



# Cleaving, ever more fondly, to this entrepreneurial life

Once upon a time, to be called an “entrepreneur” was to be branded as either a filthy, backstabbing opportunist or a depraved, irredeemable criminal – the distinction being perishingly small and one for local justices of the peace, alone, to make.

Fortunately, for those of us who moil for money in the muck of enterprise, the world has largely come around to seeing things our way. Today, we are more likely to be described as “visionaries” and “builders”, “innovators” and “creators”.

The Free Online Dictionary defines an entrepreneur as one who “organizes, operates, and assumes the risk for a business venture.” According to Merriam-Webster, an entrepreneur is drawn naturally to “a project or undertaking that is especially difficult, complicated, or risky.” Meanwhile, Oxford says an entrepreneur is “a person who sets up a business or businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of profit.”

That’s all well and good. But when I say the world has largely come around, I do so with the certain knowledge that various stereotypes still persist and that some myths die slow, annoying deaths. I have encountered dozens of ludicrous suppositions over the years, but my hit parade includes three all-time favorites: The entrepreneur doesn’t punch a clock; the entrepreneur doesn’t play well with others; and the entrepreneur can’t hold down a real job.

Right off the start, the notion that the entrepreneur doesn’t punch a clock is demonstrably false. I say demonstrably because I have the scars on the knuckles of both my hands to prove that I have punched dozens of clocks over the years. Now, I prefer to drape them with bedsheets like the protagonist masking his portrait in the Oscar Wilde masterpiece, *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, so as to avoid seeing time’s ravaging advance. My clocks always run faster than most, especially when a client is holding me to a deadline, though he has yet to provide me with the resources necessary to enable me to meet said deadline.

Following on this point, the proposition that the entrepreneur doesn’t play well with others is misleading in the extreme. It’s more accurate to say that others don’t play well

with the entrepreneur. On any given day (including Saturdays and Sundays), my phone conversations topple over and into something very nearly approaching theatre of the absurd.

Client: “Hey, man, so watchya doin’?”

Entrepreneur: “I’m working.”

Client: “Yeah, about that... I’ve always wondered what you self-employed types wear when you are, you know, ‘working’. I mean, do you sit around in your underwear when you are at your computer? Or do you go totally commando? Um... Are you naked, like, right now?”

Entrepreneur: “Yeah, that’s right... I’m naked... Is there something I can do for you, or can I get back to work?”

Client: “You bet, by all means, keep plugging away... Oh, by the way, You know that report I said I wanted this Friday. Well, I’m actually going to need it a couple of days early. I don’t have all the details, but I’ll let you know. Okay, chief? Now, put on some pants for God’s sake.”

As most workplaces with which I am acquainted are not clothing-optional operations, this brings me to my third and final bugbear: The entrepreneur can’t hold down a real job. Actually, this is true – but not for any reason of low character or native inability. It has to do with the nature and conditions of the modern office, itself.

If holding down a real job means learning how to waste time gossipping with one co-worker about the body odour emitted by another, consulting with colleagues about the best couponing websites in Canada, checking the box scores of the most recent Premier League football match, plotting doctor’s appointments over the next calendar year, or emailing little Johnny’s homeroom teacher about the upcoming parent appreciation night, then, well... yes: The entrepreneur can’t hold down a real job.

In fact, given a choice, he’d rather stick pins into the soles of his feet and go for a stroll on an ice flow. Or, more likely, stick close to his desk and muse mirthfully about the day, which is coming for everyone, when his type of livelihood, no longer depraved, will be the only game in town. | ABM

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The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of Atlantic Business Magazine. Feedback: dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com