



Book The Four Routes to Entrepreneurial Success

John B. Miner
Berrett-Koehler, 1996

Recommendation

In this engaging book about entrepreneurs, John B. Miner cites research that identifies four different types of entrepreneurial personalities. The result is a thoroughly fascinating treatment of the different routes to entrepreneurial behavior. *BooksInShort* recommends this book to anyone who wants to be an entrepreneur, anyone who works for or with an entrepreneur, or anyone who wants to understand entrepreneurial psychology.

Take-Aways

- Four types of people become successful entrepreneurs.
- Personal Achievers are classic entrepreneurs because of their need to achieve.
- Personal Achievers believe that they have a strong internal locus of control over their lives.
- Supersalespersons are entrepreneurs who place a strong emphasis on service.
- Supersalespersons feel very strong empathy with other people.
- Real Managers are entrepreneurs with the skill to manage large organizations.
- Real Managers can fail if they over-manage small ventures.
- Expert Idea Generators love pursuing new ideas and changing the future.
- Expert Idea Generators are independent, dislike rules, and seek recognition.
- Each of these personalities must learn the fields they enter, be self aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and stick to their career paths.

Summary

Four Types of Entrepreneurs

No single type of entrepreneur or single career route ensures entrepreneurial success. Essentially, there are four types of

entrepreneurs, each with a distinct personality. These types are the "personal achiever," the "supersalesperson," the "real manager," and the "expert idea generator." If you work in a business environment with entrepreneurs, knowing the strengths and weakness of these personality types can help you succeed, particularly if you manage entrepreneurial people or ventures.

Personal Achiever

Personal achievers are the classic entrepreneurs. They are the types of people we picture when the term "entrepreneur" is used. They are the only types who must become entrepreneurs to succeed in life. If they are placed in a non-entrepreneurial environment, they stand a good chance of failure.

"There is not a single type of entrepreneur, but rather, there are four different types, each with a distinct personality

They possess seven characteristics that relate to entrepreneurial success:

1. Need to achieve.
2. Desire for feedback.
3. Desire to plan and set goals.
4. Strong personal initiative.
5. Strong commitment to their organization.
6. Belief that one person can make a difference.
7. Belief that work should be guided by one's own goals, not other people's.

"Each type of entrepreneur must follow a distinct career route to succeed, and each must relate to the business in a different way."

A personal achiever's driving force is the need to achieve. Probably, personal achievers are more concerned with achieving success than with avoiding failure. These highly rational decision-makers may overwork themselves, although their drive is complemented by their ability to function under stress. However, their focus on work tends to interfere with their family life. Thus, divorce may be a consequence of their success at work.

"The key: If you have a given pattern, success comes only if you find situations in which you can use your strengths."

Personal achievers need feedback regarding their success and failures. This feedback gives them additional energy to move forward aggressively. The information they value offers specific data, for example, reports on sales, revenue, profitability and inventory turnover. Future prospects energize personal achievers. They like to plan and set goals. Then, they can translate these plans and goals into the end result: money.

"Expert Idea Generators are people who have ideas for business that can provide a real competitive advantage."

Personal achievers have great personal initiative and commitment to their organizations. They can act without direction or support from others, and, at same time, they do not like to share credit. Personal achievers believe they, alone, are the driving force behind their success. However, their commitment to their organizations or companies is genuine. Often, personal achievers talk about their organizations like a parent lovingly talks about a child. And like a parent, they aggressively defend their child from attacks. Personal achievers also have a strong internal locus of control: They believe they control their lives. Similarly, they believe that personal goals - not goals set by other people - guide their actions. They do not like to participate in activities that are group-directed because group activities dilute their individualistic success. Consequently, they are not effective business partners, and tend to break off into independent businesses as soon as possible.

"Personal Achievers are the only type who really must become entrepreneurs to succeed; in other settings they may fail."

When you view the seven characteristics of personal achievers as a whole, you might use the term "quarterback" to describe their approach. Like a quarterback, they like to lead the team to victory. They frequently become the company expert in many areas, because there is often no one else around in the early stages of a firm's life to do those tasks. But since personal achievers are highly

individualistic, generally they are not good employee managers. They tend to get impatient when other people are doing jobs they know they could do themselves.

“To succeed, Supersalespeople need to sell.”

What can make a personal achiever fail? Four traps can halt a personal achiever’s professional progress. First, personal achievers must acquire the necessary knowledge before they start to work. Second, personal achievers must recognize that they are personal achievers, and understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Third, personal achievers must avoid being blocked along the way by either corporate venture constraints, investor restrictions, or family pressures. Finally, personal achievers must be alert that their organizations don’t become too large for their operating style to be effective. As a general rule, businesses that grow beyond five million in annual sales and have more than thirty employees have moved past the ability of a personal achiever to control. This point in the growth process necessitates outside management and structure.

The Supersalesperson

Generally, onlookers don’t view supersalespeople as having the potential for entrepreneurial success. Their entrepreneurial strength is their approach to selling. They truly cater to the needs of clients and customers, thus placing a strong stress on service. Supersalespeople are interested in managing the customer into a sale, not in applying pressure tactics. They have personal characteristics that relate to entrepreneurial success, including:

1. Capacity to understand and empathize with another person.
2. Desire to help others.
3. Belief that social processes are very important.
4. Need to have strong relationships with others.
5. Belief that a sales force is crucial to carrying out company strategy.

“If you are a corporate manager, you have only a limited chance of having entrepreneurial potential. If you are an established entrepreneur, you have only a limited chance of possessing the potential to be a successful corporate manager. This ‘limited chance’ is the ground occupied by Real Manager entrepreneurs.”

Supersalespeople reveal their capacity to empathize in their work. They innately emphasize human interactions, feelings and emotions. They are able to probe and to draw out the feelings of others. They enjoy pleasing others, are good listeners, and are very supportive. Conversely, they dislike confronting unpleasant situations face-to-face. Sometimes they will change their position to avoid a difficult situation and to maintain friendly relations with co-workers and clients. Their desire to help others is similar to the feelings expressed by people in other helping professions, such as medicine and the ministry. This desire probably stems from a strong concern for others, though internal satisfaction could also be its driving force.

“To understand the Real Manager entrepreneur it is important, therefore, not only to recognize the type of person, but to recognize the environments in which that person will thrive.”

Supersalespeople believe social processes are important and reflect a person’s value. They need strong personal relationships to feel at ease with themselves. Their self-esteem is linked to the opinions others have of them. These characteristics both reinforce a supersalesperson’s belief that a sales force is crucial to carrying out company strategy, because the sales force is an extension of the need for positive relationships. Supersalespeople do not have to become entrepreneurs to feel happy. Many have long-term careers working for corporations. Yet, they have the ability to start ventures and to be very successful entrepreneurs.

“A desire to innovate causes Expert Idea Generators to enjoy coming up with new ideas and getting them into play.”

What could make a Supersalesperson fail? As with the other personalities, Supersalespeople need to acquire the necessary knowledge before entering a field and need to understand their personal identities as supersalespeople, with the attendant strengths and weaknesses. Supersalespeople should not be detoured from focusing on selling but, given their extra concern with other people’s opinions, they can be easily swayed off their chosen path.

The Real Manager

Real managers exhibit some of the traits of established entrepreneurs and some of the abilities of corporate managers. They possess at least three of the following six traits:

1. Desire to be a corporate leader.
2. Decisiveness.
3. Positive attitudes toward authority.
4. Desire to compete.
5. Desire for power.
6. Desire to stand out from the crowd.

“Possessing multiple entrepreneurial patterns, and thus having potential to follow more than one route, gives a major advantage to an entrepreneur.”

Real managers want to be corporate leaders. They view reaching the upper rungs of management as ratification of their goals and desires. They see upward mobility as a way to utilize their talents fully. They have faith in their abilities and feel secure.

Real managers are decisive people who are quick and self-assured decision makers. They also have positive attitudes about authority because they recognize that they need high level support for their actions. Their desire to compete - individually or team to team - is a logical outgrowth of their desire to lead. They are not afraid to be assertive and are proactive in resolving conflicts, a trait that is important to their competitiveness.

“Complex entrepreneurs want to grow an organization; private practices are thus not fully satisfying.”

Real managers want power. They are not afraid to direct subordinates' actions. They pay attention to specific facts, rules and procedures. They prefer short fact-filled communication and dislike committees and group decision making. Real managers want to stand out from the crowd, a quest for high visibility that mirrors their desire to climb the corporate ladder. They cannot advance unless they stand out as individuals.

What makes a real manager fail? First, real managers need relevant knowledge about their core businesses. Second, a real manager may over-manage a small venture. Third, a real manager should avoid being forced off the management career route. Some real managers develop an affinity for selling and strive to use their talents for other responsibilities instead of managing.

The Expert Idea Generator

Expert idea generators are people who have ideas for a business that can provide a real competitive advantage. They become tremendously enthused about their ideas and spend a great deal of time implementing them. Unlike personal achievers who spend energy on an overall venture, expert idea generators tend to focus on the idea exclusively. Very often, they will try to persuade others to contribute to implementation and, if unsuccessful, they will abandon the idea.

They possess a majority of the following five characteristics:

1. Desire to innovate.
2. Love of ideas.
3. Belief that new product development is crucial to carrying out company strategy.
4. Good intelligence.
5. Risk avoidance.

Expert idea generators want to innovate. The desire to do something new reinforces their sense of accomplishment. They love ideas, want independence, dislike rules, and seek recognition. They have a high tolerance for ambiguity, prefer loose control and may be prone to take risks. Others may see them as dreamers, difficult to control, and idealistic. They tend to focus on long-range thinking; their time orientation is toward the future. Their biggest problem is that when conditions become stable, they tend to abandon ship.

Expert idea generators value intelligence. They are able to deal with abstractions. They focus on conceptual thinking, reasoning, and judgment. To succeed, most expert idea generators will need graduate degrees. Because they wish to avoid risk, their most difficult

business decisions involve deciding which ideas will sell. Since ideas are plentiful, expert idea generators must be able to separate marketable from unmarketable ideas.

To avoid failure, an expert idea generator must avoid a work environment where those in charge stifle ideas, keep ideas under tight control, or believe there is only one, best way to do something. Even with post-graduate education, the expert idea generator never feels as if he or she has gained enough knowledge to be an expert. To succeed, expert idea generators must stay on an idea-generating career path and should be careful about voluntarily leaving their area of expertise. Having a successful idea may make expert idea generators less cautious about avoiding risk in the future. It is important for expert idea generators to remember, always, that they are capable of having really terrible ideas.

About the Author

John B. Miner specializes in entrepreneurship and human resource management. His professional practice includes writing on various business subjects, consulting organizations and individuals, serving as an expert witness in trials, and speaking to professional and business groups.
