



# The Role of Entrepreneurial Training Designed for Freelancers in Start-Up Creation Process

Daniela DAMIAN<sup>\*</sup>, Giuseppe EMPOLI<sup>\*\*</sup>

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Accepted August 2020

Available online August 2020

### JEL Classification

M13, M53

### Keywords:

Entrepreneurship, Learning,  
Freelancing, Career, Start-Up

## ABSTRACT

The experience in freelancing plays an important role in the development of entrepreneurial skills, due to working with clients, constantly promoting on platforms, on the official pages of freelancers or on specialized sites, developing certain public relations skills, marketing skills, management of your own budget or accounting. Currently, in the absence of a strategy to eliminate the routine from freelancing and move to the next step, the opportunity to work on platforms has become much more attractive, giving freelancers the opportunity to organize their own time according to personal life and do part of the projects they want. Based on the analysis of the literature, we proposed a series of strategies to motivate freelancers to become entrepreneurs, objectives and action plan, in order to encourage them and to invest their money and expertise in freelancing, to support and developing businesses that bring long-term benefits.

© 2020 EAI. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The European Union emphasized the role of entrepreneurship training in transmitting and consolidating formal knowledge about the world of business and self-employment, but especially with a view to developing cross-cutting skills such as "creativity, initiative, tenacity, teamwork, knowledge of risks and a sense of responsibility" (European Commission 2013).

The literature confirms the importance given by institutions to this tool, which is an effective strategy in creating a favorable climate and increasing the attractiveness of an entrepreneurial career (Muffato, Giacon, Saeed 2012).

Training initiatives have begun to spread, especially at university level (Neergaard and Uhlhøi 2007), both through curricular teaching and through competitions and operational workshops.

From this point of view, the actions of vocational training assistance services for the development of an entrepreneurial career can be divided according to purpose into three categories:

- education and dissemination of entrepreneurial culture or socialization and awareness actions, intended both for students in primary schools, middle schools or universities, as well as through the laboratories of mini-enterprises, competitions, internships, etc. (to stimulate interest in curiosity for an entrepreneurial career for both adults) and through general seminars on the entrepreneurial phenomenon and direct testimonies (which make entrepreneurship a real opportunity);

- entrepreneurial orientation, differentiated according to the type of users

- a. information and analysis of opportunities for those who have already started or will start an independent career,

- b. or training for those who have to build their own professional project;

- vocational training modulated and customized according to user needs and specific training gaps to be filled.

## 2. Literature review

A basic issue from which it is necessary to start for the analysis of training interventions is the question of whether entrepreneurial behavior is transmissible or not to freelancers.

In fact, the freelancer turned entrepreneur is characterized by a set of factors that influence his path and include environmental and individual variables, technical knowledge and transversal skills: in this context, the strong component related to the individual and his personality would seem to indicate that training entrepreneurship is very difficult to convey.

<sup>\*</sup>, <sup>\*\*</sup>Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania. E-mail address: [g.empoli@sidagroup.com](mailto:g.empoli@sidagroup.com) (G. Empoli – Corresponding author)

However, as early as 1985, Drucker stated: The entrepreneurial mystique? It's not magic, it's not mysterious, and it has nothing to do with the genes. It's a discipline. And, like any discipline, it can be learned".

Later, other authors also confirmed this hypothesis (Akola and Heinonen 2007). In particular, Brockhaus, trying to answer the question of whether it would have been possible to teach someone to be an entrepreneur, answered with a metaphor comparing the entrepreneur with an artist: for both, the principle applies that, based on personal predisposition and skills, adds skills and technical knowledge.

But what are the constituent elements and objectives that characterize the entrepreneurial training of freelancers? It is clear that, for the reasons set out above, not only can the acquisition of knowledge be aimed at, but there must be open training, in which part of the content will be defined on the basis of the target audience and the various projects identified. In fact, if from a point, some technical and regulatory aspects can be transmitted with frontal teaching methods, other elements have an experiential character and require a laboratory-type training, oriented towards the entrepreneurial role.

Considering the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur or freelancer, the classic objectives of entrepreneurial training can be stated as follows:

- to understand as learned and coded knowledge, related to the technical mastery of the reference sector or of the administrative-managerial aspects;

- know how to do or master the practical skills and specific experience that allows you to deal with the practical part of the work, which translates into knowledge of the market dynamics of the reference sector in the specific context in which it operates;

- knowing how to be, which implies the ability to understand the context and to adopt appropriate behaviors, thus involving the system of values, expectations and motivations.

These aspects are analytically distinct, while in reality they are strictly intersected, because the cognitive, operative and emotional levels are closely connected.

Think, for example, of a freelancer - a potential entrepreneur who discusses alternative methods and resources to achieve specific goals: the choice between different solutions takes place not only by virtue of cognitively possessed information, but also by having practical knowledge and an overview. As pointed out above, it is based on overcoming the concept of homo economicus or the idea that man always acts with an Olympic-type rationality, so it is always possible to identify the best decision by increasing cognitive elements.

However, it has long been known that agents are subject to strategic behaviors, information asymmetries, cognitive maps, cultural and value elements that condition behavior and decisions.

So what is meant and how should entrepreneurial training be structured? As a training is structured by identifying the objectives, the recipients of the teaching methods and the teachers, we will try in the following lines to offer an image of what the literature highlights.

Before addressing these issues individually, it is necessary to limit the scope of observation: as Alberti (2004) says, there is often in practice a bit of confusion between the expressions "entrepreneurial training", "business training", "training for small entrepreneurs."

Nor does the literature present a homogeneous image. The discriminatory element in this respect concerns the final goal and objectives: in fact, it moves from very restrictive definitions, for which entrepreneurial training is a process that should lead to the creation of a business (Fayolle and Lassas-Clerc, 2006), to very extensive ones that include all training pathways aimed at increasing problem-solving ability and self-esteem. Between these two extremes, a series of positions emphasize, on the one hand, the role of encouraging training, raising awareness of entrepreneurship as a career choice, on the other hand the function of stimulating the ability to act in a preventive way. (European Commission, 2006).

Some authors have developed a reference framework, attributable to all the freelancers, which recalls the specific objectives of entrepreneurship training (Ilozor et al., 2006).

As Matlay and Pepin (2012) point out, the above is an analytical synthesis in that each aspect is found in any path of entrepreneurial training, even if in different combinations and weights depending on the recipients and their context. It is clear, in fact, that the training addressed to middle or high school students will have more goals related to the development of an entrepreneurial attitude, mentality and entrepreneurial culture, while a training session for potential entrepreneurs will have aimed at providing and providing more technical knowledge (e.g. problem solving, negotiation, planning, etc.).

Referring to the need to provide training that is not only content but also experiential, the literature emphasizes how often the courses aim to provide above all knowledge "about entrepreneurship", rather than "for entrepreneurship" (Mwasalwiba, 2010).

Entrepreneurial training aims to give potential entrepreneurs greater cultural autonomy to equip them with tools to address critical issues, precariousness and complexity. In this sense, transversal and reflective skills are developed.

What has been highlighted so far highlights the way in which entrepreneurship is expressed through activities that require particular attitudes and which, however, must also be adequately managed through appropriate training courses (Boukamcha, 2015).

The provision of specific training policies in support of business creation and entrepreneurship also allows for greater action on the selectivity of interventions in terms of the freelancers involved and the quality of funded business opportunities.

### 3. Strategies enabling freelancers to turn into entrepreneurs

#### 3.1. Strategy for preparing and planning the transition from Freelancing to entrepreneurship

Its main objective is the desire to excel as an entrepreneur, in the same field in which they worked as freelancers. Transforming their passion into a business idea, based on the expertise gained over time on freelancing platforms and also based on interaction with other contractors, can lead to the creation of a business in their own style.

In order to meet these objectives and to manage the difficult moments involved in the transition from freelancer to entrepreneur, a gradual transition is needed.

The transition to action and the correct choice of the field of activity, leads to the elimination of fears regarding the status of entrepreneur, working in parallel, a certain period of time, both for freelancing projects and for founding a new business.

<i>A. Strategy for preparing and planning the transition from Freelancing to entrepreneurship</i>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transforming the passion from freelancing into a business idea.</li> <li>- Creating a business in your own style by delivering quality services based on freelancing expertise.</li> <li>- The desire to excel as an entrepreneur in the field in which you worked as a freelancer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify risk factors during the transition from freelancing to entrepreneurship.</li> <li>- Analyzing the risk and assuming it, the risk is always indispensable for fulfilling the objectives, the challenges always representing an opportunity both in the freelancing activity and in business.</li> <li>- Managing the difficult moments involved in the transition from freelancer to entrepreneur, working in parallel for a period of time.</li> <li>- Eliminate fears regarding the status of entrepreneur by choosing the right field of activity.</li> <li>- Appealing to accountants, lawyers or other entrepreneurs with a decisive role in entrepreneurial independence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Success in founding a company</li> <li>- Financial independence by releasing from the control of employers on freelancing platforms.</li> <li>-entrepreneurial independence</li> <li>- excellence in the field of expertise</li> </ul>

#### 3.2. The strategy of motivation and development of one's own ideas

Its main objective is to identify personal passions and hobbies - the basic motivator in developing their own ideas and to identify favorable circumstances that are consistent with their own ideas, following the evolution of employers on the platforms.

The implementation of a business is based on the development of one's own ideas and passions, and the main reason generally starts from dreams that can be put into practice, then from independence and a sense of control over one's own destiny - in order to reap the benefits.

Giving up this freelancing environment can be done gradually and planned, setting the rules based on ideas, tasks and objectives, which, in turn, can provide major and immediate satisfaction.

Another reason to consider is the potential gain in entrepreneurship that depends entirely on business development. Not so with a freelancer - revenues are usually fluctuating and limited, becoming the main topic of negotiation on freelancing platforms with employers.

<i>The strategy of motivation and development of one's own ideas</i>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The desire to get out of the freelancing routine</li> <li>-Identifying personal passions and personal hobbies the basic motivator in developing their own ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create content through articles, based on the experience of freelancing.</li> <li>- Engage in creative work while taking advantage of this experience.</li> <li>- Growing a brand on an identified segment in the activity on the platforms.</li> <li>- Identifies favorable circumstances that are in line with their own ideas, following the evolution of employers on the platforms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gaining prestige by eliminating work from home (remote).</li> <li>- Social position</li> <li>- Professional career in entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>

### **3.3. Development and innovation strategy**

This type of strategy has as main objective the desideratum to do a business in its own style, other than freelancing, based on the accumulated professional expertise, developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem with direct effects on the quality of life.

The second equally important goal is learning, which aims to explore and innovate. Innovation is born in companies where entrepreneurs take risks, successfully applying the ideas they have, through different execution processes, which, in turn, lead to the creation of new products and services, considering it important for the growth strategy.

Essential in the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem are the collaborative processes between freelancers in particular and young entrepreneurs, based on their experience in start-up programs, then on informal meetings and counseling sessions in entrepreneurship.

<b>Development and innovation strategy</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The desire to make a project in your own style, other than freelancing.</li><li>- The aspiration to deliver quality services from the position of businessman.</li><li>- Learning aimed at exploration (innovation).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem with direct effects in increasing the quality of life, based on the knowledge gained from collaboration with other entrepreneurial entrepreneurs on the platforms.</li><li>- Development of a new sales method or development of a new technology based on the expertise in the freelancing activity.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Gaining professional autonomy through the power of proximity and experience on platforms.</li><li>- Increasing the passion for innovation, and development for new technologies.</li></ul>

### **3.4. Strategy for taking control of personal progress**

Its main objectives are both the ambition to make things better, with an impact on professional and personal life and the development and transformation of obstacles from freelancing expertise into future business opportunities.

Certainly, very few freelancers take responsibility for their professional progress. Given the field in which it operates, the allocation of uninteresting projects becomes inevitable at some point. Some will blame the employers on the platforms, others the family, and in the end, the winners will be only those who will take responsibility for their professional development.

In order to have a professional progress and to move more easily to a career in entrepreneurship, it is necessary a sustained effort, built step by step, until it becomes fruitful. It may not often take years to reap the desired results.

<b>Strategy for taking control of personal progress</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The ambition to do things better and with an impact on professional and personal life.</li><li>- Development and transformation of obstacles from freelancing expertise into future business opportunities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Perfecting freelancing ideas to create an impactful company.</li><li>- Building value through things done in remote work.</li><li>- The transition from spectator to actor work with long-term results.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The joy and purpose of building a future by changing the mentality.</li><li>- Consecration obtained in business starting from the experience gained in freelancing and through the power of destiny.</li></ul>

### **3.5. The strategy of eliminating the routine from freelancing and moving to the next step**

By conscientiously repeating the same tasks every day, freelancers automatically enter a routine often with negative effects, which leads to the situation of working on a project because they have to, not because they want it.

Routine can become limiting or eliminate creativity and spontaneity in a freelancer's work. When the routine appears and the negative effects appear, freelancers can use to identify business-friendly circumstances or can identify market opportunities in accordance with their profession and professional profile.

<b><i>The strategy of eliminating the routine from freelancing and moving to the next step</i></b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected outcomes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Release from the control of employers on the platforms.</li> <li>- Leverage the expertise as a freelancer to create your own business.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying business-friendly circumstances.</li> <li>- Identifying market opportunities or niches in accordance with the profession and professional profile of the freelancer.</li> <li>- Attending mentoring courses in entrepreneurship.</li> <li>- Getting in touch with successful entrepreneurs</li> <li>- Identifying new business cultures that motivate and potential in the field of freelancing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Differentiate yourself from other freelancers by changing your mentality.</li> <li>- Getting out of freelancing work and achieving performance as a future entrepreneur</li> </ul>

Attending entrepreneurship mentoring courses becoming paramount, socializing, meeting successful businesspeople, can arouse admiration among professionals and can also stimulate them intellectually.

The closer a freelancer is to entrepreneurs, the easier it will be for them to move on to the next step. Getting out of the freelancing routine means knowing and overcoming one's own limits, differentiating oneself from the rest of the freelancers being done primarily by changing the mentality.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The findings of our study can be summarized as follows:

- Learning freelancers to understand entrepreneurship. From this point of view, it refers to the field of knowledge: the aim is to make known the entrepreneurship and the specific role that entrepreneurs play in the reference economic context and in society. Therefore, the need to transmit, in the training programs, also the normative and value aspects that the entrepreneurial role plays for the society. Along with this aspect, another element regarding the sphere of knowledge refers to the transmission of operational knowledge aimed at launching a company and its management (production, management, marketing).

- Learning to become preventive (attitude). This aspect of entrepreneurial training aims to change attitudes to direct them towards personal responsibility and reflexivity regarding the development of their own life and career. This is the element that official documents emphasize as an added value of entrepreneurship training, as it aims to develop those proactive, flexible and adaptive attitudes that are typical of post-Fordist work contexts. Therefore, it is an individual process of empowerment, which aims to increase the spirit of initiative, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-determination to extract all the resources of the individual. In this respect, entrepreneurship training aims to strengthen those elements that in the first chapter were mentioned under the label the motivation and personality of entrepreneurs. In particular, there is a need for "need of achievement", risk appetite and self-efficacy.

- Learning to become entrepreneurs (skills), in terms of the goal of entrepreneurship training to provide all the skills and information needed to start a new entrepreneurial activity: therefore, it is a matter of passing on the way of planning, management and evaluation of the activity in terms not so much knowledge as capacity.

If freelancers have a clear picture of individual and business prospects, they can develop a long-term strategy taking into account the preparation and planning strategies for the transition from a freelancer to an entrepreneurial career.

These strategies can be implemented through the objectives set, accompanied by actions, plans and strategies that are mainly related to motivation and financial economic reasons.

We propose a strategic adaptation of the new business to the digital age by setting up and implementing a system for forecasting the company's external environment with real chances for success. Planning, perceiving and solving problems can be one of the directions in which creativity and the ability to learn from previous freelancing expertise are directed.

#### **References**

1. Alberti, F., Sciascia, S., & Poli, A. (2004, July). *Entrepreneurship education: notes on an ongoing debate*. In *Proceedings of the 14th Annual IntEnt Conference, University of Napoli Federico II, Italy* (Vol. 4, No. 7).
2. Boukamcha, F. (2015). *Impact of training on entrepreneurial intention: an interactive cognitive perspective*. *European Business Review*.
3. Drucker, P. F. (1985). *Entrepreneurial strategies*. *California Management Review*, 27(2).
4. Fayolle, A., & Lassas-Clerc, N. (2006, September). *Essay on the nature of entrepreneurship education*. In *International Conference Entrepreneurship in United Europe-Challenges and Opportunities*.
5. Heinonen, J., & Akola, E. (2007). *Entrepreneurship training and entrepreneurial learning in Europe: results from the ENTLEARN project*. *Turku: TSE Entre, Turku School of Economics*.
6. Ilozor, B., Sarki, A., Hodd, M., Heinonen, J., & Poikkijoki, S. A. (2006). *An entrepreneurial-directed approach to entrepreneurship education: mission impossible?*. *Journal of management development*.

7. Matlay, H., & Pepin, M. (2012). *Enterprise education: a Deweyan perspective*. Education+ Training.
8. Muffato, M., Giacon, P., & Saeed, S. (2012). *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor–Italy. 2012 Executive Report*. Gem, Università degli Studi di Padova, in <http://www.gemconsortium.org>.
9. Mwasalwiba, E. S. (2010). *Entrepreneurship education: a review of its objectives, teaching methods, and impact indicators*. Education+ training.
10. Neergaard, H., & Uhløi, J. P. (Eds.). (2007). *Handbook of qualitative research methods in entrepreneurship*. Edward Elgar Publishing.