Entrepreneurs Can Unwind With This 18-Bottle Wine Deal for Just $70



Disclosure: Our goal is to feature products and services that we think you'll find interesting and useful. If you purchase them, Entrepreneur may get a small share of the revenue from the sale from our commerce partners.

According to a 2025 Forbes study, entrepreneurs typically work an average of 50-60 hours a week, with early-stage founders often putting in 70-80 hours. That doesn't leave much free time, so if you get a break, you'll want to make the most of it.

Make sure you have a stocked wine rack with this deal from Swirl Wine Shop, which gives you 18 bottles of red, white, or mixed wines for just $69.97 (reg. $270) — that's less than $4

each – plus shipping.

Stock your wine rack with 18 bottles for $70

Whether you're entertaining or just taking a load off after a long day of entrepreneurship, this deal from Swirl Wine Shop makes sure you're ready for anything. This limited-time offer delivers 18 delicious bottles of wine to your doorstep – you choose between red, white, or a mixed variety of red, white, and rosé. These 750ml bottles of mixed wine offer balanced choices that aren't overly complex, some of which have won awards in blind-tasting competitions.

If you choose reds, you'll receive varieties from locations ranging from South Africa to Spain. The whites include Chardonnays and white blends that are crisp and refreshing. And if you can't make up your mind, the mixed option includes a great balance of wines for every occasion.

Shipping is not included with this amazing deal. While you receive bottles for less than $4 each, you'll pay $39.95 for shipping all the bottles at the time of redemption. All purchasers must be 21 years of age, and someone 21 years or older must be available to sign for this delivery.

Act fast to take advantage of this deal for 18 bottles of wine from Swirl Wine Shop, now just $69.97 (reg. $270).

StackSocial prices subject to change.

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How I Reclaimed Control of My Business and Life After 20 Years – And How You Can Start Today



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This article is part of the America’s Favorite Mom & Pop Shops series. Read more stories

Key Takeaways

- Building a strong entrepreneurial community requires intentional connections that balance challenge and support.
- True freedom in business comes from embracing vulnerability and integrating all parts of your life

Twenty years ago, my husband and I made a decision that would transform our lives.

I had just quit a government job that had me traveling the world. We had two young children and no clear plan. We gave ourselves six months to figure out our next move.

What followed was both unnerving and beautiful.

Each day, Enrique and I would go to the gym, drop the kids off at the free daycare and ride stationary bikes side by side while mapping out our future. That rhythmic hum of the bikes, the kids' laughter in the background — it became our strategy HQ.

Enrique, then finishing his MBA, turned our future into his final project. We evaluated three potential businesses and eventually chose a cleaning franchise that aligned with what mattered most to us: time freedom and financial independence.

That season taught me something I'm still learning to this day: Freedom requires structure — and that structure is built from the people you surround yourself with.

Related: I Hit Rock Bottom When My Childhood Dream Crumbled Before My Eyes — But Entrepreneurship Saved Me. Here's What I Learned About Purpose, Perseverance and People.

The power of anchors

In the early days, "community" didn't mean networking events or masterminds. I wasn't ready for all that.

What I needed were anchors — one or two people who could keep us steady when everything felt uncertain.

One was Enrique's strategy professor, who helped us evaluate business models with clarity. The other was a friend working at the Small Business Development Center — a free, often-overlooked resource for entrepreneurs. He became a steady guide during those critical early months.

He had one simple, unwavering rule: "Don't come see me until your financial statements are done." His point was clear — if you don't know where you stand financially, you're not running a business.

Later, when I faced tough employee decisions, he didn't

sugarcoat things. “Yes, you need to do that.”

I’d cry. Then I’d do it. And I’d return stronger. Those tears weren’t weakness — they were part of becoming who I needed to be.
Because freedom requires facing what scares you most.

Finding the right circle

As the business stabilized, I realized I needed more than anchors. I needed peers — people who understood the weight and wonder of entrepreneurship.

That’s when I began seeking out entrepreneurial communities. For example, groups like Entrepreneurs’ Organization offer spaces where people live not just big businesses but big integrated lives. It shifted my view of what was possible — not just professionally but personally.

I also realized that real entrepreneurial success isn’t about separation — not work *versus* life — but integration. You’re not building a business while life happens on the sidelines. You’re weaving it all together.

The right circles support that. They don’t just celebrate wins — they hold space for the full journey: the doubts, the pivots, the personal growth.

Vulnerability as a superpower

A major turning point came when I gave a talk about my entrepreneurial journey.

It wasn’t just a business story. I talked about surviving abuse. I talked about parenting. I talked about building a company from scratch. For the first time, I brought my full self to the stage.

What I had once viewed as liabilities — the hard parts I kept hidden — were actually my greatest strengths. Owning my full story didn't diminish my credibility. It deepened it.

In that moment, I realized: Vulnerability isn't a liability — it's your leverage.

Related: Want to Be an Entrepreneur? Start With These 4 Simple Steps.

Community as a container without walls

That experience reshaped how I think about community. The best communities aren't rigid. They're more like containers without walls — strong enough to hold you, yet spacious enough to let you grow.

Now, my sense of community is more fluid. Every morning, I walk five miles listening to podcasts — business leaders, spiritual thinkers and health experts. One idea leads to another, one voice leads to a new connection. Mentorship is everywhere if you know how to listen intentionally.

That's the evolution — from needing a handful of anchors to building a global network of voices. Proximity matters less now. What matters more is alignment.

The future of the entrepreneurial community

If I could redesign the entrepreneurial community of the future, it would look different than most rooms I've walked into.

We'd break down artificial hierarchies. No more sorting people by revenue tiers or exit size. Instead, we'd gather around

shared values – resilience, generosity, curiosity and purpose.

We'd see that the entrepreneur with a $1 million business could teach the billion-dollar founder something they've forgotten. And vice versa. Vulnerability would become currency. Wisdom would flow in all directions.

Final thoughts

Those exercise bike sessions twenty years ago were the foundation of something much bigger than a business.

They taught me that success isn't a solo journey. It's shaped by every mentor, every challenge and every honest conversation that helped me become more of who I truly am.

We often chase freedom as a destination. But I've come to believe this: Freedom doesn't happen when you escape the hard stuff – it happens when you embrace it with the right people beside you.

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The Winning Bid for Barbara Corcoran's 'Palace in the Sky' Penthouse Has Finally Been Revealed



Key Takeaways

- Barbara Corcoran is the founder of real estate firm The Corcoran Group.
- Corcoran put her Fifth Avenue penthouse on the market in May, with an asking price of $12 million.
- An offer was accepted after just one day, but the winning bid hadn't been disclosed until now.

"Shark Tank" star Barbara Corcoran's New York City penthouse sold for $1.5 million more than the asking price — after it landed a buyer within just one day.

Corcoran, 76, listed her Fifth Avenue property in May for $12 million, and a bidding war ensued. An offer was reportedly accepted after just 24 hours of being on the market. And now that the deal has officially closed, the winning price has been revealed: The penthouse sold for $13.5 million, an extra $1.5 million over ask, Realtor.com reported.

"Real estate is always emotional, but I never thought I'd say goodbye to this beautiful palace in the sky," Corcoran wrote on Instagram in May.

Related: A Billionaire Founder Admits He Had 'Horrible Habits' — Then He Started a Morning Routine That 'Transformed' His Life

Corcoran bought the duplex penthouse a decade ago for $10 million, and poured $2 million into renovating it, leaving her with a net profit of $1.5 million on the sale. She first glimpsed the property in 1992, while delivering letters for a messenger service, and was impressed by its terrace with views of Central Park.

"I walked in and saw this green, lush terrace through the French doors, and said to the lady who let me in, 'If you're ever going to sell this, would you sell it to me?'" Corcoran

told *The New York Times* earlier this year.

Related: Kevin O'Leary Is Starring in an A24 Film With Timothée Chalamet and Gwyneth Paltrow: 'I Didn't Take Any Acting Lessons'

In 2015, she got a phone call from the owner and ended up buying the 4,600-square-foot penthouse. The apartment features five bedrooms, five full baths, two half baths, a library with a wood-burning fireplace, and a butler's pantry.

Now, Corcoran and her husband, Bill Higgins, an 80-year-old former FBI agent, are trading in their two-story penthouse for a single-level apartment with no stairs. Corcoran told the *NYT* that Higgins could no longer safely manage the stairs, which is why they opted to move.

Corcoran previously stated that she makes $4.5 million from her investments, including profits from her 16-year run as a "Shark Tank" investor. She sold her real estate firm, The Corcoran Group, for $66 million in 2001.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/barbara-corcoran-sold-her-nyc-penthouse-above-asking-price/498220

How I Avoided the 7 Most Common Money Traps for Founders



Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- It’s possible for a company to be profitable on paper and still fail due to a lack of cash.
- Avoiding financial planning is like flying a plane without a dashboard.

You’ve built a business from the ground up — congrats!

But even the most innovative founders can make mistakes when it comes to finances. After all, every aspect of your business is supported by financial discipline. When mistakes are made early on, they can snowball into significant problems.

Based on my experiences and those of other founders, the same mistakes seem to be repeated. Thankfully, with awareness and discipline, these flaws in financial strategy can be avoided. Here are seven financial mistakes even smart founders make,

and how to avoid them.

Related: I Thought I Knew Finance — Then I Took Over My Family's Franchise. Here Are The Hard Truths I Learned.

1. Mixing personal and business accounts

Failing to separate your business and personal finances is the most common and dangerous mistake founders make. Innocently enough, it starts as a personal card for a business lunch, but soon spirals out of control.

The problem: By mixing funds, you blur the legal line between you and your company. Your assets (such as your home and savings) could be at risk in a lawsuit. Moreover, it creates a tax nightmare which could result in audits and penalties. Also, it's hard to make wise decisions on profitability and cash flow because of an inaccurate financial picture.

The fix:

- **Open separate accounts.** Get a credit card, savings account and checking account dedicated to your business right away.
- **Pay yourself a salary.** Rather than withdrawing money from the business account, pay yourself a predictable salary. By doing so, a clear financial boundary is established.
- **Use software.** To keep your records clean, use tools like QuickBooks or Xero.

2. Not taking care of your credit score

The majority of small businesses are bootstrapped, with 78% using their own funds to get started. Although self-reliance

is admirable, it often means your company has no business credit score at the start, which severely restricts your financing options.

The problem: Due to your startup's limited resources, you may need to seek outside funding for equipment or inventory. If you don't have a credit history for your business, you may be unable to secure loans or lines of credit, which can halt your company's growth.

The fix:

- **Maintain an excellent personal score.** In the early stages of your business, your credit score becomes your company's credit score. Be sure to pay all your personal bills on time, maintain a low credit utilization ratio, and keep an eye out for errors in your credit report.
- **Build business credit early.** As soon as your company is legally formed, open a business credit card and pay it off every month to establish a credit history.

3. Underestimating the importance of cash flow

It's possible for a company to be profitable on paper and still fail due to a lack of cash. Many startup founders are so focused on revenue that they forget cash flow is their business's lifeblood.

The problem: You land a big client and hire staff to do the work. Unfortunately, you won't receive your payment for 90 days. Due to a cash flow gap, you're unable to pay your bills. It's the classic "grow-or-go" trap, where rapid growth outpaces your ability to manage cash flow. In fact, due to cash flow issues, 82% of small businesses fail.

The fix:

- **Create a cash flow forecast.** Keep track of projected cash inflows and outflows with a dynamic tool. By spotting potential gaps in advance, you can avoid crises.
- **Negotiate favorable terms.** Consider shortening your clients' payment cycles (e.g., 30 days) and extending your vendor's terms.
- **Build a cash reserve.** Keep three to six months' worth of expenses in a separate account. If revenue dips, this reserve can be a lifesaver.

Related: Smart Business Owners Know the Difference Between Profit and Cash Flow. If You Want to Make Money, You Should, Too.

4. Ignoring the tax implications of your decisions

Taxes are more than just a year-end problem; they're a fundamental part of a company's strategy. As such, ignoring them is a costly mistake.

The problem: You could face a massive, unexpected tax bill that wipes out all your cash reserves without proper planning. An incorrect legal structure, such as an LLC versus an S-Corp, can also result in overpayments. You'll miss out on thousands of dollars' worth of legitimate business deductions without proper bookkeeping.

The fix:

- **Hire an accountant early.** Don't wait. To help you with corporate structure, quarterly taxes and deductions, find a CPA who specializes in businesses like yours.
- **Educate yourself.** As a founder, you don't have to be an expert on taxes, but you need to know what constitutes a business expense.

- **Pay on time.** Set aside money for estimated quarterly taxes to prevent a huge, unpleasant surprise.

5. Under-pricing your product or service

Passionate founders often hesitate to charge what their products are really worth. In addition to leading to burnout, this is not a sustainable business model. As McKinsey points out, overcharging isn't the most common reason for improper pricing. Instead, up to 90% of improper pricing issues are caused by underpriced products.

The problem: When you underprice, you may not be covering your actual costs, such as overhead, marketing and your own time. In addition, you attract the wrong kind of customers – those who are demanding and quick to leave for an even cheaper alternative.

The fix:

- **Know your value.** Know what makes you unique and don't be afraid to charge for it.
- **Calculate your costs.** Don't guess. Be sure to include all direct and indirect costs, as well as a healthy profit margin.
- **Consider value-based pricing.** You should price your product based on the value it provides to your customers. Depending on the benefit you provide, your price may be increased if your solution saves a company significant time or money.

6. Avoiding financial planning and record-keeping

Founders are often visionaries, not accountants. However,

avoiding financial planning is like flying a plane without a dashboard.

The problem: When you make hiring or expansion decisions without a solid financial plan, you're flying blind. As a result, you miss out on opportunities, such as determining which products are most profitable. Also, if your financial records are messy, no investor will invest in you.

The fix:

- **Treat finances like a partner.** Regularly review your finances. For example, a weekly cash flow review could be scheduled.
- **Automate everything.** Record-keeping can be automated with accounting software. Sync your bank accounts and credit cards for a complete record of your transactions.
- **Create a budget and plan.** Even the simplest budget can give you a sense of direction. But, since it's a living document, you should revisit and adjust regularly.

Related: How Setting Clear Financial Goals Leads to Business Success

7. Rushing to hire new employees

As crucial as delegation is, founders also need to take the hiring process into account. Overhiring can hurt a company's burn rate, or the rate at which it loses money.

The problem:

Your early employees shape the culture and mission of your startup. A rush to hire can result in poor fits, higher turnover rates and a significant drain on your finances. If you hire people who aren't the right fit, you'll spend much more than the average cost of hiring someone new, which is around $4,700.

The fix:

- **Outsource first, hire second.** Consider hiring a freelancer or virtual assistant before hiring a full-time employee. With this option, you can manage cash flow and test needs without committing long-term.
- **Vet thoroughly.** You should ensure potential hires are not only skilled but also a good cultural fit. Early employees are investments, not expenses.

The Bottom Line

Innovators are masters of innovation, but a solid financial foundation must support their innovation. The thing is, there's no reason for these mistakes to occur. When you approach your finances with the same passion and attention you devote to your product, you can ensure that your business not only survives but thrives.

Key Takeaways

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If You Want Real Leads From LinkedIn, Stop Being Pushy — Here's What Actually Works Instead



Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- Discover why most LinkedIn outreach fails — and how to build genuine connections that actually convert.
- Learn a simple, no-pitch strategy to turn LinkedIn connections into real leads without annoying anyone.

For over 20 years, I've worked in digital marketing strategy, watching LinkedIn evolve from a professional networking site into a battleground of cold outreach.

I've seen every type of message imaginable — from smart, thoughtful approaches to tone-deaf mass pitches that feel like spam.

The difference between these approaches boils down to one simple factor: whether you show up as a human being or just a hustler.

When LinkedIn outreach feels like a conversation, people respond. When it feels like a sales pitch, they tune out.

The problem with cold outreach on LinkedIn

Let's be real: I get dozens of messages every day that read something like this: "Hey Christopher, saw your profile and thought you'd be a great fit for our software. Do you have 15 minutes?"

And my honest answer? No. I don't have 15 minutes for that message. And neither do the hundreds of others receiving that exact same pitch. These messages don't just fall flat — they actively harm your credibility. They turn LinkedIn into a dumping ground for sloppy, half-hearted sales attempts.

If your message is so generic that it could go to 100 people without changing a word, it’s not personal. It’s lazy.

The mistake isn’t reaching out; the mistake is skipping the relationship part and jumping straight to the ask.

Related: 6 Reasons Why Successful Entrepreneurs Need to Be on LinkedIn

LinkedIn isn’t a sales floor — it’s a networking room

Think about this: would you walk up to a stranger at a professional event and hand them a brochure while saying, “We help people like you save time and money. Want to talk?”

Of course not. But that’s exactly what most LinkedIn messages feel like.

LinkedIn isn’t where deals close. It’s where conversations begin. That means treating LinkedIn like a networking event, not a marketplace. It means showing interest in the person first, before asking for anything in return.

If you don’t take time to learn about their work, their challenges or how you might genuinely help, you’re not building relationships — you’re shouting into a void.

What an actual LinkedIn lead funnel looks like

Here’s the good news: LinkedIn *can* generate leads. But only if you respect what the platform really is — a place for authentic connection.

Let me walk you through a simple, effective approach that doesn’t feel spammy.

Step 1: Start with a thoughtful connection request

Don’t just hit “Connect” and hope for the best. Give the person a reason to care.

You don’t need to write an essay — just a short, sincere note that shows you’re paying attention.

Try something like:

“Hi [Name], I came across your recent post about [Topic]. Really enjoyed your perspective. I’d love to connect and follow your insights.”

Notice: no pitch, just context.

Step 2: After they accept, don’t pitch — start a conversation

Getting a connection acceptance doesn’t mean you’ve earned the right to sell.

What it means is they’re open to talking.

So comment on a post they wrote. Share a helpful article. Ask a genuine question related to their work.

For example:

“I saw your post about managing remote teams. I’m curious how you’re handling communication across time zones?”

This shows you’re listening — and that you care.

Related: Want to Succeed as an Entrepreneur? Discover the Key to Building Long-Lasting Connections

Step 3: Offer help before you ask for anything

Once you've started a back-and-forth and built some trust, you can offer something of value.

But this isn't the time to jump to a sales pitch.

Instead, offer a helpful resource:

"You mentioned struggling with keeping content consistent. I created a quarterly content calendar template that's helped others. Would you like me to share it?"

You're giving before asking — and that builds goodwill.

Step 4: Respect their pace — don't push if they're not ready

If you don't get a response, don't follow up with a dozen messages asking if they saw yours.

That's desperation, not professionalism.

Instead, stay on their radar in a natural way. Like their posts. Share useful content. Check back in after a few weeks.

Remember: the goal isn't to close a deal immediately. It's to stay present and build trust over time.

You can't scale relationships until you've earned them

I hear this question a lot:

"Great advice, but how do I scale this?"

The answer? You don't — at least, not at first.

You can’t automate what you haven’t first proven works manually. You need to nail the tone, timing and value one conversation at a time.

Once you’ve figured that out, you can create a repeatable process. But even then, personalization and intentionality must stay front and center.

Scale what works. Don’t scale what doesn’t.

A real-life example of relationship-driven LinkedIn outreach

Let me share a quick story.

One of our B2B clients – a manufacturing firm in the energy sector – wanted more visibility and stronger leads before a major industry conference. No budget for ads, no interest in a flashy campaign.

Instead, we ran a two-month organic LinkedIn outreach campaign focused on thoughtful connections and relevant conversations.

Here’s what happened:

- 75% response rate on direct outreach
- 41% connection acceptance rate
- 200,000+ impressions on personal LinkedIn posts
- 33% growth in followers

No salesy messages. No automation. Just real people talking to real people.

That’s what happens when you treat LinkedIn like a relationship builder, not a sales machine.

You don’t need a script — you need a point of view.

Here’s the bottom line:

If you want to win on LinkedIn, stop copying templates. Start building relationships.

Have a real point of view. Speak from experience. Ask better questions. Share insights that matter.

Connect with people who truly fit your business — not just anyone with a promising job title.

People don’t want to be prospected.
They want to be understood.

And they definitely don’t want to be sold to by a stranger on the first message.

How to tell if your LinkedIn outreach is actually effective

Not sure if your current outreach works? Ask yourself:

- Would I say this message out loud to someone I just met?
- Is this conversation about *them* — or about me?
- Have I earned their interest?
- Am I offering value, or just pitching?
- Would I want to receive this message?

If you answered “no” to any of these, it’s time to rethink your approach.

The bottom line

LinkedIn is not a shortcut to sales. It’s a long-term play built on trust, authentic conversation, and shared value.

You can’t fake it. You can’t automate it. And you can’t rush it.

But if you show up consistently, engage like a human, and make it more about *them* than *you*, you’ll build a network that listens, responds and eventually buys.

Just not because you asked them to in the first message.

Key Takeaways

- Discover why most LinkedIn outreach fails — and how to build genuine connections that actually convert.
- Learn a simple, no-pitch strategy to turn LinkedIn connections into real leads without annoying anyone.

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How Much Money Would You Give Up for Remote Work? A New Survey Examines the Trade-Off.

Key Takeaways

- A new study of nearly 1,400 U.S. tech workers found that many were willing to accept a 25% lower salary for jobs that were hybrid or fully remote.
- On average, these tech workers were 32 years old with nearly seven years of experience.
- The survey focused on high earners in tech, with average job offers around $239,000 a year.

As companies like Amazon, JPMorgan, and AT&T implement stricter return-to-office policies, a new study shows that tech workers will accept significantly less pay for positions that are hybrid or fully remote.

Researchers from Harvard, Brown, and UCLA recently released a study that found many tech workers were willing to give up a quarter of the salary they could have had for the chance to work remotely or in a hybrid setup rather than in person.

The study, which examined 1,396 workers in the U.S. tech world, mostly software engineers, product managers, and data scientists, found that workers who accepted remote or hybrid positions agreed to a salary that was 25% lower on average than what they were offered for a similar fully in-person position.

Everyone in the study had received at least two job offers between May 2023 and December 2024, averaging around $239,000 a year, and accepted one of the positions. On average, these tech workers were 32 years old with nearly seven years of experience under their belts.

Related: Hybrid Workers Were Put to the Test Against Fully In-Office Employees — Here's Who Came Out On Top

UCLA Economics Professor and study co-author Ricardo Perez-Truglia told *The Wall Street Journal* the average amount tech workers were willing to give up for remote or hybrid work was more than expected.

Previous studies found that the average worker was willing to accept a pay cut of around 10% to work fully remotely. For example, an August survey of 1,000 employed Americans released by Youngstown State University found that in-person respondents said they would take an 11% pay cut for a remote or hybrid job.

"Our estimate is substantially higher," Perez-Truglia and the other co-authors wrote in the study.

According to the researchers, the higher 25% estimate likely boils down to two main reasons: First, the study focused specifically on high-earning tech workers, who may place extra value on remote options and be willing to trade more salary. Second, instead of using hypothetical survey questions like other studies, the study analyzed real job offers that respondents received from major companies such as Google, Meta, and Apple — meaning those pay cuts actually happened when people chose remote or hybrid over in-person roles.

Related: Remote Walmart Employees Question Return-to-Office Policy, Some Opt to Quit Instead of Relocating

The survey respondents also factored in insights from Glassdoor, a site where current and former employees

anonymously leave reviews of companies, when deciding where to work. Still, remote and hybrid work arrangements ultimately mattered more in their decision-making, especially when it came to taking a lower offer.

Additionally, the survey found that there was little difference in how workers felt about hybrid and fully remote jobs – fully remote roles were only slightly more appealing. According to Perez-Truglia, the findings indicate that even offering employees one or two work-from-home days a week could sway their preferences and help companies attract top tech talent.

"Clearly there can be a compromise," Perez-Truglia told the *WSJ*.

Click here for the full report.

Related: Looking for a Remote Job? A New Survey Says It Could Be Harder to Find Than You Think.

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- On average, these tech workers were 32 years old with nearly seven years of experience.
- The survey focused on high earners in tech, with average job offers around $239,000 a year.

As companies like Amazon, JPMorgan, and AT&T implement stricter return-to-office policies, a new study shows that tech workers will accept significantly less pay for positions that are hybrid or fully remote.

Researchers from Harvard, Brown, and UCLA recently released a study that found many tech workers were willing to give up a

quarter of the salary they could have had for the chance to work remotely or in a hybrid setup rather than in person.

The study, which examined 1,396 workers in the U.S. tech world, mostly software engineers, product managers, and data scientists, found that workers who accepted remote or hybrid positions agreed to a salary that was 25% lower on average than what they were offered for a similar fully in-person position.

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https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/workers-are-willing-to-sacrifice-pay-for-remote-work-survey/498213

You’re Growing Fast — But Is Your Money Keeping Up? Here’s the Capital Strategy You Need.

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- Sudden business growth is exciting, but the mechanics of growth often outpace the funding needed to sustain it.

- Think of your capital stack as three distinct layers — internal, external and contingent. You must orchestrate these layers so they work in harmony with your business.
- To ensure your capital is on track, you must forecast cash flow regularly, identify your triggers, match capital to purpose, build lender/investor relationships early and keep a contingency layer.

Growth often comes faster than expected, and many businesses struggle to keep pace with the rate of demand. A common challenge many fast-growing companies face isn't a lack of opportunity but capital misalignment.

Let's look at why capital often lags behind growth, the risks it creates and how companies can close the gap by calibrating their capital stack.

Related: 7 Financial Pillars That Make or Break Growing Businesses

Why capital falls behind growth

Sudden business growth is exciting, but one frustrating aspect is that the mechanics of growth often outpace the funding needed to sustain it. There are several reasons why that is, but a big aspect is simply timing.

Revenue and cash don't always arrive at the same time. For example, you may have sales lined up, but if receivables are delayed, the money won't be there when your suppliers and employees expect to get paid. The lag between booking revenue and collecting it can create short-term strain on your business.

Plus, expansion often eats into working capital. Adding new staff, carrying more inventory or opening a new location all require upfront spending before the new revenue fully kicks in. That creates a cash gap right when the business should be

leaning into growth.

To make matters even more challenging, traditional financing channels often move slowly. Bank loans and SBA programs can take weeks or even months to close, and by the time funds arrive, the opportunity that sparked the need may have passed.

The 3 layers of capital

It’s helpful to think of your capital stack as having three distinct layers, each with its own role. The challenge isn’t simply having access to all three, but orchestrating them so they work together to fuel your business.

The first layer is internal capital, which includes cash flow, retained earnings and reallocating resources from within the business. It’s the most flexible form of funding because you have complete control over it, and it can be deployed quickly. However, it has a limited scope, and overextending internal funds can weaken your day-to-day operations; therefore, this layer is best suited for urgent needs.

The second layer is external capital, and it comes from outside sources like loans, lines of credit, equipment leases or investors. External funding expands your reach and unlocks bigger opportunities, but it comes with obligations like monthly payments and interest charges. It’s important to ensure this type of capital is matched carefully to its purpose and timeline, so it supports growth without creating long-term strain.

Contingent capital is the final layer, and it includes vendor terms, undrawn credit facilities and emergency reserves built into agreements. These aren’t typically used in day-to-day operations, but they provide a safety net when conditions shift unexpectedly. Think of contingent capital as backup funding that’s there when you need it, but stays in the background when you don’t.

Most businesses already use some combination of these layers, but few take the time to arrange them intentionally. The real advantage doesn't come from having access to capital, but from orchestrating these layers so they work in harmony with your business.

Related: 21 Ways Startups That Have Used Capital Efficiency to Stay Ahead

Balancing the core tensions

As companies scale, growth brings both opportunity and complexity, and one of the biggest challenges is learning how to manage the natural tensions that come with financing.

Timing vs. volume

First, you need to find a balance between timing and volume. Many owners focus only on how much capital they can access, but when the funds come can be even more important. A business that secures funding months before it's needed risks paying for idle cash, while one that waits too long may lose ground to competitors.

The most effective way to manage this tension is by forecasting cash flow regularly and setting clear triggers that signal when it's time to draw down funding. That way, money moves in sync with demand instead of guesswork.

Flexibility vs. fit

The second tension is flexibility versus fit. On the surface, a line of credit may seem like a great fit if it has low rates, generous limits or favorable repayment terms. But if the structure is too rigid for how your business actually operates, it can quickly become a burden. Strict covenants, inflexible draw schedules or repayment obligations that don't match your cash flow can limit your ability to pivot when conditions change.

That’s why the best financing isn’t always the cheapest, but the one that aligns with your business model and growth timeline. Flexibility matters, but so does making sure the financing tool you choose truly fits your needs.

Preparation vs. over-planning

The final tension is finding the balance between preparation and over-planning. On one hand, it’s tempting to lock in large, long-term financing to feel ready, but too much structure can weigh a company down. On the other hand, waiting until the last minute often forces you into reactive decisions that carry higher costs or less favorable terms.

A more effective approach is to fund growth in stages, aligning each round of capital with specific operational needs and return-on-investment goals. By taking only what’s needed and when it’s needed, businesses can stay nimble and avoid unnecessary debt.

Related: 7 Silent Mistakes Fast-Growing Startups Make Before Running Out of Money

A practical checklist

If you’re growing fast, here’s a simple framework to check whether your capital is keeping up:

- **Forecast cash flow regularly:** Don’t just rely on your annual budget. It’s important to update your cash flow projections at least quarterly.
- **Identify your triggers:** Important events like contracts and seasonal surges are often signs that signal capital will be needed.
- **Match capital to purpose:** Use short-term financing for short-term needs and long-term funding for strategic investments.

- **Build relationships early:** Lenders and investors respond faster when you're already on their radar, so it's important to start building those relationships before you need them.
- **Keep a contingency layer:** Even healthy businesses need backup access to liquidity for unplanned expenses or new opportunities.

Growth doesn't wait, and neither should your capital strategy. The question isn't just whether you have enough funding, but whether your capital stack matches your pace of growth.

When your money is properly timed, layered and calibrated, it helps you stay ahead of the competition.

Key Takeaways

- Sudden business growth is exciting, but the mechanics of growth often outpace the funding needed to sustain it.
- Think of your capital stack as three distinct layers — internal, external and contingent. You must orchestrate these layers so they work in harmony with your business.
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Growth often comes faster than expected, and many businesses struggle to keep pace with the rate of demand. A common challenge many fast-growing companies face isn't a lack of opportunity but capital misalignment.

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3 Tips to Boost Business Revenue During Local Events

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This article is part of the America's Favorite Mom & Pop Shops series. Read more stories

Key Takeaways

- Plan ahead for success — build out a calendar for the year ahead to give yourself ample time to develop promotions, secure necessary materials and generate buzz.
- Create targeted promotions for a variety of channels — create a theme for your promotion and share it through a multi-channel campaign.
- Get directly involved — consider sponsoring or hosting a local event, having a branded booth at a local festival or donating goods or services for a charity auction.

The numbers speak for themselves. Since the pandemic, consumer demand for live entertainment has surged with increased attendance and spending up 25% from 2019, according to Bank of America Institute. In fact, this year's FIFA Club World Cup drove a 7% year-over-year rise in consumer spending in host market zip codes, mainly on food and drink. This momentum is anticipated to continue into next year. According to FIFA, the 2026 World Cup is expected to inject up to $30.5 billion into the U.S. economy.

Major events aren't the only ones that make a mark on the economy. Smaller-scale events, such as regional festivals and concerts, also contribute to local economies in meaningful ways. Buzz around these events, big and small, isn't just for attendees. It's a golden opportunity for businesses to connect with new customers, enhancing their visibility and revenue potential. Here are three strategies business owners can use to capitalize on upcoming events.

Related: **Why Local Marketing Still Matters in the Digital Age**

1. Plan ahead for success

To make the most of events and key moments in time, it's crucial to plan ahead. Compile a comprehensive calendar for the year ahead, including sporting events, concerts and other performances, as well as annual community gatherings like festivals and fairs. Building out a calendar allows business owners to move from reactive to proactive marketing, enabling them to prepare campaigns weeks or months in advance.

Creating a targeted campaign tied to an event requires ample time to develop promotions, secure necessary materials and generate buzz. For example, restaurants and retailers near FIFA World Cup stadiums that expect to see increased foot traffic should consider hiring additional staff, planning for any new promotions and raising awareness among visiting fans well in advance of kick-off.

It’s also important to set measurable goals during the planning stage. Be sure the goals are consistent with the business, its objectives and the target audience. Businesses that sell food and drink near the stadium might aim to increase foot traffic by 20% on game days. This short-term goal can be measured by tracking sales, monitoring the number of customers and even assessing order value. More long-term goals can be measured through metrics like social media engagement, customer sentiment or rewards program sign-ups.

2. Create targeted promotions for a variety of channels

Ahead of an event, businesses should begin designing compelling promotions that can be deployed across a variety of channels. When creating the central theme of the promotion, keep it simple and directly tied to the event or moment in time.

Once a business has its theme and promotion idea, share it through a multi-channel campaign to maximize reach and impact. Physical channels like signage, window displays and promotional flyers may feel old school, but having a tangible presence can engage a captive audience, leading them to associate businesses with the event.

Digital and online channels are another great way to engage with prospective customers who don’t come into contact with the business on a daily basis. Consider using social media, email marketing or a business website as part of your toolkit. Broadcast channels are another way to reach a broad audience. Consider purchasing ad spots on local radio stations and podcasts, or pitch the promotion as part of a “business spotlight” on a local TV news show.

By synchronizing the business’s message across multiple channels, including physical, digital and broadcast, owners

can create a strong campaign that reaches customers wherever they are. This approach also helps maximize the return on their promotional efforts by driving both online engagement and in-person foot traffic.

Related: 4 Ways Small Business Owners Can Capitalize on Big Events

3. Get directly involved

In addition to creating targeted promotions, businesses should consider getting involved with local events more directly. By becoming a part of the event itself, business owners can increase brand visibility and build local goodwill. Sponsorships, for example, can help bolster a business's reputation and increase customer loyalty by showing the owner is invested in the community. Consider sponsoring a local event, having a branded booth at a community festival or donating goods or services for a charity auction.

Another way to get involved more directly is to host an event tied to a larger occasion or moment in time. Throw a pre-game party ahead of a major sporting event with refreshments and team merchandise, or a holiday-themed gathering during peak shopping seasons. Hosting an event is a great way to bring customers into a business's storefront and create a memorable brand experience.

Next time an event, big or small, comes through town, business owners should seize the chance to participate. By tapping into events, whether through targeted marketing campaigns or strategic sponsorships, business owners can amplify their market presence, strengthen customer relationships and build a more positive brand reputation within their local communities.

Key Takeaways

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AI Companies Will Pay to Watch You Cook and Clean. Here's Why.

Key Takeaways

- AI robotics companies need high-quality videos to help train their robots.
- The videos are more specialized than something that's been posted to social media already.
- The pay can range from $10 to $150 an hour, or $1 to $4 a minute.

Two weeks ago, an unnamed "robotics AI startup" in New York posted an ad on Craigslist looking for "first-person video of everyday activities with your iPhone." The company wants footage of "cooking dinner or doing laundry at your own home."

But why would an AI robotics company need this kind of video? It's to train the robots, of course. "This data will be used to train AI models for humanoid robotics, helping robots learn tasks like navigation, object manipulation, and household activities," the post reads.

Business Insider reports that the robotics industry is booming, with VCs investing more than $12 billion in the field

this year, and startups are eager to acquire “high-quality” training data — meaning the robots can’t learn how to do things from any old clip on YouTube.

Related: JPMorgan Staff Can’t Access the Company’s New $3 Billion NYC Headquarters Without Handing Over Their Biometric Data

“Unlike LLMs, robotics doesn’t have the internet as a ready-made dataset — you have to generate training data from scratch in the real world, which is far harder,” Ulrik Hansen, cofounder of data labeling startup Encord, told *Business Insider*.

In January, *Bloomberg* reported that content creators were selling unused, unpublished video footage to AI companies for anywhere between $1 and $4 per minute. That’s because robots will need fine motor skills and the ability to move with precision if they are going to build housing in space (Jeff Bezos recently said at Italian Tech Week that robots will build space colonies where “millions” of people will live by choice).

For now, they’ll at least learn how to separate darks from lights and start a cold laundry load.

The pay for that kind of training can fetch up to $50 an hour, the CEO of AI training startup Micro1 told *BI*. Meanwhile, Hansen said “highly technical tasks” that include things like “handling surgical equipment” could earn much higher, around $150 an hour.

As for the training gig on Craigslist, it pays less — up to $20 an hour — and requires two to four hours a day of “specified tasks.” In addition to cooking and doing laundry, the company is looking for videos of people cleaning, opening doors, playing sports, and assembling furniture.

Related: Why AI is Not Replacing Human Video Editors (And Why

Businesses Should Still Harness It)

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How This Overlooked Security Risk Can Bring Your Startup Crashing Down Overnight

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Key Takeaways

- Startups often prioritize speed over security, creating hidden risks that can lead to catastrophic failures.
- The real threat isn’t external hackers, but insecure developer practices and a lack of accountability in engineering culture.
- To succeed in the long term, startups should normalize best practices, use secure coding tools and implement security training for all engineers, regardless of their specialties.

Bill Gates once said, “The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency.”

Startup founders rarely think of their companies as inefficient, due to the many tasks they must juggle at once and the necessity to keep pace with rapid technological trends, but their engineering culture often is. While such founders focus on things like rapid iteration and minimum viable product (MVP) launches, they often overlook the fundamentals of secure development.

This is why the real cybersecurity threat facing startups isn't hostile foreign actors or futuristic artificial intelligence exploits; it's the culture of prioritizing speed, which is quietly reducing security effectiveness until one untested function, dependency or access control flaw brings everything crashing down.

Related: Weak (or Nonexistent) Cybersecurity Is Taking a Massive Toll on Small Businesses. Here's How to Protect Yours.

Startup culture often prioritizes speed over security

Startup culture tends to thrive on velocity, as its members remain committed to development and up-to-date on technological innovations. The success of internal teams is measured by factors like rapid iteration and short-term growth metrics. Additionally, product delivery is rewarded, while security is treated as something that's nice to have, but not necessarily essential. Unfortunately, the lack of focus on security can create blind spots, leading to systemic weaknesses.

It's quite common for developers to lean heavily on unverified open-source libraries, copy-pasted code from forums or GitHub and legacy dependencies with known exploits. Continuous integration pipelines often skip security testing altogether. Few startup companies set aside time or budget for security measures, including code audits, threat modeling or even the adoption of basic secure coding standards.

Such procedures can create structural fragility, leaving companies more and more vulnerable to security failures, the more they progress in other areas. The code that powers tomorrow's unicorns is often an unsecured patchwork, where security debt grows faster than technical debt.

One step away from collapse

After having witnessed the results of thousands of audits over the years, I've begun to notice recurring patterns, many of which inevitably lead to company failures. For example, reused code that isn't properly audited can lead to critical vulnerabilities. Backdoors slip into production — sometimes unintentionally, sometimes not. Insecure access control can allow anyone with the right information to access and manipulate core systems.

Startup culture has convinced itself that rapid innovation is survival, but truthfully, many of these companies are steps away from complete collapse due to their lack of security procedures. And these collapses can be triggered by a single insecure function or compromised third-party dependency, resulting in multi-million dollar losses in minutes.

Related: Your Company's Security Strategy Has a Glaring Hole. Here's What's Causing It — and How to Fix It.

Misplaced trust: Developers aren't trained for security

It isn't realistic to expect developers to be security experts, yet startups routinely operate as if they are. Upon completion, code can be put into production with not much more than a stamp of approval from an executive — and without formal review.

Many Web3 startup founders and even engineers often lack a solid understanding of security or the potential risks in their systems, including code risk, oracle risk, operational risk and compliance risk. They tend to believe that, as long as the code is well written, these issues won't exist. In reality, however, security concerns are not equivalent to code quality.

In our experience at CertiK, many clients' engineers are reluctant to engage with security researchers, viewing security findings as unimportant or as challenges to their design and implementation. This resistance or neglect often leads to security issues going undetected or unresolved in a timely manner.

Additionally, most computer science curricula don't include comprehensive training in secure development, and few engineers have practical experience in adversarial thinking or attack modeling. Even within companies, healthy coding practices tend to be inconsistently enforced. This creates a dangerous situation whereby engineers have control over systems that handle customer funds and private data, but without the necessary education to prevent disasters.

Maintaining accountability with essential infrastructure

Other departments within startup companies are held to very high standards. For example, financial officers prepare for audits, and legal teams face compliance reviews. Developers, however, often operate in an accountability vacuum. This must change if companies would like to succeed in the long term.

To do this, startups should normalize many best practices, such as third-party audits before product launches, using secure coding tools and implementing security training for all engineers, regardless of their specialties. It is also essential to implement protocols such as versioned access control and key management with no single point of failure and distributed code ownership, so that no system rests on the unchecked authority of one developer.

It's true that implementing these procedures can lead to significant overhead costs, but they are insurance policies on the future success of a startup company, and therefore worth

the money. They reduce the likelihood of catastrophic breaches that could sink a company faster than any rapid market downturn.

Related: 4 Reasons You Need Developers With Cybersecurity Skills in All Tech Teams

Changing the trajectory of startup successes and failures

Unfortunately, the startup world is already sowing the seeds of billion-dollar failures. The apps, protocols and platforms being built today will form the backbone of tomorrow's digital infrastructure. If the foundation is currently insecure, eventual collapse will be inevitable.

Today's startup founders face a pivotal choice: Continue to treat security as a distraction from growth, or acknowledge it as a prerequisite for survival. The latter path is about maturity, resilience, leadership and long-term sustainability. Just as financial officers and legal counsel are expected to uphold standards, developers must be held to the same level of accountability.

The next generation of startups will either build companies that endure or become tomorrow's cautionary tales. The difference depends on whether leaders are willing to demand security today — before it's too late.

Key Takeaways

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