

The psychological profile of successful entrepreneurs

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[NINA HENDY](#)



It's no fluke that entrepreneurs are outgoing, gregarious and confident people with high levels of self-discipline.

People with such personality traits are often drawn to entrepreneurship, driven by the challenges that running your own business presents.

So, could an assessment of your personality traits pre-determine whether or not you've got what it takes to become a successful entrepreneur? Perhaps so, it seems.

Determining your entrepreneurial traits

Dr Mike Allan, a psychologist and associate director of employment advisory firm [Livingstones Australia](#), says it is possible to predict if an individual is more or less likely to be a successful entrepreneur, based purely on their personality traits.

"You can pick an entrepreneur, just as it is possible to predict if a person has the traits likely to make them a successful airline pilot or police officer, with both professions having used psychometric assessments as part of their selection process for decades," Allan says.

How you can unlock the entrepreneurial spirit within your business

"Nearly all current research indicates that personality doesn't really change over a lifetime, and is formed by the time someone is around 18-21 years of age. How we display that trait is dependent on culture and environment."

Determining whether you're cut out for life as an entrepreneur is best done via a series of questions designed to figure out a person's approach to

work and their thinking styles.

Some of the most widely used tests include such as Myer Briggs, DISC and Hermann Brain, with responses used to identify features of a person's personality to help predict behaviour.

John Belchamber has been consulting to businesses using DISC profiling since 1998.

He founded [Invoke Results](#), which conducts psychometric testing for businesses.

Belchamber says when you know a person's preferred working style; it is possible to predict what they value, what tasks they avoid, how they respond under pressure, their approach to work situations and what strategies to use to work with them with a high degree of accuracy.

"In start-ups, we often find a person with a technical skill set who believes they can set up a business and work on their own. This type of person often has a profile which worked well in their employment and is excellent at providing a quality service, handling details and technical issues, but is not so good with conflict, multi-tasking and being the front man salesperson," Belchamber says.

Know your strengths

If you're considering a career as an entrepreneur, understanding where your strengths lie ahead of the launch by undergoing some personality profiling can be of huge value, suggests Vanessa Gavan of business consultancy, Maximus International.

"The first year of a start-up is exciting, but often extremely confronting. There

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are often many defining moments and setbacks. How you respond to these is often make or break,” Gavan says.

Human relations expert Anne-Marie Orrock helps companies with personality profiling and agrees it can be a useful tool for those about to embark on their own business.

Orrock is managing director of Corporate Canary HR Consulting, and says profiling can help someone understand what parts of their business they should outsource.

Orrock describes successful entrepreneurs as typically having a personality with a high level of independence and also possessing traits of persistence. They often enjoy freedom of action, dislike working within structure, prefer to be self-directed, are often restless and have a sense of urgency, are impatient and need varied work.

“The problem here is that without the assistance of profiling tools, what each person’s interpretation of ‘independence’ or being ‘driven’ is highly subjective,” she says.

“In addition, people believe, and are encouraged by friends and family to ‘just go for it’. Profiling tools can unearth if your level of independence is enough.”

Dr Allan stresses the importance of resilience in successful entrepreneurs, saying that without it, people are likely to give up when the going gets tough.

“Most entrepreneurs can be very tough-minded and have a clear focus on what they are trying to do, and need to be a little selfish,” he says.

People engagement expert James Adonis agrees. “When you’re down to your last few dollars, getting knocked back, working more hours than you did in your corporate job, it takes resilience to continue.”

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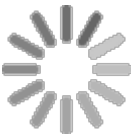
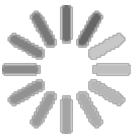
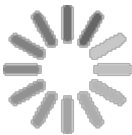
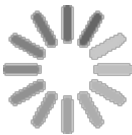
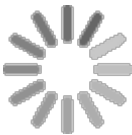
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Psychologist Aleks Srbinoski (at fulfillinghappiness.com) goes on to describe entrepreneurs most likely to succeed as extroverted and gregarious, because being able to interact confidently with others is vital, Srbinoski says.

Confidence and optimism is essential, and the ability to not let repeated failures and rejections bother you is also a must.

“A deep level of self-understanding in terms of strengths and weaknesses is vital, and having good leadership and delegation skills is crucial.”

On the other hand, Srbinoski describes those more likely to fail as introverted pessimists deeply afraid of failure, don’t like dealing with people, impatient, struggle with constructive feedback, lack flexibility and are unsystematic and self-focused.

But those on the brink of launching a business shouldn’t give up hope if they don’t fit the mould.

There isn’t just one type of person able to be successful at entrepreneurship or any other profession, Adonis says. As long as the person has the right attitude and is eager to learn, it’s possible to overcome any obstacles, he says.

How you can unlock the entrepreneurial spirit within your business

“Attend courses, read books, get a mentor, join a support group, subscribe to newsletters, listen to podcasts – do whatever it takes to become a dedicated and lifelong student of entrepreneurship,” he says.

Profiling only says so much

Gavan agrees, saying if your personality profile doesn’t match the talents of other entrepreneurs, don’t give up heart.

“The benefit of profiling is not just in the insights you gain, but in what you do with this information.”

Investing in a dedicated feedback session with a psychologist who understands the demands of a business start-up can really help, Gavan says.

“Together, you should be co-creating a personal development plan that ties to your business plan. There should be a connection between what comes out in the personality profiling and the commitments you are making in your business plan.

“The key is in realising that in starting a business, you have to take total responsibility for your development.”

“You must make continual deposits in your own self-awareness and development, otherwise 10 years down the track you will look around and everyone will have moved beyond you and you will be doing what you have always done,” Gavan says.

The makings of an entrepreneur

Research suggests a combination of traits is important to making an entrepreneur:

- Above average levels of resilience (emotional stability)
- Above average of openness (open to new ideas and experiences)
- Above average levels of assertiveness (extraversion)
- High levels of achievement striving (conscientiousness)
- High levels of self-discipline (conscientiousness)

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- High levels of deliberation combined with above average action orientation

Source: Dr Mike Allan, associate director, Livingstones Australia.
This article first appeared on [StartupSmart](#).

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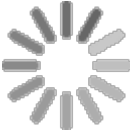
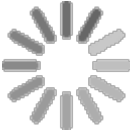
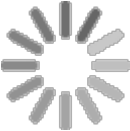
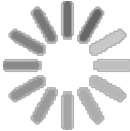
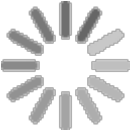
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