How to Drop Your Ego and Watch Your Business Build a Lasting Legacy

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- Ego can distort decision-making and weaken collaboration.
- Admitting “I don’t have the answer” is a leadership strength, not a weakness.
- Humility builds trust, psychological safety and organizational alignment.
- Leaders who manage ego create better teams, stronger decisions and lasting impact.

Leaders often feel a silent pressure: to always know the answer, to always be the smartest in the room and to always project certainty. It comes with the title, the responsibility and the spotlight. Many internalize the belief that leadership means having all the solutions.

But that belief is dangerous. It inflates the ego. It makes leaders defensive. And in the longer run, it disconnects them from their teams.

True leadership isn’t found in having every answer at hand. It’s found in the ability to shape an environment where answers can emerge collectively. That requires humility, ego awareness and the confidence to acknowledge, “I don’t know.”

Related: 9 Reasons Humility Is the Key Ingredient to Exceptional Leadership

The role of ego: How it distorts leadership

The ego is not inherently bad. It fuels confidence, helps leaders take risks and provides resilience in the face of criticism. But when unchecked, ego warps leadership.

The ego often acts as a subtle barrier. Leaders driven by it tend to dominate conversations. They assert control even when collaboration would yield better results. They filter decisions through how they will look, not what is best for the organization.

This creates a cascade of problems:

- **Shutting down voices.** Team members stop contributing because they feel unheard.
- **False certainty.** Leaders often act as though their perspective is complete, when in fact, it rarely is.
- **Poor alignment.** Decisions may look authoritative but lack buy-in, creating friction later.

Unchecked ego creates silos of power. It keeps leaders from seeing the bigger picture. Teams stop speaking up. And innovation dies because no one wants to risk contradicting the leader.

The benefits of humility: Strength through vulnerability

If ego isolates, humility connects.

Saying “I don’t have the answer” is not a weakness. It is a powerful leadership act. It signals openness. It creates space

for dialogue. And most importantly, it builds psychological safety, the environment where people feel safe to speak up, share ideas and challenge assumptions.

Humility can also shift decision-making. Instead of being filtered through one person's lens, problems are examined from multiple angles. Diverse perspectives are invited and can lead to better solutions. Teams feel ownership of outcomes because they were part of creating them.

Humility is about being strong enough to invite others in. It's about moving from "I lead alone" to "We lead together."

Related: My Career Took Off When I Stepped Aside — That Shift Might Be Exactly What You Need to Scale

Practical ways to manage ego and lead with humility

Humility in leadership shows up in everyday choices and conversations. The way leaders speak, ask questions and share credit shapes whether ego dominates or collaboration thrives. By making small but deliberate shifts, leaders can create conditions where trust deepens and better solutions emerge. Here are some practices to put into action:

1. Say "I don't know" out loud.

It sounds simple, but it's powerful. By openly admitting uncertainty, leaders set the tone for curiosity and exploration. It encourages others to step in with insight.

2. Frame decisions as ranges, not absolutes.

Instead of presenting a single answer, outline the minimum and maximum viable options. For example: *"Here's the least we could do, and here's the most ambitious version. What do you think sits in between?"*

This reduces defensiveness, opens creative dialogue and shifts problem-solving from top-down to collaborative ownership.

3. Ask questions before giving answers.

Leaders often rush to solutions. But better leadership comes from better questions. Ask: *"What are we missing?" "How would you approach this?" "What trade-offs do you see?"* These questions disarm the ego and invite fresh thinking.

4. Use the language of "we," not "I."

The words leaders use matter. "I want us to…" versus "We will…" changes the tone. The latter signals shared responsibility. It reminds the team that leadership is a collective act.

According to Fladerer, Haslam, Steffens and Frey (2021), CEOs who used we-referencing language in shareholder letters achieved stronger organizational performance because this language "stimulates a sense of shared identity" within organizations.

5. Acknowledge contributions and admit gaps.

Humility grows when leaders publicly credit others for ideas and progress. It also grows when they acknowledge what they don't know. Both create a culture where truth matters more than appearances.

6. Explain the decision-making process.

Even when a leader must make the final call, sharing the reasoning builds trust. Walk the team through the inputs considered, the trade-offs weighed and why one path was chosen. Transparency matters more than being "right."

Why this matters: The cost of ego vs. the power of humility

Unchecked ego narrows leadership. It creates isolated leaders who may appear confident but operate without full information. Over time, ego erodes alignment, weakens culture and leaves organizations vulnerable.

A healthy level of humility, in contrast, expands leadership. It creates space for teams to think collectively, align deeply and innovate fearlessly. Leaders who embrace humility gain stronger trust and better long-term results.

A 2022 meta-analysis published in The Leadership Quarterly found that humble leadership is positively associated with affective trust, organizational identification, work engagement and affective commitment, highlighting its role in fostering stronger relationships and more committed, engaged teams.

Humility is central to sustainable leadership. Ego might deliver short-term wins, but humility sustains long-term impact.

Related: Don’t Let Your Ego Get in the Way – How Humble Leaders Build Stronger, More Motivated Teams

Conclusion

Authentic leadership isn’t about knowing it all. It’s about creating the conditions where the best answers can emerge.

The most powerful phrase a leader can start with is not “Here’s what we’ll do.” It’s: *“I don’t have the answer?”*

That single act shifts culture. It turns ego into humility. It transforms leadership from control into collaboration. And it proves that strength is not found in always being right, but

in always seeking what’s right.

Ego may build authority, but humility builds legacy.

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Pay Once, Run Human Resources Operations for Good

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Instead of paying for individual tools for applicant tracking, performance reviews, e-signatures, project management, document editing, surveys, and training courses, Armano wraps all those features into a single browser-based dashboard. Subscriptions start at just $49.99 (MSRP $432).

HR software that actually fits a small business budget

Most small businesses don't have a full-time HR department. Those responsibilities often fall to founders, office managers, or team leads who already have a plate full of customer work.

Armano HR bakes guidance, onboarding flows, document templates, and training tools directly into the platform, which reduces the need to hire specialists too early. That's helpful when you're trying to invest in growth, not

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The real benefit isn't just convenience—it's consistency. Leaders can see hiring pipelines, time-off balances, training progress, and performance data in context rather than piecing screenshots together.

Armano HR Software: Lifetime Subscription

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How Entrepreneurs Can Harness AI to Build Trust, Loyalty and Scalable Growth Without Losing the Human Touch

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Key Takeaways

- Discover how to use AI and customer data ethically to strengthen trust, loyalty and long-term business growth.
- Learn practical ways to scale personalization and connection without sacrificing your brand’s human touch.

Humans are so predictable.

I realized this years ago while reviewing AI outputs — but it wasn’t just an observation. Every click, swipe and purchase creates a digital footprint that businesses can use to build trust, retain customers and grow revenue. For entrepreneurs, understanding how to harness this data ethically isn’t optional — it’s the fastest path to scaling human connection, increasing loyalty and turning AI into a competitive advantage.

Understand how your data turns into dollars

You don’t need to be a technologist to leverage the data economy. You’re already part of it. Every action you or your customers take is tracked and monetized. Cookies, identity graphs and clean rooms allow companies to observe behavior across platforms, often in ways most users never realize. Understanding these mechanics allows you to ethically leverage data for personalization, engagement and growth — without alienating your audience.

Build trust to retain customers

Personalization stops being helpful when it feels like surveillance. Privacy isn’t just confidentiality — it’s autonomy. Customers rewarded with transparency and control become repeat buyers and loyal advocates. Treat data as a conversation, not a transaction. Clear consent and visible

control increase engagement, reduce churn and boost lifetime value.

Related: This Ex-Amazon AI Leader Reveals How Entrepreneurs Can 10x Their Output With AI

Use AI to scale human connection

AI isn't a replacement for intuition — it's an amplifier. It identifies patterns, predicts needs and allows your team to focus on high-value human interactions. By hyper-personalizing experiences at scale, entrepreneurs can create loyalty, deepen relationships and turn every interaction into a revenue opportunity — while keeping their brand authentic.

Turning data into a competitive advantage

The Personal Data Vault Key (PDVK) model puts customers in control of their data. Instead of companies building profiles behind the scenes, users grant access explicitly. This approach ensures consent is logged, revocable and transparent. Entrepreneurs who adopt consent-first systems and ethical data practices can increase customer engagement, retention and lifetime value while building a trust-driven brand.

Actionable steps for entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs can start by designing zero-party data experiences, asking users for preferences while clearly showing the value exchange. Permissions should be easy to track and adjust, and data-sharing should always be explicit, fair and transparent. When customers opt in, consider offering rewards or perks to reinforce trust and loyalty. Minimizing collection and defaulting to privacy-protective settings further strengthens relationships while keeping businesses

efficient.

Even before PDVK becomes standard, consumers can assert control by limiting unnecessary tracking, reviewing permissions and sharing data only where the value exchange is clear. By respecting these principles, entrepreneurs build a brand rooted in trust, drive engagement, and gain a sustainable competitive edge.

Related: How to Build Trust and Transparency With Your Customers While Taking Their Data

Future-proof your strategy with AI

AI agents will increasingly rely on data to function. By controlling what data feeds AI, you ensure models reflect human values, not just profit motives. Responsible use of AI allows businesses to scale intelligently while preserving the human touch that drives loyalty and growth.

The opportunity ahead

Not long ago, people were compensated for insights in focus groups or surveys. Today, every interaction is mined for profit — often invisibly. Entrepreneurs who treat data with respect, transparency and purpose can turn this "hidden labor" into measurable business results: higher engagement, stronger advocacy and a lasting competitive advantage.

Data isn't just the new oil — it's your customers' trust, choices and attention. Treat it as such, and your business will outperform on retention, reputation and results.

Final takeaway: Build trust-first, human-centered systems that scale. Leverage AI responsibly. Reward and respect your customers' data. That's how you turn ethical practices into growth, loyalty and long-term entrepreneurial success.

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7 AI Tools That Run a One-Person Business in 2025 — No Staff, No Code.

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Most entrepreneurs use AI like a spellchecker and then wonder why nothing changes. In 2025, leverage beats hustle. I'll walk you through seven *practical* ways to research faster, automate the boring stuff, see around corners, and scale without adding headcount—or learning to code.

What you'll create today:

- **Trend radar:** Live web research that surfaces what's taking off now — plus smart comment replies to ride the wave instead of chasing it.
- **Competitor x-ray:** Spot gaps in your niche, reverse-engineer winning offers, and pull insights without buying any pricey tools.
- **Autopilot architect:** Connect your calendar, content and email into simple workflows that run automatically while you work — or even while you sleep.
- **Deck-in-a-minute:** Turn an outline or blog post into a clean sales deck or pitch presentation — no design skills required.
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- **Numbers translator:** Convert messy spreadsheets into clear dashboards and next steps so decisions stop feeling like guesses.
- **Solo stack 2025:** The lightweight combo of voice, scripting and strategy that lets a single founder accomplish what used to take a whole team.

Hit play, steal the stack, and let your business start working harder than you do — no staff, no code.

The **AI Success Kit** is available to download for free, along with a chapter from my **new book**, *The Wolf is at The Door.*

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This 29-Year-Old Founder Took a $150,000 Pay Cut to Become CEO of His Own Startup. Here's Why He Says It Was Worth It.

Key Takeaways

- Alex Blackwood is the 29-year-old co-founder and CEO of mogul, a real estate investment startup.
- He previously worked at Goldman Sachs, making $250,000 a year.
- Blackwood says that founding mogul was worth it and that it is more personally rewarding to be a startup founder.

Over three years ago, Alex Blackwood was working 100-hour weeks as a real estate investing associate at Goldman Sachs and making $250,000 a year.

Blackwood left that life behind to pursue mogul, a fractional real estate investment startup he co-founded with fellow Goldman Sachs alum Joey Gumataotao in September 2022. mogul allows users to buy shares in a home and receive the direct benefits of the underlying real estate, including dividends, on a monthly basis. Users pick individual homes and buy shares in those homes, earning rental income. The minimum investment required to start is $250.

Blackwood and his team select top properties, exclusively single-family homes, purchase the property and fractionalize the ownership of the property so that investors can receive monthly dividends in accordance with their level of ownership. There are over 13,000 investors on mogul and $40 million in assets invested through the platform.

Related: She Took Her Business From a $5,000 Investment to Over $1 Million in Revenue — Here Are Her 3 Profit Hacks for Small Business Owners

As co-founder and CEO of mogul, Blackwood, 29, makes about $100,000 a year — while still working 100-hour weeks. Despite the $150,000 pay cut when compared to his Goldman Sachs days, Blackwood says it is more personally rewarding to be a startup founder.

“It’s funny, everyone at the time thought I was the stupidest person they knew,” Blackwood told *Entrepreneur*. “To be honest with you, I didn’t really think twice about it. I jumped into it. It’s exactly what I wanted to do.”

Alex Blackwood (left) and Joey Gumataotao (right). Credit: mogul

Blackwood and Gumataotao each put $50,000 into the business in late 2022 and got another $350,000 of investment in their pre-seed round from Tim Draper of Draper Associates. They additionally raised about $3.6 million for their seed round in late 2023. Earlier this year, mogul raised a $4 million seed extension round, bringing its total funding to about $8 million.

Blackwood said that in an alternate universe, he would have continued working for Goldman or a private equity firm. Even though he acknowledged that the Goldman path was “a recipe for near-certain success” and a comfortable position later in

life, he also knew that he would regret not pursuing mogul when he had the chance. His long-term vision for mogul is to build the company to “be bigger than Amazon.”

“We want to be the biggest platform out there, and building this has been so rewarding towards that,” Blackwood said. “I would rather be doing this underneath a bridge than not doing it and being kind of comfortable.”

mogul co-founder and CEO Alex Blackwood. Credit: mogul

Blackwood differentiates mogul from competitors like Arrived and Yieldstreet by claiming that mogul offers higher returns, between 15% to 20% annually. Arrived reports annual returns ranging from 6% to 12% per year, while Yieldstreet has a net annualized return of 6.6%.

Related: Why Most Startups Fail and How Serial Entrepreneurs Beat the Odds

Blackwood started the company after buying a property for the first time and realizing how capital and time-intensive it was. At the end of the transaction, when he looked at the closing cost estimates, he saw countless fees that he couldn’t avoid. He knew that there had to be a better way to own real estate.

“I realized that there was something to be done in the real estate space,” he said.

mogul is now on track to do $3 million to $4 million in annual revenue by the end of the year, a fourfold revenue growth year-over-year. Next year, the startup is looking at another three to four times revenue growth on top of that.

The startup makes money by charging fees at various points in the investment process. For example, it charges a flat 5%

onboarding fee when a property is added to the platform and earns a 2.5% fee on rental income generated by the invested properties.

Related: His College Side Hustle Made $12,000 on Amazon in 2 Weeks — Then It Surpassed $250 Million

As CEO of mogul, Blackwood says he plays the part of a lawyer, an accountant, an investor and a marketer. About a year ago, he signed and delivered 400 postcards with a brief description of what the company was to every tenant in his apartment building. The postcards explained that he had started a real estate investment company, drawing from his expertise at Goldman, to allow anyone to invest in real estate and receive all the direct benefits.

At the bottom of the postcard, he offered a promotion where recipients could scan a QR code to receive $50 towards their first investment.

The strategy nearly got Blackwood evicted from his building for soliciting from fellow tenants — but it also led to 200 people visiting the site and 50 people signing up.

“That actually led to one of our highest-yielding marketing campaigns,” Blackwood said. “It was a pretty crazy marketing strategy.”

Related: These Brothers’ Business Solves a ‘Very Difficult’ Shopping Problem — And Boasts Over $100 Million in Annual Sales

Blackwood says that at the end of the day, mogul’s growth comes down to its high-quality supply of properties, which drives a retention rate of over 90%. The startup is also constantly improving, like testing different phrasing on its website, and hiring new team members who are sparking new growth.

“It’s the supply, it’s the iterating on the product and then our team members,” he said. “We’re starting to hit our stride, and it’s getting really fun to do so.”

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AI Won’t Replace Humanity — It Can Help You Build Deeper Connections. Here’s How.

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Key Takeaways

- AI-powered hyper-personalization enables businesses to anticipate customer needs and deliver meaningful, human-centered experiences at scale.
- Combining data-driven insights with empathy ensures that technology amplifies human connection rather than replacing it.

A silent revolution is reshaping how businesses grow — and it’s not driven by automation, algorithms or even innovation. It’s driven by connection.

Today’s most successful brands aren’t just competing on product, price or performance — they’re competing on *understanding*. They know their customers so deeply that every message, product and experience feels tailor-made.

That’s not luck. It’s the result of hyper-personalization — the next frontier in customer engagement, powered by AI and data. Unlike traditional personalization, which reacts to behavior, hyper-personalization anticipates it. It allows companies to predict what customers want *before* they ask, turning every interaction into an opportunity to build loyalty and trust.

In a world where attention is scarce and competition is fierce, hyper-personalization isn't a nice-to-have. It's how brands will stay relevant, human and profitable in the AI era.

Related: AI Won't Replace You — But an AI-Equipped Professional Will. Here's Why.

From personalization to precision

Once upon a time, personalization meant adding someone's name to the top of an email. "Hi, Adam!" was considered clever. Not anymore.

Today's consumers expect every interaction to feel like a continuation of the last conversation — seamless, relevant and centered on them. They don't want to feel like one of a million customers; they want to feel like *the* customer.

That's where AI-driven data systems shine. They don't just react; they predict. They learn who your customers are, what they value, and how to deliver it faster, smarter and more intuitively than ever before.

That's the future: personalization that scales.

AI as the great equalizer

The true power of AI isn't that it replaces human intuition — it amplifies it.

Think of AI as a high-powered microscope for your business. It helps you zoom in on behaviors, identify patterns and respond with precision. Whether you're running a global brand or a growing local franchise, AI offers access to insights once reserved for billion-dollar data teams.

But insight alone isn't enough. AI can tell you *what* people do; only humans can understand *why* they do it. The magic

happens when you blend machine learning with emotional intelligence — when you use AI not just to personalize, but to humanize.

The trust factor: earning the right to personalize

Here's the truth: data is a privilege, not a right.

When customers or franchise owners share information, they're giving you something sacred — their trust. Break that, and no algorithm can win them back.

The best brands treat data as a conversation, not a transaction. They're transparent about how data is used, clear about the value it creates, and willing to give customers control over their own experience.

Because hyper-personalization done right isn't about intrusion. It's about intention.

Related: AI Can Replace (Some) Jobs — But It Can't Replace Human Connection. Here's Why.

Scaling connection without losing soul

The hardest part of scaling isn't growth — it's staying personal *while* you grow.

When your customer base hits a hundred, a thousand or ten thousand, how do you keep it feeling one-to-one? That's the art of hyper-personalization: designing systems that replicate human care through technology.

The goal isn't to replace people. It's to free them — to let machines handle the data so humans can do what they do best:

build relationships, foster creativity and inspire trust.

Three rules for getting it right

If you want to bring hyper-personalization into your business model, start here:

1. **Listen at scale.** Every interaction tells you something. Collect data not just to sell — but to serve.
2. **Design for adaptability.** AI thrives on iteration. Keep testing, learning, and evolving.
3. **Stay human.** Use data to deepen relationships, not automate them into oblivion.

The future belongs to the curious

AI and data are no longer optional — they're oxygen. But the real differentiator isn't who has the most technology; it's who has the most curiosity.

Hyper-personalization rewards the leaders who ask, "How can I serve better?" — and then use technology to make it happen.

Scaling a business doesn't mean losing the human touch. It means using every tool available to make that touch even more meaningful.

Because when you combine data-driven precision with human purpose, you don't just build customers. You build believers.

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You Can Build a $100 Million Startup and Still Walk Away With Nothing. Here's How to Protect Yourself.

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Key Takeaways

- Even a fast-growing, high-valuation startup can leave

founders with nothing if they don’t understand how the exit waterfall determines who gets paid first.
- Learn how to protect your equity, negotiate smarter funding terms and structure your company so your hard work actually pays off.

In 2023, my company, UNest, looked like a success story. We had over 700,000 users, a $120 million valuation and several promising M&A conversations underway. I had spent five years building a product I believed in — a financial platform that helped families save and invest for their children’s future.

On paper, everything pointed to a strong, profitable next chapter.

Then the Silicon Valley Bank collapse changed everything. Practically overnight, the market froze, our M&A talks paused and access to capital vanished. During that uncertain stretch, I had a call with our lenders that would completely change how I understood startup outcomes — and, ultimately, how I think every founder should approach funding.

That conversation introduced me to the exit waterfall — the framework that determines who gets paid when a company sells or restructures. I realized something few founders learn until it’s too late: you can build a successful company and still walk away with nothing.

Because in the exit waterfall, structure is strategy.

Related: When My Company Hit $100 Million in Revenue, I Realized It Was Time to Become an Employee Again

What the exit waterfall really means

Most founders assume their reward is proportional to how hard they’ve worked or how much equity they own. In reality, your

payout depends on where you sit in the waterfall – the hierarchy of who gets paid when money comes in.

Here's how it typically works: debt holders get paid first, then preferred shareholders (usually investors) and only after that come common shareholders – the founders and employees. So even if you own 20% of your company, if investors and lenders are owed more than the sale price, your stake could be worth nothing.

It was a difficult realization. Even if our M&A deal had closed, the structure meant that the return for my team would have been minimal. Value on paper doesn't always translate to value in hand.

How founders can protect themselves

If you're a founder reading this, you don't have to learn this lesson the hard way. There are ways to protect yourself – and your team – from being wiped out when the exit waterfall starts flowing.

1. Model your exit scenarios early
You don't need a finance degree to do this. Run a few simple models: what happens if you sell for $10 million, $50 million or $100 million? Include debt, liquidation preferences and dilution. If you're last in every scenario, fix your structure before it's too late.

2. Negotiate liquidation preferences
Liquidation preferences determine whether investors get their money back before you do – and how many times over. Push for 1x non-participating preferred. Anything beyond that means your investors get paid twice: once for their capital, and again from your upside.

3. Be cautious with venture debt
Venture debt can seem like growth capital, but it often

becomes a trap. If you can't clearly see how you'll repay or refinance it, don't take it. Lenders sit at the top of the waterfall — they get paid first and can seize control long before you realize what's happening.

4. Keep a clean, transparent cap table
Who you take money from matters as much as how much you raise. A clean, mission-aligned cap table gives you flexibility and leverage. Avoid scattered SAFE notes, side deals and overly complex structures.

5. Invest in great legal counsel
Strong legal advice isn't optional — it's protection. A good startup attorney will walk you through each clause and model your payout under different outcomes. That clarity can save you from financial loss and regret later.

6. Maintain leverage
If you raise money when you're desperate, you lose power. Bootstrap longer if you can. Explore strategic partnerships or revenue-based financing. Investors respect founders who have options.

7. Guard your control rights
Don't give up board or voting control too early. Those rights determine who decides *when* and *how* your company exits.

Related: I Built a $20 Million Company by Age 22 While Still in College. Here's How I Did It and What I Learned Along the Way.

What I tell founders now

Many founders think they can't push back. They think they should be grateful just to get funded. But that's how the system stays unbalanced.

Financial and funding literacy is founder power. The more you understand your cap table, your debt and your exit waterfall,

the harder it is for anyone to take advantage of you.

You can’t control the market — but you *can* control your understanding and your outcome.

Learn your structure. Model your scenarios. Negotiate your terms. Because in the end, the deal you sign determines whether you’re building wealth or just working for someone else.

Key Takeaways

- Even a fast-growing, high-valuation startup can leave founders with nothing if they don’t understand how the exit waterfall determines who gets paid first.
- Learn how to protect your equity, negotiate smarter funding terms and structure your company so your hard work actually pays off.

In 2023, my company, UNest, looked like a success story. We had over 700,000 users, a $120 million valuation and several promising M&A conversations underway. I had spent five years building a product I believed in — a financial platform that helped families save and invest for their children’s future.

On paper, everything pointed to a strong, profitable next chapter.

The rest of this article is locked.

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Why Web3 Opportunities Remain Out of Reach for Most — and How That's Finally About to Change

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- The vast potential of Web3 is currently limited because the tools and knowledge required to build on blockchain are only accessible to a narrow band of experts, excluding millions of visionaries.
- Historical tech revolutions succeeded when tools became usable by non-experts. Web3 will take off when its intricate backend is simplified by AI-driven "virtual cofounders."
- Accessibility, not technical mastery, is what will finally deliver on the promise of a decentralized, user-owned internet.

Web3 promises to be the next great leap in online interaction — a new internet owned by users, not corporations. Yet, despite its vast potential, it remains locked behind walls few can climb. The tools and knowledge required to build on blockchain today are accessible only to a narrow band of experts, leaving millions of visionaries sidelined.

Every major technological wave only truly took off when it stopped being the playground of specialists and became accessible to everyday people. The personal computer didn't

revolutionize the world until spreadsheets and word processors made it easy to use. The internet exploded once browsers and blogging tools lowered the entry bar for publishing. Web 2.0 took off when platforms like WordPress and Shopify enabled teachers, students and small businesses to become digital creators without the need for engineers.

Web3 has yet to experience that moment. Globally, there are approximately 47 million software developers in 2025, spanning every major technology and industry sector. Yet, only around 24,000 are actively contributing to blockchain projects each month. That's less than 0.1% of the global developer base, a tiny fraction that underscores just how exclusive and specialized blockchain development remains. Until those barriers fall, Web3 adoption will stay locked in the hands of a few rather than the many.

This isn't a reflection of demand but a testament to the steep barriers in front of would-be builders. Smart contracts require coding skills, security audits demand specialist expertise, and the ecosystem's fragmentation makes it daunting to navigate. Because of this, innovation largely revolves around familiar patterns, such as DeFi derivatives and NFTs, which limit the transformative potential of Web3.

Related: How This Company is Trying to Help Mainstream Users Navigate the Web3 Economy

Why barriers block adoption

Usability and accessibility remain the biggest hurdles for Web3. Even simple projects demand the technical fluency most entrepreneurs and creators lack. The specialized knowledge required, paired with regulatory uncertainties and complex user experiences, such as managing wallets and private keys, creates a fortress few can enter. Expensive transaction fees and fragmented tooling only deepen the divide between idea and execution.

Lessons from the past: Technology scales by lowering barriers

History shows that every game-changing platform simplifies its complexity to broaden its creator base. Whether it was turning accounting into spreadsheets, publishing into blogs or commerce into online stores, the breakthrough came when anyone could create without expert coding. These “WordPress moments” and “Shopify moments” shifted entire industries.

Web3’s breakthrough moment will come when building is as easy as describing what you want. Imagine saying, “*Launch a digital marketplace*,” or “*Set up a community platform where members can connect and share content*,” and watching the technology assemble itself — no coding, no engineering team required.

By combining AI with safe, pre-built components, systems that once demanded months of specialized work can be created in minutes. This shift expands the playing field from a handful of blockchain developers to millions of entrepreneurs, students and creators ready to bring bold new ideas to life.

Related: 3 Steps to Web3: The Ultimate Guide to Navigating Web3 for Non-Tech Founders

The proof is in the trending statistics

The rise of no-code and AI-driven development platforms is not theoretical. By 2025, approximately 65% of all new business applications will be launched without traditional coding. Nearly 70% of new enterprise tools employ drag-and-drop or conversational paradigms.

The NFT ticketing market alone is forecast to grow from $1.3 billion today to almost $3.6 billion by 2034, underscoring immense demand for accessible blockchain applications. These

signals indicate a clear path for Web3’s growth if the correct tools are implemented.

The future is for visionaries, not coders

Web3’s next evolutionary leap will no longer be confined to the domain of Solidity engineers or cryptographers alone. The future belongs to those who dare to dream and create, regardless of technical background, empowered by AI-driven “virtual cofounders” that seamlessly navigate and simplify Web3’s intricate backend. These intelligent partners will dissolve the complexity that today limits access, unlocking boundless opportunities for innovators everywhere.

Just as Shopify revolutionized commerce by putting global storefronts within every merchant’s reach without a single line of code, a new generation of intuitive vibe coding platforms will democratize Web3 creation. Visionaries from every industry will harness drag-and-drop, conversational AI and modular building blocks to craft secure, scalable blockchain solutions with remarkable ease and speed.

This paradigm shift will transform Web3 from a niche frontier into an expansive landscape where imagination sets the only limits. Anyone with a bold idea can launch decentralized applications, DAOs and digital assets that were once the preserve of specialized developers. The possibilities are endless, and the era of true inclusivity and creative freedom in blockchain innovation is just beginning.

Related: Building Sustainable UX Models: Why Web3 Must Overcome Key Challenges Before Entering Mainstream Adoption

The Web3 tipping point is accessibility

The promise of Web3 will not be realized through more complex code or deeper technical silos. Its tipping point will come when creation itself is democratized — when turning an idea into reality no longer requires gatekeepers with rare technical skills. Platforms that remove these barriers won't just enable more projects; they will unlock an entirely new generation of entrepreneurs, creators and communities who can build, own and scale in ways previously impossible.

The future of Web3 will not be written line by line in code. It will be designed, described and deployed by millions whose only prerequisite is vision. Accessibility, not technical mastery, is what will finally deliver on the long-promised ideal of a decentralized, user-owned internet.

Key Takeaways

- The vast potential of Web3 is currently limited because the tools and knowledge required to build on blockchain are only accessible to a narrow band of experts, excluding millions of visionaries.
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The Unexpected Way Retirees Are Reigniting Their Passion After Stepping Down

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- According to research, “prosocial spending” can increase happiness.
- Whether you have prior nonprofit experience or not, you can still put your strengths to work.
- If someone just wants your name on a letterhead or hopes you’ll write a big check, stay away from them.

For many ex-CEOs and founders, swapping 60-hour weeks for leisurely days sounds good until the novelty wears off. Even though golf, travel and downtime are fun, they don’t seem to have the same sense of purpose as their careers. After all, retirement can feel quiet after decades of managing teams and solving high-risk problems.

It’s for this reason that a growing number of retired entrepreneurs are finding unexpected fulfillment in soup kitchens, classrooms, nonprofit boards and grassroots missions. Giving back isn’t just noble — it’s also deeply satisfying and surprisingly energizing.

Let’s explore why charitable work is more rewarding than retirement clichés and provide steps to make the next chapter of your life worthwhile.

Related: 5 Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before I Became a CEO

The identity crisis no one warns you about

Retirement can feel disorienting if you’re used to being in charge, constantly making decisions, and chasing goals. A sudden drop in urgency and feedback can result in an identity crisis, leading you to ask, *What am I without my business? What’s my purpose now?*

It’s been found that retirees with strong ties to their previous careers are more likely to suffer from diminished mental health after retirement. Moreover, struggling to adjust to retirement undermines one’s ability to establish effective financial goals to maintain and improve financial security.

Volunteering bridges that gap. It taps into your leadership, problem-solving, and passion for impact – just in a different setting. It doesn’t matter if you mentor young entrepreneurs or build homes for families in need; you’re still using your gifts to make a difference.

As a result, former CEOs may find that volunteerism rekindles their passion, but without the pressure.

Why giving back feels so good

According to a research paper co-authored by Harvard Business School Assistant Professor Ashley Whillans and Canadian researchers Lara Aknin and Elizabeth Dunn, “prosocial spending” – spending on others – can increase happiness.

For entrepreneurs and CEOs, though, giving back has the following advantages;

- **Pressure is replaced by purpose:** Although the boardroom may be behind you, the desire to contribute never wanes. By volunteering, you can accomplish meaningful work without having to deal with quarterly earnings reports or payroll stress. Rather than showing up because you have to, you show up because you want to.
- **It’s like solving problems, but it’s for people who really need it:** Your insights can transform a nonprofit or first-generation college student, whether you’re working with a nonprofit or mentoring first-gen students. Often, organizations lack the strategic minds they need, yet they cannot afford them. On a human scale, you become a difference-maker.

- **Engages your mind and emotions:** Relaxation, not numbness, should be the goal of retirement. Volunteering offers new challenges, fresh perspectives, and emotional rewards. It has been shown that older adults who volunteer report greater life satisfaction, lower depression rates, and even improved cognitive abilities.
- **Community and connection are built through it:** In most cases, leaving your company means leaving behind daily interactions, problem-solving banter, and shared goals.

Related: After a Nine-Figure Exit, This Founder Couple Is Giving Back

The skills you spent decades building are invaluable

It's important to remember that most nonprofits don't need more money as much as they need leadership. Understaffed and stretched thin, many are struggling to survive. As such, in your field of expertise, budgeting, marketing, operations or strategic planning can make a difference in a way that few others can.

Take a moment to consider how your decades of wisdom and experience could benefit:

- **Logistics are a problem for a food pantry.** By implementing an effective inventory management system, you could reduce waste and ensure timely deliveries. Utilizing your network to secure donated transportation or negotiate better bulk purchasing agreements will enable the pantry to feed more people with less effort.
- **An inefficient workflow plagues a local animal shelter.** You might suggest ways to digitize records, automate volunteer scheduling or build a more seamless flow for animal care and public interaction, based on an analysis of the shelter's intake and adoption processes. As a

result, staff can spend more time on animal welfare instead of paperwork.

- **Scaling up a youth mentoring program.** You can help the program develop a scalable curriculum, establish a robust mentor training program or establish clear metrics for success. Using your growth strategy experience could help them reach more young people.
- **Branding or fundraising assistance for a startup nonprofit.** In addition to helping them develop a resonant brand story, you could also provide advice on digital marketing strategies or help them structure their fundraising appeals to attract major donors. The insight you can provide into market positioning and investment pitches would be invaluable.

Ultimately, you can help organizations avoid mistakes you made in your early years and empower them to grow sustainably.

How to start giving back (without overcommitting)

Volunteering is often resisted by driven professionals who worry it will consume their time or feel like busywork. Here's how to avoid it"

Start with your "why": What causes are most important to you? What type of work energizes you? Would you like to use your business skills or try something completely different? When you clarify your why, you're not just filling your time; you're aligned with your purpose.

- **Test the waters before diving in:** If you're interested in joining a board long-term, consider starting with a short-term project or advisory session. Many nonprofits welcome trial contributions. By doing so, you can gauge whether you're a good fit for the company's culture.
- **Use your network:** Most likely, you know someone who is

involved in a nonprofit or civic organization. So, don't be afraid to ask around.

- **Look for the right fit:** Look for organizations that respect your time and value your expertise. If someone just wants your name on a letterhead or hopes you'll write a big check, stay away from them.
- **Stay in your zone of genius:** Unless you want to, you don't need to reinvent yourself. Consider streamlining systems if you have experience in operations. Put what you already know to good use.

High-impact ways to contribute

There are many ways retired entrepreneurs can give back, each with varying degrees of involvement. The following are some popular ways you can give back:

- **Mentorship**
- **Nonprofit board work**
- **Skilled volunteering**
- **Direct service**
- **Micro-volunteering**

Whether you have prior nonprofit experience or not, you can still put your strengths to work. In return, here's what you'll get;

- **A renewed sense of purpose**
- **Deep emotional satisfaction**
- **Continued personal growth**
- **A new circle of peers and friends**
- **A meaningful legacy**

In the end, many entrepreneurs find that giving back fills a more profound need than a round of golf or a vacation to the beach. As a result, it becomes a second act – not just in life, but in impact.

Related: I Mentor First-Time Entrepreneurs — These Are the 4 Unseen Benefits I Gained By Giving Back

Final thought: From success to significance

You don't have to fade into the background when you retire. Throughout your career, you built something that mattered. Now, you can apply that same drive to something even more meaningful: helping others.

Volunteering isn't just about giving your time away. It's about investing it where it counts.

So if you're feeling restless when you retire, maybe it's time to hang up the clubs for a bit and ask a new question: *Where can I make a difference today?*

Quick resources to get started

- VolunteerMatch.org — Find causes that match your interests and skills
- Score.org — Supporting small businesses and startups
- Local community foundations or United Way chapters
- Incubators or nonprofits focused on specific industries

Key Takeaways

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Defining My Ideal Client Profile Changed Everything for My Business. Here’s How You Can Transform Yours, Too.

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Key Takeaways

- An Ideal Client Profile is a snapshot of who you serve best and why. It consists of core demographics and identity, aspirations and desired outcomes, pain points and problems, decision-making drivers, and fit and alignment factors.
- Once you define your ideal client, you can build everything else (messaging, pricing, programs) around that insight.
- To start, pick one person, have a real conversation and write their story down.

In the mid-2000s, I was a high school Latin teacher, and I loved it. I loved the rhythm of the classroom, the quiet triumph when a student finally grasped the logic of a complicated translation and the look of surprise when they realized ancient wisdom still applied to modern life. But what fascinated me most wasn't Latin itself. It was watching students make connections about who they were becoming.

That curiosity about potential, growth and transformation eventually led me to coaching. I earned my first professional certification through the International Coaching Federation (ICF), built a small roster of clients and thought I was on my way. Most of my clients were students or parents of students.

Then reality hit.

Teaching had given me structure, salary and summers off. Coaching was an open field, inspiring but unpredictable. My handful of clients couldn't sustain a living. I knew if I wanted to make coaching work as a full-time career, I had to understand business.

And that's when I came across the concept that changed everything: the Ideal Client Profile, or ICP.

Related: These 4 Questions Can Help You Identify Your Ideal

Customer

The moment it clicked

At first, the phrase sounded like something from a marketing textbook. It seemed abstract, maybe even too corporate for someone coming from education. But once I understood what it really meant, I realized it was a reflection tool as much as a marketing one.

It asked a fundamental coaching question: *Who do you serve best, and why?*

When I sat down to map it out, something shifted. I realized the clients I loved working with weren't defined by their profession or income. They were defined by mindset. They were the kind of people who saw change as a skill, who were open to reflection and who approached their lives like a creative project.

Once I knew who those people were, I could build everything else (my messaging, my pricing, my programs) around that insight. That's when my coaching business became financially viable.

What an Ideal Client Profile really is

An Ideal Client Profile is a living snapshot of who you serve best and why. It evolves as you evolve. It's both a map and a mirror, guiding your outreach while clarifying your purpose.

Here are the five elements that make a great one.

1. Core demographics and identity

Who your client is in basic terms: age, career stage, industry or life stage. These details aren't the whole picture, but

they form the outer shell of your ICP.

2. Aspirations and desired outcomes

What are they reaching for? A strong ICP captures both their current reality and their vision for what's next. It shows the "from" and the "to."

3. Pain points and problems

What keeps them up at night? Identifying these bottlenecks helps you understand exactly what problem your coaching exists to solve.

4. Decision-making drivers

How do they decide to hire, invest or take action? The best ICPs reveal the emotional and logical forces behind those choices.

5. Fit and alignment factors

What makes them your ideal client, not just any client? This includes personality traits, readiness for change and the type of energy that brings out your best work.

Once you've clarified who you serve best, you can go a step further by defining your niche. Explore the top life coaching niches and how to choose yours.

Related: To Find Your Ideal Client Begin With a Study of Yourself

How to evaluate your Ideal Client Profile

When I began teaching this concept to coaches, I realized some needed a more tangible way to measure depth. They wanted a framework that turned insight into something you could score,

track and refine.

Imagine each Ideal Client Profile could earn 25 points. You get 10 points just for conducting a real interview with someone who fits your potential ideal client. The remaining 15 points come from the quality of the insight you gather.

1. Future vision clarity (out of 5 points)

- **Score 1:** Generic goals like "wants to grow their business."
- **Score 3:** Captures the emotional "why" behind the goal, what success means to them.
- **Score 5:** Understands how the goal fits into their life story or identity shift.

2. Current reality clarity (out of 5 points)

- **Score 1:** Lists common issues like "overwhelmed" or "stressed."
- **Score 3:** Pinpoints the exact situations where the pain shows up.
- **Score 5:** Identifies the emotional and relational costs of staying stuck.

3. Journey and obstacles clarity (out of 5 points)

- **Score 1:** Lists what they've tried.
- **Score 3:** Explains why those things didn't work.
- **Score 5:** Names the deeper fears or beliefs holding them back, the unspoken reasons they haven't hired a coach yet.

Related: Get Picky With Your Clients – How to Identify and

Attract Your Ideal Customer

Why it matters

Creating an Ideal Client Profile is more than a marketing exercise. It’s a way to see your business and your clients through a more human lens.

When I started, I thought building a coaching business was about perfecting offers or posting consistently. It turned out to be about listening deeply and curiously to the people I most wanted to serve.

That’s what teachers do. That’s what coaches do. And in many ways, that’s what entrepreneurs do too.

If you’re a coach trying to build your practice, start here. Pick one person, have a real conversation and write their story down. Capture not just what they say, but what they mean. You’ll discover insights that shape everything from your website copy to your next program design.

You might be surprised to find that defining your Ideal Client Profile not only helps you build your business — it helps you rediscover your “why.”

Key Takeaways

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