



Admin & Legal - A Practical Guide for Scientific Founders

Administration, Legal Matters, and Why Simplicity Wins

Founding a company as a scientist often means entering unfamiliar territory: administration, taxes, and legal responsibilities. These topics are rarely exciting, but they are critical for building a stable and scalable venture. This guide focuses on pragmatic principles rather than perfection.

1. Administration: Clear Beats Perfect

A clean administration is essential. It does not need to be top-notch or overengineered — but it must be clear, understandable, and consistent.

Follow the KISS principle: *Keep it Smart and Simple*.

- Choose smart tools that reduce manual work as much as possible.
- For selection consider the tool providers customers are they comparable to your business (e.g. Corporate versus start-up).
- If your selected tool cost money, that is usually fine. They are almost always cheaper than spending your own time.
- Before committing, scan the market and talk to your network to get best practices.
 - Not all tools fit your needs.
 - Compare both features and costs carefully.

Only manage administratively what you can realistically handle yourself.

For everything else, delegate to experts.

2. The Two Exceptions: Taxes and Law

There are two areas you cannot fully outsource as a founder:

Taxes

You must understand the basics of your tax situation — even if you do not enjoy it. You are legally liable for your advisors work and mistakes.

Do not expect a tax advisor to advise you proactively for your best options such as temporarily giving a grant to the start-up instead of paying a high salary (very high tax implication!).

Exchange experiences with other entrepreneurs.

They often provide practical insights that no textbook or advisor will mention.

Legal Matters

The same principle applies to legal topics.



- Going to a lawyer for every single legal question becomes expensive very quickly — and often does not move you forward proportionally.
- Your goal is legal awareness and personal safety, not legal perfection.
- Build a basic understanding of common legal issues relevant to your business.

For critical topics, bring in trusted legal partners selectively and intentionally.

3. Use Templates — Seriously

Templates are your friends.

- For incorporation documents, shareholder agreements, or employment contracts, start with standard templates.
- Many solid templates are available online (check i.e. Industrie & Handelskammer Frankfurt or <https://standardsinstitute.de/en/>; <https://www.ewor.com/startup-templates>).
- You do not have to copy them blindly — adapt where necessary.
- Avoid over-customization early on.

Again: **KISS — Keep it Smart and Simple.**

In this guide, we include two links to trusted resources where you can find high-quality templates for common legal and administrative needs.

4. A Final Word for Scientific Founders

Administration, tax, and legal topics may feel like distractions from research and innovation. But ignoring them creates risk and friction later.

You do not need to love these topics.

You do need to understand them well enough to make informed decisions.

Clarity beats perfection.

Understanding beats blind delegation.

Simplicity beats complexity.