

Entrepreneur: a career choice

David Cooper Founder, President and CEO of ITSportsNet Ltd.

Cool Companies™ profile page 62

From an early age I knew that I wanted to be an entrepreneur... well that isn't quite true, from an early age I knew I didn't make a very good employee. I always wanted to figure things out for myself and then do them my own way. However, becoming an entrepreneur is not treated like a career path in the same way as becoming a teacher, lawyer, doctor, nurse, architect, etc... (in fact, my guidance councilor strongly suggested I become an architect or engineer). Despite the lack of a defined career path for entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship still flourishes. This article is the Coles Notes for Entrepreneurism 101 I would have liked to have taken back in high school.

Not surprising the first thing to do is learn as much as you can about becoming an entrepreneur. One of the first books I read about entrepreneurship was a cheap paperback called "How to be an Entrepreneur". I've long since lost the book but it gave me one of the greatest pieces of advice I try to pass along at every opportunity, which is "to become an entrepreneur, find some entrepreneurs and hang out with them". This is not a new idea, high schools and

colleges do it with almost every other career and call it job shadowing, work placement, intern, etc. If you want to learn about a job you can learn a lot by reading, but you can learn even more by talking to and hanging out with the people that do the job. Talking to and hanging out with entrepreneurs is also called building your personal network.

At first I was quite intimidated and hesitant to talk to entrepreneurs, I did not want to bother them or waste their time. However, most entrepreneurs are fairly passionate about their business and are more than willing to talk and share their knowledge. In fact, if you manage to corner me and ask me about my current venture ITSportsNet, you are in more danger of not being able to shut me up.

Talking to other entrepreneurs and learning from them is still an important part of my career development today. When I come across a new problem or need to grow a certain area of my business I look around for who is already doing what I want to do and ask them how they do it (I'm not a big fan of trying to re-invent the wheel).

Another important aspect of becoming



an entrepreneur is you need to have an insatiable appetite to learn. As an entrepreneur you will have no supervisor, nor a boss, you will need to figure things out for yourself. Not only will you have to solve all your own problems, but your customers, employers and the whole world will be bringing their problems to you (well, maybe not the whole world, but some days it will seem like it).

My last piece of advice is to become a planner. With any career you need to map it out. If you are going to become a teacher or a lawyer, the steps are pretty well mapped out for you in big bold letters, but, when you take the entrepreneurial path you are going to have to create your own road map, set your own goals and build your own bridges. And coincidentally all these planning and execution skills you learn with your own career are exactly the same skills you need for building a business. Success is never an accident; it is the result of planning and hard work.

WISE WORDS

"It's never too late to be what you might have been."

-- George Elliot

"If you can run one business well, you can run any business well."

-- Richard Branson

IN RETROSPECT...

"640K ought to be enough for anybody."

-- Bill Gates, 1981

"\$100 million dollars is way too much to pay for Microsoft."

-- IBM, 1982

WISE WORDS

"There are two mistakes one can make along the road to truth: not going all the way, and not starting."

-- The Buddha