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Some men have thousands of reasons why they cannot do what they want to, when all they need is one reason why they can.

- Willis Whitney
Our Core Ideology

Our Ideology is authentic and personal: this is who we are as individuals working at Startup Weekend. This is what guides and inspires us to pursue our mission—this is our WHY. The Core ideology is divided between our Core Values and our Core Purpose.

What We Believe: Our Core Values

- People should be judged by their actions, not by what they talk about
- The best way to lead a fulfilling life is to pursue your passions
- Entrepreneurship is the single greatest force advancing society and human welfare
- Empowering others is the best way to identify leaders, build communities, and inspire change
Why We Exist: Our Core Purpose

Our core purpose is to help people lead fulfilling lives and create value for society.

Envisioned Future

Startup Weekend is fundamentally disrupting the way the world is approaching entrepreneurial education. Startup Weekend is a democratizer of entrepreneurship, making it accessible to as many people as possible—regardless of religion, race, gender, or sociopolitical differences. Startup Weekend dares to envision a future that imposes a huge, yet realistic, challenge to the organization. A useful exercise in envisioning the future is to examine our "Big Hairy Audacious Goal" (BHAG).
In 15 years, Startup Weekend will be the world's largest starting point for entrepreneurs creating meaningful and persistent firms.
Vivid Description of the Future

Assuming we can achieve our BHAG, one could easily envision a world where anyone will know where to go when they have an idea, are looking for a team or want to create a company. Startup Weekend will successfully prove that within any startup ecosystem we can increase not only the volume, but the quality of entrepreneurs and the rate at which they advance from one stage to the next in their journey. Millions of people will consider entrepreneurship when facing challenges in their professional or personal lives. People will be more resilient to failure, becoming an entrepreneur will be as natural as looking for a new job, and people will feel that our organization has contributed to their life in a positive way. Countries will experience new growth and a new era of wealth because of a culture that has never been more supportive of freedom, creativity and innovation.
Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline.

-Jim Collins
Who Are WE?

Startup Weekend is a volunteer-powered organization with thousands of volunteers on every corner of the globe that dedicate their time to making this possible. For us, average is not an option. We are not just good at what we do—we are the best in the world.

From a team of 3 enthusiastic entrepreneurs who hardly made rent for a year and a half, Startup Weekend has developed into an incredible, world class organization. We are a team of passionate people who believe that we have some of the coolest jobs on the planet. Maintaining a culture that embodies our past but sets high bars for our future is central to our success.

Startup Weekend is an organization of entrepreneurs

We live life to the fullest. We take risks. We constantly innovate and develop new means of creating value for our consumers (participants), our customers (partners/donors looking for impact), our community (facilitators, organizers, coaches, panelists, investors), and our company. We apply rigorous methods to validate the fact that we are constantly improving.
We are (experiential) educators

While we are not direct teachers, we are masters at creating environments where our attendees can become active learners. We help define the parameters and create opportunities for people to ask hard questions, achieve great success, and yes, even fail. There is no better way to learn than by doing it. Participants become better entrepreneurs, coaches become better mentors, judges become better advocates, sponsors become more engaged, and communities foster creativity and innovation.

Organizers are the lifeblood of the organization

While it may seem counter intuitive to say that our attendees are not our primary customer, it is critical to understand that we exist because of and to serve our organizers. Organizers are the single largest stakeholder in Startup Weekend’s ability to achieve its mission. Startup Weekend is defined by the people that we let represent us. Ultimately, our organizers are responsible for the experience attendees have, and we cannot pretend to know everything that benefits attendees as well as organizers due to the cultural and political differences from city to city. This implies that we will always maximize the value we provide to organizers and entrust that they are representing who we are at our very core.

Guiding Principles

In executing our mission on a daily basis, we follow a number of guiding philosophies. The following are important to know and refer to on a regular basis:

You can’t learn entrepreneurship sitting in a classroom

The only way to learn how to start a business is by actually doing it.
The team is the most crucial element of a startup

Startup Weekend is THE best way to learn how to find a co-founder and build a great team. We address this by providing potential co-founders the opportunity to go through a “functional interview” where they can actually observe how on another operates under pressure. The only way to know if you can work with someone is to actually do it.

Teams and Idea

Ideas are important—but so are the teams; as they are what makes an idea real. We emphasize that by keeping in mind the “formula”:

\[ \text{Startup} = \text{Idea} \times \text{Team}^2 \]

The best teams can succeed with mediocre ideas, but the mediocre teams will never succeed with even the best idea. Ideas are an extremely efficient mechanism for connecting people with similar passions and interests that are interested in solving similar problems. It is important to remember that really amazing ideas always have really amazing people behind them, so we insist that amazing teams are created as a first step to executing on great ideas.

Organizers are our most important stakeholder

(We always capitalize the word Organizer): they are the driving force for the Organization’s sustainability. We must strive to maximize the value we provide our Organizers. This includes the support and leverage of past event efforts, tools for communication, managing attendees, finances, speakers and sponsors as well as introductions, new career opportunities, and becoming part of a global network of community leaders.
The future of our country and our world relies on constant innovation and advancement. While lifestyle entrepreneurs can build a great life for themselves and it can be a gateway to bigger things, high growth companies that build meaningful and persistent businesses have brought forth almost all of the gains in economic wealth as well as advancement in human welfare since commerce began. At Startup Weekend, we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to encourage anyone, no matter their location or product, to pursue the world as their market, not just their local city.

Neutrality

The single greatest asset Startup Weekend has as a brand is that it can always act in the best interest of the entrepreneurs and local communities by not altering its beliefs, model, or aligning its interest to the sole purpose of any one party. Opinions are based on research and clear, objective sources. Startup Weekend enlightens attendees of the most current methodologies and resources available for starting a business and gives them a high-energy, low-risk and supportive place to experiment with them; however, these will never be forced.

Collaboration

The world needs more people and organizations supporting entrepreneurs and the creation of startups. When it is in the best interest of our community, we indirectly support any organizations that have a mission similar to Startup Weekend.
Mentors are like mushrooms

Almost as important as picking the right co-founders is selecting the best advisers for your startups. Mentors can make or break your business. Even if someone has had a multi-million dollar exit or started an amazing company, he or she may not make a good coach. We strive to educate experienced professionals to coach teams effectively, and we help entrepreneurs learn how to utilize and choose the best coaches for them. We have a responsibility to help accomplished individuals learn through experience how to be mentors by attending Startup Weekend events.

Every entrepreneur is a social entrepreneur

Entrepreneurship is the single largest driving force to creating jobs for ourselves, opportunities for our neighbors, and better, more responsible societies. Being a “social enterprise” is a business model decision that can be strategically introduced into any for-profit or nonprofit model to optimize impact over profit. We all strive to see a greater number of businesses that act responsibly and sustainably, but we are cautious of associating too closely to any trends that can be subjective or isolating. “Social” is approached as is any other horizontal theme that can apply to any Startup Weekend event.

Funding does not equal success

All too often we are led to believe that funding represents the key metric for success for an early-stage startup. Startup Weekend maintains its neutrality and encourages entrepreneurs to challenge the notion that in order to be successful, you must obtain investment capital. As such, we never promote cash prizes for teams at Startup Weekend events.
There are different types of entrepreneurs

Some entrepreneurs are genuine idea people, some are incredible executors. Almost anyone can be considered an entrepreneur as long as you can point to some moment in time when they took a substantial risk to build an innovative business or join a young team when all of the answers were anything but clear.

Business plans are dead

Business plans imply a previous knowledge of what will happen, but we believe this is not the case for what we call a startup. A startup is defined as a group of people looking to scale and sustain a business model. Startups are not a smaller version of a big company.

The Entrepreneurial Journey

Models are inherently not perfect, but some are useful, created this model to represent the phases that entrepreneurs go through and contextualize the conversations around what various roles exist within startup ecosystems. The Entrepreneurial journey is a great tool we use whenever we’re talking about eco-systems or even just Startup Weekend. Startup Weekend has perhaps the most pivotal role in this model at the Action step, the most underserved step. Ultimately, we believe that we can increase the volume, quality and rate of advancement of entrepreneurs within their ecosystems.
The single largest source of new Entrepreneurs in the world

**DISCOVERY**
You want to be an Entrepreneur

**ACTION**
You are an Entrepreneur

**STARTUP**
You have a solid team with some good ideas

**SCALE**
You have a stable business model

**FT500**
You are taking over the world

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**Entrepreneur’s Journey**

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Notes:
“Without actions, the world would still be an idea.”

- George Doriot
Define Success

Success for Startup Weekend is not easily quantified in all aspects. Often for non-profits, and contrary to standard for-profit business practice, we will utilize a combination of tangible tracking metrics as well as more anecdotal evidence of our impact and performance. Successful non-profit organizations are governed by different principles, because the meaningful metric is not profitability but the impact an organization has on a problem or cause.

Startup Weekend has the responsibility to lead and the power to greatly influence the global conversation around early-stage entrepreneurship, startup ecosystems, and job-creation. Startup Weekend will continue to shape its thinking and approach based on not only what the community needs but also what we learn from our own operations. What we learn will always and regularly be shared with our community.
When understanding and explaining Startup Weekend, it is important to be able to explain WHAT Startup Weekend is; however, please remember that you should ALWAYS start by explaining Startup Weekend first with the WHY, then the WHO and finally, the WHAT. Don’t be afraid to challenge that expect to hear the WHAT first.

These statements tend to be useful in describing the Operational Models for the WHAT:

**Vision Statement**

“Startup Weekend will be the world’s single largest starting point for new entrepreneurs.”

**Mission Statement**

“Startup Weekend inspires action in the lives of entrepreneurs through experiential education.”

**Purpose Statement**

“Startup Weekend provides anyone all over the world the opportunity to experience entrepreneurship and develop the skills, connections, and confidence necessary to launch a company.”

**What is Startup Weekend?**

“It is the most accessible, low risk, and effective environment for building teams, validating ideas, and learning the first steps to launching a business.”
Key Strategic Metrics We Track

**Operations**
- Growth & Sustainability Ratio
  \[
  \frac{\text{# Of Events} \div \text{# Of New Cities}}{\text{Average Time Between Events}}
  \]

**Biz Dev**
- Total $ Raised
- Ratio of:
  \[
  \frac{\$}{\text{Contributor}}
  \]

**Marketing**
- Meaningful Stories - Illustrate impact
- Attendee Ratios
  - Designers
  - Developers
  - Women
  - Etc.

**Research**
- Impact Score
- Number of publications
- Number of academic partnerships
- Number of article/blog posts per month

**Community**
Graduation rate or successful “exits”: Attendee becomes a Volunteer then becomes an Organizer then becomes a trained Facilitator. At any time in their lifecycle with Startup Weekend, it is successful for them to break or exit.
Operational Objectives to Achieve our BHAG

- One million attendees by 2018
- Serve as the starting point for at least 1 Billion dollar entrepreneur
- By 2018, over 20,000 Organizers & Facilitators have either changed their jobs or started a company due to their involvement with Startup Weekend

Define Success

The following is a graph illustrating what drives the organization. Using this as a tool to aid in decision-making helps drive clarity about how to produce the best long-term results. All strategic initiatives should align with all three facets, and, in the event they do not, need to be considered not core to the organization and handled accordingly.
Experiential education
Trust and empowerment
Entrepreneurship is the way to build a better society & world
Neutrality
Pursuing passions leads to a fulfilling life
Teams are more important than ideas

Experiential learning
Team building/co-founder dating
Validating ideas
Creating opportunity
Empowering grassroots leaders
Catalyzing grassroots movements
Building ecosystems
Inspiring change & action
Scaling initiatives

Time:
- Organizers/facilitators
- Core team
- Revenue per event

Money:
- Global partners/donors

Brand:
- Education
- Successful teams
- Global Network

Research:
- Data

Organizers/facilitators
Core team
Revenue per event
Global partners/donors
Education
Successful teams
Global Network
Data
WELCOME
To Startup Weekend

- Lounge
- Bathrooms
- Phone Booths
- Creative Room
- Meeting Room
Your First Day

Consider this your first dinner with the in-laws. It may be a bit awkward at first, but you are part of the family now.

Startup Weekend is a flat organization. We are a team of self-starters and go-getters. You won't find a lot of management here, but you will find that you are expected to ask questions when you have them and voice your opinion when you have one. We want to encourage collaboration and innovation within our model, and this means preserving an environment in which they flourish. This organization is the manifestation of all of its team members, and it is yours to steer - towards opportunities and away from risks. You have the power to execute on projects and the power to influence any conversation. This will be one of the most challenging and rewarding professional experiences of your life, and you've got an amazing team to help you every step of the way.

Every one of us is here for very special reasons, and there is no other group of people more capable of making Startup Weekend one of the most impactful nonprofits on the planet.

Welcome!
Facts That Matter: (Don’t Forget These)

- Startup Weekend is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit: Our salaries are funded by (a) event level revenues, (b) sponsorships, and (c) donations from our partners. We are held to much higher financial rigor as a non-profit, and we must maintain higher levels of transparency and constantly strive to ensure our compliance with IRS regulations.
- Startup Weekend is not just an event company.
- We do not define our success by the companies that come out of Startup Weekend: we define success by our impact on people’s lives.

Work Culture

Work/Life Integration

Most of us consider the Startup Weekend team to be like a second family. We are both friends and co-workers, which makes the line between work and life hard to draw. We believe strongly in allowing and encouraging one another to pursue non-work-related activities, so whether your favorite band is in town, a family member is visiting, a special event happening, the snow is deep, the lake is calling, or that last minute trip to Mexico pops up, you are encouraged to adjust your schedule to take advantage of the great things life has to offer. Of course, we all expect one another to make up for time spent doing these things.
While people will occasionally push themselves to work substantial extra hours, for the most part, doing this for extended periods indicates a fundamental failure in planning, communication, and/or time management. This organization was built with long hours and a lot of hustle, but this can still be accomplished without burning out. If you ever find yourself or see someone doing this, it should be brought to the attention of others. We are all here to lead fulfilling lives.

The following provides a sample of how we define the Startup Weekend culture.

**Work Hours**

While work hours are flexible, we expect that everyone puts in sufficient time and is willing to do what it takes to deliver on projects and tasks. The Seattle office has core hours from 9:00 am to 6 pm PST, and everyone is generally in the office by 10 am. More than anything, work hours are about setting expectations with the rest of the team and validating your work schedule through effectiveness and productivity.
Out of the Office

Startup Weekend’s paid time off covers whatever time you need in these three main sections:

Sickness

We encourage you to stay home when you are feeling ill. You should take the needed time to get better and not risk infecting those around you as well. This also includes time for taking care of others. If the you are out of work for more than five (5) days please notify our HR manager as further information will be requested.

Vacation

There is a difference from going to a different state and still being in your email - this is not a vacation. Vacation to Startup Weekend means you are fully unplug from work. That’s right - no email, no phone... you are “off the grid”.

Personal Time

This includes time to attend various health appointments, personal errands, mental health days, moving, religious holidays outside the Startup Weekend recognized holidays, etc.

The only failure here is the failure to communicate and plan appropriately. Employee’s should arrange for time off with their managers. Once this is communicated with your manager, please add the days you will be out on the company internal calendar and notify the HR manager.
Work From Home

Occasionally you will need to work from your home. Only thing we ask is that you notify your manager and team as well as still being available via phone/chat/email during the core business hours (specified above).

Sociability

We work hard and we like to play harder. Any given week there are various Happy Hours, team activities, startup events, dinners, jam-a-thon’s etc. We encourage everyone on the team to attend but by no means are these events required.

Travel

Providing travel opportunities for our best Organizers, Facilitators and supporters is one of our core value propositions, and goes a long way towards building loyalty/retention and forging important relationships/connections around the Startup Weekend brand. From time to time core team employees are invited to travel to events and this experience is highly encouraged. Your business travel should be covered by the cost of the event. You are more than welcome to have a couple days to enjoy the location under the unlimited PTO policy.

Please remember, you will be at these events as a SW representative and this role should be treated with respect. Use your best judgement, but please remember that you represent a US based non-profit.
SoSummit / Regional SoSummits

The Startup Organizer Summit is an annual event where we gather our community leaders together from all corners of the globe. We are launching regional versions of the summits, with the goal of strengthening connections between Organizers and helping to ensure the sustainability of the efforts and energy we all pour into this every single day... not to mention, have a little fun!

Please review our Employee Guide for information on payroll, benefits and other perks.

Workplace Atmosphere

While we operate within the casual and chaotic world of startups, we hold ourselves to a very high standard when it comes to punctuality and presentation. Our workspace creates the first and most important impression on anyone who walks through the door. Team members are encouraged to customize and get creative with their workspaces as long as they are kept tidy, as we work and present ourselves as a world-class organization.
Workplace Atmosphere cont.

Conversations in any circumstance must demonstrate integrity and not distract, offend, or demean others. We take enormous pride in the casual atmosphere but expect the highest level of professionalism from everyone.

We strive to have a collaborative environment but we are always cautious to not waste time in unnecessary meetings. All in-person meetings must have a clear purpose and desired outcome. All meetings should be followed by a clearly delineated action items. Attendance at regular team meetings is not optional.

As issues, questions and problems arise, team members are expected and encouraged to talk about them. We strive to foster a culture of open and frequent communication, and expect all critiques to be paired with proposed solutions.
Decision Making

The leadership at Startup Weekend is very intentional about maintaining a legislative approach to all decisions so as to ensure all stakeholders are involved; however, we are just large enough that not everyone can always partake in every conversation or decision. Everyone is empowered to make decisions to the best of their ability and are encouraged to seek out multiple different people for everyday questions to reinforce the flow of information and knowledge across departments. Every person in the office has the ability to partake in any conversation, and is expected to be proactive to weigh in on any topic or decision. If someone feels like they were not part of a decision they should have been, it is their responsibility to make that known, as often, an oversight is unintentional and is simply due to the speed at which aim to maintain forward progress.

A Decision Is Being Made!

Do you want to participate in the decision making?

Yes

Voice it!

No

Then don’t worry, you’re in good hands

Ok ;)

But I’m not happy with the result / wanted to add or discuss something relevant...
Our greatest strengths

- Our team: Our greatest strength is our ability to attract amazing people and build a team that is, per person, arguably one of the most effective forces for good on the planet.
- Rapid Iteration: We pride ourselves on being able to iterate quickly, experiment with new ideas, and implement effectively in a very swift manner.
- Balance of messy & intentional: At times, the speed at which we move can make things appear “messy,” but that is embraced as a great strength that allows us to continually innovate.
- Finding the right advisors: When we have problems with unknown answers, no matter how tactical or grandiose, we are unafraid and proactive in looking to external stakeholders and engaging some of the most qualified people to help us think through solutions.
- Having opinions: We’re continuously learning (a lot!), and we develop opinions and share them. They will not always be aligned, but they make for extremely productive debates. Never shy away from developing and stating an opinion.

Our greatest weaknesses

- Messy can be confusing. Sometimes it is hard to keep up with others, and sometimes it is hard to keep others in tune with what you are doing. You must be conscious, pro-active, and forgiving about this.
- We are not good at hands-on management and daily goal-setting: Startup Weekend is an organization of ‘doers’, not elaborate planners or micro-managers. Team members that can write their own job descriptions and continue to evolve them over time will excel the most and be rewarded for it.
- We are challenged by involving those not in the office in strategic conversations. It’s just hard. If you are out of the office, you must be pro-active to stay involved in any topics you feel necessary.
Where Are We Going?
Pivotal Moment

Startup Weekend is at a pivotal moment (in 2012), both internally and with respect to the larger role that it plays in the world. We have enlisted the most passionate and capable team. We have validated our volunteered-powered model, relying on highly passionate and motivated individuals who are excited to bring Startup Weekend events to their respective communities. We believe this decentralized and open-sourced method of operating has helped us grow and increase our overall impact around the world. As we continue to grow, it will be disciplined growth that distinguishes us from a good organization to a great, enduring one.

Articulating Startup Weekend’s mission is central to envisioning our future. Our steadfast dedication to this mission in all of our daily operations pushes us forward on the path to greatness. This document has hopefully provided some of that clarity and the rest will come only through your questions, conversations with the team, and experience with all that is Startup Weekend.
Current Areas of Focus

The future always holds surprises (and we are not fortune tellers), but at this point in time Startup Weekend will most likely build on our success by focusing effort in the following areas:

- **Research**: Understanding and collecting valuable insights from our community. We are positioned to be the single largest window into early stage entrepreneurship. This will drive our innovation, growth, fundraising abilities, and ability to influence others ultimately fulfilling our mission.
- **Verticals and Horizontals**: Applying our model to a myriad of industries.
- **Pre & Post Weekend Programs**: Increasing the quality and readiness heading into SW events by providing contextualized learning opportunities (pre-event programs), and increasing high-potential teams’ chances of success by providing more direct support after the weekends (post-event programs).
- **Our “Economic Denominator”**: Devoting significant attention to revenue-generating activities.
- **Maximizing the Value Proposition to our Organizers and effectively managing organizer turnover** - one of the single greatest threats to our sustainability.
- **Regionalizing our operations to help us achieve increases in the quality and volume of events**.

**Conclusion**

At no point in time in human history has the global business community ever been so connected or accessible. More than anything else, the phenomena of entrepreneurship has the ability to alleviate poverty, take us into the cosmos, lead to more fulfilling lives, and increase human welfare. In this context, Startup Weekend is set to become one of the most important non-profits in the world.
Conclusion cont.

We must never take for granted the brevity of the task before us, for Startup Weekend truly has the potential to fundamentally change the fabric of society in communities around the world. We are spreading a culture - one that fosters creativity and innovation; one that transcends religion, politics, race, and beliefs. Because of the work we do every day, hundreds of thousands of people will discover their passions, solve meaningful problems, create jobs, and contribute to a better society.

We are a force to be reckoned with, a movement, a revolution. Now, enough talking. Let’s start doing, together.