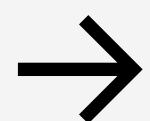


8 lessons from 1,000+ YC startups

by Dalton Caldwell,
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1

Adopt the mindset “Just don’t die”

- Success often comes from persevering through setbacks.
- Many startups almost failed before finding success.
- Focus on continuous improvement, not perfection.

2

Knowing when to quit

- If you love the work, team, and customers, keep going.
- If it's harming your well-being, reconsider.
- Don't continue just to avoid failure; no one will remember it in the long run.
- Life is too short to do something that makes you miserable.

3

What makes a great pivot and signs it's time to pivot

- Successful pivots move closer to areas where you have expertise.
- Learning from past failures or insights can reveal new opportunities.
- Pivot when growth ideas run out, not when options still exist.

4

Avoid "tarpit" ideas

- "Tarpit" ideas seem promising but are hard to scale or solve.
- They arise from trends or unsolved problems and get initial positive feedback.
- Avoid ideas that get stuck in a cycle of validation but fail to deliver long-term value or growth.

5

Why investors say no to startups

- Investors have limited funds and choose a few startups to back.
- They prioritize ideas with massive growth potential or personal excitement.
- A "no" isn't personal; it means they found better opportunities.

6

The importance of market size (TAM) in investment decisions

- Early-stage investors prioritize team, growth, and user acquisition over market size.
- Market size matters more as the company scales and seeks larger investments.
- A startup's ability to pivot can reduce the importance of market size early on.

The pitfalls of over-delegating

- Don't hire senior execs too early—stay focused on product and users.
- Founders should stay involved in product development and customer feedback.
- Avoid pressure to scale quickly—focus on sustainable growth.

8

Effective ways to talk to customers

- Engage directly with customers in person, not just online.
- Spend 20-30% of your time talking to customers.
- Focus on understanding customers' pain points, not just their feature requests.

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