ARTICLE

Building Something From Scratch

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Entrepreneurship rewards the bold. Grab a notebook, jot three problems you can solve, and take one action today.

entrepreneurship · build today · tech · risk

I've always thought entrepreneurship sounded more complicated than it really is.

People talk about businesses, startups, funding, customers, scaling and all these big words, but when you're actually trying to build something, it feels much more personal. You have an idea, you don't know if it'll work, you try it anyway, it fails, you learn something, and then you try again.

That's pretty much what my journey has looked like so far.

I've made mistakes. I've had ideas that didn't work. I've stayed up late trying to figure things out. I've also had those moments where something finally clicks and you think, "Okay, maybe this can actually work."

So instead of giving you some perfect guide to entrepreneurship, I thought I'd just share some of the things I've learned along the way.

It Starts With a Problem

One of the first things I learned is that a business idea doesn't have to come from some huge moment of inspiration.

Sometimes you just notice a problem that keeps happening around you.

For me, that happened in Port Harcourt. Power supply was a constant headache for creators and small businesses. People needed electricity to work, but blackouts kept getting in the way.

I started looking into affordable solar backup systems.

At first, I was excited because I thought I had found a great idea. Then I made the mistake a lot of people make. I assumed people would want it just because I thought it was useful.

They didn't.

At least, not in the way I expected.

My first prototype didn't get the response I hoped for. That experience taught me something important.

Talk to people before you build too much.

Seriously.

Ask people if they actually have the problem you're trying to solve. Ask how they're currently dealing with it. Ask what they'd pay for a solution.

You don't need some fancy market research setup either. You can use Google Forms, WhatsApp, or just have actual conversations with people.

Sometimes a conversation can save you weeks of building something nobody wants.

Starting With What You Have

Another thing I've realised is that you don't always need a lot of money to start.

I started with NGN 50,000 from my savings. It wasn't much, so I had to be careful with how I spent it.

Instead of trying to build the perfect business immediately, I focused on getting a simple version of the product working.

That meant building a basic solar kit in my garage and figuring things out as I went.

I also tried to use free or cheap tools wherever possible. Canva helped with branding. WhatsApp Business helped with communicating with customers. LinkedIn helped me meet people and find opportunities.

And I started paying much more attention to where my money was going.

Every naira matters when you're starting with limited resources.

By the third month, revenue had reached NGN 200,000. Looking back, the number itself wasn't the biggest lesson. The bigger lesson was seeing that something I had started with a small amount of money could actually generate revenue.

That gave me confidence to keep going.

You're Going to Get Rejected

This is probably one of the less glamorous parts of entrepreneurship.

You will get ignored.

People will tell you no.

Sometimes people will seem interested and then disappear completely.

I remember spending weeks preparing for a demo for a major potential client, only for them to ghost me afterwards.

It sucked.

But after getting over the frustration, I started asking myself what I could have done differently.

One thing I noticed was that my follow-up wasn't great. I was putting a lot of effort into getting people interested, but I wasn't doing enough afterwards.

So I started being more intentional about following up with leads and keeping track of conversations.

I've also had to learn how to deal with other things along the way.

Fear of rejection: Pitch anyway. You're probably going to hear "no" more than you'd like.

Burnout: You can't work every minute of every day and expect yourself to be fine. I try to keep Sundays as a no-work day so I can spend time with family and reset.

Trying to grow too quickly: You don't need a huge team just because you're building a business. Sometimes you just need to get better at doing the important things yourself first.

Building in Nigeria

There's a lot happening in Nigeria's tech and business space right now.

We've seen companies like Paystack and Flutterwave grow from Nigerian startups into much bigger companies. That can be inspiring, but I also think it's easy to look at businesses like that and feel like you need to build something massive from day one.

You don't.

Start where you are.

If you're selling something, put it online. Try WhatsApp, Jiji, Jumia or social media. Find people who already have access to the customers you're trying to reach and see if you can work together.

And when your business starts becoming serious, learn about the legal side too. Registering with CAC and understanding the rules around your industry can save you problems later.

My solar venture now powers more than 200 homes, and I'm looking into opportunities to expand into East Africa.

But honestly, I'm still learning.

I don't think there's some point where you suddenly become an entrepreneur and now you know everything. Every new stage comes with a different problem to figure out.

So, What Now?

If you're thinking about starting something, you don't need to have everything figured out.

I definitely didn't.

Start by looking around you.

What problems do you keep seeing?

What do people complain about?

What do you know how to do that could make someone's life a little easier?

Write down three problems. Pick one. Talk to someone who actually has that problem.

You don't need a logo yet. You don't need a fancy office. You don't even need the perfect name.

Just start learning.

That's probably the biggest thing entrepreneurship has taught me so far.

You learn by doing.

And sometimes, you only figure out what to do next after you've already taken the first step.

If you're building something too, I'd genuinely love to hear about it. What's the idea you're working on, or what's stopping you from starting?

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