



HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL STARTUP

12 Lessons from  Combinator





1) Founding Team

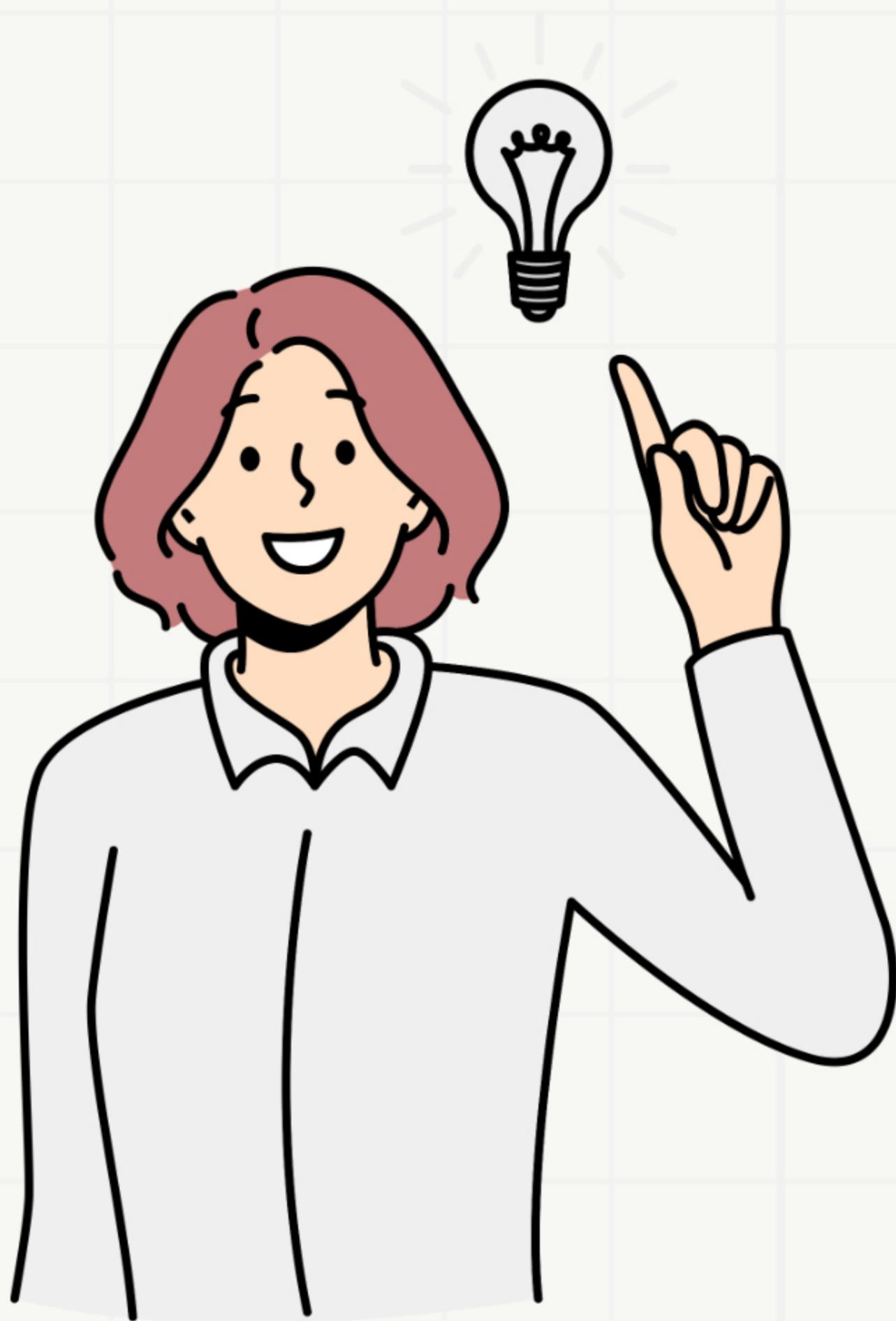
- 2 to 4 co-founders
- At least 50% engineering or technical
- Each has one year of living expenses saved
- All must quit their jobs





2) Idea Generation

- Brainstorm with teammates
- Solve personal or well-understood problems
- Focus on daily/weekly issues, not monthly/yearly





3) Market Research

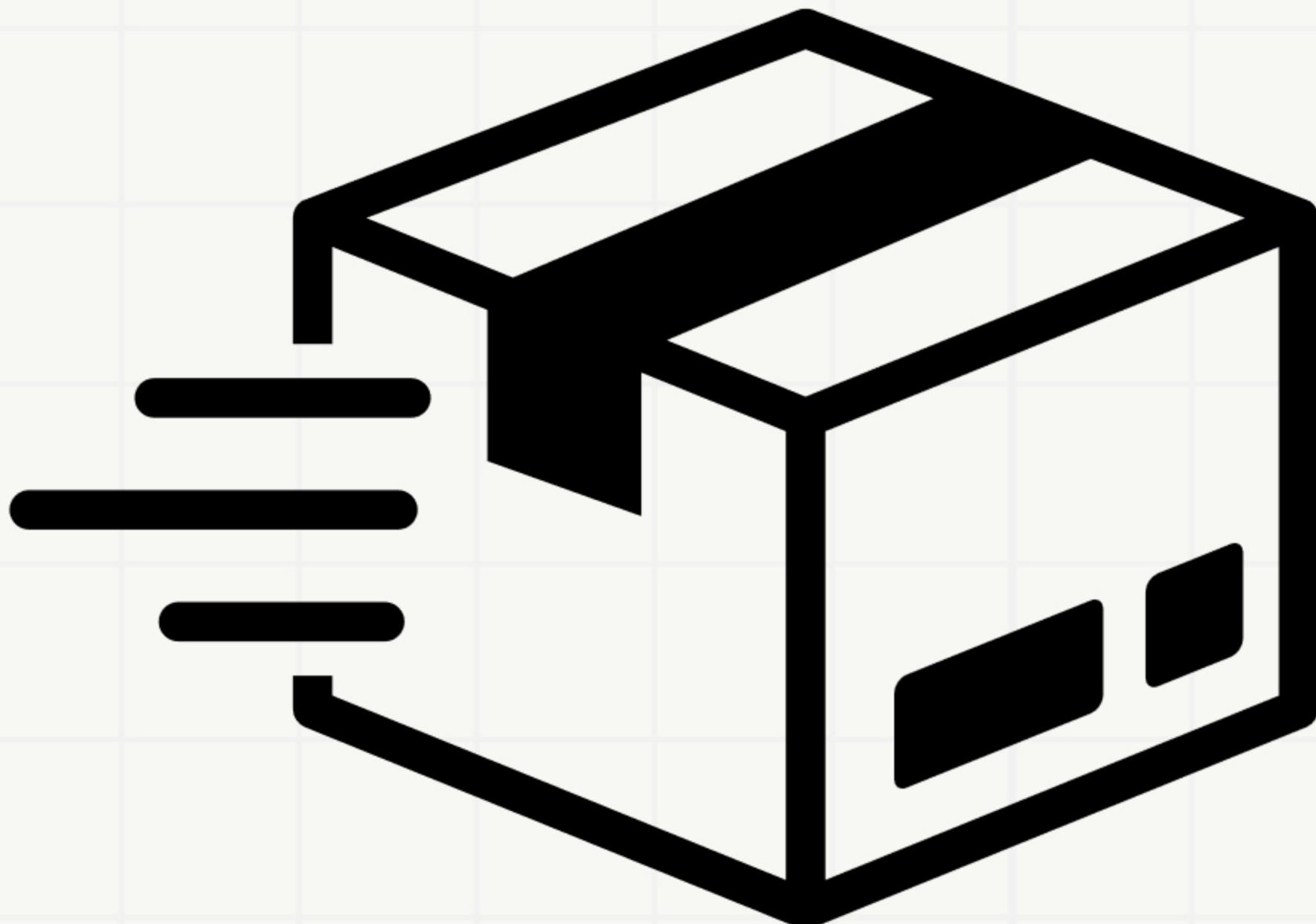
- 1 hour of research
- Ensure billions are being made in your market
- Use competitors' products





4) MVP (Minimum Viable Product)

- Launch within 2 months, or even better, 2 weeks
- Get something into users' hands quickly
- Don't over-iterate before launch





5) Legal Setup

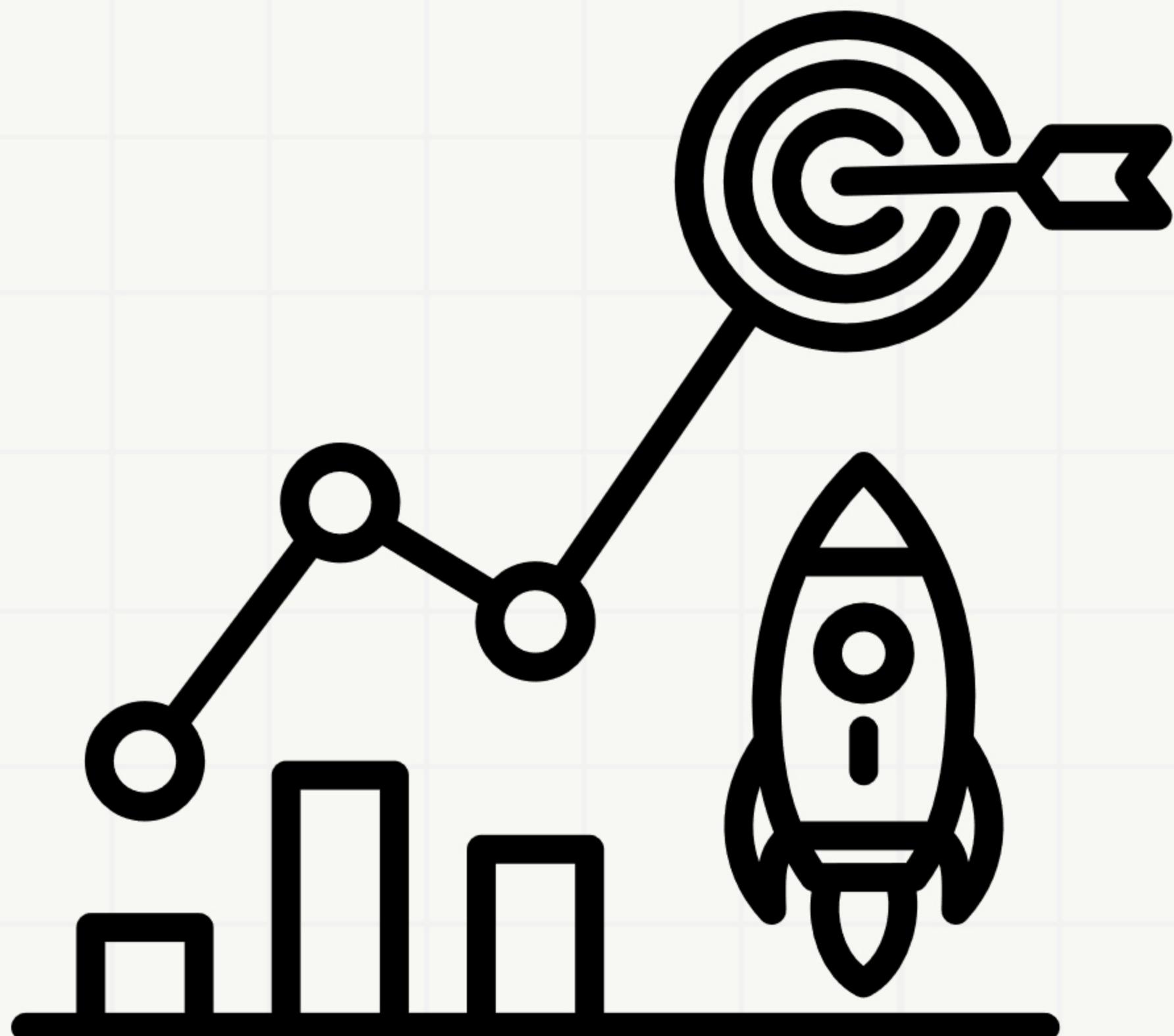
- Incorporate in the US for \$250 via online services
- Enables fundraising from US investors





6) Growth Strategies

- Experiment with ads (least preferred)
- Focus on reference customers (for B2B)
- Ensure usage equals sharing (for consumer products)





7) Press Relations

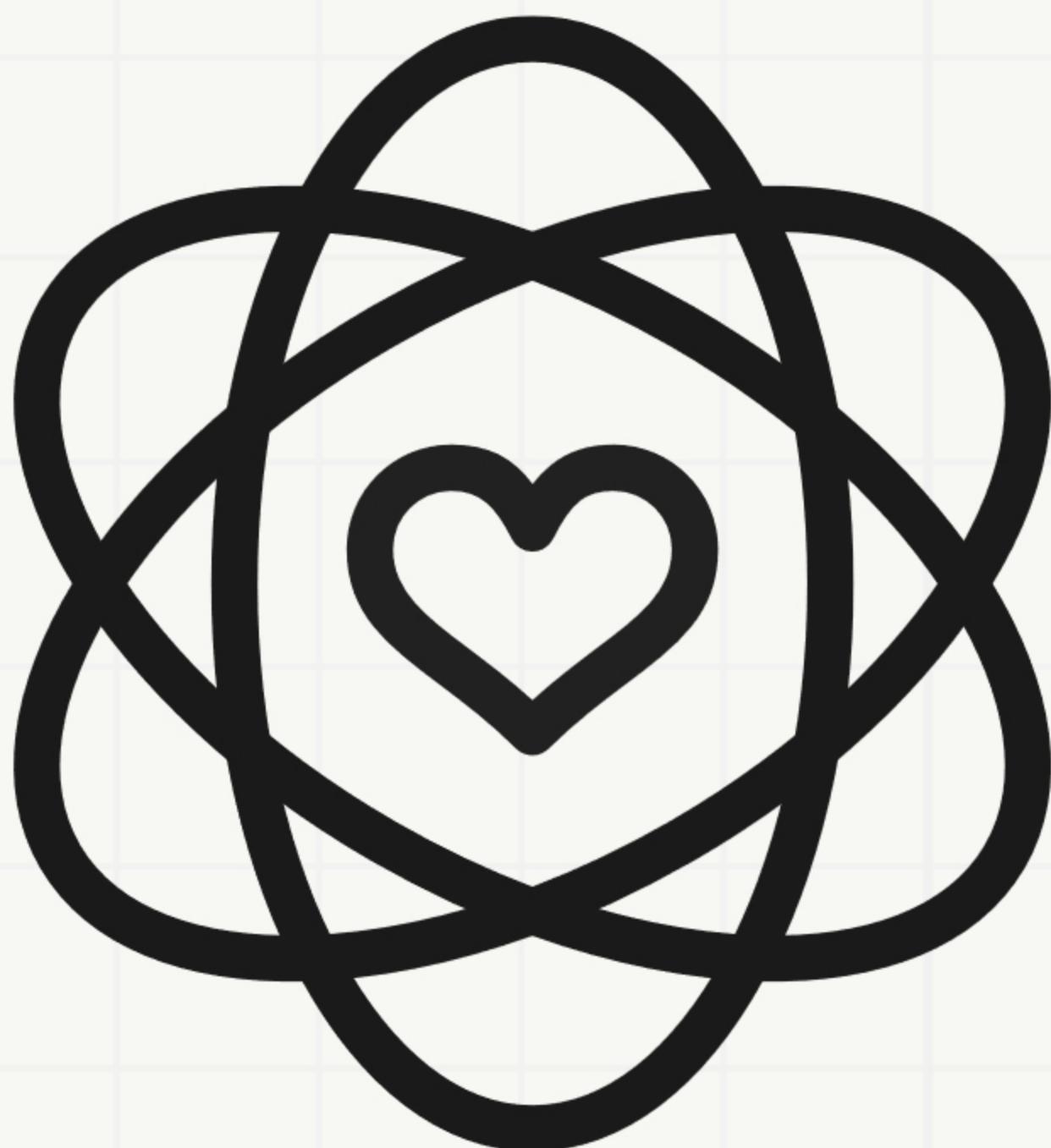
- Handle PR yourself in the early stages
- Treat PR like business development
- Build relationships with reporters
- Provide real news (launches, funding, significant hires)





8) Fundraising Principles

- Create a situation where you don't need the money
- Schedule investor meetings tightly (e.g., within one week)
- Create FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) among investors
- Show growth to attract investors





9) Fundraising Tips

- Launch before fundraising
- Talk to the press to get noticed
- Build momentum by talking to many investors simultaneously
- Target investors who understand your problem





10) Financial Operations

- Spend less money than you have
- Pay yourself less
- Choose a cheaper office
- Review expenses monthly





11) Hiring Strategy

- Increase average talent with each hire
- Be fair and transparent with offers
- Give stock options
- Hire slowly; do more with your founding team





12) Product Development

- Focus on solving real problems
- Iterate based on user feedback
- Don't wait for perfection before launching

