

Dreaming Your Way To Success

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I had a break through today in my thinking about being an entrepreneur. I have been curious for quite some time now about what kind of person is drawn to becoming an entrepreneur? Specifically, what are the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs? There have been many books written, many seminars presented, and numerous MBA classes offered to help people learn how to be successful entrepreneurs. They offer skills, techniques, models, tips, and "insider" secrets. My break through came when I began wondering if perhaps one of the critical characteristics of successful entrepreneurs is something that cannot be taught by traditional methods-the characteristic of dreaming.

Every once in a while I come across a different kind of entrepreneur. I meet someone who dreams bigger than their background, education and experience says then can. This person is someone I call an "entrepreneurial dreamer." They never stop dreaming regardless of their circumstances or obstacles. This is not to say they do not fail or get discouraged, but they are the kind of entrepreneur who simply creates another dream when their current dream dissolves. I also do not mean this in a negative sense, in that they are somehow irresponsible or negligent, but that they do not allow discouragement or disappointment to crush them.

Are you an entrepreneurial dreamer? Are you the kind of successful entrepreneur who seems to have an almost innate ability to dream bigger than your experience, history or environment allows? Do you have the desire, the passion and the power to keep on going even in the face of insurmountable odds?

If these qualities and characteristics describe you, then I would like to ask you a couple questions:

1. Have you identified what your dreams are by writing them down?
2. Are you living out your dreams? Perhaps your dream is to be financially independent or building a multi-million dollar business. Maybe it is having a business where you can determine your schedule or how much time you work this month.
3. What is keeping you from dreaming bigger than you do now? Maybe you have had a recent setback financially or too many things are taking up your precious time. Identify those things that are holding you back and find a way to move past them.
4. How focused are you on expanding your dreams?

Whatever your dream is and regardless of how well developed it is, I believe most successful entrepreneurial dreamers go through a process.

THE PROCESS OF DREAMING

I meet a lot of entrepreneurs, some are successful and others are simply looking for a clean exit strategy. As I talk with the successful ones and ask them about how they achieve their dreams, I have found a common process they go through. The process is

not linear, $A + B = C$, but cyclical. It all starts with a passion to dream big.

DARING TO DREAM. This is often the first phase the successful entrepreneurial dreamer goes through. It is the realization that they have the ability to dream. Yes, everyone dreams, but successful entrepreneurs keep dreaming even when everyone and everything is out to destroy their dream. They are not a "normal dreamer." The normal person easily gives up their dream and follows the crowd, the successful entrepreneurial dream keeps going.

Action Step: Most dreams come in moments of inspiration, not perspiration. Do you give yourself time to do nothing but dream (not day dream)? Think about where you find your creativity. Commit to doing something creative and stimulating at least 2 times this month for the purpose of increasing your dreams.

DEFINING YOUR DREAM-once you have found their new dream, the successful entrepreneur realizes they must talk about it, think about it, plan for it, and eventually define it.

Action Step: Do you have a dream? What specifically is it? Describe it in as much detail as possible. Write down every aspect of it. Revise it. Have others critique it. Memorize it. Tell others about it. Revise it some more.

DEATH OF YOUR DREAM-something happens, a setback, a crisis or a failure and your dream is crushed. It is at this point that many potentially successful entrepreneurs give up. They choose the well-trodden path back to "normality" or corporate life. The successful entrepreneur grieves their dream's death. Then they examine what went wrong and what they can apply to their next dream to make it even more successful.

Action Step: Write or talk about your dream's death as if it has already occurred. What will that look like and what will that mean for you and your future direction? What are 3 things that could kill your dream? What can you do to prevent those things from happening? What will you do if they occur next month?

DISCOVERING YOUR DREAM-this is more of a rebirth than a re-discovery. When the entrepreneur's dream dies, the dreamer must resurrect it. However, they must also realize that it is no longer the same dream. They are no longer the same person. They have experienced death and now their dream must be "reborn" and take on a life of its own.

Action Step: Meet with at least two experienced entrepreneurs and talk about your dream. Ask them to critique it. Listen as objectively as you can. You may walk away discouraged, but take their advice to heart and use it to make your dream better-to give it "new life."

DEVELOPING YOUR DREAM-you have come so far, but don't stop now. Defining your dream can be such a consuming effort that people forget the purpose of the dream is

not to have a dream just for the sake of having one, but to implement their dream. You must take positive action steps to begin implementing and realizing your dream.

Action Step: What 3 things are keeping you from acting on your dream right now? Outline the steps you need to take in order to make your dream become a reality, then set a time line for accomplishing these steps.

DIRECTING YOUR DREAM. Once you are on your way to entrepreneurial success through developing your dream, you must learn how to most effectively channel your energy and resources so they produce the greatest returns. You must continually focus on revising your dream and implementing your dream in order for it to fulfill you in return.

Action Step: Find someone to hold you accountable for defining, developing and directing your dream.

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