

## Chapter 2

### What Makes a Good Business Owner?

While there's still some debate on whether entrepreneurs are born or made, there's no denying it: business owners – like camels -- share certain characteristics that seem to help them thrive on the rocky road to self-employment.

Which of the following characteristics can you relate to? Entrepreneurs...

1. Take risks
2. Are determined
3. Are Type-A
4. Are not afraid of hard work
5. Are passionate about what they do
6. Sometimes find it hard to disconnect from work
7. Adapt as needed
8. Have big visions
9. Live for the thrill of starting something new
10. Are comfortable juggling different roles

If you don't possess all of these qualities, don't worry. If you're excited about starting a business in an area you're passionate about, that may be all you need to take the plunge.

Now, let's dive into each trait to learn how it helps business owners succeed.

#### Risk-Taking

There's simply no getting around it: starting and running a small business is fraught with risk. But compared to the risks camels face in the desert, the risks you'll face as a Camel Entrepreneur are a relative breeze!

First, you have to see if your idea is viable enough to actually attract customers and turn a profit. Then you have to ensure that your cash flow is steady enough to pay your vendors, employees, and yes, yourself.

Some companies take months — or even years — to reach profitability. If you're planning on your new business supporting your personal expenses, it might come as a shock if you can't cover them.

Certain industries are riskier than others. With the recent recession, we saw the real estate market tank, and many self-employed real estate professionals jumped ship. Before you start a business, know what the risk is in the industry you're considering. Look at all factors, including economic forecast, demand in your community, and competition to get a better sense of how much risk you'll be taking on.

To mitigate your risk, have a well thought-out plan for your first year in business. Have money in the bank or take out financing to ensure that you aren't relying on your business' income to pay the bills at the start. Know what you're getting into so that you're not traumatized with how much risk you actually take on once you start your business.

## 5 Ways of Reducing Risk

While it's impossible to completely eliminate risk as a small business owner, there are strategies you can use to lower it.

1. **Start your business part time while continuing to receive a full-time salary.** One way to mitigate your financial risk is to ease into entrepreneurship while you have the security of a steady paycheck and health benefits. Work on your company after hours (never while you're at work!) and on weekends until you're stable enough fiscally to quit your day job.
2. **Start in a field you know very well.** The better you know an industry and its players, the better you'll succeed. Here's a great example of how this can benefit you: there once was an engineering manager of a large utility firm who resigned. The following month, he became a consultant to his previous employer. He was performing the same type of work, but was able to bill three times his previous salary. As long as you have a connection with your former employer, this is a possibility.
3. **Start in a field with constant demand & less client loyalty.** Look at your community. What need is there, and how can you fill it? The food truck industry, for example, is still relatively new to many cities. If you have experience in the restaurant industry, you could test the waters by offering your menu on weekends, building a customer base, and then expanding your hours.
4. **Look for a wider audience.** Rather than have to find clients piecemeal, seek out opportunities to reach a bigger audience at conventions and seminars. Lately, I have been presenting one-day seminars in southern California. This provides me the opportunity to interact with multiple professionals at once and pass my

business cards around. Approximately 10% of my audience becomes a client or refers work within 6 months of the seminar.

5. **Start marketing yourself through content.** Create a blog that centers on your area of expertise. Write about topics that your ideal customers would care about. Pay attention to which posts get the most traffic to get a sense of where you should focus your priorities once you launch your company.

## Determination

There's nothing more determined than a camel seeking water. When a [thirsty camel smells water](#), it rushes to it, and will fight any other camel getting in its way.

There's also something so dogged about taking an idea and turning it into a business. And while you might be lucky enough to stumble onto a smooth and seamless business concept, chances are, you're going to need persistence to overcome a number of obstacles. Successful Camel Entrepreneurs don't give up when things get tough; like camels, they persevere.

If you're known for being stubborn when it comes to getting what you want, you might make a good entrepreneur. Use it to your advantage to go from an idea on a napkin to a fully operational and profitable company.

## Type A Personality

Not every entrepreneur is Type A, but it seems to help. Type A personalities are driven leaders who will do whatever it takes to get the job done. [Wikipedia](#) categorizes Type A people as:

**“ambitious, rigidly organized, highly status conscious, can be sensitive, care for other people, are truthful, impatient, always try to help others, take on more than they can handle, want other people to get to the point, proactive, and obsessed with time management.”**

The downside to being Type A is that you're probably a workaholic (more of an issue for your family than you!) and may be impatient with employees. Still, everyone around you knows that when it comes to executing on your vision, you will deliver.

## Not Afraid of Hard Work

It's time to dispel the myth that entrepreneurs get to be their own bosses, work when they want, and play the rest of the time. While certainly, you may have more flexibility as

a business owner, that's not always the case, especially when you're first launching your business.

Just like a camel on a journey across the Sinai Desert, you should expect long and stressful days at the start, if not for the duration of your business. Expect your personal relationships to suffer, and everything else in your life to take second place. Be ready to donate the blood, sweat, and tears required to make something truly amazing.

When you can step back a bit and let your business run on its own, with minimal effort on your part, reap the benefits.

## **Passionate**

The reason you're reading this and considering starting a business is probably because you're passionate about something. You think about it incessantly, and yearn to "do what you love," as they say.

This is probably the key attribute of a successful entrepreneur. After all, if you start a business doing something you don't love, but that could net you a great deal of money, you'll likely soon lose interest and drive, and the business will fail. On the other hand, if you wake up every day excited to see what's to come, you'll be able to successfully run your business as long as you want.

Sometimes entrepreneurs lose that passion a bit. This is usually temporary, and can be alleviated with some time away from the business. Take the day off. Take a vacation. Then come back refreshed and rejuvenated.

## **Hard to Disconnect**

The problem with being passionate about what you do *and* a workaholic is that sometimes you won't know when to shut it off. Your business won't seem like work to you, which will make it easy to work long into the wee hours of morning. Your spouse might not see it as a perk of marriage, though.

Don't let work permanently dictate your life! It's assumed that the [divorce rate among entrepreneurs](#) is fairly high, due to the workload, though no studies have been conducted. It's up to you to make sure your family is your top priority. Keep the communication with your family open so that they know what to expect from you as an entrepreneur. If you will be unavailable for family activities for the next several months, let them know now, and plan to take off some time when you can come up for air.

Keep work at work. Don't bring it home if you can help it. This is especially important if you work from home. Once you're done for the day, resist the urge to check your email

or get on your computer again. This is a challenge for workaholics, but being strict about this rule will help you maintain your personal relationships.

## **Flexible and Adaptable**

If there's one lesson entrepreneurs can learn from this world of 6-second attention spans, ever-changing social media platforms, and technology that changes at the speed of light, it is this: the world is in flux. Businesses that are built to succeed will be agile and ready to change for whatever comes.

Look at larger corporations. They tend to be slow to adopt new technologies, simply because of the layers of approval necessary to implement them. As a small business owner, you'll have the advantage. The only approval needed is your own. Be open to new ways of doing things, new opportunities, and new challenges, and be willing to acclimate as necessary.

## **Big Visions**

It's an example that's been overplayed, but Steve Jobs — once an entrepreneur — was a visionary. He saw the big picture and brought on the right people to connect the dots from where he was in the moment to where he wanted to take the company.

If you're a "doer," this might be hard. If you focus on the "right now" rather than your five-year plan, it will take some adjusting to stretch your strategy beyond today. But if you can see the possibilities, the potential your business has, you'll be in a category all your own, that your competitors can't possibly compete with.

## **Thrill of Something New**

Just like a blank canvas inspires painters to create something that's never existed before, entrepreneurs, too, relish in the newness of creation. If the idea of developing a company from scratch — from your own hands — stimulates you, you'll make an excellent entrepreneur.

Many business owners aren't satisfied with starting just one business. After all, eventually the newness and shininess wears off, and they're left wanting more. That's when they become serial entrepreneurs, and the real fun begins.

## **Role Juggler**

Entrepreneurs also know that in order to succeed, they must be adept at taking on multiple roles — everything from making coffee and taking out the trash to cold calling potential customers to recording finances in the accounting software. This phase doesn't last forever, but successful business owners are always well-versed in the

various areas of their companies, and are always able to dive in and help when necessary.

Just don't get too comfortable with managing multiple roles.

Once you get your business launched and bringing in revenue, be ready to delegate. A herd relies on one another to find the water or the final destination. Don't go it alone. Find people who are smarter than you at different tasks, like accounting, marketing, or design, so that you can go back to doing what you do best: running your business. Start out with part-time help if finances are still a concern, then graduate to full-time employees when you can afford it.

### **Are You Ready?**

If this section got your blood coursing through your veins and you identified with several of the characteristics of entrepreneurs, you likely would make a fantastic entrepreneur. Read on to get clues that you're ready to start your journey in self employment right now in the following section.