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› 5 WAYS TO STAY MOTIVATED IN START-UPS

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5 ways to stay motivated in start-ups

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The birth of a start-up is an exciting time. Headquarters are established, roles are assigned and announcements made. That's the easy part. But once the dust settles and the hard work begins, many entrepreneurs are surprised by how difficult it can be to succeed. It's important to stay motivated and remember, as Chinese philosopher Laozi famously said, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step".

Laozi founded Taoism 2,500 years ago but, believe it or not, it can still teach us a lot about how to stay motivated while starting a business. Here are five tips.

1. Don't be a slave to expectations

Remember when you told your family and friends about your hopes and dreams for the venture? If you're not careful, you can easily become a slave to the expectations you declared at the height of your excitement. Laozi sums it up well: "Care about what other people think and you will always be their prisoner."

2. Set realistic milestones

Be mindful of the size of the task you have set yourself and eat that elephant one bite at a time, as the saying goes. Often business milestones are aligned to the needs of investors, but the market has its own ideas about timing. Set milestones that allow for changing resources along with lost and new opportunities. As Laozi said, "New beginnings are often disguised as painful endings." If the plan doesn't work out, learn, reset and adapt.

3. Pace yourself

Take control of how you are investing your time. Allow time to wonder, 'What if I did it differently?' Don't get stuck on the treadmill of working harder and harder. Laozi was right when he said: "Doing nothing is

better than being busy doing nothing.” Give yourself the time – and permission – to think.

4. Be patient

Start-ups require long-term planning and hard work. This might not be the glamorous life you envisaged when starting out but stick with it. Somewhere along the road, you will realise you’re no longer toiling, but winning. “What the caterpillar calls the end, the rest of the world calls a butterfly,” says Laozi. If you are patient, the end of your hard slog will mark the beginning of real success.

5. Know yourself and play to your strengths.

Avoid recruiting mini-mes. People with the same skill set and approach will be easy to work with initially, but won’t strengthen your business. A diverse mix of skills and experience promotes healthy debate and innovation. Understand what you bring to the table, then hire people whose skills complement your own. Laozi, once again: “Knowing others is wisdom; knowing yourself is enlightenment.”

Starting a business is not easy or glamorous, despite what glossy magazines would have us believe. Take heart in the knowledge that people have been embarking on similar journeys for thousands of years – all beginning with a single step. The road is long, but with a little patience and tenacity, the hard work might just pay off.



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By Alan Manly

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