The Warren Buffett Indicator Says It Is Time to Buy

Ahead of Berkshire Hathaway's annual meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, this weekend, stock analysts are pointing out that the "Buffett Indicator" is saying it is a good time to buy.

Bloomberg defines the Buffett Indicator as a ratio of the total value of the U.S. stock market via the Wilshire 5000 Index divided by the dollar value of U.S. gross domestic product. Berkshire Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett has said it is the "single best measure of where valuations stand."

"The Buffett Indicator expresses the value of the U.S. stock market in terms of the size of the U.S. economy," according to Current Market Valuation. "If the stock market value is growing much faster than the actual economy, then it may be in a bubble."

The indicator sits at 180%, which signals that equities are cheap, which is music to the Oracle of Omaha's ears.

Adam Sarhan, founder of 50 Park Investments, told Bloomberg, "This is a crucial indicator because it helps traders know when to deploy capital and buy stocks." He added, "There are reasons to still be concerned about the global trade war, but if Trump isn't playing hardball with tariffs, people are going to buy, buy, buy with valuations much more reasonably priced now."

Related: Worried About the Market? Here's How Warren Buffett, Ray Dalio, and Harvard University Protect Their Portfolios

Some critics of the Buffett Indicator say it doesn't account for costs associated with high interest rates, and that the

market corrections can take a long time to play out. But for investors looking for the closest thing to a sure bet, it is hard to argue against following the strategy of one of the most successful investors of all time.

As a reminder, when he started his career at the age of 21, Buffett's net worth was just $20,000. Today, his net worth is estimated at $167.7 billion.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/warren-buffett-indicator-says-it-is-time-to-buy/491025

Starbucks Is Hiring In-Store Human Workers After Replacing People With Machines — and Finding It Didn't Work

Starbucks has found that removing human labor in favor of machines doesn't work for the company — so now the coffee chain is hiring old-fashioned human baristas at thousands of stores.

Starbucks CEO Brian Niccol stated in a call with investors earlier this week that the company's effort to reduce headcount over the past few years and replace humans with machines had backfired: Advanced machinery proved to be an inadequate substitute for human labor.

"Over the last couple of years, we've actually been removing labor from the stores, I think with the hope that equipment could offset the removal of the labor," Niccol said on the

call, per *The Guardian*. “What we’re finding is that wasn’t an accurate assumption with what played out.”

By the time Niccol joined Starbucks in September 2024, the company had been testing out human staff increases at just a handful of locations. Niccol broadened the effort this year to include 3,000 locations of the coffee chain’s 40,000 stores globally.

Related: ‘We’re Not Effective’: Starbucks CEO Tells Corporate Employees to ‘Own Whether or Not This Place Grows’

Niccol stated that new technology alone doesn’t cut it. Starbucks needed to adequately staff stores and allow employees access to new equipment to deliver a better customer experience.

“Equipment doesn’t solve the customer experience that we need to provide, but rather staffing the stores and deploying with this technology behind it does,” Niccol said on the call.

Niccol noted that increasing staff would entail higher costs but asserted that “some growth” for the company would accompany the move.

Starbucks CEO Brian Niccol. Photo by Kevin Sullivan/Digital First Media/Orange County Register via Getty Images

The move to hire new baristas is part of Niccol's plan to turn Starbucks around after five consecutive quarters of declining sales. Starbucks reported on Tuesday that same-store sales dropped 1% in the first quarter of 2025, falling short of Wall Street expectations.

Related: It's Pay-to-Stay at Starbucks As the Coffeehouse Reverses Its Open Door Policy

Niccol reassured investors on the call that though the financial results proved "disappointing," Starbucks was "really showing a lot of signs of progress" internally. For example, the average time to deliver in-store orders had declined by an average of two minutes during the quarter, he

said.

Niccol’s plan to turn around Starbucks includes limiting the number of items customers can order through mobile, adding ceramic mugs for in-store orders, cutting 30% of the menu, writing customers’ names down with Sharpies on their cups, and asking baristas to make orders in under four minutes. Starting May 12, Starbucks will also require baristas to dress uniformly in a solid black top and khaki, black, or blue denim bottoms.

Starbucks operates 16,941 stores in the U.S. and has 211,000 U.S. employees. The company’s stock was down about 11% year-to-date at the time of writing.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/starbucks-adding-new-staff-says-machines-alone-wont-cut-it/490980

How Ecommerce Businesses Are Leveraging Web Data to Understand Their Customers and Stay Ahead of the Competition

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

To stay ahead, ecommerce businesses can’t ignore the importance of data, especially the sort of public web data

that their competition has access to. Whether it’s tracking competitor prices or catching the latest consumer trends, having access to web data empowers companies to make smarter choices, no matter what sector they’re in.

However, the specific types of data required and their applications can vary significantly from one industry to another. In this piece, I would like to give you a glimpse into the differences and similarities of data collection.

Related: How to Use the Right Data to Make Effective Business Decisions

Who needs data? Everyone!

Ecommerce businesses across all industries rely on web data to monitor competitors, gauge their market standing and discover new growth avenues. Recent statistics show that in 2024, around 2.5 billion people – nearly a third of the global population – were making online purchases of consumer goods worldwide. This massive digital marketplace generates a treasure trove of valuable public data, such as:

- Pricing information
- Data on product availability
- Consumer reviews and sentiment
- Search trends and keywords
- Promotional strategies
- Market share indicators

All of this, and more, can be collected and analyzed with the help of web scraping. Now, let’s take a closer look at how different industries tap into web data to improve their decision-making and overcome their respective challenges.

Furniture industry – seasonal strategies and high-value purchases

The furniture industry operates on clear seasonal patterns, with significant sales happening in January and July as retailers make room for new inventory. During these peak times, prices can drop by anywhere from 10% to a whopping 60%, making it a crucial moment for buyers and sellers alike.

Industry-specific data needs:

- **Seasonal pricing trends:** Keeping an eye on how competitors adjust their discounts during peak clearance times.
- **Holiday promotion strategies:** Watching for special deals during big shopping weekends such as Presidents' Day, Memorial Day and Labor Day, when furniture is often discounted.
- **Consumer research patterns:** Gaining insights into the online-to-offline shopping journey. For instance, the famous Rule of 7 might be changing as people visit a store fewer times before making a purchase.
- **Floor sample availability:** Spotting chances when competitors are offering floor models at significant discounts.

Related: Once Only for Huge Companies, 'Web Scraping' Is Now an Online Arms Race No Internet Marketer Can Avoid

Fashion industry – rapid cycles and trend detection

The fashion industry is experiencing a remarkable surge, with estimates suggesting it could reach a staggering $1,183

billion by 2029, growing at an impressive annual rate of 8.94%. This sector is characterized by its rapid product cycles, constantly shifting trends and an increasing number of sustainability-conscious consumers.

Industry-specific data needs:

- **Trend anticipation:** Scrutinizing social media and review data to spot emerging styles before they hit the mainstream.
- **Inventory monitoring:** Keeping tabs on competitor stock levels to pinpoint items in high demand.
- **Sustainable product positioning:** Collecting data on how competitors promote their sustainability claims. This is important because, as Deloitte points out, 60% of millennials and 59% of Gen Z are willing to pay extra for sustainable products and services.
- **Fast fashion pricing:** Monitoring price changes in real-time to stay ahead of the competition.
- **Counterfeit detection:** Scanning online marketplaces for unauthorized replicas that could harm brand reputation.

Electronics industry – technical specifications and product lifecycles

The electronics industry faces some unique challenges, like dealing with complex products, fast-paced technological change and short product lifecycles. Given the industry’s estimated Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 7.5% from 2024 to 2031, making data-driven decisions is more important than ever.

Industry-specific data needs:

- **Serial number management:** Keeping track of product specifications across various platforms to maintain consistency.
- **Product lifecycle data:** Keeping an eye on when competitors start discounting older models to make way for the latest tech.
- **Detailed specifications:** Making sure all technical information is readily available and competitive.
- **Consumer electronics pricing strategy:** Utilizing real-time pricing intelligence for high-value items, especially since consumers are always comparing prices.
- **Stock prediction modeling:** Leveraging historical sales data to fine-tune inventory for products with short lifecycles.

Related: **Website Scraping Is an Easy Growth Hack You Should Try**

Food and beverage industry – health trends and ingredient transparency

The food and beverage sector is experiencing steady growth, projected to go from $6,200,011 million (2024) to $9,807,540 million by 2032, reflecting a CAGR of 5.9%. This industry requires specialized data collection to address food safety regulations, dietary trends and consumer health concerns.

Industry-specific data needs:

- **Ingredient transparency:** It’s crucial to keep an eye on how competitors present their nutrition information. After all, research has shown that over half of Americans say that front-of-package (FOP) labels impact their food and beverage purchases, and a quarter

consider this impact significant.

- **Emerging dietary trends:** Companies must identify emerging consumer preferences for products that are organic, sustainable or plant-based.
- **Allergen labeling practices:** Monitoring how competitors comply with allergen documentation is vital, particularly for the 220 million people living with food allergies worldwide.
- **Adoption of subscription models:** Analyzing how competitors are implementing recurring purchase options. Food subscriptions are projected to contribute to a $442 billion global subscription economy by 2025.
- **Omnichannel integration:** Understanding how competitors connect online and offline experiences is key.

Gathering web data is a game-changer for ecommerce across sectors, but the type of information you need and how you should use it can differ greatly from industry to industry. With the help of web scraping approaches tailored to a specific industry, businesses can stand out by tapping into real-time insights and using them to inform their pricing, product development and marketing strategies.

As ecommerce keeps growing on a global scale, those who know how to make the most of public web data will be in the best spot to understand market trends, predict what consumers want and ultimately grab a bigger slice of the market in their areas.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/how-web-data-helps-you-stay-ahead-of-the-competition/489969

‘Undisclosed Conflicts of Interest’: Kohl’s CEO Fired After Board Finds ‘Highly Unusual’ Deals

Kohl’s CEO, Ashley Buchanan, was fired on Thursday after the retailer discovered he had entered into business deals with someone with whom he had a “personal relationship.”

Buchanan was let go after only four months on the job—he had just started in January. He was previously the CEO of the craft store, Michaels.

After an investigation, the Kohl’s board says that Buchanan led the company to agree to a multimillion-dollar consulting deal with a person with whom the *Wall Street Journal* reports he was romantically involved. In an SEC filing, the company said it had “found that Mr. Buchanan had directed that the Company conduct business with a vendor founded by an individual with whom Mr. Buchanan has a personal relationship on highly unusual terms favorable to the vendor.”

This “caused the Company to enter into a multi-million dollar consulting agreement” with the individual, it continues.

Related: Hertz’s CEO Suddenly Steps Down After Company’s Pivot from Electric Vehicles

“An investigation conducted by outside counsel and overseen by the Audit Committee of the Board determined Mr. Buchanan

violated company policies by directing the Company to engage in vendor transactions that involved undisclosed conflicts of interest," Kohl's said.

The *WSJ* report names former Bed Bath & Beyond CEO Chandra Holt, now the founder of coffee company Incredibrew, as the other person involved in the deal.

Holt denied the claims to the WSJ.

"I've known Ashley Buchanan for 10 years, but I have not received any compensation for my Incredibrew business from Kohl's," Holt told the outlet.

Kohl's has closed 27 underperforming stores since January, per Axios. The company still has over 1,120 stores.

Related: BP's Former CEO Forfeits $40 Million in Severance Due to 'Serious Misconduct'

The Kohl's board named Michael Bender, the current Director of the Board, as Interim CEO, effective immediately.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/kohls-ceo-ashley-buchanan-fired-after-4-months-conflicts/490976

Is Your Company Struggling to Innovate? Here's What's Really Holding You Back – and

How to Turn Things Around

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

When you think of the world's most innovative companies, it's tempting to imagine a scrappy team of visionaries in a tiny room, spinning gold out of straw. But in reality, most large organizations struggle to innovate — not because they lack creative talent, but because their systems, cultures and processes are built for efficiency, not invention.

That's the paradox: As companies scale, they optimize for predictability, standardization and risk mitigation. The result? Creativity gets squeezed out. Teams fall into what I call the "River of Thinking" — a comfortable but stagnant flow of "this is how we've always done it." Leaders want bold new ideas, but their organizations are wired to resist them.

I've seen this firsthand in my work with companies like Disney and Virgin. The key to scaling creativity isn't waiting for lightning to strike — it's architecting the conditions for a thunderstorm of ideas. And that requires a fundamental shift in leadership: moving beyond efficiency-driven mindsets to deliberately designing cultures where innovation thrives. Here's where to start:

Related: How Business Leaders Can Foster an Innovative Work Culture

1. Move beyond the status quo

One of the biggest creativity killers is what I call the "River of Thinking." It's the comfortable current of "this is how we've always done it," where past successes become anchors. Breaking out of this river takes conscious effort —

questioning whether there’s a better way forward, disrupting systems and rethinking the routine.

Take the MagicBand at Disney, for example. On the surface, it’s a handy piece of wearable tech. But behind it was a vision to completely transform the guest experience, making every interaction effortless and magical, from park entry to payments. The idea didn’t start with a brilliant gadget; it started with bold questions: *What would make visiting Disney feel seamless? What’s stopping us from achieving that?* Asking these questions allowed us to tackle barriers head-on and redefine the guest experience.

But questions alone aren’t enough. They’re the spark, but storytelling is the fuel that ignites action. This is where a tool I call “Illustrate” comes into play, which is a method to make bold ideas impossible to ignore by engaging people on a sensory level. If you want others to champion a big idea, you need to make it real for them – something they can see, hear and even feel.

2. Make ideas tangible

Let me take you back to a legendary moment in Disney’s history to illustrate the power of, well, “Illustrate.” Joe Rohde, the creative genius behind Disney’s Animal Kingdom, pitched the concept of a safari experience where guests could come face-to-face with exotic animals. But his initial pitch didn’t land; it was too abstract.

So, Joe decided to show rather than tell. In his next meeting, he brought in a full-size Siberian tiger. Imagine being in that room! Suddenly, the idea went from theoretical to visceral. It wasn’t just a pitch anymore; it was an experience. That moment helped bring the safari concept to life, and today, Disney’s Animal Kingdom is one of the most visited attractions in the U.S.

We used similar tactics while working on the Aulani resort in Hawaii. We wanted to attract young families, so a team proposed offering parents a suite of baby gear — strollers, car seats, cribs and more — so they wouldn't have to lug everything from the mainland. Initially, I didn't see the value, but they asked if they could pitch their concept again. When they came back, they didn't just explain their idea; they built what I called "Stuff Mountain" — a towering display of all the items parents might need. It made the pitch impossible to ignore, and I immediately gave the stamp of approval.

Related: The Best-Kept Secret to Cultivating Creativity and Innovation

3. Empower teams to innovate boldly

Another leader who excels at turning ideas into reality is Richard Branson. I've worked with Branson on several projects, and his mantra has always stuck with me: "Screw it, let's do it." He's unafraid to experiment, and that boldness has fueled Virgin's innovative streak.

But what sets Branson apart isn't just his willingness to take risks; it's his focus on people. Virgin has always been an employee-first organization, and it's no coincidence that they deliver some of the best customer experiences in the industries they touch. Branson once told me that employees — not executives — are the ones who shape the customer experience day in and day out. This philosophy inspired Delta Air Lines to adopt a profit-sharing program for employees. The result? A massive cultural shift and some of the happiest employees in the skies.

4. Create the mental space for

creativity

Just as Branson focuses on empowering employees, leaders can foster creativity by making sure their teams have the mental space to innovate.

And here's the thing about creativity: It doesn't thrive in chaos. Most of us are stuck in what I call "Busy Beta" — a constant loop of distractions and deadlines. True creativity happens in "Amazing Alpha," that relaxed state where your brain makes unexpected connections and big ideas take root. To scale creativity, leaders need to help their teams get into Amazing Alpha more regularly.

At Disney, we created physical spaces specifically designed to spark creativity. These "greenhouses" were brainstorming havens filled with inspiration: visuals, prototypes and yes, snacks. No judgment. Just free-flowing ideas. It might seem small, but these kinds of designated spaces helped us generate some of our boldest concepts.

Related: Want Your Team to Excel? Play Games With Them (Yes, Games) to Advance Their Performance to the Next Level.

5. Balance imagination with execution

Scaling creativity is about balancing two forces: expansive thinking and reductive thinking. Expansive thinking generates ideas — it's playful, boundless and a little wild. Reductive thinking refines those ideas — it's focused, strategic and practical. Most companies lean too hard on the latter, squashing creativity before it even has a chance to bloom.

At Pixar, they've mastered this balance with "plussing meetings." The goal? Build on ideas instead of shooting them down. It's a simple shift, one that transforms brainstorming

from a battlefield into a playground. And it’s another tool leaders can use to keep expansive thinking alive while moving toward execution.

If there’s one thing I’ve learned, it’s this: Creativity doesn’t just happen — it’s engineered. Whether it’s a MagicBand, a safari park or a profit-sharing program, innovation requires intention, tools and the right environment.

So, here’s your challenge: Are you creating an environment where creativity can thrive? Are you giving your teams the space to dream big and the tools to make it real? Because when you do, the results aren’t just innovative — they’re transformative.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/how-to-scale-innovation-and-creativity-in-your-business/490427

‘Way for Identifying Humans’: Sam Altman’s Startup Is Bringing Eyeball-Scanning Orbs to the U.S.

Tools for Humanity, a startup co-founded in 2023 by OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, is expanding its field of vision.

The startup announced at a Wednesday event in San Francisco that it is sending out thousands of its eyeball-scanning Orb

systems to the U.S. for the first time on a mass scale this week, per *Bloomberg*.

The Orb is a spherical device that allows people to scan their eyes to prove they are human, in exchange for a cryptocurrency token called Worldcoin. The eye scans create a unique user ID or digital passport, which can then be used to verify user identities and differentiate them from AI and bots.

The Orbs will be accessible through six new World Spaces stores, modeled after Apple stores and opening this week, reports *Wired*. The stores will be based in six U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, Atlanta, Austin, Miami, Nashville, and San Francisco.

Tools for Humanity is also partnering with Razer to bring Orbs to Razer's retail stores, with the goal of having 7,500 Orbs in the U.S. by the end of the year.

"We needed some sort of way for identifying, authenticating humans in the age of AGI," Altman said at the event while explaining how the startup originated. (AGI refers to artificial general intelligence that can meet or surpass human abilities.)

[embedded content]

According to *TIME*, Tools for Humanity offered 25 units of its WLD cryptocurrency (worth about $26 today) to those who had their eyes scanned by the Orb last year. It's unclear how much cryptocurrency the startup will offer U.S. users.

Related: Sam Altman's Crypto Project Collects Personal Data With an Eye-Scanning Orb — And Now It's Banned in Spain

While the promise of a cryptocurrency payment may entice some users to scan their eyes, Tools for Humanity Chief Architect Adrian Ludwig told *Axios* that the real draw was the services that an Orb eye scan unlocks, like age verification on dating

apps.

Tools for Humanity announced on Wednesday at the event that it is joining forces with dating app giant Match Group to offer the option to verify ages with Orb scan. This initiative starts with Tinder users based in Japan.

“It’s not about a small amount of crypto payment,” Ludwig told the outlet. “It’s really about unlocking the potential of all those other services.”

The startup is additionally partnering with Visa to launch The World Card, which allows users to spend cryptocurrency anywhere Visa is accepted, in the U.S. later this year.

Related: Sam Altman Says Mastering AI Tools Is the New ‘Learn to Code’

Tools for Humanity previously only conducted limited tests of the Orbs in the U.S. and didn’t offer the scanning technology on a broad scale, per *Bloomberg*. The startup has scanned the eyes of more than 12 million people around the world through the Orb, including in countries like Portugal and Thailand, per *Axios*.

The startup, which was called Worldcoin until its rebrand late last year, encountered opposition in Spain last year, with regulators blocking the company over concerns that it was collecting biometric data. As of August, the startup had halted its activity in the country.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/sam-altmans-startup-brings-eyeball-scanning-orbs-to-the-us/490977

Chasing Every Marketing Trend? Your Brand Looks Desperate for Attention. Here's How to Stand Out Without Making People Cringe.

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

There's a party cliché that endures in pop culture: the guy who has had one too many, climbs up on a table and ends up dancing with a lampshade on his head. It's a trope that dates back to the 1920s, popping up in everything from newspaper columns to sitcoms like *I Love Lucy*. The lampshade-on-the-head bit is shorthand for someone who's lost all sense of self-awareness in pursuit of a laugh or attention.

And it's a perfect metaphor for how brands sometimes behave.

In the quest to be seen as fun, relatable or in touch with the moment, some brands go too far. They chase TikTok trends that have nothing to do with their business. They use slang that doesn't fit their voice. They turn solemn moments into sales events. Like the partygoer with the lampshade, they might get noticed for a moment — but not in the way they hoped.

So, how do you avoid being *that* brand? Here are a few lessons from the party scene:

Related: I Wasted Months Chasing Viral Content. This Unlikely Strategy Brought Me Real Customers.

1. Know your audience

The guy with the lampshade doesn’t realize everyone else is cringing. In his mind, he’s the life of the party. Brands can fall into the same trap when they try too hard to be funny or viral without thinking about how their audience will actually receive it.

Your brand isn’t at a party with your peers – it’s trying to earn the attention and trust of your customers. If they see you behaving in a way that feels desperate or out of touch, it can damage your credibility. Every tweet, video or ad should be run through a simple filter: “Will this resonate with our audience? Or will it make them roll their eyes?”

2. Stay in character

Every brand has a voice. A set of values. A personality. Think of your brand as a guest at the party. If you’re the calm, thoughtful one, suddenly jumping up to do the worm on the dance floor might feel … off.

The same applies to brand communication. If you’re a B2B SaaS platform known for data security, suddenly posting memes or jumping into social debates might confuse your audience. It’s not about being boring – it’s about being consistent. People trust brands that feel authentic. And authenticity comes from knowing who you are and sticking to it.

3. Don’t mistake attention for affection

One of the biggest pitfalls in modern branding is confusing virality with value. Sure, a silly post might rack up views. But what are you really gaining? More often than not, fleeting attention isn’t worth sacrificing long-term brand equity.

The goal isn't to get everyone talking — it's to get the *right* people to believe in you, buy from you and tell others. That comes from delivering consistently, speaking with clarity and showing up with purpose.

Attention for attention's sake is like applause at a party — it feels good in the moment but is quickly forgotten. Brands need to build relationships, not punchlines. And that takes a strategic blend of relevance, timing and authenticity.

Related: How to Make Your Marketing Less Cringeworthy and More Authentic

4. Timing matters

There's a time for fun and a time for seriousness. The worst party moments happen when someone fails to read the room. Brands do this, too. Consider the brand that tweets a joke during a major crisis or posts a dance challenge in the middle of a tragedy.

Your brand should have emotional intelligence. Humor can be powerful, but only when it's in good taste and good timing. Being tone-deaf not only undermines your message — it makes your audience question your values.

This is where having a clear brand compass pays off. When you understand your mission and values deeply, you're more equipped to discern whether a moment is right for levity or for restraint. You don't have to sit every trend out, but you should evaluate carefully: Does this moment elevate your voice or dilute it?

5. Restraint is a trust builder

There's power in *not* doing what everyone else is doing. Just because all your competitors are jumping on a trend doesn't mean you have to. In fact, doing less but doing it with

thoughtfulness and intention can set you apart.

Restraint shows confidence. It tells your audience, “We know who we are. We don’t need to wear a lampshade to get your attention.”

In today’s marketing world, where content fatigue is real and audiences are bombarded constantly, being a voice of calm and clarity can be a brand differentiator. Sometimes, silence or a subtle statement speaks louder than a splashy campaign.

6. Humor isn’t off limits — just be smart about it

Some of the most memorable campaigns are playful, clever, and yes — even silly. But the humor works because it fits the brand. Think of Old Spice or Wendy’s snarky Twitter persona. These brands committed to a consistent character, and their audiences rewarded them for it.

If your brand voice allows for humor, go for it. Just make sure it’s humor that builds affinity, not confusion or cringe.

Humor also requires listening. What are your customers already laughing about? What in-jokes exist in your industry that you can play with respectfully? The best brand humor isn’t random — it’s deeply in tune with its audience.

Related: 7 Social Media Blunders That Are Burning Your Brand (and How to Avoid Them)

Brand reputation is built in the quiet moments

The irony of the lampshade cliché is that it suggests the person wants to be remembered — but usually, they end up as a cautionary tale. Brands that make the same mistake may find

themselves in the headlines for a day, but it won’t lead to loyalty.

Brand reputation is built in the small, consistent moments of clarity and care. In showing up when it matters. In knowing when to step back.

So, the next time your team is tempted to jump on a trend or make a splash just to get noticed, ask yourself: Is this on-brand? Is this for our audience, or our ego? Will this feel smart in a week, a month, a year?

If the answer feels fuzzy, it might be time to leave the lampshade on the lamp — and your brand’s dignity intact.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/chasing-every-trend-is-ruining-your-brand-do-this-instead/489587

How to Prepare Your Startup for Early-Stage Funding in a Tight Market

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Here you are, a poised founder looking for funding while stepping into an economic landscape much different from what you were expecting, which is undeniably challenging. You’ve heard venture capital is becoming increasingly difficult to acquire, funds are being selective, and early funding now feels harder to secure than ever.

What are you going to do? Who can you turn to? How can your startup position itself for success in such a tightening market?

Related: You Need to Do These 5 Steps If You Want to Survive the Difficult Funding Market

Funding isn't disappearing – it's shifting focus

First thing to remember: This isn't the first time, and indeed not the last time, venture capital shifts focus due to economic factors. Investors constantly change focus; they're more cautious in tumultuous markets, especially ones that are difficult to predict, and evaluating companies in such a market comes with heightened scrutiny. But this doesn't mean your entrepreneurial dreams have to come to an end and be shelved; it simply means adjusting your strategy to align with today's new market realities.

Having been a founder or co-founder multiple times, the questions you're facing may seem daunting and insurmountable:

- How do you create and demonstrate value in a risk-averse investment climate?
- What do you need to do in order to "stick out" in a crowded and extremely competitive funding arena?
- How will you anticipate and effectively answer the really tough questions investors are undoubtedly going to ask?

1. You must clearly define your

value proposition

In such an environment where investors have quickly become cautious, defensive and deeply analytical of investments, providing clarity and directness are paramount. You must be able to clearly articulate your startup's value proposition, and it needs to immediately resonate – investors don't waste their time, and they're not going to allow you to take too much of it either. They want quick answers to these three critical questions:

1. What exactly are you solving for?
2. Who benefits the most, how quickly and how significantly?
3. What makes your solution unique and different from others, and what makes it defensible?

There's plenty of research over the past 30+ years that underscores that a clear, concise, and compelling value proposition substantially increases your chance of not only attracting but also acquiring investors' attention and funding, especially in tight markets. According to venture capitalist and author Guy Kawasaki, "If you can't explain your startup in one clear sentence, your odds of funding plummet significantly."

2. Demonstrate real traction and customer validation

Investors today are vastly different than they were in the late 90s during the dot-com boom. Today, more emphasis is placed on demonstrable traction (paying clients), customer validation and early product-market fit that is creating a pipeline. It's no longer sufficient for just a promising idea, at least for the majority of startups. You must be able to

show tangible evidence that your perceived concept is gaining meaningful traction within the market. This is undoubtedly a major milestone to obtain clients, and in doing so you show traction. Unless you're Sam Altman or the next Google, investors are going to look at traction as a validator, and if you don't have it, you're most likely to hear "no" more than "yes."

According to Harvard Business Review, startups that have early traction and validation from real customers are four times more likely to succeed in raising a formal seed-stage investment. You don't need millions in ARR – even small, early metrics such as active users, early revenue, retention rates or letters of intent from potential customers is tangible traction that can have a significant impact on investor confidence.

Related: 5 Tips to Win Over Investors in Uncertain Times

3. Master your financial story and funding requirements

No sugarcoating anything here, you need to know your financials. As much as they may be trivial and less meaningful than a Fortune 500 company, they're crucial in tight funding markets. You'll need a strong budget that is well-thought-out, financial projects that lean more towards the conservative side depending on your startup and a clear, data-backed understanding of your burn rate and runway – and you absolutely better know how long that runway is with current market conditions.

Research from CB Insights has shown that startups that have had poor cash flow management remain one of the main reasons why they fail. All investors know this, or at least definitely should know, and they're looking for founders who can confidently manage financial resources effectively through

uncertain times without completely falling flat on their face.

You should be prepared to answer these questions with clarity and sincere confidence:

- What will be your uses of the funds, and precisely how will they be allocated?
- If we give you these funds, how long exactly will your runway last, and what is your contingency plan?
- What milestones do you anticipate achieving before your next funding round?

4. Refine your investor strategy and pitch

All investors are different. Some focus on specific industries and have specific requirements they look for. Others have a broad thesis focus and are broader with their requirements. Either way, not all investors are equal, especially within a tight market, so choosing the right investor for your specific situation and approaching them becomes ultra-important. You need to target the right investors whose investment thesis aligns with what you're pitching. Doing so increases the likelihood that your startup is in the right company, and funding success increases dramatically.

Stanford's Graduate School of Business advises, "Founders who spend the time identifying and targeting specific investors aligned to their industry, stage, and growth goals are twice as likely to successfully secure early-stage capital."

Related: The Investment Market Is More Competitive Than Ever — Here's How Startups Can Still Secure Funding

Adaptability is your advantage

Startups that succeed are those that achieve demonstrable adaptability, clarity, traction, sound financial planning and strategic outreach to aligned investors.

Remember, you're an entrepreneur. Your greatest strength is resilience and adaptability in a chaotic environment. Use this tightened market as an opportunity to refine your vision, sharpen your strategy as you go and demonstrate to investors that your startup isn't just surviving but poised to thrive, even with extreme uncertainty.

The current market isn't your obstacle – it's your proving ground!

https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/how-startups-can-secure-funding-in-todays-tough-vc-market/489808

Elon Musk and Tesla's Board Chair Refute Report That EV Maker Is Looking for a New CEO: 'Absolutely False'

Tesla is denying a Wednesday *Wall Street Journal* report that it's looking to replace Elon Musk as CEO.

According to the report, which cited people familiar with the matter, Tesla board members had contacted several recruitment

companies about a month ago to work on a formal process to find Tesla's next chief executive. The sources stated that the board had narrowed its attention on one unnamed major search firm and had met with Musk last month to warn him that he needed to spend more time on Tesla.

Related: 'They Need to Expand': Tesla's Annual Sales Declined For the First Time. Here's Why.

Robyn Denholm, chair of Tesla's board of directors, directly refuted the report in a post on X on Thursday, writing that *The Journal* was "absolutely false" in claiming that the Tesla Board had reached out to recruitment firms to start a CEO search, and said that "this was communicated to the media before the report was published."

"The CEO of Tesla is Elon Musk, and the Board is highly confident in his ability to continue executing on the exciting growth plan ahead," Denholm added.

Musk also directly addressed the report, writing in a post on X on Thursday that it was an "extremely bad breach of ethics" that *The Journal* would "publish a deliberately false article and fail to include an unequivocal denial beforehand by the Tesla board of directors!"

He added in a follow-up post that the "WSJ is a discredit to journalism."

> *Earlier today, there was a media report erroneously claiming that the Tesla Board had contacted recruitment firms to initiate a CEO search at the company.*
>
> *This is absolutely false (and this was communicated to the media before the report was published).*
>
> *The CEO of Tesla is…*
>
> *— Tesla (@Tesla) May 1, 2025*

> *It is an EXTREMELY BAD BREACH OF ETHICS that the @WSJ would publish a DELIBERATELY FALSE ARTICLE and fail to include an unequivocal denial beforehand by the Tesla board of directors! https://t.co/9xdypLGg3c*
>
> *— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) May 1, 2025*

Since Musk began leading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) earlier this year, there have been at least 80 reports of vandalism or arson of Tesla cars and mass protests at Tesla showrooms. Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives recently wrote in a note to investors that Musk has caused "brand damage" to Tesla because of his involvement with DOGE.

"Musk needs to leave the government, take a major step back on DOGE, and get back to being CEO of Tesla full-time," Ives wrote ahead of Tesla's earnings report last week.

Tesla's earnings showed that its first-quarter profit had declined by 71%, reaching $409 million in the first three months of the year compared to $1.4 billion in the first quarter of 2024.

In response, Musk said in the earnings call last week that he would spend "far more" of his time at Tesla starting in May, shifting his focus from leading DOGE to working on Tesla. He specified that he would spend "a day or two per week" overseeing DOGE starting in May, a downgrade from the 120 hours a week he reported spending on the department in February.

Musk is the richest person in the world at the time of writing, with a net worth of $333 billion, per the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

Related: Elon Musk's DOGE Is Hiring People Eager to 'Work Long Hours' to Eliminate 'Waste, Fraud and Abuse' in the

Government. Here’s How to Apply.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/elon-musk-board-chair-tesla-isnt-looking-for-a-new-ceo/490967

Nobody Wants Another Useless AI Tool — Here’s What to Build Instead

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

As excitement around AI rages on, users have been inundated with many products. Unfortunately, they’ve encountered more than a few glorified paperweights.

With so many options flooding the market and customer skepticism at a peak, it’s not enough to have AI capabilities. If you’re in the AI game, you must also bring value.

Case in point: 70-85% of GenAI deployments fall short of their ROI goals. That’s not just a little oversight — it’s a red flag. Hype alone won’t make the cut anymore.

The spotlight is on companies that can show real results and prove that their AI tools are more than just clever algorithms. They need to serve a true, tangible purpose.

After two decades in the video tech space, I’ve seen firsthand how important it is to integrate new technology in a way that truly enhances users’ daily workflows. It’s not enough to just

simply have the latest flashy tech.

This isn’t the first wave of technological advancement to disrupt the industry, and it certainly won’t be the last. The key is knowing how to leverage AI in ways that not only keep you competitive but also help you truly add value for your users.

I’ve developed a game plan to help companies navigate the AI maze. Here are three key principles to ensure your AI products don’t just keep up, but truly deliver value to your customers.

Related: No One Talks About This Skill, But It’s Quietly Powering the Most Effective Leaders. Here’s How to Develop It.

1. Give them the draft

One of the most important things you can do for your users is to give them something to work with right away.

Whether rewriting something in a user’s voice or giving them a script, people want to walk away from an AI interaction with something they can immediately use or build on. Sure, most users will need to tweak and fine-tune the AI’s output before it’s perfect, but that’s the point. You want to minimize the work they have to do.

If AI can provide an enhanced version of whatever they’re working on, you’ve saved them time and effort. It’s the difference between generating a few lines of copy and offering a full draft that they can immediately improve upon.

The goal is to offer something that helps users continue moving forward, rather than leaving them to start from scratch.

Related: ‘Gradually Stop Using Contractors’: Duolingo Is Replacing Contract Workers With AI

2. Give them time

Time is money, especially when it comes to productivity.

The best AI tools aren’t just those that help users complete tasks. They’re the ones that help users complete them faster. AI should give your customers more time in their day, not take it away.

Let’s take podcasting, for example. You’ve spent hours editing the video for your latest episode. The next task? Promoting it on social media. Sounds simple enough, right?

Actually, it can be a major time suck. Manually hunting for those perfect moments or creating chapters in an hour-long video is a total grind and timesuck.

Now, picture this. What if AI could help you select and edit all the social media clips you’ll need for promotion in a few short clicks? It could save users hours or even days of work.

That’s the power of AI: when you give it a specific task, it can free up significant chunks of time for your users. In turn, they can focus on the things that require a human touch while the AI handles the busywork.

Our video highlights and AI Chapters tools are prime examples of this in action. They give users the power to create social media content without the time-consuming hassle.

3. Give them superpowers

Use AI to enable your users to do something they couldn’t do before.

Imagine this: You’re a copywriter, and you need to create a video. In the past, you’d have to rely on a video editor, wait for them to make their edits and go through multiple rounds of revisions. It’s a lengthy, multi-step process that often

requires a whole production team.

Now, with AI-powered transcription and text-based editing tools, you can transcribe the video, refine the text, and even create a polished script all by yourself, in just minutes. You've gone from a multi-player operation to a one-person powerhouse. That's the kind of transformation AI makes possible.

This is the core magic of AI: it allows users to tackle tasks that would typically require an entire team, expensive software or specialized skills. Whether it's transcribing hours of interviews, analyzing massive datasets or generating high-quality content, AI breaks down the barriers that once limited productivity. It gives people the freedom to do more with less.

But AI isn't only about speeding up workflows. It's also about opening up new doors. It's about giving users the tools to achieve things they never thought possible or at least to accomplish them far more easily and efficiently.

AI should be a tool that propels them beyond what they could do yesterday and enables them to hit new milestones. That's the real power.

Related: Meta Takes on ChatGPT By Releasing a Standalone AI App: 'A Long Journey'

AI for real impact

When you create AI products that help people achieve their goals faster, more efficiently and with greater skill, you're not just riding the wave of innovation. You're shaping the future of how people work and create.

So, if you're producing an AI tool, take my advice: make sure it's not *just* another AI product.

Instead, focus on creating a game-changing solution that makes life easier, faster and more impactful for your users. In this crowded AI landscape, it’s the products that truly bring value that will stand the test of time.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/stop-building-ai-that-slows-people-down/490330