

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LIFECYCLE



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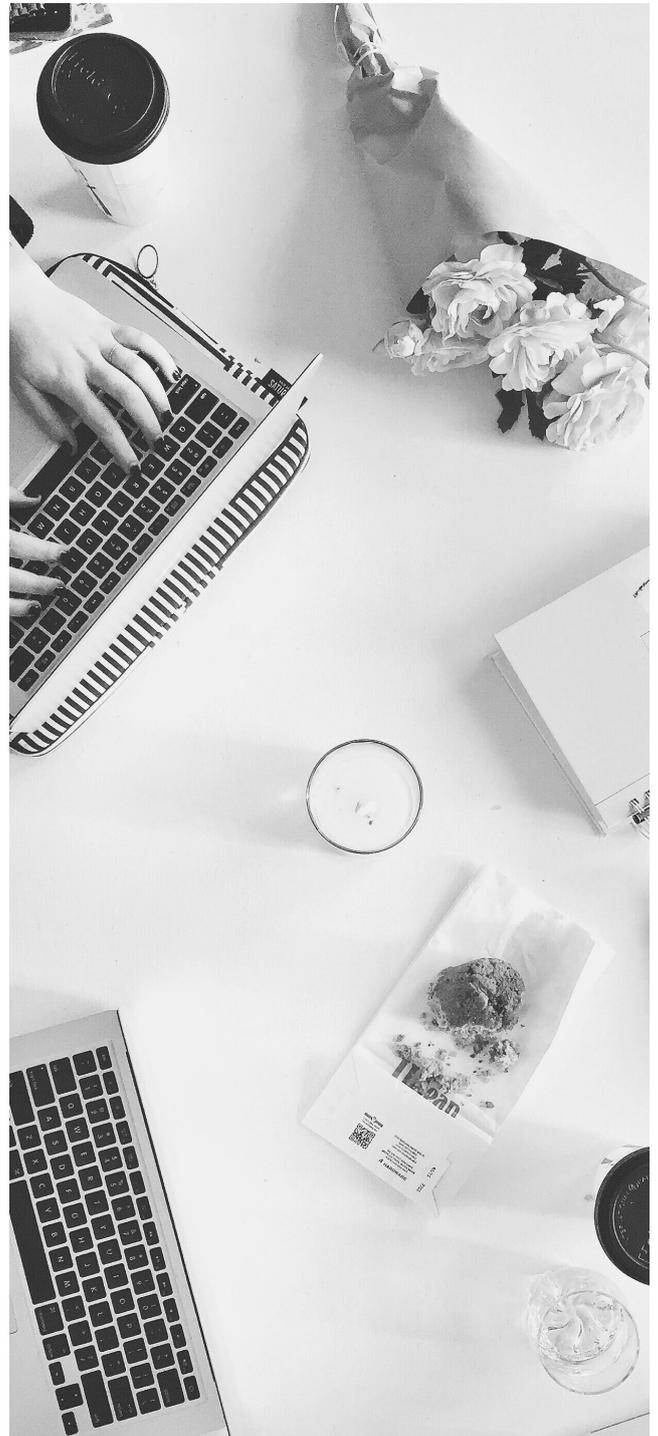
INTRODUCTION

The information in this booklet aims to support individuals with ADHD understand and prepare for the various stages of the entrepreneurial journey. Please note, while this information is designed to support individuals with ADHD, a lot of the information and resources also apply to people with other neurodiverse variations. We use 'entrepreneur' as a generic term referring to an innovator, a source of new ideas, goods, services, and business/or procedures..

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As you read this section, keep in mind the following learning objectives:

- 1. Understand what stage of the entrepreneurial life cycle you are in.*
- 2. Understand what you can do to be successful in each stage of the entrepreneurial life cycle.*



KEY TAKEAWAYS & OUTLINE

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LIFECYCLE

p. 3-4

In order to start a successful business, it is important to understand and prepare for the various stages of the entrepreneurial journey. Go to [The Entrepreneurial Lifecycle](#) for:

- a. An overview of the entrepreneurial lifecycle p. 3
- b. Dualism across the entrepreneurial lifecycle p. 4

STAGES OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LIFECYCLE

p. 5-12

This section breaks down each stage of the entrepreneurial lifecycle, and provides information on the advantages and challenges entrepreneurs with ADHD may experience as well as tips and resources to excel during each phase.

- STAGE 1: interest and opportunity identification p. 5
- STAGE 2: early-stage entrepreneurial behaviour p. 6-8
- STAGE 3: resource acquisition p. 9
- STAGE 4: resource coordination p. 10
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THE SIX STAGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

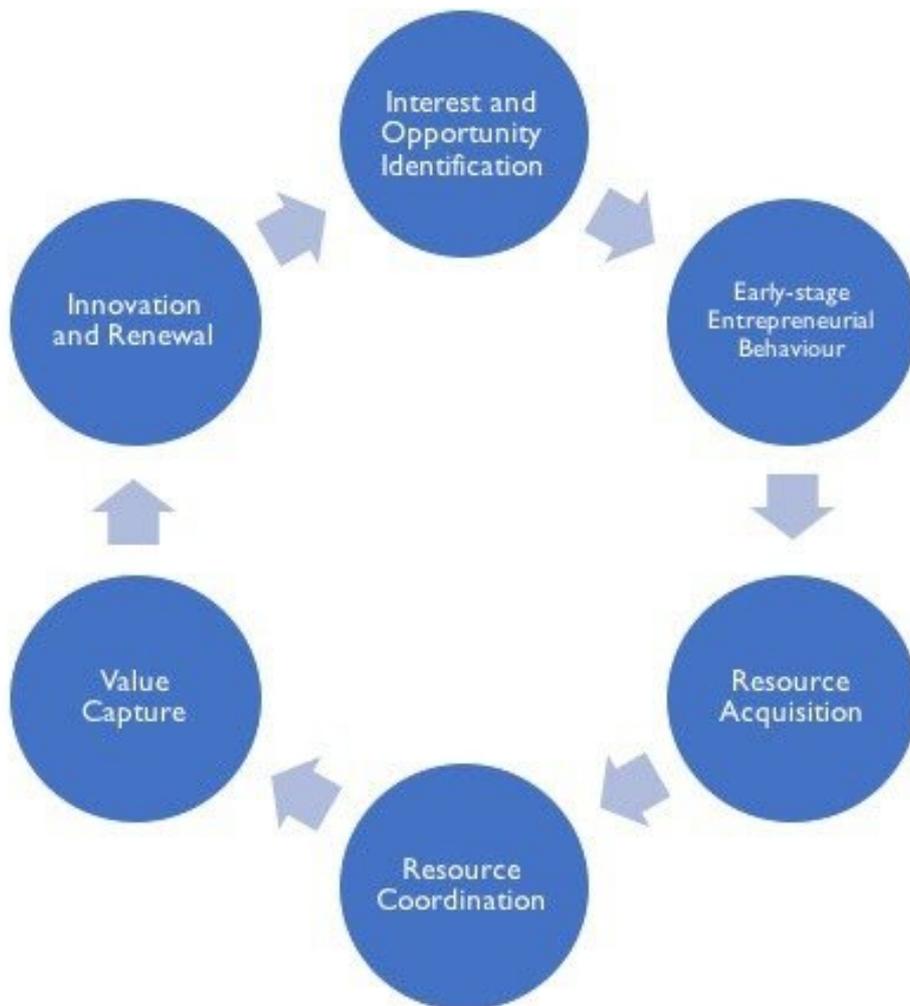
ACCORDING TO LERNER ET.AL (2018)

1. Interest and Opportunity Identification
2. Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Behaviour
3. Resource Acquisition
4. Resource Coordination
5. Value Capture
6. Innovation and Renewal

The early stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle are creative and exploratory in nature, while later stages are more structured, predictable, and execution-driven.

“It is rare to find all the requisite skills and insights embodied in a single founder for the entire arc of the entrepreneurial life cycle.”

—
Lerner et al., 2018, p. 271



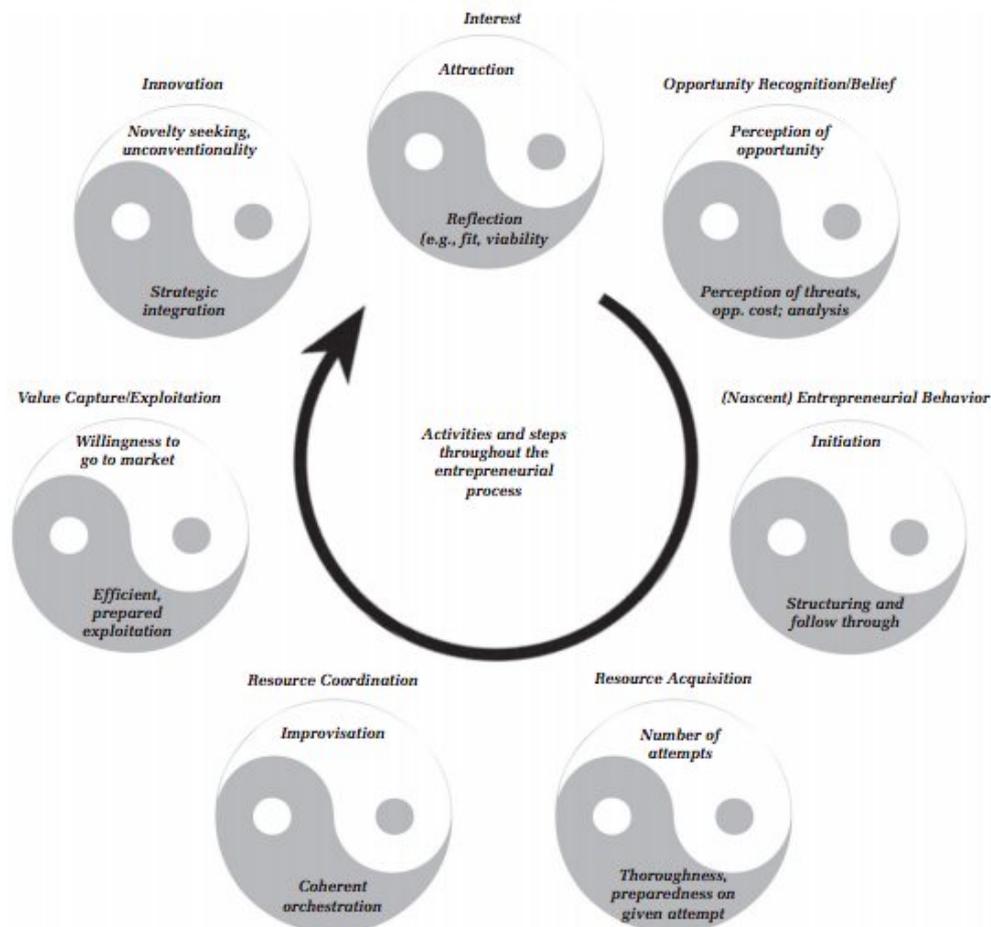
THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LIFECYCLE: AN OVERVIEW

DUALISM ACROSS THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LIFE CYCLE

“Borrowing from Taoist philosophy, the complementary, dualistic nature of the ADHD–entrepreneurship relationship can be usefully framed by the two opposing sides of the Tao... In a fashion that is highly reminiscent of ADHD’s mixed influences, the Tao embraces the notion that there is no front side of a coin that does not have a back side. Flipping the coin does not change the fact that the coin has a head side and a tail side. Ideally, a person’s yin essence (i.e., relaxed, restful, contemplative, being, receiving, nurturing, integrating) and yang essence (i.e., active, energetic, doing, engaging, penetrating, separating, grasping) are in balance to varying degrees, depending on contextual and personal conditions, but neither side ever disappears.”

—
Lerner et al., 2018, p. 270

FIGURE 2
Dualism Across the Entrepreneurial Life Cycle



Note: Extending Figure 1, ADHD disinhibition is positively associated with the yang (white), negatively with the yin (gray).

STAGE 1: INTEREST & OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION

OUTLINE:

In the earliest stage of business venturing, individuals with entrepreneurial interest need to use imagination, creative vision, experience, and prior knowledge to perceive untapped opportunities.

POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES:

Early-stage entrepreneurial activities – interest, opportunity identification, and initiation of early entrepreneurial behaviour – involve processes where ADHD can be an asset (Healey & Rucklidge, 2005; Honos-Webb, 2008; White & Shah, 2006, 2011). At this stage, the identification of new, untapped opportunities is usually achieved through unconventional thinking (Baron & Tang, 2011; Ward, 2004). According to White & Shah (2006, 2011) and Wiklund et al. (2016) “there are demonstrable linkages between these types of creative, generative activities and the presence of ADHD” (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 273).

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:

“The relative lack of reflection associated with ADHD may result in individuals focusing on the excitement and appeal of the innovative idea while ignoring, rationalising, or dismissing opportunity costs and personal financial risks” (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 274) as well as other obstacles such as market demand, competition, and legality and regulation.



TIPS & RESOURCES:

FINDING INSPIRATION & IDEA GENERATION

Use the [*Finding Inspiration and Idea Generation*](#) resource booklet developed by the Neurodiversity Hub to discover:

- How to find your niche
- The creativity and improvisation habit
- Idea generation framework and techniques

IBA INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WORKBOOK

Use page 5-18 of the [*IBA International Entrepreneurship Workbook*](#) developed by Dr. Tamara Stenn to identify what your passions are, what specific problem you want to address and the solution you hope to provide.

For use with the book, *Social Entrepreneurship as Sustainable Development*, c. 2017, T. Stenn, Palgrave

STAGE 2: EARLY-STAGE ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR

OUTLINE:

During this stage, the entrepreneur begins to bring their idea to life. The key element of this stage is building a business plan. This step is crucial because engaging in formal organisational planning processes before talking to customers and undertaking marketing and promotional efforts leads to more successful business outcomes. Key considerations in a business plan include but are not limited to:

- Defining the value proposition
- Forming a team
- Planning research and validation methods
- Undertaking competitor analysis
- Developing business strategy and marketing plan
- Registering the business
- Planning resource acquisition

POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES:

The early stages of bringing an entrepreneurial idea to life often require the ability to engage other people, such as potential team members, business partners, mentors, and investors. "The general preference for action by individuals with ADHD ... is apt to translate into a greater number of early-stage attempts to engage others" (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 274).



POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

The ability to swiftly initiate action needs to be complemented by careful planning, analysis and commitment to completing key tasks. Novel ideas, in particular, entail more uncertainty so self-corrective action is absolutely necessary to stay on track which can be something people with ADHD struggle with (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 274).

TIPS & RESOURCES:

CREATING A BUSINESS PLAN

To get started, utilise this [Business Model Canvas](#) template. Please refer to this two minute [instructional video](#) for directions on how to fill it out.

To transfer this into a more robust business plan, use this [Business Plan Template](#) in conjunction with this guide from the [Small Business Development Corporation of Western Australia](#).

STAGE 2:

EARLY-STAGE ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR

TIPS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

SELF-LEADERSHIP

Three strategies drawn from *Entrepreneurship: The Practice and Mindset* (2016) that you can use to practice self-leadership:

Behaviour-focused strategies

- **Self-observation:** to improve awareness of how, when, and why we behave the way we do in certain circumstances, you may want to consider keeping a diary to document your feelings and responses to different scenarios. This can help you to identify trends in your behaviour.
- **Self-goal setting:** write down your goals on sticky notes and posters to stick around your workplace. It may be helpful to create short-term goals (like daily to-do lists) from your long-term goals so that it's easier to track progress and meet milestones.
- **Self-reward:** rewarding yourself when you reach your goals can be a great motivator. This can be something like watching a movie after finishing all the tasks you had planned for the day.

Natural reward strategies

- Natural reward strategies are about making aspects of a task or activity more enjoyable by focusing on the most positive aspects of the task. This could be something like listening to music while working or working outside for a change

Constructive thought patterns

- Building constructive thought patterns are about “identifying destructive beliefs and assumptions and reframing those thoughts through practicing self-talk and mental imagery” (Neck et al., 2016, pg. 73). One great way to do this is to visualise yourself successfully performing an activity before undertaking the task.



ONLINE COURSES FROM BE YOUR BEST

Organisational Skills:

in 4 short weeks, get confident with your neurodiverse strengths, learn how to plan and be productive, manage your time and reflect with ease.

Achieving Goals:

Learn the power of words and how to make good decisions, you can achieve meaningful goals and expand your critical thinking to manage challenges with a stride in your step.

These materials from Be Your Best are research-backed and created by neurodiverse people with therapeutic aims for engaged learning.

BUILDING A BALANCED TEAM

Use page 3-4 of the [IBA International Entrepreneurship Workbook](#) developed by Dr. Tamara Stenn to identify what are the strengths and weaknesses you have during each stage of the entrepreneurial life cycle. Use these insights to determine what sort of team members you need to bring on to help in areas you are not familiar with or struggle with.

For use with the book, *Social Entrepreneurship as Sustainable Development*, c. 2017, T. Stenn, Palgrave

STAGE 2:

EARLY-STAGE ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR

TIPS & RESOURCES CONTINUED

BUILDING A BALANCED TEAM (CONT.)

Identify Your Thinking Talents and Shadow Attributes

A Thinking Talents Map (developed by Angie McArthur and Dawna Markova) helps individuals to place their top Thinking Talents chosen from a pool of 34 different options into one of four categories: Analytic, Innovative, Procedural, Relational. When individuals in a team share their mind patterns and map their Thinking Talents, a common language and universal way of relating to each other emerges.

Step 1: Read through the [*Thinking Talent Characteristics*](#) document and note down which Thinking Talents best apply to you.

Step 2: Divide your selected Thinking Talents into one of four categories (Analytic, Innovative, Procedural, Relational) using the [*Thinking Talents Map Template*](#) document. Use can use the [*Thinking Talents Map Guideline*](#) to help you understand which talents fall under each category.

Step 3. In order to make sure we are using our talents well and creating excellence as a result, it's also important to look at when and where we exhibit a shadow attribute and then transform it. To transform a shadow attribute, you need to:

- **name it** by identifying the thinking talent that it's associated with
- **contain it** by using it knowingly and wisely
- **aim it** by engaging it on behalf of your goals.

Repeat this practice with each of your shadow attributes until the thinking talent is readily apparent to you.

Step 4: Share your Thinking Talents Map and shadow attributes with the team so that everyone understands your learning and thinking style.



BUILDING A SUPPORT NETWORK

Reach out to seasoned entrepreneurs in your particular areas of interest or who may have similar experiences to you to ask for further guidance and advice. Use the [*Building a Support Network*](#) resource booklet developed by the Neurodiversity Hub to discover:

- How to find a mentor
- Networking tips
- Accelerators and Incubators

STAGE 3: RESOURCE ACQUISITION

OUTLINE:

The resource acquisition stage entails sourcing external funding, an office, human capital, and suppliers – just to name a few. This step typically requires planning, due diligence, and a formal registration of the business and financial accounts. This stage in particular involves extensive interpersonal coordination, stakeholder communication, joint production, and market-based transactions (Hunt & Hayward, 2018), each of which requires well developed, context-appropriate social skills on the part of the entrepreneur (Baron & Markman, 2003).

POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES:

In the face of convention, uncertainty, and naysayers, ADHD may be an asset in looking past barriers, projecting confidence, and persisting in making resource acquisition attempts—all of which are instrumental to garnering external investment (Mullins, 2013).

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

“Business activities such as ordering and managing raw materials, providing customer support, dealing with regulations, invoicing, paying bills, maintaining an organised work space, and keeping complete financial records are often considered mundane—if not altogether odious—by individuals with ADHD, making them even more vulnerable to distraction and more prone to procrastination and activity avoidance” (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 275; APA, 2013).



TIPS & RESOURCES

If the extensive interpersonal coordination and stakeholder communication necessary for successful resource acquisition is not your strong suit then it is important that you have other people on your team who are skilled in this area. Refer back to your team's Thinking Talent Map (p. 4) to ensure that you have a balanced team and are keeping yourselves and each other accountable for any Shadow Attributes. Remember, while delegating these tasks is a great solution, make sure you stay in the loop on the resource acquisition process by regularly scheduling meetings to hear about any progress as this will undeniably affect the tasks you are focusing on too. Lastly, keep referring back to your business plan to make sure you and your team are on track for reaching key milestones.

STAGE 4: RESOURCE COORDINATION

OUTLINE:

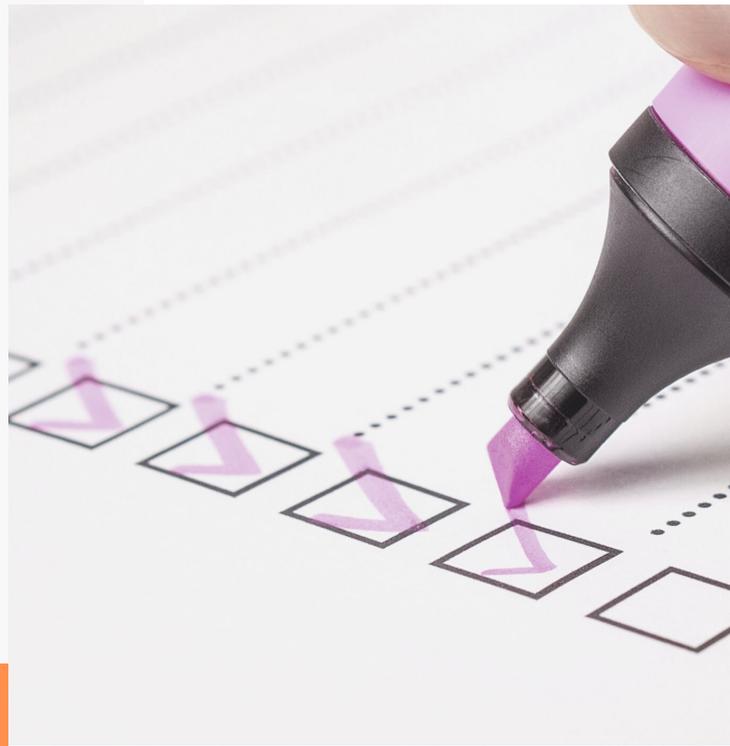
Resource coordination involves developing and instituting a formalised set of policies, procedures, and processes to consistently transform a product or service from a concept to reality. This stage is typically entails the value chain, or a step-by-step business model used to increase a businesses productivity so it can deliver the most value for the least possible cost.

Some primary activities include:

- **Inbound logistics:** receiving, warehousing, and managing inventory.
- **Operations:** procedures for converting raw materials into a finished product.
- **Outbound logistics:** distribution of a final product to a consumer.
- **Marketing and sales:** advertising, promotion, and pricing strategies to enhance visibility and target appropriate customers.
- **Service:** programs to maintain products and enhance the consumer experience—like customer service, maintenance, repair, refund, and exchange.

POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES:

“To a certain degree, all new and small firms must be willing and able to improvise to compensate for the limited availability of resources. Where bricolage and improvisation play a key role in acquiring and coordinating resources, ADHD could be strategically important, perhaps even an advantage” (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 276).



POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

“Existing research suggests that individuals with ADHD struggle to establish and maintain routines and struggle with chronic disorganization (e.g., Barkley et al., 2008). As such, the effective coordination of resources is apt to be particularly challenging for individuals with ADHD” (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 274)..

TIPS & RESOURCES:

If the extensive planning and organisation necessary for successful resource coordination is not your strong suit then it is important that you have other people on your team who are skilled in this area. Refer back to your team’s Thinking Talent Map (p. 4) to ensure that you have a balanced team and are keeping yourselves and each other accountable for any Shadow Attributes. Remember, while delegating these tasks is a great solution, make sure you stay in the loop on the resource acquisition process by regularly scheduling meetings to hear about any progress as this will undeniably affect the tasks you are focusing on too. Lastly, keep referring back to your business plan to make sure you and your team are on track for reaching key milestones.

STAGE 5: VALUE CAPTURE

OUTLINE:

Value capture occurs when the entrepreneur's product or service is successfully secured by the target market. For new and small firms, value capture may be especially challenging due to a lack of scale, key resources, sociocognitive legitimacy, market access, or experience (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994).

To succeed in value capture, the entrepreneur must constantly be taking into account:

- Market acceptance of the idea
- Supplier and customer preferences and behaviours
- The ability of employees to execute the business plan

POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES:

"When the conditions for value capture are unstable, dynamic, or ambiguous, ADHD could once again be an asset. Overall, the most fruitful course of action typically necessitates balancing a willingness to go to market with a level of preparedness and organisation, which together drive a young firm's capacity to profitably capture value." (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 277).

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

"Value capture that is contingent on well-considered market entry and the efficient delivery of goods and services will favour trustee-centric structuring and administration, thus ill-fitting entrepreneurs with ADHD. Without adequate organisational development, a scalable business model, and a serviceable logistical supply chain, profitable opportunity exploitation is difficult, and often impossible" (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 277).



TIPS & RESOURCES:

Success in value capture usually requires "balancing a willingness to go to market with a level of preparedness and organization" (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 277). The best way to achieve this balance is to have a team whose strengths and weaknesses complement each other throughout the entrepreneurial life cycle. Refer back to your team's Thinking Talent Map and try to ensure that you have a balanced team, and are keeping each other accountable. While team members may be assigned to different tasks, make sure everyone stays in the loop during the entire entrepreneurial life cycle by regularly scheduling team meetings. Lastly, keep referring back to your business plan to make sure you and your team are on track for reaching key milestones.

STAGE 6: INNOVATION & RENEWAL

OUTLINE:

Entrepreneurial firms must find ways to continuously evolve and adapt through innovation while also seeking to establish themselves. The challenge here is finding the right balance between staying relevant and staying profitable.

POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES:

“Given their relative tolerance of uncertainty and preference for novelty, founders with ADHD can be expected to embrace innovation and unconventionality .. Founders with ADHD will tend to seek out opportunities to initiate innovative changes, driven by the tendency to become bored with stability, continuity, and structure.”(Lerner et al., 2018, p. 277)..

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

“ADHD founders are apt to be immune to inertia, yet also less likely to strike a balance between the aims of innovative renewal and scaled competence... For new and small firms, the thin line separating financial success and failure raises the stakes involved in deftly balancing the desire for change and the need for continuity. Novelty for novelty’s sake should be complemented by the balancing benefits of stability and structure” (Lerner et al., 2018, p. 277).



TIPS & RESOURCES:

New ideas within an established business should be complemented by the balancing benefits of stability and structure. That being said, there is no need to limit your imagination during the initial idea generation phase. Be open to feedback from your team members about your new ideas, and remind yourself that this is a team venture. Group buy-in is important for success! Remember to also keep referring back to your business plan to make sure your new idea is in line with the businesses’ goals, mission, and capabilities.

FINDING INSPIRATION & IDEA GENERATION

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- The creativity and improvisation habit
- Idea generation framework and techniques

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