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### **Title:**

Entrepreneur today – a hard working creator.

I grew up in a family where both my mom and my dad were entrepreneurs. At the age of 6 I was already joining my dad at his business lunches. At the age of 15 I was helping him out with some promotion ideas. At the age of 18 I was a full-time assistant to my parents business deals. I had no doubts applying to a business administration faculty. At the same time I was always interested in art, culture and education. So right after my graduation I got a job at one of the most prominent contemporary art museums in the Russian capital. Well, let's skip this part and just say that it was not at all what I expected. Working at a museum turned out to be a routine and demotivating job. Every day I was asking myself those questions: what am I learning here? What influence do I have on this organization (if any?). If it weren't me, it would be some other recent graduate doing the inventory and ordering glue for educational courses. Not being able to cope with our jobs anymore, my best friend and I decided to start something on our own.

Sitting in my kitchen at 3 a.m we were talking about art, starting your own business at the age of 21, all the difficulties that we'll have to go through. After one (or two) glasses of wine we came up with a name and a slogan that would fit our values. ART FLASH. That's how we would name our yet to be born child. And the slogan – *Making life a masterpiece*. We want to see beauty in everything we do, we want to tell people about art, we want to bring something interesting and creative into everyday life. With the little knowledge that we had, we did some market research and found our niche. Slowly, step by step, we gave birth to our child, nourishing it like a little flower.

We created a project that consisted of 2 main parts: the first part is an on-line store with t-shirts and jumpers. On them we put prints of contemporary artists from Russia: oil painters, illustrators, graphic designers, photographers. The second part is an educational project: using different channels we are telling people about both classic and contemporary art. We use our social media, our blog, different events and educational cards to tell our audience something new every day.

After only half a year my partner left the team and I was left alone. During the next 2 years the team was growing and shrinking, going up and going down. It was like a small boat in a huge

ocean. Sometimes it was clear skies; sometimes it was stormy and windy. Sometimes I thought the storm is going to be so strong that it will take our little boat down forever, like the one on Aivazovsky's «The Ninth Wave» painting. But as we went further, the situations that seemed to us like «storms» before turned into grey clouds with a few raindrops. We were learning from our own mistakes. And with every breaking wave, with every new customer, our boat was getting stronger and stronger.

Ok, enough about us. Let's come closer to the topic of the essay.  
Who is an entrepreneur? It is such a broad question, that I don't even know where to start.

An entrepreneur for me, is most importantly, a person who **sees the BIG PICTURE**. You don't just think about accounting and closing the balance sheet. You don't just think how to transport products from point A to point B. You don't just pay taxes and sign contracts. You don't just talk to clients and make offers. You do all of the above and much more. You see your business (no matter how big it is) as a machine with various parts. If one parts breaks down, then the machine stops working. You need to take care of all the parts at the same time and you need to make sure they run smoothly.

An entrepreneur is a **curious person**. His head is always full of questions. Walking down the street he notices something and he writes it down to research the question later that day. He always reads a lot. Unfortunately, he doesn't have so much free time to read Dostoyevsky anymore, but he for sure does read a lot of articles related to his field.

An entrepreneur is a very **communicative person**. When you start your own business, you have to talk to an enormous amount of people. Sometimes you go knocking on doors and offer your products or services. You do cold and warm calls. You talk to delivery people, lawyers, consultants, interns and friends of friends who might be useful for your business. I don't think that a successful entrepreneur can close down to the world and just sit alone in his room. Well, unless he's developing software to sell it for \$1 bln. But then again, if he doesn't show it to the world, he's not an entrepreneur.

An entrepreneur is a **brave person**. He's not scared of troubles, problems and conflicts that might emerge on the way. And if he is scared, he grabs his fear, puts it deep in his pocket and tries to never take it out again. At the beginning there are millions of thoughts running through his head like: is it going to work out? Maybe I should just go back to my full-time job? Maybe I will fail and everyone will laugh at me? What if no one buys my product? If he is able to cope with those difficult thoughts and fears, then there's nothing that can stop him.

In today's world, an entrepreneur **has to be fast**. He has to learn fast, react fast, make fast decisions. Every day we receive enormous amounts of information – through TV, newspapers, social media, billboards, calls. A smart entrepreneur has to learn how to get rid of all the «noise» - all the information that is not useful for him, that is taking up his time and attention, taking the focus away from the main thing. I usually dedicate around 20-30 minutes every day to read some articles and catch up on the recent news, but that's about it. An entrepreneur in 2016 has to know (in most cases) how Instagram works, who Mark Zuckerberg is and how to pin cool things on Pinterest. I know a case when apartments were successfully sold through Instagram. Whatever works.

To launch a start up in today's ever-changing, fast and unpredictable environment you need to have a set of entrepreneurial skills. That goes without saying. You also need a good team, because unless you're making cookies in your kitchen and selling them to your neighbours, you will need help such as: reliable partners, sales people, interns, people working at the production and whoever you need for your specification. An entrepreneur has to be a part of the team, but at the same time oversee how all the elements work.

You need to keep track of what's happening on the market – always do research on your competitors, find out new inventions in your field, see how you can improve your offer to satisfy the demanding customers. And the last, but not the least, you need to be a bit lucky. Of course, it has to be mentioned that your product or service should have some demand on the market.

There are many more skills that can be named, but the ones that I listed above are the most important ones for me personally. I think that educational and governmental institutions, as well as institutions formed by people themselves, can help individuals develop those skills.

Business and management programs in universities often have a lot of case studies, group presentations and tasks, tough deadlines etc. Mostly it's all theoretical and once you get out there – to the real world – it all becomes much more difficult than it seemed on paper or in your classroom. I think the best option is to start some kind of «**business incubators**» in universities, so that students can develop their ideas, do real market research, pitch their ideas to real investors. They can get feedback, both positive and negative. Some of those ideas in business incubators actually grow into huge businesses with hundreds of employees.

Society can help young entrepreneurs by organizing meetings for small business owners. At those events people usually talk about problems that they're facing, share their experiences; get some new contacts and even clients. It is really good for networking, in my opinion. Sometimes at those events you can even find investors, shareholders or partners.

The government can create grants or governmental orders for entrepreneurs. Set up interesting challenges, have teams sign up for them and compete against each other. For example, 2 really young and small architectural bureaus recently won an opportunity to create the design of new streets and subway stations in Moscow. What an amazing way to tell people about your start up!

But can an entrepreneur be helpful for the society? Can he create a better environment? For sure. Firstly, he might do so with sole products or services that he provides. Such as selling bags for separating garbage, providing fast and safe transportation like Uber, promoting healthier lifestyle and so on. Secondly, entrepreneurs share their experiences with people; a lot of them are open, friendly and simply nice. Once they get their business on track, they try to help others - the ones with limited abilities and lack of opportunities. They are the ones who donate to charity, start charity funds, and organize fundraising events.

Entrepreneurs help their local communities by creating jobs. By doing so, they are at the same time helping other local businesses grow, because their employees would go to the local hairdressers, gyms, florists, grocery stores. Small business owners hire people themselves when they don't yet have a HR department. In a small team employees are working hard, they do many tasks not in one field, but in many. They learn from their employer, working together side by side.

Once the company grows and has more than 50 employees it's getting harder for the leader to communicate with everyone and keep track of all the everyday tasks of his employees. I can't speak from my own experience, because in my small business we're only a team of 4, but I can still try to speculate. In order to keep the entrepreneurial spirit going, the leader, in my opinion, should be as open as possible. He should come up to his employees on a daily basis, ask them how the job is going, what difficulties are his employees facing, answer their questions. Be a teacher and a mom at the same time. A good idea would be to have a commission salary for the sales department. Every sales manager would feel like he has his own small venture inside the organization. They would be more motivated to call clients, offer company's products or services, make more profit both for themselves and the company. An entrepreneur should organize both study and fun events for his team, where he would share his knowledge, people would communicate between departments and learn from each other. They should feel like a part of something really important, but each of them is a part that is very valued by the business owner and colleagues.

A perfect example of an entrepreneur for me – probably every second person would write that – is Richard Branson. He is a type of **LEADER** that I want to be in the future. Despite all the fame and money, he seems to be very down to Earth. He is sharing so much of his knowledge with the world! He writes books, makes movies, performs at various events, read lectures in colleges, and has a cool and engaging Instagram account – that is a perfect example of how an Entrepreneur can contribute the Entrepreneurial thinking into society. The more business owners will do that, the more people will be motivated to finally put their ideas into action, leave the fears behind and start doing what they love.

According to Peter Drucker *"Entrepreneurship is not 'natural'; it is not 'creative'. It is work."* I don't completely agree with this statement. I 100% agree with the fact that being an entrepreneur is hard work. You never rest. You work much more than 8 or 9 hours a day. You fall asleep with your laptop and your phone in your bed. You have endless "To-do lists" and "Idea folders". But at the same time I do think that being an Entrepreneur is something connected to being creative. Not meaning that you can paint or dance well. I think that coming up with innovative, spontaneous and life-changing ideas is creativity. I think that making a name, a slogan, a mission statement for your small business is creativity. Choosing the colours of your web site or filters for your corporate Instagram account, ordering packaging for your products or cool new business cards for your team is creativity. Doing something new, something that you've never done before – that's what creativity means to me.

Summarizing everything above, I would say that Entrepreneurs are a huge and a very important part of our society. They are creative thinkers, hard workers, fast decision makers, brave and communicative people. I really hope that one day I will be able to be called a successful Entrepreneur. I would be happy to share my knowledge with local society, students and other business owners. But for now, I have to get back to work – a to-do list of 50 bullet points for today cannot wait.