

Inspiring Thoughts from "The Entrepreneur's Creed"

Every successful entrepreneur has learned from the experiences of others - those who have gone before and created success as they carved out their entrepreneurial paths. Some of those lessons are complex, and some are simple. They apply to different people in different ways and at different times. Taking those lessons and making them our own is one of the ways we learn and grow. In their book, *The Entrepreneur's Creed*, authors Merrill Oster and Mike Hamel worked with 20 highly successful entrepreneurs and synthesized success principles that were common to all of them. We have captured 45 of those principles here. Some of them will resonate with you because of where you are right now, others may not now, but will in the future. View them in relation to where you are in your entrepreneurial journey. Keep them handy for future reference. Enjoy the wisdom.

1. Earn trust by giving it
2. Take responsibility for your actions
3. Get the facts before making decisions
4. Go the extra mile
5. Put first things first and last things not at all
6. Accentuate the positive
7. Centre your life around specific goals
8. Devote yourself to lifelong learning
9. Discover and follow your calling
10. Concentrate on what you do well
11. Pour a solid foundation of hard work
12. Find your weaknesses and fix them
13. Cultivate new shoots from old roots
14. Live with passion
15. Speak the truth in love
16. Honour those in authority
17. Start over if necessary
18. Face life with boldness and courage
19. Block out the unnecessary
20. Conquer your personal demons
21. Seek divine guidance
22. Excel at helping others excel
23. Care deeply about people
24. Take risks with people
25. Lighten up - you'll live longer
26. Stay open to opportunities
27. Surround yourself with experience
28. Focus on what really matters in life
29. Help others with what you've learned
30. Escape the complacency that can come with success
31. Follow your sense of calling, even to unexpected places
32. Give your time and talents to causes you believe in

33. Live for something bigger than you
34. Open the door when opportunity knocks
35. Envision the future you want to create
36. Make positive values a forethought, not an afterthought
37. Have a realistic timeframe for your dreams
38. Use your head to follow your heart
39. Find a way around roadblocks
40. Leave an indelible impact on those you serve
41. Commit to a concept with a future
42. Practice forgiveness as a way of life
43. Turn disappointments into discoveries
44. Lead from your values
45. Maintain the tension between control and growth

The bits of wisdom that resonate most deeply with you, will stay with you as you grow your business. Live them out and share them with others.

Seven Dynamics of Change

One of the only things we can be truly certain of, is that change is an inevitable part of life. This is especially true in the life of your small business. Changes in the economy, customer mindset and preferences, local and world markets, purchasing patterns, business cycles - these happen all the time, and your readiness to accept and embrace change determines your capacity to compete in a dynamic and competitive marketplace. But change isn't easy for most of us. We tend to like things the way they are - especially if we feel they're working. Ken Blanchard, management consultant and author of the international best-seller, *The One-Minute Manager*, has identified seven dynamics of change. These are predictable patterns of how most people deal with change. Whether you're a sole proprietor or work with a staff, knowing about these common reactions to change can help you to navigate change in your business more effectively.

1. People will feel awkward, ill-at-ease and self-conscious

Managing change when you're on your own is one thing, but managing it when you're working with a team of others is quite another. Fears and inadequacies arise around your capacity to manage the change effectively. Doing things in a new way is always a little awkward, and feeling nervous about how you'll do, as compared to others on your team, is natural.

Change Strategy - if you're in business on your own, ask yourself whether fear is holding you back from making the change. Explore those fears and recognize their capacity to hold your business back from future success. If you've got staff, acknowledge their feelings and create opportunities that make it safe for people to be successful on their own terms. Establish an environment where it's okay to make mistakes and where your team learns from each other.

2. People initially focus on what they have to give up

As a change leader you need to acknowledge that people will feel the loss of the old ways and not expect them to grab hold of the new, overnight. They may long for "the way things used to be", but be patient. If you handle things right, you'll soon have them seeing the benefits of the new way of doing things, or at least accepting the new way as the standard for your business.

Change Strategy - if you're in business on your own, be honest about what you're giving up and how you're feeling about it. Trying to ignore those feelings and push through them will only make you resentful and you won't be able to fully embrace the new ways and methods. If you've got staff, let them grieve for a short while about what they perceive they have lost. Then guide them towards positive acceptance of the new.

3. People will feel alone even if everyone else is going through the same change

Everyone wants to feel that their situation is unique and special. This is human nature. Even if everyone else in the office is going through the same thing, somehow it makes us feel better to think that our circumstance is more difficult, more challenging, or different than what everyone else is going through.

Change Strategy - if you're in business on your own, ask yourself if you feel this way. If you do, be proactive about finding others who have gone through something similar. Hang out with them, learn from them, and open your eyes to what they have to offer from their experiences. If you've got staff, find ways to bring them together and unite them in their experiences. If you can get people feeling empathy toward others, and recognizing they are not alone, you'll be a lot further ahead in building team buy-in.

4. People can handle only so much change

There's a limit to how much change people can cope with, so if it's within your control, try to manage change in small increments. While most people find small changes manageable, massive change can cause people to shut down and render them incapable of moving forward.

Change Strategy - if you're in business on your own, be honest about how much you can handle. Whenever possible, try to implement change in small steps so that you can be on top of things each step of the way. If you've got staff, bring in changes one or two at a time. Giving people the opportunity to become successful at managing them will make them more confident and open as changes continue to come. If the amount or size of the change is beyond your control and is radical, you may find it helpful to seek the counsel of and/or hire someone who has managed organizational changes like yours to help with implementation.

5. People are at different levels of readiness for change

Some people thrive on change and find it exciting. Others are threatened by even the smallest change. Any change will have "early adopters" (those people who buy-in right away without the slightest hesitation); "opportunity groups" (those people who could be influenced toward or against the change), and "resisters" (those who will go

kicking and screaming all the way to the end). If you know where your people fit into these categories, you will be better able to bring them on board.

Change Strategy - if you're in business on your own, which of these three categories do you naturally fit into? If you're an early adopter, you'll have no problem going for it. If you need to be convinced, gather the evidence you need to help you accept the change and move forward. If you're a natural resister, ask yourself what's at stake if you don't find a way to implement the change. If you've got staff, get your early adopters onside and use them to help you sell the change to your team. Your largest group will likely be your opportunity group, so create positive strategies that will win them over rather than push them toward the resisters. Be patient with your resisters, but let them know that their resistance will not impact the fact that the change is there to stay. If they are too vocal and/or destructive within the team about the change, you need to ask yourself whether you need to let them go in order to move your team forward.

6. People will be concerned that they don't have enough resources

People might fear they aren't smart enough, computer savvy enough, quick enough, or a number of other "enoughs" to meet the challenge successfully.

Change Strategy - if you're in business on your own, what resources do you need to make the changes most effectively? What do you need to do to get those resources in place? If you've got staff, make sure you offer the necessary resources that people need in terms of training, safe opportunities to practice, mentoring and ongoing support so that they can take on the new tasks with greater confidence and less fear.

7. If you take the pressure off, people will revert to their old behaviours

Blanchard says, "If people perceive that you are not serious about doing things the new way, they will go back to the old way. Sometimes this will be in the open, and sometimes it will be covert." It's human nature to go back to what we know best.

Change Strategy - if you're in business on your own, find a way to keep yourself accountable to staying on track. Ask a business colleague, good friend, or mentor to do this for you. It's important to have someone on board who will alert you if you're falling back into your old ways. If you've got staff, stay on top of where people are in managing the change. Deal with "backsliders" quickly and decisively, reiterating the fact that you are moving forward with this change, and giving them the tools to climb back on board.

Managing change isn't easy, but it can be done effectively if you understand the natural response to change and are proactive about strategically managing those responses. The ability to lead effectively through change is a "make or break" skill that will impact how effectively your business moves into the future.

How to Recover from Not Winning a Big Contract

Chances are, you've been there. The bid is worth significant potential revenue to your business. You've spent countless hours doing research, did your homework on what they wanted and how you could supply it, prepared a dynamite proposal, covered all

the bases, researched your competitors and aced the presentation. You made a solid connection with the people at Company X and feel confident that your business is going to win the contract. Then you get the news - they chose your competitor. It's a big blow; you've invested a lot of your time and you're confused as to what could have gone wrong. Recovering from losing a big deal can be hard, especially when you've been so invested in the process, however, you can grow and even benefit from such a loss if you're willing to take the steps to do so.

Ask for Feedback

There's value in going back to the company and asking them for feedback as to why you weren't chosen. Approach them with humility (not sour grapes) and tell them you'd like to know what you could do better next time in order to win the contract. They may tell you there was nothing you could have done - it was a decision that had nothing to do with how well you did or didn't prepare. Or, they might provide you with some telling information, of which you were completely unaware, that affected their decision not to award you the contract. Take the feedback to heart and use it strategically the next time you bid on a contract.

Take an Honest Look at Your Process

Ask yourself the obvious questions - did we miss anything? Were we talking to the right people? Could we have done anything more professionally? Did we generate enough confidence in our product or service? Did we ask the right questions in the first place so that the proposal was on the mark? Was the proposal presented in a professional way? Was the presentation too formal, or too casual? Be brutally honest. There are always things you could do better. Figure out what those things are, and create a strategy around how you will do things better next time.

Keep the Door Open (in other words...never burn bridges)

You may be tempted to be angry at being rejected after all the time you spent working on the proposal. Perhaps you feel that Company X even led you on, or misled you in the process. Maybe they intended to choose your competitor the whole time and you feel you wasted your time and resources in preparing your bid. However you feel about the outcome, put those feelings aside (they're not good for business) and never let Company X know you feel that way. Leave the experience with a positive attitude and with the relationships intact. You never know what will happen. For any number of reasons, your competitor could drop out, or get fired. If you've made every effort to maintain a positive connection, you'll be the first person they call. If you make it clear that you want to work with them and leave the door open for future bids, you'll be all that much further ahead when another opportunity comes along. Your integrity will be intact and you'll have earned their respect for next ! time.

Let It Go

The worse thing you can do is dwell on the loss. Yes, it cost you time and money. That's the price of doing business. It wasn't about you personally, so don't hold on to negative thoughts that you weren't good enough. You did your best, you've taken steps to plan what you could do better, now it's time to move on. There will be other

opportunities, and if you're too busy feeling bad about losing this one, you might miss the next.

Losing a big deal can be a painful part of doing business, but maintaining a positive, growth-oriented attitude will help to ensure you're ready and able to compete next time.

Blue Beetle Book Reviews

From time to time we love to share books that we hope will help you be more successful in running your small business. Sometimes great books aren't specifically business-oriented, but their content has huge business implications. We've recently come across two books like that, and we'd like to share them with you.

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

How We Can Learn to Fulfill Our Potential

by Carol S. Dweck

Do you think that your IQ is fixed? Are some people just wired to be good at Math and Science and others at Art or English? Are people born naturally smart or not smart? Is achievement a measure of your intelligence? Is musical or artistic talent something you are born with? Is failure a result of not trying hard enough? Is leadership a natural trait? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this book will challenge your beliefs and your assumptions.

Based on years of research and thousands of studies on children and adults, Dr. Dweck has identified the true measure of human success, and it has nothing to do with how smart you think you are, how much opportunity you were given, or how you think you are "wired". The true measure, is in how you think - your mindset. In this book, Dweck explains why it's not just our abilities and talent that bring us success, but whether we approach our goals with a fixed or growth mindset. With the right mindset, anybody can improve all aspects of their lives.

In fact, our IQ is not fixed. We can "grow" smarter, simply because we don't see limitations. People who have never picked up a paint brush, or an instrument because they thought they weren't artistic, can be taught to draw and play if they have a growth mindset. A fixed mindset always focuses on the outcome (i.e. getting an A, winning an award, being the best), while a growth mindset focuses on the process (i.e. what I learned, how I can do better, where I want to go). The difference between these two mindsets and their impact on life, both professionally and personally, is staggering.

Full of real-life stories and results from hundreds of tests and case studies, the principles in this book are based on real evidence and have real applications. If you approach your business with a fixed mindset, you can expect some very specific results, according to Dr. Dweck, and the same is true if you approach your business

with a growth mindset. This book will change the way you think. Your approach to work and life will never be the same.

The Creativity Formula: 50 Scientifically-Proven Creativity Boosters for Work and for Life

by Amantha Imber

Dr. Imber is a scientist. She has spent her life working on ways to prove that creativity can be measured, developed and proven. Creativity, she believes, is what drives us all forward in all aspects of life. Unfortunately, many people believe that creativity is only granted to a select few and that it is elusive, etherial, unpredictable and endowed only on "creative types". Imber emphatically disputes this view, and says that everyone has the capacity to be creative. She and her team have researched the conditions and techniques that allow people to maximize their ability to solve problems more creatively, and generate significantly better ideas. There is, in fact, a formula to do so and it isn't difficult.

The Creativity Formula draws on proven research to provide 50 simple ways to improve creative thinking. Imber says that anybody can claim they are an expert in a field, build a website, give seminars and coach people how to do things in a certain way, but she believes in evidence and science to create credibility, and her methods are proven - scientifically.

This book provides 50 creativity exercises - each with an individual and organizational application - that will increase the quality of ideas, generate solutions, and help people to think more creatively. These exercises can be used in any order and in different circumstances for different applications. The exercises are simple, easy to follow and fun. Use this book to grow your own creative thinking skills, or use it with your team to generate greater creativity in your workplace.

There's nothing like a great read, especially if it makes an impact on your life and your business. We hope you'll consider adding one of these books to your "must-read" list this fall!

The Virtual Trade Show

A Cutting-Edge Technology that Could be VERY Good for Business!

For many small businesses, trade shows - even if they could be beneficial to their marketing efforts - are not an option. They are costly, require big chunks of time and can be risky in terms of return on investment. Technology is now offering a unique solution that has many people talking about what the future holds, and what is already possible, in a virtual environment. Susan Friedmann, a tradeshow coach from New York, (www.thetradeshowcoach.com) says this: "Virtual trade shows are the next big trend. Although a mere 1% of all trade shows are now held online, industry

experts expect that by 2015, more than 25% of trade shows will be conducted in virtual environments. That's a market you can't afford to ignore."

Like online meetings," says Friedmann, "a virtual trade show (VTS) can be simple or breathtakingly realistic. The simplest assemble a series of pages, each one a virtual booth for an exhibitor, plus instant messaging so exhibitors and attendees can talk in real time. The more complex are complete environments like high-level video games or such online worlds." There are a surprising amount of virtual trade show providers online already and a simple search will give you some sites to visit. One such site is Unisfair (www.unisfair.com). Check it out for an example of this kind of high-level technology and to experience what attending a virtual trade show could be like. According to Friedmann, here are some reasons to consider attending virtual events relevant to your industry.

A VTS Is Budget Friendly

The costs of a trade show involve transportation, shipping, hotels, hospitality, booths and exhibit spaces. Not to mention your time! A VTS eliminates almost all of those costs, and the cost of exhibit space is minimal. With travel costs rising it's anticipated that more industries will turn to virtual trade shows as a less expensive way to showcase their wares.

A VTS Allows You to Experiment and Explore New Markets

At a VTS, you don't need to worry about the flow of foot traffic, the placement of your booth or many other design constraints (size restrictions, access to electricity, rental of linens etc.), and, most often you'll have help designing your display. Set-up takes a minimal amount of time and the software is supplied. This freedom from a huge financial investment means that you can try new things with very little effort to see what works. You will be able to test new approaches and explore new markets without fear of blowing your annual marketing budget.

A VTS is Completely Green

Lowering environmental impact is an increasingly important goal for many companies. Imagine the difference between a traditional trade show, which involves travel, lots of hydro electricity, paper, food and non-recyclable waste, and a show that is completely online, involving none of those things. It's an alternative lots of companies will be considering in the future.

A VTS Creates Exceptional Lead Generation

Friedmann estimates that 80% of leads from traditional trade shows are never followed up, however, virtual trade shows collect the data for you - and most include built-in lead management software. VTS systems generally allow you to run analytics as soon as the show is over and tracks and analyzes the data for you. You'll be able to start following up leads immediately, which can greatly improve your return on investment.

The VTS Markets to the Customer of the Future

VTS's will help you reach out to the digital generation. Over time, attending a virtual trade show will seem as natural to corporate decision-makers as using the telephone does to us now. This is the way of the future. Gaining experience now in the virtual world will give you an edge in marketing to this vast demographic.

"The virtual trade show may never completely replace the great exhibit halls," says Friedmann. "Face-to-face contact is just too essential for many people. However, a wise marketing professional will use this exciting new technology to reach out to customers." Think about how you could use this creative new technology to improve your company's bottom line!