

What this is

Whether you're trying to figure out how to make something you love into a job, early in the life cycle of a startup, or some other scenario, you don't need a massive 5 year plan, because that'll only change as soon as you've finished making it. But not planning at all is pretty dumb, too.

Enter frameworks. They help a lot, so here are a bunch of them. Borrow them, steal them, edit them, send them to people so you look smart, whatever you want.

Most of them are built with the idea that we should care about what happens to all humans, so you'll notice it's fairly gender neutral and is about increasing instead of limiting access to startups, tech, entrepreneurship, and creativity.

P.S. have a mini-framework or resource to suggest adding to this doc? Email joecardillo1@gmail.com

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Pitch deck template for early stage companies/entrepreneurs

tl;dr - this framework is for those in the early going. there are many examples of pitch decks out there, and you should google to find examples relevant for your industry along with getting feedback from mentors and founders, but having worked in/around startups and entrepreneurs for close to a decade, IMHO these are the ~12 slides necessary to pitch your early stage venture.

Wisdom earned the hard way (by messing up)

- You get a title for each slide AND two short sentences OR 3 bullets OR a visual that has text in it. Any more text than that and you'll lose the audience.
- Write out the deck first, in a doc (copy this one if it helps!) and then turn it into a slide with visuals. Get the data and stories out before you constrain yourself with presentation software. Once you're a pro, you can skip ahead.
- Stick with ~12 slides max for initial pitch of 5-10 minutes. Put everything else after your closing slide in the "appendix." That way you can say "what a great question, we actually have a bit more info for that on slide 14, let's take a look..."
- Remember that no one seals the deal on the first go. You are having a conversation, and if it goes well you'll have another conversation (sometimes, right after).
- Keep it simple, keep it visual. If you use video, pre-load it, and have a backup image slide or make it easy to talk about what was on the video in the next slide. Never ever depend on WiFi in the moment.

SLIDE 1-2 - The Intro

Passion, how/why you started the biz, who you are. Can be interchangeable with slide 3, depends on the startup and how much your story drives the company/brand.

SLIDE 3 - The Problem

Start with a story. Today you can do lots of things, but something you can't do is [this thing].

We experienced this [lack of product feature, isolation, desire for a better brand, etc] and created X to see if we could help. We realized a LOT of other people had the same problem "wouldn't it be cool if..."

Be willing to use negative space, too. In other words, some products/services are inspiring because of what they help you do...and some are about what they take care of, so that you can go do what you love.

If you can, use an image that is powerful, symbolic, and representative of the bigger market.

SLIDE 4-5 - The Market / Opportunity

Realized there was a much bigger opportunity...a lot of people want this, and there's actually a big market...

Data point 1 on the market

Data point 2 on the market

SLIDE 6-7 - Validation/Traction

We're so passionate about [XYZ] and we tested every aspect of it to find out what worked, and see if our solution worked, and who wanted/needed it.

Show examples of products, talk a bit about validation, traction, demand, use data.

SLIDE 8 - Customer segments

Core audience is x, y, z. Who are you serving now, what do they want, data/first hand experience to validate your assumptions.

Describe what this audience *believes*. For example: they are savvy dreamers fed up with a culture that doesn't reflect their values (pop culture hasn't caught up with them, Elle Magazine ain't it).

Additional segments. Who *could* you serve, why/how, what would it take to add them to your audience and/or pivot.

SLIDE 9 - Competitive landscape (AKA partners)

Could be 1 or 2 slides. Describe who's out there doing what you're doing, and then talk about who you're partnering with already, or plan to.

This is validation that the market already wants/needs what you're building, and having partners investing time/money/energy already or that you could work with is huge.

SLIDE 10 - Business model

Depending on your model, could be 2 slides.

Here's how we're making money right now. Highest margin items are X and Y, we're moving more volume of A or B product right now. Revenue, profit, repeat customer rate, etc.

Here are the ways we're acquiring customers, and what it costs per. Here's how we get to 10, 100, 1K, 10K.

If it's early, describe the data/research you are gathering to answer the above questions.

If you're making money, shipping products, getting users etc. you'll probably need that 2nd slide and should be able to answer "what are your unit economics" expertly.

SLIDE 11 - Team

Photos + quick 1-2 sentence bio. Humanize the team, share your experience, talk about *why* you are the right people to solve the problem, address the market.

SLIDE 12 - Vision

Tell us about your overall vision. What you see for this company/product long term. Say it like you mean it.

SLIDE 12+ - Appendix

An appendix is a good strategy for any type of pitching - you know you can't fit all the data into the pitch (esp. If you have limited time), but often in the Q&A or even a casual follow-up conversation this reinforces your expertise AND answers the silent question of "can I trust this founder/team to think of the possible challenges/opportunities of the future."

Basically, it's a signal to potential investors or partners, because one of the most common things that happens in pitching is an investor will say "Love your vision, cool story, etc. but I just don't see how you'll be able to [points out specific problem]."

With a good, detailed appendix you'll always be able to respond (even when it's a jerk asking, which happens) along the lines of "great question, let's dig into that, I've got a few more slides in an appendix that address [XYZ thing]."

Creating meaningful relationships online

** tl;dr - this framework looks at how to quickly talk / connect to people online in a non-crappy way, including how / where to find people to connect with, and engaging i a good, thoughtful conversation.*

Find the ecosystem you want to live in, and hang out with the people there

Keep in mind that it takes a combination of time (at least 2-3 months) and consistent interaction to build good relationships. This includes exchanging insight about who you are, your approach to ideas, work, etc. as well as getting all of that back in the other direction.

Start with 10 people doing the kind of work (personal or professional) that you want to be doing as a human. Learn from them, add ideas / thoughts where you can, and when you don't have anything new to say then simply listen. Look up some blogs in search, find an author or two who occasionally freelances for your favorite tech, culture, sports, etc. blog.

Participate in one of [hundreds of twitter chats](#)

Find communities / forums thinking about and working on things that matter to you

- ☐ Slack groups
- ☐ Facebook groups
- ☐ Reddit communities
- ☐ LinkedIn hashtags, communities, leaders
- ☐ Quora topics/categories

Remember to connect over ideas, not influence

Instead of telling someone how great they are or leading with what you want from them - start with a relevant question about something they do or have said, and, if you can, find a way to be useful to them or someone they know.

This is a generally good practice because it also fosters an appreciation / respect for the quality of someone's ideas. If you focus on ideas and not the person's influence, you'll connect to them on what they're most passionate about. This also ensures you don't get

into an “everything this person does is great” relationship, which isn’t true from either direction and you both know it.

If you don’t have anything constructive to add then just “follow” or “like” or upvote their thing and move on. There are plenty of instances where it’s fine to simply listen without adding your voice.

Treat everything like a conversation

Tweets, bios on social media, blog posts, videos, meeting for coffee, meetup groups, these are all forms of conversation. This is worth practicing generally and will help you develop relationships faster, and in more depth.

For example, instead of:

“Hello, I would like to discuss something that I thought of in response to your post from last week, would you be interested in talking about economics and the job market for millennials?”

Try:

“Curious - in your post last week you said millennials don’t have it any harder economically than previous generations - any links you can send my way? You might find [this Pew study on Millennial economics](#) interesting, too, as they take an opposite tack.”

That’s the type of conversation that has value to both sides, and is about ideas. You’re not guaranteed to get a response, but it’s a whole lot more likely.

Finding a job that matters to you / fits your passion

** tl;dr - this framework is all about how to find a job that you actually want, and that you care about and can learn from, including where and how to connect, and what type of mindset you need to get there.*

Find the ecosystem you want to live in, and hang out with the people there

It’s not required that you have specific experience, but you should be comfortable describing how and why what you’ve learned in previous jobs / internships / indentured servitude makes you want to be a part of the community.

Keep in mind that even if you have a resume history that's relevant, it takes at least 2-3 months to build relationships. A good referral includes some insight into the kind of person you are and your approach to ideas, and to work. That takes time.

Ideally, this is a mix of offline and online interactions, but if you aren't in a major city for what you'd like to do, or you don't have resources or a ton of time you may need to rely more on establishing a digital presence. I find that connecting over ideas on blogs, social channels, etc... is a good introduction before meeting offline anyway.

Remember to connect over ideas, not influence

No influential person worth knowing likes a superfan.

Instead of telling someone how great they are - start with a relevant question about something they do or have said, and, if you can, find a way to be useful to them or someone they know.

This is a generally good practice because it also fosters an appreciation / respect for the quality of someone's ideas. If you focus on ideas and not the person's influence, you'll connect to them on what they're most passionate about. This also ensures you don't get into an "everything this person does is great" relationship, which isn't true from either direction and you both know it.

If you don't have anything constructive to add then just "like" or upvote their thing and move on. There are plenty of instances where it's fine to simply listen without adding your voice.

Which leads to a last point...

Treat everything like a conversation

Resumes, bios on social media, [emails](#), blogs, submissions to job sites (which you shouldn't be doing anyway), these are all forms of conversation. This is worth practicing generally and will help you develop relationships faster, and in more depth.

For example, instead of:

"Hello, I would like to discuss something that I thought of in response to your post from last week, would you be interested in talking about economics and the job market for millennials?"

Try:

“Curious - in your post last week you said millennials don’t have it any harder economically than previous generations - any links you can send my way? You might find [this Pew study on Millennial economics](#) interesting, too, as they take an opposite tack.”

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Resources

The [single best thing](#) I’ve read about finding a job is from [Nick Corcodilos](#), also known by his column titled Ask The Headhunter. He’s got 30+ years of experience in advising people on how to get jobs, executive level and otherwise.

If you haven’t run across it yet, [@alexmturnbull](#)’s blog has a lot of practical advice about connecting to people, in [particular this post on building relationships with influencers](#). There are also some examples of pitch emails that are near perfect and easy to re-shape.

Creatives: how / where to find good paying gigs that are properly spec’d

** tl;dr - whether you’re a writer, actress, artist, gallery owner, designer, web developer, musician, coffee or food truck business, you’ve almost certainly dealt with some crazy project that took up all of your time and burned all of your energy. this is a quick framework to help you avoid that insanity, stay on track, and make money.*

Create and stick to agreements that are literal, simple, and that you can point to (this is why it makes sense to publish things)

Have a contract. Don’t agree to do anything that’s not in the contract. Repeat.

Here are some good templates you can work off of:

https://graphicartistsguild.org/tools_resources/letter-of-agreement

<http://www.aiga.org/standard-agreement>

<https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2013/04/legal-guide-contract-samples-for-designers/>

Pyraph Magazine also [has some pretty solid docs / templates](#) that nearly any type of creative person can use. It’s \$15 but could be worth signing up for. If you need something really specific, find a creative like you (visual artist, designer, developer, musician, food truck owner, etc.) who’s moving their career along and ask the what they used.

Note: it's generally ok to do spirit of things, but that spirit also has to be published somewhere. In your contract you can link to your website where the spirit or ethos of the thing you're working on exists, that way you have something to point at if a new or unusual request arises that you didn't deal with specifically but is against your values.

Say no to free work or unreasonable requests, and if you can't do that say "maybe" and let things play out

No reason to sugar coat things, we all know that saying "no" is important. As a creative / entrepreneur your energy is valuable and there are too many things to do and not enough time to do them.

Obviously that's easier said than done, so here are a few variations you can use (easier in email, if it's in-person you'll want to practice a lot and expect to get better over time):

- Hi X! Thanks for the note, that makes sense, however that's something that I don't normally work on. Happy to refer you to someone if that's helpful.
- Hi Y! Can I get back to you on this tomorrow? It's not something that's specifically laid out in our contract, and I'm not sure if [I'm the best person for that / I have the bandwidth].
- Hi Z! Sounds cool, unfortunately I'm not able to help with that aspect - have you considered [hiring a photographer / talking to a consultant / paring down the project]?

Often, when someone has an unreasonable request, if you simply wait it out and see what happens they'll move on or forget about it. Either way, you can avoid doing work that doesn't make sense or that is free.

Stop pushing and start pulling

If you don't have a good website, make one.

It doesn't need to be complicated, 3-5 pages should work. Like [this one](#) or [this one](#). Include an "about" section (tell them what you believe, and what you are currently exploring), a "work" section (which should include how to hire you / contact you for work purposes), and a section that includes examples of your work.

Then, use the content from that site to fill out your instagram, twitter, facebook, etc. profiles. Keep it simple. Focus on sharing your work.

Finally, if you're looking for work, find someone else doing the heavy lifting and let them help you. If they're really good, move them into partner status.

Here's are a few content and/or design or web development marketplaces you can easily setup a profile on using content from your website and portfolio if you're a writer, graphic or UX / UI designer, film / video creative, web developer, etc.

Hubstaff - <https://talent.hubstaff.com/>

White Truffle - <https://www.whitetruffle.com/>

Visual.ly - <http://visual.ly/>

Scripted - <https://www.scripted.com/>

Newscred - <http://www.newscred.com/company/>

You can also use AngelList to look up content and design marketplaces

<https://angel.co/companies?keywords=design+marketplaces>

<https://angel.co/companies?keywords=content+marketplaces>

(feel free to try other keywords, this is just a starting point. You can also use cheaper, more Craigslist-type marketplaces, but the dollar amounts are usually lower. Try to find someone who actually charges).

Most marketplaces will have some sort of notification system by text, app messaging, or email where you'll get an offer of a job and the price included. Having worked in operations for a design marketplace, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- If it's an early stage startup / tech company, they are probably still trying to work out how to match clients and creatives. Watch how they spec jobs, if it always involves more work than mentioned at the start, be cautious.
- The dollar amounts are often higher with early stage co's if they are venture capital backed, this is because velocity and volume (how many projects a month and how quickly) is more important in the early going than the cost. They want to build a model that works, and then reduce costs to client and amount paid to creative.
- Make your own spec sheet (it can be a riff on your simple contract) that lays out what you will and won't work on. It's ok to say no to jobs, but if you don't have a clear framework for what you are willing to work on you'll never know if that \$1,400 is a good deal or will consume your life for the next 3 straight weeks.

Framework for pitching media / developing journalist relationships

** tl;dr — getting covered by the news of any kind (broadcast, newspaper, radio, online) can seem mysterious. but pitching journalists / media publications isn't that hard, if you follow a few simple rules. this framework breaks down some easy to learn techniques, as well as what to avoid.*

First and foremost, the single biggest thing you can do is learn what the journalist and/or publication covers, and figure out what the easiest way is to communicate with them. [Category home pages / archives](#), [author pages](#), [portfolio sites](#), and [social media](#) are all easy ways to find out what someone or some publication is up to.

P.S. If you're not sure the preferred communication for a publication or journalist, check their site, social media handle, or simply email them and ask.

If you're not willing to spend a few minutes looking through past work and preferred communication, do not expect the journalist / publication to spend a few minutes wading through your message, email, or press release.

Got it? Ok good. Here are 3 simple tips and a template you can put to work.

The first step is to get someone's interest.

For most journalists and media publications, the full story simply isn't necessary on a first touch. Ideally, you're providing them with suggestions for an angle that they might find interesting or that's worked well in the past.

Provide content they can use right away (or that sparks ideas of what they can create).

A Dropbox or Google Drive folder with 5 hi-res photos, a video (link to YouTube is usually fine), and some data is a smart way to provide options for coverage. Sometimes a full-story isn't practical because of a deadline, or they simply need a slideshow or video more than a mostly text article at that moment. Giving them high quality content they can use (not ads) is always a smart tactic, even if they don't use it right away they have something at their fingertips for later.

Understand what's newsworthy, but provide options.

Media tend to be information sponges, this means they are getting a lot of stuff inbound, and you never know exactly what's going to stick (or what they'll have time or space for). Providing starting points for stories is one of the most important things you can do, and reduces the likelihood of them simply turning a story down (plus, in a week or two or three, they have some potential stories they can fit into their queue easily).

And here's the template for an email pitch...

Hi X!

Hope you are well - [x organization] is gearing up for xyz, and we're [hosting event/releasing beta product/opening news location] at [X place + Y date].

Was backreading through your stories and saw you covered [xyz topic, opening, event, product] and wanted to see if this was something you'd be interested in covering...

Possible story angles

- Angle 1 (story)
- Angle 2 (content/slideshow/video)
- Angle 3 (data)

Happy to talk more / provide any info that you need (more about us here: [link](#)), there's also a link below to related data / photos / videos etc that you're welcome to use

[add link to dropbox/google drive folder]

Regards,

X

NOTE: Besides just pitching a journalist or media publication, it's a good idea to develop a relationship, because the best stories come from them knowing who you are and why what you or your company/organization does is important. Check out the "Creating meaningful relationships online" framework above for more hints about how to do this.

3 tips to build a friendly, hardworking, and motivated remote / distributed team

** tl;dr - remote / distributed teams are more common now than ever, but people still struggle to see the concept as real, and waste time on meaningless meetings and tools. this is a quick set of tips to getting things done, and enjoying the people you work with or that work for you.*

Focus on iteration and momentum

One of the things that happens in both an office setting and with a distributed team is that your schedule starts to contain too many meetings. Since very little work actually gets done in those, it can quickly demoralize a team and wreck whatever you're working on. Six 10 minute meetings to work out a feature for a product / service are almost always more useful than one 60 minute meeting. This is critical for teams that primarily communicate via phone or video chat. Good constraints = good work, and if you can't figure out the next step in 10 minutes you probably need to work on it more. Also from a motivational perspective, it feels good to do things over time and to get momentum.

Something no one will tell you: the above goes for fun stuff, too. Very few people are comfortable spending 19 minutes of an hourlong meeting talking about personal stuff when there's work to be done, so don't do it. Keep a channel open of your choice that just has fun stuff. Don't be afraid to say "hey I need to clear my brain, anyone want to hop on and hangout for 5 mins?"

When you're doing specific, task based work make sure to look at a document / visual / sketch together

Part of iteration is about delivering a plan, even if that plan needs to change. Depending on your team and work styles, you may use different tools. It doesn't really matter which tools you use, it matters that you are looking at the same thing.

There's a much deeper and more scientific explanation for this, but the basic reason is that we all have our own model for structure in our brains. How each of us thinks about a plan is going to be different, and unless it's out there in the world and on a whiteboard, in a doc, etc... then we can't possibly collaborate with other people in way that accounts for the model in their brain.

Here are a couple of things you can use:

[Mindmeister](#) - anything you put into a word doc you can turn into a visual representation / map, including bullet points, lists, etc... has a google docs plug in, look for "Add-ons" on your toolbar.

[Draw.io](#) - easy way to draw diagrams. can get complex but the basic version is great. also has a google docs plug in.

Keep in mind that the biggest difference between an office and remote work is in how we inspire each other and exercise creativity

One of the things you have less control over as a distributed team is the “out of sight out of mind” problem. Creative thinking, brainstorming, weird ideas, these all primarily are expressed via our connection to other people. Google called it 80/20 time, but really it’s just creativity.

Tools like [Sqwiggle](#) and other constant / real time video services can help, but you’re still just seeing what’s in the frame not a person’s entire experience on the other side of the terminal. Setting aside 30 minutes for pure weird ideas / thinking out loud together time can make a huge difference. You may also want to find other ways to “drop-in” which can include things like: playing online tetris together, 10 minutes to write a complete story together with everyone contributing one short paragraph (basically, madlibs), or simply listening to music together on [turntable.fm](#). It doesn’t really matter what you do, as long as you hold time and space for not work things.

Resources

[Lukasz Madon](#) wrote up an excellent list of resources for remote / distributed work. Lots of the companies he mentions keep their own blogs, too.

A checklist for testing beliefs (about your product and yourself)

** tl;dr - entrepreneurs are intense people. we fight hard for what we believe in, but at times we struggle with self-awareness, and to identify what beliefs are driving us as individuals, or the product/company we are building. this is a checklist to help when your emotions / beliefs are overwhelming, although you can certainly use it in times of calm, too.*

- ❑ **Give yourself room to breathe, and to be uncomfortable** — as Kyle Wild [suggests](#), take a break, go do something different. Sometimes that requires a trip to Burning Man, sometimes it doesn’t. The point of taking a break is not to step back and say that you’re amazing or awful, it’s to get a more honest picture of yourself, your work, your heart, and to give you room to appreciate what you are already doing and imagine what more you can and should do. You don’t necessarily need to go somewhere totally different or do something radical in order to breathe and be uncomfortable. Sometime it’s as simple as a direct examination of your brain, heart, or beliefs in whatever environment you are already in.

- ❑ **Identify what's truly at stake** — one of the things I've learned over the years in project management, product, and operations roles is that it's ok to let off steam or spend time working out how you feel about something. But ultimately what you need to know is what happens next, and how you'll incorporate what you've learned or negotiated in a given situation. It helps when you don't get caught in the weeds on things that are less important long term but evoke a strong feeling. "What really matters here?" is the question that goes with this.
- ❑ **Encourage yourself to be passionate, but remember that most of the things that matter exist outside of your head, in the world with people who are directly a part of your life**— this can be a tough one. Basically the question here is, am I really the only person affected / upset / passionate / confused about this idea / problem / place / thing? Usually the answer is no, and it's important to remember that you can balance your own beliefs and emotions while also listening to and honoring those of other people.
- ❑ **The most critical thing an entrepreneur can do in building both their business and self is create / maintain momentum in the right areas** — this is something of a hidden secret for entrepreneurs / startups. Rarely if ever do you know the answer or long term vision for your life or the life of your company. It's more important to simply define the areas / themes that are important, and keep returning to them. Most of the time that's where the useful answers come from, because in an ecosystem (and you and your company/product are certainly an ecosystem) things change constantly and what's true now often isn't in 3, 6, or 12 months.

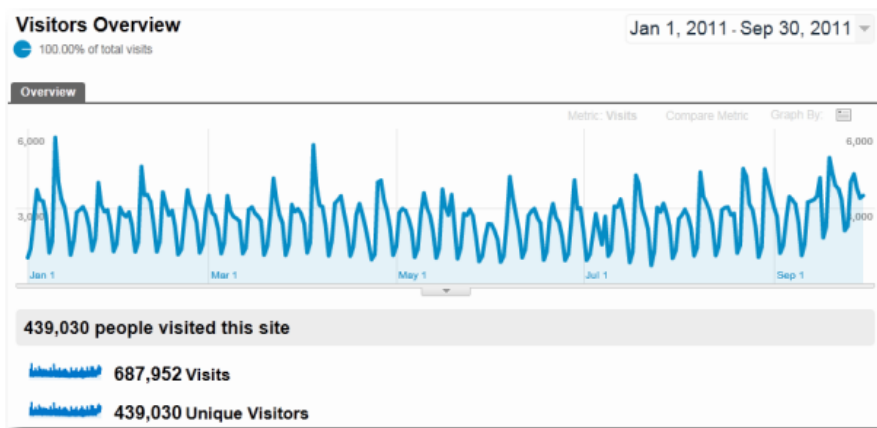
How to evaluate a new data/information source

** tl;dr — in pretty much all industries it's now popular to say you are data driven and / or that you make decisions based on data. sometimes this is b.s. that sounds good and sometimes it is a good faith effort. anytime you analyze or reference data it's important to be able to evaluate why it exists, who created it etc.*

- **Figure out how the data was generated** — it sounds simple, but knowing where your data is from is critical. often, context makes a difference later.
 - platform / digital product example: profiles are the heart of many digital products. if yours includes any type of login that can be personalized, one of your metrics will be rate of new signups (+how engaged a user is in the first 1-3 weeks), but signups via oauth / twitter & fb may be different from cold signups and knowing this will allow you to drill down and look for any friction in the process.
 - physical world example: if you run a food truck you probably spend time figuring out where the busiest places are so you can sell your delicious noms. if someone tells you that a certain block sees average foot traffic of 4,000 people per day that

sounds like a good opportunity, but if it turns out that's only Thurs - Saturday or if the data is being supplied by the owner of most retail stores in the area who has a vested interest in spinning it positively. That can make a huge difference.

- **Determine the time frame for your data, and whether it is static v. dynamic (real-time or near real-time)** — historical data has different applications than real-time. the latter is excellent for getting a picture of how things are going in a particular area if you already have a metric for it. if you don't, you'll need a large chunk of historical data to work against so that you don't look at too small a slice to be useful. sometimes, visually representing data can be helpful, but knowing when you need macro vs. micro view is important.



this chart from G.A. is [pretty much useless](#) (h/t Avinash Kaushik)

- **Clean up and structure your data** — just pointing at information in a database, spreadsheet, or dashboard is rarely useful. most of the time you will need to clean up your data and test subsets to determine what structure to put around it. The data journalism handbook has some good info on the whys and hows [here](#), and info on tools (many of which are free) [here](#). if you're a beginner, you may want to start with sublime text to [clean up / structure categories](#), and then use google spreadsheets to display it, and to generate charts / graphs.
- **A last word** — evaluating and understanding data is actually a fairly philosophical pursuit. if you talk to a data science professional you'll find many of the same traits of inquiry you would in a philosopher or biologist / chemist / physicist. every time you consider a new source of data you should be considering the world that data lives within. it's pretty complex, but Owen Zhang of Datarobot has a [great slideshare presentation](#) about how he operates at data science competitions, and even if you don't understand the more technical aspects it's worth a good look. you don't need to be a data scientist yourself, but you also shouldn't trust a dashboard or visual representation from anyone else, and it's usually a good idea to ask for source materials.

Framework for making mistakes

** tl;dr — some people will tell you to try not to make mistakes, to spend your time being wary of what might happen. a better way to look at it is to focus on what you want to do, what matters, what feels right, what is meaningful. this framework is designed for when you fall short.*

Always know you are capable of screwing up.

Remember that all humans are capable of all things. The worst person you've met can come up with a good idea or take a meaningful action, and the smartest, most amazing person you know is capable of doing something stupid or wrong. When we create a pattern for good or bad we tend to continue to act in that way, but it is not a given. Remembering this is extremely important for the next part of the framework.

Gather information without judgment.

When you make a mistake, the most important thing is to look into it without rushing to judgment about why or how it occurred. This is hard. Screwing up can feel very personal, like a judgment on our life — we feel that either we messed up and are bad, or we did good and are good. Neither is of these is typically accurate.

The more people affected by the screw up and the higher the stakes than the faster we want to resolve it. This is because it's an uncomfortable feeling to make a big mistake. You'll want to set a timeline. Whether it's 15 minutes, 15 hours, or a couple of weeks. If the situation is a crisis you'll have less time, but it's important to set aside some time to listen to anyone involved and to question yourself without "deciding what happened" it's very rare that you'll be able to assess correctly without some separation between screwing up and acting to fix it.

Once you have information, set aside quiet time to see how it feels.

This is especially counter-intuitive to people who think a lot / have high brain activity. In fact, it's one of the most critical things you can do. Again, it can be a short amount of time, but it's important that you set it aside. Going to the beach, riding a bike, taking a shower, that's when the good ideas happen and it's also when you are best attuned to listening to the deeper threads in your head and your heart, which is what you'll need to access how / why you made a mistake.

Acknowledge the mistake, simply and honestly.

Once you've dug into the underlying reasons / feelings around the mistake, put it in plain terms for yourself and/or your team. This step in particular requires some space before and

after. Don't try to make decisions when you are acknowledging, and don't try to keep taking in a bunch of new information. This is the place to breathe out and do the hard work of letting go of your ego, not justifying anything that led to the mistake even if you can.

Make a decision and stick to it.

If it's a mistake you made in the context of a company, team, or project, then explain why you're making the decision. Be concise. If you can't then you may need to return to the previous steps.

If it's a mistake that mostly affects you, decide what you can live with. Then let go of it. There's very little to be gained by trying to change a decision. If you don't like some aspects of it, remember that for the next time.

Mark the mistake in your mind, return to it now and then.

What does it feel like? Look like? What were the circumstances and who were the people involved? You don't need to do a huge revisit of the mistake constantly, just know what it felt like and what the environment around the mistake was. Be explicit in thinking through the mistake as you encounter situations that feel or look the same. They may be different, and that's ok, the goal is to use the information in a healthy way not point fingers or act out of fear.

A short framework for dealing with loss

** tl;dr – acknowledging everyday griefs is critical to growing as an entrepreneur, and as a human. too often we wait for the bigger things, like losing a family member, failure of a company, or getting fired, before we dig deep, and by then we are so out of practice with loss that we fall apart completely.*

Here are a few questions that I use on a regular basis to dig deep and deal with loss, and to ensure that I'm building a life and company that I believe in:

- *What is natural here, in this moment?* - this is a difficult question, and it's often necessary to ask a bunch of times, and in different settings.
- *What do I know and what do I simply have to accept?* - constant practice with this question makes it easier to let go of what you don't control anyway.

- *The person that I want to be, how would they feel about / act in this situation?* - so often when we are critical (or not critical enough) it is through the lens of self-doubt, of believing something about ourselves that undermines the best action we could take.

In startups the mantra of “fail fast” is used so often that it feels meaningless. Perhaps a better approach is to lose with grace, and with acknowledgment.

Marketing from scratch, for startups

**tl;dr – this framework is for startups / entrepreneurs that need to get their marketing off the ground. although there isn't really a size requirement, this probably works best for venture backed early stage up to seed or series A. if those terms don't mean anything to you or you don't have a marketing dept of any kind, then this should be of help to you, too. some of this stuff overlaps with what tech folks love to call “growth hacking”... it doesn't really matter what you call it as long as it works.*

First, figure out where you are. It's not an exact science but in general you are in one of two places...

1. Have an idea that you are working on + some early customers / users of your product
2. Have a company that's making money (revenue positive) on a consistent basis and a clear path to growth.

(If you're venture backed or plan to be, that “clear path to growth” is both highly subjective and important. Welcome to the world of venture capital=)

If you find yourself in the first group, there's a good chance a lot of your content and messaging will be changing at some point in the near future. This limits what you can / should do, both because of cost and also because changing direction too many times costs you in peoples' perception of your brand, willingness to try something new, clarity across your internal teams, etc.

Framework for group #1 — here are some basics that you should work on that will help you explore external messaging, solidify your team's mission internally, and figure out your target customers & market.

- **Start a blog.** Seriously, do this + commit to publishing posts regularly. Doesn't have to be every day or even every week, but consistency is important. Recommended at least 2x/month. Read 10 other blogs per week that are working on a similar kind of problem / market. (5-8 hours to get it started, 2-3 hours per week)

- **Setup & use 2–3 social channels or online forums.** Interact a few times a week, if not daily. Make a list of customers / potential customers & a list of other people working on a similar kind of problem / market, and interact regularly / listen to what they're thinking and talking about. (*min. 3–5 hours per week total – if you get distracted easily then consider adding 15 min. tasks/ to do's into your calendar*)
- **Setup email marketing.** Start using it to send an update once a month if not more. If you're not sure what you're doing, practice and talk to people who do. This will be your most powerful owned property outside of notifications (which only applies if you are creating an online product where people log in and access an activity feed of some sort). (*~5 hours to setup, 3–5 hrs per month to write, format, proof, and send*)
- **Create a basic editorial guide / strategy that covers all channels.** In particular it should, in 2–3 sentences, say why you're building the product and what you hope to learn with your customers & potential customers.

What this framework will do is:

- a) help you establish a set of good habits for later
- b) get valuable information which you can use to tweak your product.

This will also support the [customer development](#) that [Steve Blank](#), [Eric Ries](#), and other lean startup proponents talk about.

- c) grow an audience of people interested in your journey, and willing to go on it with you.

Not all of them will end up being long time customers, especially if your business direction changes, but they will be there to give you feedback and evangelize what you are doing / tell other people why you are a company and/or person worth working with

Framework for group #2 — So you're making money & growing or thinking about growing your team. Time to focus. If you've been following the first framework, you will be able to move very quickly.

If not, you can still get going you'll just need to put a good chunk of time in. As mentioned, if you change the trajectory of your business / pivot to a different market, you will need to re-run this framework / reconfigure. Be careful about doing that too many times.

Having said that, here's a Framework for Months 1–3 for getting your marketing together...

Content

- Editorial guide — put one together to set overall strategy + tone, tweak during first 3 months and then have a final version to guide writing / stories
- Design guide — work w/a designer on contract to create guide with different types of design styles (illustrative, iconic, etc)
- Editorial calendar — establish workflow for writing, editing, scheduling post (good one to start is [co-schedule](#))
- Storylines — Establish overall themes to fit the brand. Recommended 1–3, they will vary, but below are a few, fairly smart starting places
 - Customer stories — goal is to deepen engagement w/existing users, tell their stories, and align you with your community / customers. For example, borrow qualitative / story telling approach from [Dell Stories blog](#))
 - Data — goal is to reveal trends / interesting insights / what the future looks like for [your customer segment here]. In particular, focus on how the innovation that you are working on enables businesses to grow and improve. Don't talk about yourself except in passing, this is about the ecosystem & world of your customers, not you. Models: [OkTrends blog](#) + [Newscred blog](#)). Secondary goal to position you as an authority, and develop strong partnerships (you should have 2–3 target partnerships for your business, people who are already reaching the audiences you want to reach.
 - Competitive landscape — do good, medium length feature stories about the landscape + how it's changing. Most competitors are creating generic content, so positioning you as a leader in understanding what [your customer segment] needs and really telling their stories in a unique, thoughtful way is important. Need to research competitive landscape, pain points, quickbooks, intuit etc. For example: NY Times [Small Biz blog](#) as a model. Can also include guest posts from partner blogs.
 - Partners, or potential partners - anyone in the early stages of a business or project will always feel like they're creating something that's never been done before. That's the nature of being a creative and/or entrepreneurial person. But the truth is, no one works alone. All great companies, works of art, projects, etc. come from a great partnership, and those stories are important and can be very moving.

Minimum time commitment to do it well: 30 hrs per month for 3 months, + freelance design work on a style guide and 1–2 big visual pieces per month

Distribution

- Influencers — research & framework your approach
 - Survey existing influencers that are already aware of your company, and that blog a lot and use the platform
 - Find new influencers (can use [Littlebird](#) or similar)
 - Create 3 lists — top 50, medium 50, best of the rest (so ~150 total)
 - Quick profile of each influencer, incl. what they care most about & why your product should matter to them
- Guest blog posts — create target list of 10–15 blogs you should be interacting with and/or contributing content to + getting guest posts from. First priority is those that you have informal or formal partnership with
 - Spend first month interacting with / getting to know target guest blogs, months 2–3 developing & testing partnership (trying a 1st post, cross promotion on channels, etc.)
- Establish primary channels
 - Blog + email (nurture and/or newsletter) = primary channels (focus on owned for conversion, borrowed for subscriptions)
 - Research social channels + hashtags + communities, define strongest channels for your co and start interacting with influencers (sharing their content, emailing people, asking Qs, etc.)
- SEO
 - Keyword research — 10–12 keywords to target for competitive landscape
 - Create 2–3 page SEO Guide — content rules, on-page optimization, rich media optimization (for card display on social channels & rich info display in Google, Bing, DuckDuckGo). This should be used in conjunction with the editorial guide.
 - Link structure — probably a good idea to do quick analysis of current site (is there a helpdesk or knowledge base? If not, set one up for SEO purposes)

Minimum time commitment to do it well: 30–35 hrs per month for 3 months

Additional thought #1:

With this model, after 3 months you can probably drop costs by about 20–30%, especially if you line up a part-time content director and/or social media editor freelancer via something like [CloudPeeps](#).

That's if you want to stick the freelance route. You can also consider hiring someone full time. Normally this means in person, but you can also hire someone full time who is good at content, editorial, and growth/marketing roles. It's rare to find someone who can do all of this stuff well though.

If you do go the full-time route, consider hiring an ex-journalist. They are excellent at this stuff, and someone with 2–3 years under their belt can handle most of this.

Additional thought #2:

This stuff isn't expensive, but it's also not cheap. In general, consider being willing to pay a bit more at the beginning, and then once you have a template you can cut costs a bit. The same thing applies here as with code: every \$1 you spend planning properly and setting up a good framework / template saves you \$10 later.

Email newsletter framework

** tl;dr – email newsletters are critical to anyone building a business. they're a direct line to your subscribers / customers, and when used correctly are your strongest owned channel. this is a quick primer for how to structure them correctly.*

People and businesses send crappy emails all the time. We tolerate it because there is some value being exchanged or because we have some type of relationship with them, but ultimately if you don't respect your audiences' time and attention they'll unsubscribe the second they think they can get that value elsewhere or if they just get annoyed enough.

Seth Godin wrote something related to that back in 2011 (links [here](#) and [here](#)) calling it the "attention economy." With technology increasing the things that demand our time, it's an idea that will probably continue to grow in importance.

The most important thing to keep in mind with email marketing / newsletters is that while they are usually labeled as owned properties, *they are also earned via the trust of your audience.*

If you're not familiar with those terms or you've heard them but can't remember, here's the basic rundown:

- **Paid** - it's what it sounds like, you pay someone money to promote your content and/or link. Includes things like TV spots, print ads, banner / display ads, paid search, promoted posts / content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
- **Earned** - originally this just referred to when a newspaper or TV / radio station wrote a story about your company or product, but now it's expanded to include online reviews, blogger coverage, likes / retweets, comments, shares, etc.

Sometimes you'll hear the phrase "organic" or "organic reach" used in regards to SEO, content marketing, and social networks. In reality every social platform or search engine will eventually start limiting what your followers, fans, or audience is going to see, and then force you to pay to reach them. This is problematic for large brands, but a much bigger hardship for small business owners and early stage startups.

- **Owned** - this is where emails fit in, "owned" just means you own the means of distributing content directly to people. It can be a blog, website, online or physical store, app, or publication that you run. You can use any of these to reach people at any time.

Email is probably your strongest owned channel, but using it consistently and respectfully is important. Here's a basic framework you can use / edit as you see fit that will help you do that.

Platform

There's a lot out there already on how to select an email provider, so I'll just point to a couple of good overviews + offer some quick thoughts.

[How to Get Your Email Newsletter Off The Ground](#) (The Next Web)

[How to Create an Email Newsletter People Actually Read](#) (Hubspot Blog)

Whatever platform you select, it should make it easy to:

- **Test / measure** - even small things like typos or weird displays of a character or image will throw your audience off. Look for an email service that makes it easy to quickly test your emails, you may need to send them to yourself multiple times and look at them on multiple devices. It's also good to be able to access open rates, click-thrus, etc. though for reasons I'll mention later these are better for setting baselines than telling you in an absolute way whether your emails are working.
- **Optimize for both mobile devices and desktop** - your email provider should automatically convert content to smoothly display across a variety of devices and make it easy to simulate what your audience will see ([Mailchimp](#) does this well, and you can test it for free). There's broad evidence (and I have specific product / company experience that verifies)

people spend more than half of their time on mobile, but they often do deeper research on desktop.

- **Get new subscribers** - a good, simple button on your website, blog etc. that says something like “join 486 entrepreneurs learning about how to build a business from scratch” goes a long way. Testimonials, data, etc. that show you are already reaching and providing value to people is what’s called “social proof.”
- **Personalize messages** - this includes things like adding <<First Name> parameters to your email so that when someone signs up and gives you their name you’ll be able to start emails with their name e.g. “Hey Laura.”

It also includes being able to segment lists based on actions people take with your emails, demographics, etc. At the beginning this won’t be as important, but if you do offer a product or service in your emails being able to sub-segment people who’ve clicked through to learn more is an example of how you might be able to later personalize content e.g. “Hey Laura, thought you might be interested in [service you offer / product you sell]” with some assurance that it might be useful to them.

Content

Obviously you can setup a platform correctly and still screw up relating to your audience. Mostly, people do this by sending awful emails. There’s a key question that can help you avoid this:

How can I provide some value and / or inspiration to people on a regular basis that leads to them reaching out to me when they need information on or want to purchase the product or service that I provide?

If you already have customers or even a handful of people that are your target customer (or audience) you can also use [Google Forms](#) or [SurveyMonkey](#) to ask them directly what would be useful.

Once you answer this question (and you should regularly revisit it) it’s a good idea to create a template for your ideal newsletter, edit it, and then have your target customers and/or advisers or mentors review it.

Here’s a general structure I put together for a couple of friends who just started their businesses (one is a chiropractor, one does healing / spiritual work), but yours may vary depending on the research you do.

- **Inspire** - share a personal story, a moment that stuck out to you recently, or something you’ve learned in your career about healing / taking care of one’s body.

- **Reading list / links and resources** - provide something valuable, share what intrigues you, and /or some ways people can optimize their own health or become more aware of what their body needs.
- **Info on your services / special offers** - if you connect to people on those first two items, that's when they'll be willing to consider doing business
- **Referrals** - this should come once you've established your newsletter, and you may want to consider sending a slightly different version to sub-segment of your list that you know have purchased your product / service already.

Note: I actually consider referrals to be one of the strongest metrics for your business. We'll say we like something when we don't or buy from people we don't always feel good about, but we'll almost never personally recommend a product or service that we don't believe in.

Hubspot (email marketing software) also did a good writeup with some [examples of email newsletters](#) that are doing a good job of these sorts of things.

Tone, Timing, and Consistency

It's partially addressed in the previous section, but tone is something you should also think about. The editorial "voice" of your emails matters a lot, and while it usually takes on a combination of the company's overall mission and the personality of whoever's writing it, you may want to put some time into developing a quick editorial guide / framework.

Consistency is also critical - pick a day / week / month and stick to it. The reason for this is that we unconsciously pay attention to how consistent people are, and brands and businesses are held to an even higher standard. It also helps to think of how we intake information, the 1st or 2nd time might not always stick with us, but if we build a relationship with someone and remember them, the 3rd or 4th could be a tipping point.

Along those lines, you'll want to think about things like what else someone is receiving, what you're asking them to do, what the timeframe is. An e-commerce business where you run a 48 hour sale is a lot different than building an online content platform where people share and read things in a different manner.

The basics of social media content + distribution for early stage businesses / creatives

** tl;dr – brands (and people) often engage in social media before they're ready, or with an unrealistic set of expectations. as a result, they project their insecurities and weaknesses, not to mention missing out on building important, powerful, and genuine relationships. this framework is a cheat sheet to doing it well, and using social media in ways that make sense, and that are scaleable (as much as they can possibly be...since one lesson of social media is that it is not infinitely scaleable, and there are tradeoffs and costs, like any relationship).*

Social media is one of the most misunderstood parts of marketing.

Often, people treat it like a direct sales or broadcast channel. Buy our thing! Love us! Special deal today only! Here is a thing that's important because we say it is! Look how cool we are being!

These tactics may work in the short-term, but usually lose their power quickly...and they also miss out on the most powerful part of social media: building deep relationships over time with current and future customers/clients, along with your brand's most valuable partners and potential partners.

Good social media can be bootstrapped, but it almost always has to include components like research, strategy, execution, and measurement. The most important thing is to know why you are doing it, e.g. is it

1. The brand's business card, where people who don't know a company well or only know it a little can quickly assess what you're all about
2. The primary channel for two-way communication and community development / customer loyalty
3. A research tool that can give you insight into why and how people engage with your company and its' products and services

Creativity, thoughtfulness, analytics, problem solving, and empathy are all necessary to make those work. And, they are pretty hard to fake. Below is a set of templates to get you started.

Create an editorial plan. Basically, this boils down to: what do you want the channel to be used for, what types of people or brands do you want to reach, and what type of content do you want to use to reach them?

If you hop over to the "Marketing from scratch, for startups" framework and look for the "storylines" section you'll find some examples of content you can create or collect and use.

For brands or people with limited time, you'll want to keep it simple, like the below:

- Partners: we want to relate to and communicate with potential partners over what they're doing and how we could work together. So this storyline would focus on showcasing

collaborative work, can be yours / other examples of people you admire in the industry or field / and showcasing those partners or potential partners work.

- E.g. "This is a good online guide from @xyz brand about [important problem in the industry] or "Interesting, @xyz has some good info in this video about a new technique they learned from @abc for hanging lights in a proscenium theater"

Create some similar examples of content by audience, and then map out the content per audience track (look for distribution plan info below).

Then, drop it into an easy to review tool (see distribution section below for info on that), look at a week's worth of content, and ask yourself: is there enough variety here?

In terms of fully original content that you create, good stuff takes time. But if you're a creative or have a good writer, designer, editor etc on staff that'll cut down the time required.

Remember that good content is usually a built habit, not something you are born being good at. And, it's a matter of experimentation and tweaking over time, and using metrics. The section at the bottom, below distribution, has some good tips on how to go about that.

Here are a few examples of editorial plans by channel:

Twitter - post 5 times each day

- 2 visuals e.g. video or photo
- One hat/tip to a partner or potential partner e.g. "Cool video from the folks at @XYZbrand, they've been looking at Y problem a lot lately and this breaks it down" or "Beautiful piece from @xyz, reminds of A story we heard about B"
- One thing about you. Yes, this is painful if you are used to self-promoting, but remember that no one wants to hear about you all the time. Social media is a place to build relationships over time, and if you do a good job your customers or audiences will promote you, and bring back other customers or audiences.
- Include 1-2 hashtags that are practical (fairly well used in search/people are using them) or have a sense of humor (#sillyhashtagscanbefun)

Facebook - post twice per day

- 4:1 ratio of things that are about other people / ideas / inspirations / partners vs. you or your organization
- Need to keep up to speed on research, but mixing videos, photos, and links to stories w/image thumbnails is a good idea. Very few people use hashtags on Facebook, so make the content good. Usually, 25-150 words is a good length, though you go longer if you have something that's inspirational.

Instagram - post 3-4 times per day

- One inspirational quote over a photo

- One photo or video sharing what you're working on (or a product, thing etc. that you want to showcase)
- One re-share of someone else's content, with an @ or link that credits / hat tips to them

*note: in general, a majority what you share should be not about you. some brands or people can get away with it more than others, but often the 80/20 rule or 60/40 is a good approach.

Aim for a framework that enables distribution / efficiency. Research which channels you want to reach, what type of content works best on them, and how much time you want to spend on each.

Distribution is mostly about the mechanics, like how many times per day to tweet, when to tweet, and which types of content to include. There's a lot of info out there, like [this Mention article on keyword research and the best times to tweet](#). If you Google that sort of thing separately, you'll also find lots of other information.

It also includes the problem of managing the actual postings. It rarely makes sense to post in real-time because it's very time consuming and doesn't leave much time for editing. Instead, it's a good idea to schedule everything.

In my experience, the smoothest and least time consuming tool that's available right now is [Buffer](#). It allows you to drag and drop links, photos, videos, and type in text by channel. Then, you can easily duplicate from one channel to another. So you could, for example, spend 45 minutes per week adding content to Twitter, drag and drop it to Facebook and Instagram, and then edit the text (which, look for the editorial section, but you'll want to create some variety in both content and timings across channels). Buffer also looks at your engagement per channel, and then can calculate and schedule timings appropriately.

You'll need to do your own research, but in general Twitter should be max 8-10 tweets per day, Facebook twice per day, Instagram 2-3 times per day etc.

Consistency is really important. You can always spontaneously tweet or insta some content now and then that's exciting or happening in real time, but as a brand, you should be thinking about the fact that it takes people 40-60 times to form an impression. No one will ever tell you you are sloppy, but they will notice. If you can't keep up, simply reduce the number of times you post per day.

A note on metrics: this could be a whole sub-topic, but in general your metrics should map to the content you're creating.

Meaning, if you want to increase your current customer loyalty, you need to make a list (there are different ways to do this) of those kinds of people who follow you, and try to increase their interaction / engagement via social media channels.

Or if you want to increase partnerships, you need a list of those potential or current partners that you can increase engagement with. Then, you'd look at how often those people or brands are mentioning you, replying to your content or commenting on it, sharing your content, or championing you in general. In other words, action should lead to action.

The Content Marketing Institute has some good breakdowns on how this works ([here's one](#)), but you'll have to self-define a bit, just know that it depends on what audiences you're targeting and what you want them to do / how you want them to engage with your brand.

How to tell if a startup actually has traction

** tl;dr – “traction” is one of those words that people throw out regularly when talking about early stage startups. but evaluating whether or not a startup has it is complicated. this framework focuses on what you should look for whether you're an investor, founder, potential partner, or simply someone interested in working for a startup.*

Entrepreneurs have a lot of ideas. It's easy to tell when you're talking to one because they'll come up with at least 2–3 business ideas in a half hour conversation on nearly anything.

But an idea is not the same thing as a business. In a startup the most important people are those who execute, who get things done when others simply talk about it.

Something I've learned from both investors and experienced entrepreneurs is not to worry about keeping secrets in the early stages of a business. There are exceptions – like security software or the first idea in a niche market – but for the most part ideas are worthless because everyone has them, and reaching 400,000 customers leads to a whole different set of concerns than reaching 40 (or 40,000, for that matter). It's mostly the execution, and team, that matters.

So how do you know if the walk matches the talk? Here are a few things you'll notice about companies that are experiencing significant traction...

They measure the product in motion – growth is best measured by rates, not by static, overall gains. In other words, by how much is more important than how much.

1,700 new users on an online platform or 50 new customers into a store this month sounds compelling until you realize it's only 5 more than last month. If you've been flat for a while, it usually means your growth strategy isn't having a measurable effect. Also, looking at it in this manner helps you think more carefully about the levers (or channels) for growth.

It also helps you stay realistic. A 27% increase in the rate of users or customers gained in a month is less impressive when most of the gain was due to a channel that's non-scaleable or that gave you a one-time bump you can't replicate.

Emotion isn't an afterthought— this is one of the things inexperienced entrepreneurs (and investors with little expertise in building a company) consider a soft / unimportant metric but is actually critical.

Sometimes it comes through via things like Net Promoter Score (NPS), or your metrics on how likely people are to refer the product to their friends and broader networks. But most of the time it requires qualitative analysis, or deep [customer development](#).

The heart of it is: how do people actually feel about your product? Does the UX / UI of your online platform literally make them crack a grin and say "honestly I never thought doing my accounting / design collaboration etc. online would be anything other than drudgery, but this is actually interesting." Same goes for apps and physical products, and even digging deep with just 10–15 people can quickly get you an answer as to whether you're on the right track.

They boil the story down— one of the most difficult learning curves for an entrepreneur / founder is learning to tell the story of a startup. The mistake that most first-timers make is thinking that the story is about them. It's not.

Rather, the question is "who is it for?" and "what is their story?" Seth Godin [wrote about this recently...](#)

"The marketer can change her story, but she can't easily change the worldview of the person she seeks to sell to. It's almost impossible to turn someone who doesn't care about hats (in particular) into someone who cares a lot about hats.

This person the product is for: What do they believe? Who do they trust? What do they seek? What are they afraid of?"

They start with strong partnerships— in my experience this is the secret weapon for successful startups, and especially for first-time founders. It contains all of the other proof points, and when someone tells me they are launching to a huge market with no partnerships in process, I pretty much write them off.

The experienced investors and entrepreneurs that I know feel the same way. If you can't line up and deliver on a partnership you'll likely have a hard time focusing on what the core value of your company is to a wider audience.

6 frameworks & resources (with no b.s.) for understanding growth and quickly building out a company or idea

** tl;dr – in the startup world, you'll hear about "growth" all the time. jargon aside, growth really is the driver of everything in an early stage business. These are 6 great frameworks that help you understand what growth means, how to get it, which tradeoffs to make, and what you should be measuring.*

One of the smartest VC firms in Silicon Valley on how network effects actually work:

<http://growthhackers.com/slides/network-effects-explained-by-a16z>

(e.g. how to get the people in your network / product to get others inbound)

Sean Ellis on finding a growth metric that you can actually use:

<http://www.slideshare.net/seanellis/finding-the-one-growth-metric-that-matters>

(this has some really smart stuff in it about how to structure your business model, measure, and understand growth... a lot of it is software focused but there are principles in here that translate to any business)

Josh Elman's deck on sticking to one metric for measuring your company's growth

<https://growthhackers.com/slides/the-only-metric-that-matters-by-josh-elman/>

Instigator Blog: <http://www.instigatorblog.com/product-market-fit-and-lean-analytics/2015/02/02/>

(this is also a good blog to subscribe to)

Lean Startup Circle:

<http://www.leanstartupcircle.com/> (San Francisco based, great newsletter with lots of reads about lean startup, rapid prototyping, building co from scratch)