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## WHY DO SOME ENTREPRENEURS ACHIEVE EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS? INSIGHTS FROM BASIC RESEARCH ON EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE (SUMMARY)

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## SUMMARY

### WHY DO SOME ENTREPRENEURS ACHIEVE EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS? INSIGHTS FROM BASIC RESEARCH ON EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE

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#### Principal Topic

The odds are strongly against entrepreneurs. Most new ventures fail and only a tiny proportion attain success. Yet, a small number of entrepreneurs found companies that achieve truly exceptional outcomes. What factors contribute to such results? It is suggested that useful insights into this question may be gained from basic research on expert performance—consistently superior performance in a particular domain. Contrary to widespread belief, systematic research on exceptional performance indicates that across many fields, attaining such outcomes does not depend on exceptional levels of innate talent or long experience in a given domain. The relationship between years of experience and performance is very weak in many fields, ranging from chess, music, and sports through medicine and auditing.

#### Method

What then, are the bases of exceptional performance? Several factors have been identified as playing a major role, but the most important seems to be participating in deliberate practice—effortful, directed practice focused on building the specific skills necessary for high levels of performance. Deliberate practice produces such results in three ways. First, it provides the persons who engage in it with knowledge relevant to the tasks they are performing. Second, it provides them with increased skill in recognizing complex patterns in the domain. Third, it promotes the development of closer links between working memory and long-term memory (LTM), so that individuals can draw more efficiently and rapidly on large amount of knowledge stored in LTM.

The findings of basic research on exceptional performance may help explain the unusual success attained by some entrepreneurs. Like highly successful performers in many fields, they have acquired specific skills and enhanced cognitive capacities that, together, permit them to perform important tasks very effectively. As a result, the new ventures they launch are unusually successful.

#### Results and Implications

Research on expert performance has important implications. From a theoretical perspective, it sheds new light on the question of why some entrepreneurs are so much more successful than others. From a practical point of view, research on expert performance suggests that current or nascent entrepreneurs can be trained to perform tasks related to the success of new ventures. This has important implications for entrepreneurship education.

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