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Building an Effective Startup Team

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ABSTRACT

Startups operate in an environment marked by high uncertainty and have very few established norms and procedures to guide their actions. Therefore, to succeed they need not just a strong and visionary entrepreneur/leader, but also an effective supporting team. Members of these startup teams must be able to multitask, learn quickly, make strategic decisions, manage operations, look for customers, fix problems, and pivot when necessary. Choosing the right people to join the team is essential, but what should leaders look for, apart from what is mentioned on their resumes? This study examines the structure of startup teams to: (1) determine which roles are necessary to build a startup team; (2) find the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed in team members to ensure a higher probability of the startup's survival; and (3) identify team-related competencies essential to ensure team effectiveness in its early stages. This qualitative study presents the findings collated from interviews with members of startups in Thailand to obtain a better understanding about selecting an effective team. The findings indicate that: (1) to establish a startup, the only crucial roles in the team are the founder and developer; (2) the team members do not necessarily require extensive knowledge about, or expertise in, the field of business they have entered; however, they need to have adequate skills and abilities to complete the tasks at hand on time, collaborate persistently, and show enough resilience, when facing challenges or blockades, to move forward or change strategy; and (3) for the team to function effectively, the team (especially the founder and developer) must collectively have all of the team-related competencies – collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution, communication, goal setting and performance management, and planning and task coordination; and if the team lacks a particular competency, another member or cofounder with this competency strength should be invited to join the team to fill in the gap, and thus, creating an effective startup team.

Keywords: startup, entrepreneurship, team composition, characteristics, effective team

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of startups is one of the most important economic and social developments in recent history. These new startup firms – based on entrepreneurial effort, technology advances, and the support of the Internet and social media – can start their operations quickly; connect with, and collect feedback from users; adapt their business strategy; and grow/scale fast. With the help of the Internet, people can now read, shop, book, and communicate faster and at their convenience through digital platforms on their computers or smartphones. Powerful disruptive companies, such as Google, Amazon, eBay, Uber, and Airbnb are all successful startup businesses that have transformed the lives of millions of people worldwide and will continue to do so in the years to come.

However, what constitutes a successful startup team? Many entrepreneurship studies prioritized the influence of founders or CEOs (Andrews, 1971; Kimberly, 1979; Miller et al., 1982; Miller & Dröge, 1986; Begley & Boyd, 1987; Nelson, 2003; Baron, 2007); however, most new startup ventures are led by teams, rather than individuals (Cooper et al., 1989; Kamm et al., 1990; Lechler, 2001; Reynolds & White, 1997; West, 2007). The nature of the founding team of a startup is quite different from that of other types of teams, such as top management teams in established firms, project teams, product teams, and so on. This is because it operates in an

environment of high uncertainty and deals with situations that have few established norms and procedures for guidance. These startups do not have the luxury of acquiring experts to look after a specific responsibility/role; most members have to multitask and take up responsibilities even if they have no prior experience of handling them. With or without prior industry experience and knowledge, members of the startup are forced to make strategic decisions, oversee the business operations, fix multi-dimensional problems, and pivot or make drastic changes when necessary. It is, therefore, important to carefully select members of the team, who are expected to set the initial strategies, policies, and procedures of the company, as well as establish a company culture that sets important precedents as the venture continues to develop and grow (Klotz et al., 2014).

Having members in the team with prior startup or industry experience and product knowledge is essential; however, is it more important that the team works well together and each member has certain skills or strengths that complement those of others or fill the skill gaps when needed? Given the resource constraints during the initial stages of a startup, is it the priority to choose team members with the right fit? How big should the team be? What roles should be established in the initial stages for the team to function effectively? Which KSAs would contribute most to the success of the new startup venture? This study's key implications are for selection and staffing decisions; in particular, it hopes to achieve a shift from the default strategy of focusing on position requirements to selecting the people with the right individual- and teamwork-oriented KSAs.

The following research questions guided this study:

R1. Which roles are crucial in the initial stage of a new startup?

R2. Which individual knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) should a member of the startup team have to ensure a higher probability of the venture's success?

R3. What team-related competencies are essential for team effectiveness leading to the survival or success of the new startup venture?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding why companies succeed or fail is important for the economy's stability and health (Gaskill et al., 1993). Most research on entrepreneurship focuses on the factors determining entrepreneurs' success and their characteristics (Begley & Boyd, 1987; Baron, 1998, 2004; Sarasvathy, 2004). However, many studies also indicated that business failure is an important experience that leads to the improvement of entrepreneurs' knowledge and skills (McGrath, 1999; Minniti & Bygrave, 2001). Successful startups learn from their mistakes and failures, quickly adjust their business strategies to respond to the market, and meet their customers' needs. Therefore, failures provide critical learning opportunities (Cardon et al., 2010); enhance entrepreneurial knowledge and founding experiences (Huovinen & Tihula, 2008); and are a part of the organization's learning process (Sitkin, 1992).

Zacharakis et al. (1999) explained that business success and failure can be determined by internal factors (individual/organizational) and external factors (environmental). Internal factors are the decisions and actions that are under the control of the leader and/or management, while external factors are incidents or events that occur outside the company, and therefore, beyond the management's control. In most cases, businesses fail because of a combination of internal and external factors. Startups in their early stages are highly prone to failure because they usually operate in unknown business territories and untested environments. External factors that cause failure include inadequate economic circumstances (Gaskill et al., 1993), insufficient financial resources (Liao et al., 2008), or changes in government policies (Cardon et al., 2010).

Although startups are aware of the external factors that might affect their businesses, more than 90% of startups self-destruct (Marmer et al., 2012). This happens so often that Scherr (1989) stated that there is always a link between the management's ability and the venture's failure. One of the leading internal factors for business failure is incompetent leadership or poor management (Gaskill et al., 1993; Zacharakis et al., 1999), while other leading causes include overconfidence, excessive risk-taking (Hayward et al., 2006) and poor financial management. These are all people-related factors, and more specifically, factors related to the new venture's management team.

Because most startups fail because of internal factors, rather than competition (Marmer et al., 2012), an important element in running a successful startup is having a strong team. Studies indicate a strong association between the success of the venture and the team that started it (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1990); they found that management teams have a more significant influence on the organization's performance than individual executives (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; O'Reilly et al., 1993). Hence, the founding team's quality and composition are critical determinants of the organization's performance (Glick et al., 1993; Hambrick, 1994).

In creating teams, Stevens and Campion (1994) introduced the KSA requirements for teamwork, and identified two categories of KSAs: interpersonal and self-management. Further, they listed the following five subcategories of KSAs: (1) conflict resolution; (2) collaborative problem solving; (3) communications; (4) goal setting and performance management; and (5) planning and task coordination; the first three belong to the interpersonal category and the remaining two fall under self-management. They explained that the KSAs are attributes that the management can influence through trainings, selection procedures, and so on. However, personal traits and dispositional attributes of individuals are harder to influence or change at work; therefore, the focus should be on KSAs, rather than personality.

Although many literatures have focused on the individual entrepreneur and team success, there is still a gap in the literature about the crucial roles in a startup team; the KSAs required in startup team members; and the desirable team-attributes needed for the team to fulfill its potential during the critical stage of venture conception.

3. METHODS

This study uses a phenomenological approach to qualitative research by exploring the experiences of startup members during the initial stages of their ventures, as well as the contexts or incidents that have influenced their experiences related to the startup phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The objective of this approach is to arrive at a clearer understanding of the phenomenon by interviewing 10 founding members of different startup teams in Thailand about the initial stages of their ventures. The study relies on the participant's first-hand experience and perspective in initiating startup ventures to provide insights on essential individual KSAs and teamwork competencies when forming teams. Some of the ventures covered in the study have ceased to exist; this helps in examining whether teams with low levels of KSAs in members and/or low team-relevant competencies contributed to the failure of the new startup ventures.

The participants were asked to explain how the new venture started; the nature of business; challenges and outcomes; how the team was formed; assignment of roles and responsibilities; interaction among members; and reasons for parting of ways or growth in numbers. The following questions, which are related to the research questions, were asked during the interview:

R1. Finding the crucial roles in a startup team:

    1.1. How many members were present in the team and what were their roles and responsibilities?
    1.2. Are some roles more crucial than others? Why?

R2. Individual KSAs-related questions:

    2.1. Which is more important for members of the startup team to have in the initial stages: hard skills (ability, education degree, specific product/service knowledge, past industry experiences, etc.) or soft skills (personality, leadership, adaptability, collaboration, etc.)?

    2.2. Are there any specific attributes that are most crucial for the survival of a new startup team?

    2.3. What are the main knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics needed for each position/role?

R3. Teamwork KSAs-related questions:

    3.1. For the team to function effectively, what teamwork KSAs does each role need to have?

3.2. What is more important for a new startup team: a person with high level of KSAs or a person with high teamwork-oriented competencies (conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving, communication, goal setting and performance management, and planning and task coordination)?

Members of the teams interviewed held different positions in the new venture, and came from several different industries; their startup experience varied, but all started with a team no larger than six members (Table 1). The table presents interview details in a chronological order; participants P3 and P7 were from the same startup venture that has now ceased operations, whereas P9 and P10 are from the same venture still in operation. The names of the interviewees and companies will remain confidential.

Table 1. Members of new startup teams that were interviewed.

PARTICIPANT (P)	INTERVIEWEE POSITION (MALE/FEMALE)	YEARS OF STARTUP EXPERIENCE	NO. OF MEMBERS (FULL-TIME/ PART-TIME)	NATURE OF BUSINESS	YEARS OF OPERATION	GENERATE INCOME	CURRENT STATUS
1	CEO/Founder (M)	2	4 (2 FT, 2 PT)	Service Utility Application	2	Yes	Operating
2	Cofounder/ Developer (M)	3	3 (2 FT, 1 PT)	Agricultural Platform	1	No	Operating
3	Cofounder/Chief Technical Officer (M)	5	6 (6 PT)	Social Enterprise Platform	3	No	Ceased operations
4	CEO/Founder (M)	10	4 (2 FT, 2 PT)	Hospitality Booking Platform	8	Yes	Operating
5	Founder/Chief Marketing Officer (F)	10+	5 (5 FT)	Female-centric Retail Platform	5	Yes	Ceased operations
6	Cofounder (F)	3	4 (2 FT, 2 PT)	Cosmetic Products Platform	3	Yes	Operating
7	Founder (M)	5	6 (6 PT)	Social Enterprise Platform	3	No	Ceased operations
8	Investor/Shareholder/ Advisor (F)	3	4 (3 FT, 1 PT)	Retail/Service Platform	4	Yes	Operating
9	Cofounder (M)	5	5 (2 FT, 3 PT)	Professional Service Platform	3	No	Operating
10	Cofounder (M)	5	5 (2 FT, 3 PT)	Professional Service Platform	3	No	Operating

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

From the interviews with participants, several patterns emerged (Table 2). The composition of the participant's teams varied according to the resources and people available to work on the project on either full- or part-time basis. However, all of them had a cross-functional structure, wherein the founder and founding team members had to solve various problems themselves.

Except for P1, none of the participants had extensive working experience, prior knowledge, or expertise in the field of their venture; however, they were interested in it because they had experienced a problem or "pain point," or saw a gap in a business or service that they sought to fill. In terms of their educational background,

all had a bachelor degree or above in a variety of fields, and were either in their late 30s (P6, P8) or early 40s (P1, P3, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10); the only exception was P2, who was in his early 20s. All of them had had work experience in different companies before founding their own startup, and all of them had prior exposure to a startup business, either as an employee (P2, P3, P5, P7, P9, P10), business partner (P6, P8), or a frequent client/user (P1 and P4).

Of all the participants, only P1 and P4 had no intention of attracting external investors or venture capital from the start, while the rest started with the intention of creating a product aimed at attracting investors to provide funds and scale. None of the startups received any external funding from the start of operations; this drove them to operate with their own personal funding and without hired experts. However, only P5 and P8 had succeeded in raising funds from venture capitalists.

Table 2. Summary of the findings

PARTICIPANT (P)	R1 CRITICAL ROLES (FROM THE MOST TO LEAST IMPORTANT)	R2 ESSENTIAL INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES (IN ALL POSITIONS)	R3 TEAMWORK COMPETENCIES (IN FOUNDER/COFOUNDER AND DEVELOPER, ARRANGED FROM THE MOST TO LEAST IMPORTANT)	
1 **SERVICE UTILITY APPLICATION**	1. Founder (FT) 2. Developer (PT) 3. Sales (PT) 4. Maintenance (FT)	K: Needs some understanding of the business. S&A: Business acumen, leadership, multi-task, resilience, motivation skills	Founder/Cofounder: 1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Conflict resolution 5. Planning and task coordination	Developer: 1. Communication 2. Planning and task coordination 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Problem solving 5. Conflict resolution
2 **AGRICULTURAL PLATFORM**	1. Founder (FT) 2. Cofounder, Developer (PT) 3. Cofounder, Business Dev. (Sales/Marketing) (FT)	K: Not necessarily of agriculture, but of import/export and marketing. S&A: Agile, adaptability, resilience, communication	Founder: 1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Planning and task coordination 5. Conflict resolution	Developer: 1. Communication 2. Planning and task coordination 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Problem solving 5. Conflict resolution
3 **SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PLATFORM**	1. Founder, Sales (PT) 2. Cofounder, Developer (PT) 3. Cofounder, IT & Administration (PT) 4. Cofounder, Sales & Marketing (PT) 5. Cofounder, Legal Consultant (PT) 6. Cofounder, Field Operator (PT)	K: None S&A: Vision, leadership, business acumen, good coordination, resilience	Founder: 1. Communication 2. Problem solving 3. Conflict resolution 4. Goal setting & performance management 5. Planning and task coordination	Developer: 1. Problem solving 2. Planning and task coordination 3. Communication 4. Conflict resolution 5. Goal setting & performance management
4 **HOSPITALITY BOOKING PLATFORM**	1. Founder (FT) 2. Developer (PT) 3. Administration (FT) 4. Sales (PT)	K: Needs to understand ecommerce, but no prior experience in hospitality business required. S&A: Resilience, manage task delegation well, attention to detail	Founder: 1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Conflict resolution 5. Planning and task coordination	Developer: 1. Problem solving 2. Planning and task coordination 3. Communication 4. Goal setting & performance management 5. Conflict resolution
5 **FEMALE-CENTRIC RETAIL PLATFORM**	1. Founder (FT) 2. Cofounder, Business Dev.(FT) 3. Developer (FT) 4. Cofounder, Marketing/Sales (FT) 5. Finance/Accounting (FT)	K: Of retail, trends, and fashion. S&A: Common sense, logic, resilience, motivation skills, leadership	Founder: 1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Conflict resolution 5. Planning and task coordination	Developer: 1. Communication 2. Planning and task coordination 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Problem solving 5. Conflict resolution

			Founder:	Developer:
6 **COSMETIC PRODUCTS PLATFORM**	1. Founder (FT) 2. Cofounder, Online Retail Specialist (FT) 3. Developer (PT) 4. Marketing/Sales (PT)	K: Of e-commerce and retail. S&A: Market-savvy, leadership, great networking and communication skills, resilience, agile, and ready to adapt/change	1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Conflict resolution 5. Planning and task coordination	1. Communication 2. Planning and task coordination 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Problem solving 5. Conflict resolution
7 **SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PLATFORM**	1. Founder (PT) 2. Cofounder, Developer (PT) 3. Cofounder, Administration (PT) 4. Cofounder, Sales & Marketing (PT) 5. Cofounder, Legal Consultant (PT) 6. Cofounder, Field Operator (PT)	K: None S&A: Motivate team, leadership skills, collaboration, manage task delegation well, diligent, good communication skills	1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Conflict resolution 5. Planning and task coordination	1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Planning and task coordination 4. Goal setting & performance management 5. Conflict resolution
8 **RETAIL/ SERVICE PLATFORM**	1. Founder (FT) 2. Cofounder, Sales & Marketing (FT) 3. Developer (FT) 4. Advisor/Business Dev. (PT)	K: Understand e-commerce and retail concepts. S&A: Resilience and hard work, leadership, and team coordination.	1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Conflict resolution 5. Planning and task coordination	1. Communication 2. Planning and task coordination 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Problem solving 5. Conflict resolution
9 **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE PLATFORM**	1. Founder (FT) 2. Developer (PT) 3. Administration (FT) 4. Cofounder, Sales & Marketing (PT) 5. Cofounder, IT (PT)	K: None S&A: Visionary, persistent, good delegation and management skills, assumes leadership when necessary, but let others lead too.	1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Conflict resolution 5. Planning and task coordination	1. Communication 2. Planning and task coordination 3. Problem solving 4. Goal setting & performance management 5. Conflict resolution
10 **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE PLATFORM**	1. Founder (FT) 2. Developer (PT) 3. Administration (FT) 4. Cofounder, Sales & Marketing (PT) 5. Cofounder, IT (PT)	K: None S&A: Always curious and willing to learn, inspiring others, persistent, resilient, well-rounded management skills	1. Problem solving 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Conflict resolution 5. Planning and task coordination	1. Planning and task coordination 2. Communication 3. Goal setting & performance management 4. Problem solving 5. Conflict resolution

Critical Roles while Beginning a Startup

All new startup ventures in this study started with a person having an idea that had the potential of being a startup. The person saw a business opportunity, sensed potential for success, and was passionate enough to take the next steps in building a business. Through brainstorming sessions with friends and acquaintances, this person started forming a team by inviting people who had the relevant expertise and experience in a certain area to help or give advice; many of them finally joined as members of the team, investing their time and money in the hope of receiving equity shareholding if the venture succeeded. The person who initially came up with the idea usually becomes the founder, or leader, of the new startup team.

The next crucial task is finding a developer to create a website or application, thereby turning the idea into reality. The only role that was hired either full- or part-time to work on the project right from the start is the developer, with only P2, P3 and P7 where the developers are also cofounders and will receive a share of the profits and a salary if the ventures start generating income. Recruiting a trusted developer to join or work for the team is essential; this is because the venture must own the technology and platform their business operates on. Participants stated that they have heard of many cases where developers would not share the technology

they have developed for the founder and would later on request an additional pay to transfer the information or control over to the founder. To avoid such circumstances, developers were either invited to join as cofounders (P2, P3 and P7), or hired full- or part-time to work on the project by signing a contract that included intellectual property provisions.

From the information collected during this research, in the initial stages of a startup, the two critical roles are those of the founder and developer. Cofounders, business partners, marketing experts, analysts, lawyers, etc., are all supporting roles that do not exist in all new startups during the initial stages. The participants stated that the necessary technical advice could be accessed through other information channels, such as startup incubators, advisors, workshops, family members, friends, books, websites, and so on. However, startups in a more complex line of business (ecommerce, online retail, etc.) or reliant on technology might need specific business expertise; the person having it may join as a cofounder, team member or advisor to guide the team in setting up the business operations and structure (P5, P6, and P8). Of the interviewees, only P1 and P4 initiated the startup without a cofounder. All participants stated that their startup began with a founder and a developer and the team grew when more help was needed. P5 stated that having a roles/responsibility framework right from the beginning could help startups to plan ahead; know when more employees are needed; and fill in the gaps in responsibility as the business continues to grow.

Reflecting on their experience, many of the participants indicated that their venture would have made faster and more effective progress if it had fewer team members. P1 and P4 kept the team small by including no cofounders; this was done to avoid people-related complications – as decision-making, progress in implementation, and updates tend to be slower if more people are involved. This view was supported by P3 and P7; they said that this was especially the case when most of the team members are close friends or acquaintances; are working on the startup as a side project; or the leader does not have strong leadership and task management skills. Within the current startup ecosystem, entrepreneurs can build a much leaner business more quickly than in the past because all the necessary support is available – it ranges from startup communities, private sector incubators and accelerators, to governmental initiatives and incentives. The process of turning an idea into a website or application platform to test the market has never been faster and easier, and can be done with a much smaller team by utilizing outsourced assistance or the services of freelancers.

Team Member's KSAs

If one disregards the personality traits and dispositions, all the participants emphasized that the only skills and abilities needed for the startup team members are those required to do the job at hand and complete the tasks on time, besides learning new things quickly and continuously. All team members are expected to multi-task and take over responsibilities in which they have no experience; these include online marketing, accounting, and/or sales. Only the developers were expected to have the hard (technical) skills of developing platforms prior to joining the team. Team members with work experience can find solutions to issues or challenges faster than those who have less or no work experience. However, educational degree, product/service knowledge, and past industry experiences are irrelevant or have very minimal impact in a new startup because most founders launched ventures in areas in which they had no expertise; P1, whose startup sought to solve a customer pain point in his existing line of business, was the only exception. Most of the participants interviewed, except P1, explained that the founders had very little knowledge of the industry or the business they had entered; however, they had decided to start a business because they saw a chance to disrupt, solve a pain point, or add value to an existing industry or business area.

All the participants agreed that soft skills are more crucial for new startup teams because the roles and responsibilities of team members are normally not clearly defined; so they would have to work closely to meet the same objectives and their roles would sometimes overlap with one another. The soft skills that most of the participants deem important are adaptability, collaboration, persistence, and resilience. For founders, leadership and decision-making skills are crucial for keeping the venture going in the face of various challenges and pitfalls encountered while operating a business. Leaders hold the key to streamlining team processes and achieving outcomes (Zaccaro et al., 2001); unfortunately, not everyone can become a leader, and teams are greatly affected by the lack of leadership or mismanagement by leaders. P3 and P7 had no clear leadership because all the team members were friends and acquaintances of one another, held full-time jobs, and were working on the new startup as a side project. With no one taking full responsibility, following up on tasks, and holding the

team together, the members eventually lost the interest and motivation to work on the project, and the startup eventually ceased operation.

The founder's knowledge about the business subject matter does not have to be high during the initial stages of the venture; but needs to improve incrementally through his/her passionate persistence, as well as a process of trial and error. However, a founder needs leadership skills to inspire and the ability to hold the team together, while motivating them to drive the business forward. The founder must have enough ability to run the necessary operations, or hire others to do so. Other positions, such as cofounders, marketing experts, analyst, lawyers, and so on, are supportive roles at this stage and their KSAs can come in handy; however, their absence does not threaten the existence of the new startup. These roles can change or become redundant over the life of a startup team; however, as long as the objectives and views about progress of the founder and developer are aligned, the venture will continue to exist and move forward.

Essential Team-related Competencies

Based on the KSA requirements for teamwork (Stevens & Campion, 1994), an effective team needs the following team-related KSAs: conflict resolution KSAs; collaborative problem solving KSAs' communications KSAs; goal setting and performance management KSAs; and planning and task coordination KSAs. Not all team members interviewed had all these team-related KSAs' however, the founder must have strong interpersonal KSAs – collaborative problem solving and conflict resolution. The developer must have strong self-management KSAs – goal setting and performance management, and planning and task coordination. For the team to function effectively, both the founder and developer must have strong communication KSAs (see Chart 1).

Chart 1. Team-competency KSAs required in founders and developers
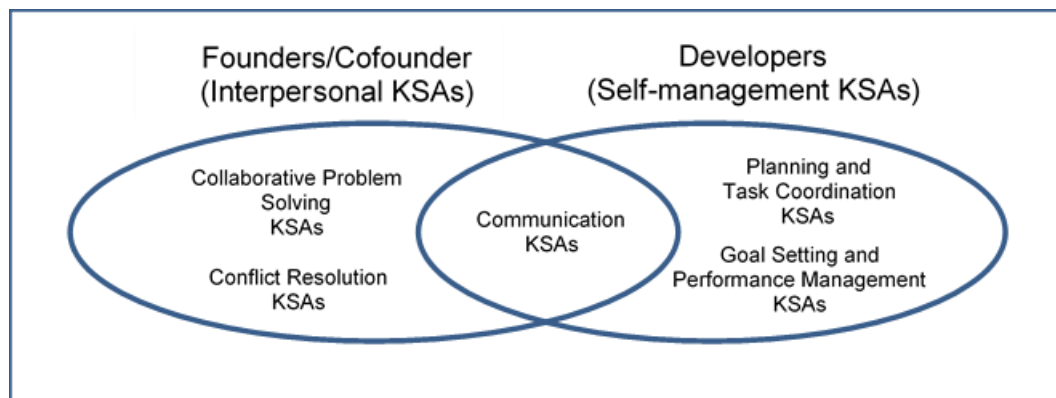
All the participants stated that the founder must have higher than average interpersonal KSAs and be able to resolve conflicts – with external stakeholders and internal team members – through negotiations and strategic win-win approaches. The founder must also solve problems by mobilizing the team to work together collaboratively and come up with appropriate actions. Developers, on the other hand, must have higher than average self-management KSAs to be able to manage their own assignments and achieve the objectives or tasks assigned. The self-management KSAs include setting up achievable goals and plans on developing and implementing tasks to achieve the founder's expectations. Whether a startup progresses quickly or not depends significantly on the developer's work speed and understanding of what the founder and the team want to see in the product. The developer must also evaluate and provide feedback on the challenges and the tasks accomplished so that the team can discuss and decided on solutions to solve the problem. This is why both the founder and developer need high communication KSAs; it ensures open and supportive communication with all team members, and thus, leads to a more effective team.

Having a cofounder with different strengths can also provide support to the team and fill knowledge and skill gaps. P5 is a founder with creativity and networking skills, but has low tolerance for team-related conflicts and day-to-day problem solving and operations (low interpersonal KSAs); therefore, she invited an acquaintance

with strong management and leadership skills to join as a cofounder and help in managing the startup team. All participants agreed that it is essential for the founder to acquire strong interpersonal KSAs and the developer to possess strong self-management KSAs; if this is not the case, a new cofounder or team member with either strong interpersonal KSAs or self-management KSAs would be needed to fill the gap.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Starting a new business is an exciting experience, but it is not easy. Many factors, both external and internal, can cause the business' failure. Because most new startup ventures fail owing to people-related issues, it is essential for them to form strong teams comprising members who have a high level of KSAs and can work well together. This study concludes that the roles of the founder and developer are critical in a new startup venture. As these two roles are crucial for the startup team, the founder and developer must have high level of KSAs to run the business operations. The founder must have adequate leadership and task management skills and the ability to hold the team together and motivate it; however, he or she does not need to have extensive knowledge or experience in the line of business of the startup. If the startup operates in a complex line of business or is heavily reliant on technology, a person with specific business expertise may be invited to join as a cofounder, team member or advisor to fill in the knowledge and/or operational gap. The developer, on the other hand, must have acceptable technical and development KSAs to create a well-developed web/application platform that accords with the founder's vision. For the team to function effectively, the founder must acquire high conflict resolution KSAs and collaborative problem solving KSAs, while the developers must acquire a high level of self-management KSAs: goal setting and performance management, as well as planning and task coordination KSAs. Both founder and developer must have a high level of communication KSAs to convey and understand what is expected and develop a platform that reflects the founder's idea and vision.

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