

Building a startup in Africa means getting your hands dirty

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A lot of startups are moving really slow today because the founders are not getting their hands dirty. Building a startup in Africa, especially in a country like Nigeria, is no joke and you really need to go hard or go home.



Image by 123RF

A lot of founders waste a lot of time building products customers do not even need. I believe every product has a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) you can deploy and start growing on gradually. Who said you do need to build an app immediately when you can get a landing page and move on to greater things?

Your customers

Your customer is KING. Your first-time customers at the early stage of your business will define what model you would actually operate on in the long run. Personally, I believe every core founder should take customer service more seriously and this should be everyone's job at the start. Getting closer to your customers will actually tell you what to chop off or add up. Do everything you can to leave your customers happy.

The benefits of referrals cannot be overemphasised. If you are into e-commerce in the Nigerian economy, you know how hard it is to get one single sale. Referrals from past customers have really helped us grow at [WaraCake](#).

Before you even start anything online, do a keyword research using the Google Keyword planner and see if people are actually searching for keywords related to what you intend to offer. How many people are searching monthly? What parts of the country are they searching from? What devices are they using most?

Building product

The Google Keyword planner can answer all that and it's FREE. Building a product with users is more important than raising funds. Why are you trying to raise funds that might never come? Make sales, acquire users, sign partnerships, and you just might not need funding. While bootstrapping, you need to stay as lean as possible.

At WaraCake, we focused on selling cakes alone at the start, but now we have added other gift items to the store because our customers want them. We used to cancel same day orders but we delivered a cake within two hours from the time the order was placed with our new [WaraBuddy](#) solution.

Spend more time with your customers, don't leave it to that intern you hired on a petty little salary. One key thing I learned from my time at Passion Incubator from Olufunbi Falayi, is to always under-promise and over-deliver.

E-commerce in Africa is here to stay and it isn't for the faint-hearted, it's going to be hard, you need to find your star Unique Selling Point (USP), your star marketing channel and double down.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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