SQUARE-1 ENGINEERING

Evaluate Your Career Plans Along With Your Business Personality Before You Jump In

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Five Success Traits All Startup Employees Must Have

Executive Summary:

The world of startups and small business can indeed be an exciting place to be. Its commonly characterized as highly collaborative, fast pace, less bureaucratic and wildly innovative. While this sounds great in theory, in practice the world of a startup can be rife with challenge, including heavy amounts of stress and uncertainty. It's vital we as professionals analyze our personalities and professional behaviors to assess whether or not we would do well in the startup world - before we actually jump in. Knowing what you're up against before you dive in will allow you to determine if it's appropriate for you to consider the startup space, small business and or entrepreneurship.

Are You Truly Ready for the Startup World?

Entrepreneurship and the world of startups are often glamorized and depicted as the greener grass on the other side of the pasture. While this may be true for some, for others the idea of working in a startup can be polarizing.

How do we truly know whether or not we have what it takes to operate successfully in the startup world before we make the decision to jump in? Before you jump ship from your present job into the world of a startup (or small business for that matter) take a moment to check in with yourself on how you land with these five characteristics which are vital to ones' success in the start-up environment:

Working Outside the Box

When we work for big companies our jobs and daily output is often focused on a certain set of tasks.

It's the opposite in the startup world as the mentality of those who are successful in this space is they're willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done, keeping company moving forward. This includes taking out your own trash! If you've ever said "that's not part of my job" in response to work that was requested of you I would recommend taking a hard look at whether a startup or small company is the right move for your career. You don't have an option to be picky on the work you're doing in a startup, the only option is to do it. Even if that means taking out your own trash or cleaning your workstation.

Time Requirements

Working 8-5 in a large company can be a great perk. If you've done this for any length of time you may have forgotten how nice it is to mentally shut off at 5PM. In startups working 8-5 is non-existent. It's common to work long hours and or be tethered to your smart phone around the clock. The statement 'work life balance' is blurred beyond recognition in the startup world. Those who are successful here know and understand it takes time and effort to create something. How dedicated are you to making that happen and what are you willing to give up in the process? Personal time tends to take a back seat.

Ambiguous Nature

Working in a large company doesn't necessarily mean that everything is clearly defined and outlined yet it is typical SOPs (standard operating processes) are at the very least available for workers who choose to use them. In the startup world you may find yourself creating these on your own. Take a moment to think how you would feel about being confronted with a daily situation where you are supposed to be working hard, harder than ever before, and there

isn't a lot of direction or support to help you in that effort. If the thought of that excites you then the startup world may be a breath of fresh air, if not then maybe your large company job and career is the safer bet.

Leadership

This is one of the most overlooked aspects of a start-up in my opinion. Leadership. If you haven't worked in the startup world before you may not be aware that people in leadership still do much of the hands-on work. In big business this is hardly the case. Neither camp of leaders are necessarily better than one or the other, it's just a very different environment. In startups every person on the team has to give 150% which means those who don a leadership title still have to get dirty in the day to day tactical activities.

The reason you want to consider this as part of your 'can I make it in the startup world' is because leadership ultimately can have a great or very grave impact on the startup business. Seems a bit obvious yet when someone is doing both daily work and in charge of strategic decision making their influence and involvement has a much greater impact on the business. In big business if a company experiences a failure with one of their leaders it typically can be salvaged whereas in the startup world one or two costly mistakes by leadership can send the company into financial ruin.

Cross Functional Collaboration

Startups offer an intimate working experience. Working in a startup everyone knows everything about everyone. It's close quarters with high

amounts of communication, partnering and feedback. Collaboration of course exists in big business but not at the intimate level of a startup. When we work for a big company we are often a part of a team but doing work independently, even times on our own little island. It's common for one department to have no idea what another department is up to in big business. This isn't the case in the start up world, quite the opposite. If you've come to enjoy the experience of working relatively on your own with little involvement from cross functional outsiders staying away from the startup world may be a good decision for you to make.

The professional life in a startup can indeed be a rewarding and exciting adventure however it certainly isn't for everyone. Once we've spent time analyzing what's most important in your career and how you respond to specific environments the better idea you'll have of how the startup environment fits in with your career plans.

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