

Entrepreneurial Mindset

By Karel Murray, CSP

At what point do we figure out we aren't like everyone else? For me, becoming an adult became a goal in itself. My mother drilled into my head that I must be responsible for my own financial support because prince charming may not be in my life plan. Yup, a real positive influence that I didn't learn to appreciate until I was in my 30's when I finally set out to build my own business.

My journey to adulthood had me envisioning my own home decorated the way I wanted and a checking account. How I funded that account never entered my mind until I procured my first job as a waitress. It wasn't until then that I understood how hard that task would be. Working 8 hour weekend shifts racing back and forth from the kitchen to tables filled with fussy babies and petulant parents became a means to an end to procure tips, cash paychecks and deposit those earnings into a fund that would eventually support me in the manner to which I was accustomed.

Okay, I was dreaming but it sure sounded like a reasonable plan.

Waitressing wasn't my life calling, no matter how much I enjoyed the banter of friendly patrons who came in daily. I became tired of smelling like country fried steak. I determined that perhaps my efforts would be better spent working in a women's clothing store at the mall – a move up in professionalism.

The company immediately hired me to work in the women's lingerie department. How was I to know that I would have to watch middle aged women try and squeeze into girdles two sizes too small as their faces turned purple with indignation at the weight gain? Only now, as one of those women, can I appreciate their sheer frustration in never finding anything in my size. And for three months I submitted recommendations for the layout of the department and how to improve the customer interaction. For those three months, the owners looked at me with frustration and indicated that perhaps I should just concentrate on the job rather than trying to change things.

Okay, I was dreaming that a business would actually want to make their processes efficient and profitable, but it sure felt like a reasonable plan of action.

In my high school years, I worked in a hospital as a clerk for the nursing staff. This role educated me about leadership and dignity. I watched how some doctors rightly earned the scorn of the staff because of their arrogance and rudeness while other physicians treated the staff as a vital part of their medical team and earned respect and cooperation as a result.

For the first 15 years of my working life, I worked for other people. The lessons gained regarding the delivery of customer service, how to manage and supervise others in task completion, motivation, and balancing work and my personal life have stayed with me.

But through it all, I always felt like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. Little by little, I realized that I was losing my sense of wonder, excitement and yearned for the joy of creating something that was mine alone.

Do you remember the sheer delight of selling your first cup of lemonade and hearing that dime hit the bottom of your cash cup, knowing that it was the start of something big? How people who walked or drove by would wave, smile and shout words of encouragement? I recall the lessons of timing; that lemonade sells best when it's hot outside and not in October when the leaves are blowing around the stand, that eventually your customer base will want variety and that costs go up and that it is possible that income can plummet. These are hard lessons for a child of any age.

Now I understand that I truly had an entrepreneurial mindset from an early age – constantly thinking of new ways to earn money within the confines of my situation. I learned that some hyped programs for home based businesses only made the person selling the plan rich (I spent 8 hours a day typing contact information off of thousands of coupons onto a form in my typewriter, only to make less than \$75 a week for the effort). Eventually by thirty-five I realized that I needed to be the master of my own ship – to find a career that allowed me to utilize all my skills, determine my schedule and set my level of commitment.

As a result, a business owner was born.

The joy of being in business for yourself is unparalleled. I've experienced the pleasure of profitable years and the despair of wondering what happened and how will I keep my business up and running. Through it all, I've never lost the belief in myself to make the money I'll need to thrive, even if it means re-inventing myself in order to adapt to shifts in technology and the world view.

Following your heart and making your own opportunities is the first step to career freedom. There's a place for those who

- Make the best cupcakes ever
- Organize an office or a closet
- Re-build car engines
- Use their voices to record audio books
- Write speeches that inspire
- Train dogs to help humans in need
- Gets cats down from trees
- Deliver correspondence between offices
- Design applications that revolutionize cell phone use
- Educate children through nanny services

Entrepreneurs aren't like everyone else. We don't like being categorized, we don't believe in limitations and we thrive on applying every aspect of our personalities and mind capabilities into our daily lives.

Go on... step up to your ability and don't look back.

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