Highly competitive startup team compositions

Ideas are
<u>not</u> unique

Teams are inherently unique

lyft (2009)   UBER (2009)   RelayRides (2010)   Ridejoy (2011)   Sidecar. (2011)   HAIL O (2014)

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Founder   Founder   General Counsel   Head of Design

Startup teams are becoming increasingly competitive

**Rise of software & internet
(1980s - 1999)**

**Web 2.0
(1999 - 2010)**

**Post Digital
(2010 - onward)**

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Technology	TCP/IP and commercial internet Networking Operating systems Browsers		
Cost	Expensive		
Speed to market	Several months/years		
Business Type	Mainly B2B		
Startup teams	*Few and homogenous*		

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	Rise of software & internet (1980s - 1999)	Web 2.0 (1999 - 2010)	Post Digital (2010 - onward)
Technology	TCP/IP and commercial internet Networking Operating systems Browsers	User generated content Interoperability	Mobile Internet of Things AR/VR Ubiquitous web
Cost	Expensive	Relatively inexpensive	Nearing zero
Speed to market	Several months/years	Months	Days
Business Type	Mainly B2B	Large shift to consumer	All business is done online
Startup teams	*Few and homogenous*	**Many and less homogenous**	**Enormous and heterogeneous**

What is the data telling us about competitive teams?

Women

70% of unicorns have women in leadership

Engineering Talent

92% of unicorns start with tech co-founders

Former Employers

>92% of unicorns co-founders worked in tech or prominent companies

Age

Top companies are being founded by teams in broad age ranges 20s – 40s

School Matters

Teams with at least one founder from top colleges / universities perform best

Solo Founders

Teams with more than one founder out perform solo founders by 163%

Sources: First Round Capital 10 Year Project and Aileen Lee's Welcome to The Unicorn Club, 2015
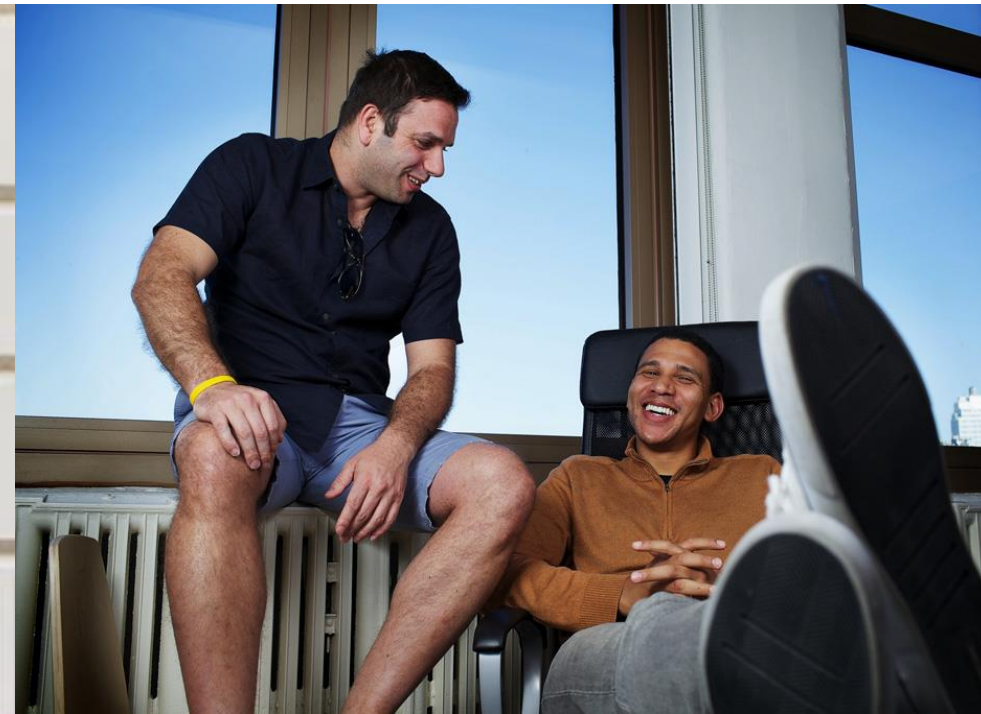
Founder / product fit

Founders are **MBAs from top schools**

Founders worked for **top companies**

Authentically care about the product

Engineer and **top MBA** co-founders

Top schools and **top former employers**

Domain expertise and **leadership**

Founder / product fit

Co-founder has extensive experience working for financial institutions

Engineering team from Cornell Tech's Startup Studio

Top schools and **companies** prior to Cornell Tech

Founder / product fit

nanit

Co-founders have PhDs in computer vision and MBA

Engineering team is deeply technical

Domain experience in retail and venture capital

Founder / product fit

Co-founders are a mix of engineers and MBAs

Team from **Cornell Tech's Startup Studio**

The team was formed before the idea

Founder / product fit

Co-founders are a mix of engineers and Law

Team from **Cornell Tech's Startup Studio**

Team pivoted to a new and an entirely different idea during Startup Studio

What to team composition to avoid?

o **All MBA team members** with no technical skills

o **Recruiting your friends and people who are just like you** with no regard to domain expertise or ability to build

o Highly risk adverse people who **over index on hedging and backup plans** that are unrelated to the startup

Choosing the right startup co-founder

- ✓ Use the superpowers spreadsheet to identify people that have **complementary skills, domain expertise, and passion for similar ideas**

- ✓ Grab coffee with people who **challenge your fundamental beliefs** and who **see the world differently**

- ✓ Don't be afraid to explore new ideas with **someone you wouldn't otherwise engage**

- ✓ Be **open** and **vulnerability** when sharing ideas: allow the idea to morph

- ✓ When you are meeting with potential co-founders, talk about times when you both **gave something your all and overcame huge obstacles**; and have a real conversation about your **determination to make this startup succeed!**