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Introduction

The dream of starting their own business is something that many people live with for a long time before finally putting the wheels in motion.

In my case, I never thought that I would get as deeply and personally involved with a startup business as I have done in recent times. Helping to get a brand new company up and running is exhilarating, satisfying and at times just a little bit terrifying.

When preparing to take the first steps on this thrilling but daunting path it is easy to find excuses for delaying. A lack of time and a lack of money are all reasons that people use to avoid turning their startup ideas into reality. However, with most new entrepreneurs it is mainly a simple fear of the unknown that stops them from progressing.

Starting up a business is never going to be easy. In fact, it is likely to be one of the toughest and most draining things that you ever do in your life.

There is no shortcut to startup success, but I hope that by taking note of the tips and details that I have discovered you will find that your startup stands far more chance of being a roaring success.

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Chapter 1

Startup Guide

I guess that everyone comes to the idea of running their own business in different ways. For some people it is to fulfil a lifelong passion while for others it may be that they get bored being an employee in someone else's company.

Whatever route you take into this way of working there are sure to be a few defining moments in the early stages that put your resolve to the test. If you can ease past these issues then you will start to feel that your startup gets closer and closer to reality each time.



Is the Idea a Winner?



It might seem that the idea is the one part of the whole startup process that you don't need to fret about too much. However, there are some points that make this a more thought-provoking issue than you perhaps initially think.

For a start, how sure are you that your idea is original and that it could work? Many of us have an idea that we jealously guard for months or years without ever really putting it to the test.

The longer that you sit on an idea the less likely it is that you eventually do anything about it. On the other hand, you don't want to dive right in and start your business without giving the idea behind it long and deep thought.

You will want to find out enough about the market and the potential rivals before investing a lot of time and money into the idea. Yet, you will also want to avoid dithering and potentially losing the energy and impetus that could be crucial in getting you up and running.

This means that it is a fine balance you need to achieve between doing research and striking while the iron is hot.

Remember that a quality business idea doesn't have to be earth-shatteringly original. You could find a twist to an existing formula that sets you apart from the crowd and wins you customers.

For example, the start up I am involved with appeared at one stage to be just one of many project management platforms around. However, by integrating it with Google Drive we made it unique and something that stands out clearly from the crowd.

Is the Business Plan Going to be a Nightmare?

There is a lot of new information, new terms and new skills to learn when you plunge headfirst into the process of starting up a company. Among the worrying new terms that can chill any newcomer's heart is "business plan".

Thankfully, this isn't going to be as much of a nightmare as you might think. Indeed, the process of writing the business plan can be invaluable in forcing you think about issues that might have otherwise only cropped up too late.

In basic terms, your business plan should show the people who might invest in you what the business is about and why it is going to be a success. You need to be completely honest in this document and not over-estimate the profit or impact that you could potentially make.

You will find business case templates online and the process of filling in the information shouldn't be too demanding. If you have a good idea and have done your research on the market then you probably already have most of the information that needs to go in here.

The business plan typically starts off with an Executive Summary, which it makes sense to write at the end once you have everything clear in your head. After this you will have sections covering the idea, the people in your startup, the financing matters and your funding needs.

I think that it makes sense to keep the business case as simple as you can, as this will make it easy to read and understand. You should read it over several times to avoid any silly errors that could count against you when the decision-makers cast their eyes over it.



The Funding Issues

We can look at the question of funding by breaking it down into two different options; classic funding methods and modern alternatives.

The classic ways of funding a new business include getting a loan from the bank, borrowing from a friend or even using your credit card to get going. More modern funding methods include internet crowd funding sites and peer to peer lending.

There are pros and cons to each of these approaches, meaning that the same way of getting funding won't work for everyone. Certainly, at the time of writing, getting a bank loan isn't as easy as it used to be for many people.

This had led to many startups going for crowdfunding and peer to peer lending instead. These are certainly interesting ways of raising funds that you might not otherwise get access to.

Other Common Problems and Concerns

Each new startup entrepreneur is going to have their own list of problems and concerns that they need to address before feeling comfortable going ahead. For instance, you may worry about how you can quickly turn a profit or how to test out a product or service that is completely new.

It is exciting to go through the process of identifying and then resolving problems. With each obstacle that you remove from your path the end result should become clearer and closer.

Personally, our biggest problem in the early days was in working out how to make an impression in such a competitive marketplace. This led to the conclusion that we needed to find a way to provide some sort of unique value that would give us a powerful head start.

As I mentioned earlier, choosing to add Google Drive integration was the move that helped to do this. As soon as we considered this option it immediately became clear that it was the answer to our biggest issue.



Chapter 2

Startup Company Ideas

While some entrepreneurs start off with a clear idea of the business they want to set up, others are on the lookout for an idea that they can turn into reality. In either case, there are some important points to consider at this stage of the start-up process.

What Type of Business Inspires You?

It isn't absolutely essential to be inspired about your business and to be passionate about it, but feeling like this definitely helps. Let's face it; you are going to be living and breathing this startup for a long time, so you don't want to choose an idea that could soon leave you feeling bored or indifferent.

Perhaps you will feel inspired by offering a product that helps people live a better life, or a service that solves a common problem. Will you put a smile on your customer's faces or help them to spend less on essential items?

If you are looking for an inspiring type of business then it is a good idea to consider what you would like to see someone offer the world or what other people have mentioned to you in passing.

This can be a long and fairly difficult process so it is important to not get frustrated and just jump on the first half-decent idea you stumble across. Keep looking until you find a business idea that genuinely excites you and that you would like to find out more about.



Our approach to the ideas side of things was defined by a practical approach to finding a product that would solve common project management issues and make life simpler for many people. As with many other startups, we went through a few different prototypes before finding one that was ideal for our needs.

Once we had developed the first prototype it was clear that we had a great idea that we could go on to develop further.

Be Honest About Your Skills

Finding a potential business idea is one of the most thrilling moments you will ever experience. It is incredibly easy to let your imagination run away with you and picture how it could turn into a hugely successful and profitable business.

Yet, before you get caught up too much with dreams and plans, this is the perfect moment to be honest about your ability to turn the ideas into reality. Have you already got the skills that you need or could you reasonably be expected to learn them?

Of course, you won't expect to do everything that is needed on your own. Along the way you could work with developers, artists, writers, salespeople and anyone else who could provide their specialist services at the crucial moment.

However, by taking a step back and considering the overall project you need to decide whether or not you are capable of taking it on. Hopefully you will feel full of energy and capable of doing this to the highest possible standard.

Having said that, there is no shame in admitting that a business idea looks too big or complex for you. It is certainly far better to admit this at the very beginning rather than later on.

How Could It Make You Money?

Once you have a fantastic idea you should then start to think about how this type of business could go on to make you money. Great ideas are all well and good but who is going to hand over cold, hard cash for what you do?

You certainly shouldn't feel embarrassed about focussing on the financial side of the business very early on in the process. After all, you are looking for a money-making business rather than a hobby, aren't you?

Many business ideas that looked incredible have fallen by the wayside over the years due to there not being enough people willing to pay for what they offer. On the other hand, some simple and fairly modest ideas have been gigantic successes in a financial sense.

Take some time to think about whether what you are planning is something that is strong enough for people to part with money for. If it isn't then it is time to look for a new startup idea.



Doing Market Research

Market research is an area of business planning that it is easy to fear. However, this is something that you should try to approach with a great deal of enthusiasm and an open mind.

If we leave aside all of the technical stuff and fancy words, market research is really just about finding out what demand there is for what you want to do. We have already looked in the last point about whether it is something people would pay for.

Now we need to consider issues such as your potential rivals, market conditions and how you would reach your target market. This is a vital phase in the startup process and it is when you should start to feel that your ideas are beginning to reach the stage of getting to the real world.

There are different ways of doing market research, from the online approach to cold calling, giving out samples and doing surveys. By this point you should be clearer on who your target clients are and this should help you to define your approach.

Don't get downhearted if the initial results aren't as positive as you had hoped for. If people don't seem particularly interested in what you do then it could be because you are asking the wrong people or doing it in the wrong way.

Having said that, it is also important to not try to fool yourself in believing that a demand that doesn't exist is out there.

Chapter 3

Startup Tips

As with most things in life, it pays to pick up a few tips from the people who have been there and done it. In terms of startup successes, there have been plenty of them in recent years to inspire and motivate you.

So what can be learned from listening to the lessons that other people have learned the hard way?

Find the Right Team Quickly

There will probably be a moment in your startup when you realise that it is time to look for some help. No matter how good you are at what you do, there is no way that you can expect to do it all alone.



Clearly, getting the right team is crucial but you also need to be aware of the need to do this quickly and effectively. If you leave it too late then you could end up wasting a lot of time trying to do things that someone else could have done more easily.

Having a strong team around you will also help to inspire you to keep going when the going gets tough.

Take Criticism On Board

It is easy to treat your startup as your baby but this can lead to you being overly sensitive to any criticism that comes its way. Just as we don't like people saying that our babies have big ears or a funny nose; so we don't like to hear that our new businesses are less than perfect.

If we turn this on its head then we can see that the criticism you receive could be among the most valuable insights that comes your way. Instead of blithely ignoring it you can use it to make your idea better and stronger.

The more criticism that you listen to and react to early on then the less chance there is of nasty surprises cropping up later on.



Focus on One Thing at a Time



When you start a new business you soon find that your time becomes an ever more valuable commodity. Having a solid team working with you is essential but you will also want to make sure that you focus on one thing at a time.

It can be a massive temptation to jump from one task to another in order to try and get more done. However, it is usually a far more productive approach to try and completely finish each task before moving on to the next one.

Of course, to do this well it helps to have a well-worked out plan that shows you in what order you need to do things and what your important milestone dates are.

Don't Give Massive Discounts Just to Get Your First Clients

Can you imagine the wonderful feeling when you get your first clients? This is sure to be a very special moment no matter what you sell or offer.

Having said that, you should avoid the idea of giving big discounts in order to get the first clients onboard. It may seem vitally important to get new customers signed up quickly but you don't want to start off by seriously undervaluing your product.

You will have put a lot of effort into getting to this stage and you don't want it to be poorly rewarded. If you don't charge what your work deserves then you run the risk of losing enthusiasm or simply running out of funds to carry on in the long term.

Be Better Than Your Rivals (In At Least One Aspect)

Why should people choose you rather than one of the other companies that operate in the same marketplace? This is one of the questions that you simply can't avoid answering at some point in your venture.

The ideal answer is that that you are the better option in at least one aspect. Maybe you are cheaper, quicker or give a more polished end product.

If you can't find at least one thing that you do better than everyone else then it is time to rack your brains in order to find a way of adding extra value. Give people a good reason to choose you and the chances are that they will do so.

Be Proud of What You Do



There is no denying that getting involved in a start up business is something that takes over your life. Like me, you are sure to waken up in the night when great new ideas strike you or find that your mind wanders to work when you are watching a movie.

All of this means that you really need to do something that you enjoy and are proud of. If the business idea isn't something that gets you excited then how can you expect to dedicate so much time and effort to it?

On the other hand, if you do something that you are proud of then the rest will come a lot more naturally. It is worth going the extra mile to have a business that you can be truly proud of both now and in the long term.

Stick to What You Know and Are Good At

A startup business is sure to move you out of your comfort zone in so many ways. With a lot of new skills to be learned every step of the way this is a huge challenge for anyone to undertake.

This means that it is important that you have a solid base to build from. If you are doing something that you know well and are good at then you will always have the confidence of this to fall back on.

If you have a great idea then start off by considering whether you are the right person with the right skills to turn it into reality. If not, then is it really worth giving it a try or could you do something more suited to your skills instead?

Be Flexible As Circumstances Change

You may very well start off with a clear vision of how you want this idea to take shape. This is fantastic but there is no guarantee that everything will fall into place exactly as you initially imagine it happening.

In fact, the most likely scenario is that you need to change your ideas over and over again as time goes on. This makes planning ahead more difficult and it also means that you need to be highly flexible.

There is simply no way to stick rigidly to a plan when the marketplace is changing, new technology appears regularly and your own knowledge grows. Instead, you need to embrace this need for flexibility and try to enjoy it.

Chapter 4

Startups for Dummies

There are sure to be many questions about starting a new business that you want to ask. Maybe you are afraid to look like a fool by asking a question that seems too silly or extremely basic.

Well, let's start off from the point of view that there is no such thing as a silly question. The worst thing you can do is ignore your worries and fears in order to not appear stupid.

So, we might as well cover in this section all of the things that you want to know but don't want to ask.



Should I go it alone?



This is one of the fundamental questions you need to ask yourself at some point. It is clear that many of the most successful start up companies around were founded by teams or by at least a couple of partners.

There are definitely some big benefits to having co-founders to help you out. This approach will give you a more balanced set of skills, differing opinions and the ability to get a lot more done in less time.

The other point to consider is whether the business is likely to be big enough and profitable enough to support a team of co-founders. If not then how will everyone get rewarded for their hard work?

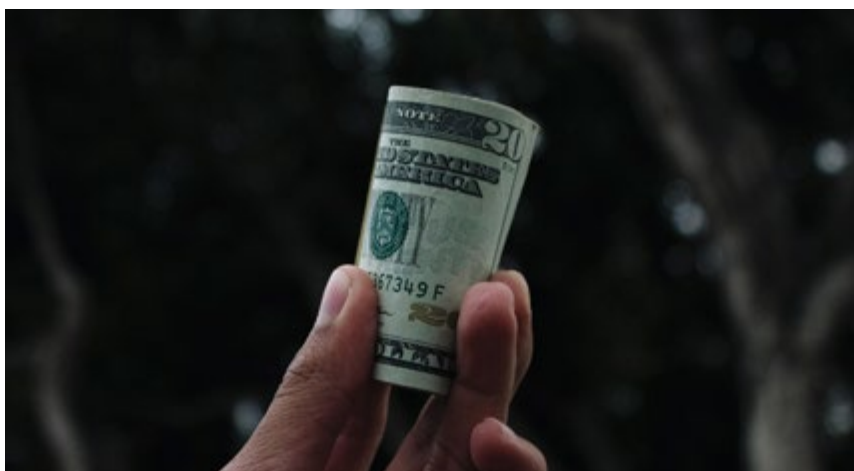
How do I start a company legally?

The idea of setting up a new company legally is pretty daunting. You may see this as the point of no return, when your ideas finally get turned into reality.

The truth is that the exact process will obviously depend upon where you are based. If you are doing this somewhere like the UK, the US or Australia you should find all of the instructions you need online easily enough.

You can get an agent to do this you if you like, allowing you to concentrate on other matters. Also, if it sets your mind at ease then you might want to investigate the process of closing a legal company before you get started.

How quickly will I make money?



This is one of the key questions for any new business but it is something that many entrepreneurs instinctively shy away from. Certainly, you need to know that you will start to make money before your initial funding runs out.

Clearly, the exact answer to this question will depend upon a wide range of factors. For instance. how quickly will you have a finished product to market and how long will it take for people to give you a try and then pay you?

Most successful new businesses take at least a couple of years before they turn a profit, with many of them failing before they get to that point. That makes it essential that you plan for a long setting up period without serious income coming in.

Where can I get help?



There is no shame in looking for some help with your new startup. In fact, just about the worst thing you can do is operate in a bubble with no outside help at all.

A great place to start is on internet blogs and forums. Just by searching online I have quickly found answers to many of the most difficult issues we have faced on a wide range of matters.

You can also look for help from Government initiatives or by going to trade events and speaking to people in the know. The UK and the US are among the best countries for getting startup help from Government agencies right now, as they currently both look to encourage their country's entrepreneurs.

Should I hire a local team or outsource remotely?

There are some interesting options for getting a team to help you out these days. While having a local team remains a common approach, there is also the chance to set up a remote team instead.

The local team method certainly makes it easier to get together and collaborate in the same room. However, in many cases arranging virtual meetings with a system such as Skype is good enough.

The outsourcing approach to team building may be cheaper and could allow you to bring in experts from around the world. Having team members from different cultures can present some issues — language barriers and time differences, for example — but it can also allow you benefit from fresh ideas and different ways of working.

What if I fail?

One thing you probably don't want to consider right now is what you will do if your ideas fail. However, while you will want to have a positive outlook, you don't want to just sweep the idea of failure under the carpet.

We have to face up to the fact that the failure rate for startup companies is pretty high. Recent figures suggest that half of UK startups fail within 5 years, while the US figures are roughly similar.

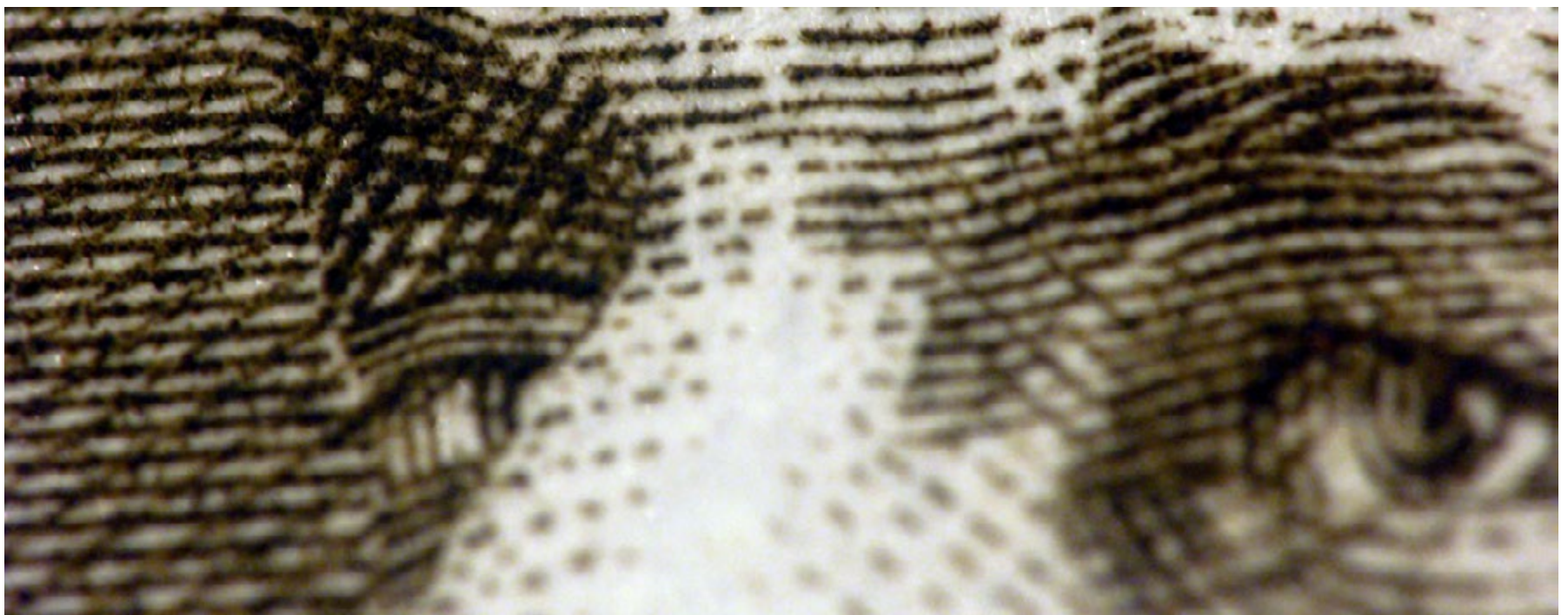
Of course, you will do everything that you can to avoid making those statistics worse but what if your efforts aren't enough? The key here is to strike a balance between giving it all you have and being aware that life goes on even if the company fails for one reason or another.

How to find an investor?

Finding the money to fund your ideas is going to be one of the biggest headaches that you have on this project. It is no great surprise to find that a lack of money is a major reason for startups failing.

One increasingly popular way of doing this is through startup platforms such as Startups.co, Clarity.fm and Gust. You could also consider a crowdfunding site like Kickstarter or Indiegogo, although you should bear in mind that each one has a different approach and focus.

Another ways of getting hold of an investor is with an angel network, which will help you to get in touch with an angel investor to give you advice as well as investment. Alternatively, you could look at the classic approach of using a private equity firm or the modern method offered by incubators and accelerators.



How to Find a Good Developer



The lead developer you work with will go a long way to helping that you have a smooth and efficient startup process, provided that you make a smart choice. For starters, you will want someone who has the excellent technical skills that you can rely upon.

Apart from that, you need a lead developer who is a strong communicator capable of leading and inspiring others. You might find the right developer at programming meet-up or by looking online for someone with the right skillset.

It is important to remember that you need someone who is happy to take on extra tasks and is flexible enough to deal with the demands of a startup.

Chapter 5

**Discover the Perfect
Startup Culture**

When starting a new company it is easy to make the mistake of focussing solely on the practical matters. However, it is equally important to think about the startup culture that you are building and fostering in your team.

There is clearly a psychological aspect to building a great culture that is very important, but that isn't all that there is to it either. The truth is that there are a number of factors to take into account to try and discover the ideal startup culture that will drive you to success.

The following are the main points to bear in mind when you are thinking of the best company cultures to try and introduce to your business in the early days.



Provide a Great Place to Work

You may be surprised at how much the setup of your workplace can affect the quality of your ideas and, ultimately, your levels of success. Typically, companies that have great cultures best flourish in a location that lets people work flexibly and creatively.

Many entrepreneurs have been won over by the power of plants, natural light and sofas in their quest for a suitably creative and relaxed environment. Even the colours that you use should be taken into account, with [blue helping to boost creativity](#) and red being useful for some types of mental processing tasks.

There is also a trend for allowing workers to enjoy some quality recreation time at work, to let them recharge their batteries and feel good. You might also want to think about company culture ideas like offering yoga classes or sessions of mindful meditation, especially if you are going to be operating in a stressful industry.

You will want your people to love coming into work and to feel fantastic once they are there. Many workers also feel that the ability to sometimes work from home is a big factor in helping them to enjoy their job.

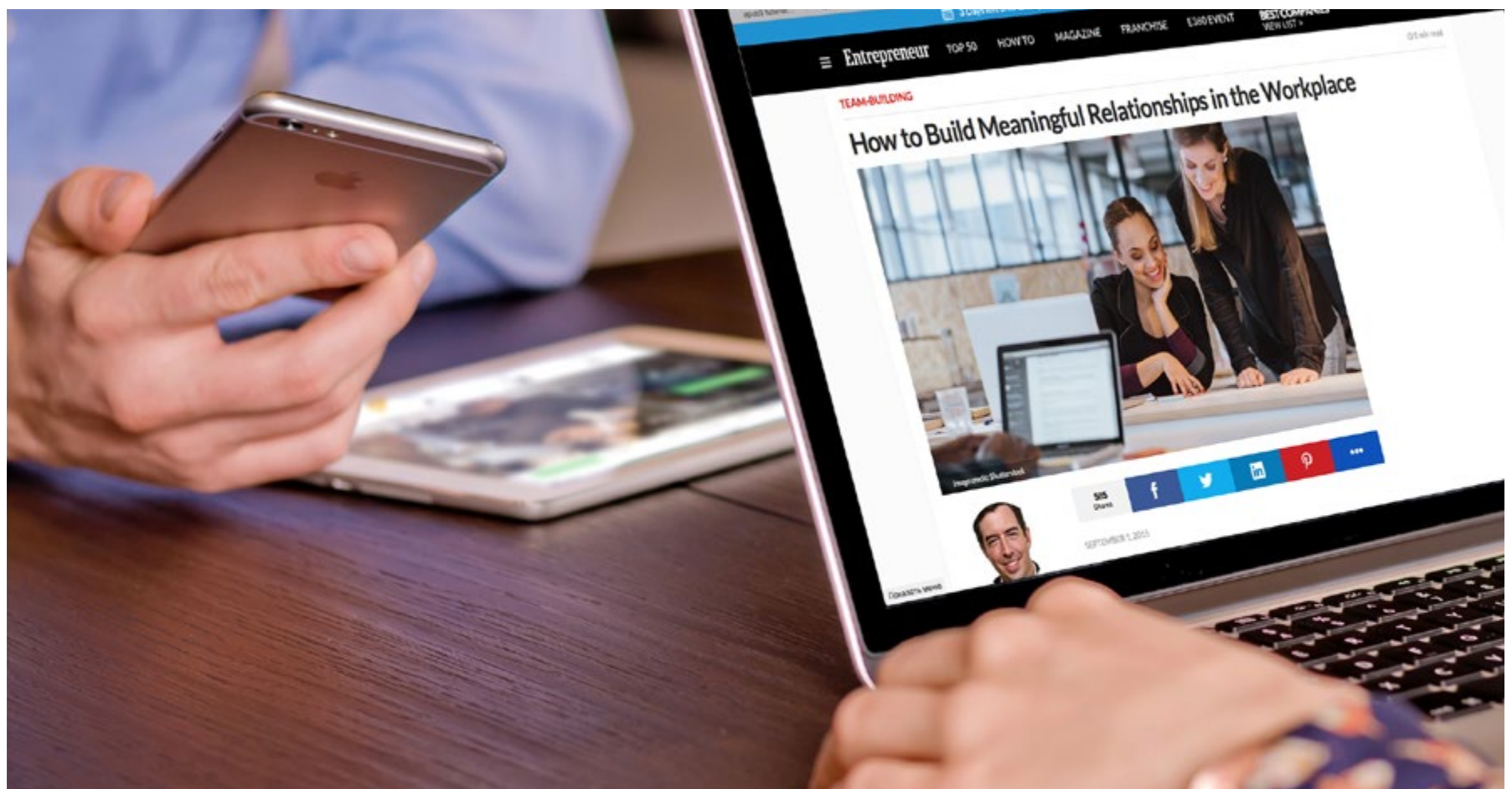
Certainly, here at Kanbanchi we have a strong and united team, meaning that going into work every day is a pleasure. I can only imagine how horrible it must be to work in a startup that has a poor working environment.

Build the Right Relationships

The human relationships side of things is vital in any startup culture. When you are just starting up you need to be able to build strong relationships with suppliers, clients and everyone else that you come into contact with.

As well as this, there are also the [relationships in your team](#) to think about as well. You will want everyone in the team to believe in each other and to work well together right from the very beginning.

Of course, the leaders of the company need to lead by example in this case and show how committed they are to building a company that is filled with powerful



relationships based on trust and mutual respect. This is a tremendous base for any new company and will make you feel extremely confident about going forward with your team.

Perhaps you will arrange team building exercises or strengthen your team's bonds through workshops and training sessions. If you can inspire everyone to aim for the same goals and to respect one another then you will be well on the path towards having a strong, united team that grows together.

Focus on the Company Values

Every new company wants to establish a powerful set of core values that shows what they are all about. This is an easy way to show the world what matters to you and that you are trying to achieve one of the best company cultures around.

In order to focus on these values you will want new members of the team to be people who share them or can at least work to them. If you make everyone in the company aware of the core values this means that you can expect them all to be working towards the same goal.

It also shows your customers how highly you value them and that you always strive to provide the very best. [Establishing your new company's core values isn't easy](#) but it is something that it is well worth spending some time on.

Perhaps you could ask your team to give you some of their ideas in this respect, to get you started. Otherwise, there is no harm in checking out the stated values of your rivals and other companies, to see if there are any trends or concepts that you could amend for your own use.

Encourage New Ideas

Ideally, your startup will be a hotbed of ideas where everyone is able to contribute effectively to your progress. The more people you have contributing with great ideas the greater your chances of getting the fresh approach that you need.

Not everyone is used to being able to pitch in with their own thoughts at work, though, so it may take you some time to get new team members into this habit. This means that it is important that you show them how much you value and respect their ideas.

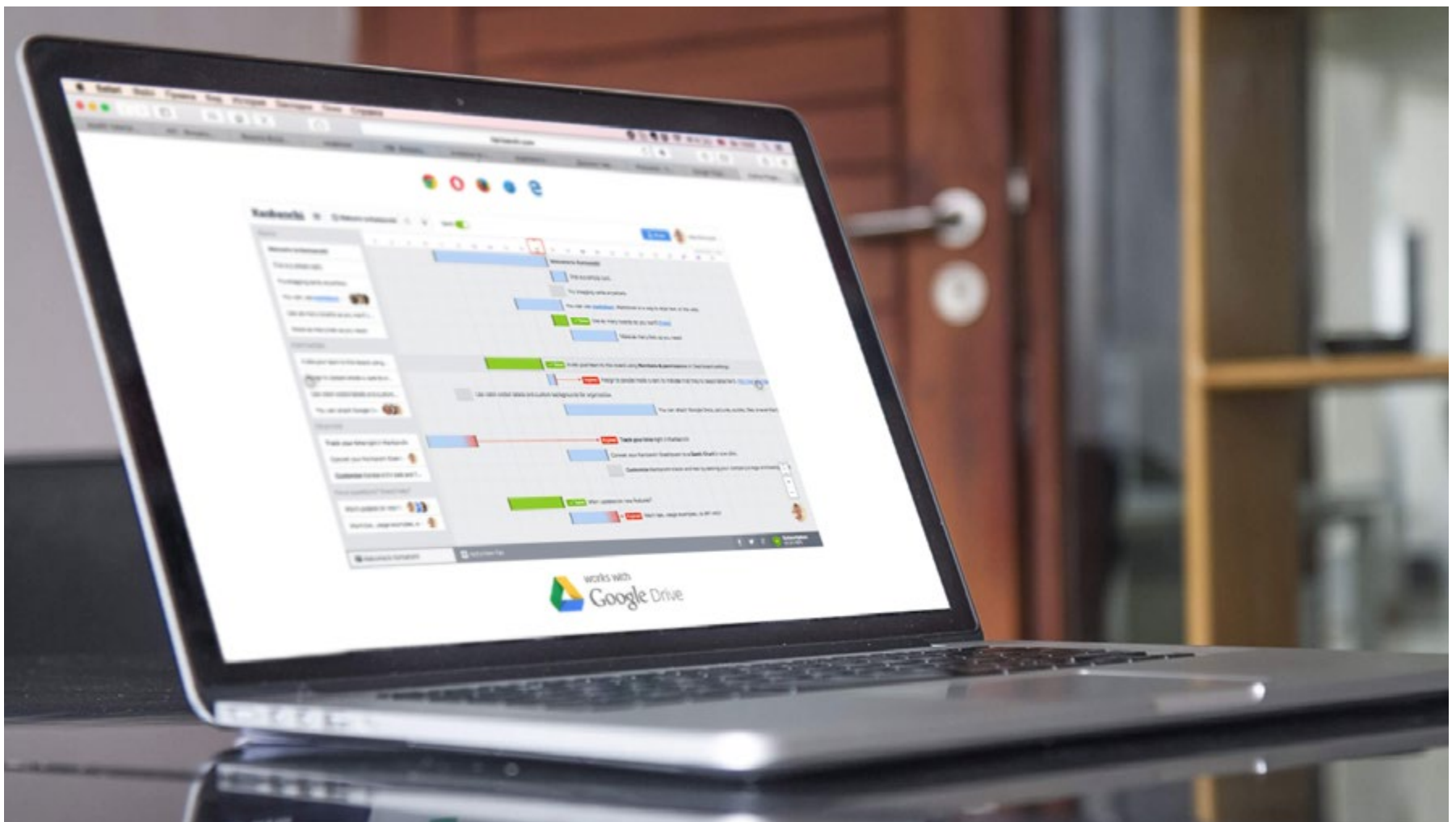
There are many [different ways to get more new ideas](#) into your business and it is well worth giving them all a try. Doing this can also help your team members to feel as though they are playing an important role in the development and growth of the company.

Even if the ideas that you generate aren't of any great use to you right now, they could still come in very useful at some point in the future. Therefore, it is a good idea to keep a record of all the ideas that you might want to return to later on.

Choose the Right Startup Tools

It is also vital that you choose the right tools to enhance your startup culture and boost your time effectiveness. These will reflect to some degree what you are trying to do overall and make it a lot easier for you to do things professionally and without losing too much time.

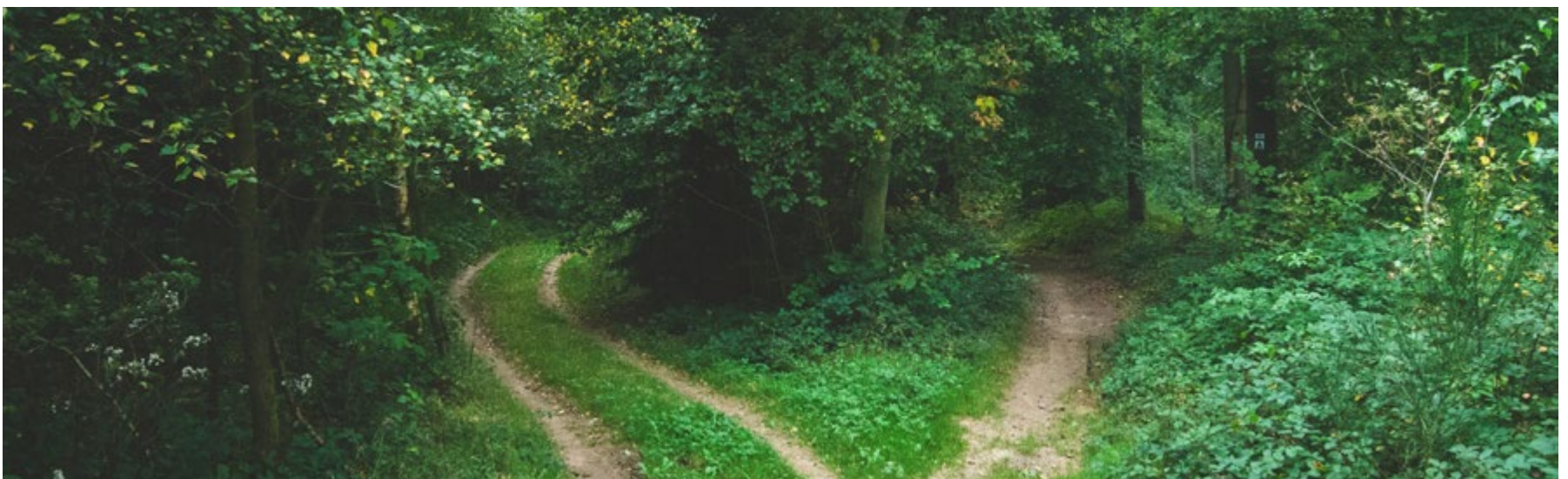
For example, high tech startups are likely to work with cutting edge technology while others may go for a back to basics approach. The startup tools that you choose make an immediate statement about your way of working as well as laying out your vision for your future.



With any new company it is essential that you can track ideas, projects and responsibilities clearly and rigorously. In this respect you almost certainly benefit from a Kanban board-based approach such as [that offered by Kanbanchi](#), to keep you on track easily and professionally.

Other startup tools that could come in useful include ways of getting more traffic to your website, social media tools, graphic design sites and brand monitoring services. You won't need all of them but by smartly choosing a few of the most appropriate tools you can use your time and energy more effectively.

Encourage Different Ways of Thinking



While you will be looking for team members who share your values and ambition, there is no need to assume that you all need to think in the same way. Indeed, having a team crammed full of people who all think in the same way is one of the surest ways of seriously limiting your future growth possibilities.

On the other hand, if you can bring in people who think in different ways then you can benefit from a vibrant and varied approach to your creative process. This means that you will want to look at more than just the skills and experience that people bring to the company.

In a perfect world you will find a way of building a varied team that can bring your ideas to life in new and unexpected ways. Above all, it is a question of not being afraid of new ideas even if they are different from your own.

One way of doing this is by looking at hiring people from different backgrounds and with varying levels of experience. It isn't easy to find the perfect balance in your company but it is an area this you need to pay attention to in order to get the excellent startup culture that you need.

The Importance of Food

When looking at the question of “where does culture start?” it is easy to overlook the importance of food. Yet, this is one of those factors that can play a particularly big role in keeping workers happy and on top form.

Distributing free food to the team is a simple and hugely effective way of maintaining high spirits and a positive attitude in your startup. You can also this as an opportunity to give them [brain foods](#) that are associated with a host of interesting benefits.

This is an especially good tactic when you are working through a tough period and having to demand a lot of your workers. If they are working late one night then surprising them with a delivery of tasty food can instantly improve their mood and motivation levels.

Obviously this is just part of the secret of startup success but it is the kind of interesting point that it is easy to overlook when there are so many other issues that need your attention.

Go Green



Living and working in an environmentally responsible way is something that we should all be striving for these days. No matter what type of industry you are in, creating a green, sustainable culture can give you all something to have pride in and to feel good about.

There are a number of easy yet effective ways of doing this. For instance, you could save on the energy that your lights, devices and computers use just by being more carefully about switching them off and using the energy saving settings at the right times.

Another good idea to help you foster a green work ethic is to get the staff cut down on their commuting time. This could mean allowing them to work from home at times or it could mean encouraging and incentivising them to travel to work together rather than each person in their own car.

You could also build a strong and environmentally friendly culture in the startup by using less paper or none at all. [Becoming a paperless office](#) by using only digital documents is a challenge that it is well worth rising to, as it will show your values and modern approach while helping out the planet at the same time.

Save Money



Being frugal with your company's funds is one of the characteristics that you will want everyone to display right from the very start. If there is a decent startup budget then the temptation may be there to spend more than is strictly necessary.

This might not cause a problem right away but at some point it is likely to cause some serious issues for the company. You can avoid this becoming a major problem by leading by example right from the very start of the company and challenging yourself to save money whenever you can.

Even if the money that is saved on each expense is minimal, it is the idea of becoming more frugal that you will look to bed in. If you can make this an integral part of the company culture then you will eventually reap the rewards.

Try saving money with ideas such as buying used furniture, [avoiding big overheads](#) and shopping around for the best deals on everything that you need to get. You might be surprised at how easy most people fall into the habit of being frugal and saving money when they see everyone around them doing the same thing.

Make Everyone Feel a Part of the Success

Finally, a big part of a successful startup culture comes from making everyone feel like they are a major factor in any success that you gain. Your whole team should be emotionally invested in the process of building up this company as solidly as possible.

Maybe you will give them enticing challenges to get their competitive side engaged or perhaps you will [find a way of rewarding them for playing their part](#). It is worth bearing in mind that we each respond to different challenges, motivations and types of company culture, so the exact same approach might not work for everyone in the team.

However, it is definitely worth taking some time to think about how you are going to make each member of the team feel as though this is their company and strive to do their very best at all times. Once you achieve this then you can look forward to the future with a lot more confidence.

Chapter 6

The Perfect Startup Tools for a Productive Day

There is no denying that a day in a startup company can be hectic, inspiring, nerve-racking and a whole lot of fun all rolled into one.

One of the big challenges for any new company is that of keeping the inspiration and the fun elements while organising their working day in such a way that it is more productive. In this respect, the good news is that there are some excellent startup tools that will help out greatly.

So how will a day in the life of your new business pan out once you use the right startup tools at the right times of day? Well, it could look a lot like the following schedule that I have found works well for me.

Check the Time Tracked the Previous Day

What is the very first thing that you do every single morning at work? This is a vital time slot that can either get you off to a tremendous start or else put you on the back foot right away if don't use the time wisely.

In this respect, I find that it is a great idea is to start off by seeing what everyone got up to the day before. Thankfully, there are a few ways of doing this that don't involve me following people around the office or constantly asking them what they are doing.

While some of my team still prefer the old fashioned approach of tracking time through a pen and paper, there are more hi-tech solutions that I can depend upon instead now. For instance, by using the [Toggl service](#) I can benefit from one click time tracking that I can use anywhere and that provides easy to read reports.

This means that checking what everyone was doing the previous day is an easy task that I can carry out early in the morning before deciding if there is any need to switch things around for the current day.



A Kanban Board for an Organised Start to the Day

Once I know what everyone did yesterday I can look to find ways to make today an even better day for the company. This can be done by seeing what needs to be done by whom today and then getting a plan together to do it.

A powerful and highly organised start to the day like this work wonders for my business. Once I know what everyone should be doing and how it all links together then there is a far greater chance of getting through an extremely productive day.

To make this happen I start the day off on the right foot by using a kanban board to organise the workload. The likes of [Kanbanchi](#) is a wonderful collaboration tool that lets me manage all of the tasks in the smartest, easiest and most effective way.

I don't need to worry about duplicating effort or having important tasks neglected now that I have got into the habit of managing our tasks in this way.

Finish the Morning By Checking All Your Corporate Emails

As lunch time looms I sometimes start to worry about the fact that the day is starting to slip away from me. One of the most common worries at this time of day can be that the inbox is starting to look a little bit too full.

Handling emails is one of those tasks that eat up a lot more of my working day than I would like. To make this less of a problem a clever approach I have started to use is the [Yesterbox method](#) that has been advocated by Zappo CEO Tony Hsieh.

With this technique I just answer all of yesterday's messages today, which works brilliantly for making me feel completely up to date before lunch. This is a good choice of task to finish off the morning, as it means that I am comfortable in the knowledge that I have no old messages waiting for me to attend to them in the afternoon.

In this case, the tool that helps me out is a simple corporate email account with Gmail. In this way, I have linked all of our email accounts together and I am sure that nothing slips through the net without being seen.

Yesware to Track Emails in the Afternoon

The previous point only covers part of the email process though, doesn't it? It is all very well responding to the messages that people send me but what about following up the emails that we have issued to try and drive some new business?

The other part of this therefore involves tracking the emails that we send out to customers, to see the open rate, how many people download the attachment and other valuable information. This might sound like a deeply unglamorous task but it needs to be done if we are going to expand in the way that we want to.

A terrific tool from [Yesware](#) allows me to keep a close eye on how good we are at getting our message through to the people who matter most. I track our success rate in the afternoon and see whether we need to shift your focus or try something different in the future.

This is an ideal task for starting me off gently after lunch and getting my focus back onto driving more sales. This also gives me a few moments of genuine early-afternoon joy when I see that the figures are unexpectedly good.

Find Out How to Promote Your Business After Lunch

Promoting our new business through the issuing of press releases was something of a daunting task at the outset. Indeed, it was something that I kept putting off each day because I knew that it was going to be a hard slog.

However, there are some interesting tools around that now help me to find the right site or person to get my story out there. Taking a look at them is a good way to make use of those mid-afternoon hours that could otherwise fly past unproductively.

One of these tools is called [Submit.co](#) and it offers me a list of technology related websites that can be ordered by their Alexa rank or number of followers on Twitter. This is a fine way of finding the media sites that are the best fit for my needs.

In a similar vein, the [Hey Press database](#) is set up to let me find journalists who are likely to be interested in what we do. By getting in touch with a few of them in the afternoon I can hopefully put the wheels in motion for gaining some publicity the following day or in the near future.

I feel fantastic when I have taken the first steps in this process, which usually puts me in a positive frame of mind for the rest of the day.

Whiteboard for Noting Ideas at the End of the Day

As the end of the day approaches I often feel my energy starting to wane and my ideas drying up. This means that it is a great moment to take a break from the daily routine and look for some new ideas from the team.

There are obviously a number of ways of noting ideas on a group basis. One of the best approaches is to simply get everyone together at the end of the day to gather their thoughts on what went well that day and what could have gone better.

Whenever this process of sharing ideas is done it is vital that this is carried out smartly so that we capture all of the best ideas and allow everyone to participate fully. A simple and efficient way of doing this is end the day with a productive session in front of a whiteboard.

When I end the day with a bunch of new ideas it is something that leaves me and the team feeling invigorated. Even if it has been a pretty bad day I can look forward to trying again tomorrow and seeing if the ideas on our whiteboard make the difference.

Have a Last Look at What Most Matters Online

How will you end the working day before finally going home for a well-deserved break? It is easy to waste the last few minutes of the day if you lose focus but perhaps you can squeeze a little bit of extra productivity out of it instead.

Personally, I want to see what people are talking about online and on social media in respect of our business, our rivals and the industry in general. To save this becoming a massively time-consuming task I use a startup tool to get pinged with notifications whenever there is something to check out.

For example, with a Slack integration on Notify I get notified on anything that I am interested in. This makes it easy to stay abreast of the market in the way that best suits me.

It is the sort of task that I try to keep an eye of throughout the day, although I will also have it down as something to take a final look at when the day ends.

In this way, I can shut down my computer and go home feeling satisfied that I have had a highly productive day. By using the startup tools we have looked at here I can be sure that I have made the best possible use of my time and that I am looking forward to doing it all again tomorrow.

Chapter 7

**3 Mistakes Startup Founders
and Olympians Should Avoid**

When the Olympics are in full swing the world watches on intently. Success and failures abound, personalities shine through and medals get handed out.

So, what do the Olympics and startups have in common? The big winners are obvious, the monumental blunders are apparent and there are thousands of stories we'll never even hear about.

Here are the top 3 mistakes startup founders and Olympic hopefuls should avoid.



Choosing the Wrong Location

Olympic athletes are among the best in the world at what they do and a huge proportion of the games' events are individual rather than team based. An Olympic gymnast can practice the rings in their own backyard all year long if they want.

However, if you talk to most of the top tier athletes around the world they will tell you that nothing beats training at their country's Olympic Training Centre when they have the opportunity. Top tier athletes from all over the country coming together in one place with a singular focus... an Olympic Gold Medal.

A collective energy and friendly competition at these locations drive athletes to perform their best day in and day out.

In the same way, if you've got an idea for a great startup being in the right city can make all the difference in the world. The simple fact is that nearly all venture capital money in the world is doled out in and around Silicon Valley.

If you seriously want to compete on the global scale, head to where the opportunity is located. Yeah, the competition is stiff here, but that's what drives the very best to perform at the highest levels.

It's not the worst of startup mistakes if you prefer to stay where you are, but it's just about what your goal is. If your goal is to win the top place, then choose to start from the right place either.

Going It Alone



Every Olympian has a coach. This is someone who pushes them to perform, providing constant feedback and analysis, while generally helping to keep the athlete pointed in the right direction.

The relationship between coach and athlete is one that is more than just a matter of matching skills. It's about chemistry, it's about connection, it's about matching personalities and passions. No athlete makes it to the top of the podium without a great coach.

Just as no great athlete can make it alone, single founder companies have little chance of making it big. Giants of tech such as Paul Graham have pointed out a myriad of flaws with the single founder model and who are we to suggest otherwise.

Here at [Kanbanchi](https://kanbanchi.com), we have a team based in UK and a team based in Russia, each playing a fundamental part in our history. Starting and growing a company is hard enough, don't try and do it all yourself.

Not Giving It Your All

If you've made it to the Olympics it's hard to imagine that you haven't worked hard and accomplished a lot. Nevertheless, many athletes make it to this point on great natural ability alone.

Ability that has been honed and driven, but isn't necessarily focused. If you talk to the greatest Olympic athletes you will find that there was a turning point, a moment when they made the mental transition from "This is important" to "This is everything".

The reality is that winning a gold medal at the Olympics is going to dominate every moment of your life for years leading up to the actual Games. Running a successful startup is a commitment in the same way.

The moment when you think you've given it all you've got, it's time to push twice as hard. Success comes to those who are able to sustain an amount of effort that most find untenable for years and years.

The company will take everything out of you. It will push you harder than anything you've done before.

It doesn't mean you can't start a company at nights and on weekends, but it means that you have to be ready to take the plunge and commit to making this your future. Dipping your toes into it will never result in earth shattering success, it may result in a reasonably nice side project, but big time success requires big time commitment.

Closing Thoughts

The Olympics are the world's greatest stage for athletes and getting there takes tremendous effort and commitment. Building a massively successful startup represents the same obligation of time, effort, and energy.

Things like finding a partner or coach, choosing a location that enables success, and then giving it everything that you possibly have will help you earn that medal you desire.

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