The way to succeed in a startup is not to be an expert on startups, but to be an expert on your users and the problem you're solving for them

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gradually realize how completely fucked they are, because while imitating all the outward forms of a startup they have neglected the one thing that's actually essential: making something people want.

We saw this happen so often that we made up a name for it: playing house.

We tell them the best way to [convince investors](http://www.paulgraham.com/convince.html) is to make a startup that's actually doing well, meaning [growing fast](http://www.paulgraham.com/growth.html), and then simply tell investors so.

 starting a startup is where gaming the system stops working.

Startups are as impersonal as physics. You have to make something people want, and you prosper only to the extent you do.

 A founder who knows nothing about fundraising but has made something users love will have an easier time raising money than one who knows every trick in the book but has a flat usage graph.

partly because as the company's daddy he can never show fear or weakness, and partly because billionaires get less than zero sympathy if they talk about having difficult lives.

But the total volume of worry never decreases; if anything it increases.

I can answer that one for you. Do not start a startup in college. How to start a startup is just a subset of a bigger problem you're trying to solve: how to have a good life.

Facebook is running him as much as he's running Facebook.

The hard part was predicting how tough and ambitious they would become. There may be no one who has more experience at trying to predict that, so I can tell you how much an expert can know about it, and the answer is: not much.

So one guaranteed way to turn your mind into the type that has good startup ideas is to get yourself to the leading edge of some technology — to cause yourself, as Paul Buchheit put it, to "live in the future."

The component of entrepreneurship that really matters is domain expertise. The way to become Larry Page was to become an expert on search. And the way to become an expert on search was to be driven by genuine curiosity, not some ulterior motive.

Some founders listen more than others, and this tends to be a[predictor of success](http://www.paulgraham.com/word.html). One of the things I remember about the Airbnbs during YC is how intently they listened.

It shouldn't be that surprising that colleges can't teach students how to be good startup founders, because they can't teach them how to be good employees either.

What should you do if your true calling is gaming the system? Management consulting.