

note 1-428-785
February 2009

Note on Building a Successful Startup Management Team: 12 Keys

One of the greatest challenges in starting a new business lies in recruiting key managers and molding these individuals into a vibrant, cohesive team. The metaphor of putting a band together is apt: You've come up with a compelling vision for the musical group you want to form and what will make it stand out from the crowd. You're looking to identify a handful of talented individual musicians and to convince each of them to cast his or her lot with you to help form an entity that is still only a dream in your mind. And, even if you succeed in recruiting a full complement of superb musicians, success for the band comes only once you've gotten them all to play tightly and coherently together, creating music that is far greater than the sum of the individual parts.

Assembling a strong team is difficult enough when it's done in the context of an established, stable enterprise. Add to that challenge the perpetual uncertainty and change inherent in technology startups, and you're looking at a doubly tough task.

However, as is true with so many aspects of business, experience has shown that adhering to basic guideposts in the recruiting and teambuilding process can help markedly. This article lays out 12 rules that, applied together, can help you avoid common pitfalls and successfully build a great management team for your startup.

Key #1 – It's a process, not an event.

For starters, it's important to bear this in mind: assembling your team isn't something you just do once, then forget about and move on to the next task. Recruiting and teambuilding are processes that should carry on through the entire lifecycle of your company. Think of all the people you meet through your initial networking and recruiting activities as an asset: You're building your contact list of good people, only a handful of whom will join your group initially. You'll find that many candidates who don't join your team at the outset will prove worthy of maintaining contact with; some may prove to be ideal candidates for future openings as the company grows and matures, while others may become key industry contacts down the line. Here's an eye-opening piece of coaching perspective I received from a successful entrepreneur when I was just launching my first startup: Even after his company had long since gone public and its market capitalization had passed several billion dollars, he estimated that he still spent a third of his time as CEO on recruiting and mentoring activities – constantly scanning the horizon, as it were, both outside his company as well as within the ranks, for hot talent to attract, nurture and promote.



Published by GlobeLens, a division of The William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan.

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