ENTREPRENEURS

The Next Generation

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About This Issue

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Sixth grade students from a Houston school dance to promote their handcrafted goods for sale.

Today's young people are more connected to each other and to the wider world than any previous generation. Many reject the status quo because they see alternatives, know that a better life is within grasp, and are willing to reach for it. That's how U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described the youth of the Middle East and North Africa on April 12, 2011. But this description can be applied to youth almost anywhere.

Many young people around the world share the belief that becoming an entrepreneur is the most effective and exciting way to make their dreams and ideas a reality. Entrepreneurship gives young people an opportunity to improve their own lives and those of their families. And, as the founder of an organization of young entrepreneurs writes in this issue, it also gives young people freedom to transform their communities and change the world for the better.

To be sure — entrepreneurs, whether young or adult — face daunting obstacles, particularly in countries with underdeveloped financial systems, overdeveloped bureaucracies and inadequate infrastructures. Yet today is a better time than ever to start a business. The Internet offers access to a variety of resources for potential business owners, and many governments are making it easier to do business in order to create jobs and encourage economic growth.

This publication discusses many of the opportunities and challenges of being an entrepreneur today. It also discusses — and debunks — persistent myths about entrepreneurship.

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An exchange student from Japan sells drinks as part of her entrepreneurship class at a high school in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

If you are a young person interested in exploring the path of entrepreneur, you can read about how some of your peers have started their ventures and, in so doing, have set off on a new path in life.

Coutesy Photo

In 2007, Marcello Orizi left a good job in Switzerland to start a high-tech company — Prossima Isola — in his native Sardinia, Italy, together with his friend Daniele Idini.

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Courtesy of Solé Bicycles

Jonathan Shriftman, right, and Jake Medwell ride high on their Solé Bicycles.

Young Entrepreneurs Remake the World

Ankur Jain

Courtesy Photo

Ankur Jain of the Kairos Society

Ankur Jain is the founder and chairman of the Kairos Society, an organization that helps top young entrepreneurs from around the world start high-impact, high-growth companies. Jain graduated in May 2011 from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and subsequently launched a new venture to help startups expand their business into foreign markets.

Entrepreneurship can launch you on a path to change the world. But closer to home, entrepreneurship can give you the freedom to transform the lives of your family and people in your community. What better reasons are there to start your own business, except, maybe, the satisfaction of being your own boss?

I know what you're thinking: Entrepreneurship isn't easy. It takes a high-powered education, lots of money, and lots of top-level connections. But in my experience launching the Kairos Society, a foundation that provides support for student entrepreneurs, I've seen that every day, all over the world, young people without any of the advantages considered crucial to success are starting businesses big and small. What they do have is the passion and determination to make their business dreams happen and to change the world, no matter how many roadblocks they run into and how often they're told "That's impossible!"

Hemant Sahal, a 22-year-old student at Vellore Institute of Technology in Vellore, India, is moving ahead with a business idea that came to him while riding his bicycle through poor villages near his home. Sahal noticed that villagers were suffering from heavy metal poisoning caused by tainted drinking water. Most existing water filters did not remove these metals, and those that did were too expensive for local people. Through his new company, CALLMAT, Sahal is developing inexpensive treatments for removing toxic chemicals from the water supply.

Time Is Now

In many ways, this is the perfect time for young people like Sahal to experiment with entrepreneurial ventures. Governments of emerging economies are seeing the value of helping citizens realize their dreams of business success. More efficiently than governments, entrepreneurs create jobs and increase prosperity, when they are free to do so. The Internet has collapsed time and distance barriers. And young people everywhere, no matter where they are on the economic or education ladder, can take their part in the entrepreneurial revolution.

On the face of it, becoming an entrepreneur can sound scary. I won't lie to you: It's the hardest work I've ever done, yet also the most exhilarating. There is nothing like working for yourself, being in charge of your destiny, and making life better for yourself and the people around you. In many ways, entrepreneurship is one of the least risky things you can do — because control is in your hands.

If you're fired up about the idea of becoming an entrepreneur — perhaps you already have an idea for a business — don't get discouraged by the obstacles you believe are in front of you. For instance, your age. You or those around you may think that you're too young to be taken seriously in business. But that attitude devalues

© AP Images

Entrepreneurial ideas can help provide clean water to the poor.

what young people can bring to the business world: namely, fresh ideas and open viewpoints.

In 2010, the X Prize Foundation, which rewards people who create smart ideas for solving tough technical and scientific challenges, ran a competition to develop street-ready vehicles that would average more than 100 miles on a gallon of gas. In the group of finalists was a team from a Pennsylvania high school — the students submitted a hybrid gasoline-electric car using lithium-ion batteries based on a modified Ford Focus. These teens didn't need years of training in automobile mechanics — they had passion for the project, and they had the desire to make it happen.

> Entrepreneurship is one of the least risky things you can do — because control is in your hands.

Solving A Problem

Money, or lack thereof, can be an imagined obstacle to starting a business. While startup capital is great if you can get it, plenty of businesses are launched without it. For instance, businesses based solely on the Internet don't need office space, supply chains or other things that normally require startup money.

If you need startup capital, there may be financial resources from your local or national governments that you're not aware of, so it's smart to ask around. Start-Up Chile is one such resource. It funds and supports entrepreneurs from all over the world who come to Chile to get their companies off the ground. As governments see how important entrepreneurship is to the success of their local economies, they are setting up programs to guide and even fund startups.

You may believe that you can't launch a business because you don't have partners or mentors. Thanks to the Internet, you no longer have to worry about finding people at home to team up with you or give you advice. You have a wealth of advice, support, and potential partners at your fingertips. You can build a team, find

suppliers and manufacturers, and do other things online. So it doesn't matter whether the proper talent or partner is nearby.

As for what it takes to start a business, think about it this way: Entrepreneurship is about solving a problem, not starting a company. A couple of years ago, two friends attending the University of Southern California saw that other students were buying fixed-gear bicycles, which were very expensive — typically US$1,000. The two friends, Jonathan Shriftman and Jake Medwell, were convinced the bikes could be made more cheaply, but they had no manufacturing experience. In fact, they had no experience running a business, creating a business plan, or any of the elements you think you'd need to start a company.

Nevertheless, they searched the Internet and emailed companies around the world, asking if they could manufacture similar bikes at lower cost. They discovered that they could have the bikes made for US$310, and a business was born. They placed orders and started selling bikes from their new company, Solé Bicycles. In March 2011, *Inc.* magazine named Jonathan and Jake to its list of "America's Coolest College Start-Ups." Pretty amazing for two guys just barely into their 20s.

Don't Take "No" For An Answer

Jonathan and Jake asked a lot of questions before finding the right partners for the business. You need to get into the same frame of mind to become an entrepreneur. Don't be shy about asking people — many people — for information or connections. Sometimes we are afraid to ask for favors but, trust me, the entrepreneurial world is built on people helping each other.

You also need to believe in your idea and lose your fear of being told "no," because you're going to hear "no" a lot. That's OK — it's part of the process of starting a business. You can expect to be told "no" about a hundred times before someone actually says "yes." Find a few people that believe in you and keep them close — they can support you when you've heard nothing but a flurry of "no's."

> Don't ever let hearing "no" stop you from dreaming big and setting your goals high.

Most importantly, don't ever let hearing "no" stop you from dreaming big and setting your goals high. When we first started the Kairos Society, we were a small group of 18-year-old students at the University of Pennsylvania with a desire to create a new culture of entrepreneurship. We had a vision of being the most influential entrepreneurship group in the United States. Everyone told us we were wasting our time. But six months later, we had 500 student entrepreneurs on the historic *USS Intrepid* aircraft carrier listening and talking to former President Clinton and Bill Gates Sr. We persisted day in and day out, and this relentless execution of our plans has now allowed Kairos to expand around the world. In Greek, the word kairos means the "right moment," and, for each one of you, there truly couldn't be a better moment to become an entrepreneur. ■

© AP Images

A Philadelphia high school team turns a Ford Focus auto into a plug-in hybrid vehicle.

Taking On Google in Egypt

© AP Images

The Internet may spark an entrepreneurial transformation in Egypt.

"Technology is in my DNA, Code Optimizer is my name, research and innovation is my work." That's how Haytham ElFadeel introduces himself on Facebook. And you can believe him. Before the future Egyptian entrepreneur was 10 years old, he had devoured stacks of computer magazines and had taught himself computer programming.

"I simply fell in love with these machines," he said.

Home Schooling

While studying economics at the Higher Institute of Management and Commerce in Damietta, he taught himself computer science at home. When he graduated, he got a job as a software engineer at a large Egyptian company and later at a large multinational firm.

ElFadeel was so fast at finishing his work at the first company that he had plenty of time left to work on what he was really interested in — the Semantic Web, a "web of data" that describes things and relationships among them on the World Wide Web in a way that computers can understand and that enables getting more meaningful and accurate search results.

"I would borrow equipment from my office and work more on semantic searches at home," ElFadeel said. "This was so far from what the company was doing that nobody minded."

In 2008, he started working on a semantic search engine that collects data from different sources and gives answers to direct questions and queries. For example, such an engine can tie together different types of information — blogs, photos, audio interviews — from different sources on a movie star or historic event and present it in a user-friendly way.

Two years ago, when the work started bringing results, ElFadeel invited his brother Ashraf to join him. Ashraf has a background in software development and network infrastructure. They named their

© AP Images

Will Kngine be a new Google?

venture Kngine, meaning "knowledge engine," and headquartered it in Giza, the home of the pyramids.

A New Library Of Alexandria

A popular U.S. technology blog, TechCrunch, views Kngine as "a direct assault on Google." But the ElFadeel brothers — while not shy about their ambitions — see themselves more in the context of Egypt and its history. Kngine is "a new Library of Alexandria," they declared on the company's website. The Library of Alexandria was a vast collection considered by historians the largest and most significant library of the ancient world.

Courtesy of Kngine

Ashraf ElFadeel, left, and Haytham ElFadeel, right, meet their major investor, Ahmed Alfi, in Giza.

"If we succeed, our engine will be actually better and more useful than the Library of Alexandria because Kngine's users will get answers quickly and won't need to peek into many volumes or pore through numerous pages," Haytham said.

Haytham said he and Ashraf like working on something that matters to them personally and to humanity.

"We feel that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, we are willing to try as hard as we can, and nothing can stand in our way," they write in their blog.

And try hard they did, working 12 hours a day with meager funding. The Nile valley is not Silicon Valley, at least not yet, and venture capital is scarce. It took them a year to secure adequate capital from a private investor. Recently they won a cash prize in a business plan competition sponsored by the U.S. State Department.

Haytham said he and Ashraf are part of a new generation of technology entrepreneurs that has emerged in Egypt in the past few years. They would like Kngine to become "a platform for innovation because it would inspire more people." But whether it actually becomes one or not, "I would still love these machines," Haytham said. ■

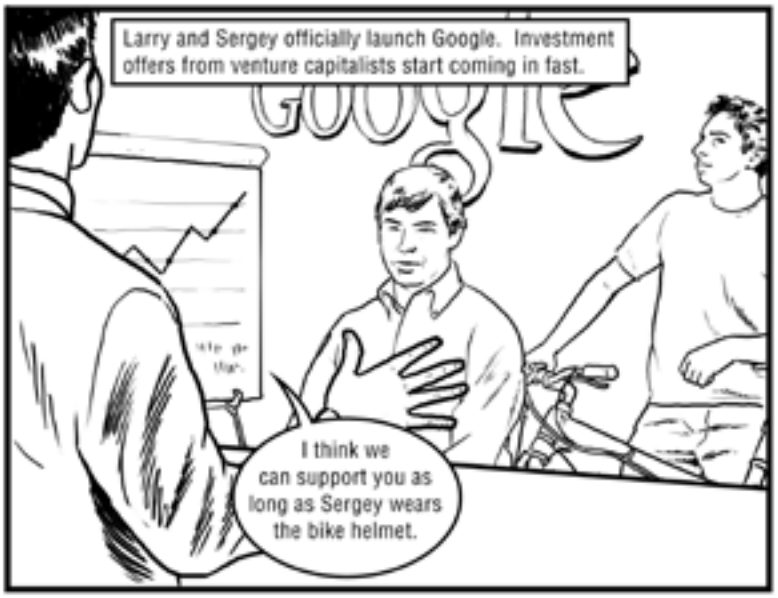
— Andrzej Zwaniecki

Google

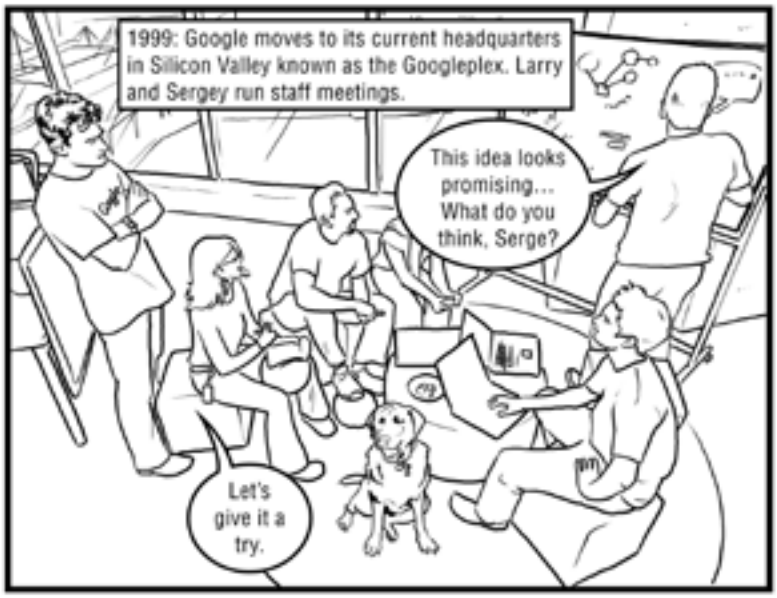
1996: Larry Page and Sergey Brin, computer science students at Stanford University, do a research project on the digital library. It leads to a new Internet search technology.
Hey, Serge, can we call it Backrub?
I don't know. We can always rename it.
Like PageRank?
How about Google?

Larry and Sergey ask others to give them equipment or recover it from the trash. They fit many machines into their small dormitory rooms…
We need more discs and my credit card is maxed out. I can't use it.
My card is maxed out too.
Let's get another card.

The co-founder of Sun Microsystems, Andy Bechtolsheim, gives Larry and Sergey a check for $100,000.
He wrote "Google" on the check!? Man, the company isn't even official yet.


Larry and Sergey officially launch Google. Investment offers from venture capitalists start coming in fast.
I think we can support you as long as Sergey wears the bike helmet.

A Startup that Roared!



© AP Images

Enthusiasm, honesty and toughness helped Mohamed "Mo" Ibrahim make his Celtel, a telecom company, a great success in Africa.

© AP Images

Steve Jobs is characterized as forward thinking, passionate and charismatic. It's hard to imagine a world without his creations.

© AP Images

The personal attributes helped Shai Agassi, center, sell his plan for electric cars to Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle, right.

© AP Images

Richard Branson is an action taker, not a day dreamer. The businesses he started have made him a billionaire.

What Makes Someone an Entrepreneur?

By Jeanne Holden

© AP Images

American educator Ed Sobey, center, at an innovation center in Bangalore, India. He wants to make these kids into entrepreneurs.

Jeanne Holden is a freelance writer with expertise in economic issues.

Entrepreneurs are many types of people. Successful entrepreneurs come in various ages, income levels, genders and races. They have different types of education and experience and come from different cultures and countries. But research shows that most successful entrepreneurs share certain personality traits, including creativity, dedication, determination, flexibility, leadership, passion, self-confidence and "smarts."

• CREATIVITY drives the development of new products or services. It makes the entrepreneur improve constantly. It is learning, asking questions, and thinking in new ways.

• DEDICATION makes the entrepreneur work hard, 12 hours a day or more, often seven days a week, especially in the beginning. Planning and ideas must have support from hard work to succeed.

• DETERMINATION means you really want to succeed. If something bad happens, you don't give up. Determination persuades the entrepreneur to make another phone call, or knock on another door. For the true entrepreneur, money is the reward, but seeing the product or service actually work is more exciting.

• FLEXIBILITY is the ability to move quickly when things change. An entrepreneur should be ready to modify his or her original idea if customers push for something else.

• LEADERSHIP is the ability to create rules and set goals. Good leaders finish everything they start and make sure everyone follows the rules.

• PASSION is what gives entrepreneurs energy. Passionate entrepreneurs can convince others to believe in their idea. Passion helps entrepreneurs stay focused and gets others to take their plans seriously.

• SELF-CONFIDENCE comes from planning, experience and what you know. Self-confident entrepreneurs can listen to others without giving up their own point of view.

• "SMARTS" is an American term. It describes skills based on common sense and intelligence. Common sense gives a person good instincts; intelligence makes him or her an expert. Many people have smarts but don't recognize them. For example, a person who successfully keeps a family budget has organizational and financial skills. Employment, education and life experience all contribute to smarts.

Every entrepreneur has some of these qualities. If he or she doesn't, he or she can hire someone who has them. The most important thing is to be aware of your strengths and to build on them. ■

Entrepreneurs Press Ahead, Despite Obstacles

© AP Images

Will they win Calcutta's government licenses? Only if they pull hard enough.

When 24-year-old Mathew Kiilu launched a sunflower oil-pressing business in 2007, he had to overcome unexpected obstacles. To avoid high rents in his hometown Nairobi, he located his plant in a far-off village. But a power company took 10 months to provide electricity to his business, and post-election violence cut him off from sunflower seed suppliers. He survived by finding a power generator for electricity and alternate sources of sunflower seeds.

The challenges Kiilu faced are familiar to entrepreneurs in developing countries.

Heads Against A Wall?

The general rules for small businesses to succeed in the developing world are not that different from those in the developed world. What is different is the much higher level of energy and perseverance required of entrepreneurs in developing markets in which institutional and infrastructure hurdles often are daunting and persistent. These hurdles range from onerous government regulations to poor infrastructure to weak law enforcement.

"It takes a great willpower to do business in my country," said Kneeyee Alex, founder of ESTREET, a foundation promoting entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Many policymakers and development experts in wealthy countries view entrepreneurship as a way of providing self-employment and creating jobs in markets that offer limited opportunities for wage employment, according to Wim Naudé of United Nations University in Helsinki, Finland. Entrepreneurship also increases social mobility and empowers marginalized groups such as women or migrants, Naudé said. Self-employment is often the only option for young people who lack experience and connections necessary to secure jobs.

But in countries with less-than-friendly business climates, showing persistence and gaining entrepreneurial experience counts more than anywhere else, Naudé said.

"To be successful, budding entrepreneurs should try, try again after failure, [and in effect] become serial entrepreneurs," he said.

© AP Images

Potters in Bat Trang village near Hanoi ply their trade under relaxed government regulations.

Looking For A Mentor

For young people, Naudé said, the lack of experience makes it particularly difficult to see and seize business opportunities. In the United States or United Kingdom, aspiring entrepreneurs can benefit from entrepreneurship programs and courses, which rarely are available in developing countries. In addition, young people usually lack the collateral necessary to get a bank loan and are more susceptible to being side-tracked, for instance, into illegal activities, according to Naudé.

Having a mentor with some business experience or knowledge often helps. Kiilu got helpful advice from his father, who also runs a business.

Alex recommends that entrepreneurial novices connect and share their stories with each other. "Usually there will be someone with a solution," he said.

Another advantage of networking is that other entrepreneurs or business experts, either local or international, may offer vital contacts or other forms of support. Such mentors can eventually become investors or customers, said Ayman El Tarabishy of George Washington University in Washington.

The Internet equalizes chances to succeed for entrepreneurs in the developing world who understand technology well. Young entrepreneurs with small businesses often survive by street smarts, as illustrated by Kiilu, who learned to fix his equipment when he couldn't find anyone to do it for him. Small business owners also resort to finding public-sector "patrons" or building their businesses "under the radar" without government registration. A public sector patron might be a government official who does favors for a young entrepreneur.

Against Corruption

However, the lack of official approval, a title to property or an enforceable contract limits small businesses' ability to grow. Informal businesses have higher capital and transportation costs, more storage problems, greater difficulty hiring quality staff and less ability to enforce contracts, according to Julio De Castro of Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

For these reasons, more ambitious entrepreneurs often bend over backwards to register their firms and obtain necessary licenses.

Whatever they do, they must resist corruption and establish a reputation for high ethics, according to experts. "Stand firm on ethics and radiate it around you and simply be persistent," said Shaffi Mather, a social entrepreneur in Kerala, India.

> "Stand firm on ethics and radiate it around you and simply be persistent."

As governments recognize the importance of entrepreneurship to economic development and growth, they slowly are loosening regulations and implementing programs to support entrepreneurs, said Kenneth Morse, an entrepreneur and visiting professor at ESADE Business School in Barcelona, Spain. He noticed positive changes in attitudes toward entrepreneurship in Jordan, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan. In 2010, Kazakhstan, Rwanda, Peru, Vietnam, Cape Verde, Tajikistan, and Zambia were among economies that improved the most in the ease of doing business, according to the World Bank report.

As to Kiilu's business, he is encountering new obstacles as it grows. But the Kenyan entrepreneur is optimistic about the future. He told *East Africa in Focus*, a regional information website, that he is already planning his next move: flour milling. ■

— A.Z. and Katherine Lewis, a contributor

Telecom Dials "Biz" For Development

© AP Images

So many potential customers, so much instability.

In Somalia, many services do not exist because of the civil war. But telephone connections work very well, thanks to entrepreneurs like Nasra Malin.

Busy Signal

In 1997, she was one of six entrepreneurs who founded NationLink, a telecom operator, in Mogadishu. This is the capital city and center of violence in her country. Malin and her partners thought they could break into the market against all odds, competing with three established companies and dealing with security challanges. They were right.

Courtesy Photo

Nasra Malin

NationLink has become a successful telecom operator. They offer wireless and fixed-line services to 300,000 customers and employ more than 1,500 people.

But Malin and her partners can't take their company's market position for granted — the telecom industry is growing fast and there is a lot of competition. Somalia has no strong government, so NationLink must make an extra effort to protect its business. Around 40 percent of the employees work on ensuring security at the company. If someone asks for a bribe,

© AP Images

Thanks to telecom operators a volunteer doctor could receive a call.

she said, "we usually pay, because if we fight them, someone may get killed."

The company is growing despite violence and lack of security. Malin said she and her employees hope to "bring peace and development to our country." In 2000, NationLink partnered with two other companies to start the Somali Internet Company to provide Internet access in Somalia and some other African countries.

Around 40 percent of the employees work on ensuring security at the company.

One Call At A Time

In Atlanta, Georgia, Jennifer Bunting-Graden understands Malin and her goals. Bunting-Graden, who is a lawyer, has tried to start a business venture in her native country, Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone also went through a period of civil war. She said NationLink helps bring peace and development by creating jobs, providing access to information and improving quality of life.

For Malin, NationLink is also about self-confidence and status. Her family has bred entrepreneurs for many generations. Before the civil war, they owned many businesses worth millions of dollars. Malin studied in Somalia and the United States, where she received a degree in business administration and finance. Working with her father and uncles was also important: They taught her to "think and act independently," she said.

At NationLink, to prove her worth, Malin tried to achieve better results than her male co-workers. Now she is the finance chief and the only woman among its leaders; at home she is a wife to a medical doctor and mother to four daughters. So she understands both family and business. Malin believes more women can be leaders in her company. She supports them. Those women care for their families, but also search for opportunities as entrepreneurs. ■

— A.Z.

Debunking The Myths

Entrepreneurs Are Born, Not Made

Far from the truth. An entrepreneurial mindset can be nurtured in business-friendly and risk-rewarding climates, and entrepreneurial skills can be taught. You can hardly become an entrepreneur if you don't have an idea for a new product or service, or if you lack an initiative to go on your own. But if you have both, you can acquire the necessary skills. Just go out, start a company, fail and learn from your mistakes. Well, that's a tough way. You can take an easier route by taking entrepreneurship courses offered in some countries by an increasing number of universities and some secondary schools. You can also seek expert advice from local and national entrepreneurship organizations on how to develop and implement business ideas. Finally, you can approach an experienced entrepreneur or plug into a network of entrepreneurship mentors on the Web to discuss your startup project.

Entrepreneurs Are Solo Players

Some are. But often potential entrepreneurs rely on a partner or partners to start or grow a company. For example, in the United Kingdom, 40 percent of business startups have more than one founder, and partnerships have a 15 percent higher rate of return than solo startups. Even Steve Jobs worked with Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne before going on his own. A partner — a family member or friend — can bring in skills or experience you lack and provide moral support during a crunch time. Building the company up is even more of a social activity as it entails hiring employees, pursuing investors, and persuading customers to buy from you. You can do all these on your own as long as you don't sleep, don't eat and don't wash. But you don't want to scare off key people with your miserable looks and bad smell. So you can be better off taking on a partner and dividing work and responsibilities between you two.

Entrepreneurs Are Driven Solely by Desire for Profits

Not really! A financial gain may be an ultimate goal, but it rarely is the only one. Some entrepreneurs are driven by passion to realize their dreams or ideas or by determination to seize a market opportunity. The majority of U.S. small business owners say they were motivated to start up a company by desire for independence — to do what they like, in the way they like. Elsewhere, people resort to entrepreneurship because they have limited options. Where employers and jobs are scarce, you can become your own employer and indirectly contribute to society by giving consumers more choices, creating jobs or making the world a better place in other ways. Socially conscious entrepreneurs pursue social goals while keeping their eyes on the bottom line. Their priority is to increase the social impact of their ventures rather than profits.

Entrepreneurs Need a Lot of Money to Start a Business

Nonsense! In the United States you can start a basic business, for example a janitorial service or fruit stand, with a couple of hundred dollars. In less developed countries, the upfront cost can be much less. Creativity can help you lower it. For example, you can rely on guerilla marketing rather than on costly ads to reach your potential customers. Free or inexpensive startup resources on the Web offer another opportunity to go cheap. In general, the capital required to launch and sustain a venture depends on what kind of business you want to go into. A home-based company with no employees will require less capital than a venture located in a rental office or retail space that needs a crew of hired hands or brains. Estimating up-front and operational capital needs is one of the toughest challenges for a budding entrepreneur. So don't blame yourself too much when you realize that you underestimated such costs. Multimillion dollar ventures that rely on an army of consultants do too.

Real Entrepreneurs Always Succeed

Baloney! Only those who never take any risks never fail. In the United States, about half of startups go down in the first four years. But real entrepreneurs have a hard time giving up on their ideas even after their first attempt ends in failure. Many bounce back to try again. Those who learn from past mistakes are most likely to succeed on the second, third or nth try. Startups fail because of an insufficient or ill-defined market, lack of planning, inadequate funding, or other reasons. So if you fail the first time, you should look at what went wrong and draw appropriate conclusions for the future. Such an analysis may prompt you to revise your business plan or its execution, to think about completely different business or to apply for a regular job. Whatever you do, get rid of "the shame" of losing and move on. You'll be in a good company: Henry Ford, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Soichiro Honda experienced failures before achieving success. ■

A $25 Solar Lamp for Millions

Courtesy of Yann

She might find some use for electricity.

How many people does it take to replace a 19th-century kerosene lantern with a 21st-century solar lamp?

Cosmos Ignite Innovations proves it takes two.

One, Matthew Scott, led the design and development of a solar lamp when he was a student at the Stanford Business School in 2003. The lamp is based on light-emitting diode (LED) technology, which uses much less electricity than incandescent bulbs or fluorescent tubes.

Scott initially intended for the lamps to be used in commercial buildings or aircraft. Then he read *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid* and shifted his approach. The book by C.K. Prahalad describes the commercial opportunities offered by the 2.5 billion people in the world who live on less than $2.50 per day. Scott wanted to reach some of them with his lamp.

That's when his old Stanford friend, Amit Chugh, came into the picture. Scott asked Chugh, who had

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Buying wares by the light of a kerosene lamp in Lagos? Look but don't inhale.

Courtesy Photo

MightyLight inventor Matt Scott with MightyLight.

Courtesy Photo

Amit Chugh with MightyLight.

business-management experience, to help him redesign the lamp for the poor in Chugh's home country, India, where millions of people rely on hazardous, polluting kerosene lanterns for light. Scott and Chugh formed a joint venture, Cosmos Ignite Innovations, with offices in the Silicon Valley in California and New Delhi. Scott secured financial backing from a veteran venture capitalist in Silicon Valley, and Chugh went to local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in India to test the lamp.

Mighty Lights For The Masses

"It was a bridge between a high-tech hub and market of millions of poor craving a better life," Chugh said.

The lamp, named MightyLight, is a multifunctional, water-proof, shock-proof, solar LED lamp capable of holding an eight-hour charge and designed to last 100,000 hours. Cosmos Ignite started selling it in India at $50 a unit in 2006.

Chugh said he and Scott were driven by the desire to "give back to the society and feel good about it in the process." They sold MightyLights through NGOs, international agencies, the Indian government and commercial distributors. They chose not to follow the traditional path of aid and development groups that depend on charities and private foundations for financial resources, which sometimes dry out, leaving technology providers in limbo. "What we wanted instead was a commercial enterprise that would make our venture sustainable over time," he said.

Chugh established design and assembly operations in Gurgaon, India, and has worked with Scott to make their lamp cheaper because many Indian poor couldn't afford it at the original price. Now an improved, brighter model sells for $25.

> With social goals in mind, "you're not going to be a millionaire anyway."

Expanding The Light

So far Cosmos Ignite has sold 150,000 MightyLights in 18 countries. The company has expanded the product line to seven items, which include solar home lighting and street lights.

"The idea is to increase social impact rather than profits," Chugh said. "But from the outset you have to realize that you're not going to be a millionaire."

When fishermen and weavers started using MightyLights to extend their work hours, Chugh knew he and Scott were on the right track. "And when you know that, every challenge is exciting," he said. ■

— A.Z.

Courtesy of I Am White

An illustration by the young Chinese artist who calls himself "I Am White."

Courtesy of 4wallz

A street art installation in Shanghai.

Art and Money Mix for China's Neocha

Courtesy of Mad Science

Adam Schokora, far left, and Sean Leow, far right, with Neocha EDGE crew/artists.

Not many entrepreneurs start their businesses with such razzle-dazzle as Sean Leow did. In 2007, he hosted a lavish party in Shanghai to launch Neocha, an online community of alternative Chinese artists and musicians. The event, which featured 62 designer groups and eight independent rock bands and DJs, drew more than 10,000 people.

Leow, a California native, had studied international relations at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Nanjing, China. While in the country of his grandparents, he had become fascinated and inspired by young Chinese artists and musicians. He noticed they were "pursuing their passion with far too few resources and garnering little recognition." Leow decided to do something about it.

After The Party

The launch of Neocha created a buzz that was felt beyond the creative communities in China. But, to Leow's surprise, revenue from ad and mobile payments on which the business plan was based never really materialized.

The plan turned out to be "irrelevant," Leow recalled. He downsized Neocha staff, moved its office to a smaller space, and switched to a less expensive Web-hosting service. "I always knew there was value in alternative Chinese art and music," he said. The challenge was to find the business model that would help the artists sell their works while creating revenue for the company.

The turnaround came when the global market research consultancy Flamingo International approached Leow to canvass young Chinese artists for an advertising

campaign for Nike Inc. Mining Neocha's database, the company compiled a report on youth cultural trends in China and produced related photo and video materials. The quality of the work done in a relatively short time impressed the consultancy.

From A Fan To Partner

As Neocha was attracting more consulting business, one of the company's fans, Adam Schokora, who had a background in marketing, joined the company and came to play a prominent role in managing consulting projects. In 2009, he and Leow launched NeochaEDGE, a creative agency focused on content production, market research and events planning that is based on the talents of more than 30,000 Neocha users. NeochaEDGE has helped to organize events that featured a graffiti exhibition, slipmat (a piece of cloth used by DJs) art and live music, and done other projects for clients such as PepsiCo and the Absolut Vodka brand.

"We realized the tremendous value that these artists can bring to companies that are looking to create cutting-edge, creative content for their marketing efforts," Leow said. The new model has proved profitable, he said.

Leow said he and Schokora want to "continue to make a difference in the creative industry." In 2010, they launched the EDGE Creative Collective, as part of the existing company, to represent artists associated with Neocha in the business world. In China, competition in this business segment is not strong yet, and few rivals have as well developed relationships with hip artists as does NeochaEDGE.

> "We get to work with super creative people."

The business has become serious, Leow said, but he and Schokora still have a lot of fun.

"We get to work with super creative people and the type of content we create is not your run-of-the-mill boring advertising," Leow said. A fashion shoot with a hip photography/stylist duo, anyone? ■

— A.Z.

© AP Images

Young Chinese artists turn even tattoos into art.

Dancing in the Online Marketplace

© AP Images

How do you run a dance club when there is so much dancing in the streets?

Roberto Fermino became a DJ when he was 16. He would grab his audio equipment and go to people's places to play tunes for them to dance to. "That was pretty easy," Fermino recalled. Five years later, he stepped up the pace, starting a party club. He wanted to popularize electronic dance music as much as he wanted to make some money.

Getting people to enjoy his musical offerings proved difficult, though. The residents of the low-income area of São Paulo where he lived preferred more traditional tunes. "Changing culture and cultural preferences is really hard," he sighed. "So it didn't work that well." But Fermino doesn't regret the experience: It taught him that a business venture doesn't fare well unless customers want its services or products.

In 2010, he joined his cousin Jefferson Soares, who ran a company that designed Web pages. The Soares' business was struggling. Fermino helped him create a Web platform that allowed the company's clients to build their sites gradually at less expense. By the time the business took off, Fermino already had something new on his mind — an online marketplace for local services. Small businesses that needed to hire photographers, designers, window dressers and other service providers often didn't know where to go to find them.

Building An Online Marketplace

Fermino figured that a Web-based platform would be a good way to help both sides connect and facilitate transactions between them. His company would charge small intermediation fees. Fermino and his partners have been exploring the idea over the past months, talking to lawyers, fellow entrepreneurs and others. "We revise it, improve it and refine related plans almost every day," he said.

Funding is the greatest problem because in Brazil angel investors generally back only businesses they know, and only few angel investors understand online ventures, especially early-stage companies. But Fermino doesn't take "no" for an answer in his search for capital. One avenue he is exploring is business-plan competitions, which give budding entrepreneurs a chance to win not only startup funds, but also publicity.

Courtesy Photo

Roberto Fermino

The Center Of Entrepreneurship

Fermino, now 26, studies engineering at Universidade de São Paulo, where he runs an entrepreneurship center on campus and online. At the center, student entrepreneurs exchange ideas and experiences with each other and with established business owners who come to talk to them. It has become a popular place among students who run their own ventures or are thinking about starting one. The center also is working on developing an entrepreneurship program that would expand on a basic business class offered by the university. Fermino and his colleagues are drawing on similar programs at U.S. and Latin American universities for best practices.

But Fermino's entrepreneurial drive never stops. "Ideas are exploding in my head," he said. He picks one with the most promise and works on it. The others he shares with friends and fellow entrepreneurs. If you need an idea, just give him a call. ■

— A.Z.

© AP Images

An online marketplace allows people like this Brazilian mother to conduct business from anywhere.

Teenager Takes Charge of Events

© AP Images

Christmas decorations in Manger Square in the West Bank city of Bethlehem.

When Waed al Taweel started a business, she had no idea what entrepreneurship was. But that didn't stop the 18-year-old secondary school student from entering a contest open to all students in the Palestinian Territories to plan and launch a full-fledged business.

Al Taweel started a company that planned and managed special events and called it Teen Touch. She hired 28 classmates to send out invitations, rent facilities and arrange for catered food. Teen Touch organized children's birthday parties, decorated private houses and buildings in the West Bank city of Ramallah for Christmas and opened a store to sell gifts for Valentine's Day.

"We took care of all the arrangements from A to Z," al Taweel said.

Recognition Abounds

Teen Touch won a prize as the best student company in the Palestinian Territories. It also was recognized as the 2007 best student company in the Arab world in the annual INJAZ al-Arab Regional Company Competition. During the competition al Taweel was chosen as 2007's best student executive in the Arab world.

She sold her business after six months and distributed profits to investors in accordance with competition rules. When al Taweel went to college at Birzeit University, she already had other ideas.

"I started having dreams of my future business," she said. "I discovered that I could be a leader of a company."

In 2010, President Obama invited al Taweel to the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship in Washington. She was the youngest participant and

a speaker on the panel on youth entrepreneurship. Babson College President Len Schlesinger was so impressed with her that he offered her a scholarship to study in the master of business administration program at his school.

At that time, al Taweel had an idea for a recreation and entertainment center for young Palestinians in the West Bank. "I want it to be a unique gathering place, to combine fun and personal growth," al Taweel said. Her plan includes a bowling alley, a skating rink, a miniature golf course and a library. "Young Palestinians need a place like this because they have difficult lives," she said. Al Taweel also hopes to create jobs for her peers, who don't have many employment opportunities. In 2010, close to 40 percent of young people in the West Bank and Gaza were unemployed, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

Ken White

Waed al Taweel speaks at the 2010 Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship in Washington.

REALITY BITES

Al Taweel knows that it will be difficult to implement her idea. So after talking to Babson professors, she decided to focus on her studies first.

"They told me I would be better prepared to develop the idea for the center when I complete my undergraduate studies," she said. The 21-year-old entrepreneur is studying hard at Birzeit to finish her undergraduate work and be ready to enroll in Babson's graduate program. "What happened in the last three years was overwhelming," she said. "It has helped me realize what I want to do in the future." And what she wants to do is to be an entrepreneur. Because she believes that this way she can achieve her full potential.

"But I am still at the beginning of the entrepreneurial path," al Taweel said. ■

— A.Z.

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A graduation ceremony at Birzeit University.

Turkish Connection

© AP Images

It's not a promotional event. It's the 2006 solar eclipse over Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul.

Studying at a secondary school in Daytona Beach, Florida, in the early 1990s was a memorable experience for Fatih Isbecer, an exchange student from Istanbul. He was enthralled by the technology revolution in the United States at the time, Isbecer said.

Technology Bug

"I was filled with an entrepreneurial spirit and loaded with different technology ideas," he recalled. "I felt that change would eventually affect Turkey."

At the time Isbecer was in secondary school in Florida, Turkey was way behind the United States and other developed countries in telecommunications. Residential telephones were rare in rural areas. To make a phone call a person generally had to go to a local post office and wait for a connection.

Courtesy Photo

Fatih Isbecer

Thanks to Turkish entrepreneurs such as Isbecer, the situation has changed dramatically.

In the late 1990s, Isbecer and some classmates from Istanbul Technical University started a small business that focused on Internet projects. "It was a kind of techies' playground," he said.

In 2000, Isbecer launched a more serious business, Pozitron, a

Courtesy of Nevit

She tries to make sure that the next generation of cell phones will come from Turkey.

firm that develops enterprise, networking and security software for telecommunications applications. Challenges were many, including recruiting experienced senior managers who were in short supply in Turkey, Isbecer said.

Curtain Goes Up

One of Pozitron's first hits was a mobile-phone application for the country's only official sports betting game, IDDAA. A few years later came a major breakthrough: Pozitron entered international financial markets with mobile-phone banking applications developed for Turkey's largest private bank, Turkiye Is Bankasi AS. The applications allow users to transfer money, trade stocks, pay bills and check balances anywhere in the world.

In 2007, Isbecer was selected a "high-impact entrepreneur" by Endeavor, a U.S.-based nonprofit that promotes entrepreneurship. A year later, Pozitron won the Global Business Plan Contest organized by Harvard Business School for an integrated, mobile-banking product.

He was particularly satisfied when his product hit the U.S. market the same month as a similar U.S. product.

"Launching this product in the same month that a large U.S.-based multinational bank released its own version gave me a huge satisfaction," Isbecer said.

He said his ambition is to participate in shaping the future of the wireless industry and, together with his Turkish friends and rivals, dispel the myth that the high-tech sector in Turkey doesn't exist.

Elmira Bayrasli of Endeavor said Pozitron's success "worked not only to create jobs, but also to inspire other Turks to see themselves as innovators." ■

— A.Z.

Courtesy of Procsilas Moscas

The sign of the days gone by in Istanbul.

Why Did You Become an Entrepreneur?

© AP Images

Craig Newmark

I'm an accidental entrepreneur, having started Craigslist around 16 years ago as a hobby. The deal was to give back to the nascent online community, since [Internet users] were very helpful even back then. However, in 1999, it was clear that my thing was very important to millions of people and that I had to become a serious business guy to fulfill my commitment to my community.

Craig Newmark is the founder of Craigslist, a community-based network primarily focused on free online classified advertisements. Since 1995 it has grown into one of the most popular websites in the United States.

Rajiv Mehrotra

Back in school, I used to assemble and sell transistor radios so I think that I always have had the entrepreneurial spirit within me. Later, I trained as an engineer but knew that I wanted to be involved in all aspects of business — from product development to financing to marketing. Being an entrepreneur is a way of life, which I love!

Rajiv Mehrotra has founded many successful telecommunications companies in India. He has been named as a person who will change "your life" by Time *magazine and as a technology pioneer by the World Economic Forum.*

Courtesy Photo

Courtesy Photo

Ewa Wojkowska

I don't think one ever plans to become an entrepreneur — it is a result of continuous attempts to do things better. But looking back, I believe I have always had ideas to do things differently. Kopernik is the result of my belief that development assistance can be much more tangible and effective.

Ewa Wojkowska is a co-founder of Kopernik, a non-profit enterprise that distributes simple, inexpensive technologies in the developing world.

Bilel Bouraoui

An entrepreneur is someone who dares to dream, who trusts himself and his team to turn unconventional ideas into extraordinary projects. An entrepreneur believes the sky is the limit and sees an opportunity where others see a problem. I have been very much inspired by great people who shared these values, and for a long time I have known this is the kind of person I would like to be.

Bilel Bouraoui is a co-founder and chief executive of AWS, an online social media business in Tunisia.

Courtesy Photo

Courtesy Photo

Mike Moradian

I became an entrepreneur because I believed in my idea and believed I could help create change. As an entrepreneur, you get to take your own vision, dreams and ambitions, and mold them into something great. There is no better thrill than creating something that works, and no more rewarding dollar earned than the one you earned yourself.

Mike Moradian started the Los Angeles-based CampusBuddy, a company that publishes data on grade distributions at 250 U.S. public colleges.

Sandiaga Uno

Courtesy Photo

I became an entrepreneur by accident with no family history of entrepreneurship. After the financial crisis hit in 1997, I was laid off and left with no choice but to take my future in my own hands. Being an entrepreneur gives me the power to positively change society through idealism and creativity.

Sandiaga Uno co-founded Saratoga Capital, an investment firm. Since 1998 it has grown into one of Indonesia's largest investment companies.

Courtesy Photo

Phil Tepfer, left, and Charles Bogoian.

Charles Bogoian

I've always felt entrepreneurship provides a great opportunity to make a tangible and positive impact on the world. While facing the challenge of "building something from nothing," I've learned invaluable skills and lessons that normally would have taken much longer for me to experience.

Phil Tepfer

Entrepreneurship is the ultimate form of self-expression: It's the challenge to create a product or service that is uniquely your own and have other people like it. Seeing the community accept that creation is one of the single most gratifying things I have ever done. It's a vehicle to change the world, affect countless lives and build a life knowing you've done something — hard to top in a standard 9-to-5 [job].

Phil Tepfer and Charles Bogoian are founders of LiveProud, a Boston-based business that sells jackets and shirts made of fabrics from recycled materials.

Selima Abbou

Courtesy Photo

Do you dream to create beautiful things? Do you dream to create tasty things? Do you dream to create products that would please many? Do you dream to create a brand that would reflect all the values you have imagined for your business?

I have dreamt all these dreams and that's why I decided to start TYPIK.

Selima Abbou founded TYPIK in 2004 to sell traditional Tunisian products both online and through traditional stores.

Tomer Dvir

Courtesy Photo

I became an entrepreneur because I wanted to take action to fix the things that bothered me, not just complain about them. Becoming an entrepreneur has given me the power to create change; not only to improve my own PC experience, but to improve the experience of hundreds of millions of PC users the world over.

Tomer Dvir is a co-founder and chief executive of Soluto, an Israel-based software company that makes personal computers run better.

Courtesy of Antonio Bonanno

Marcello Orizi

When I was a child and played pickup soccer, I always opted for the lesser team. It was so awesome to win against the favorites! I always have liked challenges. And I always have wanted to have a real influence over my life and create something helpful for others. To seek challenges, to shape the future and to give back to society are the reasons I became an entrepreneur.

Marcello Orizi is a co-founder of Prossima Isola, an information and communication technologies company, and two other startups in Sardinia, Italy.

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Tyler Galganski, a finalist in the "2010 America's Best Young Entrepreneurs" competition organized by *Bloomberg Businessweek* magazine, co-founded a business selling undershirts with hoods.

Additional Resources

Websites on youth business and young entrepreneurs

GenX Startup and Idea Café, a forum for young people on business ideas and startup advice.
http://www.businessownersideacafe.com/genx/

Global Entrepreneurship Week, an annual event celebrating and promoting entrepreneurship among young people around the world.
http://www.unleashingideas.org/

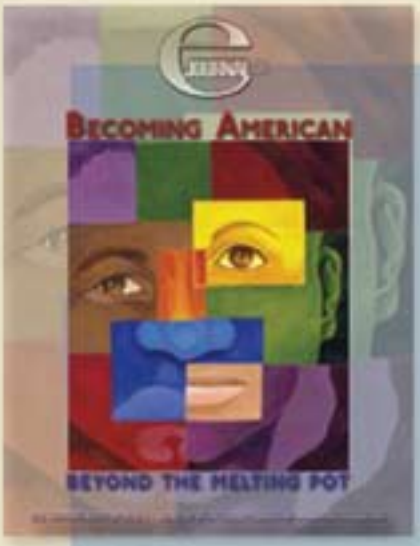
Junior Achievement Worldwide, the world's largest organization dedicated to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy.
http://www.ja.org/

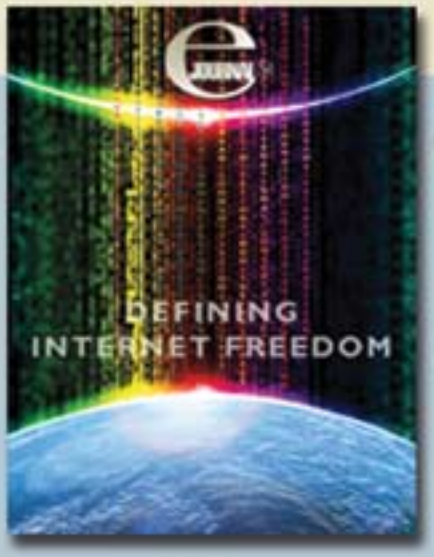
Kairos Society, a student organization that aims to foster the next generation of global leaders through entrepreneurship.
http://kairossociety.com/

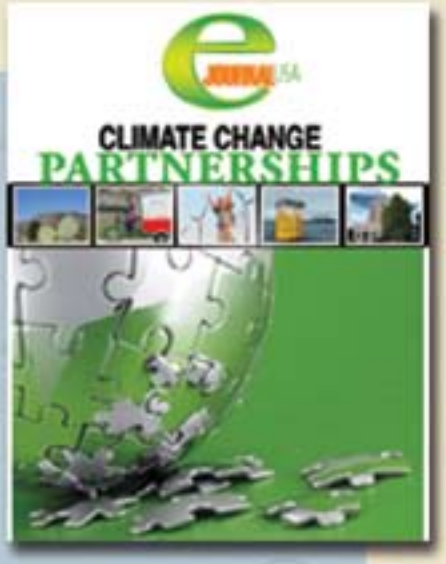
Teen Business Link, the U.S. Small Business Administration's information resource for potential young entrepreneurs.
http://archive.sba.gov/teens/

© AP Images

It's never too early to become an entrepreneur. Beck Johnson opened his ice cream stand in Sunapee, New Hampshire, when he was 10 years old.







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