



Download at blazing-fast 4G speeds.

Overdrive™ 3G/4G Mobile Hotspot



Learn more

4G available in over 25 markets and counting.

Sp

LOG IN REGISTER FOX BUSINESS

Search Small Business

SMALL BUSINESS CENTER

HUMAN RESOURCES

NETWORKING

ENTREPRENEURS

FINANCE

STRATEGY

TECHNOLOGY

VIDEO

STRATEGY

Build the Road, So You Don't Get Stuck

Published May 26, 2010 | FOXBusiness

Print

Email

Share

Recommend 2

Text Size



"Entrepreneur Diary" by Damon Schechter, founder and CEO of Shipwire Product Fulfillment.

Over the past few week weeks, there has been quite a bit of road construction down the street from Shipwire. Though I've needed to find an alternative route to the office, I can't help but smile at the thought of the construction. The reason is that it reminds me of an amazing piece of advice given to me by one of our Shipwire board of advisors, Ivan Hoffman, who built

FedEx Ground. Ivan told me that our job as founders and early employees is to "build the road."

Before I go into what that means I need to make a quick aside. If you are starting a [business](#) that you hope to build into a multi-million or billion dollar company, you should form a team of advisors around you that have "been there, and done that." I think Shipwire is very fortunate to have a board with long-term vision that can help us to weather the short-term speed bumps.

Ivan comes into the Shipwire offices on a semi-regular basis to meet with us, coach our growth and ask questions ... ones that occasionally make us squirm. During one of his first visits, he told us about a mistake that he had made in one of his early companies that had cost him dearly. He said, "Early stage employees need to invest in the road and not the people."

As you can imagine, this made us scratch our heads. I value each of my employees and we do invest in them. However, Ivan was not saying: "don't invest in your people." Rather, what he wanted us to understand was that the early-stage employees need to build the processes and procedures that will help the business scale and grow. Ivan told me a story about hiring a solid team of people for one of his startups where he invested in the people and built the company around them. But when his employees moved on, the company struggled because the original employees took all their knowledge of the business and processes with them, leaving the company in bad shape as it tried to move forward.

RELATED LINKS

[Even the Boss Needs Time off Fly-Fishing's Trip From Japan to U.S.](#)

"Build the Road" is a mantra for my core startup team. We constantly ask ourselves what steps we need to take on a daily basis to help the business scale. When we crack the code on a particular problem, we document the steps taken to solve it to ensure that the next group of employees doesn't have to resolve the same problem. For instance, we use internal wikis for projects and processes. Just as

with [Wikipedia](#), every Shipwire employee is both a reader and creator of the content. The team is motivated to build our processes as they overcome each roadblock.

To find out if your team is taking the time to build the road, ask yourself: "What would happen if a core-team member were no longer available?" Would you be able to recover and keep the business moving forward?

Print

Email

Share

Recommend 2

Text Size



SMALL BUSINESS DISCUSSIONS

Q: What is the biggest misconception about starting a business?

A: It's very different having an idea about something than actually building it. Building & scaling a company always takes about three times longer.>

Bob Casey and Rich Littlehale - founders of YouRenew

From: Phone Home - This Device Still Works
October 14, 2009 **RE**



Q: Loans for small business can be difficult to obtain. How can I get one?

A: Ask your bank about a Small Business Administration-backed loan. These loans guaranteed by the government, lessening risk for the bank.

SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION