



To be or not to be?

Stories like ours, histories that detail the early days of entrepreneurial successes, are rare but not unheard of. Typically, they give the impression of spontaneity.

Spontaneous or not, how does a person know that it's going to work out? How do you decide if and when to take the plunge? In other words, how or when do you know that you have what it takes to be an entrepreneur? To answer these questions, we went back to the entrepreneur's POS, his or her personal operating system.

The heart of a startup is the the founder, and what really matters for this person is his or her POS. Do not confuse the operating system with the 'application programs'. In drawing an analogy with computer systems, the point is to remember that an operating system is what you are, whereas the application program is what you do.

Good application programs in an entrepreneur will include his or her ability to execute tasks, amount of industry knowledge, amount and application of that knowledge, as well as other professional and business skills. Corporate management, what tends to fill the MBA programs, deal with institutions, systems, procedures, corporate processes, manuals, accounting, human resources, marketing, strategy, and the many other things that make businesses run. Corporate management is not what gets companies started in the first place.

Entrepreneurship, however, is about how things get started, and really is about one thing and one thing only: the entrepreneur. And at the heart of the entrepreneur is his or her being.

We suggest that before you decide to take the plunge, consider whether you have the minimum amount of root qualities that are required in the POS of all successful entrepreneurs.

We've borrowed the notion of root qualities from Buddhism (根器), where they are understood as the inner or intrinsic qualities that are required but almost impossible to teach in a classroom. These are qualities that everyone has to a lesser or greater degree, but it takes a minimum amount from six essential root qualities to make for a successful entrepreneur.

Just as a certain grade of steel is needed, without which a winning race car couldn't be built, there needs to be a minimum amount of these root qualities to enable an entrepreneur to get the startup off the ground. The root qualities are a minimum of:

1. Passion, focus, and dedication
2. Risk tolerance and the "sleep factor"
3. Intuition and common sense
4. Courage and stamina
5. IQ and EQ
6. Luck/blessing factor and health

Do you think you have what it takes?