

Module 4a- WHAT DO ENTREPRENEURS NEED TO KNOW?

It's an ongoing debate. What do entrepreneurs need to know to be successful? There are hundreds of choices in curricula. Many entrepreneurship programs find success in using off-the-shelf curricula with modifications that make the content relevant to their students and other educators find creating their own program of study using a compendium of books, articles, and online resources to be the preferred way to go.

There are benefits to either approach but keep in mind you'll want to make your program as unique as possible because this provides incentive for students to study at your college. With this in mind you'll want to adhere to certain practices in your curricula to be sure you cover what is expected from an entrepreneurial studies program. It is widely agreed that four key elements should be taught as part of your curricula.

Personal/Personality Assessment

The Entrepreneur: What it means to be an entrepreneur

The priorities, mindset, and habits of successful entrepreneurs

Opportunity Analysis

Identifying viable and profitable business opportunities

Concept: Defining your business concept

Feasibility: Determining if your product, service, and business are viable

Planning: Mapping out your organization and operation

Sales & Marketing Plan

Products: Delivering your product or service

Competition: Creating advantage. How your offering compares to others

Market Analysis: Understanding the size and scope of your market

Financial Plan

Pricing: Market penetration

Startup: Beginning costs and reaching optimum sales levels

Expenses: Managing cost of goods sold, and operating expenses

Fiscal Responsibility: Budgeting and financial statements

In the HOWtODOIT Room at the annual NACCE Conference we have expanded, each year, our discussion of additional aspects of the entrepreneurial experience that should be included in your program. We engage guests in the room to provide ideas on how these topics should be approached. You may also want to include:

Inspiration: *Helping entrepreneurs with the intangibles.* Entrepreneurs must understand and develop the mindset, motivation, and self-belief displayed by successful entrepreneurs. We must prepare entrepreneurs more effectively for the risk taking, temporary failures, fears, doubt, and persistence all successful entrepreneurs must have.

Products: *Helping entrepreneurs create great products.* At the heart of a successful business is a product or service that people want to buy. How can we do a better job of preparing entrepreneurs to create products that people want, and that will create sustainable businesses?

People: *Helping entrepreneurs find, work with and keep the right people.* Entrepreneurs with strong people skills and who are good at building great teams are more successful. Is this something we can teach in the classroom? What are the lessons we can learn from entrepreneurs about how to do this effectively?

Customers: *Helping entrepreneurs build profitable customer relationships.* To build a successful business you must be able to develop long-term customer relationships. This doesn't always come easy for new entrepreneurs and may be tough for educators to even understand in a real sense. So how do we help entrepreneurs in this area? What are the practical things we can teach entrepreneurs to help them do this effectively?

Value: *Helping entrepreneurs build their net worth and companies of substantial value.* Ultimately, an entrepreneur wants to create a business of substantial value and personal wealth. Educators often shy away from this subject believing they have little to offer in this discussion, yet many of our students are driven by this goal. Can we help guide entrepreneurs in ways that will help them reach this goal?

Community: *Helping the entrepreneur address the social needs.* When an entrepreneur becomes the pillar of a community everyone involved benefits: the entrepreneur, employees, customers, and citizens of the community. It is also particularly beneficial to the community college where support from influential figures, personal involvement, and financial contribution, are badly needed. How can we educate entrepreneurs

about the power of community service, help entrepreneurs meet their community goals and remain connected to the community college, and accomplish this without becoming too self-serving?

Advisors: *Helping entrepreneurs get the professional support they need.* How we can help entrepreneurs understand the vital role of advisors in shaping business strategy and helping the business grow. How do entrepreneurs go about selecting advisors, and what kinds of advisors are crucial to different stages of the business?

Creativity: *Helping entrepreneurs be more inventive and distinctive.* What is the unique role creativity plays in the success of today's products and services and how we can help entrepreneurs create environments and businesses that support creativity and enable them to translate their inventive approaches to market acceptance, revenues, and profits? What are the unique challenges of creative businesses and how can entrepreneurs balance creative and management objectives?

Social Media: *Helping entrepreneurs build their business with social media.* How is this new force in media and technology creating exciting new opportunities in entrepreneurship and developing a new breed of savvy business-builders? What should you be doing to prepare your entrepreneurs for success in a social-media world?

Technology: *Helping entrepreneurs define and develop the role technology will play in business growth.* Today, the roles of planning, sales, marketing, finance, and operations are all affected by new technologies. What are the challenges of educators keeping up with what's going on and advising new entrepreneurs in an environment where there are so many options that can enhance a business?

Market Forces: *Helping entrepreneurs prepare for unpredictable and unforeseen shifts in the market.* What happens when customers, funding, and suppliers go away? What happens when new well-financed competitors emerge? We'll talk about how entrepreneurs have responded to market forces and survived and often reinvented their businesses.

Politics & Policy: *Helping entrepreneurs understand the political landscape.* How we can help entrepreneurs understand the importance of political and civic engagement and how their involvement will help them surface opportunities and have an impact on public policy. How

can entrepreneurs establish relationships with political and public service groups and how they can play a complementary role in the growth of their communities?

Legal Issues: In the classroom, educators will want to consider how they will address the many potential legal issues that entrepreneurs face in their businesses. While you may not be an attorney, the reality is that every business has legal matters that surface. “We have a course that provides our students what they need to know to prevent them from appearing in court in front of a judge,” says Tim Mittan of Long Beach City College in California. “The sooner you can prepare your students for this reality, the better,” says Mittan.

Discussing legal issues as part of your entrepreneurship class will provide your students with needed experience in considering the broad range of legal implications that arise in forming and growing new ventures. Encouraging the mindset that entrepreneurs should proactively address (and not defer) legal questions will perhaps remove some of the natural intimidation those not in the law profession might typically have.

Among the key legal considerations your students will face are:

- **Banking:** Preventing the unintentional breaking of laws in banking and credit
- **Business formation:** Understanding the legal process of forming a business and the implications of various business structures
- **Contracts:** Understanding contractual situations and nuances of business contracts
- **Copyrights:** Understanding concepts and issues governing intellectual property
- **Domain Names:** Reviewing the legalities of the Internet and preventing copyright or trademark infringement
- **Giveaways:** Understanding state and national laws governing contests, sweepstakes, and prizes of certain sizes
- **Leases:** Understanding what's contained in agreements they will sign when renting an office, retail space, or warehouse

- **Privacy:** Understanding what can and cannot be done with customer information and Federal Trade Commission requirements regarding privacy policies online
- **Trademarks:** Understanding how trademark law factors into selecting and marketing the company name, logo, tag lines, slogans, mottos, and domain names
- **Warranties:** Understanding the legal implications of language in the sales process such as “free” and “guarantee”

Shadow an Entrepreneur

One of the most beneficial activities you can make available to your students is the ability to “shadow” an entrepreneur. That is, following an entrepreneur for a day or more to see what he or she does to run and grow their business. In your efforts to build connections with your community look out for entrepreneurs who may be receptive to this idea and that may have business settings that are interesting and suitable for this activity. Many entrepreneurs will respond positively to the idea of having a student shadow them during the day. This is a great way to make your entrepreneurial studies program, real-world, and highly relevant.

Conclusion

What the entrepreneurs in your program need to know will vary based on their interest and skill level. Some will need to understand basic concepts and others will need more advanced concepts. You can't teach everything an entrepreneur needs to know in your classroom. But having an understanding of the scope of knowledge an entrepreneur needs will help you tailor your program and alert your students to additional learning and seasoning required.