

Entrepreneurship – A Genuine Genius Called You, Me and Everyone



Ashwani Singla

“Entrepreneurship stands for the people and for seizing the opportunity every single time. And a successful entrepreneur is one who is from the people, one of the people, and yet propped up by the people.”

The former flamboyant French President Nicholas Sarkozy had promised the people of France that his presidency would all be about them; but the citizens of France gradually found out that it was mostly about him and his model wife Carla Bruni.

An opportunity exploited well by Francois Hollande, who ousted Sarkozy to become 24th President of France. “You are much more than a people who want change,” Mr.Hollande struck the right chord with a huge gathering in Paris that had congregated to celebrate his victory at the Place de la Bastille.

There are two key messages that helped Hollande win over Sarkozy, other than prevailing economic and social issues. One, Hollande, like a true entrepreneur, seized the moment and turned the tide in his favour. Second. Hollande realised that his predecessor and opponent had lost the connect with the biggest stakeholders in his success – The People.

Politicians across the world are perhaps best examples of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship - That stands for nothing but the people and seizing the opportunity every single time.

And a successful entrepreneur is one who is from the people (amongst you and me), one of the people (employees, peers, customers, business associates, vendors et al) and yet propped up by the people (as a leader).

Some thought leaders believe that the concept of an entrepreneur is difficult to define. The broadest definition of an entrepreneur is someone who owns and operates his / her own small business. However, this definition somehow falls short of describing an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs are visionaries who change the rule of the game. Every individual, be it politician or an employee, have and display various entrepreneurial traits. The only difference is in their scale and intensity.

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But what then is entrepreneurship and what makes an entrepreneur? Is it the nature, attitude, trait of taking risk, IQ, self-confidence, family background or social network.

Or is Entrepreneurship just about seizing the opportunity and having the conviction and courage to walk that extra mile, even if you are the last man standing?

Entrepreneurship is combination of all the above traits. It is all about being “Genuinely Genius”.

Warren Buffet, George Soros, Jack Welch, Donald Trump, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, Ratan Tata, DhirubhaiAmbani, MukeshAmbani, Kumar Mangalam Birla, Anand Mahindra, Narayana Murthy and innumerable others are all examples of successful entrepreneurship.

But what is that Genius in them that has helped them stand out as shining examples of successful entrepreneurship among more than 6 billion inhabiting our planet but miniscule making it Big.

Is it that the lady luck smiled only on these people? Is it about them being opportunists? Were they born with entrepreneurship qualities? Were they born more intelligent than others? Or is it just that they are simply Genius.

Partly Yes & Primarily No.

The Genius of their successful entrepreneurship is - **1%** Inspiration, and **99%** Perspiration, People, Passion, Perspective, Planning, Persistence, Presentation, Patience, Pennies and being Plucky.

The 1% - Inspiration

Inspiration or Idea is at the cornerstone of entrepreneurship. It is an idea that can move mountains and can help build multi-billion dollar institutions, be it Apple, Dell, IBM, McDonalds, GE, General Motors, Ford, Coca Cola, Pepsi, Facebook, Google, Twitter, Sony, International Red Cross, Lions International, United Nations, Infosys, Tata Group, Wipro, L&T or Reliance to name a few.

It was an idea of flying that inspired Leonardo Da Vinci and Wright Brothers to sketch and eventually turn the dream in to reality, leading to one of the biggest and most vital entrepreneurial venture of modern times – Aviation.

It was an idea and inspiration that helped Harland Sanders begin serving fried chickens during Great Depression at a gas station, before it earned him honorary title of a Colonel from the mayor of Kentucky and face of one of the biggest fast food chains in the world – Kentucky Fried Chicken.

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The Idea and Inspiration saw tech giants like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, leave their ever-lasting imprint on history of mankind.

However, one thing that runs common amongst all the inspirational ideas is their practical use. None of the ideas that helped set up these successful entrepreneurship ventures were abstract. They helped make the world surrounding a better place to live. They helped serve People – the core of any entrepreneurship venture.

It is therefore of utmost importance that your idea or inspiration must be of use to the People.

The 99% - Perspiration, People, Passion, Perspective, Planning, Persistence, Presentation, Patience, Pennies and being Plucky.

Perspiration

Your idea or inspiration can help you begin the journey to entrepreneurship but it is only hard work that will take you long.

You might have heard of the Rs 500 Note story. A speaker waves a Rs.500 Note and asks the crowd, “Who wants this Rs 500 Note”. Not surprisingly everyone in the crowd shouts “Me”. In the meantime, a lady just rushes to the stage and snatches the currency from hands of the speaker. “The lady is the only one in the crowd who desperately wanted to have the Rs 500 Note and she acted on her need.” So the lesson here is that you may want to achieve your aim but it cannot be achieved without action.

Entrepreneurship demands action from the entrepreneur. An employee has the liberty of taking leave, of falling ill, but an entrepreneur has little option but to be on his toes 24X7X365. The colleagues, vendors, partners may have the option of switching off from work after office hours but an entrepreneur can never switch off from work even for a moment, at least in the initial years of building an organisation.

Once you have set on the correct path and build your organisation brick by brick, laying a strong foundation and systems in place, you may have liberty of taking a step back but can never lose sight of the larger picture and constantly need to goad and guide the people who have joined your endeavor to realise bigger dreams.

People

It is important to bear in mind the entrepreneurships that helps improve the quality of life for individuals, families, communities and sustain a healthy economy and environment can only grow and sustain in the long run. An entrepreneur always strives to build an organisation that

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outlives his physical life. To achieve this, an entrepreneur needs to have ears to ground. It requires keen sense of observation and understanding of a human psyche.

Entrepreneurship is not just about sharing the vision and dream with the people you work with but to equip each one of them with ability to share and achieve the same vision and dream. This relationship is built on mutual respect, faith and understanding as aptly summed up in quote by none other than legendary former chairman of one of the biggest global conglomerate GE, Jack Welch. "I don't run GE", he said, adding "I lead GE."

However, entrepreneurship is not just about employees. It is also about the partners, vendors, customers and society at large. People buy people first and then they would look at the products or services you seek or plan to offer.

Passion

Imagine James Watt, Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates or Steve Jobs doing things that their neighbours or parents wanted them to do or to earn a living. Where would the world be?

All of them followed their heart. Their dreams did not let them rest. Traditionally, it is witnessed that almost half of the enterprises fold up within first three years of being set up. However, chances of your enterprise to survive longer increase if it is your passion.

Bill Strickland, author of *Make the Impossible Possible* says: "Passions are irresistible.... If you're paying attention to your life at all, the things you are passionate about won't leave you alone. They're the ideas, hopes, and possibilities your mind naturally gravitates to, the things you would focus your time and attention on for no other reason than that doing them feels right."

Perspective

In simple terms, perspective is knowledge of the business and of factors that affect your enterprise. It helps entrepreneurs make judgment, formulate decisions and work. It provides context, helping you decide what should be done, when, why it is important and how best it could be done.

To build a successful enterprise, the business has to have the right perspective – How useful is it to the society? What is the need for the product or service the enterprise strives to provide? How do relationships with all the key stakeholders impact the working of the enterprise? Each question can be answered by the perspective that the entrepreneur achieves by gaining knowledge and putting things in the right perspective.

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Planning

No one ever climbed Mount Everest by simply strolling to the peak. Each step towards the goal is planned to the detail.

Planning is but structured approach to any action you plan to initiate to meet the desired goals and Entrepreneurship requires planning to each minutest detail.

The modern day sports are an example of micro level planning by participating entities to achieve only one goal - win. If it is cricket or football or hockey or even individual sport like swimming or sprinting, each move of the opponent is studied in detail, frame by frame, and strategy to beat the competition formulated.

Persistence

Big shots are ones who keep firing small shots at regular intervals.

James Watts spent 20 years perfecting the steam engine and William Harvey worked for 8 years to demonstrate how blood circulated in the human body and another 25 years to convince the medical fraternity.

Persistence is the virtue that helps build successful entrepreneurship. Persistence with your dream, your vision, your people, your stakeholders and above all with self. Entrepreneurs firmly believe in what American writer Napoleon Hill said: “No man is ever whipped until he quits – in his own mind.”

Presentation

In today's world it is not just important to have clarity of vision, thought process, systems within the organisation, or oneself, but it is also important how you present it to the stakeholders that help build your enterprise – Be it investors, employees, customers, business partners, bankers or society at large.

Unless you are able to communicate the message, all your efforts to build a successful entrepreneurship are bound to result in to naught.

Patience

Rome was not built in a day and nor was Taj Mahal. It was character that got us out of bed, commitment that moved us into action and discipline that enabled us to follow through. Discipline is achieved if you are patient.

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Ever think Kolkata Knight Riders would have won its maiden Indian Premier League title in 2012 in their fifth attempt, if Shah Rukh Khan and his fellow proprietors had given up hope and not had faith in themselves and their team?

Pennies

If you are in to anything for money, you are bound to fail. Entrepreneurships are about ideas and passion. However, if you do not know how to count your pennies well, you are inviting trouble. Most of the brilliant ideas and business fail due to lack of understanding of finances. Your passion can guide you to unbelievable heights but it is the firm understanding of the finances that help you stay at those heights.

It is important to know the finances of your enterprise, whether you are presenting to a team of investors or simply working to grow your business. It is critical to know how much cash is flowing in to and outside the enterprise because in business it is the numbers that tell the real story.

Plucky

Robert Prigogine in his epic “Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance” aptly sums up fears in humans. He says that every individual inhabiting our lovely planet have their own Ghosts with whom they deal with every moment.

Entrepreneurship is about facing these Ghosts head on. The first step in every enterprise is that most giant leap that you would ever take. All that follows would definitely not be a cake walk but relatively easier to handle. However, one needs to remember that being plucky does not mean being rash. Being plucky instead is best explained by none other than Peter Drucker, who says: “The entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity.”

As Steve Jobs said, “You’re already naked, so there is no reason why you don’t follow your heart”. Life is short. So, get out of your fears, do something and make a difference.

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