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CEO, The Creative Class Group & Author, Upgrade

How to Run Your Business Like a Rock Star

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[Richard](#) and [Rana Florida](#) with musician [Jack White](#) at [Third Man Records](#), Nashville.

Bands and startups have a lot in common. Sleepless nights, fueled on caffeine and adrenaline, they both have a lot at stake and chances are they've sacrificed a lot to get to where they are. Success in a hyper competitive marketplace relies on a number of strategic factors. Here are 15 simple tips to ensure your startup is a number one hit.

1. **Scale Fast.** Once you have a hit, scale quickly. Band managers know to start booking bigger arenas the moment a song breaks into the iTunes Top 10--and to hit the road touring to keep it there. Uber knew to scale quickly into other top markets the moment it was a hit in one city. The ability to react quickly to market demands is key.

2. **Band Mates.** Like a rock band, your business is bigger than the sum of its individual parts. Pick team members who complement your strengths and make up for your weaknesses.

3. **Image Matters.** From Mick Jagger's lips to Lady Gaga's fashion, from Jack White's hats to Bono's glasses, every act has a distinctive look. Your company needs a brand image too to reinforce its messaging. Once you find your image, use it across all marketing efforts it and promote it.

4. **Use Social Media.** Katy Perry has around 56 million Twitter followers, while Justin Beiber has 54 million, Taylor Swift 43 million and Lady Gaga 42 million. Gone are the days of the press release, use social media such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Vine and Snapchat to promote your company .

5. **Collaborate.** Whether it is JayZ and Alicia Key's "Empire State of Mind" or Fiat's and Gucci's cross-branded car, collaborations open your business up to new markets.

6. **Place Lots of Bets.** Bands know that not every song is going to be a hit so they produce lots of them in the hope that one will break through. Businesses need to constantly experiment with a wide variety of goods and services too, to find out which will be the next big discovery and bring in the most revenue.

7. **Know Your Audience.** Bands know their fans. Beyonce will never stop singing "Crazy," no matter how many new hits she writes. Even when they are breaking new ground, bands are careful not to turn their backs on their core audience. Keep your loyal customers' needs, desires and expectations in mind when you're creating new products and services.

8. **Be True to Yourself.** Miley Cyrus got her start in the Disney machine as Hannah but her career didn't take off until she shed her squeaky clean image. Rihanna's transformation from "Good Girl Gone Bad" was a double platinum album. Don't try to dupe your audience into believing that you're something that you're not, much more success will be achieved by being true to your core.

9. **Transparency is Key.** Keep your audience in the loop--admit your mistakes and errors. Warby Parker who GQ calls, "the poster child for successful fashion start-ups, raising \$100 million last year alone in venture capital funding," has a great motto; "build trust by giving it away."

10. **Measure Your Success.** There are lots of different ways to measure success: number one hits, artistic excellence and originality, Hall of Fame inductions, awards and accolades, brand awareness, and sales. Define your measures and focus on them.

11. **Band Leader.** The band leader sets the vision and pace for the rest of the band. Much like a CEO, a leader must inspire their bandmates (employees) as much as their audience (customers)-- and do it without hogging too much of the spotlight.

12. **Don't Stint on Startup Costs.** Cutting through the clutter in the marketplace takes a big investment in time and money. Be prepared to meet those commitments upfront and the dividends will more than pay off.

13. **Time Management.** Just as rock stars are pulled in a million different directions, so are startups. Focus your time and energy on the things that pay off the most and learn to say no or put strict time parameters on everything else.

14. **Give Back.** Most top rock stars have causes that they champion or nonprofits that they run. Find a strong social mission and rally around it. Whether it's local or global, your customers respect organizations that care about the world.

15. **Stick to Your Sound.** Focus on what you're good at and don't venture too far afield. When organizations dilute their core competencies they are certain to fail.

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