

Entrepreneurial activity breeds entrepreneurial passion

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The more effort one ploughs into one's company's success, the more enthusiastic about one's own entrepreneurial activity one becomes. Experiencing success on a regular basis and the the possibility of free choice are two factors that play an important role in this context. These are the findings of a research project led by the psychologist Prof. Dr. Michael Gielnik of Leuphana University of Lüneburg, recently published in the *Academy of Management Journal*. The findings refute the widespread view that dedicated entrepreneurship can only evolve from a pre-existing passion for entrepreneurial spirit.

The researchers collected data for their project in two different studies. In an eight-week field study, they surveyed 54 German entrepreneurs at weekly intervals, enquiring about the actions they had taken. They also asked about how much passion they felt about their entrepreneurial efforts and entrepreneurial project. All responses showed a clear correlation between these two variables: the efforts put in during the past week influenced perceived entrepreneurial passion, which proved to be higher the greater the efforts.

In a second study, the researchers examined the impact of sense of achievement and freedom of choice on entrepreneurial passion. For this purpose, they conducted an experiment with 136 students from Singapore and Germany by asking them to develop a [business idea](#). While one group was fed [positive feedback](#) on their models, another group of students was confronted with negative reviews. Asked about their entrepreneurial sentiment, those who had received positive

feedback mainly reported an increase in enthusiasm compared with the self-assessments they had provided at the beginning of the experiment. The enthusiasm of the experimental subjects, who had been handed bad reviews, however, either remained at the same level compared to the initial assessment or even declined. The degree of freedom of choice has had a decisive influence on perceived enthusiasm: The group of students, who were able to choose a business idea from 12 proposals, or even allowed to pursue their own ideas, turned out to be significantly more motivated than the group who had to implement a business idea that had been imposed upon them.

"Our results show that entrepreneurial passion is not a rigid personality trait, but a characteristic that may develop over time under certain conditions," explains Michael Gielnik. "In our eyes, the widespread assumption that only those, who possess enthusiasm for entrepreneurship from the word go, should become entrepreneurs, is just wrong. The passion for entrepreneurship, rather, develops with the first [entrepreneurial activity](#) and success."

More information: M. M. Gielnik et al. "I Put in Effort, Therefore I Am Passionate": Investigating the Path from Effort to Passion in Entrepreneurship, *Academy of Management Journal* (2014). [DOI: 10.5465/amj.2011.0727](#)

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