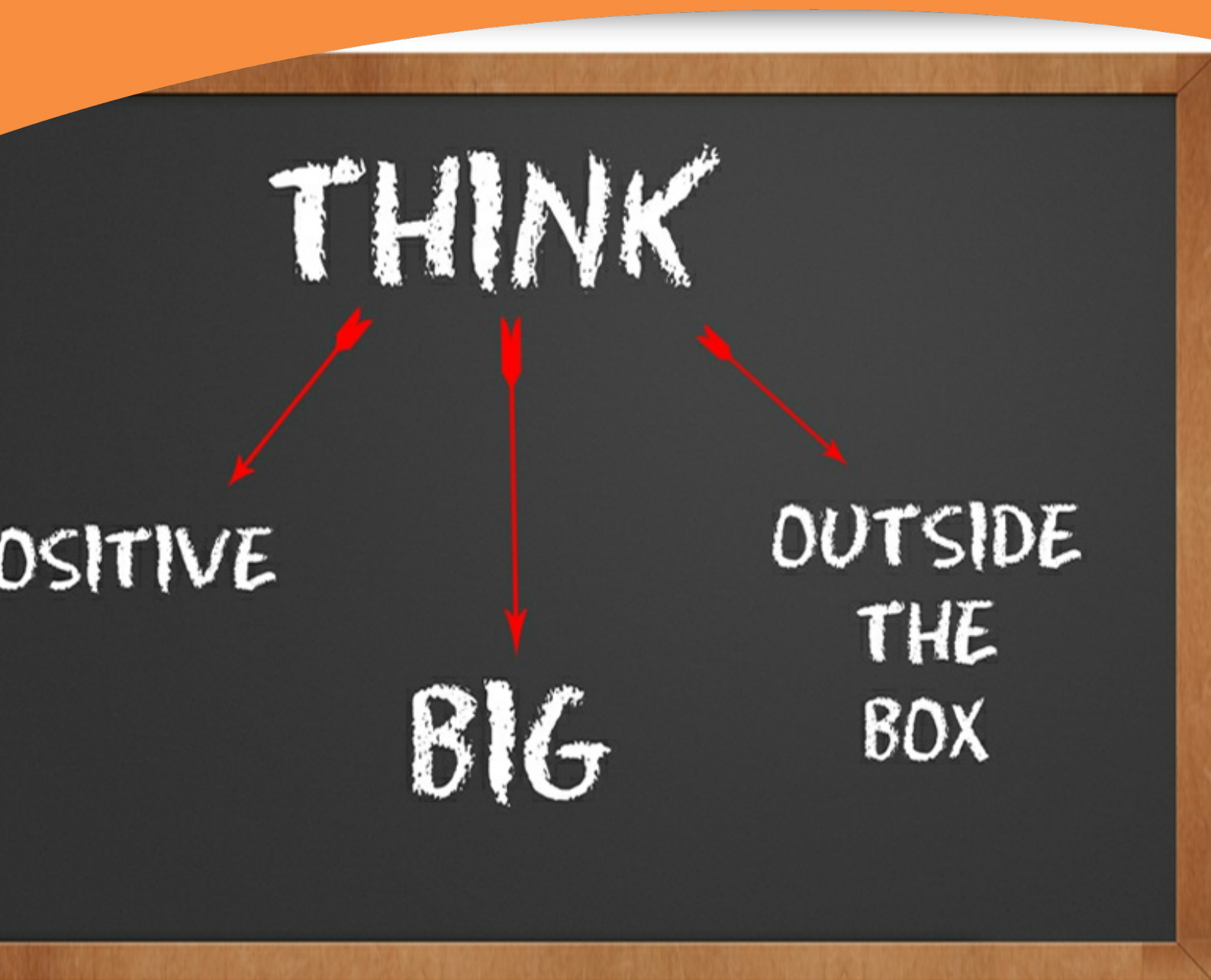


# Creating an Entrepreneurial Mindset

Failure IS an Option!

Roger Cowdrey MIBC



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# **CREATING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET**

**FAILURE IS AN OPTION!**

Creating an Entrepreneurial Mindset: Failure IS an Option!

2<sup>nd</sup> edition

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# CONTENTS

|          |  |           |
|----------|--|-----------|
|          | <b>Prologue</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
|          | <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>What is an Entrepreneur?</b>                              | <b>10</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>What stops people behaving in an entrepreneurial way?</b> | <b>21</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>How entrepreneurial are you?</b>                          | <b>28</b> |
|          | <b>Conclusion</b>  | <b>36</b> |
|          | <b>References</b>  | <b>37</b> |



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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 speaker at a podium, a panel discussion, and an 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

Since writing this book back in 2013, much has changed in the entrepreneurial world but much has stayed the same. This update is designed to reflect the changes that have happened that further influence entrepreneurship and the creation of an entrepreneurial mind, as well as reflecting on the unfortunate lack of change in many areas.

In 2013 robots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) were in their infancy. Yes there was extensive use of robotic devices on the manufacturing floor, and there were many studies on the future impact of AI, but the idea of machines and artificial brains taking over much of what humans do was considered science fiction.

Even five years ago, people were ignoring studies that showed that robots and AI could threaten 50% of the jobs in the US and there has been little evidence that governments and education have heeded the warnings that such studies gave.

Fast-forward to 2018 and we are now in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. For those that thought there was only one Industrial Revolution brought about by the steam engine, the second one was created by the age of science and mass production, and the digital age brought in the third.

Interestingly, the gaps between these three revolutions were counted in many years. However, the revolution that is now taking place through things such as cloud computing, big data, the Internet of Things, robotics, computing power, mobile computing and AI has come hard on the heels of the third industrial revolution.

More concerning, unless you are a geek, the fourth revolution has crept up on us without us realizing what is happening. Let me give you a few examples.

- We all started to be impressed by facilities in our cars that allowed us to know that there is someone in our blind spot, that helps us reverse, that tells us if we are drifting outside of lanes, that turns on lights when it gets dark and turns on wipers when it starts to rain, let alone parks the car for us. But aren't these the features that ultimately brought us the driverless car that has already completed over 2 million miles on public roads? Where will this leave taxi drivers and chauffeurs?
- My wife and I started to think that SIRI was quite cute. We could ask it to do everything from creating the shopping list to playing music, as well as asking it to find out things for us such as the weather in somewhere far away. But it is precisely this ability that demonstrates that SIRI is much faster than me at getting answers for me, and carrying out a variety of tasks. So where will that leave call centre workers and others that conduct repetitive tasks with customers?

- Talking of customers, what about the supermarket and other shops? We already have self-service tills to let customers scan their own products, thereby reducing the need for large number of checkout staff. In the US we already have trial shops where you log in with an App as you enter the store, and then take what you want and leave. The technology then works out what you bought and adds the cost to your account. Where does that leave all of those people working full-time and part-time in shops?
- A logical follow-on from this development is the shop knowing when you are near to them. We often give over our details such as telephone numbers for producing the receipt, and we regularly leave 'location services' on for all our applications. Imagine my surprise the other day when I entered a shop and almost immediately got a text message from the parent company offering me a 10% discount for that day!
- We all think that these robot vacuum cleaners are quite cute. Particularly given their ability to come out and clean the floor before making their way back to recharge. Where I live the price of such a device is less than £200, so how long before robots become a total replacement for domestic staff.
- A further development over the last five years has been in the area of drones. In 2013 the emphasis was on using drones to deliver packages from mail order companies. However, since then we have seen drones used by the military with bombings taking place from drones flown by pilots many thousands of miles away. This has led to at least one major courier company suggesting that it is their declared aim to fly their fleet of planes across America with six pilots based in a control centre. Given that much flying is already done by automatic pilot, real pilot jobs are clearly at risk.
- Even in medicine the advances have been phenomenal. A gynecologist friend of mine is already using robots controlled several feet from the patient to carry out operations. He maintains that it would be possible to carry out operations at much greater distances; even at home.
- On the social side, there are now robot baristas and self-service wine dispensers that take cash cards and credit cards.

So we see that the march of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution is really gathering pace and shows no sign of slowing down. Many of the advances will bring potential benefits, particularly to those that work in or own such high-tech industries.

However, on the down side I see little evidence that those in power are really addressing the social and economic issues that this revolution brings in its wake. Recent problems over social media data use, hacking, grooming and trolling have shown that control over the technology is lagging far behind the developments and that governments are not running hard enough to catch up.

Moreover, the pursuit of profit by the private enterprises has led them to disregard the need for controls. Corporate social responsibility has become a meaningless watchword where companies think recyclable cups at the water machine are enough to assuage their conscience. However, when elections get influenced and terrorists can recruit with impunity then there is clearly a need for action at the public and private level.

There is also little recognition across all sides of government of the implications of the revolution on employment. It is no good simply suggesting that new jobs will mysteriously appear to replace those that have been lost. As people still look to enforce the working time directive that limits working hours to 48 hours a week, no one seems to be looking at situations where people will only be able to work 15 hours a week in a job share.

Job sharing is not a new phenomenon, and has been used many times to ensure incomes for a large number of people. It also has the advantage of reducing the harmful effects of long-term unemployment on people's health and mental state as well as reducing dissatisfaction with governments that fail to address the problem of disappearing jobs. However, in the past, such action has been reactive rather than the proactive solution we should now be looking for.

With the advent of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution, governments need to be looking at how they can develop a system with people working perhaps 15 hours a week under a job share, rather than 35 hours for one and unemployment for the other. Major corporations need to be using their large profits to finance such schemes rather than taking their money offshore to a tax haven.

Hand in hand with the change in employment characteristics needs to be a rethink on leisure. The term 'idle hands are the devil's tools' requires a total rethink on the provision of leisure alternatives to the 24-hour drinking establishment. At present leisure in the UK is an optional provision for municipalities. This needs to change, but so do the conditions that would encourage more private leisure provision.

But surely the most disappointing lack of change as far as I am concerned is in the area of education. Five years on and we still lie to our children about the wonders of the educational ladder to everlasting success and happiness. Despite statistics that show that many graduates are still unemployed after six months and that some are still unemployed after a year, we still encourage them to follow the 'yellow brick road'.

Even more disturbing than the figures relating to unemployment, is the fact that many of the jobs that graduates take do not require a degree.



When I was asked to update this book I wondered if there was still a need for it. Sadly, the failure of parents, education and governments to keep pace with an even faster changing world has convinced me that the need is greater than ever.

Clearly, I cannot change the education system or governments with a simple re-write. I cannot even change the mass of misguided parents who believe that a university degree is a badge of honour and achievement for them as parents. However, I am conducting the re-write in the hope that some young people and some enlightened parents will find a more fulfilling way of going forward.

I call the book 'Creating an Entrepreneurial Mindset'. Perhaps it should be re-titled 'Becoming a Winner in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution'.

# 1 WHAT IS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

In reading this book it is important that you understand the basis on which this book is offered. My background is extremely varied and I would argue that it has many elements of entrepreneurship within it. It encompasses the formal academic training of youth, five years as a classroom teacher, twenty years within a large multi-national and nearly thirty years working with people in small and medium enterprises and the organisations that support them.

However, the bare bones description of my background hides a variety of experiences that have shaped my views on entrepreneurship. So when you read this book you should not expect a thesis anchored in academia, although I have certainly sought to verify my views with research, but one that is based on real, practical experience and draws lessons from those many years of experiences.

Certainly my time as a teacher has given me an insight into the education system that has enabled me to understand why the present system fails to deliver the entrepreneurial mindset that I believe we need in order to cope with a fast changing global world.

That is not to say that there are no opportunities for entrepreneurial thinking within education as there are plenty of individual instances of such activity. Indeed, I was instrumental in bringing computer studies into my school before people recognised the potential of such machines. However, such initiatives take place within an education system that was not designed for an entrepreneurial world and which has been further damaged by an increasingly restrictive social environment.

Some would argue that working for a multi-national would be totally against the concept of entrepreneurship. Many see large companies as the equivalent of giant oil tankers that plough forward remorselessly. There is a real belief that it is impossible to turn the tanker at entrepreneurial speed!

However, it was easy to see that there was plenty of entrepreneurship happening within the computer giant for whom I worked. This was a company that had traditionally taken five years to bring a product to market. However, once Apple threatened them they were able to develop a PC within nine months.

As with most large companies there was an almost monolithic structure with complex written procedures and processes, but the real changes within the organisation were achieved by those that did not accept the status quo as inevitable, but reacted with an entrepreneurial approach. Indeed, when I look back now on my twenty years within the company I always remember the exciting changes in which I was involved.

But probably my biggest exposure to entrepreneurship has been through my work as a consultant advising and mentoring entrepreneurs, and as an international consultant helping other countries to establish organisations to assist entrepreneurs.

That is not to say that every business I worked with was an entrepreneur. If you study a range of start-up businesses you are as likely to find a lack of entrepreneurial spirit, as you are if you study a large company. In other words, small is not always beautiful and large is not always bad.

Already you should be able to see that this is a large and complex subject. This is not about the successful characteristics of Steve Jobs or the desire to clone Bill Gates or Richard Branson. Producing more of each of these people would not solve today's economic problems.

Moreover, whilst I accept that their companies were founded through an entrepreneurial spirit, I would also argue that many of these entrepreneurial startups have morphed into traditional, profit driven monoliths. Whereas once we waited to see the next big breakthrough, now we simply wait for the yearly upgrade, with functions that many do not need and where the real entrepreneurialism is in marketing techniques rather than function.

Today the world changes faster than it ever has in the history of mankind. Since I last bought a car the engineers have taught cars how to park themselves, turn on the lights and operate the windscreen wipers. In the States there is now a car that is licensed to drive itself and such cars have already travelled over 2 million miles on public roads.

If I were writing this book thirty years ago there would have been no Internet available, my mobile telephone would have been the size of a house brick and we still had ten years to wait for the launch of the DVD!

As the world rapidly changes developed countries complain about the various skill shortages. Immigration policies are often dictated by the skill shortfall within many countries such as the need for IT skills or doctors and nurses. However, in reality, much of immigration is used to fill low-level jobs; many of which we expect to disappear as the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution takes hold.

It is a never-ending surprise to me that, in a world where most countries have high unemployment rates, they still complain of having skill shortages. The implication is that they have the wrong people in their country, whereas the reality is that they are developing the wrong skills.

What succeeding governments fail to recognise is that the true skill gap lies in the availability of people with entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to be flexible and responsive to unprecedented change.

It verges on the mind-blowing that parents, governments and teachers are still bringing up their children based on an academic, subject-based curriculum. This is predicated on a number of outdated beliefs.

The first of these is that the passport to success is an academic university degree. All the evidence points to the fact that, far from being a passport to success, it is a way to collect significant debt, whilst not necessarily providing significant financial rewards and while finding that many available jobs don't need a degree.

The second outdated belief is that there are a plethora of available jobs for life! Since the turn of the Century, which is less than 20 years, over half of the FTSE 100 companies have disappeared due to mergers, decline, bankruptcy or simple closure. Once it was considered the norm for a company entering to survive there for 50 years. Today that number is nearer to 5 years.

But it is not only the companies that are disappearing; it is also the jobs. The 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution is already starting to remove jobs. But at the same time, it is reckoned that 65% of all jobs that will be available have not yet been invented.

There are other more subjective influences at stake as well. For example, there is clear evidence from cases of grooming, hacking, data misuse, trolling and other factors, that parents have a low grasp of the technology and its potential.

There is also the ostrich mentality that exists amongst parents. Lack of understanding leads some of them to believe that it is only the lower level jobs that will be affected rather than those that their little precious will want to do.

Others think that it is a fad that will go away and that if they do what they have always done it will be OK. Clearly they have not understood Einstein when he postulated that the definition of stupidity was to keep doing the same thing with the expectation of a different result.

All of this leads me to be astounded that we still implement a largely academic syllabus designed to ready people for a world that no one can predict and which contains little of the skill development necessary for young people to cope within this new world.

This lack of skill development is made worse by the ‘nanny state’ mentality that seeks to protect everyone from any potential risk whilst trying to ensure certain success for all with every task undertaken.

While I recognise that there is a need to protect people from the unscrupulous, the desire to remove risk and to stop exploration and investigation in favour of a ‘right’ way, is working totally contrary to the skills we need in the future. The very people that are putting the controls in place, are lowering standards to make sure that everyone achieves, and are denying competitive sport to young people, are the very ones that got where they are today by climbing trees, competing to achieve in sport, playing in the rain, walking to school and learning by exploring, even if they sometimes failed.

What is needed today is a recognition that unless we change the paradigms that have influenced parents, governments and educators for so long, we are building up a crisis that will create more disillusioned, unemployed youngsters and one that will not be solved by importing cheap, low-level labour.

So this book seeks to find practical ways to create the people that we need to fill the entrepreneurial skill gap. No one believes that one book will change a system that has been in place since the industrial revolution, but we can at least make a start.

As I put on social media recently ‘ will those of you who are saying that it is impossible please stop interrupting those of us that are doing it!’ So in deference to Peter Kilby, it is time we started to hunt the Heffalump.

What I mean by that is that we need to try and find some understanding of what constitutes an entrepreneur if we are going to be able to develop the skill set necessary for successful entrepreneurship.

Peter Kilby’s notion of the Heffalump was based on the animal of that name which occurs in the Winnie the Pooh stories. The Heffalump is an animal that never actually appears and no one actually sees one.

When I was running a business support agency I once remarked that our biggest difficulty was identifying a potential start up business. If we wanted a plumber or a lawyer we went to directories. However, it was impossible to walk down the street and say that you could spot someone who was thinking of starting a business! Whilst I do not define entrepreneurs as simply people that want to start a business, it is equally true that entrepreneurs do not walk differently, dress differently or speak differently, however much the new breed for company owners try and reject the suit except when appearing before congress!

One of the problems of identifying entrepreneurs is that all too often it is the social and educational system that militates against entrepreneurial thinking that tries to identify and measure the entrepreneur. Too often we class true entrepreneurs as people like Branson, Gates or Jobs. And yet, how often do we see Muhammad Yunus or Bunker Roy mentioned as entrepreneurs? A quick Google search may prove instructional!

The problem is exacerbated by the increasing abuse of the word by organisations in order to create personal benefit. A perfect example of this abuse lies in many of the agencies that exist to support business start up. There has been a steady drift through the term 'business' to 'enterprise' and on to 'entrepreneurship'. Essentially the offerings have remained the same and only the names have changed.

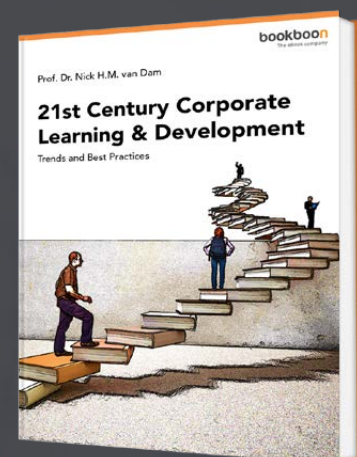
The impression is created that entrepreneurship only applies to a certain sector of the community. It is similar to the way that the word 'innovation' has been high jacked by the technology industry. This cavalier use of words has blurred rather than increased the understanding of entrepreneurship.

Neither of these assertions is true of course. Entrepreneurship and innovation are both necessary and applicable in all walks of life. Neither are they the prerogative only of the developed world. It is simply the arrogance of the people of the developed world to believe they are the founts of all knowledge.

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There is also a belief that entrepreneurship and innovation are the prerogative of the business community and the intelligent. This is also not true. It wasn't the boss of the company that came up with typing correcting fluid. It was his secretary who got fed up with spending time re-typing because of errors.

Indeed, it has been my experience that the higher up an organisation a person sits the less likely they are to have innovative ideas. Hopefully we can uncover some of the reasons for this later on.

One of the sad things I discovered when researching this book was that if you search on entrepreneurship and everyday life you get lots of references to housewives starting businesses thereby reinforcing the concept that entrepreneurship is a small business thing. People do not seem to recognise that many inventions are only successful because ordinary people use them in an entrepreneurial way.

Incidentally, I do not mean by the last example that women are poor examples of entrepreneurship. Indeed, to the contrary, my experience shows that women are often better than men when it comes to entrepreneurship. Starting out requires someone with ability to multi-programme, to manage finances properly and to be prepared to take advice.

One only has to watch a woman getting her child ready for school to see true multi-programming in action. Women usually require less finance to start an enterprise and manage the funds better as a result of handling family budgets and they are not afraid to seek advice.

Whereas, it was once said that men cannot walk and chew gum at the same time, are less able to stick to a budget and have you ever been in a car when a man has got lost and refused to ask for directional advice!

However, what I want to do in this book is to get back to what real entrepreneurship is so that we can look at creating entrepreneurs for the rapidly changing global world rather than for one small sector of society.

It is my contention that, although business examples are the easiest to understand, the differentiation of an entrepreneur is in the way in which they think and react. This aspect of an entrepreneur I refer to as the mindset. A mindset is not any one characteristic, but a whole group of thoughts and reactions that come together to create the whole.

Probably the best place to start would be with the original word entrepreneur. It is generally agreed that the word comes from a 13th century French verb, 'entreprendre' meaning to undertake or to do something. Interestingly, some, to satisfy their own particular interest

and belittle the concept of entrepreneur, have modified even that simple fact. Some people interpret 'entre' as between and 'prendre' as to work and hence interpret it as between work or unemployed!

Economists gradually refined the definition by adding various attributes to the definition. The first step was to relate it to business during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century risk had been added in that the business venture had no guarantee of profit.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century further skills were added including knowledge skills, what today we would call business skills, and also the skill of management. It was not until the last century that calculated risk appeared and by mid-century the concept of innovation had been added.

However, all of these definitions and additions come from economists and hence focus entirely on the traditional western business model. This model assumes that success be measured in terms of return on investment (ROI) or profit or some other financial measurement.

Were this to be the real case then one could argue that only countries and people that adopt the western, profit based business model can have and be entrepreneurs. However, as someone that has witnessed other models in other parts of the world, it is clear that it is possible to have entrepreneurs that do not maximize profit or return on investment. The creation of social entrepreneurship further disproves the financial basis for measuring entrepreneurship.

Interestingly, while I was researching the origins of the word, I came across the fact that 'anthaprena' is a word in Sanskrit that means 'self-motivation'. I am not suggesting that the accepted definition is wrong, but I do think that the Sanskrit has an interesting correlation with my concept of the entrepreneurial mindset.

It is also true that the economists do touch on some other attributes that are found in entrepreneurs. One of those is the willingness to take calculated risks. That is not to say that they are reckless, but rather that the innovative nature of their ideas will mean that they will have to make decisions with no guarantee of success.

But if we go back to my earlier contention together with my experience of other business models, I have to discard the pure economic definitions in favour of something that fits all business models, fits people inside large businesses, fits social entrepreneurs and fits entrepreneurial activity in everyday life. I want to rest the concept away from the business people of the western world and let it be made applicable to anyone.



Interestingly, the best non-business definition that I found was one that was devised 37 years ago by professor Howard Stevenson of the Harvard Business School. He defined entrepreneurship as:

“The pursuit of opportunity without regard to the resources currently controlled”

While it doesn't encompass all that is needed to be successful in any of the fields I have mentioned, it does have a resonance with the experiences I have had in my varied working life.

This definition does not mean that people take unnecessary risks. However, it does mean that entrepreneurs don't fall at the first hurdle when they reach an obstacle. Rather they will look at ways to resolve or circumvent the problem. Where most people see a problem, then the entrepreneur will see an opportunity.

So along with the willingness to take risks we can now add both perseverance and optimism to the mindset. However, for an entrepreneur to be optimistic they need to have a belief in what they wish to achieve and that in turn requires a vision.

That vision is one that may well need to be articulated because often entrepreneurs cannot work alone and need support of various kinds. This may involve human resource or it may involve physical resource. An entrepreneur needs people working with him or her on something with no guarantee of success so they have to believe the vision.

Often the most important people to believe the vision are family and friends who the entrepreneur relies upon for support. When it comes to resources, whether financial or physical, these people must certainly believe the vision.

For people to believe the vision, they must believe in its achievability and the reason for achieving it. Far too often I have been faced with people with a so-called entrepreneurial idea that falls at the first fence when one asks the question 'who wants it' or 'what problem does it solve'.

The time when this is most likely to happen is when it is a business idea. One person told me the business would make them a multi-millionaire on the day their business launched. This was despite a raft of flaws in the vision. Naturally the business failed.

And yet, at the same time I have seen such unlikely visions as a mobile sauna and a mobile dog-washing vehicle that have both been very successful. Interestingly, the successful ones not only have a clear vision based on need and a problem that needed solving, they also had another attribute that the first business did not have.

That attribute was one of self-awareness. By self-awareness I mean that the person has a clear understanding of their skills and of their limitations. As a result they are willing to work with others, to listen to others and to modify their vision in the light of such discussions.

This self-awareness, coupled with the need to work with people that understand and are committed to the vision leads to a far less hierarchical structure. Most entrepreneurial activity will start with a fairly flat organisational structure.

This means that entrepreneurs are often more interested in achieving their vision than they are about status. True entrepreneurs are more interested in gaining success because of the success of their idea, product or process than they are about their title on the business card.

Again, I have seen ventures where the first thing that the so-called entrepreneur does is to get business cards printed with the words managing director on them. The true entrepreneur wants the result to speak for them, not a self-appointed title.

Out of the self-awareness and the willingness to work with and listen to others comes another important attribute of confidence. People often ask me if I think their idea will work. I always reply by asking them the same question. I point out that it is not important that I believe it will work; it matters whether they believe it will work.

When I refer to confidence, I do not mean someone that is brash or over-confident. I mean that the person has enough self-belief and belief in those around him or her to resist the knocks that will usually come and still pursue their vision.

They also need to have the confidence to lead and they must be able to converse with confidence when dealing with others outside of the immediate organisation. Incidentally, when I refer to organisation this could mean a business, a department or simply a group of friends or relations.

Which leads me to what I believe is one of the most important attributes of the entrepreneur and the one that is being steadily eroded in western society. That characteristic is not being afraid to fail. It is clearly an important attribute because of the fact that the newness of entrepreneurial activity will often lead to failure and the entrepreneur has to be able to rise up and try again.

I point out to students that without the ability to keep trying we would not have got the light bulb and we would still be using candles. Although there is some dispute about the actual number of failures, Thomas Edison was reported as saying that he did not fail but that he simply found 10,000 ways that did not work!

Another example of not stopping at the first failure surrounds the well-known car anti-damp product, WD40. This product was originally developed to displace water on rockets. The water displacement properties gave rise to the WD part of the name and the 40 came because it was the 40<sup>th</sup> formulation and the first to work. Because of its water displacement properties staff started taking some and using it on their cars and suddenly a new commercially viable product was born.

In the next chapter I will look at why this characteristic of lack of fear of failure is being suppressed and educated out of the western world, but it is certainly one of the key characteristics of the entrepreneurial mindset that can and must be developed.

All of the characteristics that have been covered so far are necessary for someone to be able to act in an entrepreneurial way, but there is one other characteristic for success that seems to be fast eroded in the western world and that is the one of hard work.

There seems to be a misapprehension in people's minds that the true entrepreneur just happens. Whilst it satisfies the media to sell stories of amazing and instant success, the reality is that, along with the opportunities that appeared before them and the mindset to grasp those opportunities, there is a need to get about 10,000 hours of work in to achieve excellence.

It is interesting to read Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Outliers* with regard to the way people as diverse as Bill Gates and the Beatles managed their 'instant success' as a result of their 10,000 hours!

So we are now getting close to defining our mindset that we need to develop. Entrepreneurs need to have:

- 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

The interesting thing about this particular mindset is that none of this refers to academic prowess. There is no need for the proverbial MBA. There is nothing here that cannot be applied to individuals and departments within larger organisations and there is nothing to stop people applying the same qualities within their social sphere as well as in their work sphere.

It has always been a disappointment to me that the word entrepreneur is not associated with local and national governments. Unfortunately they have always seemed to me to be the antithesis of entrepreneurship. Given the opportunities afforded society as the global world gets faster and faster, just think what a difference could be made in the world if nations and municipalities were full of entrepreneurs.

In the entrepreneurial world, one of the main characteristics is the ability to adapt quickly to change and to react quickly to opportunities. Unfortunately, those in positions of power have become so risk averse that they often miss opportunities because of this.

For a few years now the property market in the United Kingdom has become out of the reach of young people because of price inflation due to shortage of supply. It was recognised that there were many successful applications for building permission that were not being implemented in areas of need.

Anyone with a moment's thought would have suspected that the builders were holding on to the land as they waited for prices to increase further and hence could make money either from buildings or by selling the land with planning permission at a premium. I am sure that this is what the government suspect.

The entrepreneur would have immediately implemented a regulation that imposed time limits for starting and completing a build and would have added surrender of planning permission for failure to start and financial penalties for failing to complete on time.

Government's approach was to set up an enquiry with an appointed chair and a full set of resources for the enquiry so that months of evidence could be collected and a report produced that may or may not be acted upon. Meanwhile, in the intervening two years that it will take for the report to appear, applicants still sit on their planning permissions and the housing shortage continues.

As I see a world that embraces technology in so many walks of life I still marvel that the bastion of western democracy, the English elections, is characterized by a stub of black pencil writing on a slip of paper in a temporary wooden cubicle reminiscent of a portaloos, located in a cold church hall.

While this may seem amusing and archaic, these are the people in control of a system that is fast eliminating the skills we need to face the future. In the next chapter we will look at why this is and then go on to look for remedies.

## 2 WHAT STOPS PEOPLE BEHAVING IN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL WAY?

Although it is easy to look at today's risk-averse western societies where everything seems to be controlled by health and safety legislation and claims lawyers, in reality the problem started long before this. It is possible to argue that the cultural history of western society has been militating against entrepreneurship for most people for hundreds of years.

One of the biggest inhibitors to self-awareness, free thinking and risk taking is a hierarchical organizational structure where those at the top hold all of the power and where those lower down are dependent on those above. In the Middle Ages power was determined by land ownership and this in turn was determined by rewards to knights for success in battle. Hence the army effectively sat at the top of the hierarchical tree.

Those below the knight were allowed a share of the land in order to live and survive in return for a financial contribution to the landowner and a willingness to fight in future battles on the side of the landowner.

Two interesting things come out of this arrangement. The first thing to note is that this system was sustained by people knowing and accepting their place within the hierarchy. Secondly, as the payment to the landowner was based on a percentage, working harder meant paying more to the landowner.

It is not difficult to see that as your boss was also head of your military division then it was likely that the discipline of the military would also carry over into the running of the land. In other words, the system was maintained for the benefit of the top of the hierarchy through people knowing their place and not questioning and taking risks.

So, long before the industrial revolution, the hierarchical class system had been set into the culture of the western world. Therefore, it was not surprising that when the industrial revolution came along that a similar structure was developed for running large businesses.

The system for controlling businesses had been set as one that was extremely efficient, like the new machines, but was based on unquestioning adherence to the philosophy of everyone knowing their place.

This approach clearly maintained the authority of, if not the respect for, the boss. However, it had the downside of requiring any entrepreneurial thought to come from above. It also meant that hard work from those below rewarded those above, making entrepreneurial thought from the workers even less likely.

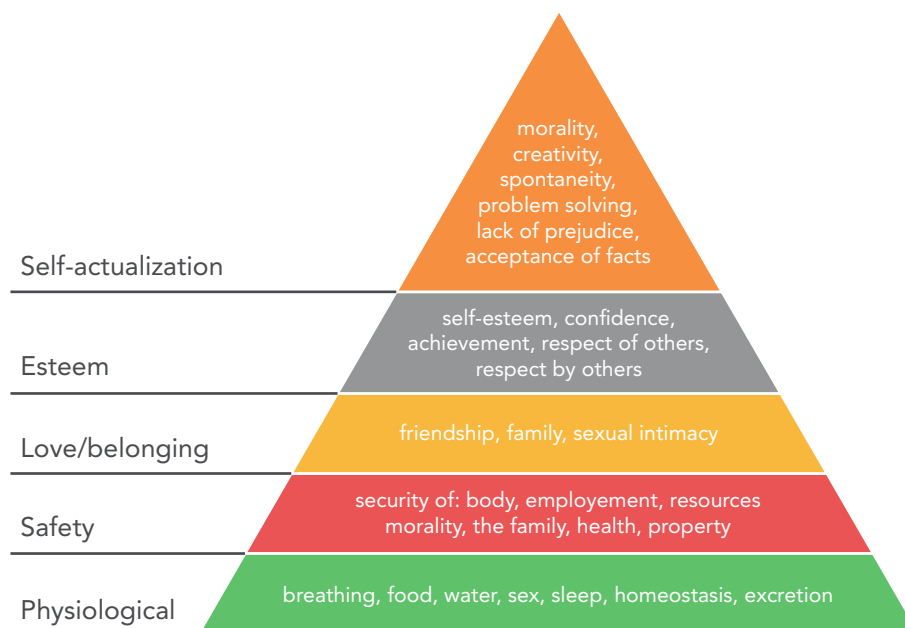
But not only were the army and landowners long time advocates of the pyramid structure of control; western religion had also operated a hierarchical structure that lead up to the ultimate power at the top who was never to be questioned. So whether at work, fighting in the army or in church you were expected to know your place and to obey commands.

This meant that stepping out of the norm was an extremely risky business that was not to be taken lightly. Imagine being a worker in days gone by. Even on Sunday when you were not working you would be expected to attend church. Here there would be a hierarchical seating plan with a special place for the lord of the manor and his family and where he and the local priest would be reckoned to be the most important people in the area.

One thing that the industrial revolution did bring was a need to improve the education of the masses, but because of the cultural conditioning of the past this opportunity was missed and further re-enforced rather than changed things.

Of course, the hierarchical pyramid approach to work, religion and military had concentrated power into a small number at the top of the pile and hence any attempt to upgrade those below them could be seen as a threat to that power. That is not to say that all bosses, landowners or religious leaders were motivated by power. There would have been some good leaders in each of the fields but they would have been the exception.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs people need to have reached the state of self-esteem before they feel confident enough to move to self-actualisation that is necessary for entrepreneurial change. However, if the overriding need is for power then the person is back at level two of Maslow which is the safety level where the desire is to protect ones self rather than to lead.



From the comments and approaches taken to educating the masses from the time of the industrial revolution it was clear that many people saw education of the masses as a threat to their power and hence their safety. This led to changes being made that did not damage the status quo but which supplied skills for the business owners of the time.

An example of the desire not to 'rock the boat' came in the following quote in the book *Education in England* by Derek Gillard.

One Justice of the Peace, for example, opined in 1807 that:

It is doubtless desirable that the poor should be generally instructed in reading, if it were only for the best of purposes - that they may read the Scriptures. As to writing and arithmetic, it may be apprehended that such a degree of knowledge would produce in them disrelish for the laborious occupations of life.

The book further goes on to quote a Member of Parliament, Davies Giddy, speaking in 1807 as saying in Parliament that:

However specious in theory the project might be of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would, in effect, be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them the virtue of subordination, it would render them factious and refractory.

If you then add to the equation the fact that education for the masses would be expensive, then it is not surprising that the first moves in improving education included:

- Sunday Schools where people were taught to read the bible on their day off
- Schools of Industry where they were taught spinning, sewing, shoemaking, wool carding and laundry work
- 'Academic schools' where they were taught elementary reading, writing and arithmetic (3Rs) by rote so that one teacher could teach hundreds of students at a time, mass producing education rather like an industrial factory.

As far as serious education leading to university and the professions was concerned, these were paid establishments and hence were the prerogative of the rich and powerful. Unfortunately these establishments kept a strong focus on subjects of the classics. Indeed, in 1805 the Court of Chancery ruled that it was illegal for the governors of Leeds Grammar School to spend endowment funds on teaching modern and commercial subjects!

As education did steadily reform many of the teachers came through the university system. Hence the education system that we now see is based on the university as the pinnacle of achievement with the schools below the university all contributing to getting people to the next stage of the pyramid. This re-enforces and protects those at the top of the education pyramid and assumes that academic success is the way to success.

Further damage to an entrepreneurial approach came when education developed the school year. There were actually people that believed that too much learning was not good for the brain. In Malcolm Gladwell's book, *Outliers*, he references the report of a US Commissioner of education who published a report by Edward Jarvis on 'The Relation of Education to Insanity'. In this report he Jarvis concluded that of 1,741 cases of insanity that he had studied 205 of them were caused by 'over-study'.

This commonly held view in the western world resulted in the removal of Saturday schooling, the shortening of the school day and the extending of school holidays. Whilst this may seem laughable today, the model that developed the present western school year was based on the agricultural model pre-industrial revolution.



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In those days there was an intense amount of activity around Easter when the whole family would sow the crops and then another in the summer at harvest time. Add to this the concept of conserving resources by hibernating in the winter and the belief in western agriculture of leaving fields fallow to rejuvenate and you have the basis for the 21 century school year!

What this system doesn't recognise is that the global world is changing much faster than ever before. Things exist today that were not even dreamed of when today's university students entered into the education system and hence an academic education without the skills of the entrepreneurial mindset in order to react to such changes can become irrelevant.

So far we have looked back to see the cultural influences that have suppressed the desire to act in an entrepreneurial way. But there are many other influences from the present day that re-enforce those cultural differences.

As we have seen, the key players in the power games of the past were the church leaders, the landowners and the business barons. However, with the increase in the quantity of education, regardless of the relevance, and the increased mobility of the population you have to find a new way to exercise power.

This new form of control has come about through the use of legislation. Unfortunately, legislation that started out with the intention of improving conditions for the people that government served has turned into legislation that restricts many of the activities at the top of Maslow's Hierarchy.

Unfortunately, governments have always seen their role as delivering legislation. Every UK parliamentary year starts with a speech by the Queen detailing the up-coming laws. In the US the inability to pass laws because of conflicts between the House and the Senate seems often to make the governing powers impotent.

Once government decides that it's only power is to legislate then survival depends on a continuous production line of legislation. What may start out as a good intention can soon develop into a straight jacket for the individual it is trying to protect. Nowhere is this truer than in the area of health and safety legislation.

To make matters worse, the whole area of health and safety has spawned a generation of 'ambulance chasing lawyers' who identified a quick way to make money and status through litigation against those that may inadvertently stray the wrong side of the copious amounts of legislation.

In this new world, at a time when we desperately need people with the entrepreneurial mindset to cope with the ever changing challenges, we are creating a society that is afraid

to put their heads above the parapet for fear of ending up in litigation. Suddenly failure is an expensive crime, there is no longer such a thing as an accident and the best way to survive is to play it safe.

This 'play it safe' mentality has also carried over into the way that people run large businesses these days. Within these companies the overriding factor in decision-making is influenced by short-term gains. So, although companies will profess to spend billions in some cases on research and development, many will not have had a major breakthrough for several years.

These very companies will proudly boast employee suggestion schemes and the like but will immediately put the assessment hierarchy over the top of the process. As ideas move up the chain the assessors will weed out the entrepreneurial suggestions in favour of the minor improvements with minimal risk. Most great ideas will never get anywhere near the top of the assessment pyramid.

What makes this risk-free approach all the more depressing is that it generates adults with a mindset that they inadvertently pass on to their children. If a child has an accident then someone has to be to blame; children's games have the risk eliminated from them; children are over-protected in every aspect of their lives.

We also live in a Western world that has become the victim of some of the entrepreneurship for which we now clamour. In a world of instant meals and fast food, of music and films on instant download, of instant credit and of 'reality' TV where anyone can be a star, is it any wonder that hard work is considered a bad option.

And yet if you look at the background of Leona Lewis, probably the most famous of the X-Factor winners, you will discover a background of four theatrical schools, instrumental training in guitar and piano and opera singing training. She had also spent time in recording studios. In other words, this was not an everyday girl that just turned up to an audition after her friends had told her she was good at Karaoke!

However, given the option between hard work and the media hype of instant success for all then it is not hard to see how people can be conned into thinking that commitment and dedication are old-fashioned values.

In this ever more complex world where, paradoxically, we take our information in sound bites, it is no wonder that people are left confused. Attempts to make university for all is seen as a way to increase education for the masses. While the intellectual elite bemoans the lowering of standards that such a move requires, no one seems to spot that the main beneficiary of this noble act is the government that sees youth unemployment drop because people are in full-time education!

Because formal education is seen as the solution to a successful future, parents end up moving homes to get near to the best rated schools, regardless of the social impact on their children of leaving their friends.

Upgrading to a better area for educational reasons also puts an additional financial burden on parents and many homes then need to increase their incomes to support the move.

No one decries the parents that try to do the best for their children based on the information that they have fed to them. But unfortunately the measurement and league table of schools is not based on the ability of the school to engender the entrepreneurial skills that young people will need when they go out into the world.

The unfortunate thing is that parents now seem to believe that the responsibility lies with governments, schools, teachers, and anyone but themselves. They seem to have lost the desire to understand the real world we live in, with five-year horizons, rapid change and no job for life, and prefer to look for someone to blame when their child ends up not achieving what THEY wanted them to.

There are those that would argue that these attitudes are so ingrained in our psyche that we cannot go back to the days when children were allowed to climb trees, where people were responsible for their own safety and where people took the sorts of risks that created new industries, discovered new lands and even put a man on the moon.

However, not all countries are in this position. There are countries where the economy is growing. There are countries where entrepreneurship and a more cooperative business model works very well. There are countries where the people are not afraid of their own shadow and are prepared to try and possibly fail. There are countries where the people don't need someone else to motivate them and there are countries where people know that if they work harder they will directly benefit.

I am not naïve enough to believe that the western leaders that top the pyramid that they built underneath themselves are likely to give up their position of power, nor do I expect the universities and business schools of the world to throw away their theories. Mind you, someone might want to re-define the word developed when applied to countries. One definition of a developed country is based on the size of its service sector! Given the role of the service sector in recent economic crises, this may need to change!

But at the same time I do not believe that the position is hopeless. Past cultural problems can be overcome as witnessed in the way Korean Airlines overcame the cultural communications problems that led to so many accidents and have developed a great safety record. The rest of the book will concentrate on how we can achieve this.

### 3 HOW ENTREPRENEURIAL ARE YOU?

So often in my work I meet people who believe that they are entrepreneurial and do not realise how restricted they have become because of the constraints that we have discussed previously in this book. They believe that because they have decided to start their own business this makes them an entrepreneur. If that were the case, why didn't they behave entrepreneurially in their own life or when working for others?

For those that think they are truly the type that are prepared to try and fail, or who are prepared to take risks having assessed them, are prepared to work hard to achieve their dreams and are really capable of embracing change, I would ask them to question whether they are doing that in their lives or simply paying lip-service.

I now live in the Asian part of Turkey, and I meet many expats who also live here. However, many of those that do so, also keep a home back in their homeland. When you talk to them, they see this as a safety net in case they find their adopted home has problems. Whilst this in its self is not an unreasonable approach, it also leads to a number of other effects.

Expats are inclined to group together rather than integrating with their new home and they try and preserve all of the things that they may find themselves doing if they were to return to their homeland. In the case of the UK this often centres on quiz nights and karaoke! In other words, they find it impossible to really embrace their new home and its culture, are not really taking risks and are almost preparing for things to fail.

This risk free approach is also prevalent in start-up businesses. I have worked with countless embryo businesses, and, all too often, people have decided to start up a new venture because of redundancy or lack of employment opportunities in their field of expertise. This rarely demonstrates a true entrepreneurial desire but rather a 'last ditch' alternative to unemployment.

One way to consider whether you are entrepreneurial in your approach to life is to look at your behaviour at home or in employment. For example, try writing down all of the new ideas or processes that you have suggested and/or implemented in the workplace. Did this give you a buzz or did you resist the concept of change?

If you are a young person still going through education, are you someone that looks for alternatives things to do or do you follow the gang? Are you thinking about how you would like to spend the rest of your life or are you slavishly following the advice of careers advisers and parents?

As parents, are you following the latest trends on parenting websites or are you following your own intuition? Are you letting your children decide what they want to do with their life and their hobbies, or are you trying to relive your life through them?

I was very impressed with a doctor couple I know who let their son decide what he wanted to do with his life. I have known the boy for a while and regularly meet him at orchestral concerts. He enjoys playing the piano, the guitar and the violin and he loves basketball. For a long time we wondered if we had a budding musician or a sportsman in our midst. But having been left to his own devices, he now thinks he wants to be a doctor!

Equally, I am reminded of the story of the concert pianist who had got to the top of her tree and was performing at the Royal Festival Hall in London. She had been earmarked for music since she was young and was brought up by two parents who were musicians.

At the end of a particular concert she went to dinner with the conductor who told her how good she was but pointed out that he didn't think she really enjoyed it. She agreed and realised that her real passion was not music but books. At the end of the season she gave up music and got a job working with books and became very happy.

These two stories demonstrate two different ways of parenting. The first parent believed in allowing the child to have a variety of experiences and took the risk that the child would choose something that the child decided would make him happy. The other child was channeled down a route that she didn't really want to go down but was given no alternatives.

At home do you always do the same things every week or are you keen to try new things? Is Thursday night always darts night regardless of the opportunities available? Do you always go on holiday to the same place each year or do you like to find new and perhaps less obvious places? Do you always let the holiday representative book your tours or are you happier to go off and do your own thing?

To me, entrepreneurial thinking in parenting is as important in running one's life as it is in running a successful business.

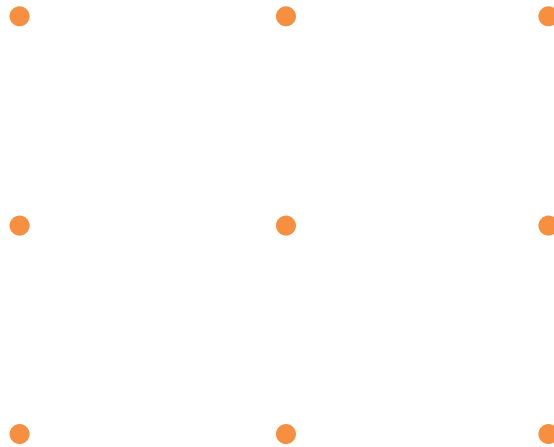
When I give lectures or work with entrepreneurs I often give some puzzles to illustrate my points regarding entrepreneurship. I do not refer to these examples as tests but rather as a stimulus to get people to want to look harder at how to become truly entrepreneurial. What follows are some examples of the sort of things that I use. I would suggest trying to tackle these before moving on to the answers that follow.

### *The third eye*

Imagine that you have been given the privilege of having a third eye added to your body. You can have this eye added to anywhere on your body that you choose. Explain where you would put the eye and why.

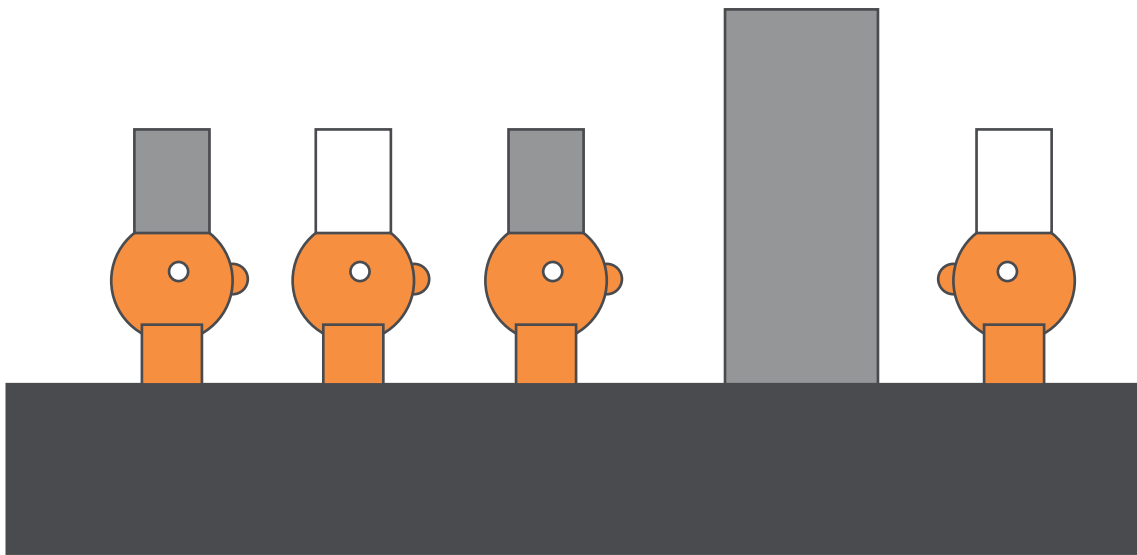
### *Joining the dots*

Below is a grid of nine dots. The task is to join all of the dots with as few straight lines as possible. You must pass through each dot on the grid with a straight line and you must pass through each dot only once. The straight lines must join to each other. How many straight lines did you draw?



### *Black and white hats*

Here is a diagram of four men wearing hats. Two have black hats and two have white hats. They are buried up to their necks in sand and cannot turn around. The black rectangle is a solid wall. The men can only speak once they have deduced correctly the colour of their hat. Which man speaks first?



### ***Burning Strings***

You have two strings of different lengths and a book of matches. If you place a lit match on the end of the longer string, it will burn for exactly 10 minutes. The shorter string on the other hand, will burn for exactly 1 minute.

How can you measure exactly 5 minutes 30 seconds using the matches and the strings?

A couple of rules/restrictions:

1. You may not use scissors.
2. The string is too rigid to be folded in half completely.
3. You can not tell by eye where the half way point of the string is.

### ***Reaching the key***

Two brothers (Milo and Noah) lived together and shared two things in common; they were both short and they were both very forgetful. After having misplaced/lost the key to their apartment on several occasions, they decided that instead of bringing the key with them, they would instead hide the key on top of the door frame.

Unfortunately, neither Milo nor Noah were tall enough to reach the top of the door frame. So they devised a system. The older brother, Milo, stood on the shoulders of his younger

brother, Noah and was able to just reach the top of the door frame (and the hiding spot for their key). Noah was significantly smaller than his older brother, so why would the bigger, older brother stand on the smaller, younger brother's shoulders?

Note: this is not a trick question.

### *Half a barrel*

Two workers in a brewery are trying to settle an argument over how much beer is inside a barrel. One worker thinks the barrel is more than half full while the other says it's less than half full. How can they settle the argument without using any measuring tools?

Note: the top of the barrel can be easily removed.

Now that you have had time to look at the six problems, let us look at what it tells us. What is important is not necessarily the answer but rather what reaching the answer tells us about ourselves.

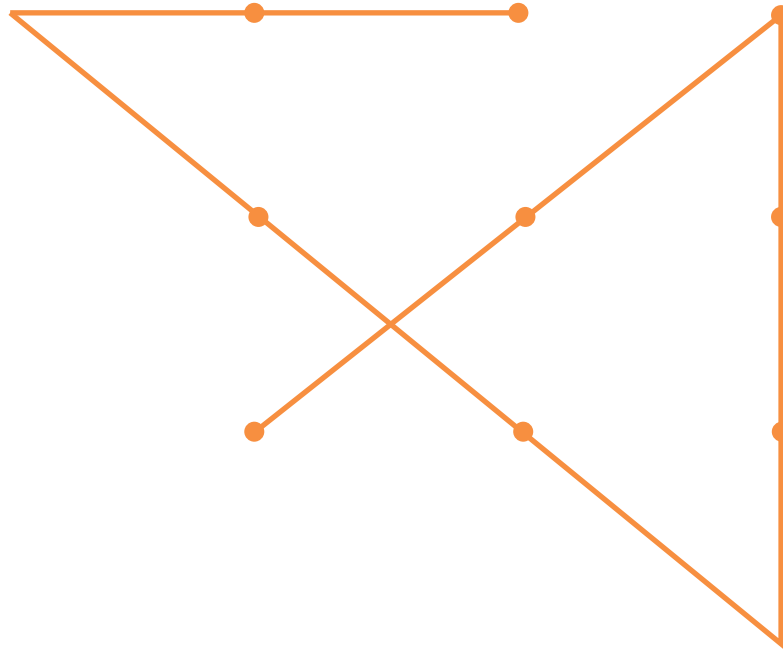
In the case of the extra eye this is an apparently free choice and hence no one answer is more right than another. However, in using this test on hundreds of people the majority of adults will put the eye on their back or on the back of their head. Their verbal reasoning is that this would enable them to see behind them. However, this is also the safe option, as it does not open them to the possibility of a solution that is different from everyone else.

However, if you ask a group of children that have yet to be indoctrinated with the conformity and do not feel the need to be the same as everyone else then you get much more imaginative answers such as on the end of fingers so as to allow people to look round corners.

The problem for adults in this scenario is that they have been conditioned to believe that there is only one right answer and even in a free choice question they will go for the least risk solution. Subconsciously they may consider the less obvious answer but will take the more obvious answer because as people get older they are less likely to want to stand out from the crowd because of the conditioning we have already discussed.

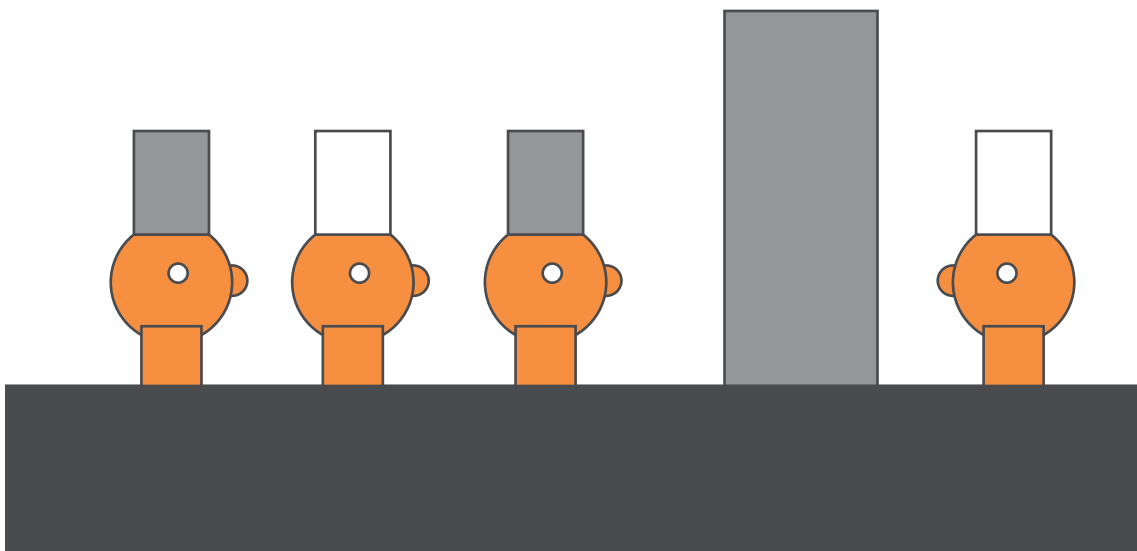
Now let us look at the question of the dots. I like this puzzle because it is a good example of the way we put artificial boundaries on our thinking. Most people can solve this with five lines and this satisfies all of the criteria set. This means that technically it is a correct solution and many people will achieve this. However, to solve this with only four straight lines requires the solver to really think 'outside of the box'.





When the solution is put to adults there is often the response that “you didn’t tell us that we could go outside the box”. However, it is also true that no one told people that they could not. They simply put artificial lines between the dots and created their own box. How many times in life do we impose limitations on ourselves that are not really there but which our conditioning leads us to believe that they are.

Next let us look at the hats puzzle



Clearly the man on the right cannot speak, as he cannot see any of the other hats. For the same reason the man third from the left cannot speak either. This leaves the black and white

hats to the left of the wall. Obviously the man in the black hat cannot speak because he can see a black and a white hat and so he has no way of telling which of the two colours he has.

This leaves us with the man in the white hat. He can only see the black hat and so he is instantly discarded. However, he can work out that if he had a black hat on then the man behind him would have seen two black hats and would have spoken to say that he had a white one. The fact that he has not spoken means that the man second from the left must be wearing white and hence he is the one that speaks.

Again, because we are talking about colour we focus on sight as the primary method of determining the answer. However, on the basis of sight alone then this is unsolvable. What this puzzle needs is the willingness to look at other senses such as sound or the lack of it in order to solve the puzzle.

The fourth puzzle is the case of the burning strings.

Again, to solve this puzzle we have to throw away our preconceptions. Automatically we think of a string being held upright and burned from one end. That will never work. However, if the long piece of string is burned from both ends it will reach the middle in five minutes and then if the short piece is now burned from both ends it will burn in 30 seconds!

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### Reaching the key above the door

When it comes to reaching the key, the automatic assumption is that the smaller person would stand on the taller. However, if one boy is taller than the other then their arms will also be longer and hence they will be able to reach further to get the key. With this one the focus was only on height and not on other attributes.

### Measuring the liquid in the barrel

With the barrel problem we automatically think of how we can find a way to measure half way down the barrel. However, there is another way to measure half of the barrel and that is diagonally. If the lid is removed and the barrel is tipped until the fluid is about to come out of the barrel then if you can see the bottom of the barrel it is less than half full and if the lower measure is above the bottom of the barrel then the barrel is more than half full.

It is very easy to dismiss these six puzzles as simply interesting diversions and to try to convince yourself that you are really your own person that doesn't follow the crowd but is independent and freethinking. But if this is the case then why is there a sneaking admiration for these solutions and a wish that you could have solved them?

Moreover, I wonder why people love to take these challenges, once they know the solutions, and set them for their friends and colleagues. They take great delight in seeing that others cannot do it and then demonstrate their own skill by showing them the answers. Could it be that deep down we all do want to be thought of as independent freethinkers and that by setting these puzzles to others we attempt to show that we are further down that path than they are?

For whatever reason, the next section of the book covers a number of exercises that will encourage you to develop the skills of the entrepreneur. So that instead of appearing to be a freethinker by regurgitating mine or other people's solutions to problems, you can really solve them yourself.

But this is much more than an exercise in puzzle solving. This is about changing your mindset to one that thinks more entrepreneurially, not just in a bar with your friends but in your work life and family life.

This may mean that more people develop really entrepreneurial businesses, but it would also encourage people to challenge the status quo at home and at work. With a rapidly changing world it is essential that people challenge what they are doing in the workplace and question whether there is a better way. But they should also challenge themselves at home to question whether they can enhance their lives by not always going with the crowd.

This book is for those that want to be in the first group.

# CONCLUSION

As was stated at the beginning, this book is about getting you to understand the history of why we get to where we are today and to recognise that the past is not a good barometer of what we need to be in the future.

Hopefully, it will also have awakened your interest in creative things and made you want to develop your skills for the fast-changing world we now live in.

This does not mean that we abandon the knowledge that we can accumulate through formal learning, but rather that we put formal learning alongside of creative learning and skills development rather than as the pinnacle of achievement.

Unfortunately, for many, that means that there needs to be a reversal of the process of risk and failure elimination that most of us have been subjected to in their lives. However, I have discovered that the development of creativity and skill development are relatively easy to work on if the person has made the decision to adapt.

If that person is you then the second book is designed to do exactly that. Within book 2 there are a number of exercises that will lead you to define your own vision for the future and will set you on a path to achieving that vision.

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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.