

Top 20 Rookie Founder Mistakes

THE LIST (Now with built-in GPS)

1. Hiring your mate's cousin Mike because 'he's sound'

Nice guy. Sound. He's also useless.

- ➔ Hire for skill, not convenience. Friends later. Don't fall in love too easy. My best hires were people I sort of didn't like.



2. Doing it all yourself.

- ➔ Delegate before you burn out. Your job is future CEO, not Chief Everything Officer. You think you're saving money but you're wasting time (see later)



3. Building before selling.

You built it. They didn't come. Oops.

- ➔ Validate the problem first. Sell it before you scale it. The best money you'll ever spend (but most won't do!) is design a super duper sales brochure and see how many enquiries you get.



4. Confusing one big sale with market validation.

If it's not repeatable, it's not a business. It's a fluke.

- ➔ Look for patterns. Systems. Repeatability = viability.



5. Winging your strategy. Hope is not a business model.

- ➔ Pick a north star metric. Track your direction, not just your motion. How far are you in your actual bank account?



6. Not paying yourself.

If your business can't afford you, it's not working.

- ➔ Set a founder salary early. Even if it's symbolic. Pay yourself something.



7. Setting vague goals.

"Let's grow" ≠ a plan.

- ➔ Make goals measurable and time-bound. Clarity kills chaos. It also kills places for Mike to hide!



8. Letting chaos become culture.

Scrappy is cute until everyone burns out.

- ➔ Systemise the scrappy. Chaos is fine short-term, deadly long-term.



9. Avoiding hard conversations.

Spoiler: that resentment is costing you more than honesty ever will.

- ➔ Say the thing. Early and kindly. Silence is not a strategy.



10. Chasing investment too early.

You don't need a pitch deck. You need a customer.

- ➔ Prove traction. Raise when you're ready to scale, not survive. Remember that if you take their money, they sort of own you.



11. Expecting your first hire to be your mini-me.

They won't be. They shouldn't be. The world doesn't need another you and, eventually they'll hate you for it.

- ➔ Hire for complement, not clone. And give them ONE clear lane.



12. Not figuring out your lane.

Your job: do what only you can do.

- ➔ Get clear on your what you're good at, stay in your lane and delegate the rest.



13. Listening to your Aunt Betty.

...and all the others. Shut up. If they haven't built a business, their opinion won't pay your rent.

- ➔ Only take advice from people who've done what you want to do. Don't worry - when you prove Betty wrong she'll tell you she had your back all along anyway.



14. Not separating your tax money.

The taxman will find you. And he doesn't do payment plans.

- ➔ Open a separate tax account right away. RIGHT AWAY! Move a % of every payment, religiously.



15. Treating time like it's free.

You can make more money. You cannot make more time.

- ➔ Guard your calendar. Protect thinking time like cash. Stop having pointless coffees.



16. Trying to serve everyone.

When you speak to everyone, no one hears you.

- ➔ Niche down. Speak directly to the people you want to help most. Tip - it's usually the younger version of you.



17. Buying tools before building traction.

You don't need the pro version. You need proof of concept.

- ➔ Start free. Upgrade when it's slowing you down. You don't need a fancy CRM, a shoebox of business cards is just fine.



18. Forgetting what problem you solve.

Your customers don't care about your features. They care about their pain.

- ➔ Lead with the pain. Your product is just the painkiller. Take your ego out of the equation.



19. Assuming "busy" means progress.

You can be busy for years and still broke.

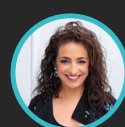
- ➔ Prioritise outcomes over activity. Work on the needle, not the noise.



20. Not asking for help.

Build your circle. Stop trying to be the hero.

- ➔ Find your people. Mentors, coaches, advisors, other founders. It's lighter with a circle.



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