ForeWord Reviews

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Startup: The Complete Handbook for Launching a Company for Less
Elizabeth Edwards
Essential Books
978-0-9832086-1-7
(December 2010)

Many business experts have noted that entrepreneurship tends to increase during a recession, as individuals begin to take more risks and make their own opportunities, rather than waiting for more traditional career tracks to appear. New entrepreneurs will get a head start toward moving a business idea from concept to reality with Startup: The Complete Handbook for Launching a Company for Less.

Based on Elizabeth Edwards's experiences as a venture capitalist, advisory board member, and entrepreneur, this extremely helpful, commonsense guide stands out from many other start-a-business books in the advice category. She writes, "Most of the business books that I read today focus on high-level strategy, but rarely get down to brass tacks: how much things cost, how to do things better—and which services to use."

Entrepreneurship is just as much about survival as it is about wealth, she believes, so half of the book focuses on saving money and mitigating risk. She doesn't skimp on strategy, though, and tackles vital components to business building, including: creating a legal structure, developing back-office operations, creating a marketing and public relations strategy, and articulating a business model that's designed to be profitable.

Edwards includes a few case studies as examples, but generally veers away from the common business book approach of including numerous anecdotes. Instead, the guidebook focuses on numbers, advice, and definitions. With clarity and precision, Edwards lays out concepts and must-know information like unit economics, equity investment, characteristics of venture-backed companies, brand values, and even website domain-name tactics. Every subject is organized into digestible chunks and the writing is so precise that Edwards makes even complicated topics seem easy to understand.

Entrepreneurs will find the numbers particularly helpful, and Edwards includes plenty of them. For example, she notes how much the average startup spends for branding and design, administrative work, and marketing, and how a startup can cut those bills significantly by employing more efficient strategies.

Thanks to the comprehensive, no-nonsense approach adopted here, entrepreneurs have a wealth of information and counsel in a single volume. Startup isn't just a great book to have in hand when beginning a business venture, it's practically a bible for a company's first year of life.

"Entrepreneurship is not for everyone," she writes. "But if it's for you, then I know this book will help you get there faster, save you a lot of time, and a lot of money. You'll be amazed at what you can accomplish."

Elizabeth Millard