

Discussion

1. A common thread in all your presentations is that both intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs need to be courageous enough to take the plunge. Does it really work in the reality of the corporate world?

Marcello: the intrapreneurial path is about a step-by-step process into growing a business rather than a jump. In the entrepreneurial world, it's a jump.

Dominic - There's a lot of disciplines you can lean on. As long as people understand they need to engage with the creators, it is interesting.

Peter - Yes. The nature of the problem itself comes from fear. The very nature of job security is founded in entrepreneurship. In the global economy, job security is an illusion. Your only security is to be entrepreneurial. Down-sizing affects those who add the least value to the company, while entrepreneurs add much value to the company. If you why is big enough, you can go forward. If the CEO's vision is big enough and something they bought into because they care, it will lead to growth

2. Most corporates are risk-averse and they have a responsibility to shareholders. Where is the balance between books and dreams?

Peter - We have the potential not to turn into a Kodak or Nokia. We have to foster environments that innovate. The job is to keep the ball rolling. The responsibility is to keep moving forward.

Marcello - Amazon managed to convince shareholders that they benefit only in 20/30/40 years (since they went public their profits have been the same). They were open with their customers and shareholders. That's managing expectations well.

Dominic - luck: what happens if someone doesn't have the luck? Just keep going, keep pushing. More important is the drive to keep pushing forward.

3. In Sri Lanka, there is a lot of emphasis on academics. Thinking beyond doesn't get nurtured. How do we get young people to think?

Peter - I have no qualifications. The world is changing, and the old model is not working anymore. There are people who gained qualification in on profession who cannot get a job in that profession, which is why there are many people starting on their own because the barrier to entry is low.

Dominic - people who dropped out of school got people who did well in school to come work for them (M. Zuckerberg). Not everyone will be doctors, and entrepreneurs don't need qualifications.

Marcello - power of role models: everyone has someone who they aspire to be like who have done well in their lives. There need to be more alternative role models (those who have done something that looks impossible to you and made something of themselves).

4. The curse of the white rabbit – the focus should be on the journey rather than the end. How does it affect an entrepreneur?

Peter - A lot of entrepreneurs are chasing the rabbit (where the dog chases the rabbit but can never catch it). The system is gamed, and they do not catch the rabbit. Similarly, people keep doing things chasing a future goal tied to what they do. People keep going on making millions in the fear the other millions will disappear. Happiness cannot be linked to the end. Don't set goals you can't achieve. When you start something to validate yourself, that's wrong. What's your "why"? Focus on the contribution.

5. If all employees attempt to be entrepreneurs, what happens to the bee-hive system in the business world? Won't there be chaos?

Marcello - There should be processes in place for those who want to be entrepreneurs. But it shouldn't become something that people are forced into.

Peter - Hela: the doors are always open. The manager is with the staff, on the floor. I travel with and socialize with the staff. We challenge them. We all have goals. We all have a role in achieving these goals. We are very clear on what Hela is doing.

6. At 13, Dominic, you had little to lose. How did you separate your net worth from self-worth?

Dominic - I want my business to succeed. My business is my life. I flourish with that. I didn't set out to be a millionaire, I had a situation to resolve. You have to have a reality and a goal. If not it collapses. I am humbled by the fact that I can do what I do and want others to be able to too.

7. The fear of the unknown: How much fear should an entrepreneur have before he takes the leap?

There is a difference between fearless and intelligence. Are you projecting what you want as the ideal onto the market? There have to be some data points, but if you are passionate about the idea, then go ahead. Fear will stop you from being intelligent. Primary fear in people is being not good enough and this stops people. What does it matter? There has never been a better time to be an entrepreneur. Resourcefulness and passion will outweigh data points' importance.

8. Intrapreneurship is new to SL. Is there something we can learn from your work in Africa?

The world is not that different however much you travel. The concept is new in a lot of places. There is huge potential to come up with solutions to issues people face. Kenya, - mobile payment service, people in a telco company realized people don't have bank accounts but need to pay bills. So they made it in the phone, without needing banks or internet. This is now huge there. It has been tried in many places and been successful.

9. Funding: how would you convince a financier to fund you on a brief?

Peter - people buy people before they buy a product. If a person is hiding behind a business plan and the certainty of their research, I would not buy into it. I'm looking for someone who is persistent, committed, and won't crumble at failures. Business plans are to show you know your costs and income.

Dominic - many people approach me and when you get into the details, they are spending money on non-essentials (like brand-new computers when you already have a computer). Need good presentation skills, language skills, exposure. Some people don't want the business to succeed, they want to sell the concept. They want to raise money and move on to another project. The financiers are cottoning on that people are now engaging in entrepreneurship as a profession. They create ideas but not a business of it. Many things on Facebook are hoaxes. They don't exist anymore. But the people have received millions in money for the idea.