

How to Have a Family and a Business

I'm taking questions on Quora today on this topic. Here's the first, and my response.

In the startup world, an unspoken hostility exist towards having a family life while trying to grow startups. What's your advice for how to go about doing both?

Well the first thing is to not worry about unspoken hostilities.

In general, just focus on your startup when it comes to investors, employees, etc. If what you're doing makes sense and you're getting traction, they won't much care what you do outside of work.

If someone pushes or asks, own it. You can say, "It might be harder to do this with a family than without, I don't know. Maybe it's easier. I don't really care. I'm doing it with a family and it's going to succeed!"

I once heard someone say that if you want to be in startups, you get to pick two items from this list:

- Your company
- Social life/hobbies
- Family/love life

You can't put energy into all three.

I fully believe this, and I've come to believe the trilemma goes further still...

It's not just that you *get* to pick two, you *have* to pick two if you want to succeed.

That is, if you have absolutely nothing outside of your startup, you are likely to burnout, go insane, become a tyrant, lose heart, lose perspective, and lose your edge easier and sooner than if you have one other thing to ground you.

With a family, you're at an advantage! You have no other hobbies or distracting flim-flam. You have your business and your family. Outside the company, you have but one incredibly powerful, grounding, perspective-granting, efficiency-rewarding, bullshit-cutting, incentive-setting thing that will make every minute you spend on your startup more valuable, and demand that you step outside of it every so often.

The three clearest ways having a family has helped me as an entrepreneur is with time,

perspective, and motivation.

Bottom line, startups are really, really hard. There are always going to be challenges unique to you, or reasons you or others think you won't succeed. It doesn't matter if it's a family, a hobby, a personality, a missing skill set, lack of capital, or anything else. Those are the obstacles that prevent everyone else from doing what you're going to do.

Take pride in it.

Footnotes

[1] You Get to Pick Two | Praxis

[2] You Have to Pick Two – Isaac Morehouse

[3] The Advantages of Having a Family While Running a Business – Isaac Morehouse