

Natural Entrepreneurship

HERE'S HOW TO BECOME A SUCCESS IN
ANY CAREER YOU CHOOSE.

By Robert L. Wallace

I could hardly wait to leave New York. The excitement of going back to West Africa had built up inside me like the hot steam churning inside a crab steamer similar to the ones by which folks in Maryland live and die. I was going to spend two weeks in Bekwai, Ghana, lecturing on my research on entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, and micro-enterprise development in emerging economies. The research findings appear in my first book, *Black Wealth Through Black Entrepreneurship*, which was inspired by two aspects of the African culture—a strong work ethic and a propensity toward what I call “natural entrepreneurship.”

I coined the term natural entrepreneurship as I traveled the dense streets of Kumasi, Ghana, and felt the energy of the African merchants. There was a natural ease that mingled with the persuasive tone of the fabric salesman's voice, the shrewdness of the gray-haired seamstresses who lined

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up side by side in the alleys ready to stitch the finest African garments, and the giddiness of the young girls who bagged cool water in plastic bags and roasted corn on open grills to sell to thirsty, weary travelers such as myself.

Natural entrepreneurship was also evident in the retail shacks located adjacent to family dwellings. As dusk began to settle and the hot African sun took a rest, the natural entrepreneurs would open their booths and begin the age-old process of bartering for the exchange of goods and services. Whether selling eggs, ice, or handmade wooden masks, the entrepreneurs touted their bargains and negotiated sales.

A Natural Entrepreneur: Student Of The Environment

What defines natural entrepreneurs? Natural entrepreneurs believe that their economic destiny is under the control of a higher power, which also is in full control of the universe. They calmly accept a mixture of blessings. A natural entrepreneur knows that his or her sweat and labor will produce stellar results. The Ashanti people repeat the phrase

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“Accept God.” According to this principle, God is first and involved in every good outcome; nothing good comes from human effort alone. Respect, faith, and acknowledgment of a greater power allows human beings to progress—in a smooth, natural, and seamless manner—from being an employee to becoming an entrepreneur.

Natural entrepreneurs are students of their environments. They diligently make an effort to understand the nuances of their profession and industry, as well as any associated technological changes. By understanding trends, they are able to match their specific skills and strengths to the opportunities created by the existing and future needs of customers. By also studying themselves, they remain in harmony with the limitations and potential of their skills.

Natural entrepreneurs realize that once they make the transition into an entrepreneurial mindset they must build upon what they enjoy doing and what they do well. Finally, natural entrepreneurs recognize that they have special gifts and talents. One major goal is to arrive at a position at the

top level of their field or profession. They also have the ambition to remain at that upper tier of performance for their entire lives.

Seize The Day

I learned from the resourceful and intelligent people of Western Africa that business opportunities exist all around us; the best ones are often right under our noses. As an American, try to gain a better perspective on what businesses you should consider, and where you would be most successful.

To capitalize on business opportunities, take a look at where you are at this present moment. The grass is not always greener on the other side. Start with your existing job, the industry that you know best, where you have the greatest contacts, the geographical area that you are most comfortable navigating, and your current skills. A vast resource of

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information for starting small businesses is found on the Internet. Two terrific resources for entrepreneurs are the Small Business Administration (SBA), <www.sba.gov>, and the GE Center for Financial Learning, <www.financiallearning.com>.

Explore all the opportunities and start to think like a natural entrepreneur. You will be amazed at the prospects and riches that you'll find.

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