What It Takes to Be a Modern Entrepreneur

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We live in a golden age for entrepreneurism, with the number of full-time, self-employed professionals potentially catapulting from 15 million in 2018 to 42 million in 2020, according to research from FreshBooks.

Being a part of this group can be incredibly rewarding, both emotionally and monetarily, but if you want to make it as a modern entrepreneur, you have to play by the new rules of the game.

People buy from people

In the past, being an entrepreneur often meant building a brand where the product or service was front and center. Today, however, being a modern entrepreneur means being in a league of your own, where you make yourself the heart of the brand and show how you stand out from others based on your personality.

That's because the corporate world has become so large and faceless that people are turning against that tide and instead want to connect with — and ultimately buy from — real people. As I preach in my new book, virtually every company of every size needs to humanize their brand to successfully market themselves.

As an entrepreneur, you likely have a built-in advantage to

let your personality shine through, because you probably don’t have layers of bureaucracy and a history of building up your corporate persona.

With my own company, for instance, I’ve been able to build out my agency by being the face of my brand, sharing my passion with others at conferences around the country, and making myself accessible and approachable on social media. So, when I want to sell what Gil Media has to offer, people know that they can trust and relate to the person leading that brand, which gives them confidence we’ll deliver great work.

Let passion be your north star

Given how personality-driven entrepreneurism is today, it’s critical to create a business based on what you’re passionate about, rather than just what you think might sell.

Being a modern entrepreneur requires navigating through the crowded corporate world, which requires persistence bordering on the edge of pestering others to check out what you have to offer. If you’re not passionate about what you’re doing, you’re more likely to quit, rather than powering through inevitable rejections to get to where you want to be.

I’ve been turned down or ignored plenty of times, but I believe in what I’m selling, and I know that it’s okay to not be perfect. No one is going to close 100 percent of all sales opportunities, but the sooner you can accept that and get back up from your losses, the sooner you’ll succeed.

Make sure you’re cut out for the grind

While you may think you have the right personality and passion to succeed as an entrepreneur, you have to also be comfortable with some degree of unpredictability. The rules of the game

change quickly – what worked in your social media marketing yesterday may not even be a feature on a platform tomorrow – but if you're relentless in both trying to connect with others and adapting your strategies to see what works, you'll have a better chance of breaking through.

Many people want the lifestyle of an entrepreneur, to have the freedom and flexibility to pursue a passion on their own terms. Too often, though, they're held back by the stability of a paycheck from a corporate job.

But if that's not who you are, if thinking about corporate policies makes your skin crawl, and if you're willing to take a risk, this is arguably one of the greatest times to be an entrepreneur. When else has it been so easy to connect with consumers all over the world with a few clicks on a smartphone, or to directly reach out to executives at almost any company just by going on LinkedIn?

The tools are readily available to become a modern entrepreneur, you just need an idea you're passionate about and a path to profitability, and you'll be on your way. Easier said than done, but I'm here to tell you it's possible if you put in the work.

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