

Human Practices for Startup Teams

People as a system: building clarity, trust, and speed.

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Senior consultant with over 10 years of experience in Service Design and **strategic innovation**. I specialize in facilitating complex innovation projects and high-level training, **blending design methodologies with professional coaching**.

My work focuses on **guiding organizations and teams through human-centered transformation**, ensuring that technology and business goals are always aligned with real human needs.



Human Practices

Intentional habits and systems we design to allow people to work together effectively, with trust and high speed.

Human Practices for Startup Teams

A team is a group of individuals who work together to **achieve the same goal**. It is a combination of different personalities.

The Alliance: in a startup, founders, freelancers, and partners are all stakeholders in the vision.



Human Practices for Startup Teams

The Startup as a Living System, not a solo performance.

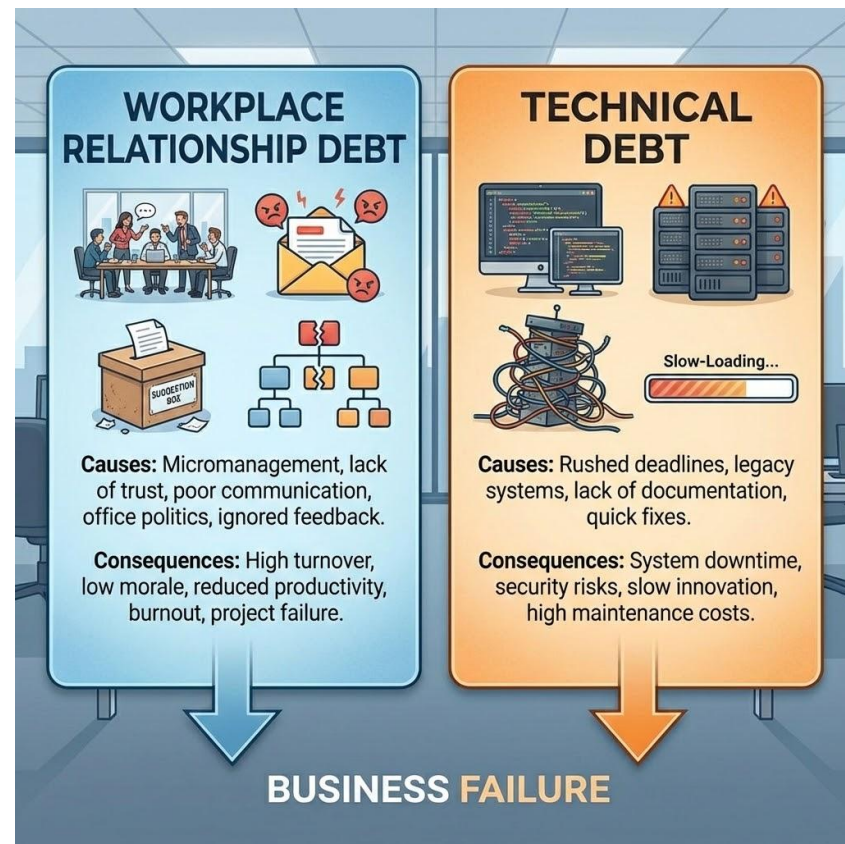
Collaborators, partners, and freelancers are all nodes in your system

Team = Your First Product



Human Practices for Startup Teams

Unresolved tensions, vague roles, and lack of trust act as friction that slowly grinds your startup to a halt.



1

Building the Foundation of Trust:

Establishing the emotional safety needed to work fast and take risks.

Leading with Vulnerability

Trust doesn't start with your team. It starts with you.



Saying "I don't know"

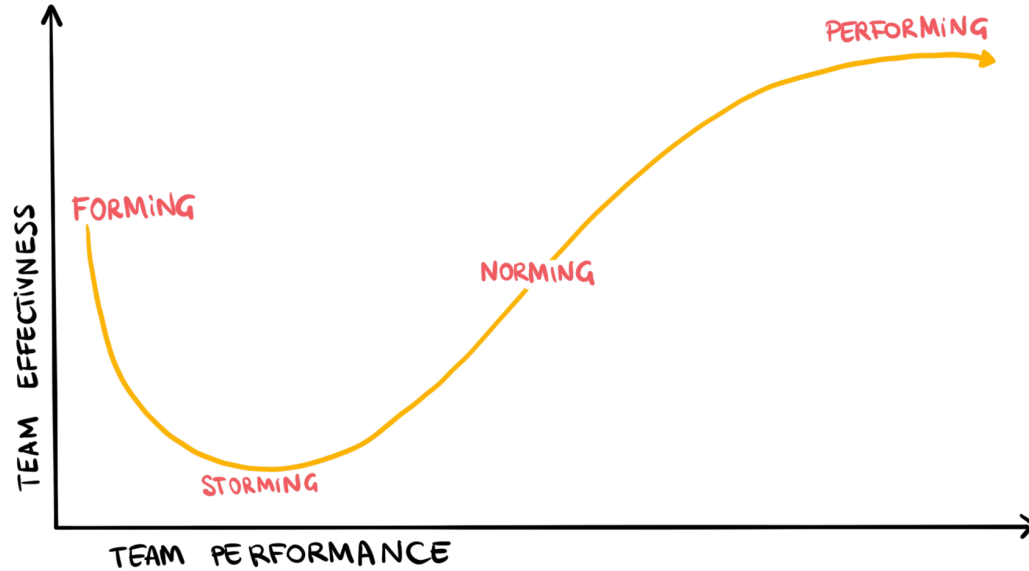
Invites collaboration and empowers others to step up with solutions.



Sharing Failures

Normalizes error as a part of learning, reducing fear across the system.

Human Practices for Startup Teams



Normalizing Tensions (Tuckman)

Forming

Safety & Orientation

Storming

Conflict & Testing

(REQUIRED FOR GROWTH NOT A FAILURE)

Norming

Integration & Unity

Performing





Flow & High Output

Human Practices for Startup Teams

The Team Manifesto:

A simple, 5-point document co-created by the team to define their "Rules of Engagement".

Example Manifesto:

1. We prioritize clarity over politeness. 
2. We celebrate the learning, not just the win. 
3. We respect 'Deep Work' hours. 
4. We own our mistakes as a system. 
5. We communicate directly, never behind backs.

2

Creating Clarity to Enable Flow:

Reducing anxiety and friction through clear boundaries and shared direction.

**"Clear is Kind.
Unclear is Unkind."**

— Brené Brown

Ambiguity creates unnecessary stress,
fuels gossip, and kills execution speed.

The North Star: **Shared Vision**

Align the Vision before you align Tasks

Powerful Questions:

Why are we
doing this?

Who are we
trying to
help?

What will
success
look like for
the human
beings we
serve?

Designing Roles, not Titles

In a startup, a "Marketing Manager" title is too static.

We need **fluid roles based on Ownership**

Job Title (The Label)

"I am the CTO."

Role (The Contribution)

"I own the reliability of the platform and the technical growth of the team."

Designing Roles, not Titles

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12rRw3YtcDWwKPERTjll5Deil4sUezEPB/view?usp=sharing>

Group Work Role Cards

Co-ordinator

Makes sure everyone takes a turn to do the work and gets a chance to give their ideas.



Challenger

Thinks about what could go wrong and alerts the group.



Recorder

Writes notes and keeps a record of decisions made in the group.



Materials Manager

Looks after any equipment used for the work and brings needed items to the group.



Time Keeper

Keeps an eye on the time and makes sure the group is keeping to schedule.



Trouble Shooter

Reads the instructions for the task and thinks of solutions to any problems. Speaks to the teacher/other groups if needed.



The Founder Bottleneck:

If people don't know their
Autonomy, they will ask you for
everything.

The role canvas

MISSION

Why does this role exist? What is the main value it brings to the alliance?

ACCOUNTABILITIES

What specific results can the team count on me for?

AUTONOMY

What can I decide alone without asking permission?

Transparency = Agency

Information belongs to the system, not the leader.



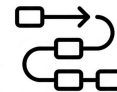
Shared Roadmap:

Everyone sees where we are going.



Open Documentation:

Reduce the "Information Monopoly".



Asynchronous Flow:

Document decisions so nobody is left out.

3

Speed:
Rhythm over Haste

Human Practices for Startup Teams

Haste (Chaos)

- Running without direction
- Burnout & Exhaustion
- Sloppy mistakes
- Reactive mindset

Speed (Harmony)

- Moving with Clarity
- Sustainable Pace
- Intentional choices
- Flow mindset

Meetings vs. Rituals

Stop "Meeting" and start "Ritualizing".

Meetings

Empty time, "reporting" to the boss, drains energy, lack of purpose.

VS

Rituals

Meaningful habits, peer-to-peer support, creates connection, clear soul.

Example:

15 minutes to unblock the system, not to report status.

Yesterday

Successes



Today

Priorities



CRITICAL

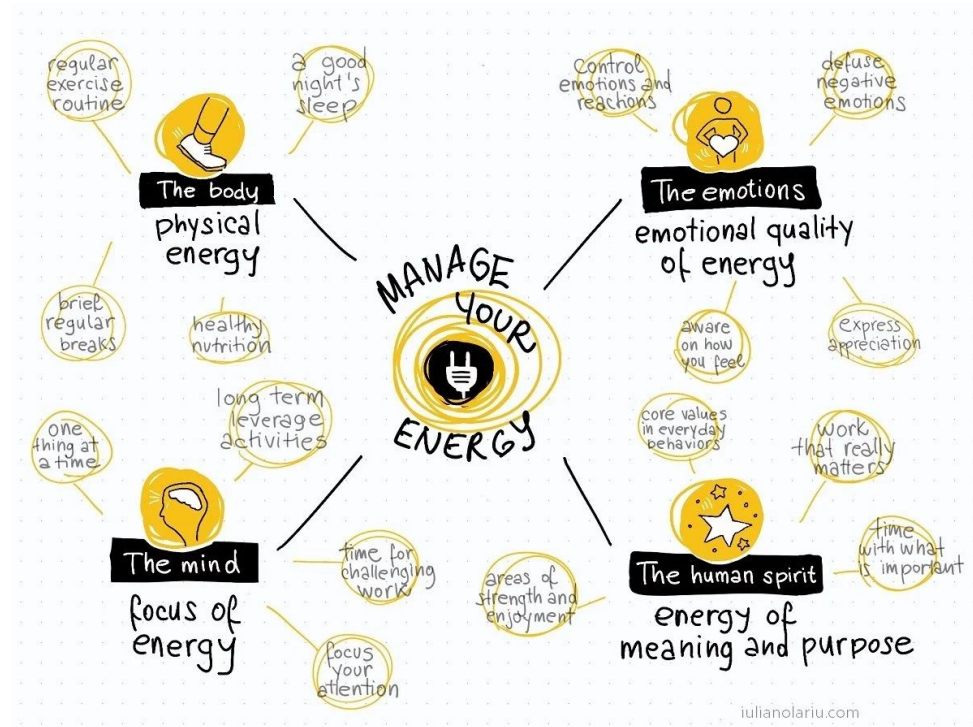
Blockers?

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Manage Energy, not Time

Energy Drains: Vague feedback, redundant meetings, lack of purpose, unclear roles.

Energy Gainers: Appreciation, clarity, small wins, meaningful connection, breaks.



4

Growth

The continuous mirror

RETROSPECTIVE

A retrospective about How we work, not just what we do.

Tool:

The KALM Framework

KEEP

What is working?
Let's acknowledge it.

ADD

What new practice
should we try?

LESS

What is exhausting
us? Let's reduce it.

MORE

What is helping us?
Let's scale it.

Feedback is the breakfast of champions.

In a small team, a lack of feedback is a lack of care. Real allies give each other the truth.

Tool:

Feedback Framework



I LIKE... "I like how you handled the conflict in the meeting."



I WISH... "I wish we could document decisions more clearly."



I LEARNED... "I learned that our roadmap was confusing for the team."

Leading like a coach

Drive ownership by asking, not telling.

Tool:

Powerful Coaching Questions

"What is the best path forward from your perspective?"

"What support do you need from me to achieve this?"

"What is the one thing we are not talking about?"

People over Processes. Always.

Building a startup is an endurance sport. **Take care of your humans,** and they will take care of your vision.

Thank you for your attention

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