

Entrepreneurship: Preparing for uniqueness

Roger Cowdrey MIBC



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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

PREPARING FOR UNIQUENESS

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The advertisement features a black header with the event logo and details. Below is a photograph of the De Vere Beaumont Estate, a large white building with a fountain in the foreground. The bottom section shows a collage of images from the conference, including a panel discussion, a woman speaking at a podium, and a large audience.

PROLOGUE

This book was first written in 2013 as a single volume. This update makes two major changes to that first edition. Firstly, the book updates and expands many of the examples from the first book, and secondly it takes into account the changes in the world that have occurred in the last five years.

Because of this the book has expanded and so the decision has been taken to split it into two volumes. The split takes place at a natural divide in the book so that, although ideally they can be read together, they also stand on their own as independent volumes.

The first book deals with the history of entrepreneurship and challenges the reader to examine his or her own attitudes to entrepreneurship. It also encourages the reader to go further in developing his or her own entrepreneurial mindset.

The second book goes through the process of creating an entrepreneurial mindset using a number of exercises and questions before moving on to practical ways of moving forward.

Throughout both books I have also stayed true to my original commitment to found the book on my practical experience, reinforced by background research, rather than making this an academic only study.

During the five years since the first version I have continued my international consultancy, writing and motivational speaking and all of this has led to a strong reinforcement of the position I have taken from the people that I deal with.

I hope these two books also resonate with you and that it helps you as you move forward.

INTRODUCTION

If you have read the first of these two books, hopefully, there are things in it that have resonated with you and you have decided that you want to add to your skills to a point where you can act in a more entrepreneurial way.

Others of you may have reached that position by your own analysis and are equally concerned about developing additional skills.

Either way, this book aims to assist you in developing a future vision for yourself in whatever aspect of your life you wish to make changes. This may be in terms of running an entrepreneurial business, being more entrepreneurial in your employment, or being more entrepreneurial in your social and private life.

What is important is that the choice this time remains yours. Parents, teachers, careers advisors or even your peers are not governing this. You only have to consider how you want your life to move forward.

Once you have worked through to the point where you have developed your vision for the future, you will find ways to help to make this happen. However, the important word is 'help'. It can do no more than that. Change will only occur if you really want it and commit to it.

So, whether now is the time that you want to turn that long-held idea into successful business; whether it is now time to start looking at new employment opportunities that allow you to be creative; whether now is the time to start a new hobby or to change the rigid pattern of your social life; whether it is time to start being more adventurous in choice of holidays or whether there are other things you want to do, let's get started on the journey by turning this page.

1 DEVELOPING A CLEAR VISION

Hopefully we have got far enough into the book for you to have begun to believe that there is still a spark of entrepreneurship left in you that can be nurtured and developed. This chapter takes the first steps on that journey to self-realisation and the opportunity to do what you want to do with your life.

In *Creating an Entrepreneurial Mindset* we discussed the sort of characteristics that make up an entrepreneurial mindset. These characteristics were:

- A clear and achievable vision
- A vision where all the resources may not be in their control
- Self-awareness
- Confidence
- Self motivation
- A willingness to take calculated risks
- A willingness to listen to others
- A lack of fear of failure
- A willingness to work hard

If we were honest, few of us actually have a clear and achievable vision that we have created ourselves. Indeed, mostly they are not a vision at all but could more readily be defined as expectations of others. These expectations are shaped much more by parents, teachers and peer groups than by our own thinking.

Ask yourself how often you have made the important decisions in your life. If you are pursuing a career, who was it really decided or persuaded you to follow that path? If you are still at school, who decided what subjects you should follow, and were they ones you wanted to follow or ones that they thought you would be best at? Who decided what hobbies would be open to you? Are you one of the boys that are forced to play football every week, not for fun, but so that parents can shout at you?

Ask yourself if you are really happy following the subjects or hobbies that were chosen for you or the career path you were expected to follow. If the answer is no and there is a desire to do something different then keep reading.

People have invented a term for young people like you that don't follow the accepted norms and attempt to forge their own vision. We talk about 'rebellious teenagers' and the fact that it is a 'phase that they will grow out of'!

At school they make judgments about future careers based not on desire or vision but on academic success. If you are good at sciences and happen to ride a horse then rest assured that the careers teacher will have you down as a veterinarian!

Peer group pressure also plays a part in establishing 'your' vision. People want you to conform to the norms of the group. For example, the decision of whether to buy or rent accommodation is determined as much by your social group as by your personal desire. Only the other day I met a parent who was incredulous that their children didn't want them to make a present of a deposit on a property. There was little understanding that many young people today want to take advantage of the global world we live in rather than being tied to a single base.

The rest of this chapter is a process I originally developed for people who had been made redundant and is designed to help you, possibly for the first time, to build YOUR personal vision. These exercises work towards your personal definition of what you want to do with your life. Once there is a vision we can move on to the other entrepreneurial skills necessary to implement your vision.

The aim of these series of exercises is to help you to focus on the sort of person that you are, the values that are important and rewarding in your work and leisure times and the transferable skills that you have gained and would like to use in the future.

Importantly, it recognises that all of us have skills and values that will be different in every case. As a consequence we need to understand that we are not a failure just because our skills and values are different to the next person.

Often the creative person is derided because they are not academic in the accepted terms of the word. In reality the 'academic' person may not be as creative as the artistic person.

So starting out on these exercises it is important to know that there are no right answers. Actually, it may be truer to say that there are an infinite number of right answers. There is a unique set of right answers for each person that embarks upon them.

Perhaps for the first time in your life we are starting from a position that you are unique and that there is no one to compare you with. You do not have to live up to adult expectations, an older brother or sister or your best friend. This is the first step on the journey of eliminating cloning and re-inventing individuals.

So lets start with the first exercise.

Constructing a lifeline

When considering who you are now, it is interesting to look at the history that has shaped you. During this part of the exercise focus on the key events and people that come to mind, peaks and troughs, stresses, decisions made by you or for you. Bear in mind that your lifeline has to contain events that are important to you. For that reason it is impossible to tell you what sort of things to put on your lifeline. What may seem trivial to one person may be of great significance to you.

1. Take a piece of blank paper and draw a line across it to represent your life so far. The shape of the line has no significance so draw the line the way you want it.
2. One end of the line is when you were born and the other end is now.
3. Mark key events along the line from as early as possible until now. Leave plenty of space between the years to fit memories as they flow.
4. Look back at each event and put any symbols that are appropriate next to each one from the selection below:

P	Peak or High point
V	Trough or low point
S	Stressful
R	Risky
Y	Your choice
X	Not your choice

What you will find is that activities throughout your life may well have more than one code against them. For example, an activity may be a high point and may have been risky and your choice. This would generate a set of codes of P, R, and Y.

The more events you can put on the lifeline the better the analysis.

You will already start to notice that this is not about external measures of achievement, but things that are important to you. What you may see as important may be trivial in someone else doing this exercise. That does not matter as this is all about you and your feelings and desires; no one else.

What you will find with the lifeline is that consistent patterns will start to emerge. High points in your life will usually have similar patterns and low points will tend to have different but consistent patterns. You need to look at these and identify the patterns that

lead to highs. It would be a good idea in constructing a future vision to construct one that is based on the characteristics that produce highs rather than lows.

Note any thoughts, ideas or words that come to mind as you look at the final result. The following questions may help to stimulate this process:

- a. Are there any surprises?
- b. What sort of experiences are the peaks?
- c. What sort of experiences are the troughs?
- d. What are the main causes of stress?
- e. Do you take many risks?
- f. Is there a positive or negative outcome to the risk taking?
- g. Do you see any themes?
- h. Do you see any changes in pattern?

Make a note of what you learn about yourself and how you have been living your life until now. These notes can be useful for reflection later when considering your next course of action.

Understanding your work and leisure values

The aim of this part of the process is to help you to answer questions about what you want from your life such as:

- How do I or would I like to spend my time
- Where do I want to live and work
- How important is money, status, security, etc.

Having identified the values that matter to you it becomes easier to make life more rewarding by making sure that you build them as far as possible into your future work and leisure vision.

Your work values

Print off the following list of 35 values and the header cards.

<p>A WELL-KNOWN ORGANISATION</p> <p>You like being part of a well-known organisation</p>	<p>PROMOTION</p> <p>You like to work where there is a good chance of promotion</p>
<p>CHALLENGE</p> <p>You enjoy being 'stretched' and given new problems to work on</p>	<p>ROUTINE</p> <p>You like a work routine which is fairly predictable</p>
<p>PRESSURE</p> <p>You like working to deadlines</p>	<p>COMMUNITY</p> <p>You like to live in a place where you can get involved in the community</p>
<p>WORK WITH OTHERS</p> <p>You like to work in a team alongside others</p>	<p>PHYSICAL CHALLENGE</p> <p>You enjoy doing something that is physically demanding</p>
<p>WORK ALONE</p> <p>You like to work on your own</p>	<p>ARTISTIC</p> <p>You enjoy work involving drawing, designing, making music, making models, etc.</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION</p> <p>You enjoy being able to express ideas well in writing or in speech</p>	<p>RECOGNITION</p> <p>You do like people to appreciate you for work you do</p>
<p>SECURITY</p> <p>It is important to know your work will always be there for you</p>	<p>CONTACT WITH PEOPLE</p> <p>You enjoy having a lot of contact with people</p>
<p>PRECISE WORK</p> <p>You like working at things which involve great care and concentration</p>	<p>HELP SOCIETY</p> <p>You like to think that your work is producing something worthwhile for society</p>
<p>SUPERVISION</p> <p>You enjoy being responsible for work done by others</p>	<p>PERSUADING PEOPLE</p> <p>You enjoy persuading people to buy something or change their minds about something</p>
<p>LEARNING</p> <p>It is important for you to learn new things</p>	<p>BEING EXPERT</p> <p>You like being known as someone with special knowledge or skills</p>

<p>TIME FREEDOM</p> <p>You prefer to be able to choose your own times for doing things, not having rigid working hours</p>	<p>FRIENDSHIP</p> <p>You would or do like close friendships with people at work</p>
<p>FAST PACE</p> <p>You enjoy working rapidly at a high pace</p>	<p>STATUS</p> <p>You enjoy being in a position which leads other people to respect you</p>
<p>MAKING DECISIONS</p> <p>It is important to you to have to make decisions about how things should be done, who should do it and when it should be done</p>	<p>CREATIVITY</p> <p>Thinking up new ideas and ways of doing things is important to you</p>
<p>RISK</p> <p>You like to take risks</p>	<p>EXCITEMENT</p> <p>It is important for you to have a lot of excitement in your work</p>
<p>MONEY</p> <p>Earning a large amount of money is important to you</p>	<p>HELPING OTHERS</p> <p>It is important to you to help other people either individually or in groups, a part of your work</p>
<p>PLACE OF WORK</p> <p>It is important that you work in the right part of the country for you</p>	<p>PEACE</p> <p>You prefer to have few pressures or uncomfortable demands</p>
<p>VARIETY</p> <p>You enjoy having lots of different things to do</p>	<p>COMPETITION</p> <p>You enjoy competing against other people or groups</p>
<p>INDEPENDENCE</p> <p>You like being able to work in the way you want, without others telling you what to do</p>	

IMPORTANT	OF SOME IMPORTANCE
QUITE IMPORTANT	
VERY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT

Considering each of the 35 value cards, think about how important each one is in your paid work

Sort them into columns allowing a maximum of 8 cards in the 'very important' column

Use the blank cards provided to create any extra cards that you wish, and discard any printed cards that seem irrelevant. Rank the cards in the 'very important' column in order of importance.

When you are happy with the sort, complete the table below for paid work to provide a record of your actual work values at the current time.

This chart can be used as a checklist to compare any likely future work activities to your needs. It is also good to identify whether or not the work you do at the moment mirrors these values.

Work Values

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

Your leisure values

Make a note of the things you do for leisure:

Repeat the card sort for leisure; some cards may need a little translation, e.g. work alone = being alone.

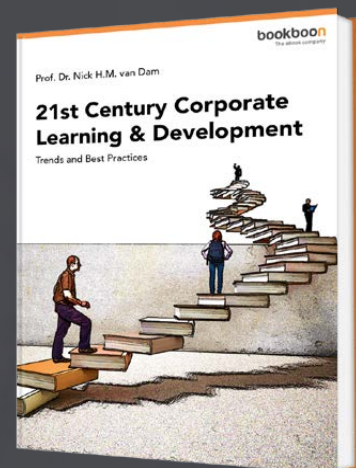
When you have completed the sort, fill in the chart for leisure activities and consider how well your current activities fulfill the very important and important values.

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Important
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

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How values change with time

Our 'important' values are key motivators for our life journey, but these journeys and values change as a result of life events, experiences and our changing self-image.

Spend a few minutes noting under the following headings, which values you think were or will be most important at different ages:

Age 18

Age 30

Age 45

Age 65

Looking back at these three 'value' exercises make a note of what you have learned about your values and needs.

Which of the values have changed with time and which have remained constant?

How well are you meeting your most important needs at work and in your leisure time?

Could this match be improved?

Transferable skills

Too much emphasis is paid to academic qualifications and not enough emphasis is paid to transferable skills. It is often difficult to fully identify the 'transferable skills' that we have because of the importance that is often placed on our role as a paid worker. We usually understand the skills that are directly related to our paid work, but it is more difficult to

discover the underlying skills that really are transferable to other paid work and leisure activities in order to make our life more rewarding.

The following exercise is designed to help you to discover not only the skills that you have, but also the ones that you would like to use in future roles.

Over the page is another set of cards that you need to print off.

P Drawing out people	T Hand-eye co-ordination	T Keeping physically fit
T Using hand tools	T Handling things with precision and speed	T Assembling things
T Fixing, repairing things	D Analysing, dissecting, sorting and sifting through information or things	T Building, constructing
T Muscular co-ordination	D Problem solving	T Finding out how things work
T Physically strong	D Reviewing, evaluating	T Driving car, motorbike
T Quick physical reactions	D Diagnosing, looking for problems	T Manual dexterity
T Using machine tools, sewing machine, lathe, power tools	D Organising, classifying	
D Reading for facts	D Following instructions, diagrams, blueprints	I Creating, innovating, seeing alternatives

D Researching, gathering information	I Working creatively with colours	I Sizing up a situation or person quickly and accurately
D Calculating, computing	I Fashioning or shaping things or materials	I Reading for ideas
D Memorising numbers	I Working creatively with spaces, shapes or faces	I Developing others' ideas
D Managing money, budgeting	I Composing music	I Conveying feelings or thoughts through body face and/or voice
D Examining, observing, surveying, an eye for detail and accuracy	I Improvising, adapting	I Writing creatively
D Taking an inventory	I Designing things, events, learning situations	P Conveying warmth and caring
P Helping others	P Taking first move in relationships	P Promoting change
P Giving credit to others, showing appreciation	P Motivating people	P Leading, directing others
P Listening	P Organising people	P Showing sensitivity to others' feelings
P Selling, persuading, negotiating	P Teaching, training	P Performing in a group, on stage, in public, etc.

VERY COMPETENT	COMPETENT
ADEQUATE FOR TASK	UNDEVELOPED

Exercise:

Layout the four heading cards and sort the rest of the cards under these headings according to competency

Use the blank cards to write on any skills not listed. Discard any that you feel are irrelevant. On the table over the page write down your skills under the headings ‘very competent’ and ‘competent’

From the remaining three columns note onto the table any that you would like to develop, then put the cards in these three columns to one side

Sort the ‘very competent’ and ‘competent’ piles into skills that you would like to use a lot, sometimes, rarely and note these on the table.

Transferable skills

Very Competent	Competent	Want to use a great deal	Would like to develop
-----------------------	------------------	---------------------------------	------------------------------

Very Competent	Competent	Want to use a great deal	Would like to develop
		Want to use sometimes	
		Want to use rarely or never	

The skills that you have identified as ‘very competent’ and want to use a lot are your most transferable skills. Those that you have identified as ‘competent’ and want to use a lot are your next most transferable.

It does not mean that skills are not transferable because you do not want to use them. However, you will be less motivated to use these skills and find less satisfaction in using them.

Data, ideas, people and things

Each of the skill cards has a letter on it D, I, P, T. Look at your most transferable cards and transfer the letters into your chart to see in which categories most of your skills lie.

Explanations of the categories can be found below and you may find it interesting to consider the types of work or leisure activities that your choices indicate will be most rewarding for you.

On the blank sheet that follows make a note about what you have learned about your transferable skills and which types of work or leisure activities will be most rewarding for you.

D = Data

These represent the kind of skills required to record, communicate, evaluate and organise facts or data about goods and services. People who like using these skills typically enjoy working with figures, systems and routines.

I = Ideas

These represent skills used in being creative, designing conceptual models and systems, experimenting with words, figures, music. People who like using these skills typically enjoy creating, discovering, interpreting, abstract thinking and synthesising.

P = People

These represent skills used in helping, informing, teaching, serving, persuading, entertaining, motivating, selling and directing other people. People who use these skills like to work towards changes in other people's behaviour.

T = Things

These represent skills used in making, repairing, transporting, servicing. People with these skills like using tools and machinery and understanding how things work.

Building the vision

You now have all the necessary components to build your vision for your future life. You know what has worked well in the past from your lifeline, you know what values you want from work and leisure and you know what transferable skills you have that you want to use. Your next step is to write your fantasy life. Consider your life as a whole and outline your perfect life including pattern of work, where you would live, integration of work, home and social life, status, income, life style, etc.

Once you have written your fantasy life you need to ask yourself some questions.

- What are the differences between fantasy and reality?
- How much of the fantasy might be achievable now or in the future?
- What are the barriers to achieving some of the fantasy?
- How might these be overcome?
- What consequences would there be for you and others in working towards this fantasy?
- Would the pursuit of the fantasy be worth the consequences?
- What objectives would you like to set for yourself on the basis of this exercise?

Having used this process with a large number of people one thing has consistently come out of the process. Although the gap between fantasy and reality may be large or it may be small, everyone seems able to identify a path to achieving that fantasy life. The next stage in the process is to develop the other skills to enable vision to move forward to reality.

2 BUILDING SKILLS TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION

Not only has the previous chapter produced a vision, but it should also have increased your self-awareness. No longer are you judging yourself by external values, but by what you truly want and believe in. You now have your understanding of your skills rather than some other person's evaluation based on academic qualifications and your performance against the skill set that they require. You also know what values you need to satisfy in order to be content with your work and home life rather than accepting the values of your peers.

What you now need is the confidence to implement the vision. Some people would argue that once you know what you want then you should simply go for it. They will come out with trite comments such as 'life is not a rehearsal'! But, as we have already seen, going it alone requires the confidence to go against years of external conditioning. Even simple steps such as telling your friends you are not going to the bar every Friday night anymore can be daunting. So let's look at ways of building confidence.

Firstly, it is important not to think of self-confidence as perfection. We all make mistakes and the person that didn't ever make a mistake probably didn't make anything. But you will have done a lot of things right in your life and they are things of which you should be proud. So start by making a list of all of your successes. Keep it handy, remind yourself regularly and add to it whenever you can.

Learn to speak up at work or in leisure activities. Set yourself the objective of speaking at least once in a staff meeting or in a group discussion with friends. Try and prepare for it. So if you know that your friends are likely to ask what you should all do, think of something and be prepared to voice it rather than go along with what others say. Be prepared to support your suggestion with a reasoned argument.

A person that lacks confidence often finds fault with himself or herself. For example, they don't like their hair, they don't think they are as funny as other people or they don't think they are as good at their job as the next person. As well as accentuating the successes it is often necessary to confront the negatives. Too many people use negatives as an excuse for inaction.

Ask yourself why you feel this way and ask yourself what evidence you have for feeling that way. Often the negative is formed because of accepted norms from sources such as media or from putdowns from within your social peers. Just think how many people think they are fat because of the increase in size zero models in magazines and on television.

Ask yourself how any of these things can stop you achieving your vision. Will bad hair really stop you achieving your vision or are you looking for an excuse? If it really will damage your vision then get a good hairdresser, otherwise let it go and follow the vision. The same is true for all of the other negatives.

Another thing that will help to eliminate the negatives is a clearer understanding of failure and failing. Too many people see themselves as failure rather than recognizing that failure is an event not a person. Unfortunately the Western World has developed a belief that success is everything and everything has to produce a success.

In reality, most successes came from a succession of failures from which information was gleaned and future attempts were defined. As Edison once said, he didn't fail ten thousand times when inventing the light bulb; he just found ten thousand ways that didn't work. Had he lived in today's world he would probably have given up and we would all still be using candles!

So this means that we have to re-programme the way we look at negatives and failure. We have to recognise that there will always be negatives and there will always be failures. The important thing is how to turn negatives into positives and how to learn from failures.

Sarah Blakely attributes much of her success to her father who would ensure every Friday was a family dinner night. At the dinner, she and her brother would be asked what they had failed at and what they had learned from it. This removed her fear of failure to the point that when she started her business she was prepared to do things that others said were not the way things should be done.

Self-confidence is about being positive about you; it is about not being afraid to try and it is about being able to learn from failure if it happens rather than retreating to the corner and adopting the foetal position.

Another aspect of lacking in self-confidence is the unwillingness to take compliments. Too often people lacking confidence will brush off compliments or make self-depreciating jokes to cover their embarrassment. Next time you receive a compliment, thank the person and accept it gracefully.

I personally have never been a great advocate of confidence building exercises that involve activities with groups such as standing in a circle and trusting the group to catch you as you fall backwards. Neither do I favour being asked to accomplish some difficult physical task up the side of a mountain where all of the team must trust each other in order to succeed.

However, I did find a solitary activity some years back that certainly did boost my self-confidence immensely. I had been going through a bad time and was not feeling very happy with myself. In fact I was subconsciously blaming myself for most of my problems and deciding that I deserved all of the badness.

Then suddenly, one night as I led in bed I decided not to evaluate my entire past life as this was too big a task. In any case there was nothing I could do to change it. Instead I decided to simply evaluate that day. I asked myself what had happened; how hard I had worked, had I been lazy, how did I treat others etc. At the end of the evaluation I decided that for that day I quite liked me!

For the next few weeks I continued the evaluation and the results came out the same pretty well every night. Occasionally I may feel that I had not been very nice to someone and this caused me to plan to improve that particular thing. Sometimes I may have felt that I had not been as thorough at work as I should have been and I planned to improve that.

But the primary effect of the exercise was that I stopped feeling negative about myself and realised that, like most people, I wasn't very bad and that I quite liked me. It also gave me



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daily feedback on where I had slipped below my desired standard (not failure) and it gave me a chance to learn from it and improve.

So I would recommend this as an exercise in increasing your self-confidence. It is something that takes a couple of minutes every night and it has the added benefit of increasing the likelihood of a good night's sleep!

I am also a strong believer in the power of positive thinking. Someone once said that if you believed that you would succeed you were probably right and that if you believed you would fail you were probably also right!

A perfect example of this came when I was working on this book whilst consulting in central Turkey. In this town there was always heavy traffic and people spent hours driving around looking for a space to park. The person I was with related that whenever he went into the centre of town he always found a parking space near to where he wanted to go. It happened so regularly that he began to wonder if he was psychic or living in a parallel universe.

One day he suggested to his friend that they go into town. His friend pointed out that there would not be anywhere to park but my friend stated that there would be a place. They went into town and my friend was right; there was a space right outside where they wanted to go. This happened several times and the friend was amazed.

One day the other person decided to drive even though they still believed that there would not be a space for them. Sure enough, as they drove around the person could not find a space. My friend looked at what was happening and realised that there were spaces but that the other person was not seeing them. My friend also realised that he was not living in a parallel universe!

What was happening was that when my friend drove around he expected to find a space and hence he saw the spaces. The other person expected not to find an empty space and hence was looking at the rows of full spaces rather than the empty ones. In other words, they were both looking to fulfill their expectations whether positive or negative.

Another aspect of training the entrepreneurial mindset relates to risk and failure. I came across a quote recently that said that 'A ship in port is safe...but that is not what ships were designed for!' How often do we fail to try because it is safer not to try? More importantly, how often do we inhibit our children by not letting them try for fear that they may not succeed?

The Western business culture has created a society that is totally risk averse and where people feel the need to win much more strongly than the need to learn from attempting. Too many

people brag about their children's achievements as if they were their own achievements whilst trying to hide the times when the child does not succeed.

Even worse, parents increasingly attempt to remove children from situations where they may not succeed and create an environment where 'don't do that' has replaced 'lets give it a go'. Children are discouraged from exploring through physical play activities such that activities I remember like climbing trees and playing cricket in the yard are disappearing entirely from Western culture!

This refusal to try for fear of failure has also helped to create the convenience society; or perhaps the convenience society has helped to create the risk adverse society! Either way, we have come from a world where culinary experimentation has been replaced by fast food that is the same anywhere in the world!

Gone are the days of the brave explorers and early holiday makers who would bravely travel to other countries where they would go off and explore the surrounding sights and would eat local food whilst staying in a local hostel. Now people play safe with mass holiday resorts that are all-inclusive with little local food and where trips are sanitised and delivered by professional tour companies.

I recently discussed a possible trip with a local tour representative where I live, as it was a wonderful combination of quality culture in the most impressive archeological setting at an exceptionally reasonable price. The tour representative agreed with me but pointed out that they could not engage in the trip as it had not been 'health and safety reviewed'! The particular site has been used for events for some 2000 years and I bet the Romans didn't have the place health and safety checked.

We also see fear of failure and lack of risk taking in the workplaces of the Western world. People are getting to work earlier and earlier so as not to be seen as the last one in the office. Then they stay later and later so that they are not the first to leave. Even then they refuse to relax and continue to work on laptops, tablets and smart phones all of the way home.

Does anyone stop and think how much cleverer they would appear if they were to arrive at the normal time and finish on time with all of their work done and without the need to work on the way home? How much more impressive it is that you can accomplish the same as your colleagues in so much less time.

There are also other clear benefits to this approach. Suddenly you get home in time to see your children while they are still awake. You are fresher and much more willing to engage in real play rather than abdicating your parenting responsibilities to bulk training by schools

and child-minders. You could go back to the days of your parents when mums and dads made up stories instead of leaving television cartoon characters to do your work.

With a bit of light supervision children can get so much stimulation from learning to ride a bicycle with their parents; from activities where first time success is very unlikely but where life lessons can be learnt. These lessons cannot be learnt when their only mode of transport is the back seat of the SUV!

It is interesting to note that a British survey conducted by the London School of Economics discovered that only just over half of young people over five owned a bicycle and less than half of them actually used it. This is despite a massive increase in cycle ways and the encouragement of cycling success in the Olympics and the Tour de France by British riders. And yet, well over 50% of 5–10 year olds in Britain had a mobile telephone as far back as 2006!

While there is clearly a need to address the education of our children in order to create the sort of entrepreneurial mindsets that we need for the future and in order to give them the best chance for a stimulating and meaningful life, this cannot be achieved unless we change the way that we ourselves look at life.

One exercise that you should try is to make a list of all of the things that you would really like to do while you are fit enough to do so. Then list alongside of them the reasons why you could not do them. Ask yourself what the worst thing is that could happen if you tried to do these things. Then ask yourself 'SO WHAT!'

My wife is a great example of using this approach when faced with potentially fearful situations. I well remember an occasion a couple of years ago when we were having a short break in the Cappadocia region of Turkey. With it's fantastic landscape dotted with volcanic fairy chimneys it was crying out for a hot air balloon trip. My wife was not particularly keen on sitting in a wicker basket at 500 feet with only a gas bottle and the wind for navigation.

However, when she looked at the reasons why she could not do this she found that she had all of the physical attributes to take part in a balloon flight and records showed that there was little risk given the safety record of this company. Moreover, she was prepared to try in the hope that she would enjoy it and to make sure I went and enjoyed it. By overcoming the fear she found that the experience was sensational and she is now the biggest advocate for hot air balloon flights over Cappadocia!

Having conquered the fear of heights, she has gone on to climb to the crown of the Statue of Liberty, go to the top of the Empire State building, stand on the edge of the Grand

Canyon and fly around New York at night in a helicopter. Next stop are the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur.

Moreover, she has repeated this approach and has used it to overcome fears that have led to swimming with stingrays, swimming with dolphins, establishing an international lunch club on her own, not to mention moving homes from one continent to another in three months. And before you start to imagine someone in her twenties or early thirties, she has children that are all grown up as well as three grandchildren!

The other attribute that is essential if you are to benefit from an entrepreneurial approach is the willingness to work hard to achieve things. Contrary to the impressions created by reality television, luck isn't just something that happens. I love the quote that 'The harder I work the luckier I get!' Once you have overcome the fear and have gained the confidence to have a go then you need to put maximum energy into it.

Failure to do so usually means that there is a confidence problem or that there is still a fear of failure that prevents a wholehearted attempt. In other words you can say that 'you tried' as if that is enough. But that is a bit like those people that buy all of the right clothing for skiing but then simply stand around and enjoy the evening parties but never ski. No, you did not go skiing; you went to parties in ski clothing as if it was fancy dress!

In his book *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell he spends some time discussing the concept of 10,000 hours. The discussion dismissing the concept that genius is born and not made. Whether it is classical soloist musicians, people like Bill Gates or the Beatles, tracing their history shows that they worked incredibly hard in order to become instant successes. He even managed to make the case that the boy composer, Mozart, had to complete his 10,000 hours before he started to write really good musical pieces.

No one is saying that simply by doing something for 10,000 hours you will become a star. Certainly, trying to win on *X-Factor* on the basis of a drunken karaoke performance will not do so. But life is not all about being a celebrity or the best in the world at disciplines defined by others. This book is about being successful in whatever you choose to do as defined by your own standards and desires.

It is about not being afraid to define a vision for yourself; it is about believing in yourself; it is about having the self-esteem and confidence to chase the vision; it is about being prepared to take risks and not to be afraid to fail, it is about getting up and trying again and it is about being prepared to work hard in order to make things happen. Most importantly, it is about taking control of your own destiny and not allowing society, parents, convention or anything else to control it for you.

There are many exercises that I cite in my lectures that I believe will help people to get back to being the creative child they once were. For example, I get people to start a failure log. This is not to depress them, but to face up to failure and to identify what they learned from the failure.

Other things that I suggest include making a meal from anything in the refrigerator without using a recipe and trying a fairground ride that you have always shied away from before.

But probably the best one is to draw an alien. The reason I choose this one is that this is the one activity you cannot fail at. Not only does it require your creativity; it is also something that you cannot fail at because no one has ever seen an alien. This means that your alien is as likely to be right as anyone else's!

Mark Twain once said; "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

3 ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ACTION

Most books on entrepreneurship invariably focus on the well-known entrepreneurs and they are usually business related. However, throughout the book I have emphasized that we are all born with the potential to think entrepreneurially. There was a study done that measured divergent thinking in children and they were measured at three times in their school life. When measured at 5 years old 98% measured high on divergent thinking capability. This dramatically reduced over the next ten years, demonstrating that we are educating it out of children.

Therefore it was important to me that the examples that I finish with are what most would call 'ordinary' people. I will explain why I say most people would call them ordinary after I have shared their stories.

The reluctant academic

This particular man was known to be particularly clever academically, was a member of Mensa and at the age of eight he moved to the class a year ahead and stayed there for the remainder of his school life. This meant finishing at 17 years old. Rather than go straight to university he took a year off. (What would now be termed a gap year)

After a summer floating around Europe he returned to England, and needing work he started in a bar. This led to going into partnership with someone to have their own bar and when the need arose to increase income he found a temping job at a major IT company whilst still keeping his interest in the bar. Not content to simply go to work and temp he started to get educated in IT issues and soon was in even more demand from the IT Company.

When the temp agency refused to increase his wages he started his own company and contracted directly with the IT Company. Soon he was in demand and he found himself headhunted. Having worked for major companies at home and abroad he now has a good job in the City of London. When he first reached a salary of five figures doing what he enjoyed doing he asked his father if he still needed to go to university!

This is a case of believing in yourself, having the confidence to try what you wanted rather than what everyone expected, to take risks and to be prepared to work hard to achieve the vision.

The successful loners

This man was well educated, from a good middle class home and with all of the social skills and education to make his way in the world at university and in the social sets. He was the sort of person that aunties and uncles loved. He was well dressed, well spoken and ideal to wheel out for social engagements and family gatherings.

But because he was well dressed and well spoken no one recognised that his true happiness came from working not as a team but on his own or in small groups. His love was not social gatherings but numbers. He was very adept at computing and his ideal was to do numbers on his computer.

So, much to the dismay of those around him he dropped out of university and took a number of jobs that gave him the chance to work with numbers, spreadsheet reports and financials. Suddenly he was doing much more of what pleased him, but still he was often working in a team.

Given that his solitary way of working was coupled with a reticence to take orders and commands from others, it was natural that he should think about running his own business. However, although he had the skills to deliver a good product, he lacked the confidence to sell and market his product. Luckily he found a partner who had such skills but required a product to compliment his skills. This partner also became his life partner. They now run a very successful business together as well as living a successful life together in their own home.

This example teaches two things. Firstly, not everyone wants to be part of a large corporate empire. More importantly, if you do not have all of the skills needed, don't be afraid to seek out those who have complimentary skills. They may not all turn into life partners, but they will make good business partners.

The hardworking dreamer

In the interests of equality I am please to include women in the entrepreneurial cases. This woman went on holiday to the sunshine and whilst there she discussed with her travelling companion the dissatisfaction with her life so far. She wished that she could work in sunny places as something like the holiday representative they kept seeing.

When she returned from holiday she set about trying to find out about how to become a holiday representative and discovered a course that could be taken on line. The course offered interviews with three top companies if she scored highly enough on the course.

She worked at the course every opportunity she had and even used a mentor on occasions. At the end of the course she had worked hard enough to score 96% and she went for the first of her interviews. After a day of interviews and evaluations she was offered a job.

Less than a year after she had sat on the beach dreaming, her hard work resulted in her departing to the South of France on her first assignment. For several years she continued the dream of travelling to exotic places and enjoying the responsibility of organising her own work.

Eventually, returning to her home country she used all of her skills to gain a senior position in a company where she got valuable business experience. After she started a family, she used these skills to start her own business to fit in with bringing up her daughter.

The immovable woman

The second of the women in this group of ordinary people was the other woman on that beach discussing dreams. She was someone that had lived all of her life within 15 kilometres from where she was born. Everyone assumed that she would always live there and few knew that she had come so close in the past to opportunities to leave her native country.

Her husband was lucky enough to travel the world with his job and was content to travel backwards and forwards to see her. But once she articulated her dream to the other woman on the beach it was there in her mind. So the next time she was due to meet up with her husband she went to him rather than him coming home.

After two weeks with her husband in another country she discussed and agreed with her husband that they should make their home where he was now working. This would save travelling and would mean they were together and not separated by two continents.

So home she went and, again by hard work, she sold and got rid of all material possessions, she sold the car and she sold the house. All of this was achieved in three months and she left her native country two weeks before the other woman took up her first holiday representative job. Interestingly, through hard work, a self-belief and self-confidence they both achieved their dreams within ten months of the chat on the beach.

I realise that many people have holiday homes as well as their native base, or expats that move abroad to their favourite holiday locations. But this was not the case when the woman set off to join her husband. This was a total commitment to a plan that had lived in her

head most of her life. This was not slavish following of a husband, but a calculated risk, where failure was not an option and where hard work and self-belief would make it happen.

As I said at the start of this section, in many ways these people are ordinary people that achieved their dreams through the very characteristics that we have talked about in this book. However, I also said that they were ‘apparently’ ordinary. To anyone that reads this book I hope they will be seen this way and that they will act as an inspiration to the reader to also behave entrepreneurially.

However, to me they are extraordinary because the brave lady in the last example is my lovely wife and the other three are our children. What the four of them achieved they did themselves, but in doing so they gave me more opportunity to see my beliefs in action and for that I thank them all.

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CONCLUSION

As I said previously, one would have hoped that the need for a book like this would have become significantly less since I wrote the first version. However, every day I see examples of why this is more needed now than ever.

Parents are still moving house to try and get their children into the schools with the best academic results and children are still being guided towards employment that will have disappeared by the time that they qualify.

If there was any doubt that the pursuit of academic achievement still rules the lives of those young people rather than the development of the skills necessary to adapt to and benefit from the opportunities that the changing world will bring, we only need to turn to the holiday companies.

As if cramming for examinations wasn't bad enough, the latest offering for the holiday season is designed for the 'pushiest' parents of all. You can now book your family holiday in the sun so that parents can lie by the pool with their cocktails while their children do three hours of classes. And on top of that then additional private coaching can be booked for the afternoon.

All I can say is that I am so glad that my holidays were spent learning how to find cockles in the sand with my grandfather, seeing real animals, playing make-believe and generally having fun. Yes we got the odd bruise or scratch, but we learned so much; not just about the things we did and saw but about risk taking, exploring, challenging and not being afraid to try and fail.

In the past I have thanked my parents for many things, such as the sacrifices that they made for me to go to grammar school and such like, but it is only while writing this book that I have truly appreciated that their approach to my growing up is what gave me the characteristics to break free of the chains that the English class system tried to place on me.

My parents never tried to channel me or make me believe that success was everything. I was brought up in an environment where failure was never criticised but where success on my terms was always applauded. My upbringing has been the basis on which I have built a life I am proud of and, therefore, by not directing me in a specific direction, their son has achieved so much more than could have been expected. For that I thank them.

When I started this book I made it clear that the contents were based on my real life experiences and that you should not expect the traditional theories of entrepreneurship regurgitated. I hope that I have been true to that objective and that you can find things that resonate within your own life.

What has become clear to me over the years is that, at a time when the world is changing so rapidly that we need entrepreneurial thinking to maximize the benefits of that change, we are in danger of educating these skills from our children. If we are not careful we could evolve into a race of risk adverse individuals that do as they are told and suffer terminal boredom.

Of course this will never happen in reality, as there is something in the human makeup of some people that will not allow the creative part of them to be removed. They are the fortunate ones that enjoy a fulfilling and stimulating life following their dreams.

But all of us have the chance to be one of those people; to have a stimulating and fulfilling life; to follow their dreams and to seize opportunities as they arise. Entrepreneurial opportunities are around us all of the time. The cry should be 'why not me?' instead of 'why me?' We should learn to look around rather than always straight ahead. We should stop trying to be a second rate version of others and become a first rate version of ourselves.

Too many people believe that it is difficult to change. Certainly, if you are tied to material possessions and external status and such other things then it could be hard. But if we value ourselves and we value having a fulfilling life then it becomes easy.

In my own case the first step on my road to enjoying every minute of my life came with as simple a thing as a bar of chocolate. I was at primary school and one of the large chocolate manufacturers was running an essay competition for schools. With chocolate as the prizes for the first six places this was my sort of competition.

I was known to be one of the better children in the class and so I hoped for one of the prizes although a girl called Bridie was expected to take first prize as she always came top of the class.

I remember when the results were read out and my disappointment at not getting any of the prizes from 6th down to second. I really thought that perhaps the quite big box for second would have gone to me. As I waited for Bridie's name to be called I could not believe it when I heard my own name. This was the moment when I realised that I did not have to settle for second place and that if I wanted something and I gave it my all then 'why not?'

I suppose that the essay that won that chocolate competition was the first time I realised that I could write creatively; even if the royalties came in chocolate! Not long afterwards, another piece of creative writing as part of an entrance examination resulted in me becoming the first boy from my primary school to get to grammar school.

From then on my life has been a succession of opportunities that have led to other things that have all brought me satisfaction and fulfillment. I got my first choice university. I got a teaching job in the town I wanted two days after qualifying. I passed my driving test first time after a week of lessons. When I was offered the chance to teach computer studies I took it not knowing where it would lead.

When I left teaching the computer studies helped me to get a job with a major IT company that lasted for twenty years. During that time I became a director of a business agency for SMEs as part of our community activities. This lasted for ten years and gave me the skills that enabled me to become chief executive of a business agency in my hometown.

During this time I was asked to become the chair of a large NGO in my spare time that led to me becoming a consultant for an organisation supporting NGOs. All of these experiences of business were brought together when I saw a request on an email to work as an international consultant. Having got that position other jobs followed as well as university lecturing opportunities. Who would have believed that I could walk into universities and present on 'Failure is an Option'.

Having been once asked to appear in a business programme; in my innocence I grabbed it. Despite it being nerve-racking it started off a media career that has involved radio, television and written media in several European and Middle Eastern countries.

In between all of this I managed to fit in twenty years as a class one soccer referee, not to mention twelve ballroom and Latin dance examinations.

In short, a boy born on the wrong side of the tracks, who never had anything other than secondhand clothes and shoes until he was in his teens, learnt that lack of material things didn't have to mean failure. I learnt that you don't have to aim for second. Go for first place; keep your eyes open and if the opportunity is there then grasp it.

When I lecture I always leave the listener, or in this case the reader, with three thoughts.

Firstly:

There are three types of people in this world
There are those that make things happen
There are those that watch things happen
And there are those that say 'WHAT HAPPENED'

This book is designed to make you one of the first.

Secondly:

Remember the Bumble Bee!

If you go to university and study aerodynamics you will discover that the Bumble Bee's body is too heavy, it is the wrong shape, its wings are too small and they flap too slowly. In other words, according to the laws of aerodynamics he cannot fly! And yet he does!

He flies for two reasons. Firstly he did not waste three years in university listening to a professor talking about aerodynamics and secondly he flew because he believed he could!

If you believe you can fly then don't let anyone stop you, especially yourself!

Finally, I always leave them with a picture of a flock of sheep with a black one in the middle. The caption reads – 'You laugh at me because I am different, I laugh at you because you are all the same'!

Let me tell you from my own experience that different is a lot more fun than all the same!

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This book is dedicated to:

My parents who allowed me to grow up without pressuring me,
Those that have given me so many opportunities to say 'yes',
My family who have shown that I am right about 'a better way',
My darling wife who has given me her unconditional support, encouragement and
praise and has been the other entrepreneurial part of this adventure they call life.