




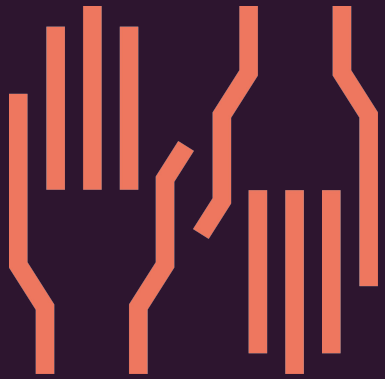
The power of co-founding teams

ENTREPRENEUR FIRST
JOINEF.COM

FOUND THE FUTURE.

A young man with dark, wavy hair is smiling and looking slightly to his right. He is wearing a grey crew-neck sweater. The background is a brightly lit hallway with green pillars and recessed ceiling lights. Other people are visible in the background, but they are out of focus.

It's still terrifying because you're putting your neck out on the line.



T E A M
F O R M E D

Why co-found?



When building a startup, you need to move **fast**.

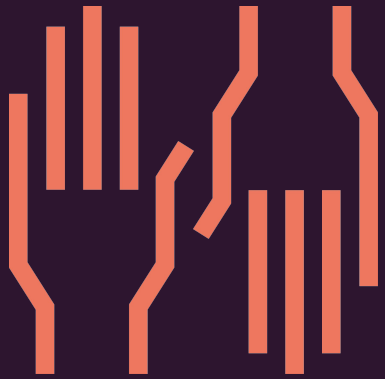
You need **complementary skill sets.**

At EF, we believe in co-founding teams of **2**.

Larger co-founding teams introduce **complexity** in 2 important ways

Relationship complexity

Idea complexity



T E A M
F O R M E D

What to look for in the right co-founder



- 1) You need co-founders with an **opposing set** of responsibilities.

Each co-founder needs to be able to **excel** at the responsibilities they own.

Talker (CEO) + Doer (CTO)

Talker:

Fundraising

Sales

Customer Development

Hiring

Doer:

Building

Developing the Product

Leading the technical team

Technologists can be CEOs.

Just because you are technical, doesn't mean you
can only be a doer.

2) You cannot separate **teambuilding** from **ideation**.

Teams should work on at least **one** of the founders' edges*.

*Your edge is your personal competitive advantage that gives you a right to win.

\$



**Domain
+
Tech**

**Domain
+
Catalyst**

**Tech
+
Tech**

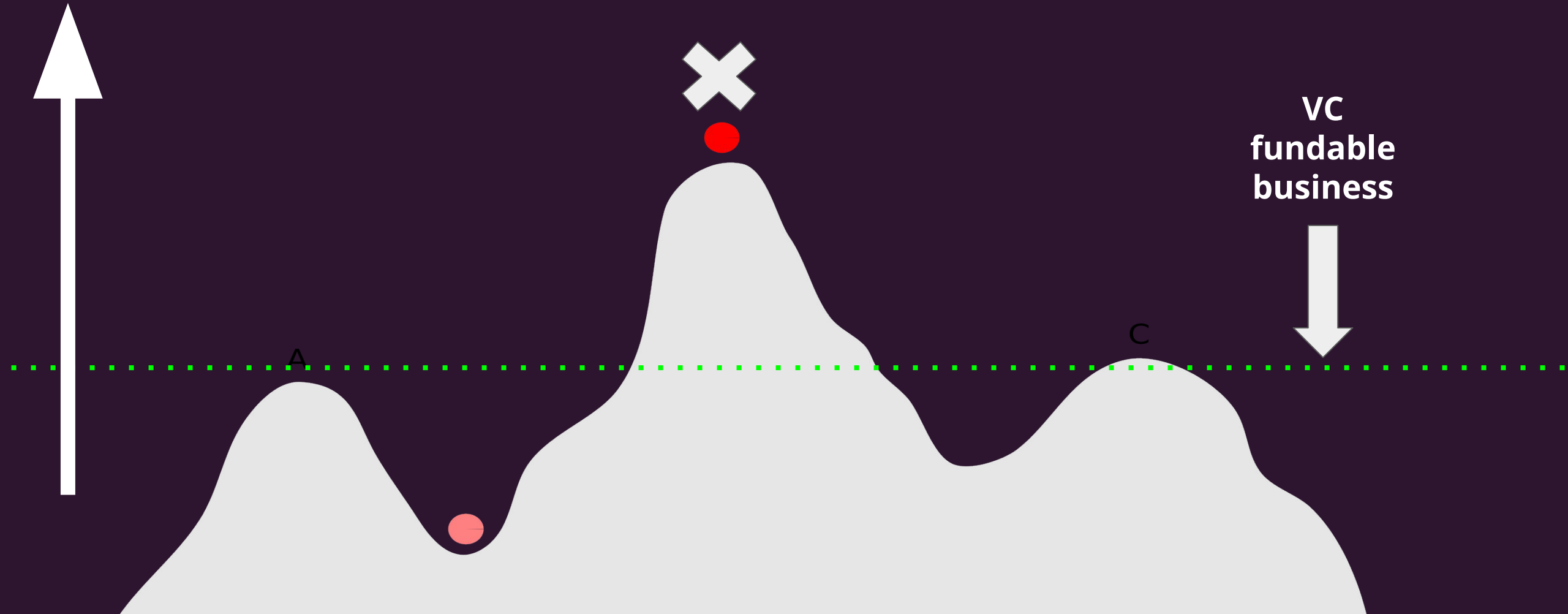
**Tech
+
Catalyst**

**Catalyst
+
Catalyst**

**Domain
+
Domain**



The Idea Maze





Ask:

1. What is your **Edge**?
2. What do you **believe**?
3. What is your **hunch**?
4. How can you **test** this?

Based on your edge and insights, start from a **hunch**...

What skills would you need to **test** the hypotheses around your hunch?

Focus on **upside potential**.

3) Focus on **co-founder potential** > friend potential

“You’re likely to be wrong if you look for social cues, instead of looking at who you can be most productive with”

Jesse Shemen, LD9

Jesse & Jiameng - LD9, Papercup

4) Pick someone you are **productive** with

Productivity = traction for teams

Productive team =

More progress together than apart

Each individual feels “lifted” by being part of the team.

You’re looking for a **multiplicative effect**.

“The best teams just move faster. They set themselves weekly goals and they hit them, often achieving unexpected outcomes as they do so”

Joe White, EF CFO



Ask:

“What do we know now, that we didn’t know **this morning?”**

“What do we know now, that we didn’t know **an hour ago?”**

4) Focus on **outcomes** > process

5) Always be **testing**: this is a process, optimise it!

Information gathering + experimenting

The best way to test a team: **get started.**

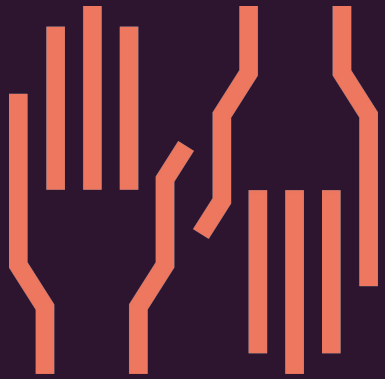
Time is not on your side.

Start. Go all in. Breakup if it's not working.



97%

of **individuals** that got funded by EF formed **a** team by the end of Week 1. It doesn't mean they stayed in that team, but they started.



T E A M
F O R M E D

Breakups



“Every second you are in an unproductive team without a clear edge, mission, or insight you are wasting your time when you could be building a company with someone else”

Dan, BE1



Fierce conversations and giving feedback

EF is unusual



But it works



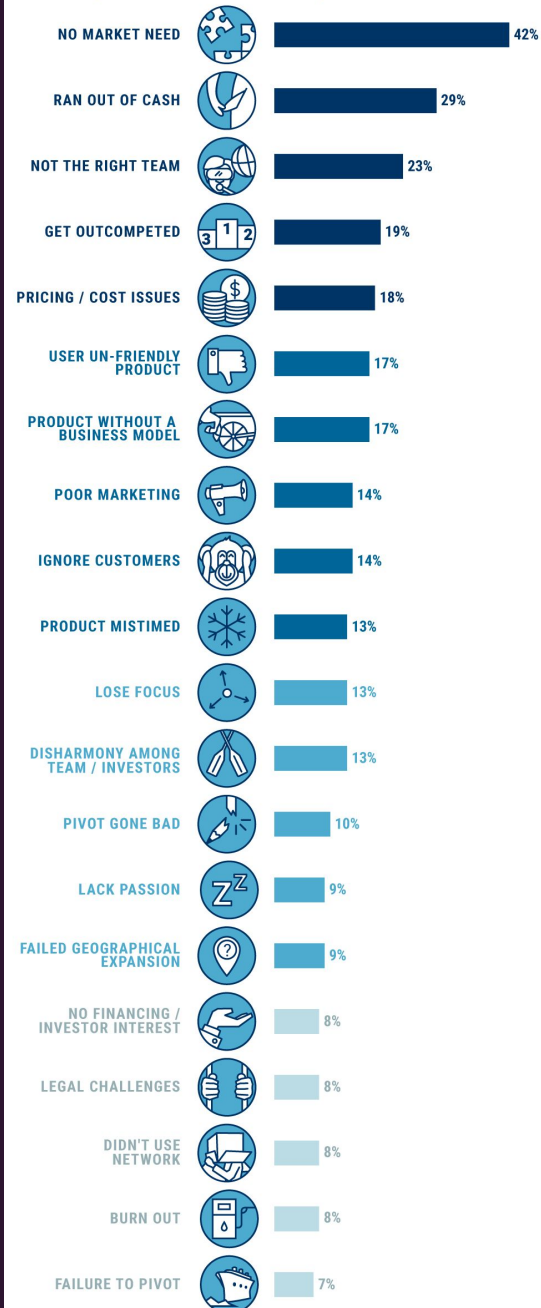
Why do good teams break up?

Why do some stay intact?



BASED ON ANALYSIS OF 101 STARTUP POSTMORTEMS

Top 20 Reasons Startups Fail



Five of the most common reasons startups fail are team related

NOT THE RIGHT TEAM



23%

DISHARMONY AMONG
TEAM / INVESTORS



13%

LOSE FOCUS



13%

LACK PASSION



9%

BURN OUT



8%



Surely this is exacerbated at EF?



Surprisingly not



But it does happen



Especially when founders are *just* focused on
the next hurdle,
they don't always prioritise this.



Issues don't 'sort themselves out' later down
the line



Co-founders focus their early conversations on the 'What' and the 'Who'



Not on the less obvious topics



Motivation

Timing

Ethics



Have fierce conversations about:

- A. Roles & Responsibilities in the Startup
- B. Personalities & Incentives
- C. Personal Priorities
- D. Working Styles, Cultures & Values





A

Roles and Responsibilities



What will each of you eventually spend your
time on?



Team composition

Talker

Doer



Do your skill sets overlap too much?



Good co-founding relationship

=

multiplicative effect



Together, you can achieve orders of magnitude more than the two of you working separately could





B

Personalities and Incentives



Personality clashes can happen in the teams
that look the strongest



Productivity can occasionally mask problems



Ask each other the important questions



'36 Questions To Bring You Closer Together'





C

Personal Priorities



What do you *need* from this company



How willing are you to drop everything for this startup?



Where does it come in your priority list?





D

Working Styles, Cultures and Values



This is the point of maximum potential.
You can set your culture from the start.



- Do you understand how your co-founder likes to work?
- What is your preferred method of communication?
- Do you want to have daily/weekly standups?
- Can/will you work at weekends? Late into the night?



There are no right or wrong answers



You may well have opposing answers



So, what are the topics you need to address?



- + Vision and goals
- + Founder roles
- + Defining & measuring success
- + Decision making
- + Company values
- + Equity and ownership interest

2) Giving Feedback

- A. The psychology of giving feedback
- B. Why is feedback important?
- C. Frameworks for giving feedback
- D. Operationalising feedback
- E. Setting up a feedback culture



Feedback is NOT just criticism



- Giving positive feedback
- Giving negative feedback
- Receiving positive feedback
- Receiving negative feedback



A

The Psychology of Giving Feedback



Why don't we like giving feedback?



Feedback might make your co-founder dislike you
or affect your relationship



You assume that your co founder cannot handle
the feedback



Your co-founder might resist feedback



Your co-founder did not act on previous feedback
that was given to them

You fear an awkward or volatile situation





B

Why Feedback is Important



Why?

1. Team Health

100% committed to the team

2. Personal Development

100% committed to your co-founder's growth



C

Frameworks for Giving Feedback



When should I give feedback?

- 1) When the likelihood of improving your co-founder's skills is high
- 2) When a problem cannot be ignored
- 3) When your co-founder is already expecting feedback

General principles for giving feedback

- + Focus on the person and adapt to their communication style
- + What information do you need to walk away with after the session?

- + Avoid interruption
- + Imagine yourself in your co-founder's position (consider the other's point of view)

Frameworks

- A. The OEPS Method
- B. The SKS Method
- C. The Stanford Method



Observe

Effect

Pause

Suggest

O: “I **Observed** that you did X”

- + Focus on the action/behavior
- + Be specific
- + Focus on what you saw, not what you think

Example:

I observed that you didn't come into the office the whole of last week, and we didn't have any face time together.

E “The **Effect** on me was Y”

- + Focus on how the action made you feel
- + Not what you thought of it, but how it affected you
- + Don't talk about the effect on *other people*

Example:

I felt confused and unsure of our relationship. I don't know what you are working on, and we aren't able to discuss issues in real-time.

P Pause



S “I **Suggest** that in future you do Z”

+ Make it concrete and actionable



Example:

If you could come into the office more often, I will feel more assured that we are both on the same page, and we can discuss things in real time. I would also feel like you are equally committed to making this work, and that we are both in this together.

B. The SKS Method

What to “stop,” “keep” and “start” doing.

- + What should your co founder **stop** doing?
- + What should your co founder **keep** doing?
- + What should your co founder **start** doing?

C. The “Stanford” Method

“I like; I wish; what if ... ?”

I like that ...

(e.g. you were passionate when presenting our product at the meeting)

I wish ...

(e.g. that you would spend a little less time explaining all the features)

What if...

(e.g. you leave some time for questions during our next meeting?)”)

Type 1: OEPS



Type 2: SKS



Type 3: Stanford





D

Operationalising Feedback



Leading an effective feedback session
means:

- + Owning it, being confident
- + Being able to change your beliefs
- + Having a structure

- + Practise, practise, practise
- + Learn how to handle responses to the feedback you gave
- + Take responsibility

Have regular feedback sessions



After every customer meeting, do a debrief:

- + What went well
- + What didn't go so well - OEPS

Talk to each other! Don't talk about each other

Conclusion

- + Human relationships require maintenance
- + No issue is small enough not to be discussed
- + Don't let things build up