

100+ Investments Later, These Are the 7 Qualities I Always Look For in a Founder

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People always ask me, “What’s the secret to a successful business?” Honestly, there’s no one-size-fits-all answer. Playbooks are for playing it safe, and real innovation doesn’t follow a script. But when it comes to investing, there’s one thing that can make or break a business... **THE FOUNDER.**

As a seven-time founder and investor in over 100 companies, I’m not old yet, but I’m no longer the youngest guy in the room, either. Thanks to baptism by fire, I’ve learned what to look for. Certain qualities of a founder are non-negotiable to me. I believe every founder needs these specific qualities to achieve their best success.

So, what are they? Let’s break it down.

1. Urgency

Urgency is the cornerstone of success in business (and life, for what it’s worth). The best founders move quickly and don’t waste time. They understand that time is money and recognize that opportunities don’t last forever. When you act with urgency, you seize the moment before it slips away.

But let me be clear: urgency isn’t about rushing, being frantic or being rushed – it’s about being purposeful. Urgency-driven founders move with intent and drive. They tackle challenges head-on and are laser-focused on what needs

to be done every single day. That “make-it-happen” mentality is pure gold in the startup world.

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2. Authenticity

There is power in authenticity. Authenticity builds trust, and in business, trust is everything. When a founder is genuine, it *shows*. This builds a following that’s more than just customers – it creates true, organic brand loyalty. When a founder is authentic, people believe in them.

This applies not only to a founder but to their brand.

I’ve learned the hard way that working with people who aren’t genuine or transparent leads to failure.

Both the founder and the brand need to be authentic. When a founder tells their story, and it resonates deeply with people, they create a brand that isn’t just about the product – it’s about something bigger. Consumers can spot a phony a mile away, especially in the consumer packaged goods (CPG) world. They’re savvy. They know when something is off.

3. Resilience

In the startup world, you’re going to face challenges. Setbacks are inevitable. And guess what? You’ll be tested. You’ll soon find out if your skin is thick enough to power through each day. But a resilient leader doesn’t let obstacles derail their vision. Instead, they push through. They adapt, they evolve and they keep moving forward no matter how many roadblocks get thrown in their way.

Resilience isn’t just about bouncing back; it’s about using every setback as fuel to drive you forward. A resilient founder sees challenges as opportunities for growth. Every

time they face a setback, they grow stronger, wiser and more determined. That's the type of leader who will thrive in the chaos of the startup world. Please don't ask me how I know!

4. Passion

Passion is the secret sauce that makes everything come alive. Consumers can *feel* the passion. When a founder is passionate about their product, mission or company, it's contagious. Passion is infectious. It spreads to employees, customers and investors.

Passionate founders don't just tell stories; they ignite movements. They speak with fire in their eyes and belief in their hearts. And when they talk about their company, you feel the excitement radiating from them. Great founders share their stories over and over again, but every time, it's with the same enthusiasm as if it's the first time they've told it.

Passion isn't just about being enthusiastic; it's about creating meaningful connections with your audience. It's about making people believe in your vision and feel like they're a part of something bigger than themselves.

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5. Adaptability

The startup world is a rollercoaster ride. Things change fast, and when they do, the best founders adapt. They pivot when necessary, but they never lose sight of the end goal. Adaptability isn't just about surviving change; it's about thriving in it.

In my experience, the most successful founders are those who don't get bogged down when things don't go according to plan. They stay focused on the big picture and are flexible enough

to change course when needed. Adaptability is what keeps them moving forward when the world around them is changing. They embrace the uncertainty and use it to their advantage.

6. Resourcefulness

Resourcefulness is one of the most underrated qualities of a founder. The best founders know how to make the most of what they have. They don't wait for things to be perfect before taking action. They take what's available to them and find innovative solutions to make it work.

Resourcefulness is often associated with resilience and adaptability. It involves thinking creatively and using every tool available to make things happen. Whether leveraging connections, finding creative solutions, or coming up with unconventional ideas, resourceful founders find a way to keep pushing forward.

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7. Accountability

Accountability is the cornerstone of leadership. Being accountable means owning your actions—good or bad. Yes, the bad, too. The best founders know that when they make a decision, they are responsible for the consequences, and they don't shy away from them.

As an investor, reliability is one of the qualities I value most in a founder. I want to know that when I contact a founder, they'll be honest, available and proactive. Founders who take responsibility for their actions build trust with their team, investors and customers. And trust? It's the foundation of everything—literally, *everything*.

The bottom line

At the end of the day, people invest in you – not just your brand, product, or idea... It's you, the founder, who makes the difference between a good investment and a great one. Your qualities, drive and vision draw people in. When these traits shine through, you don't just attract investors – you inspire them.

So, what's the secret to a successful business? It's not a perfect formula, but it all starts with the founder. Invest in winners. Help them win. And remember, everything starts with you.

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