What Unintended Entrepreneurs Need to Know About Working for Themselves

Roy Carriker (Drexel University)

KEYWORDS: Family Business, Entrepreneurship.

People pushed into self-employment need to test demand, conserve cash, build useful skills and seek expert help before relying on a new income stream.

Article originally published at NextAvenue.org(https://www.nextavenue.org/) , which has partnered with EIX.org on a series of high quality features about family business and entrepreneurship. Part of the America's Entrepreneurs Special Report

The popular notion of an entrepreneur is one who starts a business, so just what is an *unintended* entrepreneur? It is someone who never thought of starting a business or juggling income streams, but now finds himself or herself scrambling to make ends meet and needing to become more entrepreneurial. Below are some ABCs for anyone about to become an unintended entrepreneur.

Today, mounting evidence points to an accelerating growth in the ranks of unintended entrepreneurs. One example of workers being unable to retire: the U.S. workforce grew 9 percent in the last decade while workers 54-64, whose ranks might be expected to grow at a slower rate due to early retirement, instead grew 18 percent, and those in the 65 and over category swelled to 39 percent.

Becoming an Unintended Entrepreneur to Survive

Some of the unintended entrepreneurs have been "right-sized," "downsized" or pushed into retirement without the financial means to retire. Many find themselves juggling different ways to make a living. Clearly, a person in these circumstances has to be "entrepreneurial" to survive.

There is a growing possibility much of the U.S. workforce will become independent self-employed workers — entrepreneurs, either as a full-time means of earning an income or on a part-time basis to supplement income or to make ends meet. Today, full and part-time independent workers (self–employed) are estimated to be about 40 percent of the workforce and growing. However, much of the future unintended entrepreneur workforce is unaware of their eventual fate and unprepared to face it.

Improved success in being an independent or self-employed worker can only come from awareness of the need to prepare, followed by learning how to be more entrepreneurial. If you accept the premise that earning a living will be much more dependent on independent work in the future, you need to understand a great deal more about being the entrepreneur of your life.

The Entrepreneurial Mindset

Preparation begins with having an entrepreneurial mindset. Here's how:

- Keep your eyes on the horizon and be curious about new things you see and possibly don't yet understand.
- Ask yourself: Does what I see have a potential negative impact on my career? If the potential impact seems negative, make reasoned risk decisions about possibly changing your career.
- If things don't work as envisioned, be willing to pivot. An important part of having an entrepreneurial mindset is accepting setbacks along the way, not as failures, but as learning experiences toward achieving a better result.

The Tools for Unintended Entrepreneurs

There are tools useful to all entrepreneurs which are particularly important if you need to become more entrepreneurial yourself. Most importantly is the ability

Copyright © 2019 The Authors. Entrepreneur & Innovation Exchange is published at EIX.org. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited and no modifications or adaptations are made. View EIX.org Authorship Terms at https://eix.org/terms

to present yourself and your ideas. To have great presentation skill, you must also be able to write logically and succinctly to script your presentations.

If you are going to be entrepreneurial, you will also be negotiating on your own behalf and will need to hone skill in negotiation. With the internet and social media playing such an important role in society, you will need to build your individual personal brand. One beauty about these tools: there are plenty of inexpensive resources available to improve your proficiency.

The 3-Legged Stool of Entrepreneurship

When contemplating doing self-employed, independent work, think of it as a three-legged stool:

The first and most important leg: Is It REAL?

This is where most entrepreneurial endeavors fail. You may believe someone will want to pay you for your goods (handmade jewelry, baked desserts, etc.) or service (music lessons, dog walking), but you need to find out if there really is a need at the price you plan to charge.

The second leg is: Cash is king. While you are investing time and money into your entrepreneurial effort, be careful to conserve cash you may need later, particularly if things don't work out as well or quickly as you had planned.

You can find out more about financial considerations in starting a solo entrepreneurial endeavor by reading this story(https://familybusiness.org/content/346-how-new-solo-entrepreneurs-can-think-through-their-finances) at the EIX website.

The third leg is: It takes a team. You can't know everything you should know about earning a living on your own, nor will you likely have the time to learn. Seek the advice of others with expertise in a myriad of issues to be faced such as: should you become an LLC (Limited Liability Corporation); should you have liability insurance and what is your most cost-effective means of generating customers.

Coping With Uncertainty

The world of work and earning a living is changing at a rate never experienced before. There is great uncertainty in how it will evolve. Individuals can be hired to operate in virtually any capacity as independent contractors without employee fringe benefits and can even be assembled in to teams to get projects done.

What we do know today, is that there are factors leading to greater uncertainty in how workers will fare financially in the future. Awareness, working on an entrepreneurial mindset and honing entrepreneurial skills are keys in assuring better chances for future career success.

Copyright © 2019 Roy Carriker, Published by Entrepreneur & Innovation Exchange

DOI: