

7 DIRTY SECRETS

Your “IT Guy” Helping Your Startup Doesn’t Want You to Know



Why they do not want you to hire a Freakin Fractional CTO

Startups rarely begin with a bad person. They begin with a capable helper who knows more technology than everyone else in the room. The danger starts when that advantage is mistaken for executive-level technology leadership.

Jeff Davis / The Freakin Fractional CTO

THE UNCOMFORTABLE STARTUP TRUTH

Your first technical hire, helpful friend, developer, MSP, or self-appointed 'IT guy' may be talented and well-intentioned. But talent in one technical lane does not automatically qualify someone to own your roadmap, budget, vendors, contracts, security, architecture, and investor readiness.

Someone who fixed Mom's computer may be exactly who Mom needed. Your startup needs someone who can protect runway, challenge assumptions, and connect every freakin' technology decision to a business outcome.

1. More Technical Than You Is Not the Same as Qualified

A startup often hands the keys to whoever understands technology better than the founders. That is a dangerously low bar.

- Fixing Mom's computer, building a gaming PC, or knowing every keyboard shortcut does not qualify someone to design a scalable business platform.
- Technical skill matters. So do financial judgment, risk management, leadership, architecture, contracts, and the ability to explain tradeoffs to nontechnical executives.
- Confidence without range can lock your startup into years of expensive decisions before leadership realizes the difference.

2. Your Roadmap May Be a Collection of Opinions

A real technology roadmap connects product, revenue, hiring, operations, security, and funding milestones. A feature list is not a roadmap.

- Junior technical resources naturally focus on what should be built next, not what the business must become next.
- Without executive technology leadership, the loudest request, newest tool, or most interesting project can consume the runway.
- Every major initiative should have an owner, business outcome, cost, dependency, risk, and decision deadline.

3. Nobody Is Protecting the Freakin Runway

Cloud waste, overlapping software, premium licenses, rework, and weak contracts drain cash quietly because each individual charge looks survivable.

- The person who selected a tool is rarely eager to admit it is oversized, redundant, or wrong.
- A startup needs a technology budget tied to customer growth, operational leverage, security, and cash preservation.
- The cheapest choice can be expensive later; the most expensive choice is not automatically strategic now.

4. Vendor Selection Is Being Treated Like Online Shopping

A good demo and a persuasive salesperson are not due diligence.

- Cloud providers, MSPs, developers, SaaS platforms, payment processors, and AI vendors create technical, contractual, and operational dependencies.
- Someone must evaluate lock-in, data ownership, exit rights, service levels, security responsibility, integration limits, and total three-year cost.
- A vendor should win because it fits the business—not because your IT guy already knows the product.

5. Partner Agreements May Leave Your Startup Holding the Bag

Technology partner agreements often hide the risk in the boring paragraphs everyone skips.

- Who owns the code, configurations, documentation, domains, cloud accounts, and customer data?
- What happens if the partner misses deadlines, raises prices, is acquired, suffers a breach, or disappears?
- If those answers are fuzzy, your startup may be financing an asset it does not fully control.

6. Security Is Probably Based on Trust, Not Evidence

Startups move fast, share access, reuse shortcuts, and postpone controls. Attackers are famously unsympathetic to your funding stage.

- One person should not control every password, admin account, backup, and recovery process.
- Backups must be restored in a real test. Access must be reviewed. Departing people must lose access immediately.
- Customers and investors increasingly expect proof—not an enthusiastic 'we should be fine.'

7. Nobody Has Challenged Whether This Will Survive Growth

What works for 20 customers can collapse at 2,000. Growth magnifies every undocumented shortcut and fragile dependency.

- Architecture, integrations, support processes, data practices, and vendor limits should be tested against realistic growth scenarios.
- Independent review is not an insult to the team. It is how responsible leaders catch blind spots before customers or investors do.
- A Fractional CTO gives founders senior judgment without the full-time executive payroll.

WHAT A FREAKIN FRACTIONAL CTO CHANGES

A Fractional CTO does not replace your technical people. The role gives them air cover, priorities, accountability, and an experienced partner at the leadership table.

- A business-aligned technology roadmap tied to funding, revenue, customers, and growth.
- A defensible budget that protects runway and exposes waste before it becomes permanent.
- Independent vendor and partner evaluation with ownership, exit terms, risk, and total cost in view.
- Security, continuity, and access controls that can survive customer and investor scrutiny.
- Architecture and operating decisions reviewed by someone who has lived through scale, failure, recovery, and due diligence.

Your startup does not need the smartest person in the server room pretending to be a CTO. It needs confident decisions, accountable execution, and freakin' results.

If any of these secrets felt familiar, let's talk before a cheap shortcut becomes an expensive chapter in your founder story.

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