

ADVERTISEMENT

Digital River The Growing Dominance of Global Ecommerce: 7 Experts Weigh In [Read Ebook](#)

678 views | Oct 30, 2019, 08:00am EDT

Communication: The Foundation Of Successful Cofounder Relationships

Cameron Yarbrough Forbes Councils Member
 Forbes Business Development Council COUNCIL POST | Paid Program
 Leadership

POST WRITTEN BY
Cameron Yarbrough

Co-Founder and CEO of **Torch**, a leadership development platform that integrates 1:1 coaching, behavioral science, metrics + agile feedback.

f
 t
 in



Running a high-growth company involves immense psychological strain. Consistent relationship support is vital -- because without it, cofounder relationships can quickly unravel and put the entire company at risk. As the cofounder and CEO of a leadership development company, I've seen hard work and billion-dollar ideas squandered by cofounders who were unwilling to communicate.

Unfortunately, many cofounders don't consider this until their relationships are already in serious trouble. This is a huge mistake. Cofounders who are humble enough can cultivate a healthy relationship. They can hold each other accountable and create a foundation of mutual respect and open dialog.

I use these strategies with my cofounder because they help us keep the lines of communication wide open, align our priorities and strengthen confidence in each other.

Why Cofounder Communication Is So Powerful

While the concept of "scaling" often refers to a company's ability to sustain rapid growth, it's also a useful way to think about the development of your personal leadership skills. Cofounders often scale differently. Some evolve rapidly as leaders and managers, and they quickly develop both hard and soft skills uniquely suited to the business. But some take longer.

When cofounders aren't on pace with each other, the divergence can create resentment and zap confidence within the leadership team. Cofounders should establish norms of open communication and transparency that empower them to voice concerns instead of letting them fester.

PROMOTED

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Office Depot OfficeMax BRANDVOICE Paid Program How To Give Remote Employees What They Need—And Reduce Your Carbon Footprint | Grads of Life BRANDVOICE Paid Program We Need A Reset. Our Future Depends On It. | UNICEF USA BRANDVOICE Paid Program COVID-19 Threatens The World's Children In More Ways Than One |
|---|---|---|

As a cofounder, you should never be reactive when it comes to the health of your partnership. Proactively communicating with your cofounder can reduce relationship debt -- negative sentiment that builds up as small scuffles accumulate and differences remain unresolved.

As a company scales, disparities in cofounders' mindsets, responsibilities and workloads can become more and more evident. In fact, this is one of the main causes of tension I see between cofounders. It can often lead to arguments, animosity and even dissolution.

However, different roles and time commitments don't necessarily mean disaster for cofounder relationships. Communication and accountability can bridge these divides, which is why cofounders who face disparities in leadership, management and execution can actually benefit the most from healthy communication strategies.

Tips For Successful Communication With Your Cofounder

Effective cofounder communication identifies and examines the unconscious patterns that define business relationships. You should expect to confront grievances and hurt feelings with your cofounder. Here are some tips to take into consideration:

- Schedule regular 360s where cofounders receive feedback from others in the organization.
- Have a tight container of confidentiality.
- Don't vent grievances about one another to anyone else on the team.
- Ask each other for regular feedback, both positive and negative.
- Avoid sharply disagreeing with one another or having conflict in front of others.

You should also be prepared to flex your muscles of praise and appreciation for each other -- muscles that have often atrophied. Great cofounder communication leads to actionable steps and new skills in communication and role distribution. When I coached founders and couples, I was always surprised by how uncomfortable it was for many people to openly appreciate one another. Openly give positive feedback to one another in all-hands meetings, at team meetings, off-sites and teamwide email updates. It should not be forced. If the feedback is not authentic, people will generally see the overtures as empty gestures.

You should also be intentional about using your ears more than your mouths. You should be prepared to actively listen to one another in order to heal their relationship. As the old therapy saying goes: "You have one mouth and two ears for a reason." Active listening can de-escalate a conflict and ensure that all parties feel heard. It's a simple two-step process. At first it may feel awkward, but when you practice it, it can become very comfortable:

- Listen carefully to what your cofounder shared.
- Repeat back the key points, especially any feelings they expressed.

Example: "I heard you say that while everyone else liked the head of sales candidate, you felt really annoyed by how much he talked and how few questions he asked during the interview."

Finally, there's always a possibility that communication will bring long-seething frustrations to the surface. If you want to restore your relationship with your cofounder, be prepared to face their difficult truths.

If the relationship is in a severe state of disrepair, there's a risk that you will be unable to transcend your differences and move forward, and this could reveal a fundamentally unhealthy pairing. But more often than not, you should emerge unified and strong.

By investing the time and effort to build and restore this pivotal foundation, you can set the bar for healthy interpersonal dynamics across your organization and support sustainable growth and success for years to come.

Forbes Business Development Council is an invitation-only community for sales and biz dev executives. [Do I qualify?](#)

Cameron Yarbrough

Co-Founder & CEO of **Torch**, a leadership development platform that integrates 1:1 coaching, behavioral science, metrics + agile feedback. [Read Cameron Yarbrough's full...](#) [Read More](#)

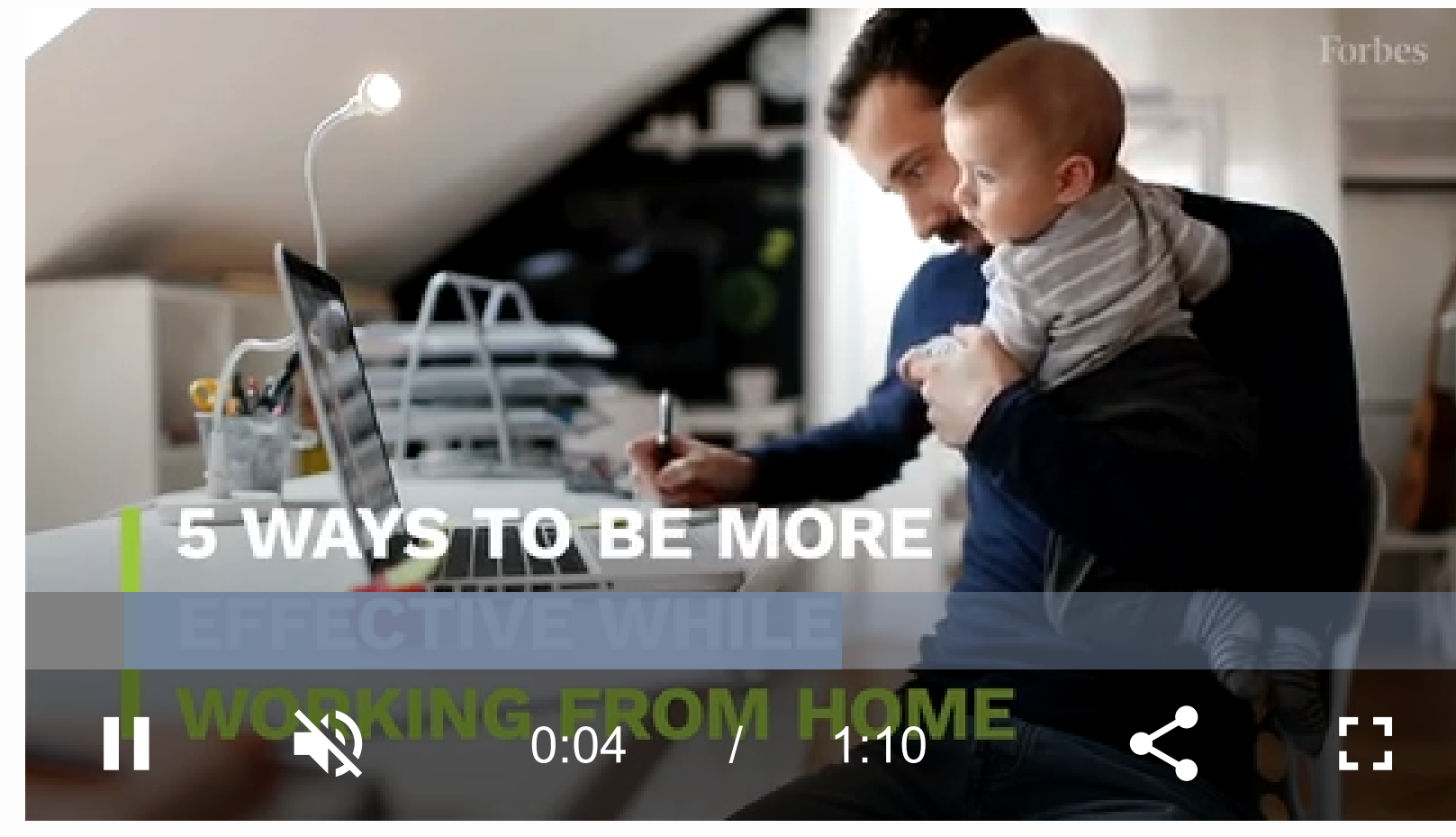
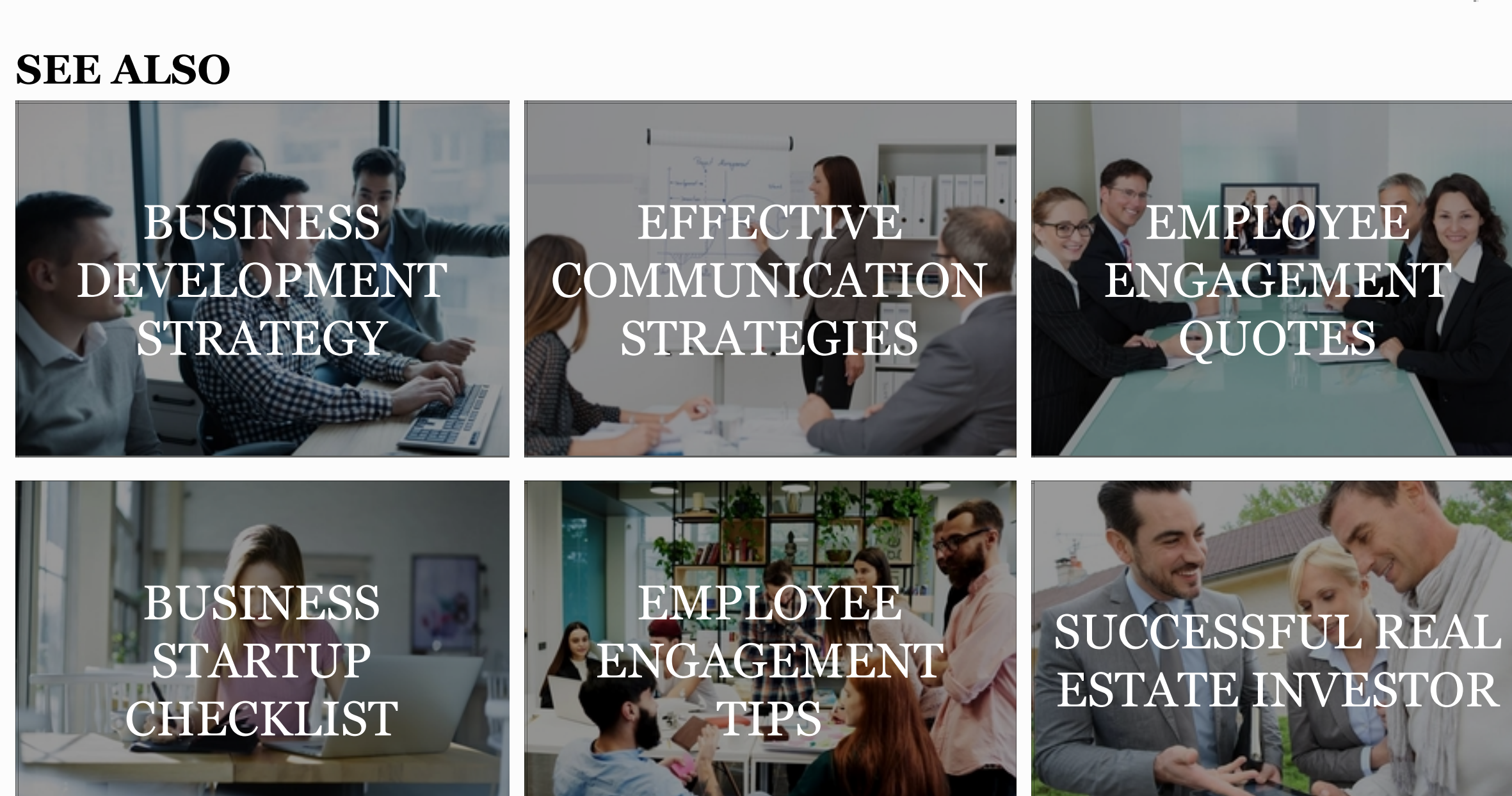
Print Site Feedback Tips Corrections Reprints & Permissions Terms Privacy © 2020 Forbes Media LLC. All Rights Reserved. AdChoices

ADVERTISEMENT

RELATED TOPICS

01. WAYS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT >
02. START YOUR OWN ONLINE BUSINESS >
03. WORK FROM HOME COMPANIES >
04. STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHEET >
05. SAMPLE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT >
06. 2020 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT GUIDE >

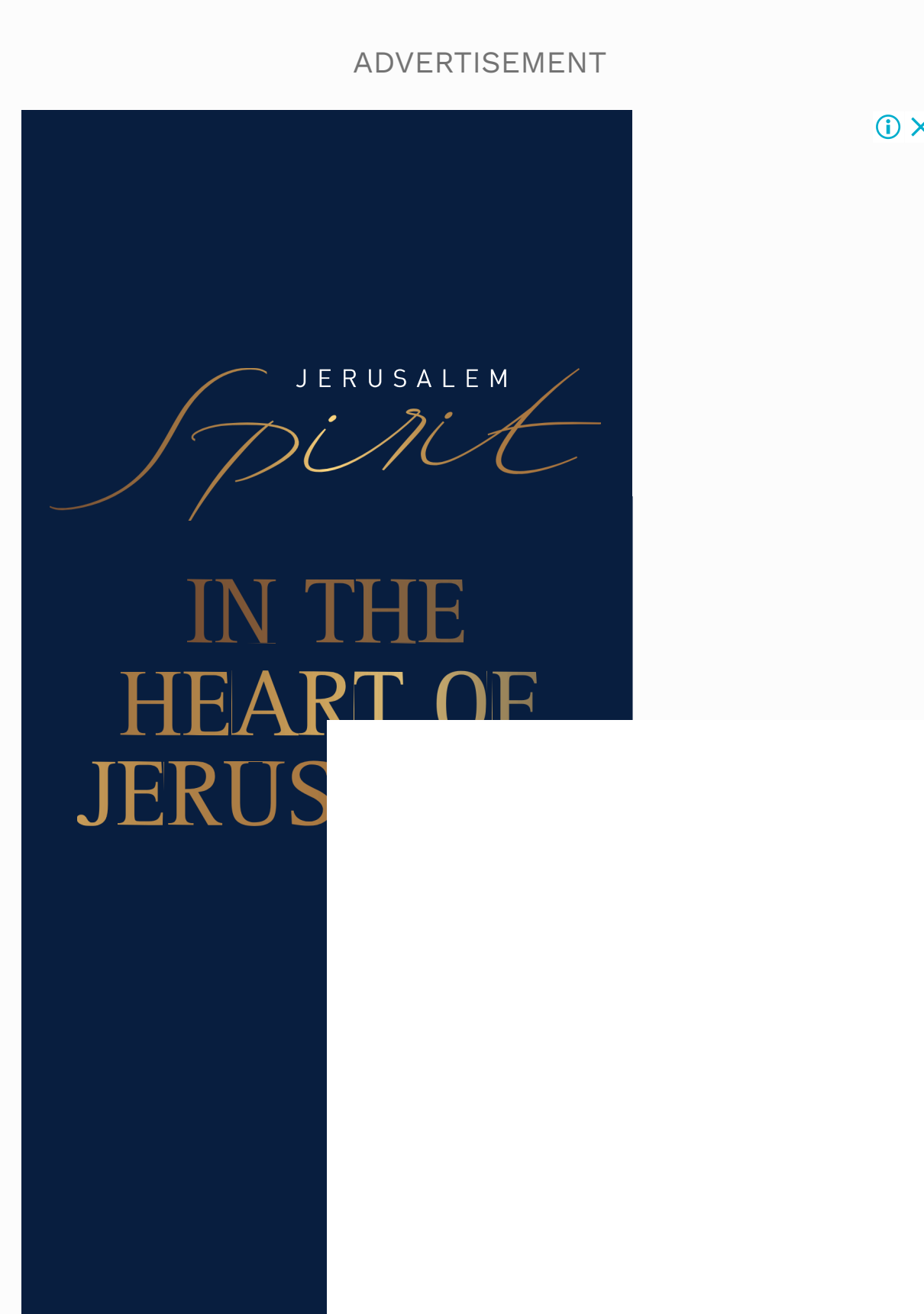
SEE ALSO



ADVERTISEMENT

Digital River The Growing Dominance of Global Ecommerce: 7 Experts Weigh In [Read Ebook](#)

ADVERTISEMENT



ADVERTISEMENT

Digital River The Growing Dominance of Global Ecommerce: 7 Experts Weigh In [Read Ebook](#)



Now in Israel. Discover why top founders (Waze, Tesla, Shazam...) joined the \$1,000 MBA alternative that makes higher level education accessible for all.

ThePowerMBA | Israel