

Navigating Tech Decisions

A Startup Survival Guide



Engineering Kiosk · 2026-06-10

Hi, I'm Toby!

Principal engineer, serial founder, passionate mentor.

30

years on the web

3+

companies
founded

100+

teams mentored

20+

engineers led,
multi-team org

1

successful exit

Deutsche Bank · eZ Systems · [Qafoo](#) · [\(Tideways\)](#) · [Frontastic](#) · commercetools · ...

TS Tobias Schlitt · Real Trade-off x +

rent-the-toby.com


TOBIAS SCHLITT

“Agentic engineering has no elders yet. What I offer is honest experience and finding the right path together. |

Principal engineer, serial founder, passionate mentor.

BOOK A FREE 30 MINUTE SLOT

~/TOBY



HAIR: #5FD4F4

THREE PILLARS

WHAT THEY SAY

WORK WITH TOBY

WHO IS TOBY?

WHY RENT THE TOBY

PRICING

Disclaimer

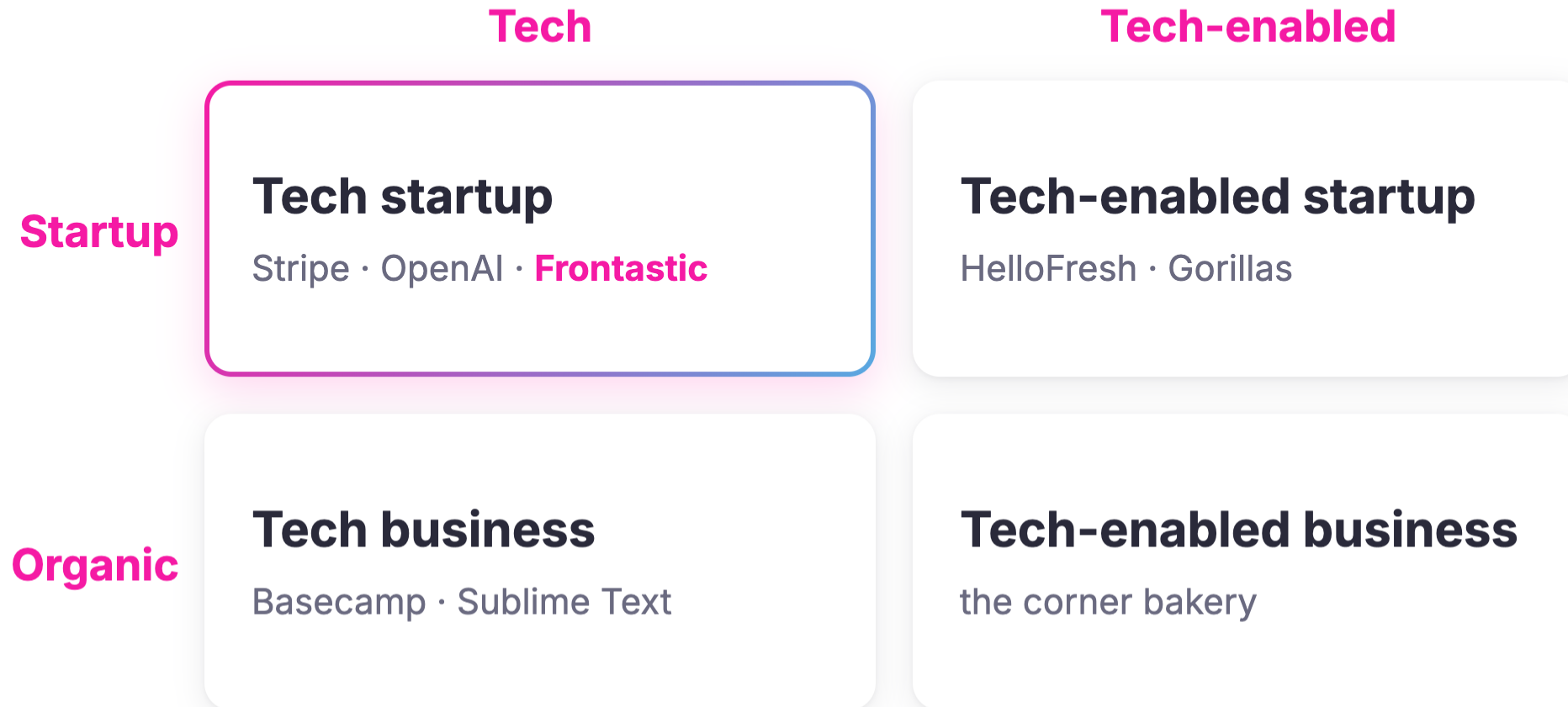
This talk contains anecdotal knowledge. Do not take it as scientific evidence!

Agenda

- Background
- Startup life
- Tech stack
- Building for scale
- Make or buy?
- Technical debt

Background

What is a startup?



Frontastic

- Frontend as a Service for headless eCommerce
- Founded 2017
- 70+ employees
- Customers like Apollo, Flaconi, Prym
- Sold to commercetools in 2022
- Continues as commercetools Frontend



FRONTASTIC.CLOUD

**Frontastic closes Pre-Series-A over 1.8 million euros -
FRONTASTIC – agile Frontend as a Service**

My roles in Frontastic

- Co-Founder
- Implementer
- Co-CTO
- Principal Engineer
- Sales, Pre-Sales, Support, Marketing, Mental Health Advocate, Mentor, Mother, ...

Startup life

How a startup works ...



... how it actually works



Product market fit

Existing customers

Adapt product



New customers

Investors

Tech stack

The tech stack

🌟 **Datastar**

🌟 **Mojo**



🌟 **Convex**

🌟 **Panda CSS**

🌟 **TanStack Start**

🌟 **Bend**

The tech stack

Datastar

Convex

Mojo



TanStack Start

Panda CSS

Bend

Tech maintenance startup reality

Imagine

- You did 2 investor pitches today
- You had an on-site workshop with a potential customer
- You hunted a Heisenbug in between
- You went for dinner with the team
- At **3am** you get called because a **customer is down**

→ this is when you need to maintain your tech stack.

**The fancy technology that you use
does not count. It's the fancy
technology that you create that
matters!**

Embrace boredom

- The most boring technology is where you **excel**
- Boring technology is where you can **juggle fast**
- The product you imagine is not the product you will have next week
- Consider: **"Innovation tokens"**¹

¹ mcfunley.com/choose-boring-technology

Building for scale

Micro-services

Authentication

Product catalog

User profile

Authorization



Recommendation

Teapot

But wait ...

What are the actual reasons to have micro-services?

- Small, focussed teams
- Scale services independently
- Clear communication boundaries
- Technology independence

Which of these apply to the startup situation?

Drawbacks of micro-services

- Increased complexity in
 - Inter-service communication
 - Orchestration & operation
 - Testing
- Decreased flexibility
- Debugging overhead

What does that mean?

~~Monolith!~~ Macro-Services

Define services for

- Unique scaling requirements
- Inevitable unique tech stack

Make it **easy** to extract services later.

Make vs. buy

Make or buy?



Make or buy?

Make

- Your **core domain**
- What **distinguishes** you

Focus!

Buy

- Side-services
- What perfectly suits you
- What **you** can afford

Prepare to replace!

Pro tip

Do not expose bought services fully to your customers.

Technical debt

Technical debt

What do you associate with technical debt?



Technical debt

- Any investment in your startup is **debt**
- So your **technical** debt is an investment
- Don't fear the technical debt
- Be aware of it, make it conscious
- Make business aware

**Technical debt is a bet on the future
where you will have more information.**

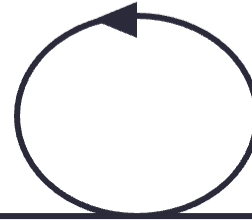
Conclusion

~~Engineering in tech startup is pure horror.~~

Engineering in tech startup is a lot of fun!

- **Excel** in your comfort zone
- Focus on proper trade-offs
- Optimize your software for **adaptability**
- Business value in the focus

... how it actually works (revisited)



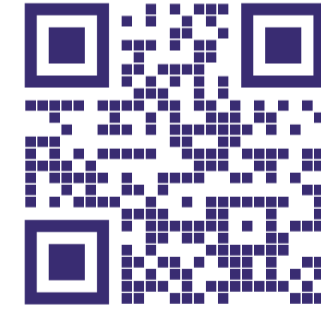
Summary

- Product-market-fit is the **interesting** phase
- Embrace **boredom**
- Prepare to change your software/product
 - Frequently
 - Fast
- Accept technical debt, make it **conscious**

Thank you!

**Let's navigate your tech decisions
— together.**

Principal engineer · serial founder · passionate mentor



rent-the-toby.com



linkedin.com/in/tobiasschlitt

Slides & let's connect



schlitt.info

Blog & more