

The Yin and Yang of Successful Entrepreneurship

By Alan Manly



Everyone has an opinion about what makes an entrepreneur successful. Motivated by genuine interest or natural envy it's a great topic to get any BBQ talking. The latest book on what makes entrepreneurs tick will surely be referenced highlighting gobsmacking success or sorrowful failure. But personality analysis is not new. One concept for

understanding these traits that became popular in China during the 3rd century BC is what is known as yin and yang. Yin (dark side) and Yang, (bright side), describe how opposite or contrary forces are complementary, interconnected, and interdependent. It sounds complicated but it makes an interesting tool to understand the traits of successful entrepreneurs.

Tenacity

A bright side, Yang, characteristic. Tenacity is the favoured word for entrepreneurs who persist and overcome adversity. A bulldog like spirit focused on success. However, on the dark side, Yin, when no one is around we may see a person trapped by the over commitment. Lying awake at nights on the cusp of cutting and running if only there



was an obvious way out. In Yin mode our bulldog is akin to a trembling Chihuahua.

Flexibility

This can be a very challenging trait with entrepreneurs. Often seen as Yin, no sooner does the entrepreneur inspire the team with a rousing speech, displaying true leadership and determination to follow a committed path, then the very next day a change of heart sees an all bets off situation overturning yesterday’s commitments. The Yang is that flexibility, be it a little erratic, can be the right response to a major threat to survival of the venture.

Passion

Entrepreneurs are nothing if not passionate. Perceived as a Yang trait, passion when expressed by an entrepreneur, can be inspirational and motivate a team to the next stage on nothing more than sharing the dream. This passion can of course morph into self-delusional Yin, leaving those being lead to lose faith in the entrepreneur’s lack of reality.

Self-Confidence

Generally regarded as a bright side Yang characteristic, self-confidence is mandatory for a successful entrepreneur. If entrepreneurs were to rely on others telling them that they have a good idea few if any great innovations would have seen the light of day. The Yin of this characteristic is the risk that the required self- confidence can produce a shameless self-promoter who overwhelms the support team resulting in outbursts of their darkest thoughts.

Risk Taking

The word entrepreneur is synonymous with risk taking. Depending on your attitude it can be Yin or Yang. The optimist always sees risk as Yang, and lives in positive expectation that Yang will win out. The pessimist knows all risk is Yin, and looks to see failure before others can see any outcome.

Vision

Entrepreneurs are big on vision. This is definitely a gleaming Yang, bright side trait. Their inherent ability

to dream of a better place with their still to be developed product or service is the essence of what entrepreneurial vision is about. The better place is not too distant in the future. The service or product may not be in production but when it arrives it will really amaze all concerned.

Opportunistic

Entrepreneurs can bloom at anytime in their lives. This is definitely a Yang of being an entrepreneur. It is never the wrong time to take that opportunity that has suddenly been presented. The Yin of this trait is that those around a late blooming entrepreneur may be blindsided by a seemingly sudden change of career direction at an unexpected time.

Personality traits of successful entrepreneurs are akin to other facets of life in that they have a yin and yang. Successful entrepreneurs are the Yang and those still waiting for success linger in the yin of the same person. The difference is often just in the timing.



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