

The Pattern of the Climb: a Guide to the age of Entrepreneurial Innovative Success

In June 2014, the President of the United States, Barack Obama visited my hometown to promote technology innovation in manufacturing. The President took a tour of TechShop, a membership-based manufacturing workshop located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. TechShop members share high tech equipment to reduce start-up costs for the small movers and shakers of the business world. This type of entrepreneurial ingenuity represents the movers and shakers of the economy because this group recognizes a vision and produces quicker results through innovation. This entrepreneurial innovation sparks insight for solving some of the world's biggest issues. As Peter Drucker emphasizes in his work Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practice and Principles, entrepreneurship is a distinct pattern of behavior. This insightful pattern of behavior is not reserved for one particular personality; it is ready for all those that embark on the innovation and insight-seeking journey.

Similar to the entrepreneurial journey, climbing the world's tallest peak, Mount Everest is the act of setting out on a daring journey that others have attempted, but not all have succeeded. The entrepreneurial journey is set like the stages of the Mount Everest climb but still maintains challenging aspects. As the abstract to the 2016 Peter Drucker Forum clearly notes, "While the journey towards an entrepreneurial society is by no means a straight-line progression towards a well-defined destination, broad cultural changes have brought entrepreneurialism into the mainstream."¹ Just as the Mount Everest climbers work from one stage to the next, entrepreneurs work in a pattern from finding a guide to descending into bliss.

Finding a Guide

The beginning of any journey begins with planning and consultation. Hiring a guide is the first step to climbing Mount Everest as an amateur safely. Although a climber can complete

the journey in solitude, finding a mentor to aid you through the risky areas and in the decision-making process is necessary to improve the probability of success exponentially.

The current age of entrepreneurship has risen mainly due to previous ages of mentorship. For instance, in TechShop, many entrepreneurs collaborate and guide one another in the utilization of different machinery and methodology. The individual entrepreneur almost instantaneously acquires an entire team of mentors who she can mentor as well.

Furthermore, the modern day entrepreneur can manufacture the perfect guide to the current age of innovation. The combination of live support systems, YouTube videos, and greater social media connections to the most successful movers and shakers in any field continues to drive entrepreneurs on a pattern of success. The lethal combination to success is piecing together the most significant part of each mentoring entity to create her perfect guide.

Base Camp- The preparation

“It [entrepreneurship] requires a good many people who know what they are supposed to do, want to do it, are motivated towards doing it, and are supplied with both the tools and continuous reaffirmation.”¹

“For no alpine peak fires imagination like Mount Everest.”ⁱⁱ

At Mount Everest, the base camp is arguably the most important stage of the journey. In this stage, a climber will meet her fellow climbers and forge relationships. She will also pack supplies at the base camp. If she under-packs oxygen, food, or first aid materials, she could not survive with the best guide on the mountain. At Base Camp, the climber must also mentally prepare for the trip. She will rely on the knowledge and data passed down from previous successful climbers and her fellow climbers who will hopefully support her when she slips.

¹ Drucker, Peter. *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. 155.

Many entrepreneurs have passed down the path to success. In the tech age, the modern entrepreneur must innovate not invent. The first unique trait of the modern entrepreneur is that she does not have to invent the wheel, the spokes, or maybe even the entity the wheel will move. This technology driven preparation is the start-up age. In order to spark innovation and fuel a start-up, the entrepreneur must gather the tools that are provided by predecessors while creating a support system of colleagues to promote work during times of imminent failure. This support system must push the entrepreneur's idea until the brink of insight, the beginning of climb.

Icefall

*"Like an amusement park ride, the thrill and fear intertwine."*ⁱⁱ

Mount Everest's Icefall is the first sign of danger for the climber and a warning of greater hardship in the near future. The large glacial structure is difficult to ascend but manageable with proper use of safety gear. The Icefall provokes fear but the pattern still stands. If this path is followed and the climber enjoys the thrill more than fearing the challenge, success is only a few stages away.

The Icefall is the entrepreneur's financial and economic tools. Using financial services and banking as a tool in a proper manner leads to a safer and more pleasant trek to success. Many of the original failures of an entrepreneur is poor navigation of the slippery slope of investors and financing the big idea for the start-up or new small business. Innovation is lost when one does not continue to enjoy the thrill and imagine reaching the next resting stage.

Camp 1-Valley of Silence

"This is a vast, flat area of endless snow, deep crevasses and mountain walls frequently washed by avalanches. Steady business awaits but need to be alert for sudden crashes and failures."

“Prepare to jump into the crevasses if need be but more importantly think of an alternate route out.”ⁱⁱ

The Valley of Silence is the calm before the climber discovers reality. Until this stage, the climb seems to fulfill the thrill-seeker’s dream. However, the vast dangerous area of white reminds the climbers of their long journey ahead. Any climber must possess alertness for and recognition of sudden changes.

Entrepreneurs face sudden changes where innovative forms of adaptation are required to survive. Otherwise, the project, business, or plan was worthless. A majority of failing situations occur from natural surroundings changing from the entrepreneur’s slight movements in a new direction. It is not very possible to prevent these failures but to instead adapt to the new surroundings and persevere. The entrepreneur must seek refuge in solitude of thought and then search for an alternative method for success.

Camp 2

“After an endless, slow march through the silent valley, you reach at last a rocky patch, at the foot of the icy Lhotse wall. This marks camp 2. This place is absolutely stunning. Clouds roll in from the lower ranges of the Himalayas, up the valley and into the camp. While acclimatizing, we spend time looking for cool old climbing gear; left here by all of Everest’s climbing history. This is also the last chance to get a decent, prepared meal. We eat all we are handed because soon we’ll be surviving on instants only.

Don’t camp too close to the Everest face, since it avalanches once in a while. Although tempted to idly hang around camp, bring yourself to take walks to the Lhotse face. It will speed acclimatization and relive altitude problems. The walks force you to breathe deeper and faster, thus saturating your body with more oxygen.”ⁱⁱⁱ

After surviving the first trial of perseverance, the climber reaches her last rest with whole food and leveled land. The movers and shakers before them left presents of gear. Additionally, climbers execute second preparation in the form of planning for sustainable sustenance.

The entrepreneur faces one last opportunity to quit before the real ascent. She takes the time to examine the near future and plan for the rough terrain and physically strenuous tasks. This stage is the last time she will enjoy the comfort of the world she knows to overcome a seemingly impossible obstacle. The obstacle is usually a hurdle that forces the entrepreneur to plan a route of ascent. It is always discouraging to hit a block of innovation. However, in the age of entrepreneurship, there is a bevy of routes and tools to propel the innovator over the wall. For instance, she might be able to jetpack over if her entrepreneur friend finds his insight over the wall.

Camp 3- Lhotse Wall

“Entrepreneurship is "risky" mainly because so few of the so-called entrepreneurs know what they are doing.”²

“The climb will be either easy or hard, depending on weather. A dry, cold season means sheer, blue ice. Maintain your crampons sharp. Deep snow makes the climb easier, but increase the risk of avalanche. After C3, you will traverse the wall towards the Yellow Band and the Black Turtle. These are rocky sections on the wall, secured by a tangle of old and new ropes. Check the ropes well and watch for rock falls from climbers above you. Another traverse takes you to the foot of the last wall to C4. This part is steep but not very high and soon you’ll put your nose above its edge, thus entering the land of the spirits – the Deathzone”ⁱⁱⁱ

The plan to face the biggest mental hurdle is finally set into motion. The entrepreneur reaches the point of preparation of route. She can only move in the upward direction. She is not

² Ibid, 34

quite aware of the potential eerie death and more difficult challenges at the top. However, the entrepreneur is following the pattern of preparation and is sure that she is moving on the correct path in the correct direction. Other entrepreneurs or supporters might inadvertently hinder her abilities, but if she perseveres and remains focused and aware of her short-term tasks, she will make it to the top.

Camp 4- The Death Zone

“Fear is always worse than reality.”ⁱⁱ

The Death Zone features a dense, dark, and cold plateau. The climber experiences a short sleepless rest before continuing into the abyss. The end begins to seem farther away and good spirits seem to evolve into an archaic ideal. The climber must remain brave and remember the summit is just a few short hours away.

The entrepreneur must overcome fear of being misguided and focus her energy on the reality of the situation. In order to move truly in the right direction and finish the journey that will affect society as a whole entity, the entrepreneur must shed the fears of failure. Reality dictates that success in following the stages of innovation is far less important than succumbing to adversaries or adverse conditions. Failure remains in sight but avoidable due to refocusing reality.

The Summit- Technology as the lifeline

“But there is one more obstacle in your way. The Knife Ridge. You will gasp upon seeing it. It is steep and looks truly nasty. The ridge towers almost freely over Nepal and Tibet, it’s sharp and very steep. Hillary Step is in the middle somewhere, a rock climb in the sky.”ⁱⁱ

The climber spends most of the last stage clipping in and out with pure focus on the achievement of the end goal. Ironically, this obstacle encompasses both the most beautiful

images and ugly dangers of the climb. With one small slip or miss clipping, the climber plummets straight into the awing landscape below. Additionally, the climber's oxygen tank begins to play its most pivotal role. It is the lifeline to bring the climber to success and then back down to safety. The climber must use enough oxygen to survive the final ascent while preserving enough oxygen for the descent back to base camp.

Digital technology has played an accelerating role in the transformation into the entrepreneurial age by dramatically lowering barriers to entry in many industries, by providing new tools for managing knowledge creation and sharing, and by enabling new forms of continuous learning. Today, the entire global canvas of entrepreneurs can use digital technology and communication tools as a lifeline for their innovation. There is a limited amount of technology. If the entrepreneur uses the correct form of technology at the correct timing with correct application, the entrepreneur can expand her innovation to its peak.

The Descent

“Entrepreneurship is not ‘natural’; it is not ‘creative’. It is work”³

“The Best Sleep you will ever have!”ⁱⁱ

The climber's descent is bitter sweet. She has accomplished her goal and trekked the long and dangerous road to reach the summit. The final stage is a form of retirement because she is moving once again toward the resting area. Concurrently, she is well aware that she can ascend the mountain again. The next time, it will be a new day with different climbers and maybe even a new guide. However, the patterned path remains stagnant and the dangers avoided the first trek might be inevitable on the next journey. The total thirty-hour climb is relatively short but its impact will stay with the climber forever.

When the entrepreneur finds success and contributes to society her innovative solution to a problem, she must work toward a break. The journey to success is filled with intense stages of rigorous work. Therefore, it is important to take a break after a big success to bask in the sunlight of accomplishment. However, this celebration must be short because there is another tour of climbers ready to follow the same pattern and innovate the recent innovation. As a result, the final stage lies in reutilizing and adapting this innovation to better society. Essentially, the entrepreneur cannot remain idle. In order to understand the best utilization of her innovation, she should stay in tuned with society even from the CEO desk.

Your Fellow Climbers-Societal, Political, and Economical Push for an Entrepreneurial Society

On a climb, one might be on the verge of death. However, a fellow climber with a little extra oxygen can promote another climber to the next stage. It is no longer an era of leaving climbing tools for future climbers. This era is certainly the entrepreneurial age because there are many “fellow climbers” who are preparing to aid other climbers.

The modern era’s political and economic infrastructure promote to the fullest extent entrepreneurship. Grant funding for innovative ideas are the cornerstone of the Western world, and market investment in technology start-ups drives job creation. During the entire entrepreneurial process, finance and creativity roadblocks can unintentionally stifle an otherwise successful entrepreneurial idea. Political grants combat these preventable failures and create an innovation platform for entrepreneurs to continue trekking.

The millennial generation is the societal promoter of the entrepreneur. From tuning into the television program, *Shark Tank* to downloading a favorite new smartphone application, millennials are ready to consume the entrepreneur’s products and services. By creating a societal

demand for innovative and practical outputs, the entrepreneur supply can only increase to suffice demand. The new generation matters because we want our fellow millennials to produce newer age outputs. The millennials create the demand that only entrepreneurs can fulfill, and the entrepreneurs cater to these demands.

Conclusion

The age of entrepreneurship is here because it is a time of ascending a great peak of adaptation improvement and technology driven innovation. Peter Drucker predicted this phenomenon in his conceptual theory of entrepreneurship and innovation. “Entrepreneurship, then, is behavior rather than personality trait. And its foundation lies in concept and theory rather than in intuition.”⁴ Entrepreneurship is not certainly reserved for thrill seekers and risk-takers. Conversely, it is looking for those willing to find innovation in each stage of the process. Entrepreneurship is not waiting for the insight and innovation to occur; it is creating innovation with the aid of the tools provided. It is the active journey of embarking into the unknown search for accomplishment and novelty.

⁴ Ibid, 31.

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- [i] Global Peter Drucker Forum. “Program Abstract.” Peter Drucker Society, 2013. <http://www.druckerforum.org/2016/the-event/program-abstract/>
 - [ii] “The Route”. ExplorersWeb Inc. Accessed <http://www.mounteverest.net/expguide/route.htm>
 - [iii] Drucker, Peter. *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
 - [iv] O’Toole, James P., Mauriello, Tracie, and Deborah Todd. “Obama speaks in Pittsburgh about tech, jobs.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 17, 2014. <http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2014/06/17/Obama-arrives-in-Pittsburgh/stories/201406170170>
 - [v] Klein, Gary A. *Seeing What Others Don't: The Remarkable Ways We Gain Insights*. New York: Perseus, 2013.