

Sam Altman Quotes

*Team, People, Ideas, Thinking, Years, Needs, Founders, Firsts, Want, Way,
Important, Matter, Trying, Should, Long, Employee, Company, Done, Focus,
Successful*

No matter what you choose, build stuff and be around smart people.

~Sam Altman

You can create value with breakthrough innovation, incremental refinement, or complex coordination. Great companies often do two of these. The very best companies do all three.

~Sam Altman

Founders are usually very stingy with equity to employees and very generous with equity to investors. I think this is totally backwards.

~Sam Altman

Obsess about the quality of the product.

~Sam Altman

Everyone starting a startup for the first time is scared, and everyone feels like a bit of an imposter.

~Sam Altman

In general don't start a startup you're not willing to work on for ten years.

~Sam Altman

No growth hack, brilliant marketing idea, or sales team can save you long term if you don't have a sufficiently good product.

~Sam Altman

You have to be decisive. Indecisiveness is a startup killer.

~Sam Altman

If you don't need it yourself, and you're building something that someone else needs, realize you're at a big disadvantage.

~Sam Altman

Execution gets divided into two key questions: 1) can you figure out what to do and 2) can you get it done.

~Sam Altman

Most investors are obsessed with the market size today and they don't think about how the market is going to evolve.

~Sam Altman

I prefer to invest in a company that's going after a small but rapidly growing market than a big but slow growing one.

~Sam Altman

1 of the hardest parts about being a founder, is that there are a 100 important things competing for your attention each day.

~Sam Altman

The best people know that they should join a rocketship.

~Sam Altman

What being a founder means, is signing up for this years long grind on execution and you can't outsource this.

~Sam Altman

I believe in fighting with investors to reduce the amount of equity they get and then being as generous as you possibly can with employees.

~Sam Altman

If someone is difficult to talk to, if someone cannot communicate clearly, it's a real problem in terms of their likelihood to work out.

~Sam Altman

Some day everyone will find out everyone else's comp, if it's all over the place, it will be a complete meltdown disaster

~Sam Altman

The natural state of a start-up is to die; most start-ups require multiple miracles in their early days to escape this fate.

~Sam Altman

For most software startups, this translates to keep growing. For hardware startups, it translates to don't let your ship date slip.

~Sam Altman

Startups are very hard no matter what you do; you may as well go after a big opportunity.

~Sam Altman

Startups are not the best choice for work-life balance, and that's sort of just the sad reality.

~Sam Altman

One of the biggest advantages that start ups have is execution speed and you have to have this relentless operating rhythm.

~Sam Altman

AirBnB happened because Brian Chesky couldn't pay his rent, but did have some space.

~Sam Altman

A small communication breakdown is enough for everyone to be working on slightly different things. And then you loose focus.

~Sam Altman

Wait to start a startup until you come up with an idea that you feel compelled to explore.

~Sam Altman

The startups that do well are the ones that are working all the time.

~Sam Altman

The tenth social network, and limited only to college students with no money, also terrible. Myspace had won.

~Sam Altman

Mediocre founders spend a lot of time talking about grand plans, but they never quite make a decision.

~Sam Altman

AirBnB spent 5 months interviewing their first employee, before they hired someone and in their first year, they only hired 2 people.

~Sam Altman

I think as a rough estimate, you should aim to give about 10% of the company to the first 10 employees.

~Sam Altman

People that are really smart and that can learn new things can almost always find a role in the company as time goes on.

~Sam Altman

Someday, you need to build a business that's difficult to replicate. This is an important part of a good idea.

~Sam Altman

... and you can only have 2 or 3 things everyday, because everything else will just come at you; you know fires in a day.

~Sam Altman

Founders need to figure out what the message of the company is going to be.

~Sam Altman

There's at least a hundred times more people with great ideas than people that are willing to put in the effort to execute them well.

~Sam Altman

We talk to a team they've gotten new things done, that's the best predictor we have that a company will be successful.

~Sam Altman

The thing that kills startups at some level, is the founders giving up.

~Sam Altman

Be suspicious of any work that is not building product or getting customers. It's easy to get sucked into an infrastructure rewrite death spiral.

~Sam Altman

Most of the best hires that I've made in my entire life have never done that thing before.

~Sam Altman

You should be able to describe any employee as an animal at what they do.

~Sam Altman

If you look at successful pivots, they almost always are a pivot into something that the founder wanted. Not a random made up idea.

~Sam Altman

For most of the early hires you make in a startup, experience doesn't matter very much, and you should go for aptitude.

~Sam Altman

You also want to fire people who a) create office politics, and b) who are persistently negative.

~Sam Altman

It's easy to move fast or be obsessed with quality, but the trick is you have to do both at a startup.

~Sam Altman

At the beginning, you should only hire when you have a desperate need to.

~Sam Altman

You also really want to take the time to think about how the market is going to evolve. You need a market that's going to be big in 10 years.

~Sam Altman

One thing that founders always underestimate is how hard it is to recruit.

~Sam Altman

... if you talk to say any of the first 40 or 50 employees, they all feel like they were a part of the founding of the company.

~Sam Altman

Share results (financial and key metrics) with the company every month.

~Sam Altman

When lack of structure fails, it fails all at once. What works totally fine from 0-20 employees, is disastrous at 30.

~Sam Altman

If you compromise and hire someone mediocre you will always regret it.

~Sam Altman

You want to think about what is the path for my first 10 or 15 employees going to be as the company grows.

~Sam Altman

You have to find a small market in which you can get a monopoly and then quickly expand.

~Sam Altman

If it works out, you're going to be working on this for 10 years.

~Sam Altman

You have to let your team get all the credit for all the good stuff that happens, and you take responsibility for the bad stuff.

~Sam Altman

Unpopular but right is what you're going for.

~Sam Altman

You can basically change everything in a startup but the market.

~Sam Altman

Stay focused and don't try to do too many things at once. Care about execution quality.

~Sam Altman

Because so few people make an actual long term commitment to what they're building, the ones that do have a huge advantage.

~Sam Altman

There are 3 things I look for when I hire people. Are they smart? Do they get things done? Do I want to spend a lot of time around them?

~Sam Altman

Developing a personal connection with anyone you're trying to do a big deal with is really important.

~Sam Altman

In the early days of a startup, people's compensation is whatever you negotiate with a founder and it's all over the place.

~Sam Altman

The biggest PR hack you can do, is not hire a PR firm.

~Sam Altman

Long term thinking is so rare anywhere, but especially in startups. This is a huge advantage if you do it.

~Sam Altman

The best founders work on things that seem small but they move really quickly. They get things done really quickly.

~Sam Altman

Even though plans themselves are worthless, the exercise of planning is very valuable and totally missing in most startups today.

~Sam Altman

M&A negotiations feel really fun. This is one of the biggest killers of companies, is they entertain acquisition conversations.

~Sam Altman

If someone is choosing between joining McKinsey or your startup it's very unlikely they're going to work out at the startup.

~Sam Altman

Losing focus is another way that founders get off track.

~Sam Altman

One thing I tell startups all the time is that the best way to grow is to make their product better.

~Sam Altman

Here's a good rule of thumb: don't worry about a competitor at all, until they're actually beating you with a real shipped product.

~Sam Altman

Two other things that we hear again and again from our founders, they wish they had done earlier, and that is... simply writing down how you do things and why you do things.

~Sam Altman

You don't need to make the structure complicated, in fact you shouldn't. All you need is for every employee to know who their manager is.

~Sam Altman

Press releases are easier to write than code, and that is still easier than making a great product.

~Sam Altman

Once your product is working, switch from not caring about this to caring about this a little bit.

~Sam Altman

It's difficult to get large groups of people, to the extreme levels of focus and productivity that you need, for a startup to be successful.

~Sam Altman

Really dig into projects people have worked on and call references; that is another thing that first time founders like to skip.

~Sam Altman

One of the pieces of advice that we give at YC is: try to work together on a project rather than just doing an interview.

~Sam Altman

A board member of mine used to say sales fix everything in a startup,

and that is really true.

~Sam Altman

The best ideas often look terrible at the beginning the truly good ideas, don't seem like they're worth stealing.

~Sam Altman

The company just needs to see you as like this maniacal execution machine.

~Sam Altman

These all sounded really bad, but they turned out to be good. If they had sounded really good, there would have been too many people working on them.

~Sam Altman

Why now, why is this the perfect time for this particular idea, and to start this particular company?

~Sam Altman

As you grow, the productivity I think, goes down with the square of the number of employees if you don't make an effort.

~Sam Altman

If you compromise in the first five, ten hires it might kill the company.

~Sam Altman

Because it's one of these sort of connections between nodes- every pair of people adds communication overhead.

~Sam Altman

You never want to be in a place where an employee has vested 3 out of the 4 years of stock and they start thinking about leaving.

~Sam Altman

The single word that matters most I think to keep the company productive as it grows is alignment.

~Sam Altman

If it takes more than a sentence to explain what you are doing, it's almost always a sign that what you are doing is too complicated.

~Sam Altman

You want to continue to be run by great products, not process for it's own sake.

~Sam Altman

... for the top twenty most valuable YC companies, all of them have at least two founders.

~Sam Altman

I really believe that the single hardest thing in business is building a company that does repeatable innovation... and just has this ongoing culture of excellence as it grows.

~Sam Altman

You really want to know your cofounders for a while, ideally years.

~Sam Altman

The role of the board is advice and consent. If the CEO does not lay out a clear strategy and tries to get the board to set one, it will usually end in disaster.

~Sam Altman

To get the very best people- they have a lot of great options, and so it can easily take a year to recruit someone.

~Sam Altman

Just put a little pin in your mind: when you cross 50 employees, there

are a new set of HR rules that you have to comply with.

~Sam Altman

Cofounder relationships are among the most important in the entire company.

~Sam Altman

So you should always stay on top of people's vesting schedules.

~Sam Altman

A lot of people treat choosing their cofounder with even less importance than they put on hiring. Don't do this.

~Sam Altman

Related Links:

- Team Quotes
- People Quotes
- Ideas Quotes
- Thinking Quotes
- Years Quotes
- Needs Quotes
- Founders Quotes
- Firsts Quotes
- Want Quotes
- Way Quotes
- Important Quotes
- Matter Quotes
- Trying Quotes
- Should Quotes
- Long Quotes
- Employee Quotes
- Company Quotes
- Done Quotes
- Focus Quotes
- Successful Quotes