Are you an Entrepreneur?

What is an entrepreneur? Or a better question, what isn’t an entrepreneur? Being an entrepreneur is more than a skill set. It is more of an attitude and perhaps even a personality type.

There are many life experiences that are a thrilling for some and a tragedy for others. It comes down to what makes you happy and what makes you crazy.

If entrepreneurship interests you, ask yourself, “what energizes me? What gets you excited and makes you want to work harder than you’ve ever worked before? Does risk intrigue you or repel you? Are you happiest when everything is neatly organized and in its place or when options are flying round with unlimited possibilities and potential?”

Startups are often and at times complete chaos. If can be a barrage of emails, text messages and people walking into your office needing an immediate decision. Some people can handle and even thrive on this chaos. If you need to have everything organized and in its proper place before you can call it a night, then the startup world is probably not for you. If you can’t get comfortable with chaos, entrepreneurship is probably going to kill you or at least leave you longing for that predictable corporate job you abandoned.

A stellar work ethic is another distinguishing feature of an entrepreneur’s personality. Starting your own venture will most likely be the hardest thing you will ever do. You will work harder then you have ever worked before. I often say that an entrepreneur is someone who is so crazy that they will work seventy hours per week for themselves just to avoid working forty hours for someone else. When the line between your work and free time start to blur you may just be an entrepreneur.

Why would anyone want to work this hard and have this much stress? When you are in charge of yourself and choosing your own course each day you will get a tremendous feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction. Living in the corporate ranks certainly offers more security and predictability but it can drain away creativity, energy and adventure. If the unknown and uncertain calls out to you, you may just be an entrepreneur.

Great entrepreneurs are also typically great at sales and communications. I’ve heard a lot of would-be entrepreneurs tell me, “I’m not a sales person.” To this I typically respond, “Then you are probably not an entrepreneur.” You may be the brilliant engineer who creates the better mousetrap but it is the entrepreneur who can convince the customers of this that will be far more successful.

Almost every aspect of a startup company involves sales. You will be selling your product or service to customers, selling your investors on why they should invest, selling potential employees on why they should come work for your little startup, etc. So if you just can’t see yourself doing the job of a salesperson then find a partner who lives for it or seriously rethink your foray into entrepreneurship.

Finally, if you are a perfectionist then you may struggle with entrepreneurship. Startups almost never give you the opportunity to make things perfect. We generally do things just good enough and then move on to the next task. I have often found that perfectionism kills the speed and number of simultaneous activities startups require to succeed. For most startups the goal is not perfection, but efficiency and good enough is almost always better than flawless.

If you don’t perfectly match the profile I’ve painted here, you may still become a successful entrepreneur. It might feel awkward to you for a while and require more effort but if you are flexible and willing to adopt new patterns for success then everything is possible.