How to navigate technology for a startup

1. Distinguish between a tech startup and a tech enabled startup. Recognize the difference and make technology and enabler not a disabler for your business.
2. Build an MVP using a wireframe demo or concierge to validate customer demand and behaviors thereby derisking marketing which is the biggest risk for failure for a business.
3. Initially as founder = product manager have clarity on what you are building
4. Where possible use SaaS platforms such as Shopify for ecommerce and Squarespace for CMS as building custom code based website commits you to spending a percentage of your profits forever on IT. This should be your last resort.
5. Hire software developers using best practices of sourcing, filtering, attracting and retaining
6. Educate yourself on frameworks, languages and platform so you can communicate fluently and specify software with some level of knowledge
7. Start with desktop website, followed by mobile optimized site and finally a mobile app
8. Trace out as many user stories as possible each of which are independent and negotiable to specify interface. Don’t try to achieve perfection.
9. Decompose the project into smaller bits that can be completed in roughly one week
10. Use SaaS where possible to expedite process and reduce room for error. Some must haves are stripe for payment gateway and Twilio for sending interactive response software and Sendgrid for email marketing.
11. Build features that solve problems you have encountered and can relate with making it easiest for you to solve
12. Don’t design details of the website upfront – do it based on a feedback loop. This practice is referred to as incremental software development and reduces technical debt.
13. Keep specs of features and code flexible so they can be leveraged while developing new features
14. Model your technology on iterative software development which means it should be goal driven. For example we want to achieve a 20% CTR on the homepage – how do we code or design interface to achieve this
15. While managing your software to try build in reversibility so you don’t get stuck with features or code that you may not want later