

How Founders Can Improve Their Tolerance for Uncertainty

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

Businesses, especially startups, are characterized by uncertainty. From the viability of a business idea to investors' decisions, as well as how users would respond to your latest product feature, you're never exactly sure what's coming. Externally, political, technological and competitive uncertainties are causes for worry as well.

Studies have shown that uncertainties are constant in entrepreneurship, and a leader's ability to tolerate and manage them will greatly support the success of their venture. However, repeated exposure to high levels of uncertainty can send entrepreneurs into an emotional rollercoaster that could affect their self-image. Early-stage and first-time founders run greater risks of being broken by the twists and turns of rapidly changing business environments.

More fascinating, though, is that some – especially serial entrepreneurs – are hooked to the uncertainties synonymous with startups. And their ability to tolerate these uncertainties and adjust accordingly to changing environments has helped them succeed. You, too, can learn to do the same by incorporating these four attitudes into your life:

Related: [3 Ways to Overcome Uncertainty About Your Business' Future](#)

1. Avoid micro-managing your team

Delegate some uncertainties. So many activities go into building a company. A majority of those activities carry fair amounts of uncertainty. And it's easy to get roped into bouts of worry trying to figure out how things could go wrong.

It could be a marketing campaign that your team is trying out for the first time or a new product that your company is working on. Rather than actively engaging in these activities and interfering with your team's every move, you can rid yourself of the anxiety that comes with the process and focus your energy where it's needed the most.

Studies by the *Harvard Business Review* reveal that micro-managing a team could significantly add to a boss's stress and anxiety levels. Just lay back a bit, and let the marketing or product team worry about the uncertainty associated with their roles. You'll thank yourself for it.

2. Accept what you cannot control

As far as entrepreneurship is concerned, so many events take place that are beyond the entrepreneur's control. It could be some government policy changes that threaten the survival of your business. Maybe a key employee is quitting to spend more time with family. Whatever it is, there might be absolutely nothing you can do to change things. And you have to accept that.

Yes, it's easier said than done. You'll most likely feel vile for being in such a position. That's okay. Feelings make us humans, and you don't have to deny them. The University of Utah Health Care psychiatrist, Maria Reyes, predicates that recognizing and acknowledging our feelings towards circumstances beyond our control is the first step to managing anxieties related to uncertainty.

Also, you might need to disengage from the situation a bit. Stepping back helps you gain a better view of what seems like an obstacle to your success. Some entrepreneurs make the best of this step-back moment, by doing things like playing golf or engaging in hobbies of various sorts. You can give it a shot.

Related: [The 4 Things Leaders Need to Do First When Faced With Uncertainty](#)

3. Be grateful (for the little things)

Gratitude is an antidote for the negative emotions that uncertainty engenders, wrote psychologist Guy Winch in his book, *Emotional First Aid*. Being grateful has a joyous effect on the mind. Studies have shown that expressing gratitude causes the release of serotonin and dopamine in the brain. These hormones are associated with happiness, higher self-esteem and motivation.

Endeavor to take small breaks to reflect on your experiences. Identify the little things that often go unnoticed, and imagine how life would have turned out without them. It could be as trivial as being able to refuel your car at the gas station the day before. If it's helped move you forward in the slightest bit, then it's worth expressing gratitude for.

An act as simple as being grateful, if done repeatedly, can help you build tolerance for uncertainty because you believe that there will be good things to be grateful for either way.

Related: [How to Practice Gratitude as a Business Skill](#)

4. Make contingency plans

Building a business requires making assumptions and following gut feelings. A majority of the time, those assumptions are

wrong. Worst off, verifiable market research data may look so wrong when reality sets in. If they were always right, I guess uncertainty would be every entrepreneur's least problem.

So, as you make assumptions and lay out plans to succeed, it's crucial to also plan for failure. What would you do if reality renders your assumptions nonviable? What are your Plan B and Plan C?

You have to figure these out. According to a report by the *Harvard Business Review*, in times of uncertainty, the best entrepreneurs create contingency plans that can allow them to change course quickly. This is particularly helpful because most lethal circumstances are beyond the entrepreneur's control. Talk about changes in market trends, and like in 2020, the pandemic.

Related: 6 Strategies You Need to Run Your Company Through Uncertainty

It's very easy to get tangled up in the need to control your future and that of your company. And knowing that some things just aren't fated can be unsettling. That's understandable. You're not alone. Many have learned to live with it. And so can you.

The best approach to tolerating uncertainty is to stop resisting change and accept what you can't control. Also, reduce the amount of uncertainty that you need to deal with by delegating some of them while making plans to recover from possible failures.

Most importantly, don't forget to pause and appreciate the little things that you experience along the way. As with most processes, building tolerance for uncertainty is a worthwhile journey. You don't want to miss the opportunity to be grateful.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/437517>