

My buddy Jason had a [GREAT post](#) about rules for startups. Read it, love it learn it.

Of course, anyone who has started a company has their own rules and guidelines, so I thought i would add to the meme with my own. My "rules" below aren't just for those founding the companies, but for those who are considering going to work for them as well.

1. Don't start a company unless its an obsession and something you love.
2. If you have an exit strategy, its not an obsession.
3. Hire people who you think will love working there.
4. Sales Cures All. Know how your company will make money and how you will actually make sales.
5. Know your core competencies and focus on being great at them. Pay up for people in your core competencies. Get the best. Outside the core competencies, hire people that fit your culture but are cheap
6. An espresso machine ? Are you kidding me ? Shoot yourself before you spend money on an espresso machine. Coffee is for closers. Sodas are free. Lunch is a chance to get out of the office and talk. There are 24 hours in a day, and if people like their jobs, they will find ways to use as much of it as possible to do their jobs.
7. No offices. Open offices keeps everyone in tune with what is going on and keeps the energy up. If an employee is about privacy, show them how to use the lock on the john. There is nothing private in a start up. This is also a good way to keep from hiring execs who can not operate successfully in a startup. My biggest fear was always hiring someone who wanted to build an empire. If the person demands to fly first class or to bring over their secretary, run away. If an exec wont go on salescalls, run away. They are empire builders and will pollute your company.
8. As far as technology, go with what you know. That is always the cheapest way. If you know Apple, use it. If you know Vista... ask yourself why, then use it. Its a startup, there are just a few employees. Let people use what they know.
9. Keep the organization flat. If you have managers reporting to managers in a startup, you will fail. Once you get beyond startup, if you have managers reporting to managers, you will create politics.
10. NEVER EVER EVER buy swag. A sure sign of failure for a startup is when someone sends me logo polo shirts. If your people are at shows and in public, its ok to buy for your own folks, but if you really think someone is going to wear your Yobaby.com polo you sent them in public, you are mistaken and have no idea how to spend your money
11. NEVER EVER EVER hire a PR firm. A PR firm will call or email people in the publications, shows and websites you already watch, listen to and read. Those people publish their emails. Whenever you consume any information related to your field, get the email of the person publishing it and send them an email introducing yourself and the company. Their job is to find new stuff. They will welcome hearing from the founder instead of some PR flack. Once you establish communications with that person, make yourself available to answer their questions about the industry and be a source for them. If you are smart, they will use you.
12. Make the job fun for employees. Keep a pulse on the stress levels and accomplishments of your people and reward them. My first company, MicroSolutions, when we had a record sales month, or someone did something special, I would walk around handing out 100 dollar bills to salespeople. At Broadcast.com and MicroSolutions, we had a company shot. Kamikaze. We would take people to a bar every now and then and buy one or 10 for everyone. At MicroSolutions, more often than not we had vendors cover the tab. Vendors always love a good party :0

These are all off the top of my head. But they have worked for me so far.