INCUBATION

CHAPTER 4:
INCUBATION

Alright, so you've made it this far into the book and we can't blame you if the title of this specific chapter seems a little bit alarming. In fact, there's a decent likelihood that you're sitting there thinking to yourself:

"Incubation? Why are we incubating now? We've already launched!"

Don't write us off just yet, though. The fact of the matter is that incubation is going to be a constant process throughout the first several years of your business, and this chapter will be one of the most integral sections of this book when it comes to building not only a successful business, but also a sustainable one.

What entrepreneurs, technologists and investors alike often fail to realize about their businesses during the launch phase is that launching your business is a process that is always going to take more than a day. While that sounds incredibly obvious, it's a mistake people actually make quite commonly.

Think about it: you've spent all this time in your pre-launch stage just making sure that everything is perfect. You've taken the time to focus on building your product and platform, align investors, find your workspace, get the word out about your company and (hopefully) even nail down a few deals to get your revenue stream going. With all that done, it's natural to assume that after the actual launch-date (you know, the one that's been circled on your calendar for months) comes and goes, that your business will just be established and ready to carry you into the sunset of ownership.

Unfortunately, this isn't how it works at all. In actuality,

launching your business is effectively a two part process. The first, the launch stage, we've already discussed at considerable length throughout the earlier chapters of this book. The second part of launching your business, the incubation phase, is the one that we're going to focus on here in chapter four.

With that in mind, here's working definition for incubation, just to ensure that we're all on the same page here.

Incubation: The process of keeping something at the right temperature or under the right conditions so that it can develop.

Now, admittedly, that definition leans a bit heavily towards the literal understanding of incubation, as one might incubate an egg or a pathogen. Nonetheless, it's actually applicable to your startup in a whole range of ways, not the least of which being temperature.

For example, if any of you have ever built a fire outside, you'll appreciate the following analogy. Consider your startup, at the point of launch and for some time thereafter, to be a small fire that you have built. Effectively, what you need in order to keep the fire going is simple: fuel, ignition and time.

Since your startup is launched, you already have ignition. Fuel and time, however, must be carefully balanced in order to ensure that the blaze becomes self sustaining. If you offer the fire too much fuel at once, as one might do by piling wood upon it, you're sure to smother your small flame and put it out. This is also true of your business during your incubation period; smothering yourselves in work and opportunities to the point where you can't handle the amount that you're taking on will only end in failure.

Similarly, waiting too long and leaving the fire to it's own devices will simply cause it to peter out over time due to lack of fuel. As you can guess, this is also the case with your startup; letting opportunities pass you by for fear that you aren't yet ready can result in a situation where your startup simply doesn't gain the traction, stability and - ultimately - profitability necessary for survival in the corporate environment.

In short, the key during incubation is finding the right balance, ensuring that you're taking on enough and accomplishing enough to keep your company not only running, but also growing, while simultaneously mitigating your efforts to ensure that you and the company don't become overwhelmed.

Incubation is, as much as anything else, a study in patience. This phase of growth is where many young company founders reach their first points of immense frustration. It's easy to think that things are moving too fast, and even easier (for most people) to think that things aren't moving fast enough.

With that in mind, it becomes important to narrow your focus to determine exactly what you can and should be doing to ensure the success of your company and that it survives the incubation stage of its startup period. While it may seem negative, one of the best ways to determine what you should be doing is to look very carefully at what you shouldn't be doing.

Luckily for you, there's a literal wealth of data out there regarding startups that haven't succeeded, and you better believe that a great deal of those startups hit their fail point during their respective incubation periods. Through studying this data, you can begin to gain a sense of exactly what's important at this point in

your company's growth.

SO, WHAT EXACTLY DOES CAUSE STARTUPS TO FAIL?

In order to answer that question, we've borrowed an infographic from CB Insights, a technology market intelligence platform based in New York City that analyzes the potential success of businesses for both entrepreneurs and investors. Take a look:

As you can see, the infographic takes data from more than 100 different startups that launched across differing industries. Keep in mind that while all of these startups may come from different fields, what they hold in common is that they all tried - and failed - to make it through their incubation period and on to more prosperous stages.

While it's impossible (or at least unreasonably difficult) to extract the exact reasons that each of these 101 startups failed, what's important is to take a look at the 20 subgroups that CB Insights has sorted each respective failure into. That's where we can begin to learn a valuable lesson and dig into the true meat of this chapter.

For real, take a second and study this infographic. Sure, some of the failure categories seem self-explanatory (legal challenges, pivot gone bad, bad location). Also, of course, some of them seem a bit ambiguous (lack passion, lose focus). What do you notice, though, about the majority of these categories?

Time's up. Didn't find the underlying pattern? No worries, we're here to tell you:

The vast majority of these categories of failure (at least half, to be fair) can be traced back to two primary aspects of a startup: sales and marketing.

Seriously: no market need, ran out of cash, outcompeted, pricing/cost issues, need/lack business model, poor marketing, ignore customers, product mistimed, no financing/investor issues, poor product; all of these can be traced back to sales and marketing, and with good reason.

Sales and marketing work in tandem to effectively create the lifeblood of a company, and this is particularly true of a startup. Marketing is absolutely mission critical in that it's the crux of how your company becomes something that potential consumers or partners are aware of. Sales are mission critical in that they take that awareness and turn it into something that you can actually profit upon: a sale.

All that said, observing the ways in which so many startups have failed may seem like an overly morbid way to arrive at an incubation strategy, but we think by the end of this chapter you'll understand why this is an effective observation process. In keeping with our findings, we're going to be splitting this chapter into two sections. First we will focus on how marketing will affect your incubation period, and then on how sales will do the same.

Now, with both sales and marketing, you'll find that incubation strategies are going to center less upon direct action and more upon preparation for that action. Don't get us wrong, there's an incredible amount of action needed in your incubation phase, it's just that going about it without properly preparing is one of the quickest ways to ensure that your startup doesn't make it as far as

you'd like it to.

Rather, much of the work that you'll be doing during this phase, both in sales and marketing, is going to be preparing an arsenal of tools and strategies that you can employ as you go and, further, learning how to realize when it's time to employ those tools and strategies.

Throughout our marketing segment of the chapter, we're going to be talking about both issues that you've likely already dealt with or are actively dealing with, as well as those that you likely won't see until later on in your company's progression. For example, you almost certainly already have some semblance of a working space (here's a friendly reminder that it's totally ok for this to be an unglamorous basement at this point in time!), but we're going to discuss the ways in which your space can affect your marketing incubation. Specifically, we're going to touch on incubators, accelerators, working from home and coworking spaces and the benefits and drawbacks that come along with each one.

Our marketing section of the chapter will also include detailed information on content strategy - one of the segments of your business that we've already touched on at various points of this text - and how you should be handling it during incubation. Effectively, we're going to outline the ways in which you should be tailoring your content to specific audiences within the different verticals of your business. We'll also discuss the proper ways to go about developing a backlog for later publication and offer a brief illustration of some marketing tools that we find to be perfect for startups in the incubation phase.

The sales section of this chapter on incubation will follow a similar format, but address more sales and revenue cycle-specific issues. We're going to take a somewhat deep dive into the less obvious differences between sales, revenue and profit, as well as what you can do to track, exploit and benefit from these differences.

Entrepreneurs may find particular interest in the sales section of our incubation chapter, as we'll be discussing what we've found to work when it comes to structuring contracts and pricing models, as well as locking in margins. Whether you're looking at your sales department as a predominantly business to business model or a business to customer model, we'll talk about the importance of providing information to prospects and the proper mediums through which to do so. Of course, as we have in prior chapters and as we will in the marketing section of this chapter, as well, we will outline some tools that your startup's sales department may benefit from using and the practical applications of these programs.

"WHAT DOES IT EVEN MEAN FOR US TO BE INCUBATING OUR MARKETING?"

Well, that's the million dollar question, isn't it? The fact of the matter is that incubation of your marketing processes is going to look different for every startup. This is due to the great disparity and difference between one company and the next. We know that incubation of internal marketing processes is going to look extremely different for a financial services startup than it would for, say, a social media company, but what exactly defines those

differences?

Buckle up.

In truth, the amount of factors and differences between incubation of one sort can seem infinite, but they really aren't. Focusing on three primary factors of marketing incubation will allow you to build an incubation strategy tailor-made for your company and your staff. Perhaps even more importantly, building your incubation strategy on three core concepts of marketing will allow you to develop an incubation system that's flexible; one that can change over time. This will become critically important, as incubation will be a constantly developing process through your first few years as a company, and what you need from it in terms of results will vary depending on what point in development your company is at.

First and foremost, it's going to be important for you to focus on the methods by which you present an image of your company. While this may not seem like the kind of thing that would apply to the incubation of your marketing initiatives, it most certainly is. The image that your company gives off is something that will affect the ways in which you deal with investors, potential customers, employees and recruits, vendors and more or less anyone who has to do with your business. In discussing the ways that you build a marketing image, we're going to touch on how to convey a given frame of mind, the company that you keep, the manner by which you go about demonstrating worth, and your company's social presence (both in social media and in actual, tangible events and demonstrations).

Secondly, your marketing incubation is going to have a great deal to do with the actual space in which you choose to host your business. While we've made very clear at several earlier points in this text that the quality of your work is more important than your actual office space, the space itself does matter, and can make a great deal of difference in further incubating your marketing initiatives. In this section of the chapter, we're going to compare the differences between some of the most common spaces occupied by startups, including incubators, accelerators, coworking spaces and, of course, working from home.

The third and final piece of our section on marketing incubation will consist of two parts. First, we'll touch on the ways in which your marketing strategy should be two-pronged, focusing on both the present and the future. Thinking one to two steps ahead, as we'll discuss further, can be extremely beneficial when it comes to how you can benefit tomorrow's marketing today. In the secondary, we're going to address some of the manners by which you you can link different departments of your company to bolster marketing incubation, as well as outline a few marketing tools that we've found extremely helpful.

1) Incubating Marketing Through Image Development & Creation
Now, it's probably important that we take a second here and ensure that we're all on the same page when it comes to conceptualizing marketing as a whole. In keeping with the established form of this text, we've lifted a definition for the word marketing itself from a simple Google search:

Marketing: The action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.

While that definition may seem overly obvious, there's actually a great deal to be taken from it, or at least it's second part. Most people would probably assume, when hearing the word 'marketing' come up in conversation, that it was a process geared towards the endgame of selling your given product or service. What they might be less quick to realize, though, is that the process of marketing is actually deeply multifaceted, including market research, advertising, and a great deal more unsung components.

One of the most frequently overlooked aspects of marketing is the way that it can be used to present an image that's beneficial to your company as a whole. The way in which your marketing initiatives portray our company establish in large part, for better or for worse, the ways in which other individuals are going to see your company and come to think about it. Whether you know that you're doing so or not, the tone that you establish for your company through your marketing initiatives can have a massive effect on your bottom line.

With this in mind, it's important to carefully craft the image that people are going to take from your marketing initiatives. This process can be thought of a incubation, as it's the method of developing, or growing the way that your company is seen in the world. In short form, and more clearly, incubating your marketing image is both a way to develop your actual marketing initiatives and to a means to change the way that people see and think

about your company.

Well we can't tell you what exact image you should convey - as this will depend on your product, what space you exist in and, frankly, who you want to be known as - we can say that, regardless of these factors, incubation is going to have to be a constant frame of mind, and not just a space.

Take, for example, the concept of meetups. If you're building your company in any area with a well-developed tech or startup scene, then it's likely that your city already has established meetups for individuals in a given industry. You might be asking yourself right now: "Why should I care about going to meetups? I thought that this section was on marketing?" Take a deep breath and accept this fact: meetups are one of the absolutely invaluable tools at your disposal when it comes to incubating your company image.

Think of it this way: attending meetups may not bring you additional revenue, it may not bolster your sales or make you an industry expert, but it will do at least one thing: show that your company cares about being involved in the sector that you work in. Even beyond that, attending meetups will show that your company actively wants to grow, that it wants to be something more than it is. Simply by attending meetups, you've instantly entered a state where you can incubate your marketing into something exponentially more effective than what it currently is.

When you're beginning to incubate your marketing image, it's important to remember that nearly everyone tries to build their marketing image on sales. While sales are going to be a critically important component of getting your business up and running,

your marketing image shouldn't ever be just about your product. For all the focus you place on sales, your marketing image should also work just as hard to develop a true identity for your company and your brand.

Doing this through meetups is one way to excel, but you can also achieve your image through nearly anything that involves other people. For example, you might consider using social media to create discussion groups regarding current issues in your industry or field. While this can seem like a cheap alternative to actually getting out and meeting people, you'd be surprised how much of an effect this can have. Just like how going to a meetup can establish a marketing image for your company as a one that's deeply involved in the industry, sharing content and opinions across social media or through newsletters can build a marketing image for your company as a thought leader.

Once you've come to establish this image, though, is when the real process of incubation starts. Instead of simply building an image, you now have to maintain it, and you may be surprised at how much of this can translate into truly meaningful results for your company. The more that you can build, incubate and maintain an image as a company that isn't only a member of it's given industry but also a leader within it, and one that's constantly trying to learn more, the more respect that you'll gain from your peer companies. In turn, being held in high favor by other companies and prominent individuals in your space can result in guerilla marketing in the form of these individuals talking about you.

As this process continues on in a cyclical manner - tweaking your image, presenting it in public forums from meetups to social media to industry events - you'll find that you've not only built a stronger marketing presence for yourself, but that you've done so at little to no cost to your company or staff. Whatever marketing budget you had set for your year is, in theory, still close to untouched and can be used for more concrete marketing methods like advertising campaigns, product sample distributions and analytics.

2) Marketing Through Selecting and Creating Your Workspace

Though your workspace may not seem like a factor of your business that would directly impact your marketing presence, it most certainly is. Where you choose to work affects not only how people see your company when they come to your workspace, but also what kind of marketing you can engage in, and how effectively you can engage in it. Particularly in young startups, selecting the right space in which to work is crucial to building a strong marketing presence and successfully incubating it into something that provides returns for you, your staff and your company.

Now, don't get us wrong, you can do great work from your parent's garage. In fact, plenty of extremely successful companies have done so - Apple, Hewlett Packard, Amazon and Google among them, just to name a few. With that said, you're going to want to think carefully before selecting the space that you choose to run your company in for your first few years.

Regardless of where you were working during your pre-launch period, you may find that your needs change when you reach the incubation stage, and this is particularly true when it comes to developing your marketing initiatives, and using your space to do

so.

While there are presumably endless locales in which you could go about running your company, we've identified four that we'd like to focus on here, all of which we believe have a great deal to offer when it comes to bolstering your marketing. Those are incubators, accelerators, coworking spaces and working from home. For the sake of simplicity, we'll offer a brief definition of each and then discuss the benefits and drawbacks that come along with the choice.

Incubators: A company that helps new or startup companies to develop by providing services such as management training or office space.

Incubators, effectively, are spaces where your company can work alongside other young businesses while sharing resources. These spaces are often owned by individuals who require payment for space rental at a rate below what you might find in the traditional office space market. Additionally, your payment usually entitles you to some kind of training or auxiliary benefits, as outlined briefly in the definition above.

Pros for Marketing Incubation: Working in an incubator can help bolster your guerilla marketing by instantly providing you the opportunity to network extensively with a range of other young entrepreneurs and companies, often in the same industry as you. You'll have the ability to learn from these individuals, as well as potentially collaborate with them on future marketing projects.

Cons for Marketing Incubation; While organized training and event programming can be extremely beneficial to a young marketing department, you may find that you aren't getting a

real leg up on the competition because, at the end of the day, you're all going through a very similar, if not identical, process.

Two great examples of incubators are 1871 and Matter, which you may want to research if you're considering this option.

Accelerators: Often referred to as 'seed accelerators,' these are fixed-term, cohort based programs that include mentorship and educational components that often culminate in a public pitch or demo day.

Accelerators are very similar to incubators in that you're likely to be surrounded by companies in the same phase or even the same industry as your own. One of the largest differences between the two is that individuals usually pay to be part of an incubator, while an accelerator basically works the opposite way. The individuals or company that run the accelerator will likely offer your company cash, mentorship or working space (frequently all three) in exchange for equity in your company.

Pros for Marketing Incubation: Again, much like with incubators, Accelerators provide you with the opportunity to learn from an established organization while also networking with and growing alongside other startups. Your marketing department is also almost certainly going to be bolstered by the receipt of startup capital from the entity or individual that owns the accelerator. That money can be used to build advertising campaigns and marketing procedures that you likely couldn't afford if fully bootstrapped, which may in turn result in better sales numbers than you could expect outside of an accelerator.

Cons for Marketing Incubation: As with all things in life, you get what you pay for when it comes to accelerators. Since you aren't the one paying, you can expect to be giving something

up. While equity in your company can seem like a small price to pay, it's critical that you develop a very clear understanding of what that equity means. For example, the individuals who run the accelerator may want their equity to be non-silent, meaning that they'd have some say in the direction of your company, including your marketing. Though this can be very beneficial, it can also mean that you have less control over exactly what marketing initiatives you undertake now and in the future.

Two very popular accelerators are Y-Combinator and TechStars, both of which are certainly worth reading about independently.

Coworking Spaces: An office or other working environment shared by people who are either self-employed or working different employers.

Coworking spaces are a very popular option for startups and young companies across the country, and are generally more accessible than incubators or accelerators. While the two latter companies might require a rigorous application process and very low acceptance rates, coworking spaces are likely to be relatively simple to join. Typically your company would pay the owning entity a monthly or annual fee in exchange for a small private office within a much larger, shared office space.

Pros for Marketing Incubation: Just like with accelerators, one of the largest benefits that you can experience by running your company in a coworking space is a fiscal one. While you won't receive any cash for joining, you will likely find the expense of setting up shop here to be greatly reduced in contrast to renting your own space. That extra leeway in your budget, again, can help you to further your marketing initiatives. You'll also likely present a tried and true image to potential partners

- the young, scrappy, money-savvy company - by working in a coworking space.

Cons for Marketing Incubation: While coworking spaces provide some of the camaraderie and built-in connections of an accelerator or incubator, you're likely to have less interaction with your fellow young companies here than you would in either of the former. This can make it a bit harder to network among other startups and companies in your industry, but you can still get this done with a bit of extra effort.

If you're looking to learn more about coworking spaces in general, you may want to do some reading on WeWork, one of the leaders in that industry. In a few short years, WeWork has gone from relatively unknown to the forefront of the coworking space, well, space. The company provides workspaces and services in over 30 cities with more than 100 total locations.

As you may have already gleaned, the rise of WeWork represents a global shift in the real estate industry, particularly within the professional sphere. Just as we've seen the emergence of ZipCar, Uber and Lyft conquer a market in which customers are moving away from long term ownership and towards the share economy, WeWork is dominating new demand from customers who want the benefits of a sedentary workplace without the constraints of ownership.

Working From Home: To be reasonable, we don't think that we need to provide a definition for this one.

As we said earlier, you can do great work and work from home, (or some other personal space that you aren't paying for) but it's not necessarily always the best option just because it's so

affordable. This becomes especially apparent when we consider it in the context of incubating your marketing.

Pros for Marketing Incubation: Working from home allows you the most financial freedom of any of the workspace options that we'll outline here. If you're working from home you are presumably paying nothing, or at least next to nothing, so all of that unused money can filter back into your marketing budget.

Cons for Marketing Incubation: Like it or not, a lot of people are going to judge your company and your staff based on the image that you present. This is usually an unintentional action on their part, but it can still affect your company. For example, it takes an entrepreneurial mind to look at a business in a garage and be more inclined to invest in it than one in a high rise. While this is unfortunate, you may find that working in a space like this may stunt your marketing to some level by making it hard to catch the eyes of decision makers, industry influencers and potential clients and partners. Of course, as we mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter, participating in events like meetups and tech nights may help avoid some of this dilemma for those who chose to work from home.

In short, the range of possible areas in which you can house your startup is vast, but each comes with it's own potential benefits and drawbacks, especially when considering the potential success of your marketing initiatives. Be sure to consider the ways in which a space can bolster or hinder your marketing before signing onto any lease or program.

3) Incubating Marketing Through Strategy, System Linking and Tool Selection

While the space in which you choose to work and the image that you create for your business at an early stage will be critical to incubation of your marketing, the most practically applied method by which a company can actually develop their marketing presence is often through strategic planning and selecting the right tools.

There's not necessarily as ardent a need to describe strategy and tool selection in great detail, as we have above for office spaces and image presentation, but we'd like to at least touch on it briefly before moving into the second part of our chapter, which will focus on sales.

There are countless points that could be made regarding marketing strategy, and knowing which direction to take your marketing platform in can be confusing, especially during the early years of your business. One of the surest ways to navigate these waters is to take what we've come to call the powder keg approach. Since we haven't spoken about this concept yet (at least not by name), let's offer a functional definition for it.

Powder Keg Marketing Approach: Focusing on creating backlogs and reserves of marketing materials, so that they can be released across future periods of time; developing vast amounts of marketing material ahead of time.

Now, while that definition can seem extremely simple, there's actually a great deal more to this process than you might think. To put it simply, going about the powder keg marketing approach is one of the quickest ways to incubate your marketing efforts, but it requires a keen eye. First and foremost, you need to be creating content (think blogs, books, articles, advertisements, promotions, polls) that you know you'll have a purpose for in the future.

Content creation, though, is really only half the battle, here. In

fact, you're likely to find that the powder keg marketing approach requires you to consider not only when you're going to need content in the future, but who you're going to need it for. As you work through content creation, consider exactly who is the target audience of each respective piece and how you can frame your content, both now and in the future, to reach them most effectively and create the most likely odds of customer conversion.

As you grow to consider the when, where, why and who of the content that you're creating, you're going to realize something: your marketing initiatives are speeding up exponentially. The further you get into this process, the more templated material that you'll have for responding to the needs and hurdles that will arise in your marketing department in the future.

In short form: you will have not only created a marketing strategy and content library, but you will have created versions of each of those that are fully modifiable for the future. You're strategy's greatest asset, as you'll see when moving through this process, is that it will be flexible and useful as the needs of your company change.

Now, content development and distribution, again, is only one aspect of your marketing department, but it's one that can be critical when it comes to incubation. In order to offer some perspective on more general marketing tools that might help you with incubation of marketing outside the arena of content development, we've opted to include the following list. This is by no means an exhaustive collection of tools that can provide meaningful applications to your marketing department, but you should seriously consider giving a few of these a look:

Buffer

If your startup has any intention of using social media as a method to disseminate your marketing materials and promotional content, then Buffer is one tool that you should absolutely consider using.

Effectively, Buffer is a post scheduling service. Designed to integrate with all of your major social media platforms, Buffer allows you to analyze what times of day it will be most effective to post content depending on what the message, target demographic and purpose of that content as a whole is. Though this may sound extremely basic, there are actually very few platforms that allow you to both analyze your content's posting times and schedule posts in the same application.

Buffer offers pricing for individuals ranging from $0 to $10, and pricing for companies from $99 to $399.

Feedly

It's perfect, actually, that we're listing Feedly directly after our section on Buffer, because the two can be used together with phenomenal results.

Feedly's concept is simple. You make a user account (either for you as an individual or for your business) and then use it to peruse content on the web. You tell Feedly what topics, websites, publications, YouTube channels, etc that apply to you and your business, and it then delivers your content to you in an optimized manner that lets you cut through the static and right to what you want to be seeing.

As we mentioned earlier, one of the best ways to incubate your marketing presence is to become a thought leader in the

community and industry in which you work. Obviously, one of the best ways to do so is through sharing relevant content on social media and encouraging conversations through that medium. With Feedly, you can cut out the process of searching for relevant content, and have it delivered to you instead.

Best of all, it's affordable; Feedly's pricing ranges from $0 to $18 monthly.

Mailchimp

Mailchimp is slightly more niche than Feedly or Buffer, but if you're the kind of company who's considering email marketing as a method of bolstering your product and incubating your marketing initiatives, then it's one that you absolutely can't afford to miss out on.

As you may have already guessed, Mailchimp allows for the design of automated email marketing campaigns. More to the point, Mailchimp allows you to create an intricate system of campaigns, responses and promotional materials that you can schedule automatically. In fact, some startups reach a point where the vast majority of their initial marketing or entry level lead conversion is run through automated campaigns with the help of MailChimp.

While Mailchimp can likely benefit any marketing department, we recommend it particularly to companies with limited budgets and small staffs. Pricing starts at $0 and runs up to $245/month, depending on your needs.

Zapier

Zapier is one of our favorite applications when it comes to marketing incubation, and that's because it's not really an application at all, at least not in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, Zapier is a linking tool that can be used to bridge the various systems that all sides of your company, marketing included, use when it comes to communication.

More clearly, Zapier allows you to connect your various communication platforms so that you ever have to switch back and forth from the one that you are currently using in order to obtain vital information from communication that comes in on a different platform.

Zapier allows you to set any action in any app that you currently use as a 'trigger,' meaning that it starts a reaction in Zapier. To lift an example from their website, you could set receiving a new email in Gmail as a trigger, and the attachment or message you received would then be automatically copied from Gmail to Dropbox, and you would be alerted in Slack about both the message and the new file that had been created.

The time that you save may seem small, but it can make a world of difference when it comes to establishing firm, multi-channel communication in your marketing department.

Pricing runs from $0 to $100/month.

Alright, we've touched on a lot in this section, and it may seem somewhat scattered to you right now. The fact is, though, that there are many different ways to go about incubating your marketing processes, and the most important thing is that you're getting out and doing something at all. We encourage you to go back through this section later on and determine which processes, ideas and tools might be a good fit for your business.

In the meantime, though, let's move on to our next and final

section of the chapter, where we will focus on incubating sales in a startup or early stage company.

How does incubating sales differ from incubating marketing?

Incubating sales is obviously a completely different process from incubating marketing, but it's important to realize two things about the former, particularly in a young company.

First, and perhaps most importantly, don't ever gain the impression that incubating sales is more important than marketing. It's natural for some companies to operate under this assumption, especially those that are founded or managed by individuals or entrepreneurs with backgrounds in traditional business development. Sales is certainly a considerable piece of your company's life blood, as it's where revenue comes from, but it's not the only piece by any means. You can succeed greatly at sales and still fail as an organization.

Second, remember that sales and marketing are, for better or for worse, inextricably linked. One fuels the other, and the two create a cycle that works off of one another. With that said, it's important that while you work on incubating your sales you keep your minds eye on how exactly you went about incubating your marketing, and how you can continue to link the two.

In order to provide the most direct information on how to incubate your sales processes and goals we're going to split this final section of the chapter into two primary sales incubation points; first we'll cover sales type and relationship building, then we'll move into system integrations and tool selection. As we have in other sections of this chapter and book, we'll also be outlining a few key sales tools for startups near the end of the chapter.

1) Incubating Sales By Building Relationships

Incubating sales is a very multifaceted process, and this is largely due to one basic equation: Your revenue and profit is usually going to equal your ability to continue selling.

It's true, if you think about it carefully. If you aren't making sales, then you aren't going to be in business long enough to even have the chance to continue selling. Now, with that in mind, it's natural to think to yourself:

Why, then, are we trying to incubate sales? I don't want to grow these slowly, I want a raging sales fire burning all the time!

We get that, and it's a very common response to the notion of incubating sales processes. With that said, we'd implore you to think about the process of incubating sales not as growing something organically, but as building something correctly. The more time and thought that you can put into incubating or building your sales process in the proper manner, the more easily you'll be able to achieve meaningful results in the future.

One of the most important facets of building a sales structure is also one of the most basic ones: understanding the general vertical of sales that your company is in. Once you do this, you can unlock a veritable treasure trove of information regarding how to best approach the situation of building your sales process into something sustainable. While there are countless sales types to explore, you can gain a lot from simply studying the two primary

categories, business to business and business to consumer.

One of the great things about being a startup is that if, god forbid, you decide that you don't like your vertical or product, there's usually still time to pivot before being pigeonholed into a life of something you aren't enthusiastic about. With that in mind, it's usually still best to select one of these verticals to incubate aggressively and correctly before trying to do both or switch to the other. That said, take a look at how these two sales categories should be approached differently by startups:

> **Business to Business Sales:** Fortunately, business to business sales don't require much of a definition, as the name says it all. Companies that are built on a business to business (or B2B, for brevity's sake) sales platform predominantly sell and market their product to other companies, as opposed to individual consumers.

Incubating business to business sales requires a lot of the same focuses that you'll read about in our next segment on business to consumer (B2C) sales, but applied in a slightly different manner.

Before even beginning to truly incubate your B2B sales, it's critically important that you develop an understanding of the key differences between B2B and B2C verticals. More than anything, this goes a long way when it comes to mitigating expectations. The simple fact of the matter is that the sales cycle that you'll encounter in business to business transactions is a great deal longer than the one you will when working in a B2C environment. It may take you months to even make a sale, so be sure that you and your staff are prepared for the ambiguity in your revenue cycle. Becoming too upset over an absence of immediate sales

will simply hinder your ability to close in the future, but not being mindful of your lengthy sales window may cause you to chase leads that you'll never convert, which is also bad.

As a starting point, if you're working in a B2B vertical, then one of your biggest challenges in incubation is going to be identifying the pain points of your potential customer. Consider what we said in our earlier chapters: the odds are very low that you have a truly unique or new idea. It's much more probable that your company has taken an idea or a market that already existed and improved upon it. That's all well and good, but it means that you're going to have to go the extra mile to impress upon potential customers that your product, and not the products offered by countless other B2B companies in your space, is what's right for them.

The key to this, particularly during incubation, is building sustainable relationships. While this might sound complicated, it really isn't. In fact, we've identified three primary points that you can focus on to incubate your B2B sales quickly and effectively:

Identify Industry Pain Points

While it might seem a bit smear-esque, one of the best ways to distinguish your product from others is to determine where the other product falls short and then highlight how yours excels in that area.

Aim not only to sell to your clients, but also to talk to them, to treat them as human beings. Once you've gotten to the point where you can speak to them regularly and openly, you still aren't ready to sell. Trying to close at this point in a B2B vertical can come across as pushy or desperate, and be a kiss of death for your potential sale. Instead, ask them questions about how their

current service is falling short. If you can successfully navigate your way into this conversation, then you're already most of the way to clearing your sale and incubating a sustainable sales process.

Demonstrate Value

If this step comes across to you as overly obvious, it's simply because it follows so naturally from the identification of pain points. You need to be using the information that you garner regarding how your competitors fall short to impress upon potential clients the value that you can add to their operation.

One of the best ways to do this? Simply determine what kind of resources your client is working with and make clear that it's a priority to you and your staff not to overexert those resources. That conversation might look a little bit like this:

"What's your budget for this project? We'll make sure that we come in underneath it."

Be High Touch

Of all these three steps, this is perhaps the most finicky. We say that because it's necessary to be high touch in order to achieve certain sales, but being too high touch can also drive your sales away or make your potential customers feel as though you're the equivalent of a spam email.

What we've (and countless other successful businesses before us) found is that the secret lies in non-sales communication. Sure, you want to be making your potential customers aware of your value and how you excel where your competitors wane, but this should be only a portion of the communication you're sending

their way. Newsletters, holiday messages or even just general small talk through any medium are a great way to remain in the front of the mind of your potential customer without overwhelming them.

Business to Customer Sales: As you might expect, all the differences that can be found between B2B sales and B2C sales stem from the difference in the sales target, the customer. While selling to other businesses requires remaining high touch and relevant, selling to consumers requires a comparable but slightly different skill set. In reviewing these issues and points throughout the rest of this section, we'd encourage you to consider the following:

In B2C sales, you always want to be speaking to the actual user of the product, the endpoint consumer, as opposed to the person in charge of vendor acquisitions.

In keeping with our earlier format, we've again broken this segment into three key points for incubating B2C sales:

Become a Social Market Leader

As we discussed at some length earlier in this chapter, one of the best ways to incubate your market is through becoming a vocal thought leader in your industry. Much like with the marketing practices that we discussed, developing meaningful content about your industry is, again, one of the best strategies for incubating B2C sales. Potential customers are likely to see this and - even if it isn't directly sales oriented - come to affiliate it with your brand, building trust in you as a business and eventually leading to higher conversion rates.

Encourage Word of Mouth Marketing

One of the cardinal ways in which B2C sales differentiate

themselves from B2B sales is that word of mouth marketing can actually make a world of difference when it comes to incubating and building a B2C sales platform. While this tactic may not be effective in B2B, things like loyalty programs, promotional codes and social media giveaways allow your users to become your greatest marketing vehicles, which can lead to a much steadier and well incubated sales process.

Make it Easy, Keep it Fun

The power that your customers can have as marketing vehicles, it should be noted, works for both good and bad publicity. With this in mind, you should try to make your platform as simple as possible, and keep it that in way. In speaking specifically about sales, it's important to develop uncomplicated terms, a basic pricing strategy, and effectively offer your customers no unpleasant surprises. Think of it this way: the more satisfied you can make a customer with one sale, the more likely they are to recommend you to their peers.

2) Incubating Sales Through System Integration and Tool Implementation

Now, we've already touched briefly on the importance of integrating together your systems so that they can create a cycle that's beneficial to you. While there are many ways to do this, we think it's usually best to focus on ways in which you can turn content into new leads, which your sales department can then use to incubate itself further. After all, leads are going to be, in large part, the energy that keeps your sales department running.

While some of this can be done in a relatively low-tech manner, it's important to note that taking advantage of a wide range of technological tools can make this process a great deal simpler. The key point to consider when evaluating any of the tools below is how that software or service will help you gather, visualize and act upon data analysis. Whether you choose to explicitly link these systems together with an automation like Zapier (profiled above) is entirely your choice, but we'd strongly encourage you to take a look at at least one or two of these services and applications:

BaseCRM

As the name implies, Base CRM is a customer relationship management service. Designed for everything from small startups to enterprise companies, BaseCRM is built to link simply and seamlessly with your email, phones systems and lead scoring interface, and also includes proprietary versions of these tools in it's basic package.

The true beauty of BaseCRM lies in how well it's been optimized for mobile platforms, making it perfect for salespeople and account managers on the go.

Pricing ranges from $25 to $125 per user per month, and includes a broad range of features including user support.

Salesforce

Salesforce was founded in 1999 and, in the nearly two decades that have passed since then, has established itself as the industry standard in sales and lead tracking technology. While other packages and companies may be able to offer you more niche-driven or economically friendly software packages, Salesforce is worth consideration for any company of any size in any space, B2B or B2C.

In addition to its primary platform, Salesforce also runs

mobile applications optimized for both iOS and Android, as well as a PaaS (platform as a service) extension known as Force, a social performance management platform called work.com, and a plethora of other features and extensions catered to your company's needs.

EmailHunter

One of the biggest challenges that sales departments face, regardless of industry, vertical, size or scope, is getting in touch with the correct person. You can make the best pitch in the world, but it simply doesn't matter if you're making it to someone who doesn't have the authority to authorize a sale. That's where EmailHunter comes in.

A truly revolutionary program, EmailHunter allows you to search for email addresses either by entering a domain name or a LinkedIn extension, and also allows you to verify email addresses you've already received as valid.

EmailHunter has pricing plans available from $0 to $399/ month, but you have to go with one of the paid options in order to export your findings as .CSV files.

LeadGenius

LeadGenius presents as a solid alternative to EmailHunter, and will certainly bolster businesses that are looking less to target specific companies and more to target given industries.

With LeadGenius, you build a filtered profile based on the type of industry you're looking to connect with (eg: advertising), the level of staff title you're hoping to find (eg: Director) and other keywords (eg: accounts). From there, LeadGenius provides you with an algorithmically formed list of targets it believes you should

prospect.

ZenProspect

Designed specifically for B2B sales applications, ZenProspect may be the most innovative sales prospecting automation software to hit the market, ever. The platform has been designed to cut out more or less the entire process of finding business to business leads.

With ZenProspect, you enter your ideal demographic into the user interface and select filters including everything from title to region to how recently individuals completed a specific funding round. From there, ZenProspect spits out verified email addresses of business leaders it thinks you should target. As though that weren't perfect enough, ZenProspect also allows you to design email campaigns and auto-send and reply commands to follow up with these individuals.

ChartMogul

If you purchase only one analytics automation software for your startup, you may see the most return on sales incubation from registering for a Chartmogul membership. A one-stop analytics platform, ChartMogul combines all of your customer data and reduces it to it's core, delivering meaningful insights that you can turn into actionable ideas.

With tons of pre-built API's as well as the capacity to support custom integrations, ChartMogul works for sales departments ranging from those just getting started to those with fully robust presences already developed.

As we reach the end of another chapter, we invite you to reflect not only on what we've covered here, but also the material

from the first three chapters. We know that incubation can be an overwhelming period and, in many ways, we think it should be.

Overwhelming, however, doesn't have to be a bad thing. Make sure, as you review the information we've presented here, that you're taking the time to enjoy the process.