

**E** Publicado en manual del emprendedor

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## 5 mentiras que me dijeron los detractores (y algunos todavía lo hacen) acerca de ser un emprendedor de tiempo completo

Y por qué no tuve que sacrificar mis mayores prioridades, incluso a lo largo de mis primeros fracasos iniciales y éxitos posteriores.



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Contrariamente a la creencia popular, o al menos, lo que las redes sociales quieren que pienses, es completamente posible construir negocios, carreras y estilos de vida exitosos sin gritarlo a los cuatro vientos. Hace unos años, después de que una de mis empresas apareciera en Forbes pero antes de que yo apareciera en Yahoo Finance, el familiar de un amigo me transmitió su sabiduría empresarial.

Había estado construyendo negocios rentables en silencio durante años, así que mantuve la boca cerrada y lo dejé hablar. Esta persona había ido a la universidad, tenía un trabajo de ventas y se estaba preparando para la escuela de posgrado, por lo que no es necesariamente un experto en todo lo relacionado con los negocios, pero su convicción lo habría convencido a usted de lo contrario. Aquí está el pequeño y sucio secreto sobre la convicción: no hace que una persona sea correcta.

Si bien tengo suficiente experiencia empresarial en mi haber para barrer sus objeciones que fomentan el miedo debajo de la alfombra y seguir adelante, no todos lo hacen. De hecho, los aspirantes a empresarios o los inseguros fundadores en etapa inicial podrían





## 1. OPM solamente

Ever heard of “OPM”? It stands for “other people’s money”, and there’s a widely-circulated suggestion in the world of startups that if you’re building a business, you should strictly use OPM, rather than deplete your own resources.

As someone who comes from a finance background, has helped co-found a company that did raise OPM (and exited), and helps advise and consult fundraising founders on a regular basis, I’m clearly not entirely opposed to OPM. That said, it’s not my preference — at all. I’ve built every profitable company I run today *without raising a dime* of outside capital. I’ve even turned down multiple unsolicited 7+ figure offers for funding and still do.

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While there’s an idea that “smart people don’t risk their own money”, I think that all depends on the long-term goal, ideal entrepreneurial lifestyle, and type of business you’re building. That said, I’m often hard-pressed to find a business for which a person can’t bootstrap or crowdfund their way to proof of concept or idea validation before seeking outside investors.

It’s partly true: Smart people don’t risk ALL (*or too much of*) their own money. But...there’s a caveat: As an entrepreneur who thinks long and hard about every investment and prospective acquisition, I believe aspiring entrepreneurs should be willing to put some of their own skin in the game and their own money on the line. If it’s scary for you to invest your own money, you should be equally scared to take from an angel or a VC.

## 2. Cracking the code

Ahh, the almighty code to multi-million-dollar profits. I’ve been told it occurs somewhere between the \$60k and \$80k revenue months, when the financial startup lords deem your business to have crossed that inflection point into successful territory. From there, you’re pretty much golden, right?

Yes, that was told to me in all seriousness by a very successful Hollywood agent when a mutual friend let slip that an early-stage business I’d launched had seen some unexpectedly rapid exponential growth.

I hate to be the bearer of reality (not bad news, just the truth), but business rarely works that way. Things can (and often do) go up and down, even after you hit those milestones you never thought you’d reach.

There isn’t one universal or finite code that will get your startup perpetual 400% monthly growth. That code changes, needs a tweak, or sometimes runs its course altogether. Running and growing a business means constantly reassessing, testing, and problem-solving your way through the lows, towards the highs, with no “home free” guarantee.

## 3. Goodbye relationships

I have a secret weapon up my sleeve when it comes to my entrepreneurial success and freedom. It isn’t a sugar daddy or a trust fund; it’s actually my low-maintenance relationships.

I can’t tell you how many people have asserted that being a successful founder means shutting out anything and anyone who isn’t a part of your startup. They call them distractions that need to be wiped from the radar or else drain you of your time, energy, money, and productivity.

Can I be honest? That sounds like something that someone who’s only experienced exhausting, draining relationships would say; that isn’t everyone.

It’s true that I wouldn’t be nearly as productive as I am if I had a soap opera-like family dynamic intruding on my working hours, high-maintenance friends, and a tumultuous romantic partnership. However, as someone who does maintain some very close family, friend, and partner relationships, I can assure you that sacrificing all of the above isn’t necessary and doesn’t guarantee you any more startup success.

In contrast, maintaining those diverse relationships outside of your businesses is probably one of the best ways to uphold your sanity, offer support and perspective, and allow you to step outside your lonely founder bubble.

## 4. One trick ponies win the race

If you’ve ever watched an episode of Shark Tank, you’ve probably heard the sharks ask the founder if they’re pursuing their startup





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you work smart, and distill down the tasks on your plate, hours spent, and respective ROI produced, you may realize you aren't actually working productively 126 hours per week on your business.

But sometimes you are — and that may not be the wisest. I spent the first 18 months of my full-time entrepreneurial journey primarily on one startup — that failed. Want to know what I did after that? Built three companies at once — all of which actually got off the ground, generated revenue, profits, and one of which I still operate today!

Since then, I've sold a business, pivoted another, and added in a couple other diversified ventures in other industries entirely, with an eye on acquisition opportunities all the time.

Point being? I've structured my businesses and my time to enable me to prioritize multiple ventures — in varying stages — at once. And yes, I do think it's not only doable, but smart, for other entrepreneurs to do the same.

## 5. Musk or bust

Some people simply aren't cut out for entrepreneurship. I could rattle off a list of entrepreneurial dealbreakers, but there's one false alarm that I keep hearing and simply can't stand: It starts with an I and ends with a Q.

I've heard multiple people assert that if you aren't a world-class genius (*on Elon Musk's or Jeff Bezos' "level"*), you shouldn't bother wasting your time attempting a startup, as the world is too advanced for normies to succeed as founders and innovators. This is where I must interject, as a fellow "normie" who's both built profitable businesses and helped thousands of others — including hundreds of very "normal" teens — do the same.

I'm almost never the smartest person in the room; I'm well aware: That's partly by design (I walk into some pretty cool and impressive rooms), but that's also partly just the reality self-awareness allows me to accept. I am, however, oftentimes one of the more strategic people in both how I run my businesses and how I structure my life.

Business doesn't just reward intelligence. While being smart or an expert in a certain field can grant you a leg up, there's not some universal threshold of "smartness" required to succeed in startups. In fact, sometimes the "smartest" people can be the least strategic and subsequently, the least successful. The key to entrepreneurship isn't to be smart. It's to be self-aware enough to know what you know, what you don't know, and what you can do about that to best serve your customers, impact the world, and engineer a profitable company you'll love to build, run, and grow.

## Why I still listen to the naysayers

If I'm always right — as the experienced entrepreneur and startup consultant — and these baseless naysayers and their ill-informed assertions are always wrong, why waste my time listening at all? Here's why: They might be right, and even if they aren't, I might learn.

One thing I'll never have is another person's perspective. While my experience is robust, it isn't all-encompassing, and it doesn't absolve me of the ability to learn from diverse vantage points. Thus, I let the naysayers spew their thoughts. I listen when people — educated or not — offer me a suggestion or piece of constructive (or well-meaning) criticism. I don't listen because I think they're right; I listen because there's a chance they might be, and there's an even greater chance that whether they're right or wrong, there's something for me to learn.

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