

Grounded in TUM's technological and entrepreneurial ecosystem, TUM School of Management educates responsible talents and pursues relevant research to advance innovation-based businesses and societies in Germany, Europe, and the world. At our Garching-based Entrepreneurship Research Institute (ERI), scientists from various disciplines contribute to entrepreneurship research as an emerging and important area at the intersection of business, economics, and psychology. We aim to help develop this field and improve our understanding of entrepreneurial individuals and organizations. We are looking for a

Final Thesis (Bachelor or Master)

Organizational Challenges During Venture Scaling

Context

Startups often begin with lean structures, founder-driven vision, and cultural cohesion. But as they scale—through funding, hiring, market expansion, or process formalization, they face growing pains. The need for structure, diverse talent, and investor alignment can strain the initial agility and coherence. Scaling introduces challenges in maintaining alignment, managing complexity, and adapting to external pressures for legitimacy. While scaling is often viewed as a strategic process, less attention has been paid to how these pressures are experienced by team members and how they reshape the venture's internal dynamics.

Research question

How do internal organizational dynamics evolve during the scaling of new ventures, and what challenges do teams face in maintaining alignment, coherence, and adaptability?

Suggested method

Qualitative research: Conduct semi-structured interviews with scale-up founders

Thesis objective and possible approach

This thesis aims to explore the organizational challenges faced by new ventures during the scaling phase and to develop a conceptual framework for managing internal alignment and adaptability by:

- Identifying common operational and cultural challenges that arise during venture scaling
- Analyzing how internal dynamics, such as communication, role evolution, and decision-making, shift as ventures grow
- Examining the impact of external pressures (e.g., investor expectations, market legitimacy) on internal coherence
- Investigating how team members perceive and respond to tensions between early-stage agility and emerging formalization
- Synthesizing findings into a practical model to support organizational alignment during growth transitions

Prerequisites and required skills

- Fluent in English (spoken and written)
- Solid knowledge of conducting interviews and interview coding OR solid knowledge of quantitative data analysis using survey data
- High analytical skills
- Great self-organization skills and ability to work with a large amount of data
- Willingness to work independently and reliably

Our offering

- Substantial supervision and guidance during the thesis project
- Insights into research and teaching activities at our institute and entrepreneurial education and support activities at TUM (particularly valuable when considering pursuing a PhD or planning to engage in own entrepreneurial endeavors)

Application

Please send your application (CV, current transcript of records, and motivation letter) by the 15th of September 2025 to david.nawrath@tum.de and dominik.welcher@unternehmertum.de

For further questions, please get in touch with David Nawrath via david.nawrath@tum.de

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