



# 15 Blog Posts Every Startup Founder and Their Team Should Read

by Dennis Hammer

There's a ton of free information for startups on the web. Too much, in fact, to read it all.

You don't have time to look at *everything*, so you have to focus on the content that educates you the most; the stuff that creates the most value (Come to think of it, focusing on activities that lead to the most value is a common theme for startup founders and teams).

Here's a collection of articles with the best advice for startups. Use them for inspiration and insight. They might not all apply to you right now, but they will as your startup grows. These articles cover a wide range of topics, from growth to management:

1. Startup = Growth, by Paul Graham
2. A Surprisingly Powerful Mechanism for Growing a SaaS Startup, by Tomas Tunguz
3. Don't Kick the Can Down The Road, by Fred Wilson
4. Customer Success: The Definitive Guide 2018, by Lincoln Murphy
5. The Four Cringe-Worthy Mistakes Too Many Startups Make with Data, by First Round Review
6. The Content Marketing Handbook, by Rohin Dhar
7. Build a Growth Machine Like Andy Johns, by Lauren Bass
8. 43 Lessons Growing From \$0 to \$1+ Million in Revenue, Twice, by Joseph Walla
9. Everyone Uses Buyer Personas Incorrectly, by Andrew Gierer
10. The Secret to Successful Customer Onboarding, by Lincoln Murphy
11. Why Lead Velocity Rate (LVR) is the Most Important Metric in SaaS, by Jason Lemkin
12. Reconsider, by David Heinemeier Hansson
13. Minimize your Time to Product/Market Fit, by Andrew Chen
14. The Iceberg Theory of User Feedback, by Janet Choi
15. All the Startup Advice You Read is Wrong, by Ev Williams

## 1. [Startup = Growth](#)

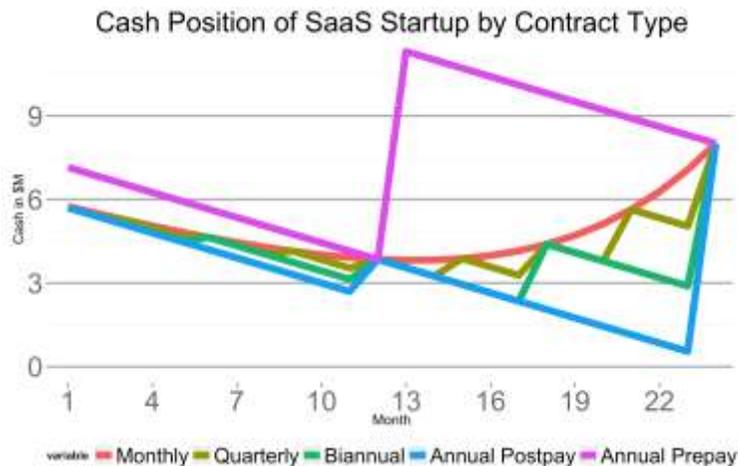
This is *the* quintessential blog post for startup founders. It's almost too cliché to include it on our list, but it's too important to ignore.

Paul Graham is a VC guy with his hand in, well, everything, including the popular startup accelerator Y Combinator. In this post, he explains what it means to be a startup.

"A startup is a company designed to grow fast," he says. "Being newly founded does not in itself make a company a startup. Nor is it necessary for a startup to work on technology, or take venture funding, or have some sort of 'exit.' The only essential thing is growth. Everything else we associate with startups follows from growth."

## 2. [A Surprisingly Powerful Mechanism for Growing a SaaS Startup](#)

In this article, prolific blogger Tomas Tunguz talks about the importance of cash for startups. "Cash is the lifeblood of startups," he says. "Cash empowers management teams to invest in all kinds of growth mechanisms. So, it's no surprise that maximizing a company's cash to invest in growth is a good thing."



Source: [tomtunquz.com](http://tomtunquz.com)

To maximize cash, he recommends getting your customers to prepay on an annual basis. Obviously that's not as simple as just sending the bill early, but getting twelve months paid upfront has a uniquely powerful effect on your startup's cash position.

### 3. [Don't Kick the Can Down The Road](#)

As the founder of your startup, the buck stops with you. You have to make the hard calls and the decisions no one wants to make. You have to drive product development, hire and fire people, and decide when to accept funding and how much.

In this post, VC Fred Wilson reminds us not to neglect the hard decisions, because if we don't make them, no one will.

### 4. [Customer Success: The Definitive Guide 2018](#)

This is a comprehensive guide on customer success (which is not the same as customer support) that every founder should read as early as possible. It teaches you how to identify and achieve your customers' goals so they keep paying for your product forever.

### 5. [The Four Cringe-Worthy Mistakes Too Many Startups Make with Data](#)

Data is the lifeblood of growing a startup, yet countless organizations get it wrong. Ask yourself if you're making any of these mistakes with your data.

(If you don't read [First Round Review](#), add it to your reading list immediately. You'll love the stories of about how real startup founders navigate challenges.)

## 6. [The Content Marketing Handbook](#)

You probably know that creating content is a key way to drive leads and sales, especially for B2B startups. But there's a difference between *creating* content and content *marketing*. The marketing part requires research, testing, data, and distribution. This guide teaches you how to build an audience that trusts you and converts into paying customers.

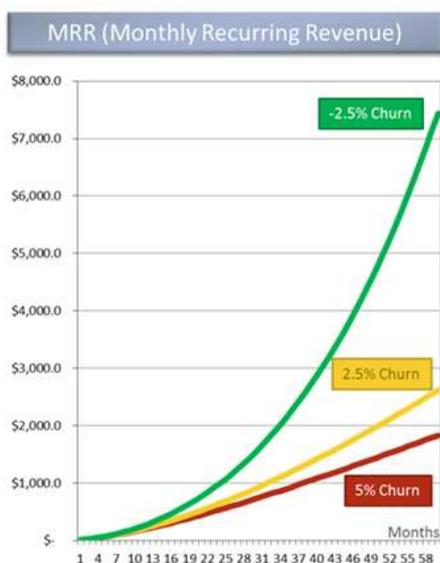
## 7. [Build a Growth Machine Like Andy Johns](#)

In this post, Lauren Bass breaks down Andy Johns's (who's been involved at Facebook, Twitter, Quora and Wealthfront) approach to growth. She makes a unique point about growth that a lot of "growth hack" blog posts miss:

"You can't 'growth hack' a crappy product," she says. "If no one group of people finds your product compelling and worth using and buying, then regardless of the marketing or growth muscle you put behind it, it won't grow. Founders often look for the silver bullet that will grow their product. This is why people experienced in growth wince at the term 'growth hacker.' Real and sustainable growth does not come from a single hack or a lone wolf hacker."

## 8. [43 Lessons Growing From \\$0 to \\$1+ Million in Revenue, Twice](#)

This is a *big* list of actionable growth advice. Joseph Walla grew two startups beyond \$1 million in yearly revenue twice, so he knows what he's talking about. Not all of these will apply to you right now, but a lot of it is good to know before you dive into your [growth process](#), like his advice on charging for your product and managing churn.



Source: [thenextweb.com](http://thenextweb.com)

## 9. [Everyone Uses Buyer Personas Incorrectly](#)

Buyer personas drive your marketing, sales, support, and even your product development, yet many startups use them incorrectly or never create them at all. This post teaches you how to build *quantified* buyer personas to focus your testing.

## 10. [The Secret to Successful Customer Onboarding](#)

Your job isn't over once customers sign up. You've got to bring them on board.

Instead of merely giving your users a tour of the interface, onboarding is about helping them quickly achieve whatever they find valuable with your product. You've got to figure out what success means for them and how to get them there. If they don't get a taste of that success early, they're likely to leave and never come back.

"As I say all the time, the seeds of churn are planted early," says customer success expert Lincoln Murphy, "And those seeds are planted deep if your onboarding experience for new customers or your prospects during a free trial is terrible."

## 11. [Why Lead Velocity Rate \(LVR\) is the Most Important Metric in SaaS](#)

Jason Lemkin makes a great point in this article: Most metrics are *lagging* metrics, meaning they show you *how things were*, not *how things are*. Leading metrics are more powerful because they can help you predict the future, especially your Lead Velocity Rate (growth in qualified leads, month-over-month).

"[LVR is] real time, not lagging, and it clearly predicts your future revenues and growth," he says "And it's more important strategically than your revenue growth this month or this quarter."

## 12. [Reconsider](#)

This is a fantastic article by Basecamp founder David Heinemeier Hansson about coming up with your own definition of success. You don't need to "disrupt an industry" or break into the "three comma club." You can build a successful company without trying to dominate the world.

"The real question is why do you startup? I don't actually believe that most people are solely motivated by fawning over the latest hockey stick phenomenon," he says. "Bedazzled, probably, but not solely motivated. I invite you to dig deeper and explore those motivations."

### 13. [Minimize your Time to Product/Market Fit](#)

“Startups need to get to ‘Product/Market Fit’ or die trying,” says startup growth expert Andrew Chen. “Most die trying.”

The sooner you build a product that your customers actually want to buy, the sooner you’ll become profitable and grow. In this post, Andrew explains how to find that fit quickly *without* cloning someone else’s product.

### 14. [The Iceberg Theory of User Feedback](#)

You’ll get lots of feedback from your users through conversations and your analytics, but there are undoubtedly problems with your product and your service you aren’t aware of because no one complains about them. Nevertheless, these “below the surface” problems impact your retention and revenue.

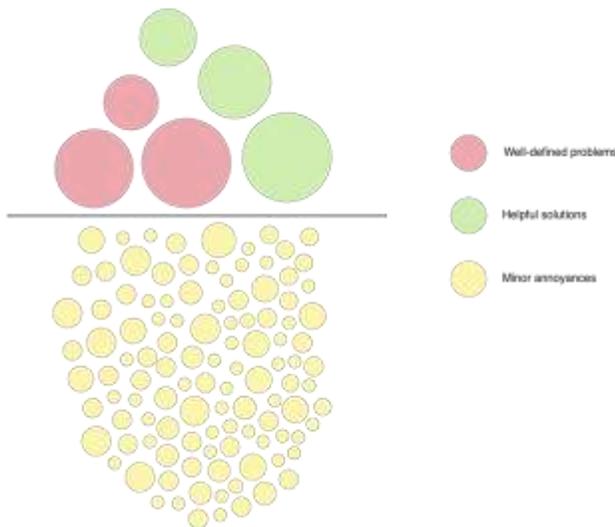


Image: [customer.io](http://customer.io)

“Minor annoyances usually don’t spark angry emails, but that doesn’t mean they hurt your product any less,” says Janet Choi, Director of Marketing at Customer.io. “You may satisfy the loud complainers who’ve gotten your attention, but the quiet ones may be struggling with diminishing patience.” Her article explains how to identify and fix these hidden problems.

### 15. [All the Startup Advice You Read is Wrong](#)

This is an important article because it will influence everything else you read. In this post, Ev Williams (CEO of Medium, co-founder of Twitter, and partner of a VC firm) explains why you should approach all of your startup learning with healthy skepticism.

Just because it worked for someone else doesn't mean it'll work for you.

## Blog Posts Can Only Take You So Far

Articles you read on the web—even if they're written by successful startup founders and teams—won't solve all of your problems. They can only take you part of the way. Their advice might be good, but it may not necessarily apply to your specific situation.

To learn actionable ways to build and grow your startup, you also need a community of experts who can apply their wisdom to your circumstance on-demand. That's where our [10xU membership](#) comes in.