

# 50 Paul Graham Quotes Every Founder Should Tape to the Wall

*The lines that show up in every YC office hour · [ycplaybook.xyz](http://ycplaybook.xyz)*

1. Make something people want.
2. It's better to have 100 users who love you than 1,000,000 who sort of like you.
3. Startups don't usually fail because they can't build a product. They fail because they can't reach product-market fit.
4. The way to get startup ideas is not to try to think of startup ideas.
5. Live in the future, then build what's missing.
6. Don't worry about competitors. Worry about being good.
7. Startups don't die from murder, they die from suicide.
8. Your job as a founder is to talk to users and write code. Everything else is a distraction.
9. Great founders are relentlessly resourceful.
10. If you have to choose between a great market and a great team, pick the great market every time.
11. It's hard to do a really good job on anything you don't think about in the shower.
12. Growth is the only thing. Everything else is downstream.
13. Default alive or default dead — know which one you are at all times.
14. Do things that don't scale. Then scale them.
15. The best ideas look unattractive on the surface. That's why nobody else is doing them yet.
16. If you're not embarrassed by the first version of your product, you've launched too late.
17. Schlep blindness: founders avoid problems that involve schleps. That's where the gold is.
18. Startups are not about working hard for the sake of it. They're about working on the right thing.
19. The fundamental skill of a founder is the ability to keep going.
20. Talk to your users. Then talk to them again. Then go talk to them one more time.
21. Most startups that fail do so because the founders gave up.
22. The most common reason a startup fails is they make something nobody wants.
23. When you have nothing, you have to ship something.
24. If your product is mediocre, you better have great distribution. If your product is great, mediocre distribution will do.
25. Startups are concentrated bets. The only way to win is to bet hard.
26. Speed is the only sustainable advantage.
27. It is more important to have potential customers love a product than for many to like it.
28. When in doubt, talk to a user.

- 29.** Almost all startup advice is wrong, except the part about working on something you'd use yourself.
- 30.** Pick problems where the world has changed but the solutions haven't caught up.
- 31.** Founders should be in 'maker mode' most of the day, not 'manager mode'.
- 32.** Every minute you spend in a meeting is a minute you're not making the product better.
- 33.** The best founders are the ones who build the things they wish existed.
- 34.** Don't optimize for fundraising. Optimize for product.
- 35.** Investors are looking for founders who are determined and clear-thinking, in that order. — Jessica Livingston
- 36.** Hire slow. Fire fast. — Sam Altman
- 37.** The best startups are usually founded by 2 people. 1 is hard. 3+ is harder.
- 38.** If you can't ship fast, you can't compete.
- 39.** Charge for your product. The first paid customer is more important than the first 1,000 free signups. — M. Seibel
- 40.** Founders who talk about competitors all day rarely beat them.
- 41.** The startup world rewards depth over breadth.
- 42.** If you're growing 5%/week, you'll be 12.6x bigger in a year. That's the only number that matters.
- 43.** Your competitors are not your problem. Your problem is making the product better.
- 44.** Most startup death spirals start with the founders losing focus.
- 45.** You should be able to explain your startup in a single sentence.
- 46.** If a meeting could be an email, make it an email.
- 47.** The hardest part of starting a startup is starting.
- 48.** If your customers are saying 'this is amazing' but not paying, your product isn't actually amazing.
- 49.** Build something 100 people love, not something 1 million people kind of like. — Brian Chesky
- 50.** When you're stuck, the answer is usually: talk to more users.