

Public Abstract

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The purpose of this dissertation is to discover how entrepreneurs think about negotiation. While our understanding of entrepreneurship has increased, much research to date focuses on the opportunity recognition and decision to exploit phases of entrepreneurship, and pays little attention to later stages of the entrepreneurial process. I aim here to fill that gap in the literature and examine the cognitions entrepreneurs have regarding negotiation-relevant activities.

Using in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs, I discovered that their thought processes while engaged in negotiation involve six major themes: personal outcomes, relationships, emotional control, risk taking, outcomes for others, and ethics. I also examined differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs in regards to those categories of thought and found that entrepreneurs tend to put more emphasis on building relationships, outcomes for others, and risk taking. Additionally, entrepreneurs put less weight on extracting personal value from negotiations. Findings from this dissertation contribute to research in the area of entrepreneur cognition, by building a theoretical perspective of how entrepreneurs think in social interactions beyond just the founding of a firm. This approach also provides a framework on which future research is discussed.