

# THERE BE HEROES

By Dawn Chafe



**W**hen you consider everything that can go wrong with a startup, you have to ask yourself why anyone would bother to hang out their shingle in the first place.

The months (often years) of planning... The dedication of every personal financial resource... The investment of time and hope and effort... The sacrifice of job stability and safety nets... The lost family time and social interaction... The need to constantly evolve and adapt to changing markets and technology... The extreme risk of failure, knowing there's a 50 per cent chance you won't survive the first five years (and that there are people who will be secretly delighted if you flop)...

One regional entrepreneur recently told me that he didn't have time for friends, that isolation was the price of success. "I don't have friends; I have colleagues," he said.

Another shared the betrayal of neighbours and acquaintances who didn't hesitate to ask her for donations, but drove past her store to shop elsewhere. And who were offended when she called them out on it.

Another revealed that she was being undercut by a supplier who was trying to push her out of business by selling directly to the market which she had created.

Another spoke of his frustration with unreliable employees who didn't turn up for scheduled shifts, and shoplifters who seemed to think stealing was a victimless crime.

Yet another talked about the frustration of an online marketplace that has people trained in a DIY mindset, as if anyone can download a 'write your own will' kit and call themselves a lawyer.

And, universally, entrepreneurs will tell you how every single cost is increasing — except the cost of their products and services. Consumers say they want fair-trade, locally-sourced products of ever-better quality, but they expect you to deliver it at child labour prices.

So really, why bother?

Somehow, despite every logical argument, every reasonable attempt at dissuasion, every negative downside and potentially disastrous outcome, entrepreneurs continue to courageously walk among us. For that, we — as a social collective — should be eternally grateful.

I acted the contrarian when I was researching this editorial, taking to social media to ask why the private sector was a better driver of economic growth than, say, government spending. After all, I goaded, jobs are jobs, right? When governments award contracts and build infrastructure, they're stimulating the economy.

And, don't governments do a better job of distributing wealth, since private sector business owners reap the greatest rewards for themselves in the form of profits?

I don't actually think that way myself; I played devil's advocate to get people thinking about entrepreneurial activity and what business contributes to society.

It didn't take long for the Twitterverse to respond. Business, I was told, creates jobs and growth. It is creative and innovative and efficient. It increases foreign investment and makes us internationally competitive. I was told that, without business, there is no corporate tax paid, ergo no money for governments to manage. That entrepreneurial activity is the foundation of a sustainable economy. And that business is a loyal, essential, generous supporter of grassroots organizations and charitable activities.

---

**Despite every logical argument, every reasonable attempt at dissuasion, every negative downside and potentially disastrous outcome, entrepreneurs continue to courageously walk among us.**

---

One entrepreneur described how he identified a service gap and created a company to fill that hole, which led to 18 full-time positions and the repatriation of millions of government dollars that were being spent elsewhere. Another said that business brings in new money via exporting while governments simply recycle existing funds and do it wastefully. Profit isn't a bad thing, argued another; it acts as fuel for business growth and job creation. "The more profitable your company is, the more you want it to grow. So you invest that money in your current business or launch another enterprise, leading to more jobs and growth. No entrepreneur ever wants to stop growing," I was told via email.

Government intervention and infrastructure spending can hold recessionary villainy back in the short term, but it's entrepreneurs who will ultimately win the day. Startups, we need you!

Dawn Chafe started with *Atlantic Business Magazine* as a freelancer 22 years ago, becoming editor in 1998.

#### FEEDBACK

✉ [dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com](mailto:dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com)

🐦 @AtlanticBus; @ABM\_Editor; #BetweenTheLines