



## Discover The Entrepreneur Within

Almost everyone I meet is seeking meaning and fulfillment in their lives. This is true of the young and not so young alike. Some of them are just starting off while others have accumulated the means to explore their passions. Job, or even financial, security does not produce that warm halo of comfort it once did. There seems to be something missing from the essence of life.

Are you one of these people who has a yearning to do more with your life? You look around and you see so a plethora of activity; people creating businesses and ideas with an abandon. Does a thought sometimes nag you: “Could I, too, be an entrepreneur? Could I be creating things that feed my passion?”

Let me take a guess. You have a sense of adventure and you like to travel. You love experiencing food, music, and ideas from many cultures. You have the talent and enthusiasm to collaborate with people from every corner of the globe, the capacity to influence customers through social media and the ability to deliver goods speedily and inexpensively, all of which give rise to many opportunities. If anything, the array of choices is overwhelming. The first line from *A Tale of Two Cities* captures this dichotomy perfectly: “*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...*”

If all these trends are pointing towards entrepreneurship, why aren't you rushing to the promised land of entrepreneurship? *Why are you still wondering? Why haven't you jumped into the fray?*

The most likely reason is *fear*. Fear of the unknown. Fear of risk. Fear of failure. Fear of not being good enough. Fear of not being creative enough. Fear that your idea will be laughed at. Fear of making the wrong choice. Fear of losing what you currently have. Fear of fear.

*Are you the only one with this fear?* No, this is called the human condition. If you take the plunge, is success assured? Of course not. No one can guarantee success. But factors such as hard work, commitment, vision, discipline, and an intense desire to create something do increase the probability of success.

Peter Drucker explained, *entrepreneurship is a process*. It is a practice, not some divine gift bestowed upon a handful of people. There are steps to follow, work to be done, things to think and re-think, and customers and partners to please. But, it is a process, and it can be learned.

At its core, entrepreneurship is about solving problems, or adding a new delight. *Problem / Solution is the entrepreneur's mantra*. Since problems are all around us, so are opportunities.

Still not sure where to start? Here are ten areas to explore.

First, look within your own life:

- 1) Frustrations
- 2) Things you know can be improved
- 3) Hobbies
- 4) Passions
- 5) Ideas from your travels



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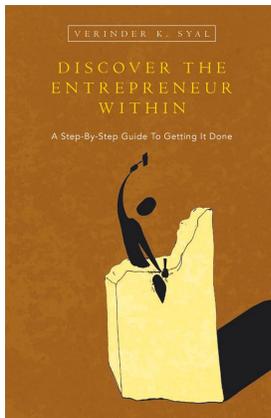
Now look at some of the broader trends:

- 6) Demographics – the ethnic surge, the aging of the population
- 7) Perceptions / Beliefs such as the green movement, water scarcity, GMOs
- 8) Things that just don't make sense, which is what begets ideas like Uber
- 9) Food and Fashion
- 10) Connections: We are connected more than ever, and yet we are more lonely than ever.

There is no shortage of ideas. You just need to look for them with a different set of eyes, a mindset that transcends boundaries and self-imposed limitations. Entrepreneurship is not limited to Silicon Valley; actually technology is only a small percentage of the GDP. You do not have to *create* a new technology; there are much greater possibilities *leveraging* technology.

Perhaps you already have an idea and are wondering how to bring it to fruition. Entrepreneurship is best done as a team sport. Bring together a team of people who share the same vision, passion, and values. However, make sure that they don't just look like you. Embrace people who have different skills, different experiences, and most importantly different thinking patterns. The best teams have a strong level of trust and are not afraid to challenge each other's ideas. Team members are focused on the greater goal, and not on themselves. Responsibilities are clear, people are held accountable, and results are delivered on a timely basis. Great organizational cultures arise from such habits.

Another common fear is the lack of money. There are more funding sources today than ever before, including crowdsourcing, family, friends, and neighbors. Bootstrapping is still my favorite way to start. Entrepreneurship, when done right, actually reduces risk.



Using the approach that has worked well in my classes, consulting, and businesses, I have laid out the entrepreneurial process, step-by-step, in my book *Discover The Entrepreneur Within*. While no book can cover every eventuality, I have focused on the key elements which include a Foundation, Customer, Operations, Looking Within, The Pitch, and The Path Ahead.

*Michelangelo said: "Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to uncover it."* Do you want to liberate this statue within?

The answer may lie in entrepreneurship, as it has through recorded history. The world is deluged with opportunities, springing up at warp speed. If you are willing to embrace the rigors and the freedom of entrepreneurship, a new life beckons.

**Dream big, work hard, embrace the challenge. Get started. Now.**



Verinder K. Syal teaches at Northwestern University, and is also a consultant, mentor, entrepreneur, former business executive, and author. His book, *Discover the Entrepreneur Within*, is available on Amazon.