USA

Start young – the more time you have to discover your passion and hone your skills, the better positioned you are to create value and have others recognize that value. Not everyone discovers their passions early, and for the late bloomers, I'd say stay opportunistic, network, and hang out with people who will help you succeed. Always keep an eye out for opportunities – if you are happy where you are, seek opportunities to learn. If you want to move to the next step in your career, work hard and seek out sponsors and mentors who will help you. Never settle for the status quo. If you're not growing, you're dying!

As for entrepreneurship, it's a long, long road. The success stories we all see are truly one in a million. You'll need to make some choices and personal sacrifices if you choose this path. It takes a ton of grit and relentless persistence to build something and stick with it for the long haul. Choose this path after carefully weighing your goals, passion, and purpose. But beware, once you're hooked, it could be addictive!

After I hit 40, I reflected a lot on my passion and purpose, but I soon realized that although these things are incredibly important, a business cannot thrive without a focus on making money. It is important to balance this focus with responsible business practices and a commitment to delivering value to your customers. Profitability, when pursued ethically and strategically, will lead to the long-term success and growth of your business.





Keith Palmer

Founder & CEO of KPPR Events And Marketing Corp - Canada



Stay dedicated, adaptable and knowledgeable of how your purpose and vision can be applied to help others.



Vitjan Pukšič

Founder & CEO of BonApp (AppVenture) - Slovenia



In both business and life, trust and connections are vital. Trust builds relationships, fostering cooperation. Successful businessmen value others' capabilities and integrity.

Networking opens doors to partnerships and collaborations. Embrace trust, expand your network, and watch your achievements flourish in business and life.



Lucas Marie

Co-Founder & CEO of Swashy - France

- 1) Building your network starts by forging links with friends, buddies and colleagues. Opportunities don't just fall from the sky.
- 2) Setting up a business is all about administration, but to bring it to life, you need support.
- 3) As far as possible, avoid putting friends inside the company.
- 4) Business is about give and take; it's not even about money. People don't care if you pay them for the help they give you; they expect you to do them a favor when they need your skills to help them achieve their own goals.
- 5) If you're at school, listen to the lessons, but don't forget that the only thing that's really important is the school network and acquaintances.
- 6) I left school at 17, and at 21, I'm earning more than senior citizens at the end of their careers.
- 7) Surround yourself well.
- 8) A person can be in one place one day and in another place another day, and that can help in your puzzle.





Matic Broz

Founder of Photutorial - Slovenia

photutorial 

Starting off, **I'd emphasize the importance of being passionate about what you're doing.** This drive is what has always pushed me forward, even if it meant sacrificing some of my free time. Passion allows you to put in long hours every day and stay committed, even when things aren't going your way.

One of the most crucial lessons I've learned is that, at some point, you've got to **be willing to take a "leap of faith."** Sure, it's important to consider all your options and consequences, but eventually, you just have to jump into the unknown and get started. You won't achieve anything if you're constantly just planning and dreaming.

Another lesson worth sharing is that **progress is not always linear.** It might take months or even a year to see any tangible results from your work. But then, as if someone flipped a switch, things start clicking. Just remember, there'll always be ups and downs.

Lastly, **achieving success in entrepreneurship is neither easy nor quick.** It demands hard work, passion, patience, and the resolve to pick yourself up and try again, even when things aren't going as planned.



Martin Blazinšek

CEO at The Smartestway - Slovenia

Identify your strengths and channel your energy and time into activities that align with your proficiency. Acknowledge your weaknesses and gracefully delegate tasks in those areas to individuals who excel in them. Recognizing and embracing your capabilities enables you to optimize your performance in areas where you shine, fostering personal growth and efficiency.

By delegating tasks that fall outside your expertise, you not only ensure a smoother workflow but also empower others to contribute their skills, creating a collaborative and productive environment. Embracing this approach cultivates a well-rounded team and allows each member to leverage their strengths, ultimately leading to collective success.



Julie Lamb

Founder & CEO of NFT-vip.io | Director of Events at CryptoOracle Collective - USA

Find a good mentor and don't be afraid to try new ideas. Don't cut corners; get all your ducks in a row (SOW, NDA, partner agreements, Tax EIN, trademarks etc) and be very organized.

If any of this scares you enough not to do it – then maybe the entrepreneur journey isn't your path... and that's ok!





Bas Godska

Founding Partner at Acrobator Ventures - Netherlands

- 1) Be careful when choosing (new) business partners, be clear about what you expect, and don't hesitate to address uncomfortable topics.
- 2) Continuously stay curious, refresh your knowledge, and enjoy original, creative thinking.
- 3) Count your blessings!
- 4) Setbacks enrich you, embrace change and be adaptable.
- 5) Listen to what experienced investors have to say about investing; a handshake is the most important, but pay attention to details and use lawyers.
- 6) Offline and hardware investing is not really for you; embrace digital!
- 7) Boost your financial management skills and take an executive course. No need for an MBA; get a mentor.
- 8) Trust your intuition and take risks (but do research).
- 9) Prioritise like-minded founders who value people over process; those who are generous, honest and stick to promises; they are truly the best.
- 10) Write a daily journal, your own "vulnerability patch software update," and capture insights, mistakes, successes and ideas. Re-read regularly, and act.
- 11) Write a page of fiction regularly.
- 12) Surround yourself with supportive, inspiring people.
- 13) Delegate a range of tasks even if it cost more, prioritize more effectively, say 'no' more often and raise the threshold of your time's worth.
- 14) Be aware of manipulation and be more assertive.
- 15) Learn to ask more and listen to the advice of really smart folks.
- 16) Read great thinkers and writers (or get the summaries if you don't have the patience).
- 17) Validate ideas and plans, but trust your intuition. It is the best guide.
- 18) Buy fewer things, raise the quality level, and practice detaching from the tangible.
- 19) Prioritise enjoyment. Hardly ever do stuff you don't like. Enjoy the process.



Conclusion

Final statements & closing notes

4.0

Conclusion

4.0

Final statements & closing notes

Through our **Improving Entrepreneurial Journey Initiative**, we aim to provide valuable guidance to both aspiring and experienced entrepreneurs who encounter diverse challenges on their journey towards optimum success.

To make this happen, we've engaged with over 150 owners, founders, CEOs, and best-in-class leaders. We've asked these global experts about the advice they would give themselves if they were starting their entrepreneurial journey all over again, but with all the knowledge & experience they have today.

The result of these conversations and the outcome of our ongoing initiative is this yearly Brochure, which includes an in-depth article on a specific entrepreneurship topic and a collection of advice from global experts, offering invaluable guidance.

THANK YOU NOTE:

A big and heartfelt THANK YOU to each and every one of you — the 179 participants who took time out of your busy schedules to contribute to this initiative. Your warm welcome, understanding, and unwavering support for this initiative's purpose have genuinely made a difference.

Your willingness to generously share your knowledge and experiences has been truly inspiring. Your insights have proven invaluable, adding depth and richness to the initiative that wouldn't have been possible without your thoughtful input. Once again, thank you for your dedication, generosity, and commitment.

