

# A Guide To a Successful Entrepreneurial Journey For Aspiring Entrepreneurs

*Success or failure, with the right preparation and approach, entrepreneurship can be a very rewarding experience*



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Representational



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Starting a venture is exciting and daunting at the same time. The excitement of embarking on a new journey, charting a new course, being independent and in control, the possibility of amassing substantial personal wealth, making a difference in the world are all reasons to look ahead with great excitement and anticipation. But at the same time, wading into the unknown, stepping outside your comfort zone, lack of a steady and predictable income, and scepticism by those around about entrepreneurship as a career choice, can create stress and anxiety. How do you prepare yourself to undertake such a journey?

## **Sort out your financial situation**

If you are starting out with just an idea, you can expect that it'll take your fledgling venture anywhere from 12 to 24 months to start clocking revenue or reach a stage where you can raise external funding. This means, you must be willing to go without pay for that length of time and probably invest some of your own money into the venture. If you are young and single, without many financial responsibilities, you may be able to take this on with a little savings or support from family. If you have bigger responsibilities—a mortgage to pay, schooling to support, healthcare expenses—you need to have a partner who can shoulder the family expenses or have enough saved up to keep your financial commitments. Often, entrepreneurs are too optimistic about their idea potential and underestimate the amount of time it takes to reach a point where they can start realising financial returns. It is important to give yourself and your venture a comfortable runway to take off.

## **Co-opt your family and friends**

Entrepreneurship requires understanding and accommodation from those around you. The financial situation may impose certain constraints. For instance, foreign vacations and expensive purchases may need to be postponed. Apart from the financial implication, being an entrepreneur takes up a lot of time. It is not a 9AM to 5PM job that you leave behind when you return home. You are thinking of and working on your venture all the time, which means you may have less time and mindshare for other activities. Of course, you should manage your schedule and carve out time away from the venture to reenergize yourself. However, you also need to sensitize your family and friends about the demands of an entrepreneurial career and explicitly enlist their support. This way, when work takes precedence, it does not create unpleasantness. Also, entrepreneurship can be an emotionally draining experience as you traverse the ups and downs of building a venture. Having a strong support system will help you navigate the journey better.

## **Choose your co-founders wisely**

Many ventures are started by founding teams rather than solo entrepreneurs. You might also be exploring starting up as a team, perhaps with a friend or co-worker. The choice of co-founder(s) is a critical decision with long-term implications. Research has shown that 65 per cent of startups fail due to conflict between co-founders. Therefore, founding team formation should be a carefully considered decision. It should be based on the competence of the individuals, their motivation for starting up, and their professional values and working styles. You might start a venture with a friend, but know very little about their professional competence and ethos. Or, you might choose a co-founder based purely on their professional experience, only to find that their motivations and working styles don't align. It is advisable to spend sufficient time upfront understanding each co-founder's motivations and professional values, and clarifying the role they would play in the venture.

## **Be willing to learn from the experience**

We routinely read about successful startups and the fame and fortune they bring to entrepreneurs. However, the reality is that these success stories are a very small percentage in the universe of startups. In fact, a majority of them fail. They fail for a variety of reasons, some due to the decisions taken with respect to product, market and other aspects of the business, and some due to the external environment in which they operate. While success

cannot be guaranteed and is often beyond the entrepreneur's control, learning from the experience is certainly possible and should be prioritized. Research has shown that in comparison to entrepreneurs who blame their failure on luck, those who make a conscious attempt to learn from their failures are far more likely to succeed in their future ventures. This does not mean that you cannot succeed the first time around. However, if it doesn't work out, the experience provides for great learning that can be leveraged for a future venture or in a corporate context where it is highly valued.

Success or failure, with the right preparation and approach, entrepreneurship can be a very rewarding experience.