



WHAT IT TAKES

UNCOVERING THE MAKINGS OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

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y understanding what an entrepreneur is, how they operate, and the competencies that are needed to ensure success, you will then be armed with the knowledge to decide if an entrepreneurial life is right for you. This article will uncover the makings of an entrepreneur.

WHAT IS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

The answer to this question may initially seem obvious, and yet, like many terms such as 'strategy' and 'competence', interpretation and understanding of the word entrepreneur varies amongst academics and professionals alike. For some, it follows the investment angle of venture capitalists. For others, it is the 'ideas person' starting up a small business. Intrapreneurs – entrepreneurs working within organizations – are a growing breed, and corporate entrepreneurship is becoming an oxymoron. Why scrutinize a definition? By understanding what an entrepreneur does and who they need to 'be', it is possible to decide if such a life is for you. We feel that the sharing of our experiences as entrepreneurs will ensure a much needed body of GCC research to enable effective entrepreneurship.

ORIGINS

First used in 1723, the term 'entrepreneur' implies qualities of leadership, initiative, and innovation in business. Entrepreneurship derives from the French word *entreprendre* ('to undertake'). They replace, in whole or in part, inferior offerings across markets and industries, simultaneously creating new products and business models. This is clearly linked to economic growth as a process of generating something new, assuming both the risks and rewards. Entrepreneurship is now even becoming identified as a career choice in its own right. Harvard Business School have the definition formulated by Professor Howard Stevenson, who defines entrepreneurialism as 'a pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled'. This can be further explained as: pursuit: relentless focus, grabbing that window of opportunity, and opportunity: innovative products and services, new business models. Beyond resources controlled: working with constraints, only their own human, social, and financial capital, mobilizing resources, brave distribution channels and so forth. Our working definition of an entrepreneur is a person who begins a business based on a passion, who finds it fun and fulfilling, who is creative and invigorating, who is risk-averse and open to challenges.

UNDERSTANDING THE DEFINITION

Entrepreneurs face considerable risk be it demand risk, technology risk, execution risk, and financing risk. To be effective, entrepreneurs must manage uncertainty, while recognizing that external risks may be out of their control. It can be difficult to reduce risk without resources or to persuade resource owners to commit to a high risk venture. Successful entrepreneurs are inspired through personal experiences and observation. Ideas and development are needed, yet entrepreneurs must ensure they do not fall into the trap of being restless or even relentless, constantly spinning new projects. Successful entrepreneurs see opportunities that add value. They are strategic, not merely jumping into ideas that are 'cool'. This is clearly a focus on products and services that customers need and will pay for.

ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAITS

Entrepreneurs are often impatient. Shrewdness and ambition support success. None of this comes without passion. Entrepreneurs work 'hard', in the sense of long intense hours when needed, sacrificing family time or other pursuits, often demanding the same of their staff and sometimes not 'being' or feeling the success because another venture feeds their need for persistent accomplishment.

Entrepreneurs tend to work for themselves because it affords the level of independence and freedom that they need. Calculated decision-making and 'playing with' business models on a small scale helps entrepreneurs discover what works and what doesn't in their industry. Among the many competencies entrepreneurs display, being powerful leaders who may not always lead from the front, risk takers, and energy are certainly prominent attributes.

Future economies depend upon entrepreneurs. Stereotypically, the GCC is known for its traders stemming from import and export roots. Successful entrepreneurs know how to seal deals. They can sell. They possess an ability to network effectively and even oust rivals. However tough the market or small the transaction, entrepreneurs know exactly what they can get away with especially when finalizing deals under pressure. Entrepreneurs also know that



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GCC FOCUS

The interplay between culture, respect for seniority, and a collectivist culture are seen to pose issues for entrepreneurs in the GCC, where new ideas and products continually challenge old ones and "individualistic efforts to change some pre-existing factors" (Mehrez, 2014) can rock the status quo. The key message here is that change is inevitable. Change can align with culture and entrepreneurs need transition plans to ensure change is managed appropriately. If change is enforced, if new products and services are too progressive, they will not succeed.

RISING RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

There is a clear need for more in-depth research in the GCC region in general and specifically around entrepreneurialism and entrepreneurship to support economic diversification, expansion, and competitiveness as keys to growth and development. This is also linked to globalization and a shift towards knowledge as the source of competitiveness, where traditional policy has become less effective, requiring more dynamic approaches.

gathering extensive information in order to make decisions is not always possible. Because of this, entrepreneurs need a team of people around them to support decisions and enable the entrepreneur to do what they do best.

BOTTOM LINE

Entrepreneurs can think and plan ahead, are comfortable with uncertainty, and have the discipline to be tough when the trait is required. Do you have what it takes?

Reference: Mehrez, A., (2014) *A Study of Barriers to Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies: The Case of Qatar*, Proceedings of 29th International Business Research Conference. **BIG**



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