Their Restaurant Sign Is So Famous It Has 1 Million Followers. Here's How They Turned a Viral Hit Into a Business.

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Key Takeaways

- What started as a fading marquee turned into a million-follower media platform, publishing company and hundreds of retail products.
- By pulling off a statewide April Fool's prank with Yeti and the governor of Texas, Ellis Winstanley proved that bold storytelling can lead to authentic collaborations.

When the governor of Texas deploys state troopers to help with your April Fool's prank, you know your restaurant sign is bigger than a roadside gimmick.

That actually happened with El Arroyo, the Austin, Texas, Tex-Mex spot co-owned by Ellis Winstanley. The marquee was "stolen" in the middle of the night, sparks flying on fake security footage as news crews scrambled to cover it.

Hours later, the governor himself appeared in a staged plea to recover the sign, which was finally unveiled at a Yeti store as part of a co-branded release. Free tumblers and margaritas capped off the joke, but the message was clear: This was no

ordinary restaurant sign.

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Ironically, Winstanley didn’t see the potential at first. “We didn’t even realize the power of the sign when we bought it,” he admits. At the time, the marquee felt like background noise. The humor had drifted, the tone was stale, and it didn’t seem like much more than clutter on the curb.

That changed when Winstanley and his wife, Paige, took control of the messages. “We started to experiment with making it more connective and more authentic,” he says. Instead of cheap gags, they wrote lines that were clever, nostalgic and funny in a way that people wanted to share. “Less funny mean or funny gross,” as Winstanley describes it, “and more funny like we’re laughing together about this.”

The internet caught on quickly. A few thousand followers turned into hundreds of thousands, and soon more than a million across Instagram and Facebook. What started as a weathered roadside sign suddenly had the reach of a media brand.

Paige turned that reach into a business. When publishers dismissed the idea of a book of signs as “too niche,” she launched Cozumel Publishing Company herself. “She literally put the books in the trunk of her car and drove them around the Texas Triangle,” Winstanley says. From there, trunkloads of books grew into a catalog of more than 300 products in 48 states, nine countries and even on cruise ships.

For Winstanley, it all reinforced a lesson he had already learned as a restaurateur: Food brings people in, but feeling brings them back. The El Arroyo sign just happened to be the loudest, funniest way to share that feeling with the world.

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Hospitality meets technology

For Winstanley, restaurants came first. He was bartending by 18, running a 24-hour punk rock diner in Austin called Starseeds Cafe, which he later sold in 2018, and eventually bought Cain & Abel's, a campus bar he still owns.

Over the years, he's been part of more than a dozen restaurants, from startups to high-volume institutions, and even restructurings of struggling groups.

Those experiences taught him persistence, but also clarity. As he admits, "the biggest one by a long shot is hiring the wrong leader to run our restaurant group, and then giving them way too much control, way too quick. It was a disaster."

That perspective shaped his next chapter as co-founder and CEO of Axial Shift, a software platform designed for restaurants. Running restaurants showed him how broken the tools were. "I don't want the manager in the office," he says. "I want the manager on the floor, learning guest names, helping new employees, sharing information. They can't do that if they're stuck behind a computer."

Axial Shift was built to fix that. "Restaurant tech has been treated like it has to be painful," Winstanley explains. "Long contracts, clunky systems, managers pulled off the floor. It shouldn't be that way." His vision is closer to Shopify: modular, flexible, easy to test and replace. "In 2025, things are moving so fast that you need to have the ability to get better every single day."

The goal is simple: Give operators insight without pulling them away from hospitality. It resonates because Winstanley is still an operator himself. He knows sales, labor, purchases and culture are the levers managers actually control.

That’s why his company feels different. “I’ve never had a problem staying curious,” he says. “My problem is that I learn things the hard way. But sheer persistence outweighs smarts any day of the week.”

For Winstanley, it’s not about choosing between operator and tech founder. It’s about using one role to make the other better.

Related: He Left His Cubicle to Start a Business With ‘No Plan B.’ Now He Has 10 Restaurants.

About *Restaurant Influencers*

Restaurant Influencers is brought to you by Toast, the powerful restaurant point-of-sale and management system that helps restaurants improve operations, increase sales and create a better guest experience.

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This MacBook Pro makes it easy to work at home, at a coffee shop, or on vacation

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Artificial intelligence (AI) has promised a lot: Freedom to imagine, freedom from mundane tasks, and freedom to focus on what's important to you in your business while AI takes care of the busywork. But with so many AI models out there, picking just one that can handle all your needs is hard — and paying for all of them is expensive and unwieldy.

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JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon Warns Against This 'Disrespectful' But Common Meeting Mistake

Key Takeaways

- JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon says checking email during meetings is "disrespectful."
- Dimon said that he gives "100%" of his focus when attending meetings and always does the pre-meeting reads.
- Earlier this year, Dimon criticized remote employees for checking notifications while he was speaking during a virtual meeting.

JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon is advocating for better meeting etiquette in the workplace — and that means no checking emails or Slack messages.

"None of this nodding off, none of this reading my mail," Dimon, 69, said at *Fortune*'s Most Powerful Women Summit on Tuesday. "If you have an iPad in front of me and it looks like you're reading your email or getting notifications, I tell you to close the damn thing. It's disrespectful."

Dimon said that he gives "100%" of his focus when attending meetings, always coming prepared by doing the pre-reads in advance.

Related: JPMorgan Is Now Valued More Than Its 3 Largest Competitors Combined

Focus is a non-negotiable for Dimon, who said if he can't give

his full attention to his work, then it would be time to “move on.”

Earlier this year, during a leaked town hall in February, Dimon criticized remote employees for checking notifications while he was speaking during a virtual meeting.

In an interview a month later with the Stanford Graduate School of Business, he recalled another incident when people were focused on their screens — and not him.

JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon. Photographer: Samuel Corum/Bloomberg via Getty Images

“I was on a Zoom yesterday… People are reading their mail and getting their notifications,” Dimon said in the Stanford interview. “As I was talking, there were 12 people in the room and four people on the screen, and all four people on the screen were on their phones. And you think you’re focusing and learning?”

JPMorgan brought all employees back to the office full-time in March, ending its hybrid work policy in favor of a fully in-person one.

Related: Here’s How the CEO of the Biggest Bank in the U.S. Spends His Downtime: ‘This Gives Me Purpose in Life’

Dimon previously remarked on meetings in his 2024 annual letter to shareholders, released in April. In the letter, he stated that CEOs should “kill meetings” because they are an “example of what slows us down.”

If meetings do need to happen, they should start and end on time, and a set person should lead them, he wrote. Dimon also noted that meetings should begin with a clear purpose and conclude with a list of actionable follow-up items. He stressed the importance of using straightforward language and

avoiding unnecessary jargon. He also rejected the idea of a "meeting after the meeting," saying that any executive who has something to say should voice it openly rather than in private afterward.

"That's not acceptable," Dimon wrote in the shareholder letter. "Don't bother… Be transparent with your colleagues."

JPMorgan is the largest bank in the U.S., with $3.9 trillion in assets and a market capitalization of over $818 billion at the time of writing. Dimon has been CEO of the bank since 2006.

Related: JPMorgan Will Fire Junior Bankers Over a Common Practice That CEO Jamie Dimon Calls 'Unethical'

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Mark Wahlberg Just Bought a Home on ‘Billionaire’s Row’ in Florida. Here’s How Much It Cost.

Key Takeaways

- Mark Wahlberg just closed on a 17,800-square-foot mansion in Delray Beach, Florida.
- In June, the actor and producer sold his California home to Paris Hilton for $63.1 million.
- Wahlberg’s new “fully-furnished” house is in an area called “billionaire’s row.”

Mark Wahlberg, 54, closed on a $37 million mansion earlier this week in Delray Beach, Florida, according to Realtor.com.

The seven-bedroom mansion has 10 full bathrooms (plus two half baths) and was recently fully remodeled. The 17,800-square-foot, fully-furnished home sits on a 2.7-acre lot in the gated community, Stone Creek Ranch, a newly developed area of Delray

Beach, west of the Florida Turnpike, surrounded by country clubs (and some farmland). There are only 37 homes in the neighborhood.

Related: ‘I’ve Got the Bug for Business’: See All of Mark Wahlberg’s Entrepreneurial Endeavors, From the Funky Bunch to F45

The neighbors also include high-end strip malls with Pilates studios, juice bars, restaurants, a Wahlberg-approved F45 gym, and an IMAX theater.

But it’s not like the family will ever need to leave their new abode — it has its own “wellness wing,” according to the Zillow listing, with a “fully equipped gym, sauna, and massage room, and effortlessly opens out to a private tennis court and a saltwater lagoon pool that holds 170,000 gallons of cascading, crystal-clear water.”

There is also a home theater, cigar lounge, wine cellar, and a guesthouse.

Realtor.com reports that the actor was represented by Florida-based Realtor Michael Costello of Compass. In true Wahlberg style, he still has his 617 Boston area code, according to his bio.

Mark Wahlberg at the Amazon MGM Studios’ “Play Dirty” world premiere held at SVA Theatre on September 24, 2025, in New York, New York. Kristina Bumphrey/Variety | Getty Images

Meanwhile, earlier this year, Paris Hilton bought Wahlberg’s former Beverly Hills, California home for $63.1 million.

Related: Mark Wahlberg Says He’s Shifted His Viral Morning Routine to Work Around His Three Teenagers

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Instead of Cuts, This $28

Billion Dollar Design Company's Response to AI Is To Hire More People

Key Takeaways

- Dylan Field is the CEO of Figma, a $28 billion collaborative design startup that went public earlier this year.
- Field said that rather than cutting jobs because of AI, Figma is growing its team and adding new positions.
- Figma is hiring for 158 open positions in the U.S. at the time of writing, including an opening for a software engineer of AI infrastructure.

Industry leaders, including Amazon CEO Andy Jassy, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, and Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, have recently predicted that AI will soon take over most white-collar jobs — but one tech CEO says they're hiring instead.

On an episode of "Lenny's Podcast" that aired on Thursday, Figma CEO Dylan Field, 33, says that rather than cutting jobs because of AI, Figma is actually growing its team. In every conversation, Field is "asking about AI efficiency" and trying to determine what internal tools Figma can build to make itself more efficient. At the end of the day, AI presents an opportunity for the company "to grow," not to cut back, he says.

"I'm going through the whole planning process on headcount right now," Field said on the podcast. "For the most part, across the company, we're adding roles."

Related: AI Could Cause 99% of All Workers to Be Unemployed in the Next Five Years, Says Computer Science Professor

LinkedIn shows that Figma is advertising for 158 open positions in the U.S. as of press time, including openings for a software engineer of AI infrastructure and a core product strategy researcher. The company has a 1,600-person workforce.

Field also said on the podcast that AI is “not coming” for anyone’s job and workers should focus on how they will “adapt” to the technology instead of worrying about mass firings.

Figma CEO Dylan Field outside of the New York Stock Exchange in New York on July 31. Photographer: Michael Nagle/Bloomberg via Getty Images

“I think it’s pretty encouraging, actually, that folks understand viscerally that this is not coming for you,” Field said on an episode of “Lenny’s Podcast” that aired on Thursday. “I think that the next thing will be, as tools improve, as models improve, how do you improve and adapt?”

Field founded Figma, a tech company that focuses on real-time collaboration in design, in 2012. The company went public earlier this year, debuting on the New York Stock Exchange. Figma has a market capitalization of over $28 billion at the time of writing, with more than 13 million monthly users.

In Figma’s recent survey of over a thousand designers, product managers, researchers, and other roles, nearly 60% of respondents in product-focused positions reported spending more time on high-value work due to AI, and almost 70% said the technology made them more productive.

Related: These Fields Are Losing the Most Entry-Level Jobs to AI, According to a New Stanford Study

Only 17% of designers viewed AI as a threat to their jobs, the survey found. The remaining majority, 83%, either did not see AI as threatening or saw it as benefiting their workflow and

productivity.

“You can either see AI as an opportunity for your company to grow and do more, or you can look at it as a cost-cutting efficiency, but I think the growth part is way more exciting,” Field said on the podcast. “It’ll be interesting to see how people adapt and grow.”

Last month, Figma announced financial results for its second quarter ending June 30, reporting “record revenue” of $249.6 million, a 41% year-over-year increase. The company will announce its third-quarter financial results on Nov. 5.

Related: AI Is Going to ‘Replace Everybody’ in Several Fields, According to the ‘Godfather of AI.’ Here’s Who He Says Should Be ‘Terrified.’

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Struggling to Raise VC? These 7 Startup Funding Tactics Actually Work in 2025

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Key Takeaways

- With venture capital harder to access in 2025, founders are turning to alternative funding options like convertible notes, crowdfunding and early profitability.
- This article breaks down seven practical, founder-friendly ways to raise capital without relying on traditional VC funding.

Raising venture capital isn’t what it used to be. According to Carta, just 5,743 new investments closed in 2024, down 7% from the year prior and the lowest number since 2018. Add to that a 46% annual drop in new venture funds raised in the U.S., and the message is clear: the VC landscape is shifting fast.

For early-stage entrepreneurs, that means one thing: capital is harder to access and investors are far more selective.

To land a deal today, startups need a longer track record, real product-market fit and a clearer path to scale. And in many cases, VC funding may not be the best — or even most realistic — route.

The good news? There are still practical ways to raise capital and secure the resources needed to grow — without giving up equity too early or spending months chasing meetings. Here are seven ways to fund your business outside of traditional venture capital.

Related: **How to Know If You Need Funding (and How to Get It)**

Use a convertible note to raise early cash

A convertible note is a short-term loan that converts into equity during a future funding round. It’s a founder-friendly way to raise money from friends, advisors or early supporters without having to price your round or give away too much equity upfront.

You can find standardized templates online (like the Y Combinator SAFE) or work with a startup attorney to customize one for your needs.

Tip: Keep the cap and discount rate competitive to incentivize early investors — they’re taking a risk before the valuation is set.

Trade equity for services with contributors

Instead of hiring full-time employees or expensive contractors, offer equity to skilled contributors who can support your startup on a part-time or project basis. Designers, developers or advisors who believe in your vision may be open to equity in exchange for their time.

Just be sure to set clear expectations, use a vesting schedule and track equity grants professionally.

Tip: Use tools like Carta or Pulley to track equity allocations professionally — even at the early stages.

Pitch aligned family offices

Family offices — private investment firms managing the wealth of high-net-worth individuals — are growing fast. Many are seeking mission-aligned, long-term investments that reflect their values or interests.

Use tools like PitchBook or Crunchbase to find family offices that invest directly in early-stage companies. Tailor your outreach to match their focus and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

Tip: Focus on family offices that invest directly (vs. only through funds) and that list a focus on startups or innovation.

Launch a crowdfunding campaign

Platforms like Kickstarter, Indiegogo and StartEngine allow early-stage startups to raise money from the public, either through product pre-orders or small equity stakes.

Crowdfunding works especially well for consumer products, letting you validate demand and generate early revenue before launching full-scale operations.

Tip: Crowdfunding works best when paired with strong branding, a compelling founder story, and a clear delivery timeline.

Apply for grants or fellowships

If your startup has a research, social impact or innovation angle, you may qualify for non-dilutive grants from government agencies, foundations or corporate programs.

Look into options like SBIR and STTR grants, The Gates Foundation, Google for Startups and university innovation labs. Grants can be time-intensive to apply for but often come with no strings attached.

Tip: Assign a team member or advisor to grant research if you're resource-strapped — many founders overlook this free capital.

Related: 6 Effective Funding Strategies for Startups

Use your day job to fund your startup

If you're not ready to raise capital or go full-time on your venture, consider using your paycheck as your startup's first investor.

By continuing to work while building, you can test and refine your idea without financial pressure. Set clear milestones (like monthly revenue targets or customer goals) to know when it's time to go all in.

Tip: Set a personal "milestone for quitting" (e.g., $5K in MRR or a certain number of paying users) to stay focused and

intentional.

Aim for early profitability

Not every startup needs outside capital to grow. If your product has a clear market and low overhead, focus on reaching profitability quickly.

When your company can fund its own growth, you retain more ownership and have more control over how the business evolves. Profitability also gives you more leverage if you decide to raise capital later on.

Tip: If you’re choosing between startup ideas, consider prioritizing the one with a faster path to revenue.

Final thought

The VC industry is changing, but that doesn’t mean building a successful startup is out of reach. If anything, this shift is encouraging founders to build more focused, resilient companies.

By exploring alternative funding paths, you may end up with more ownership, more control and a stronger business in the long run.

Key Takeaways

- With venture capital harder to access in 2025, founders are turning to alternative funding options like convertible notes, crowdfunding and early profitability.
- This article breaks down seven practical, founder-friendly ways to raise capital without relying on traditional VC funding.

Raising venture capital isn’t what it used to be. According to Carta, just 5,743 new investments closed in 2024, down 7% from the year prior and the lowest number since 2018. Add to that a 46% annual drop in new venture funds raised in the U.S., and the message is clear: the VC landscape is shifting fast.

For early-stage entrepreneurs, that means one thing: capital is harder to access and investors are far more selective.

To land a deal today, startups need a longer track record, real product-market fit and a clearer path to scale. And in many cases, VC funding may not be the best — or even most realistic — route.

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How Entrepreneurs Can Spot Billion-Dollar Business Ideas Hiding in Plain Sight

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Entrepreneurs often imagine opportunity as something obvious — the next big app, the next wave of AI or a billion-dollar market everyone is already chasing. But in reality, many of

the most successful businesses start in unexpected corners. They often look too small, too quirky or too niche — until someone connects the dots and builds something the rest of us missed.

Here are five examples of how spotting opportunities in unlikely places has created thriving businesses, along with the lessons any entrepreneur can apply.

Related: 5 Success Stories About Finding Inspiration in Unlikely Places

1. Virtual fashion

When people think of fashion, they imagine Milan, Paris or New York. Few would expect it to thrive inside a gaming platform. Yet Roblox has become one of the world's largest social ecosystems, with more than 111 million daily active users spending 2.3 hours per day on the platform.

Creators like Philipp Batura, known as Topcat, have launched virtual labels such as Gatas Only, Coast UGC and Chibi Couture. These brands now sell over a million avatar items monthly, outselling some luxury houses in volume.

Lesson: Consumers, especially Gen Z, are increasingly willing to invest in digital identity. For entrepreneurs, the key is to look closely at where younger audiences spend time and test small-scale offerings that match their behavior.

2. Reinventing razors

Razors are not an industry most would call exciting. Yet Michael Dubin, founder of Dollar Shave Club, recognized how overpriced and inconvenient razor shopping was. His subscription model scaled quickly, and Unilever acquired the company for $1 billion in 2016.

Lesson: Even “boring” products can hide billion-dollar potential. Everyday frustrations are often overlooked opportunities waiting for a creative solution.

3. Digital stickers – monetizing expression

Messaging apps usually earn money through ads. But Japan’s LINE, led by CEO Takeshi Idezawa, tapped into a different insight: Users wanted to pay for playful digital stickers. What began as a side feature evolved into a business line generating hundreds of millions annually, supporting the company’s IPO.

Lesson: Small signals can reveal huge markets. Entrepreneurs should pay close attention to microtransactions or unusual user behaviors and test whether they scale.

4. From air mattresses to $80 billion

In 2007, Brian Chesky, Nathan Blecharczyk and Joe Gebbia rented out air mattresses in their San Francisco apartment to cover their rent. What started as a quirky side hustle became Airbnb, now valued at more than $80 billion.

Lesson: Weird ideas often hide global demand. If a concept solves a real-world problem – like affordable, flexible lodging – it can scale beyond anyone’s initial expectations.

5. From gaming mice to lifestyle brand

Min-Liang Tan, co-founder and CEO of Razer, started by making high-end gaming mice for competitive players. By embracing

gamer culture, Razer grew into a lifestyle brand spanning laptops, fintech and esports, today generating more than $1.6 billion annually.

Lesson: Communities don't just want utility – they want identity. Entrepreneurs who tap into culture and passion points can create lasting loyalty and brand equity.

Related: The Best Ideas Don't Always Come From Brainstorming – They Might Surprise You Instead

How entrepreneurs can train their eyes for opportunity

Spotting opportunity isn't luck – it's a skill you can sharpen. Here are three ways to practice:

1. Observe behavior, not just words. Watch where people spend money, time and attention.
2. Keep a "problem log." Document frustrations and recurring pain points. Review them monthly to identify potential opportunities.
3. Test small and fast. Don't wait for perfection – launch a minimum version and learn from the response.

Opportunities don't always come dressed as billion-dollar markets. Sometimes they start as air mattresses, digital stickers or fashion items for avatars. The entrepreneurs who succeed – whether it's Philipp Batura on Roblox, Michael Dubin with Dollar Shave Club or Brian Chesky at Airbnb – are those willing to look where others don't and act quickly when they spot the spark.

Train yourself to explore unexpected corners. That is where tomorrow's biggest businesses are born.

Entrepreneurs often imagine opportunity as something obvious — the next big app, the next wave of AI or a billion-dollar market everyone is already chasing. But in reality, many of the most successful businesses start in unexpected corners. They often look too small, too quirky or too niche — until someone connects the dots and builds something the rest of us missed.

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How Helping Other Entrepreneurs Could Be the Smartest Investment You Ever Make

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Key Takeaways

- Mentorship can be a “rising tide lifts all boats” activity.
- Don’t engage in mentorship with personal or professional gain as the primary motivator.
- As you engage in mentorship, do it without any expectations of return.

It takes a lot more than cash to build a business. Entrepreneurs need knowledge, networks and confidence to get their ideas off the ground. Business growth occurs more quickly with a mentor, and international business growth through U.S. mentors is thriving.

Mentorship is an effective way to catalyze business success for founders worldwide who are seeking to carve out new market share. It can reduce failure rates and set the stage for scalable business growth. It can also help spark innovation and connect the dots between ideas and execution.

The U.S. has a vast number of established business leaders who can participate in the mentorship process. If you’re an investor and startup enthusiast like me, you’re probably aware of the potential to have a positive impact here. If you’re wondering how you can do that, I have you covered.

Here are three ways you can use mentorship as a mutually beneficial financial lever that fosters global economic growth and generates investment opportunities through high-potential entrepreneurs in emerging markets.

Related: I Employ 75 People Across 10 Countries — Here Are the 3 Skills That Helped Me Build My Global Team

1. Participate in international

mentorship networks

Connection is key to mentorship. You can’t help someone if you don’t know who they are, where they’re operating or why their business exists.

Mentorship networks facilitate the formation of those connections. Entrepreneurs Across Borders (EAB) is an example of one of these. It helps established U.S. entrepreneurs connect with startup leaders in other countries, where they can offer life-changing advice to those working in more restrictive systems or with fewer resources and support structures.

EAB Executive Director Chris Cochran discussed several cases in which such interventions led to quantitative improvement in founders’ lives. One was in Jamaica, where economic reforms and a tourism boom are currently creating numerous opportunities. Cochran said that while the potential is there, he recalled a business owner with 17 employees who was struggling organizationally. An EAB mentor spent 20 minutes with them, during which they helped unlock new growth opportunities. Six months later, the company had expanded to 70 employees simply by following the mentor’s advice.

Mentorship starts with connection. If you are trying to get involved as a mentor, you must begin by finding a network that serves as a communication hub. This is where you connect knowledge with needs and build lasting relationships.

2. Co-develop business models with long-term monetization in mind

Mentorship is unique in the sense that it focuses not on your bottom line or the next step for your enterprise. At its core, it is a selfless act that helps support the mentee. If you want it to work, you can’t engage in mentorship with personal

or professional gain as the primary motivator.

That said, mentorship can often be mutually beneficial. This is especially true if you're willing to invest in others with confidence and play the long game with patience.

One way to do this is by identifying entrepreneurs who require assistance in developing their business models. The EAB reference above is a great example of this. Cochran shared another story about a group of mentors who came alongside an ambitious business owner with plans to expand beyond her own country. They cautioned her to dominate her current market before taking on a higher-risk expansion project.

Such advice can help inexperienced business leaders avoid costly mistakes. It leads to sustainable short-term growth and better long-term viability. Mentors can then naturally position themselves to tangentially benefit from that growth over time without taking advantage of or destabilizing it.

As you engage in mentorship, do it without any expectations of return. This does not mean that you will not receive a return, but if you are mentoring as a means to gain leverage, equity, or a board seat, you will miss the point. It will come back around to you, but if that's your primary motivation, you have missed the point of mentorship.

Related: I Was a Founder Before I Became an Investor — Here's How It Shaped My Investment Strategy

3. Help scalable ventures achieve sustainable future growth

Along with improving business models in the present, mentorship can pave the way for sustainable growth in the future. A mentor who has already been through scaling a business can provide early and ongoing guidance in various areas, including:

- **Capital readiness:** Setting up a growing startup to be attractive to investors
- **Creating external ecosystems:** Building and bolstering supply chains and strategic partnerships
- **Connecting with investors**: Providing critical advice, from how to access investors to how to pitch them, and then managing funding

This is where you can draw inspiration from examples like the entrepreneurship-supporting nonprofit Endeavor Global's work with Mercado Libre. The Latin American e-commerce and fintech marketplace was an early selection for Endeavor. Since receiving its support in 1999, Mercado Libre has been able to connect with investors and grow, culminating in a U.S. IPO in 2007. Ten years later, it reached a market value of $10 billion.

If a group like Endeavor had not come alongside Mercado Libre, the startup likely would have struggled to grow so quickly and effectively. As you seek mentorship opportunities, consider looking beyond current operations. Look for ways to set each company up to fully leverage its growth potential.

Related: Five Strategies Startups Can Use To Optimize Their Supply Chain

International mentoring with purpose

Mentorship can be a "rising tide lifts all boats" activity. U.S. business leaders can create real financial impact, operational efficiency, and business growth through mentorship opportunities. When that happens, they benefit both the founders they work with and their own position as leaders and investors.

Another powerful and sometimes overlooked benefit of

international mentorship is the network of genuine relationships it fosters. Mentors often find themselves building connections that span all levels of society—from government leaders and policymakers to business owners and industry leaders. These relationships, forged through shared effort and mutual respect, extend far beyond professional collaboration. They form lasting friendships and global networks that can open doors, strengthen communities, and create opportunities neither side could have envisioned on their own.

Key Takeaways

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