

Foreword: Entrepreneurship from the Human Perspective

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Start-up leaders interface constantly with investors, employees, agents, and customers. Over the years, it has become obvious to me that a key predictor of an entrepreneur's success is the handling of these different human relationships. One key capability at the heart of these relationships is the art of negotiating successfully.

I have been teaching entrepreneurship for decades based on my own viewpoints. When Dinnar and Susskind approached me with their different viewpoints, I immediately connected. They emphasize negotiation as the critical entrepreneurial skill that entrepreneurs are using continuously on their way to success, or to failure. I certainly agree that negotiation skills are among the top requirements for entrepreneurs, and I won't try here to enumerate others that are also vital. I have known Dinnar and Susskind to be successful in their own rights, as well as master teachers of negotiation at Harvard and MIT. I also know and admire their additional roles as mediators, which give them unique perspectives into entrepreneurial disputes. In such disputes great ideas are on the brink of being lost forever. Dinnar and Susskind have helped parties walk back from such brinks by being able to detect the forces at work,

assess the mistakes that were made, and recognize the human opportunities to recover. I have become quite uncomfortable when I learn of growing firms where “the shootout” is the means for reaching decisions. Wiser firms do not destroy internal sources of competing ideas. They seek to encourage collaborative ties within the company that lead to integrative outcomes. That comes from mediated behavior that calls out the best from differing groups, seeking to contribute to attaining overriding common goals of the firm.

This book provides a very practical framework of looking at entrepreneurship through the lens of negotiations. The authors have laid out a great case, based on practical experience, that entrepreneurial negotiation can be learned. In fact, before reading this book I did not have the words to explain why negotiation must be learned. Now I have added much of this to my knowledge – a tough task for someone of my age! Negotiation skills need to be continuously developed, articulated, maintained, and practiced. Each entrepreneur will develop in his or her own way, and each will develop his own theory of practice. Negotiation is a human endeavor and as such is influenced by an individual’s culture, values, and society. But the learning is universal and is learned by doing. Failure is not a requirement for learning. Entrepreneurs can learn from their own mistakes, shy of failure, as well as from the mistakes of others. As part of the authors’ research for this book, they interviewed many entrepreneurs about their actual diverse experiences. Some of these interviewees were founders of start-ups that I invested in or just know. There is nothing more powerful than a true story of overcoming difficulties or even of encountering a failure. I was moved by some of the memorable real-world stories that are used to illustrate the typical mistakes that entrepreneurs make.

I also remember my own interview. How I reflected back on some of my own entrepreneurial mistakes, and how I wished that I were taught these critical negotiation skills early in my career. And for me, early could mean 50 years ago, such as when I joined as a talented computer programmer to form Meditech. I was one of four cofounders, and we set out to utilize cutting-edge computers and a new computer language in order to improve healthcare processes, which at the time were paper based and error prone. I was working part-time in the company while being full-time at MIT. I remember well making the mistake of compromising too quickly when it came to negotiating the cofounder equity allocations. Many other mistakes that we all made occurred as we grew the company. But we all learned gradually to work together to problem-solve instead of compromising. Because we learned how to deal with each other, over the years we were able to adapt to an ever-changing world: innovative technologies, new regulations, dynamic markets, and diverse customer expectations. That is why today, five decades later, the

company still exists as a profitable major player in the healthcare information technology field, with thousands of employees.

But the learning never stops. I still make entrepreneurial negotiation mistakes today as a company backer. If you are an entrepreneur or an aspiring entrepreneur, or if you are simply dealing with one – then this book is for you, just as it is for me, and for my MIT students. My first request of the authors after seeing what this book achieves was that they come and give a several-hour class session to my students in the MIT Entrepreneurship & Innovation Track. That was an easy win-win request. But I already have upped the targets and asked might they consider launching a full course in Entrepreneurial Negotiations for aspiring young MIT wannabe entrepreneurs. We haven't yet begun that negotiation 😊.

The authors effectively describe the entrepreneurial landscape and provide a launchpad for developing your own negotiation understanding. In addition to great stories and academic experimental references, they include practical guidance to help you prevent, detect, and respond to the most dangerous common negotiation mistakes. You'll learn how to develop your own entrepreneurial wisdom. This book will enhance the way you view entrepreneurship and help you deal better with entrepreneurial uncertainty, complexity, relationships, and emotions. I truly believe that by improving your negotiation skills, you will build better relationships, become a better leader, and achieve better business results.

Entrepreneurship has become a critical part of the global economy. At MIT we have educated many students and executives who have gone on to become entrepreneurs. My recent research (published in 2015 with Fiona Murray and Daniel Kim) found that MIT alumni have launched more than 30,000 active companies, employing roughly 4.6 million people, and generating nearly \$2 trillion in annual revenues. These days, I am happy to see entrepreneurship centers and initiatives being started around the world. And I am very pleased that Dinnar and Susskind have been able to combine the theory and practice of entrepreneurship, negotiation, and leadership into a package that will help more entrepreneurs succeed.

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