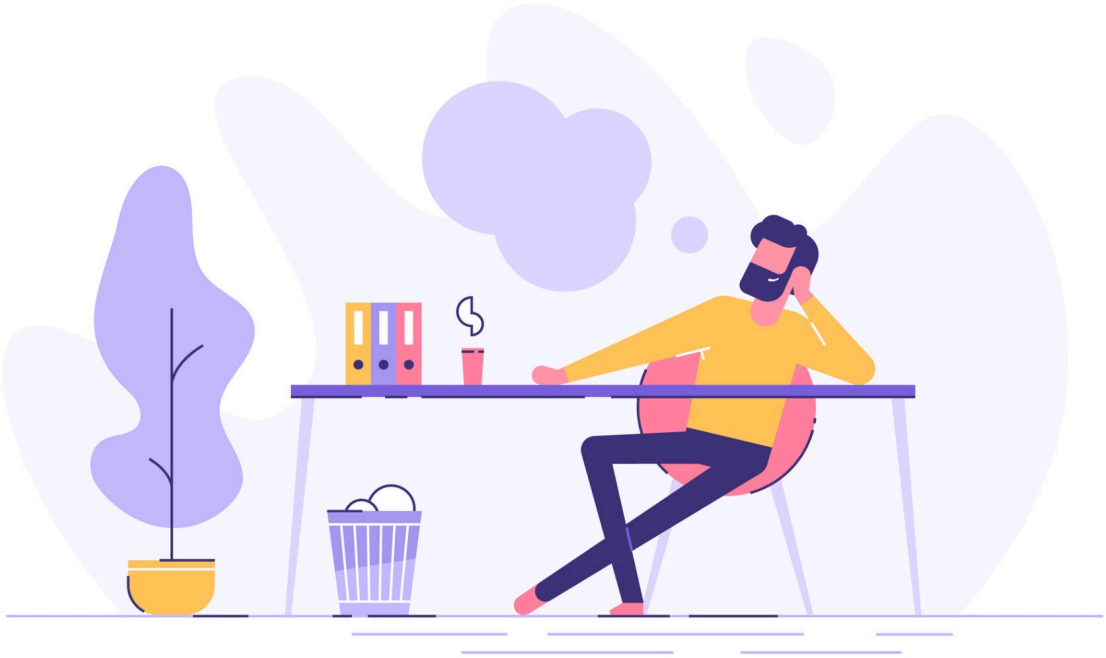
3 Tips for Keeping Your Startup Dream Alive From a 5-Time Founder



After starting five different companies, I found these are the fundamentals to startup success — every time.

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From Elon Musk, to the family ice cream shop on the corner by your house, all businesses start with a dream. Keeping that dream going through the long hours, disappointments, naysayers and logistical challenges, however, is the tough part. Knowing that 20 percent of small businesses close up shop in their first year and that the majority (65 percent) don't make it past a decade, how in the world can you stay energized and positive for the long haul? After going through

the startup process five times, I’m convinced it takes these three pillars.

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1. Do it right the first time

Does this mean you have to do everything perfectly? Not even close. (Nobody can do that!) It just means that you can’t afford to futz around – that’s like throwing sand in your company operating system, and it’s totally for amateurs. You have to be professional and do your homework so you keep mistakes to a minimum. Time is your most valuable resource, and when you leverage it well, you maximize the investment you’re putting into everything else and keep the work from being harder than it has to be.

Think for a minute here about how you interact with your employees and set them up for success. Their most valuable resource is time, too. If you respect that and give them the space and tools they need to work efficiently and authentically, they’re ultimately going to be way more productive and have a better relationship with you than if you micromanaged, were unclear or buried them in useless processes. Set high expectations, be very clear and then get out of their way.

2. Do it fast

Now, obviously, to do point No. 1 well, you might have to slot off a decent chunk of your calendar, depending on what you’re working on. And you want to have enough time to really consider your options, get feedback and look into all relevant details. Haste makes waste, as the old saying goes.

But today’s market is an ever-changing kaleidoscope. Blink, and it’s changed on you. So in that sense, you can’t hang

around forever. You have to go on the offense wherever you can, take a go-for-blood approach and commit to doing whatever it takes quickly. The more you can cross an objective off your list, the more you can use your accomplishments to stay motivated about your big business picture – and the more competitive you'll be.

Aim for as much speed as you can reasonably muster, and use the quality of your work to pace yourself. The goal is to arrive at high excellence, a fantastic service or product people really want, and a great price, all at the same time.

3. Have fun

Yes, business has plenty of seriousness to it. There's a lot on the line in terms of money, reputation and your wellness.

But in the grand scheme of things, business is just a game where the score is measured in dollars. You'll quickly discover this once you're independently wealthy, or if you talk to people who already are. Once you're in that position, work isn't about the money. It's about the people and the joy of bringing something interesting and good into the market. It's about challenging yourself every day to see what you can do.

So, work hard. But work in the spirit of play: Smile. Joke around a little. Explore. Be a good sport with your competitors. If customers are satisfied, and both you and your team can wake up every morning genuinely excited about all the things that need to be done, optimistic about having a great day, then everybody wins.

There's no beating around the bush – holding onto a business dream is no easy feat. It takes intention, strategy and a killer support network. However, this three-pronged approach can help keep you out of the weeds. Commit to making your work professional, fast and fun, and you'll easily cross whatever

finish line you set for yourself and your business.

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