

Insights from Rework by Jason Fried

Starting a business doesn't need to be intimidating.

The book "Rework" offers a refreshing approach to business that author Jason Fried and his team at Basecamp have validated over the last twenty years while running a successful software business. I've developed a three-part mantra from "Rework" to successfully start any business venture:

"Solve your problem, with less, then pick a fight."



"Solve your problem"

When Bill Bowerman was a track coach at the University of Oregon, he looked for a lighter, higher-quality running shoe for his athletes. He couldn't find any. He went to a local workshop and started pouring rubber in a waffle iron to create his own shoes. Years later, Nike was born.

Author Jason Fried and his team at Basecamp develop software applications for project managers. Each of their products is built on a simple question, "Is it something we need and would want to use?"

Fried says, *"There was no need for focus groups, market studies, or middlemen. We had the itch, so we scratched it."*

By making a product or service to solve one of your specific problems, you will know immediately if what you are doing is any good. When you solve your own problem, you can make decisions faster and more effectively.

Your ability to build a successful business come down to the speed and quality of your decisions.



"With less"

When Basecamp was building their first software application, they did it on a shoestring budget and in far less time than they had originally planned. They shared office space with another company. They bought one server and had just enough storage to support the launch plus a few months. They didn't hire customer support. The owners answered every customer email.

It would be nice to have an MBA or be the foremost expert in your industry before starting a business, but you might be able to get started with access to Google and a handful of trusted resources you can ask for help along the way.

It would be nice to develop a detailed business plan, but your time might be better spent building a solution that works and then seeing if ten people want to buy it. Once you've validated your solution, then you can build a detailed business plan.

There are so many things aspiring business owners think they need to start their business. Most of it fits in the category of nice-to-have or should have, not must have. You need less than you think.



"Then pick a fight"

Dunkin' Donuts, a coffee shop in the United States, positions itself as the anti-Starbucks. They pride themselves on not having fancy names for cup sizes, like 'venti' or 'grande.' They even had a website called DunkinBeatStarbucks.com where visitors could send e-cards with messages like "Friends don't let friends drink Starbucks."

Jason Fried says *"Being the anti-_____ is a great way to differentiate yourself and attract followers... Taking a stand always stands out. People get stoked by conflict. They take sides."*

However, since you're starting on the cheap, you might think it's hard to one-up your competition. Don't. Instead, one-down them.

I recently went to a coffee shop in NYC that had four options: hot coffee, cold coffee, espresso, and espresso with milk. Their minimalist approach was their way of being the anti-mainstream coffee shop. They offered less, but what they did offer, was better than the competition. Their cold coffee was one of the best coffees I'd ever had. I'll be going back.

The strategy is to see what the mainstream solutions are, then decide what few things you are going to do to do well, and purposely ignore the rest.

"What you do is what matters, not what you think or say or plan." - Jason Fried