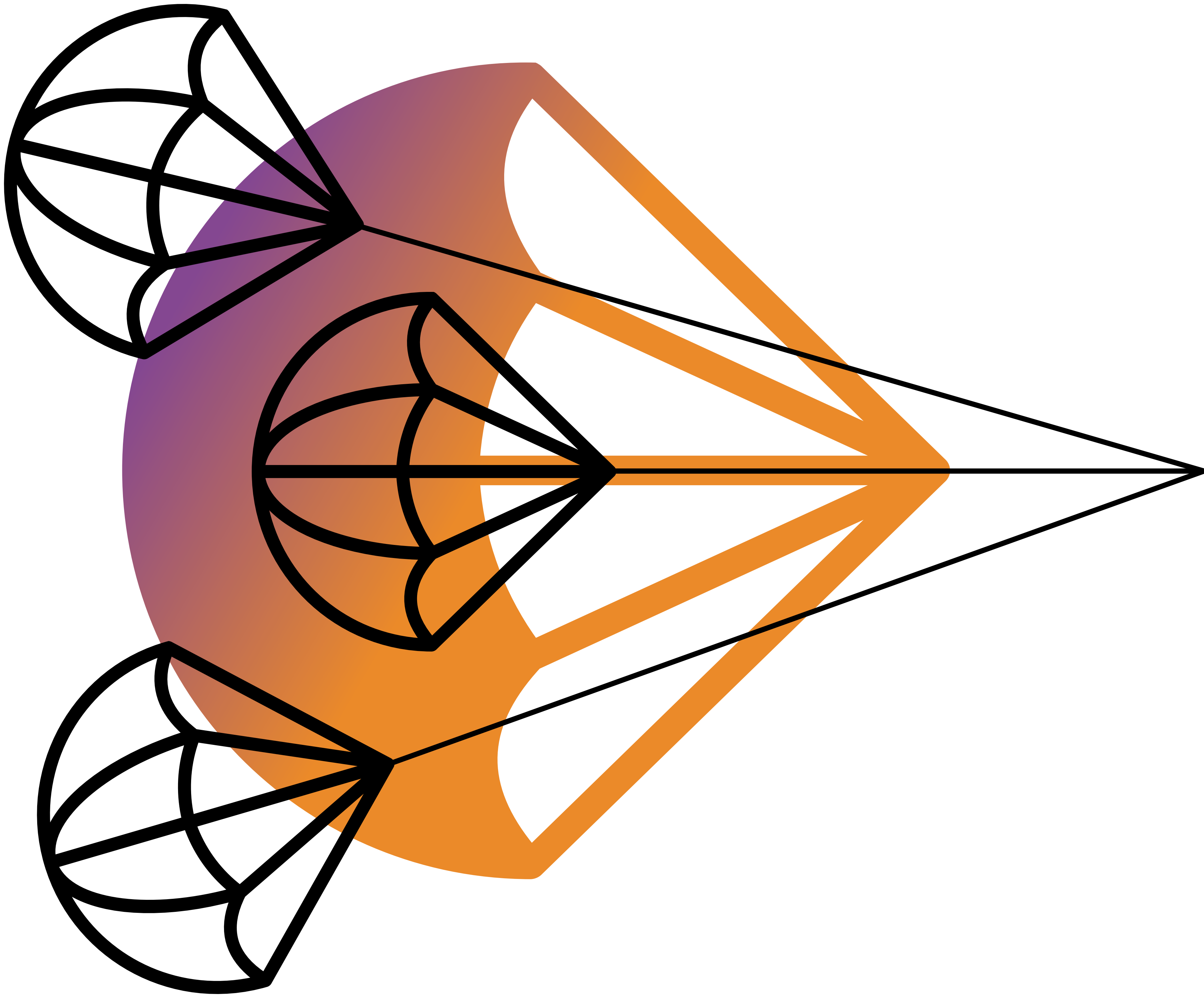


20 SOURCES OF TEAM DRAG



Martin Gonzalez & Josh Yellin

THE
BONFIRE
MOMENT

Team drag occurs when you're moving too fast, skipping over important decisions about the future, and accumulating a kind of organizational debt along the way. To help you identify where your startup might be struggling with team drag, we asked founders to share the things they wished they hadn't ignored early on, which created a lot of drag down the line.

Read through each question set, and for every item that your team hasn't spent time discussing and making agreements on, mark it as a red flag. This list is used in the final block of The Bonfire Moment.

Initiation:

1. Mission. Is our work trying to solve an important, meaningful problem, and has that higher mission been clearly articulated for the team?

2. Skills and networks. Do the people on our team have mostly overlapping skills or networks? Do we have enough diversity to open a wide range of prospective employees, customers, and funding?

3. Equity splits. Did we make the easy choice of distributing equity in equal shares, since we started as a tight-knit group of peers? If so, what will we do in the future if contributions to the startup start to drag. vary widely and people perform at different levels of quality? What will happen if a pivot makes some cofounders' skill sets less essential?

4. Colocation. How do we feel about having everyone based in the same city, working from the same physical space, or taking advantage of options for remote work? How often do we expect people to be physically in the same place? How flexible will we be when making exceptions?

5. Representing the team. Who will be the face of the startup when a media outlet or conference allows only one cofounder to represent us? Will it always be the same person? How do we prevent any of us from feeling invisible?

Operation:

6. Decision-making. Will we make important decisions based on data, intuition, or a combination of the two? In scenarios when there isn't good data, whose intuition do we lean on?

7. Raising money. What kinds of investors are we willing to work with? Are we clear about the pros and cons of receiving money from family or friends? Whom are we going to turn down for financing? Will those guidelines change if we get desperate?

8. Spending. How much will we spend on non-revenue-generating expenses, such as a nice office? Are we aligned on whether certain kinds of expenses help attract talent or build confidence with customers, or if they're empty ways to feed our egos?

9. Running out of money. If we're ever about to run out of money, what are we prepared to do? Do we ask friends or relatives for help, put in our own money, and/or take no salary? Should we make exceptions to salary cuts based on personal circumstances?

10. Hiring and firing. Will culture and values be a key part of our hiring decisions? Are we willing to turn away highly credentialed people who fail those tests? Should we fire people who undermine the culture, in addition to firing for underperformance? How much time should we give people to address constructive feedback?

Interaction:

11. Time commitment. What hours will we keep? Are we expecting everyone to work part-time, full-time, or all the time? If we started off working part-time (as many startups do), are we aligned on who will later be willing to go full-time and at what point? How will we handle deviations from this time commitment?

12. Conflict. How do we handle conflict in the team? What are the rules of engagement for resolving issues without damaging relationships?

13. Expressing stress and anger. What are acceptable expressions of stress and anger? Will we tolerate profanity, yelling, incivility, or property damage? What are we prepared to do to enforce our norms?

14. Gossip. What will we do when gossip starts to spread within the team? What is each team member's responsibility when they hear one colleague complain about another? When does gossip cross the line from harmless to damaging?

15. Mental health. What will we do when someone on the team is struggling with their mental health?¹⁵ To what extent are we ready to support our teammates, especially if they need to take temporary breaks from work?

16. Friendship outside of work. Is spending time in social activities with colleagues outside working hours optional, encouraged, or expected? Are we mindful that certain activities (such as drinking at the pub, playing soccer on Saturdays, or doing recreational drugs) might put some people in an awkward position? Will we allow participation

Separation:

17. Personal stagnation. If one or more cofounders aren't building their skills fast enough to keep up with the growing business, what are fair actions to move forward without them?

18. Resignations. What do we consider fair reasons for one of us to resign from the team? Will we support teammates who can't stay due to family responsibilities or financial needs?

19. Exit plans. Are we aligned on possible exit plans for the startup? If a large company offers to buy us out before we intend to exit, will we consider selling? Under what conditions would we reject a serious offer?

20. Failure. At what point will we decide this startup is a failure? What metric do we use: bankruptcy, or a success hurdle such as "x users in y months" or "x dollars in revenue by year y"? What will we do if some members of the team want to keep fighting while others have already mentally moved on?

If you find that your team has rushed past many or most of these questions while playing the short game, don't despair. The Bonfire Moment will help you get back on track.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Most startups fail not because of a bad product, poor timing, or mismanaged cash, but because of people problems: conflicts over strategy, decision-making, and team culture. Even the smartest entrepreneurs have been derailed by these soft problems: How do you fire a loyal friend who's not up to par? How do you motivate your team to give their all? What happens when egos and emotions overpower facts and reason? The soft stuff can be shockingly hard.

Martin Gonzalez and Josh Yellin outline the common traps startup teams fall into, and share their powerful one-day workshop that helps teams escape those traps. The unique process of The Bonfire Moment brings colleagues together for a full day of facing hard truths, noticing hidden dynamics, and gearing up for the intense challenges of startup life. When the constant hustle feels overwhelming, a team's Bonfire Moment pulls them out of the day-to-day intensity to reflect and reboot.

The Bonfire Moment has proven effective with hundreds of teams of all sizes around the world—from the smallest startups to large organizations—significantly improving their cohesion, focus and effectiveness. Now this book will teach leaders the principles behind The Bonfire Moment and how to run the workshop on their own. It's ideal for anyone who needs to build an extraordinary team to achieve big goals.

