IN SEARCH OF THE ENTREMANAGER (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Principal Topic

Owner-managers of young micro-enterprises spend more time on managerial tasks than entrepreneurial activities; however, when asked do they consider themselves to be managers or entrepreneurs, they consider themselves to be entrepreneurs (O’Gorman and O’Kane, 2003). This internal conflict of interest may be expressed in ways leading to unsuccessful relationships with bankers, resource suppliers, customers, suppliers, own staff, and enterprise support agents.

This research establishes if the entrepreneurial manager and professional manager (Timmons and Spinelli, 2003) coexist in the one person at the same time - the entremanger. Timmons and Spinelli (2003) talked about the entrepreneurial and administrative domains. However, they concluded that “a good entrepreneur is usually not a good manager, since he or she lacks the necessary management skills and experience” (p.273). Allen (1999) said “entrepreneurs and managers are two different breeds, and rarely does one person possess the distinct skills each role requires” (p.233). But in order to sustain their enterprises, in the early stages of development and growth, entrepreneurs have to manage their businesses if they are to survive.

Method

This research is a longitudinal, quantitative study. The first survey, administered in 2007, consisted of 508 entrepreneurs from Ireland. These entrepreneurs, divided into three cohorts, had completed enterprise start-up courses in either 2004, 2005 or 2006. The usable response rate was 20%. Those that responded to the first survey, and that were still in business, were administered a second survey in 2009. This response rate was 56%. The core survey questions were based on three well-known growth models (Churchill and Lewis, 1983; Griener,1998; and Burns, 2001).

Results and Implications

This research demonstrates that, in general, most founders do transition from an entrepreneurial domain towards a managerial domain over time as their enterprise grows. But it is clear that the founders were entremangers in that they spanned both entrepreneurial and managerial domains at the same time.

This research has implications for investors, enterprise support agencies, policy makers and academics in that it will help these people to view entrepreneurs in a different way, and assist them to design funding mechanisms, teaching programmes and policies that are more understanding of and beneficial to entrepreneurs at the critical growth points of their enterprises.

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