

An Evaluation of Personal Growth as an Entrepreneur

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Introduction

As with many classes, my initial expectation for this course was not what I expected. Walking in, I was expecting to learn the mechanics of starting a business and some of the technical skills necessary to be successful in entrepreneurship. Although some of this was covered, I would say I learned something far more valuable; the internal traits and skills necessary to be successful as an entrepreneur in a very competitive industry such as cybersecurity. In many ways, this unexpected realization helped me in my initial goals for the course so much more. I started this course hoping to learn how to be a successful entrepreneur in the future and where my personality and ideas could fit into such a business. I was able to do exactly that

Knowledge and Skills Development

I feel like the knowledge gained throughout this course leans heavily towards the introspection required to understand one's own capabilities and shortcomings. No human being is perfectly suited for every type of business, so learning how to combine one's passion, personality, and skills was a key skill I gained from this class. Although I had leadership opportunities before this class, I was able to translate this idea into those endeavours to become an authentic leader. By embracing what I bring to the table rather than what my predecessors did, I was able to become much more efficient and confident in these roles. Another key knowledge gap that was filled during this semester was how to overcome failures and strategically navigate them in the cybersecurity industry specifically. The business failures assignment in particular was extremely valuable in cultivating this idea and understanding how failure is inevitable, but how one overcomes them is what brings value to a business.

From a bit more of a technical standpoint, this class also taught me some valuable lessons in how to conduct market research and analysis as well as strategic planning. The business ideas paper that turned into a full business plan was key in helping me understand these concepts. I have always wanted to turn my ideas into something that could provide tangible help to the industry, so learning how to find a need in the market was the key to success for formulating a business idea and meeting that goal. I was then able to see where other industry leaders and products were in regards to my idea so that I could both address an unmet demand and have a competitive advantage. Being able to formulate all of this into a business plan was invaluable in tying the entire process together while having those real-world connections to make it feel even more important.

Challenges and Overcoming Them

The biggest challenge I faced during this term was how to hone in on a specific product that was both technically feasible at this stage in cybersecurity advancements while also being innovative enough to solve a true problem. This also coincided with a personal problem of learning how to navigate a problem where there isn't one true answer. It was completely up to me and what I thought would make the most sense to meet a need even if it is not what someone else might choose. The biggest way for me to overcome these challenges was by talking to those in the industry on how they approach imagining new tools and navigating complex technical architectures to determine what is feasible. This process taught me how to be flexible with what I want to build while focusing on meeting the need rather than being cornered into a specific model. Overall, this truly helped me have a solution-focused mindset rather than getting lost in the details of how to implement this from the ground up. I was then able to break things down

into smaller parts that I could problem solve and pivot when necessary in order to make the best product proposal I could.

Evolving Perspectives on Entrepreneurship

One of the main shifts in perspective that this class gave me was how to approach risk and failure. Beforehand, I definitely saw entrepreneurship as a high-risk endeavor with a high failure rate. Although both of these things are true, I now see this as a calculated risk with failure just being part of the process. There will never be a zero-risk idea that is meaningful, but proper research and planning combined with the desire to affect real change makes any risk worth it. Once again, the business failures paper was key to understanding this perspective on failure and how it leads to success. The discussion boards also really helped shift my ideas on how to integrate ethical decision-making and social responsibility when crafting a business. Although these things are not a requirement in entrepreneurship, they are definitely a necessity in how I want to implement mine.

Future Growth and Development Goals

To build upon what I learned in this class, my goals for continued growth on my entrepreneurial journey will be focusing on technical skills as well as the personal development necessary to drive those technical ideas forward. I want to strengthen my abilities for financial and market analysis while also better understanding how to be a leader. Both of these things will help instill confidence in myself and my product when I am able to make this business plan a reality. On that front, I've already talked to a few managing engineers at my current job on how to start developing some of the base components that will hopefully one day become a functioning prototype. Entrepreneurship itself is not a static endeavor, and I intend to continue improving myself and letting my ideas evolve as the industry itself does. In this way, I will be

more prepared for affecting real change through this new business that will go far beyond me;
After all, this is precisely what I've learned responsible entrepreneurs strive to do.