

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/find-alignment-on-values>

SendGrid CEO Sameer Dholakia talks about how an entrepreneur's most important task at the outset, given the intensity of startups at the early stage, is to choose co-founders who share your values. He says to be equally careful when choosing investors, and to base that decision more on the strength of the relationship, less on factors like the investment firm's worth or popularity.



## Transcript

- There is no more important decision, literally, in terms of order of importance of decisions, priority one, two, three, four, five, and probably six are choose the right business partner.. Building an entrepreneurial venture is extraordinarily difficult.. And if you get that wrong, the rest of it's, don't bother.. It is extraordinarily difficult.. And the key thing, ironically, that I believe goes wrong in a lot of those, in a lot of that process, has nothing to do with the hard skills of, well I'm the business person, and they're the technology person, we got the right skills matrix, it's not that.. It's, do we line up on values? Do we see the world the same way? Do we know what kind of company we wanna go build together, not in what we do, but in how we do it? Those are very different things.. So, you gotta go get lined up first, by choosing a founder and a partner that you have values with.. And by the way, it is, and if you've talked to founders who have done this, they will tell you, it is no joke, as important a decision as who you choose for your spouse.. 'Cause you're gonna spend more time, arguably, with that co-founder, than you do with your spouse for that period of time that you start building that company.. It is a crazy, and it's all about people, and your instinct around people, and values..

It's a soft skill, but it's a very, very important one.. Picking your investors, gonna be the same thing.. It's not gonna be, maybe, you know, one of the factors in your decisions may be how well capitalized are they, do they have a great brand name? It's gonna come down to, and should come down to, what is the relationship that I have with the particular partner at the firm that is gonna engage with me? 'Cause that's gonna be the person who's in the room with me, in my darkest hours, and brightest days.. And I have to be, I gotta, that person is on my side, in the trenches with me.. You gotta be able to pick that person wisely and well, and it's not easy to do.. So, you're gonna focus on people...