TO BE OR NOT TO BE: THE ROLE OF PASSION AND OBSESSION IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS (SUMMARY)

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Recommended Citation

Winnen, Charlotte J. (2006) "TO BE OR NOT TO BE: THE ROLE OF PASSION AND OBSESSION IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS (SUMMARY)," Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research: Vol. 26: Iss. 6, Article 9. Available at: http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol26/iss6/9

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SUMMARY

TO BE OR NOT TO BE: THE ROLE OF PASSION AND OBSESSION IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS

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Principal Topic

Although Inamori (1995), Japan’s leading entrepreneur identified passion as a key element to becoming a successful entrepreneur, little if any research has been conducted to explore passion as a domain. How does entrepreneurial passion impact the entrepreneur’s business? This study explored the role of passion in the entrepreneurial process as viewed by entrepreneurs in the areas of opportunity recognition, business start-up, growth, and exiting the business.

Method

This was a case study. Four cases were selected based on the entrepreneur’s passion for their business. The major source of data collection included participant interviews, observations and field notes. Additional information was collected from the participant’s websites and from trade journals or newspaper articles. To begin the cross-case analysis, codes were developed to identify people, settings, and common themes. The data was analyzed through the lenses of Fredrick Taylors’s (1912) theory of Scientific Management, Max Weber’s (1946) theories of rationality, Mayer and Salovey’s (1993) theories on emotional intelligence, and Vallerand et. al. (2003) discussion of harmonious and obsessive passion. Additionally, the conscious competency model was applied to each of the four cases.

Results and Implications

A major finding in this multi-case qualitative research study can be summarized by quoting Kulakinah in the recent remake of the Lone Ranger: “Passion is like a horse. It doesn’t diminish because you harness it. It just takes you where you want to go.” In contrast, a second finding can be summarized by a parody of the first quotation: “Obsession is like a bucking bronco. It throws you off, rather than taking you to where you want to go.” Although each entrepreneur had a different passion, their passion was part of the value system influencing their business decisions, what Weber (1946) identified as substantive rationality. Entrepreneurial passion worked synergistically with logic and rationality to propel business growth. In contrast, when entrepreneurial obsession was in control, the obsession became the driving force of the entrepreneur’s vision, becoming a roadblock to success. Two models identifying the influence of passion or obsession on the entrepreneurial process and an entrepreneurial competency model were developed based on the results of this study.

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