

Current Conditions and Challenges

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The 21st Century has pounced upon us. It has taken virtually everyone by surprise, and is hurling increasing amounts of change at us at an accelerating rate of speed. "What Was" is no more and "What's Next" is anyone's guess. What's more is that virtually every aspect of our world is in play.

Living and working and planning in the 21st century is like playing multi-layered 3 dimensional chess on rotating boards. Our world speeds through space at a velocity of 66,660mph.....and it is beginning to feel like it.

From terrorist attacks on our cities to tsunamis in our oceans; from wars in the Middle East to broken levies; from explosive gas prices, major bankruptcies, the potential of pandemic viruses to Tom Friedman's concept of the world being flat again and tremendous opportunities abounding everywhere, everything is in play.

The World is waiting for no one yet four questions stand before us:

1. How do we survive?
2. How do we compete?
3. How do we prosper?
4. How do we make a difference?

Each new century ushers in a New World; the emergence of which breaks apart traditional ways of thinking. In that space a new way of thinking must emerge if we are to surf the waves of change as opposed to being pounded by them. When this new thinking combines with the new world a "New Way" is born. The society which is first to identify, embrace and master this New Way will become the most prosperous and most sustainable society of the new century.

"The Way of the Entrepreneur"

Due to the existing and emerging conditions of this new century we are faced with the need to rapidly adapt to change in creative and

innovative ways across a myriad of planes. We must assess, acknowledge, accept and adapt continuously. We must all be fluid, yet maintain structure and must not exhaust ourselves by fighting the reality of this new century.

In a word, we must all become "entrepreneurial".

But, just as our new world is evolving so too must our definition of and the thinking around the word "entrepreneur" and "entrepreneurialism". We must expand their definitions back to their original roots if we are to uncover the innovative and truly entrepreneurial thinking and practices that are critical to success.

Peter Drucker writes of the French economist, J.B. Say who, around 1800, described the entrepreneur as anyone who shifts resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield.

This is a very broad, generous, inclusive and accurate definition. It is also very different than the definition most have today.

Yet, since the birth of the Information Age and the DotCom rage the interpretations of the word "entrepreneur" and its cousins have become extremely limited. In fact so much so that if one is not engaged in a business venture which requires millions of dollars to launch and maintain, or if the prospect of your efforts don't include this in the future, one is not considered to be an entrepreneur.

Not only does this limited definition serve as the antithesis of the word but this type of thinking actually prevents us from accessing, uncovering and then mining the rich entrepreneurial resources that reside in all of us and which are essential to our prospering and creating sustainable wealth in the new century.

In order to reverse this we must engage in discussions and practices which will experientially cause us to uncover the entrepreneurial nature that already exists within us and is within the spaces, places and groups we inhabit. We must *find* "The Way of the Entrepreneur". The goal is not to re-invent entrepreneurialism. It already exists. Our role is to discover, uncover and understand what it already is and then live it and teach it for ourselves.

In uncovering "The Way of the Entrepreneur" we must be like Michelangelo, who when asked how was he able to create such a

magnificent image of David from a block of hard marble replied that he did not create anything, he merely removed all that wasn't David. We must be like the anthropologist who removes all that hides what has been there all along and who cares not as to where it shall lead him.....only that it does.

We must train our eyes to see and our ears to hear entrepreneurialism everywhere it resides and hides. We must then encourage it every time and place we find it.

We must nurture entrepreneurial ways of thinking and being throughout our culture if we are going to experience the benefits and the gifts this new century has to offer.

Building a highly effective company, organization or city in this new century will require this new kind of thinking. Critical thinking must meld with creative thinking. We must encourage diversity of background and of thought. We must seek alignment over agreement. We must embrace the artistry of creativity as an equal partner with the numbers and mechanics of business. Then we must employ innovative practices to transform existing resources and systems into new ones and then use them to create the next generation.

But most importantly, the primal territorialistic attitude of "looking out for #1" must be replaced with one which understands that the best thing for the individual is that which most benefits the group. We must work, act and function in the manner closer to what the Buddhists refer to as "enlightened self interest". We must acknowledge that we live and work in a plexus environment.

The Work

The work can be, and must be, done in any for-profit, non-profit, governmental, social, military, political, academic, artistic and/or religious organizations. Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurialism already exists, although not always consciously in these environments. In fact, there exists countless examples of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial acts occurring in each of these areas since the beginning of mankind.

Abraham, Jesus, Mohammed were religious entrepreneurs. Ghandi, Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King were social entrepreneurs. Jefferson, Adams, Franklin were for-profit, non-profit, political and governmental entrepreneurs. Washington shared these traits and was also military entrepreneur as were Chief Joseph, Geronimo and Eisenhower. Hitler, Stalin and Mao were political entrepreneurs,

Einstein, Hawkins, Pasteur, Salk were highly entrepreneurial academics. DaVinci, Picasso, Dali, Michelangelo, Warhol, Rumi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Golda Meir. The list is as endless as the areas in which it appears.

They all broke the mold. They all brought new ways of thinking to the forefront. They all were change agents and adapted well to change. They interacted with others and pooled their resources with the resources, talents, thoughts and ideas of contemporaries and those who came before them in order to co-create the newest world order. They also had great teachers and were committed to teaching and mentoring the next generation of thinkers and doers. They all served a purpose greater than themselves. In doing so they "Gazelled" societies further into the future much more rapidly than the previous methods and paradigms could have allowed.

Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurialism have been at the root of all great societies, cultures and innovations everywhere since the beginning of time. It is both the best offense as well as the best defense for any society, culture or organization seeking to prosper in the rapidly changing and seemingly staccato world of the new century.

To that end it must be learned and relearned, introduced and embraced, fostered and nurtured, taught and mentored, defined and refined to the highest level possible in order for us to be able to adapt, prosper and sustain the highest standard of balanced human existence possible.

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