

# **Building an Awesome Team - Every Startup Entrepreneurs' Dream**



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Every entrepreneur faces a common set of challenges during their early years and some of them will continue to shadow them even well into becoming a conglomerate. This article will explore one such challenge in detail and share experiences of the writer so any aspiring entrepreneurs will recognize the pitfalls before they make the wrong decision.

According to Bill Gross (Gross, 2015), a well-known American investor and fund manager, the most important factor in startup success is timing. But unfortunately, time is something we cannot control and rarely in one's favor. Also, he points out that the second most important factor is the team. Unless the correct mix of people get together, you have a high change of failure even if the time factor is in your favor. This is something that the writer has seen over the years through ample examples. Having found 2 successful IT startups and failed at a few others, let's discuss how we can formulate a winning team by understanding people, defining the roles, adopting the roles, align your attitudes and goals, and through collective responsibility.

# Understanding people and their roles



The focus here is to find what people are good at, passionate about, how long they can keep the excitement going and under which conditions. By no means this is referring to understanding humans at a deep level as that study has been carried out for thousands of years via religions, philosophy, and various scientific studies.

When the core management team needs to formulate regardless of whether it is for a startup or an established business, above factors play a significant role. Let's consider a startup scenario. A group of young students thinking about having their own entrepreneurial venture after graduating is an ideal starting position. Through years of knowing each other (more the better), they may understand how each of them will react to certain situations, their strengths, weaknesses, and how they complement each other skill wise, how they handle a relationship and their early years and family background. This is the steppingstone to forming the team. However, it does not guarantee that they are able to withstand the rough and unforgiving journey they have ahead in the #startuptime but lays the fundamental foundation of friendship to make that initial bond.

Each one of the founding team members must understand the skills of each other on a deeper level. Having worked through many assignments and projects this should be clear and obvious in the final year.

One person can be a techie, one can approach and talk to strangers as if he/she had known them for ages, one can make sure others fall in and obey the rules etc. These are basic traits of an engineer/programmer, marketer/business development executive and project manager/administrator respectively.

Figuring out this balance and the leadership for the group will lay a strong foundation to grow the business idea.

Now we need to figure out whether this is something they are passionate about and can see a future through it for the next 10-15 years. Alternative life options such as migration, a better salaried job offer, or succumbing to family/spouse or peer pressure should not deviate the target of these individuals. This is where the strong entrepreneurial vigor and leadership skills matter.

To figure out the actual levels of resilience and how long they can keep up the excitement for their passion is key as we churn away the years. Just as in a marriage, to keep the marriage healthy and enjoyable, couples will be passing through many stages in the relationship. Same goes for the founding management team. Regular path corrections, bonding activities, having fun and being honest with each other goes a long way in ensuring solidarity.

The ambiance and working conditions matter as well. If it is unfair for everyone to turn up each day for that small, cramped-up office space, one has set up in their garage. It's understandable for the first year, but today there are ample opportunities to have a lavished office space with all the modern amenities at very reasonable fees called co-working spaces. Also, the new normal has also re-invented the working from home culture that will help startups manage their costs and expectations.

So, having the scenery and experience change over time, with a hard focus on reaching the goals while understanding your role based on your skillset will likely set a strong foundation for any team going into war.

## **Adopting the roles**

The members of the super team being formulated must understand one thing. There is nothing called stability. Today we have a fast-changing world. The technology growth rate is at an exceptional high. It took humanity about 1 million years to discover the wheel since they have discovered fire. Then it took only a few thousands of years to figure out powered flight. Then within the span of a decade we went to the moon and understood the universe. Within a few years, social media, drones, AI and blockchain came.

We are in an era where if you are out of the game for 3 months, you have a lot of catching up to do. Almost no industry is immune to this. Jobs are being replaced by automation and even the ones that require critical thinking and creativity will be replaced by AI. These traits were once thought to be unique to humans.

To face this challenge, unwavering focus, upskilling and re-learning is required on a daily basis. One must indulge in the thoughts of how to stay relevant and ahead of the curve. The roles will change and grow at a rapid pace.

The skills, time management and keeping yourself sane through all these stressful engagements must be closely examined and reflected upon in an open and supportive work culture. Growing the confidence to accept and face the challenge head-on will make sure the team members are great at the respective roles.

## Align your attitudes and goals



Everyone has their own personal goals and expectations. It may be a personal vehicle, owning a place to live, finding a partner, learning a new skill, or obtaining further qualifications. It's imperative that they align it with the goals for the company. Otherwise, there is a mismatch that will lead to stress, turnover and in some cases depression. For a startup super team, the most important personal trait is perseverance. It's that tenacity and devotion to an idea so strong, you will not falter and give up to whatever the obstacles thrown in your way.

Another main point to consider is collective responsibility. If we ask a set of team members, what is teamwork? The most common answer is a group of people collaborating to achieve a common goal. This does not correctly reflect what true teamwork means. First and foremost, each team member has an obligation to the team. In a professional setting, that is to fulfill their part of the work according to the agreed standards on time without wasting resources. The simple underlying utility driver for making this possible is communication. Through effective communication (which is a subject of its own) a vast majority of the problems can be resolved. The writer is yet to experience a project or a task that has failed where effective communication was present.

Through effective communication, each member can make sure to complete their tasks, obtain or lend support to others to fulfill their obligations and effectively deliver the completed project without major hiccups. In the next iteration the team needs to reflect on the previous project and the lessons learned to make sure the same mistakes and inefficiencies are not repeated. The collective responsibility is to do all the above and make sure the job gets done.

This way the goals of the organization can be achieved. Hence, the sense of achievement will make the team a more cohesive unit. Therefore, we sometimes see companies celebrate even the tiniest wins, which for an outsider would seem like an overkill for such a small accomplishment. In summary, developing an awesome team and nurturing it through turbulence is a massive challenge. Only a few organizations have created a supportive culture to keep it together. An organization cannot win the market competition if their own house is in disarray. Everything from cleaning the office floor to providing immaculate service levels to customers, the system must run like a well-oiled machine with happy employees wanting to contribute. To make that happen, the founding management team must plant the seed of teamwork, commitment, and empathy, so that they will eventually scale up to engulf the entire organization years into the future.

