



Tech Essentials for Startup Success

Here's how you use technology to drive growth, create a competitive advantage, and achieve your vision.

Invest in more than 600 startups and you will see the right—and wrong—ways to design technology strategy, says John Somorjai, chief corporate development and investments officer at Salesforce. Somorjai leads Salesforce Ventures, the company's venture capital arm that has invested in hundreds of enterprise cloud startups. His advice to founders when designing their tech strategies: Create a powerful advantage by choosing technology options that can grow with your business, while meeting immediate needs.

Strategy aligned with business objectives

Somorjai suggests clearly defining your mission and vision to ensure your technology strategy supports your business objectives. The goals may vary: While one business may seek to become more efficient, another may prioritize improving customer experience. Getting clear on what's most important for your business is the first step to making key tech investment decisions.

This is where having a partner with industry experience and an understanding of what it takes to reach your company's goals matters. Review prospective partners' online reviews and case studies, and talk to existing customers for insight and feedback about the options. "If you invest the time and effort to look for the right strategic technology, that will lay the groundwork for your sustainable growth and, over time, should give any startup a competitive advantage," Somorjai says.

Choosing tech to scale with the business

Choosing the right technology options, or "tech stack," includes considering a few important aspects, he says. Look for options that have reliable backend design for scalability and performance while also offering flexible front-end development features. The latter may include using versatile languages like JavaScript to create responsive interfaces. Strong security protocols and thorough data management

and analytics capabilities keep your data safe and allow you to use it for decision-making are also important considerations. And, of course, artificial intelligence (AI) integration can help speed up processes and unlock new capabilities for your business.

AI innovation to drive sales and improve relationships

Startups are increasingly using AI to drive sales and deliver better customer support. For example, small and midsize businesses are using Einstein, Salesforce's AI technology, to automate customer relationship management updates, instantly capturing and inputting customer interaction data so sales reps don't have to. Immediate access to such data allows team members to analyze customer behavior, flagging deals that may be at risk, or ready to close. AI-powered systems can also help automate personalized emails and access data to prepare outreach or pitches. "It just saves a sales rep so much time so they can focus on the actual selling process," Somorjai says.

Customer service teams also use AI-powered platforms to generate fast, personalized replies and recommendations. Some systems can even route calls to the appropriate person or use chatbots to answer basic customer questions.

Choose the right technology partner

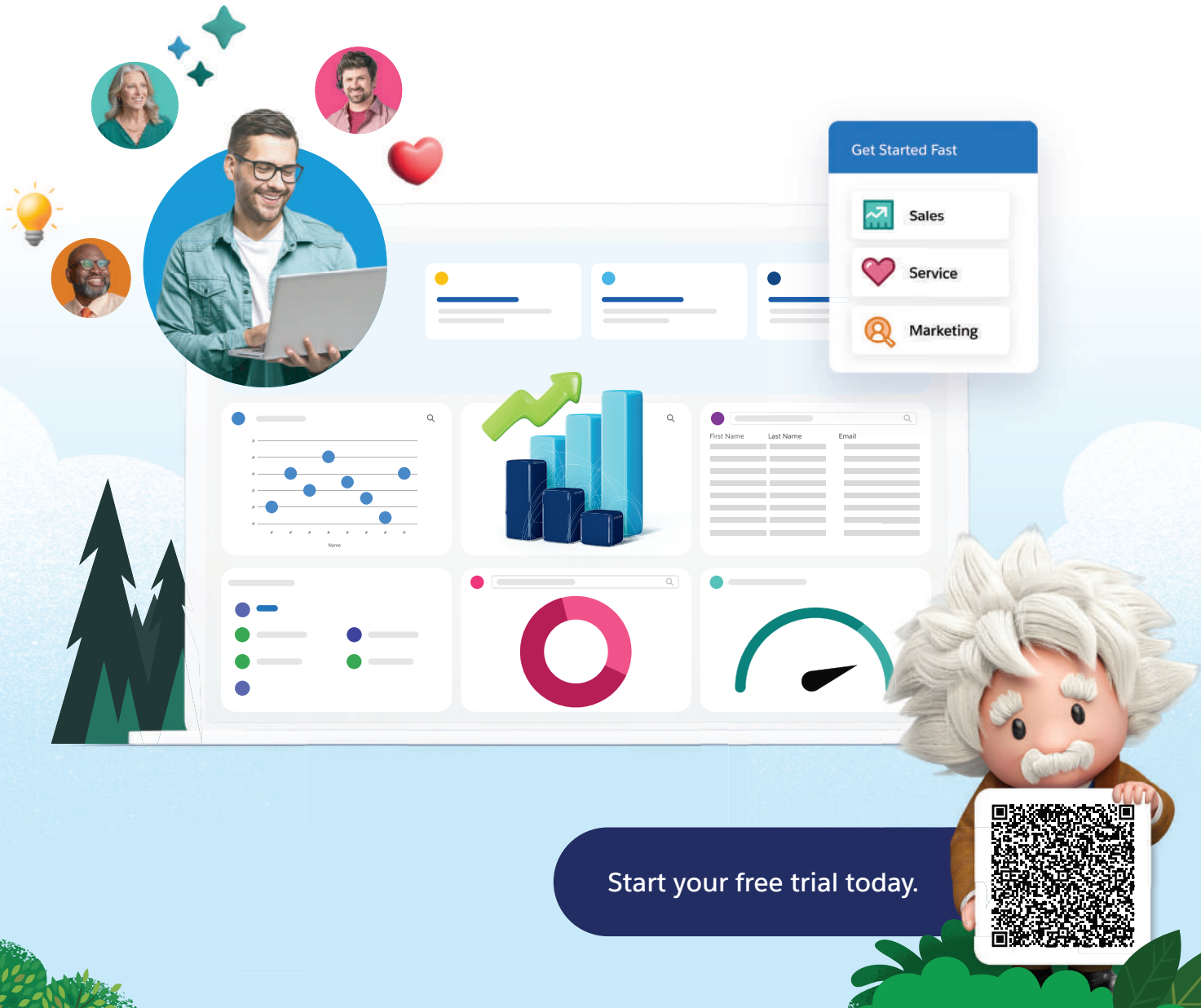
Your company's values also play a role in building a tech strategy and selecting a partner, Somorjai says. Your organization's beliefs, priorities, and principles serve as a framework that guides your actions, including vendor selection.

"Because your technology platform is so important to the future of your company, you want to make sure that the vendors you are working with share your values," Somorjai explains. "You're going to build that more trusted relationship with your vendor, who will become more and more of a strategic partner to you as the company grows." ■

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