

# Leadership Skills for Youth Development

**BE GREAT**

## **Enabling Elementary Students to Become Responsible, Caring Young Entrepreneurs**

Entrepreneurs must have the ability to realistically evaluate their own skills and to know when to draw on the skills of others. Few entrepreneurs possess every skill needed to ensure business success. These skills must be introduced and built upon in the early grades and enhanced as students move into upper elementary, middle school, and high school and beyond.

Activities within this document nudge student learners out of their comfort zones by encouraging them to try and practice new things in a safe, low-pressure environment, building confidence.

## Introduction

Entrepreneurs: Key Traits and Skills

### Are All Entrepreneurs Alike?

While there are some common traits among entrepreneurs as in athletes there are also a wide range of varying skills and talents. Some entrepreneurs like athletes get early exposure to opportunities for developing skills and traits for entrepreneurship while others depend solely on natural instincts. Both journeys although very different represent a marathon and not a sprint. Regardless of training and skills both take a lot of hard work, passion, long hours, commitment, desire and a little luck.

Again, some entrepreneurs some formal training and skill development while others seem to have a natural flair for it. Still, others break every rule or devise very unusual approaches, but still succeed. Which do you think would be your style?

While there is no recipe for becoming a successful entrepreneur, certain **skills** are associated with entrepreneurial success. Here are some important ones.

### Leadership Soft Skill #1 – Communication

Entrepreneurs should be able to explain, discuss, sell and market their good/s and or service/s or service. It is important to be able to interact effectively with your business team. Additionally, entrepreneurs need to be able to express themselves clearly both verbally and in writing. They also should have strong reading comprehension skills to understand contracts and other forms of written business communication.

### Leadership Soft Skill #2 – Enthusiasm & Attitude

According to research, one of the most important qualities associated with successful entrepreneurship is having an attitude of passion and feeling excited about what they are doing. When people feel committed to what they are doing and when they care deeply about it, they stand the best chance of being successful at it. The heart must become an ally of the mind. Think about this popular saying:

*If your mind can conceive it,  
and your heart can believe it,  
then you can achieve it!*

The attitude of most entrepreneurs is typically that they care more about what they are doing than how much money they make. They must earn an income, of course, or they cannot continue to be entrepreneurs; however, the amount they earn often is secondary to achieving their goals.

### **Leadership Soft Skill #3 – Teamwork**

Because entrepreneurs usually assemble a team of skilled people who help them achieve business success, they must be able to effectively develop and manage the team.

### **Leadership Soft Skill #4 – Networking**

Entrepreneurs constantly interact with people, including customers and clients, employees, financial lenders, investors, lawyers and accountants, to name a few. The ability to establish and maintain positive relationships is crucial to the success of the entrepreneur's business venture.

### **Leadership Soft Skill #5 – Problem Solving & Critical Thinking**

Although they may not realize it, most entrepreneurs are **creative**. This does not mean they paint pictures or write poetry (although they just might); rather, means they find innovative means to problem-solve. They always look for new and better ways to do things – ways that have not occurred to others. Successful entrepreneurs believe in their ability to be creative. Experts tell us that the biggest block to creativity is *thinking* you are not creative.

Entrepreneurs are willing to learn. They easily engage in critical thinking and are information seekers. They may already know a great deal, yet they recognize that no one knows everything, and that they can learn valuable information from others. Entrepreneurs who are not open to learning often compromise the degree of success they will be able to achieve.

### **Leadership Soft Skill #6 – Professionalism**

In order to handle the pressures of their busy lifestyles, entrepreneurs must have the ability to manage time well and to take care of personal business efficiently. Because first impressions are so important, entrepreneurs must also pay attention to such things as personal appearance and telephone skills. For example, think of the difference in the impression made by someone who answers the phone by saying, "What's Up?" versus saying, "Computer Support Services, this is James. How may I help you?" Additionally, entrepreneurs benefit a great deal by being aware of their own strengths and weaknesses.

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