



The Entrepreneurial Mindset

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Developing an Entrepreneurial Mindset

What is the Entrepreneurial Mindset (EM)?
Where do you get it?
Can you develop it?
Why is it important?
Do you already have it? How do you know?

When I think about the Entrepreneurial Mindset, two relevant quotes quickly come to mind.

“Building a business is not rocket science; it’s about having a great idea and seeing it through with integrity.” Richard Branson

“At 211 degrees, water is hot. At 212 degrees, it boils. And with boiling water, comes steam. And with steam, you can power a train.” S.L. Parker

When considering these two quotes together, they speak volumes about the Entrepreneurial Mindset. What Richard Branson is saying is having a great idea is not enough; you have to pursue the idea with integrity for it to work. Then add S. L. Parkers’ concept of not stopping, keep working to add one more extra degree of quality – like temperature to water - means the difference between something that is simply very hot and something that generates enough force to power a machine – a metaphor that ideally should feed our every endeavor – consistently pushing us to make the extra effort in every task, action and effort we undertake... including entrepreneurship.

What is the Entrepreneurial Mindset (EM)?

The term Entrepreneurship Mindset is defined, by Alain Fayolle in the Financial Times, as a specific state of mind which orientates human conduct toward entrepreneurial activities and outcomes. Fayolle further states that individuals with Entrepreneurial Mindsets are often drawn to opportunities, innovations and new value creation.

In her classic text, “*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*,” Stanford Professor Carol S. Dweck (2007 pg. 6) offers important findings based on her research. She states that there are two types of Entrepreneurial Mindsets, a “growth” mindset as opposed to a “fixed” mindset.

According to Dweck, a “fixed mindset” believes that your qualities are carved in stone, basically permanent – and this creates an urgency to **prove** yourself over and over, rather than changing and growing. Whereas, the “growth” mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts.

The “growth” mindset allows an entrepreneur to keep changing and trying new things to improve their processes in order to create the extra degree of effort which turns hot water into steam that can power a train.

Dweck’s research found that hard work and an individual’s mindset impacts success more than natural talent. Furthermore, she came to the very important conclusion that people have the ability to choose which mindset they wish to operate from.

From my observation having an Entrepreneurial Mindset is critical to fulfilling one's potential and especially in being successful as an entrepreneur. As you study entrepreneurs, you will find that an Entrepreneurial Mindset stands alone in terms of its importance, when compared to other attributes, personality, training or demographic profile, to all successful entrepreneurs, whether it be Warren Buffet, Steve Jobs, the neighborhood florist, grocer or farmer.

Where do you get it?

So, how do we get an Entrepreneurship Mindset? Dr. Dweck says we "Choose It." It's a conscious decision we make as we learn, grow and expand our thinking. I believe we continue to question and expand our understanding as we participate in learning events, such as the Entrepreneurial Mindset Section of the Sustainable Urban Agriculture Program. With new understanding, we overcome our fears and make a conscious decision to become an entrepreneur – it may be a small step at first (part-time endeavor), or we expand a hobby into a decision to move full speed ahead to turn our passion into a profit – making a business of doing what we love!

Can you develop it?

The answer is Yes! Developing Entrepreneurial Mindset takes hard work; I do not promise it will always be easy or stress free, but it can be developed. In fact, I believe you will develop it, or the odds are you will not be successful in business for very long. You can learn a lot of it in entrepreneurship classes, you can read books and articles, talk with entrepreneurs who have experienced developing it or you can learn through trial and error.

Be aware of academics or internet experts who have never operated a business on their own. On the other hand, you can find a lot of good information on the web and in books from individuals who have *walked the talk*. For example, Mark Hopkins, in his book "*Shortcut to Prosperity*," (2013) stated that developing your Entrepreneurial Mindset requires you to develop three areas of focus:

1. Recruit allies
2. Develop an unfair advantage
3. Find your field of "Play"

Under these three areas are shortcuts that may be helpful to some, if not most, new entrepreneurs. The shortcuts are concepts entrepreneurs have learned the hard way...trial and error. Note: each shortcut takes a lot of effort and energy. Biz Stone, Co-founder of Twitter, once quipped, "Timing, perseverance and ten years of trying will eventually make you look like an overnight success."

Why is it important?

According to Hopkins (2013), the foundation of all the hard work, all of the habits and behaviors we have discussed, is one core principle: add value in every interaction you have and to every opportunity that comes your way. He also offers the following 10 shortcuts for entrepreneurs in any industry:

Find your Field of "Play"

- Shortcut 1: Power Up!
- Shortcut 2: Exploit Your Natural Curiosity
- Shortcut 3: Nosce Te Ipsum – Know Thyself
- Shortcut 4: Build Creative Tension

Develop an Unfair Advantage

- Shortcut 5: Learn from the Best People and Organizations
- Shortcut 6: Earn an "I can do Anything" Attitude
- Shortcut 7: Recognize and Quickly Analyze Opportunities

Recruit Allies

- Shortcut 8: Genuinely Care About Other People
- Shortcut 9: Partner Wisely and Broadly
- Shortcut 10: Find a Mentor or Three

Do you already have it? How do you know?

I believe if you understand, accept and practice the core principle offered by Hopkins and follow concepts he presented in his three areas of focus, you will be on your way to developing an excellent Entrepreneurial Mindset. I do not promise it will be it happen overnight, but if you choose a "growing" mindset, follow the suggestions in this article, keep learning and work to add the extra degree to

whatever you are striving to achieve, you will be fine. You will have it, and you will know it. Remember, “If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

Henry David Thoreau

References

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