

# Winning the Startup Game

## **A flat start-up curve can really ruin your game.**

Demand goes unmet. Startup costs rise. And despite your best efforts to reach capacity, your startup period just grows longer by the day. Everyone's been there, but it doesn't have to be that way. At Haskell, we've developed a game plan for fast startup. Using our approach, a beverage manufacturer with an aggressive 10-week startup goal was able to reach planned capacity levels in only four weeks – and if they'd had the resources in position, it could have been even shorter! Here's how it works.

## **Introduction**

If you're struggling with flat startup curves – or curves that look okay at first, but drop off a cliff once your engineers move on to their next project – then you'll recognize problems like these:

- ▶ Your people are geared up to go, but the machines aren't ready or the resources aren't there. On the other hand, maybe the line is ready, but your people aren't.
- ▶ Change orders from contractors, last minute changes from the controls engineer, quality control tweaks, and endless other changes are stalling progress.
- ▶ Operations and maintenance staff are ready to get working, but not properly trained. Or you've conducted training, but it's off-target and costing you too much.

Haskell has been helping companies improve their startups for over 25 years. We've seen a large variety of different situations and we know for a fact that you can avoid the problems that plague most startups. It all comes down to five fundamentals.

## **The Five Keys to Startup Success**

1. Create a startup team that represents stakeholders
2. Choose a quarterback that can act as a player-coach

3. Build the playbook together
4. Execute the plays while keeping everyone talking
5. Keep score and celebrate every win

## **Create a Startup that Represents Stakeholders**

Begin by identifying all the parties that have an impact on your startup success. Everyone who touches the project needs a voice on your startup team – from plant engineering, operations, and maintenance to corporate engineering, quality, R&D, marketing, and business leadership. It's the best way to prevent unwelcome surprises and setbacks.

## **Choose a Quarterback that can Act as a Player-Coach**

When you're selecting the leader for your startup team, look for someone who can coach everyone through the startup without doing all the work single-handedly. This is vital. You want a team player who can bring everyone together and will not go it alone. Your startup quarterback should come from within your group of stakeholders. He or she is responsible for calling the plays on the field, overseeing the entire startup, and ensuring end-to-end care of the project.

## **Build the Playbook Together**

Don't expect your quarterback to create all the plays. No one person can think of everything. What's more, buy-in from your team members is one of the most critical success factors for any startup. To accomplish this, your quarterback should gather input from everyone on the team, compile the information, and present it to the whole team for feedback.

During this process, you want to define what the goal line looks like by outlining quantifiable success criteria and including them in your playbook. One of the simplest, most effective ways to do this is to use SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-based). Since training can make or break a startup, you also want to be sure your playbook includes a very

comprehensive training plan. Practicing the plays ahead of time will help prepare your team for game day.

### **Execute the Plays While Keeping Everyone Talking**

Constant communication is the key to execution. It is how you build trust and develop a nimble, responsive team that can quickly adapt to change. Your quarterback should lead a daily startup meeting (or daily startup phone calls / emails) to foster these winning qualities in your team, tackle unexpected challenges, and solve issues before they become serious problems.

The startup will be a dynamic environment with constantly changing conditions. Some tests will go well and advance the schedule while others will go poorly and impede the schedule. The team will need to adjust

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### **REMAIN FLEXIBLE – BUT STICK TO THE PLAN**

*A common mistake during the execution of the startup plan is to get caught up in the excitement of positive initial progress and commit the system to significant production before it is ready. Early on, the results should be good, because the team has done a good job of planning and setting expectations, but if you lose the discipline of following through the startup plan you may not have uncovered all the issues. And they can cause significant downtime if not addressed early.*

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to changing conditions to maximize utilization of resources (service techs, operators, materials) and time.

### **Keep Score and Celebrate Every Win**

What's the best way to boost team morale? Score more points. It's important to track your progress, celebrate milestones, and reward your people for a job well done. You'll want to include highly visible startup scorecards

on the production floor to help track progress.

One of the first clients to use our startup game plan worked with us to develop three lists of goals. They had identified a series of baseline goals and “stretch” goals, plus an even more difficult set of “wow” goals. With these quantifiable success criteria in place, we were able to easily measure performance.

At the end of the project, we not only met every single one of their baseline and “stretch” goals, but we even met several of their extreme “wow” goals. For example, **operational qualification was met 40% sooner** than planned, and **final project objectives were met 25% sooner**. The client was amazed and the team was delighted. Our startup planning process is now a staple in the clients project management playbook.

### **Ready to Get Started?**

Aim high. Follow this simple, five-step game plan. And you will win your next startup. For more information, contact Haskell's Food and Beverage division leader, Keith Perkey: [keith.perkey@haskell.com](mailto:keith.perkey@haskell.com).