How to Combine Digital, Offline and Affiliate Marketing for Maximum Growth

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- Relying on just one or two marketing channels is risky. A multi-channel mix, on the other hand, creates resilience and sets you up to be discovered in the AI-powered future.
- Start with a strong digital foundation to drive discovery, then bridge that with offline experiences to build trust.
- Add affiliate marketing and partner channels to add performance-based volume without upfront ad spend.

Growing businesses rely on marketing to generate demand. However, they rely too often on just one or two channels. And while that can work short-term, it leaves them exposed when one channel underperforms or becomes more expensive.

Companies with scalable growth use a smarter mix:

- Digital to drive discovery
- Offline to build trust
- Affiliate or partner channels to add performance-based volume
- AI marketing awareness to strengthen long-term

visibility

This integrated approach isn’t just more resilient; it sets you up to be discovered in the AI-powered future.

The risks of a one-channel strategy

A single-channel strategy creates risk. If all your leads come from Google Ads, and since CPCs often rise, your pipeline shrinks. If you depend on word-of-mouth, slow seasons hit harder. If you rely on a marketplace or aggregator, a rule change or pricing shift can impact your entire funnel.

A multi-layered marketing approach spreads that risk. It also compounds benefits. Each layer supports the next, creating more opportunities for leads, conversions and long-term visibility.

Start with a strong digital foundation

Digital is the base of nearly every modern marketing system. Your website, SEO and paid ads are the entry point for many customers.

Your website should be fast, mobile-friendly and clearly communicate your services and how to move forward. If you serve local markets, your site should include location-specific content and keywords.

For local businesses, presence on Google and other business profiles is critical for businesses targeting geographic areas. Paid media, Google Ads and social media can all help reach the right audience at the right time.

Email and SMS marketing help convert one-time customers into repeat buyers. A simple follow-up system can drive loyalty and

referrals with little overhead.

Bridge digital discovery with offline trust

Even in a digital world, many buying decisions hinge on real-world trust. People want to know the business behind the screen.

One strategy is to connect digital activity to offline experiences. Let people book in-person appointments or demos directly from your website. Promote your participation in community events, workshops or sponsorships via digital channels.

At those events, use QR codes or SMS opt-ins to capture leads and grow your list. A face-to-face interaction backed by a strong digital presence creates lasting impressions and dramatically improves conversion rates.

When people encounter your brand both online and offline, trust accelerates.

Add affiliate-style and partner channels

Affiliate marketing doesn’t just apply to just ecommerce or influencers. For service-based and local businesses, affiliate marketing means building referral-driven, performance-based relationships that bring in new customers without upfront ad spend.

These channels might include:

- Strategic partnerships with complementary businesses
- Referral relationships with brokers, agents or

consultants

- Local or regional business alliances
- Lead marketplaces or service platforms
- Corporate or warranty networks

These models typically pay-per-lead, booked service or completed transactions, making them efficient and low-risk.

Real-world example

Consider a home services company, for example, HVAC or plumbing, that already has a decent digital presence. It’s doing well, but wants to smooth out seasonal fluctuations and reduce reliance on ad spend.

One smart strategy is to join a contractor network through a home warranty provider.

For contractors, joining major networks is a good strategy to supplement your digital and other marketing efforts. These networks connect you with homeowners who already have active home warranty policies and need service. This can help smooth out slow seasons, keep your crews busy and diversify your revenue so you are not relying only on Google Ads or word of mouth.

This is a clear example of performance-based marketing. The home warranty company handles customer acquisition; the contractor acts as a fulfillment partner. This model can be applied in many industries, where one company drives demand and partners fulfill the work.

AI visibility begins with your

public footprint

An emerging and often overlooked part of modern marketing is AI visibility, also known as Answer Engine Optimization (AEO). As more people turn to tools like ChatGPT and Google Gemini to ask questions such as “find a reliable contractor in Orange County,” businesses need to understand how these systems work.

LLMs don’t rely solely on your website. They draw from a broad ecosystem of public content, including reviews, FAQs, third-party news and articles, business directories, partner sites and even offline data accessed through APIs, third-party platforms and aggregators.

As AI-driven search continues to evolve, having a basic understanding of how these systems work is increasingly important. There are many free and paid resources available to learn more, such as Clarity Digital AI Academy, which offers a free introduction to these concepts.

A simple plan to apply the model

You don’t need to rebuild your entire strategy. Start by making sure your website and SEO are clear and conversion-ready. Look for ways to connect online activity to offline interactions, like making it easy to book appointments or promoting events. Try one new affiliate-style partnership to diversify your lead flow.

And as you create content, think about how it signals relevance — not just to people, but to the AI systems shaping discovery.

The best marketing is a mix

Marketing is no longer about choosing between digital or traditional, performance or brand. The most successful

businesses today combine different marketing channels, creating a system that reinforces itself.

If your current strategy relies too heavily on one or two sources, take a step toward diversification. Audit your mix, and test one new channel this month. Over time, that layered approach creates stability, reach and visibility in a world where discovery is increasingly shaped by both human referrals and artificial intelligence.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/the-marketing-mix-that-will-maximize-your-businesss-growth/502158

Stuck Putting Out Fires All Day? Here’s How to Reclaim Your Time and Get Back to Leading.

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Key Takeaways

- Too many founders get stuck in reactive mode, buried in meetings and fire drills. But if you’re always reacting, you’re not really leading.
- You must move from reactive operator to strategic leader, which requires a mindset shift. Understand that you’re not the firefighter — you’re the architect.
- Ask yourself: If you disappeared for two weeks, what would break? That’s where your real work begins.
- Building a system that works without you requires auditing your week, blocking “CEO time,” empowering your team and shifting to asynchronous work.

You didn’t start a company to be the busiest person in the building.

And yet, if you’re like most founders, your calendar is a graveyard of back-to-back meetings, urgent messages and fire drills that your colleagues may feel only you can “solve.” The result? Days that feel full but not fulfilling, reactive

instead of intentional.

What I've learned in my time at ButterflyMX is that this isn't just a productivity problem. It's a leadership one. Because when you spend all your time reacting, you stop steering.

It's time to shift gears from reactive operator to strategic leader.

The calendar doesn't lie

Startups demand speed, and early on, doing everything yourself feels like a feature, not a bug. You're the founder, the closer, the fixer. Every problem routes through you, and that's how you stay in control. But control is a trap.

As your company grows, so does the complexity and so does the cost of staying in reactive mode. Decisions slow down. People wait for your input. Vision gets crowded out by noise.

Look at your calendar. It's the clearest mirror of how you're spending your time. Is it filled with strategic work, or just motion? How much time is spent building the future vs. maintaining the present? If you're constantly in meetings, constantly replying and constantly context-switching, you're not leading. You're buffering.

The hard truth is that no one's going to give you your time back. You have to take it.

You're the bottleneck or the blueprint

The shift from reactive to strategic isn't just about better time management; it's a mindset shift.

Too many founders confuse involvement with impact. They want to stay close to the action, but end up inserting themselves

into every decision, every approval, every update. That's not leadership. That's a bottleneck.

Your job isn't to be in the loop. It's to build systems so you don't always have to be.

Reclaiming your time starts with a new mental model: You're not the firefighter, you're the architect. You design how information flows. You decide what gets your attention. And most importantly, you choose what only you can do.

Ask yourself: If you disappeared for two weeks, what would break? That's your blueprint. That's where your real work begins.

Because ultimately, your time is your loudest signal. What you choose to focus on and what you choose to let go of tells your team what really matters.

Build a system that works without you

Insight without execution is just philosophy. So how do you actually make the shift from reactive to strategic?

Start with your calendar. Audit your week like an investor. Color-code your time: What's strategic? What's operational? What's purely reactive? Most founders are shocked by how little time is spent on what actually moves the business forward. Then, systematize your role.

Some ways you can do this include:

- **Block "CEO time":** Reserve four to eight hours a week for thinking, vision, recruiting or your most important long-term priorities. Treat it like your most sacred meeting.
- **Empower your team:** Document decisions. Clarify

ownership. Encourage autonomy. The more decisions your team can make without you, the stronger your company gets.

- **Shift to async by default:** Kill low-leverage meetings. Replace them with memos or shared dashboards. Meetings should be intentional and productive.

Most importantly, protect your attention. Because your time isn't just for getting things done, it's for seeing what others miss.

When you start running your time like a system, you stop reacting and start compounding.

Yes, some fires are real

Let's be honest: Not every reactive moment is avoidable. Sometimes the server crashes. A key hire quits. A customer churns unexpectedly. Real fires happen, and when they do, leadership shows up.

But here's the distinction: Responding is not the same as reacting.

Being available in a crisis doesn't mean you need to be available for everything. Strategic leaders know how to zoom in when it matters and zoom out when it doesn't.

And for early-stage founders, the balance is trickier. You're still hands-on by necessity. But even then, you can plant seeds of leverage — delegate one decision a week, protect one morning a week, trust one teammate a little more.

You don't need perfect systems to reclaim your time; you just need to start building them.

Time is a leadership choice

If your calendar doesn’t reflect your priorities, neither will your company.

Your job as a leader is to see further, think more clearly and act with intention. None of that happens when you’re stuck in reactive mode.

When you design your time around strategy, not urgency, you send a signal to your team, your board and yourself that you’re building something that can scale beyond you.

The best founders don’t just manage time. They multiply it.

So audit the noise. Eliminate the drag. Build systems that set you free.

And then, get back to what only you can do: leading the way forward.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/how-to-stop-reacting-and-start-leading/501724

Most Business Owners Fail to Track This Key Metric. Here’s Why That’s a Dangerous Mistake.

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Key Takeaways

- Most founders track ad spend but don’t truly understand their customer acquisition cost, but CAC is one of the biggest drivers of profitability, cash flow and how risky or resilient their business really is.
- If your CAC is too high relative to your margins and lifetime value, scaling doesn’t fix the problem — it

quietly makes it worse.
- CAC tells you whether your business model actually works sustainably and shows you whether the path you're on will pay off or not.

Most founders can tell you how much they spend on ads each month. Fewer can tell you what it actually costs them to land a single paying client. And even fewer understand how important that number actually is. Just over half of marketers know their metrics, so don't feel bad if you don't. But it's time to change that!

Customer acquisition cost (CAC) isn't just a marketing metric — it's a key measure of your profitability potential. It affects your margins, your potential growth speed, how much risk you have and how resilient your business is in different conditions. Whether you're running paid ads, relying on referrals or posting on Instagram when you remember, CAC is always there, shaping the sales and marketing math behind the scenes.

Let's break down what CAC actually is, why it matters way more than most founders realize and how to think about it in a way that doesn't make your head spin.

What CAC actually is

At its simplest, CAC is how much it costs you to acquire a new client.

The basic formula looks like this:

Total sales and marketing spend ÷ number of new clients acquired

That includes ad spend, software, agencies, contractors, sales commissions and even your own time if you're doing sales yourself. If you spent $5,000 on marketing and sales last month and signed 10 new clients, your CAC is $500.

A key thing to remember is that CAC is not just for your ads. Even if you don’t run ads, you still have a CAC. Time spent networking, posting content, sending follow-ups, paying referral fees, investing in funnel automations, hopping on discovery calls and nurturing leads all have a cost.

Why CAC directly impacts your margins

Every dollar you spend to acquire a client comes out of your margin.

If you sell a $2,000 service and it costs you $1,200 to deliver, your gross margin before marketing is $800. If your CAC is $600, your real margin is now $200. If your CAC creeps up to $900, you’re losing money on every sale, even though revenue looks fine.

This is how businesses grow their top line and still feel broke at the end of the month.

Founders often focus on revenue targets without realizing their CAC is silently eating the profit. They’ll say things like “We just need more volume” or “We’ll make it up later with upsells” without actually checking whether the math supports that plan.

If your CAC is too high relative to your pricing and margins, scaling just makes the problem worse, as it just compounds how much you’re losing.

CAC determines how fast you can grow

Growth speed isn’t just about demand; it also relies on having enough cash to invest in that growth.

If it costs you $1,000 to acquire a client and you get paid $1,000 upfront, you've just broken even on day one. If it costs you $1,000 to acquire a client and you get paid $250 per month, you're fronting the cost and waiting four months to recover it.

That's fine if you've planned for it, but dangerous if you haven't.

High CAC slows growth because it ties up cash and makes it more high-stakes for you to retain those clients. Every new client requires more capital before you see a return. This is why two businesses with the same revenue can feel wildly different to run. One has a low CAC, and cash comes back quickly. The other has a high CAC and is constantly waiting to catch up.

Lower CAC also gives you options. You can reinvest faster and test new channels. You can survive a bad month without panicking about covering your ongoing marketing spend. High CAC puts you on a treadmill where you have to keep selling just to stay in place.

CAC and lifetime value are inseparable

CAC on its own doesn't tell the full story. It only becomes meaningful when you look at it next to lifetime value, or LTV.

LTV is how much profit you make from a client over the entire time they work with you.

A healthy rule of thumb for most service businesses is that LTV should be at least 3x CAC. If it costs you $500 to acquire a client, you want to make at least $1,500 in gross *profit* from them over time. Key word — profit, not revenue.

If your LTV is close to your CAC, your business is fragile.

Any increase in ad costs, any drop in retention, any delay in payment, and the whole thing becomes unprofitable.

Using your CAC to make decisions

An easy test is to pull your CAC and your LTV and compare the two. If you are under a 3:1 ratio, start looking at what changes you need to make in the short term to your CAC, and in the medium term to your LTV, to rightsize this.

In the short term, you can reduce your CAC by reducing your marketing spend. Map out what your marketing spend would need to be per month to get to your 3:1 CAC:LTV target, and make those cuts immediately.

Once those short-term cuts are made, you can look at what to do to increase your LTV, which can make a longer-term difference in your CAC:LTV. Things that can increase LTV are increasing pricing or decreasing COGS, improving retention or improving your conversion rate. These things take time and experimentation, but it is usually worth the investment to work with a professional on these things to bolster your CAC:LTV math over time.

Ultimately, CAC tells you whether your business model actually works sustainably. It shows you the real cost of growth and whether the path you're on pays off (literally).

If you don't know your CAC today, that's okay — but it's not something to put off forever. The sooner you understand it, the sooner you can start making decisions that actually support the business you're trying to build.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/revenue-growth-means-nothing-if-you-ignore-this-key-metric/501718

Good Partners Make You Rich – Bad Partners Bankrupt You.

Here’s Why

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Key Takeaways

- The right business partner multiplies your strengths; the wrong one multiplies your risk.
- Thoroughly vet character, values and behavior before partnership — ignorance is the biggest liability.

Steve Jobs had Steve Wozniak. Warren Buffett had Charlie Munger. Larry Page had Sergey Brin. Some of the most successful people in the world owe their success to the partnerships they forged along the way.

Finding the perfect business partner is one of those fast tracts to success I love to talk about. In the case of a perfect business partnership, **1 + 1 = 3.** What this equation is trying to say is that when two people join forces, that partnership’s potential success can be significantly greater than the individual accomplishments of each partner.

But while partnering is one of the fast tracks towards success and wealth, it is also one of the fast tracks to failure or bankruptcy. Choosing a bad partner can create havoc with your financial and personal life. Bad partnerships lose money, find themselves in litigation and destroy marriages.

Questions to ask that will help you find the perfect business partner

So, how do you go about finding the right business partner?

Below are some questions to ask that will help you identify potentially good business partners:

- Is your potential partner honest?
- Is your potential partner humble?
- Does your potential partner have skills you lack?
- Does your potential partner have control over their emotions?
- Is your potential partner sound financially?
- Does your potential partner have good relationships with his family members? Family includes immediate family as well as parents and siblings.
- Does your potential partner treat their family members well?
- Does your potential partner have a hard work ethic?
- Is your potential partner a rule follower?
- Have you worked with this potential partner before?
- Do you know this potential partner very well?
- Is your potential partner positive, upbeat and optimistic?
- Does your potential partner have a good reputation?
- Does your potential partner have integrity?
- If your potential partner has a spouse or significant other, do you know them well?
- Is your potential partner a good listener?
- Does your potential partner have a reputation for keeping their word?
- Is your potential partner a good learner?

If the answers to these questions are yes, then you have a perfect partner candidate. If you don’t know the answers to any of these questions, do not partner with a potential partner until you do.

Here are some questions to ask that will help you identify potentially bad business partners:

- Does your potential partner have a reputation for lying?

Have you caught them in even little lies?

- Is your potential partner arrogant? Quick to anger?
- Does your potential partner cheat on their taxes?
- Does your potential partner have any outstanding tax issues or deficiencies?
- Has your potential partner ever sued anyone? Been sued by anyone?
- Does your potential partner cheat on their spouse?
- Do you and your potential partner have similar skills?
- Does your potential partner have money problems?
- Does your potential partner treat their family members poorly?
- Has your potential partner ever been in a failed partnership before?
- Has your potential partner ever broken any laws before – are they a rule breaker?
- Has your potential partner ever filed for bankruptcy before?
- Does your potential partner have any outstanding debts they are behind on?
- Does your potential partner gossip?
- Is your potential partner negative, downbeat and pessimistic?
- Does your potential partner have a bad reputation? Lack integrity?
- Has your potential partner ever made bad investments in the past?
- Does your potential partner have any issues with their spouse or significant other?
- Does your potential partner exaggerate or have problems keeping their promises?
- Has your potential partner ever broken any promises to you or anyone you know?
- Has your potential partner ever broken any promises to any of their past business partners?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, this may not

be the right partner for you. If you don’t know the answer to all of these questions, do not partner with a potential partner until you do.

Potential partner tests

Some other points I’d like to make regarding potential partners:

- Find three or more individuals who have worked with this potential business partner and ask them the above questions. This includes former partners and vendors.
- Ask your potential partner’s family members these questions?
- Who does your potential partner surround themselves with?
- Are their friends stand-up people or not?
- Would you associate with their friends?
- Never partner with someone who surrounds themselves with fools or people who lack integrity.

You will never know everything you need to know about a potential partner, but asking the above questions is good due diligence and will help you to better vet potential partners. Knowing as much as you can know about future business partners significantly reduces your risk.

The more you know, the lower your risk. Not knowing as much as possible about potential business partners significantly increases your risk. The less you know, the greater your risk.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/good-partners-make-you-rich-bad-partners-bankrupt-you/502057

PepsiCo Is Slashing Prices on Cheetos, Doritos, and Lay's — Here's How Much You'll Save

Good news for snack fiends: PepsiCo is slashing prices by up to 15% on some of its most popular snacks, including Lay's, Doritos, and Flamin' Hot Cheetos, *The Wall Street Journal* reports. An 8-ounce bag of Lay's classic potato chips could drop from $4.99 to $4.29, while a 9.25-ounce bag of Doritos would fall about 80 cents to $5.49.

The move comes after the company received a flood of complaints from chip connoisseurs that high prices were making it hard to buy the snacks. They aren't wrong. Retail prices

for salty snacks were about 38% higher in June 2024 than they were in 2020, according to Jefferies analysts.

PepsiCo CEO Ramon Laguarta admitted the company's snack prices had become "a little more expensive than we would like it to be." But the price cuts aren't free. The company says the cuts are funded by closing three manufacturing plants and cutting several product lines.

Read more

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Read more

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/pepsico-is-slashing-prices-on-doritos-cheetos-and-lays/502408

Crypto Spent a Decade Building Everything Except the One Thing That Actually Matters

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Key Takeaways

- The crypto industry faces a critical challenge: outdated wallet infrastructure that undermines security and user trust.
- Beyond cosmetic changes, the industry acknowledges the need for a fundamental redesign to ensure safe, user-friendly and self-custodial crypto management.

For all the talk about “decentralization” and “empowerment,” the cryptocurrency industry has ignored the one layer every user touches: the wallet. Blockchains get upgrades, protocols get rewrites and AI agents get hyped to the moon, but the thing people rely on to hold their money and identity is still a browser plugin glued together with warnings and hope.

It’s almost comical how many of crypto’s biggest failures trace back to this. Hacks blamed on “user error.” Blind-signing scams that empty wallets in seconds. Seed phrases that disappear in apartment moves or get phished out of inboxes. Entire ecosystems are built on infrastructure that collapses the moment a tab freezes or a spoofed UI pops up.

And the worst part? The industry treats all of this as normal.

Wallets get dressed up with new UI or a shinier extension icon, but underneath, they're built like SaaS products pretending to be self-custody. A website outage, a compromised iframe or a vendor failure is all it takes to expose users who thought they were "sovereign."

This isn't a niche problem; it's *the* problem. The one quietly shaping public perception, killing adoption and giving regulators endless ammunition.

Everyone loves to talk about mainstream users, but no one wants to face the obvious truth: No mainstream audience will ever trust a system that expects them to memorize magic words and pray their browser doesn't betray them.

The dam finally cracks

At Devconnect in Buenos Aires, this tension was impossible to avoid. Behind all the AI-agent talk and real-world-finance buzz, conversations kept circling back to the same topic: The wallet layer is broken, and the market has reached the point where patching it won't cut it.

A noticeable shift is happening. Not cosmetic rebrands or acquisitions, those are symptoms. The real shift is architectural. A handful of builders finally stopped treating wallets like apps and started treating them like infrastructure.

The clearest example of this was the launch of Wallet as a Protocol (WaaP) from Holonym's team. Not another wallet instance, not another extension, a protocol. Something closer to HTTPS or SMTP than a product. A wallet layer that isn't owned by a vendor. A universal account that isn't recreated for every app. Real self-custody without dumping responsibility on users. And crucially, no seed phrases, the single biggest psychological barrier for anyone outside the crypto bubble.

Whether WaaP becomes the standard isn’t the point. The point is that someone finally called the bluff: seed phrases were a workaround, not a destiny. Blind signing was a failure, not a feature. And building critical infrastructure on SaaS wrappers was never going to scale to billions of people.

The industry is paying for its shortcuts

For years, crypto put velocity above safety. Seed phrases were shipped because they were the fastest way to get wallets working. Browser extensions were adopted because they were the quickest way to reach users. SaaS-style embedded wallets became popular because onboarding metrics looked good in a pitch deck.

Now the bill is due.

AI agents are entering the ecosystem, and they can’t safely interact with wallets designed for copy-pasting keys into web forms. DeFi protocols want real users, not bots spoofing sessions through weak signing flows. Builders in places like Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa need infrastructure that works offline or in hostile environments, not something that breaks if a UI element is compromised.

The truth is uncomfortable but simple: Crypto’s weakest link has always been the thing the industry treated as an afterthought.

A correction, long overdue

What’s happening now isn’t a product cycle. It’s a correction.

Wallets can no longer behave like SaaS extensions that rent custody back to users in tiny fragments. They can’t keep relying on “don’t click the wrong prompt” as a security model.

They can’t keep telling the public to take on all the responsibility while offering none of the protection.

The next phase, whether it’s WaaP or something inspired by it, moves in a different direction entirely. Call it overdue. Call it obvious. But the wallet layer is finally getting the scrutiny it deserved 10 years ago.

And if this industry actually wants mainstream adoption, not just in trading, but in real finance, real identity, real coordination, fixing the wallet layer isn’t optional. It’s the starting point.

The rest of the stack will evolve only as fast as the wallets allow.

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For all the talk about “decentralization” and “empowerment,” the cryptocurrency industry has ignored the one layer every user touches: the wallet. Blockchains get upgrades, protocols get rewrites and AI agents get hyped to the moon, but the thing people rely on to hold their money and identity is still a browser plugin glued together with warnings and hope.

It’s almost comical how many of crypto’s biggest failures

trace back to this. Hacks blamed on “user error.” Blind-signing scams that empty wallets in seconds. Seed phrases that disappear in apartment moves or get phished out of inboxes. Entire ecosystems are built on infrastructure that collapses the moment a tab freezes or a spoofed UI pops up.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/money-finance/crypto-builders-cant-ignore-this-crucial-component-anymore/500130

Bob Iger Is Stepping Down as Disney CEO. Here’s Who’s Taking the Reins.

Josh D’Amaro is taking over Disney — and he’s got some big shoes to fill. The 54-year-old chairman of Disney’s parks division will succeed Bob Iger as CEO on March 18. Iger’s tenure saw Disney make some of its biggest moves ever, acquiring Marvel, Lucasfilm, and 21st Century Fox while launching Disney+.

D’Amaro has overseen Disney Experiences since 2020. His promotion to the top spot shows just how important theme parks and cruises have become to the company’s bottom line. Disney is spending tens of billions expanding its parks and building new ships. D’Amaro is already a favorite among Disney super-fans, frequently touring the parks and highlighting cast members on social media.

Iger, 74, will stay on as a senior adviser and board member

until his contract ends December 31. The succession ends years of speculation – and the shadow of Disney's last botched CEO handoff, when Bob Chapek's brief tenure led to an ugly power struggle before Iger returned in 2022.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/disney-names-new-ceo-to-replace-bob-iger/502407

If Your Company Isn’t Reskilling Employees Yet, You’re Quietly Planning Your Own Demise

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Key Takeaways

- Accenture “exited” 11,000 employees unable to adapt to AI, highlighting the urgent need for reskilling in the workforce.
- Research indicates employees are open to AI and willing to learn new skills, but companies must provide sufficient reskilling opportunities.
- The success of integrating AI in the workplace hinges on scalable reskilling programs and active, engaging learning methods.

In September, the consulting firm Accenture made headlines when it acknowledged it had “exited” 11,000 employees who couldn’t be retrained to adapt to AI. On a recent earnings call, CEO Julie Sweet explained the decision bluntly, saying that “the workforce needs new skills to use AI, and new talent strategies and related competencies must be developed.”

It’s a tough-but-true reality that thanks to AI, tomorrow’s jobs will look radically different than they do today. The World Economic Forum estimates that by 2030, nearly 40% of workers’ core skills will have changed.

This is hardly the first time in history that this has been the case. During the Industrial Revolution, skilled artisans and weavers lost jobs to machines that could produce textiles faster and more cheaply than they could by hand. The new technology was widely protested by people who became known as the Luddites, who weren't anti-technology as much as they were anti-being left behind. Their real grievance was that the rules of work changed overnight without a path to adapt.

Two centuries later, leaders face a similar turning point: AI will absolutely transform work, but how it plays out depends on not only the willingness of workers to adapt, but the willingness of organizations to help them along.

Why reskilling is a competitive advantage

Many headlines are quick to point to employees' widespread fear of AI. But there's more to the story — according to research from Genpact, nearly 60% of workers said they'd be more comfortable with AI if they understood it better; 80% said they'd be willing to learn new skills to take advantage of AI in their current job.

The problem is that employers have not been doing enough to get workers where they need to be. This is a missed opportunity. Hiring is incredibly time-consuming, not to mention pricey. At Jotform, hiring is one of the operational tasks I make sure I always have a direct hand in, for the simple reason that it's so important. I look for more than just hard tech skills — what I really want in Jotformers are team players who have a growth mindset. Those are the assets that transcend job descriptions.

And that's why reskilling matters. AI will keep shifting how work gets done, and a necessary skill today may be completely obsolete in six months. But people who can adapt, learn and

collaborate are worth investing in. Consider this: When employees are let go, they take years of institutional knowledge with them. Those still on the payroll get nervous they'll be next, and that anxiety can deal a death blow to productivity, engagement and the culture you've worked hard to create.

It can also lead to an exodus of high-quality people. A layoff impacting just 1% of your workforce can prompt a 31% increase in voluntary turnover, which not only creates staffing challenges but can harm your organization's reputation.

How to build a reskilling system that works

All too often, employers treat reskilling as a pesky box-ticking exercise — a one-off webinar or company-wide tutorial that may never even get seen. This is a mistake, one that can hurt your bottom line in the long run. As the Genpact study shows, employers talk a big game, but few are walking the walk — only 35% of workers say reskilling options are available at their companies, and only 21% say they've actually participated.

Instead, leaders should be looking at reskilling as a scalable system that's core to their organization's survival.

First, conduct an audit of your staff's current capabilities, including not just hard skills like AI literacy, but problem-solving abilities, emotional intelligence and other crucial soft skills that can't be outsourced or easily replaced. This helps identify high-potential learners and tailor training accordingly.

The next step is to develop a comprehensive reskilling program that's tied to tangible impacts. Remember — there's no one-size-fits-all approach to AI adoption. Role-based learning

tracks should connect directly to company goals, whether that means faster customer support resolution or less time spent on tedious, manual tasks. This not only helps leaders clarify their own objectives, but gives employees a reason to buy in by showing them exactly how AI can make their jobs easier and more meaningful.

Another crucial component? Make learning active, not passive. Everyone has had to sit through a dry training video whose contents they've completely forgotten within seconds of finishing it. That's not going to cut it.

Walmart, for example, has launched a new certification program in partnership with OpenAI that's designed to help both the corporation's frontline and office-based employees improve their AI literacy. The professional services network PwC is gamifying its AI curriculum with a live trivia game called "PowerUp," which quizzes employees on firm strategy and awards prizes to top performers. The more collaborative the experience, the better.

Reskilling shouldn't be an afterthought, a side-project or an after-hours burden. Good leaders always prioritize continuous learning, and good employees are constantly looking for ways to level up in their roles. But that doesn't mean AI adoption will happen overnight, or automatically. Big changes are afoot, and smart businesses are taking a proactive approach to preparing employees for what's to come. If they don't, they will almost certainly find themselves left behind.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/you-must-reskill-employees-in-the-ai-age-or-risk-your/499820

Elon Musk Just Merged SpaceX and xAI Into a $1.25 Trillion Company — Here’s Why

First it was rockets. Then AI. Now Elon Musk is combining both

into one massive company. SpaceX acquired xAI on Monday, creating the most valuable private company in the world at a combined valuation of $1.25 trillion. The deal cements SpaceX’s dominance while giving xAI, which has burned through cash trying to catch up with AI rivals, a much-needed financial lifeline.

Musk says the ultimate goal is building data centers in space, where there are no land constraints and closer proximity to the sun for solar energy. SpaceX has already filed plans with the FCC to launch an “orbital data center system” consisting of up to one million satellites. But experts warn there are significant technical and physical limitations to that idea — and some skeptics believe the merger is simply a financial rescue for xAI.

The combined company could go public around June, with Musk hoping to raise about $50 billion in the offering.

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Read more

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/elon-musk-merges-spacex-and-xai-into-1-trillion-company/502373

Not All Money Is Good Money — Why the Wrong Investor Is More Dangerous Than Running Out of Cash

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- Taking money without alignment on values, trust, timing and working style often creates long-term friction that outweighs short-term relief.
- The best founder–investor partnerships are defined less by speed or valuation and more by patience, clarity and how both sides behave when things get hard.

A professor once told me, “Not all money is good money.”

I understood that line intellectually, but I didn’t feel the weight of it until I began seeing deals up close. At one firm I worked with, we did what I call “friend deals.” These were

checks written due to pressure, access or favors. The terms made little sense. The alignment was nonexistent. These deals created years of friction in exchange for a few months of relief.

Founders feel this too. You close a round quickly, celebrate the win and only later realize you brought the wrong partner into the business. Misalignment in values, expectations and working style becomes more painful than the capital is helpful.

In my experience, founders tend to regret taking money when one of four elements is missing.

Related: Most Startups Ignore This One Asset That Makes or Breaks Their Success

1. When you don’t share values or vision

No amount of capital can bridge a fundamental philosophical divide. I have witnessed partnerships fall apart because the founder sought a steady, durable business, while the investor pushed for an early exit. Or the founder wanted to prioritize product quality while the investor cared only about margin.

I lived this dynamic once while evaluating an investment in a noodle company. The business had traction and even a Walmart contract. The founder had poured in his own savings. The economics looked reasonable. But my partner had worked with the founder before and raised concerns about how he handled pressure. That unease was enough to stop the deal. The founder was furious, but time has shown that we made the right call. Vision and values were never going to align, and taking the deal would have become a long, difficult relationship.

2. When you give up too much too quickly

Early in my career as a founder, I felt the pressure to close rounds fast. When the runway shrinks, and stress rises, any check feels like a lifeline. That's usually when founders give up the most: heavy control rights, deep dilution or terms that quietly lock them into future constraints.

I often think about my father, who built a successful business without outside capital. Before every key decision, he asked one question: "Do we truly need this money to reach the next level?" Many founders forget to ask that. Raising at the wrong time, or for the wrong reason, often leads to regret. You can win the round and lose flexibility.

Investors respect founders who raise with intention rather than desperation. They don't expect perfection, but they expect clarity about how capital translates into progress.

3. When trust isn't real

Trust is built between rounds. I worry when founders disappear after receiving a check. I feel the same concern as an LP when I have to chase a GP for basic updates. If transparency is shaky when things are calm, it will collapse when things get hard.

One of the clearest examples of trust I've seen came from a beverage startup I invested in. The company ultimately didn't make it – the market shifted in ways the team couldn't keep up with. But the founder handled the entire journey with integrity. She communicated openly, shared difficult news directly and consistently honored her commitments. I went on to introduce her to other investors because she deserved continued support. Even though the business didn't survive, the relationship did.

That’s what trust looks like in practice. Not guaranteed success, but shared accountability.

4. When personality fit makes collaboration difficult

Personality fit matters more than founders want to admit. Some communicate directly. Some want long discussions. Some thrive on weekly updates. Some prefer quarterly reviews. None of these styles is wrong, but mismatched expectations create tension quickly. If communication feels strained on day one, it usually gets harder, not easier.

Additionally, if either of you is faking your personality to make the partnership work, you’re investing in a ticking time bomb. I had a partner once who needed my outgoing personality to help raise money. He pretended to be someone he wasn’t and used my relationships to ingratiate himself into my circle. You can pretend to be someone for a short period of time, but in the long run, your true nature comes out and it will blow up the endeavor if your personalities don’t mesh.

Related: Watch Out for This Major Red Flag When You’re Starting a Business, Says a Serial Investor

Questions to ask before you say yes

Here are practical filters founders should use before accepting any check:

1. Do we define success the same way?

Do they want a fast exit, slow growth or domination of a niche? Misalignment here becomes conflict later.

2. What will this capital accomplish in the next 18 to 24 months?

Tie the money to clear milestones, not vague expansion ideas.

3. How involved will this investor be?

Ask about communication cadence and expectations. Assumptions create frustration.

4. How do they behave when things go wrong?

Have them share a story about a portfolio miss. Listen to whether they speak with respect or blame.

5. What does my network say about them?

Quiet reference checks are one of the strongest tools founders fail to use.

How to know when it’s actually a good match

A strong match feels steady. You can be honest without performing. You don’t feel pressure to pretend everything is perfect. You can picture calling the investor during a tough quarter, not just during your best one. Their risk appetite matches your stage. Their expectations feel realistic. You leave conversations with clarity, not anxiety.

Good partners make you sharper. Misaligned partners make you defensive.

Choosing patience over speed

When capital is scarce and time feels tight, patience can feel unrealistic. But rushed decisions often produce long-term regret. Not all money is good money. The right money, at the right moment, from the right partner, can change your entire trajectory. Patience is how you find it.

Key Takeaways

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/why-the-wrong-investor-is-more-dangerous-than-running-out/501122