

4 things entrepreneurs really need for success

By  Anton Ressel

5 Sep 2022

If you Google "The traits of successful entrepreneurs", the usual and expected themes come up - things like passion, resilience, vision, confidence, inspiration, focus, strong leadership abilities, optimism and a willingness to fail.



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It is a popular belief that if you are to make it in business in the long run, you need the courage of a lion, the skin of a rhino, the posturing of a peacock, the wisdom and dexterity of an octopus and the passion of a bull during mating season. Is it any wonder that almost 90% of South Africans elect to seek gainful employment rather than pursue an entrepreneurial journey?

The truth is, the most important trait a budding entrepreneur needs to possess, apart perhaps from the ability to multi-task, is a deflective shield; one that can endure an almost endless stream of missiles being flung at it.

Because the reality is that the most successful entrepreneurs do share a trait - the ability to duck, dodge, catch, juggle and deflect an endless number of trials.

Entrepreneurship is not for everyone primarily because it is a long journey, filled with struggle and hardship, especially in the early startup stages but actually for the long-term as well.

From registering a business to navigating your way through staffing challenges to trying to drive sales to dealing with Sars, UIF and general compliance and all the other

millions of missiles you will duck and dive (and sometimes take as a direct hit), the art of building a business lies in the shape, form and effectiveness of your deflective shield.

This analogy aligns quite closely with some of the more generic and oft-repeated traits inherent in successful entrepreneurs – tenacity, resilience and courage are all important elements of success. However, to be successful as an entrepreneur requires more than just resilience or tenacity.

It requires more than just bravery or the ability to stand back up after being knocked on your ass for the umpteenth time.

If you want to know, here are four things you really need:

- The ability to weather constant storms - what separates true entrepreneurs from mere mortals, or those who have dabbled in starting a business but reverted back to the relative safety and shelter of gainful employment, is the ability to withstand constant shifts, twists, turns and curve balls – for as long as you own a business.
- The ability to make quick and firm decisions and stand by them – hesitancy or fence-sitting is not appropriate when you are building a business.
- A gift for multi-tasking – forget juggling balls, this is more like juggling flaming hot knives with teeth.
- The ability to think operationally and strategically – and often at the same time

What is needed is a set of character traits more akin to an air traffic controller or a general during a time of war – the gumption to deal with almost unending stress and challenges, interspersed certainly with some tremendous successes and great joy, but mostly made up of wading through muck and dodging bullets.

Now would be a good time to ask yourself: How durable is your shield?

ABOUT ANTON RESSEL

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