



Lack in motivation – the extinguishing of an entrepreneur?

A comparative theoretical reflection from the M.Sc. Program
in Entrepreneurship at Lund University

Abstract

This thesis analyzes and compares two cases of entrepreneurial projects. One is classified as a failure due to termination and one is classified as success and, in the time of writing, still up and running. The theoretical framework is built on the article “*Entrepreneurial motivation*” by Scott Shane, Edwin A. Locke and Christopher J. Collins published in *Human Resource Management Review*. This framework is used to analyze and compare motivation in the two entrepreneurial projects. It will consist of seven variables for analysis; *need for achievement*, *locus of control*, *desire for independence*, *passion*, *drive*, *self-efficacy*, and *indirect effects*.

The different motivations are deeply intertwined with one another and thus could affect an entrepreneur in many ways. But success breeds success and thus success breeds the motivation of an entrepreneur in an entrepreneurial process. But on the other hand, losing one's motivation could be the downfall of one's entrepreneurial career.

Key words: Autoethnographic, Entrepreneurship, Motivation, Success, Failure.

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1 Introduction

When hearing, and reading, about entrepreneurship my thoughts always goes to big players like Richard Branson, and being a Swede; Ivar Kamprad. It is easy to ask the questions; what motivates these entrepreneurs? What makes them so consistent in making money? And there are a lot of answers to these questions, but what had happened if they lost their motivation? If they lost their entrepreneurial drive? Would they still been successful?

There are authors suggesting that motivation is the influence that transition individuals from one stage in the entrepreneurial process to another. The magnitude of the motivation will likely vary depending on the part of the entrepreneurial process (Shane et al, 2003:275).

1.1 Statement of purpose

The main purpose for this thesis is to examine the correlation between lack in motivation of entrepreneurs and success or failure. Furthermore the purpose is to examine this relationship between motivation and either failure or success in a “secure” environment provided by, in this case, Lund University. The author aims to study two different cases, one successful and one unsuccessful and compare the difference in motivation and triggers to lack in motivation or enhance motivation, but also the difference success and failure does to motivation for an entrepreneur.

1.1.1 Research question

The research question for this thesis is thus; what is the correlation between success or failure and the motivation of an entrepreneur? Or is it that lack in motivation extinguishing the entrepreneur and the will for entrepreneurship?

1.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this thesis is that an entrepreneur might lack motivation in some aspects of his or her work but if the motivation factor is strong for him or her he or she will eventually stop being the risk-taking entrepreneur,

1.3 Methodology

This thesis is mainly based on an autoethnographic methodology. There are five key factors in autoethnographic. The first is complete member researcher (CMR); the CMR in this thesis is of opportunistic nature. The researcher is thrown in to a group by chance circumstances and he CMR can not only participates in the group's actions but must also record and document these actions and conversations (Anderson, 2006:379f). The second key factor is analytic reflexivity; this involves the researchers awareness of their necessary connections to the group and the research situation. With this awareness the researcher gets the chance to reflect on his/her reflections of their activities (Anderson, 2006:382f). The third key factor; visible and active researchers in the text, in autoethnography the researcher needs to be highly visible social actor in the written text and thus use their own experience and feelings in the research (Anderson, 2006:384). The fourth key factor is that the researcher needs to have a dialogue with the informants beyond the self. This is done so the researcher can avoid self-absorption due the self-related feelings and experiences he/she is dealing with during the research (Anderson, 2006:285f). The fifth and final key factor is the commitment to an analytic agenda, it is important to the researcher not only to

provide documented personal experience or insider perspective but also to use the empirical data to gain insight in social phenomena (Anderson, 2006:386f).

The autoethnographic method is combined with a qualitative approach because the author in this thesis intends to study a case. This method is chosen because it is highly suitable for those interested in understanding and explaining processes (Merriam, 1994:33). None of the combined method is perfect and there are critiques to take in consideration when working with these methods. The autoethnographic has clear limitations in the sense that we most of the time do not find our research as deeply connected w, makes the complete membership only a partial vantage point (Anderson 2006:381). Furthermore there is criticism to the qualitative method, similar to the autoethnographical; the qualitative method could become too subjective, which can result in personal opinions rather than objective conclusions (Bjereld, 1999:108).

Finally this thesis is theory-consuming and therefore using existing theories to explain and understand in depth the specifics in a case (Esaiasson et al, 2004:40).

1.4 Material

This thesis will consist of both primary and secondary material, the secondary material will be written documents such as articles, rapports and theories, which are suitable for a theoretical case study (Merriam, 1994:117). The authors of the secondary material will already have interpreted this material and their interpretations might therefor affect my result. To avoid too much interpretations from previous authors it is imperative that I in the use of secondary material use some guidelines that will filter out unsuitable data (Esaiasson et al, 2004:303). The most important guideline is that the author's materials is seen as independent (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:104) and also consist with the same purpose as this thesis. The secondary data will be the foundation for the theoretical framework.

The primary material, collected from autoethnographic method, will be the analytical ground on which the conclusions will be based. The primary material is collected as a complete member research. The primary material has similarities

that the author has been involved in these cases and thus the material is suitable for comparison.

1.4.1 Limitations

This thesis focus primarily on two cases and therefor will have a result that could be hard to generalize to other research. Furthermore the limitations in this thesis extend to only grasps the motivations for entrepreneurial students in a secure business environment.

The thesis is also has limitations in the selection of data. First the data is selected intensively because the persons in the two different cases have similar characteristics, which also gives us the second limitation in the selection of data; there is a small variation of central characteristics. These two strategic choices in limitations are selected to correlate with the stated research question (Johannesson & Tufté, 2003:84ff).

1.4.2 Disposition

In this the author will initially describe the theoretical framework that is going to act as a guide for the analysis of the two cases. The theoretical framework is to serve as a comparisons tool for both cases. There after the two cases will be analyzed individually but with the same framework and structure. The analysis begins with a short background of the case in hand; this includes the necessary information about the case.

Because of the autoethnographical method, which makes the author object for the research, the author will therefore use “I” instead of “the author” in the analyzing chapter. All the company names will in the analysis part be referred to as company, large company, institution or large institution.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework in this thesis is will be based on the article “*Entrepreneurial motivation*” by Scott Shane, Edwin A. Locke Christopher J. Collins published in Human Resource Management Review. The author will use the components for motivation and entrepreneurship discussed in the in the article. In this thesis the author has chosen not to use all the “classic” motivations for an entrepreneur due to the fact that one can argue that some motivations so far are only equivocal (Shane et al, 2003:272). For example, there could be a problem with risk-taking due to the fact that people cannot perceive the riskiness of their own action and thus makes it hard to study because of the autoethnographical method. What the population might see as a big risk is regarded something with a low risk for the entrepreneur, the entrepreneur simply does not perceive their actions as risky (Shane et al, 2003:272f).

The framework will consist of seven variables for analysis; the first six; *need for achievement, locus of control, desire for independence, passion, drive* and *self-efficacy*, is motivations common for entrepreneurs and thus suitable for this research. The seventh is a criticism that previous research has overlooked the *indirect effects* of motivational traits. When we do a task in general realm of work the performance is mediated by situation-specific factors such as goal settings and goal commitment (Shane et al, 2003:273), which means we could forget to see the consequences of our actions and thus not see the indirect effects on what has been done. To measure these consequences the author uses the variable *indirect effect*.

Even though the foundation of the framework comes from this article the author will use some other articles to be able to go more in depth regarding the eight analytic variables.

1.5.1 Need for achievement

Need for achievement could play a very useful role in explaining entrepreneurial activity and motivation. The individuals who are high in need for achievement are more likely then those who are low to engage in activities and tasks that have a

high degree of responsibility outcome have a moderate rate of risk etc. (Shane et al, 2003:263). To measure the need for achievement is an effective tool for differencing between firm founders and the general population, but there is a big difference between entrepreneurs founding ventures and the managers driving them forward (Shane et al, 2003:264).

If a person has high need for achievement they have a strong desire to be successful and therefor setting challenging goals and standards for themselves. Furthermore, they are not easily satisfied with current achievements, and always aim to improve their performance (Lee & Tsang, 2001:586). Many studies have found that entrepreneurs generally have a higher need to achieve than non-entrepreneurs (Ibid).

In this thesis the need for achievement will be measured on every individual of the case, if they desire to be successful? If they have a need to moving forward? If they are easy to satisfy? Meaning if they settle for how things are and not for what they could be, if they think big.

1.5.2 Locus of control

Locus of control is in what extent the individual believes that their actions or personal characteristics affect outcomes (Shane et al, 2003:266). Thus it refers to an individual's perceived ability to influence events encountered in their personal life (Lee & Tsang 2001:587). There are both external and internal locus of control, an individual who believes in external locus of control are under the impression that the outcome of an event is mostly out of their control (Shane et al, 2003:266). Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they have influence and in some part control over the outcome of actions and events through their own behavior. To be able to have an internal locus of control over events is to have propensity to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Lee & Tsang 2001:587). Therefor we can expect that individuals that have internal locus of control, and thus control of events, would be more motivated to actively seek out new business opportunities instead of what the general public would do; wait for the opportunity externally present itself (Ibid).

Research on locus of control shows that entrepreneurs differs from the general population in general in the sense that they possesses a higher internal locus of control (Shane et al, 2003:266).

The analytic variable for locus of control in this thesis will be whether the team members possesses a high or low locos of control and also if they believe the outcome of an event is internal or external.

1.5.3 Desire for independence

In this context independence means taking responsibility to use one's own judgment instead of following someone else through orders. Thus it also involves taking responsibility for one's actions and efforts (Shane et al, 2003:286). It is shown that many entrepreneurial task and roles are necessitating a high degree of independence. This is because the entrepreneur takes responsibility for finding an opportunity and thus also responsible for the results connected to that specific opportunity (Ibid).

A person that desire to become an entrepreneur wants to be independent in the sense that he or she can be his or her own boss (Lee & Tsang, 2001:588). Therefor it is likely to suggest that entrepreneurs may be higher in independence than other individuals and this have founders of company higher desire for independence than general population (Shane et al, 2003:268).

The analytic variable for the desire for independence will be measured in the project members drive and desire to be independent.

1.5.4 Passion

Passion is simply put an individuals love for the work he or she is doing. Passion can be measured as an act of unselfishness where the love for work is reflected in serving employees and the society or it could be more egoistically; the passion is for the process of building a venture and making it profitable (Shane et al, 268f). If the latter is the case, the motivation is to do what is needed for the individual own interests. It is shown that passion has a significant effect on a venture growth (Shane et al, 2003:270).

The analytic variable for passion will be the team members' love for the project and the type of passion they have.

1.5.5 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief an individual has in his/her abilities to implement the necessary personal resources and skills to manage a specific level of achievement on a specific task (Shane et al, 2003:267). Thus can self-efficacy, according to Shane et al, be seen as task-specific self-confidence. An individual with high self-efficacy for a specific action on task will contribute with a greater effort for a longer period of time and also be more persistence through set backs, he or she will also set higher goals for the action or task (Ibid).

Since self-efficacy positively affects diverse human functioning, the suggestion might therefore be that it will have similar consequences in an entrepreneurship context (Markman & Baron, 2003:288). Thus will self-efficacy be important to entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurial process where effort, persistence and planning are crucial (Shane et al, 2003:267).

In this thesis the author will analyze self-efficacy as a task-specific self-confidence. Are the entrepreneurs managing to implement the right skills and competences needed to make the project go forward?

1.5.6 Drive

The drive an individual has is, in this context, the ability to pursue an opportunity, to take actions in order make it real. Drive is thus the willingness to put in the right effort needed to achieve a goal or pursue an opportunity (Shane et al, 2003:268).

There are some aspects of drive for an individual; ambition, goals, energy and stamina, and persistence. The degree of ambition influences the individual (entrepreneur) to create something great, important, and significant when pursuing an opportunity. The ambition may include make money or see a company created from an opportunity (Shane et al, 2003:268). Ambition also intertwines with setting high goals and in the individuals ambition he or she must be persistence

because an opportunity is never easy and thus is failure a part of the process (Ibid). Drive is closely related to the motivation self-efficacy, if an individual has a high self-efficacy he or she will probably have high drive and thus vice versa (Shane et al, 2003:268).

The variable of drive will be measured in ambition because the time period of the data is too short this thesis will not be able to analyze the persistence, in a longer and more correct period of time, of the team members in each case.

1.5.7 Indirect effect

Many, not all, researchers have assumed that motivation and traits have direct effect on an outcome and this is true in many ways there is more and more literature that is suggesting that there can be indirect effect through other mechanisms (Shane et al, 2003:273). If we take an example from a “regular” work, meaning non entrepreneurial, the conscientiousness is a reliable predictor of performance but there is facts showing us that the effects of conscientiousness on work performance are mediated situation-specific factors (Ibid).

This variable is, as mentioned above, chosen to measure external or indirect effects of actions taking place in and around the project team.

2 Analyzing the case of failure

2.1 Background

The first case is a project that provides a service of idea management to larger institutions. The project took place during the entrepreneurship program at Lund University and the project team consisted of three individuals. The technological requirements to provide the service were required abroad by one of the team members. The project was later on terminated.

2.2 Analysis

2.2.1 Need for achievement

As an entrepreneur the research tells me that I have high need for achievement, but the need for achievement should be fairly the same for all team members if the team shall function as good as possible. This was maybe not the case in this team; we all had different need for achievement. This shown in the planning for the project, we mainly focused on writing business plan instead of going out and doing business in a larger scale to get thing going. I'm not making a statement on whether entrepreneurs should write business plans or not, but in this case we didn't try very hard to do business we did put a larger effort in to making sure the business plan was created.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework; if a person has high need for achievement they have a strong desire to be successful and therefor setting challenging goals and this was not the case here because of the focus on the business plan and not working with business in a parallel way. This is what I wrote in my journal at the end of week three 2011.

“This week we had been about continuing the work on the business plan. We had a short meeting at the beginning of this week where we did divide the working load and assigning different part of the business plan to us.”

We all had big visions for the project but and thus a need to be successful but we settled for different goals, I was not satisfied with the goal of taking the business plan forward. In my opinion was that not the right way of moving forward, we did over planned the project.

2.2.2 Locus of control

Regarding the locus of control for the entrepreneurs in this project I think most of us had a believe in that we could control the events for this company and the ignorance from the Swedish customers, due to the lack of knowledge for this service, could be educated. But as I wrote in my journal week nine 2011:

In many cases the large institutions are not unified under one banner, the different parts of the organization work on there own and this would, as we know from meetings with an large educational institution, make it hard to sell the service to the hole large institution.”

At first we felt that if we become better at educate the customers we could still manage to make the sell and thus believed that the locus of control still was internal but as this quote shows we started to feel that the control was out of our hands, we did not have the means to unify the an large institution.

2.2.3 Desire for independence

In the desire for independence I must take in consideration the entrepreneurial background of the group. Only one team member had an entrepreneurial background, in the sense that he had started a company before. He had a higher desire for independence then the other team members. The other two were more

interested in see how it goes and then maybe take a regular work if the they found it a better option.

We also hade the unfortunate event that one of our team members did quit the project with the motivation that she was not interested in working in this long-term commitment, she wanted to be hired and doing smaller assignments. This shows us the unbalance of desire for independence in the team, which affected the outcome to failure.

2.2.4 Passion

At the start all the team members were very passionate about the project and the work to make it reality. But passion is liable to sudden unpredictable change, the person quitting which makes me question the passion of the work being of non-egoistic sort provided the service. It is more likely we are passionate about the work if we see our own benefits and rewards than the rewards of our team members, and thus when one of the team members quit the team the others started to loose the passion for the project as well.

2.2.5 Self-efficacy

The question we should raise in this part of the analysis is; did the team manage to implement the right skills and competence needed to make this project go forward?

In retrospect I think we did some mistakes regarding self-efficacy, even though we all have relatively high self-efficacy we did manage it wrong. As I mentioned before, in the need for achievement analysis, we did put a lot of effort in to the business plan and planning the project. This might have not been the right way of distributing our skills and competences, and even more when we lost one team member. When we she did quit we decided not to take in anyone else or change the work of the team, this might be because we had to much confidence in our own self-efficacy and believed that we had the skill to manage our tasks with one person short. Afterwards I wrote:

“I felt that if a management team loses a vital asset, as we did, and don’t replace him or her, the project (or venture) has a larger risk of failing.”

2.2.6 Drive

In this case I have found that the drive is closely intertwined with passion. In the start of the project all the team members were ambitious and wanted to create something significant with the service we provided and therefore the goals were set high but when we started to lose our passion for the work and the project it affected our ambition and thus the drive to move it forward and create something of the opportunity. Week nine 2011, I wrote in my journal:

“And we both agreed that our operation has been running a bit slow lately.”

Our persistence of setback for this project did decrease with the loss of passion and thus the entrepreneurial drive slowly faded in the team.

2.2.7 Indirect effect

One could argue that one of the biggest indirect effects in this setback with the large institution. When we realized the amount of effort needed to make this project happen, due to this meeting, the indirect effect was that we lost one of our team members. And due to the loss of her we ended up in something like a spiral of lack in passion, and then lack in drive etc. One big decision started to affect other decisions in the team and thus we can see a series of indirect effects to the project.

3 The case of success

3.1 Background

The second case, like the first, also took place during the entrepreneurship program at Lund University. This case is a company providing a “simple” product for retail and the team consists of two people. The product was invented locally and the company is still running.

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 Need for achievement

In this case we had a larger need for achievement, in this case the need for achievement was fairly the same amongst the team members, and thus the team had a solid foundation to work from in terms of goal setting and work pace. When I started this team we immediately started to contact customers and start selling instead of planning which steps to take etc. This is an indication on that the need for achievement in this team is a lot higher, here we can see a strong desire to manage sell and thus become more and more successful. Our need for achievement also made us work with more challenging goals, such as how many contacts we needed to make instead of which pages to write for the business plan. At the end of week eleven 2011 I wrote:

“This week has been my first actual week. We did set up goals for the coming weeks. We decided to get in contact with five stores in Malmö with the intend of getting more letters of intent. Except from the stores, where

we managed to get a couple of meetings next week, we also made initial contact both with...”

In similarity to the first case we also had big vision for the project, but here I was more satisfied with the correlation of need for achievement and goals.

3.2.2 Locus of control

Even if this is a new product on the market we felt that, in the opposite of the first case, we could keep control of the events and actions taking place in the company. Because we were out and trying to make contact with new customers, and eventually make the sell, we felt that we had control over the events and actions of the company. Because of managing to achieve the goals set up, the team perceived to have a higher internal locus of control.

And because individuals that have higher internal locus of control, and thus control of events, would be more motivated to actively seek out new business opportunities and this correlates with the second case. The further we did get in doing business, the more we achieved, the more motivated we became to continue to seek out the opportunity we did work on. For example I wrote in my journal at the end of week 17, 2011:

“One final and very excited thing that happened this week was that the CEO of the largest potential customer emailed us and wanted to know more about our product, he wanted to bring it in to their “new product meeting” this month.”

3.2.3 Desire for independence

In this case, regarding desire of independence, I also need to take in consideration the entrepreneurial background of the team members. Like the first case we were only one of the members with prior experience of founding a company but the other team member had prior experience of team management which had given

him a lot of freedom in his work. This led me to the conclusion that both team members' had approximately the same high desire for independence.

The whole team had as a goal; if we could get the right amount of investment, work on this full time.

3.2.4 Passion

As I mentioned in the previous case, I think we are, especially as entrepreneurs, passionate about our work if we see the personal gains and rewards but it's still liable to sudden unpredictable change. Because we had no sudden change in the team, in sense of new opportunities or a team member quitting, and thus could we build on our egoistic passion in to a more non-egoistic passion where the team is more in center.

3.2.5 Self-efficacy

In this case it was easier to establish the high degree of self-efficacy among the team members. This could be for a couple of reasons, first and foremost this case did not have a team member quitting and therefore did not have to manage this individuals' skills among the remaining team members, which makes it easier to manage the right competence and skills for the right task. The second reason for the higher self-efficacy is connected to the simple way of seeing self-efficacy on, as a task-specific self-confidence. For every task we managed to successfully solve we grow more confident in our ability and thus the higher self-efficacy. This could be correlated with the fact that this case had a much simpler product to sell and the service in the first case.

3.2.6 Drive

Because drive is closely intertwined with passion and especially self-efficacy we then can make the assumption that the team in this case has a high drive. Drive is the ability to pursue an opportunity and the willingness to put in the effort needed. As we have established before in this analysis the team in this case has set

challenging goals or tasks, and by completing them, one by one, they have shown a high ambition. This counts as they have high motivation in drive, but se still cannot measure the ability to sustain the achieving of goals, persistence.

3.2.7 Indirect effect

Indirect effect is harder to measure in the analysis of this case for the reason that this case is still up and running, unlike the first one. It is easier to look back on events when I have been able to step back and look over the things that went wrong. I do not deny that there are indirect effects affecting this case, they are just harder to find.

I would say that indirect effects in this project would be events when the team was created, when I was asked to join it affected my decision in my current project and eventually lead me in to the other project so indirect effect should not be overlooked because it might have a large impact on specific events on an entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial process.

4 Conclusion

After comparing these two cases there is some conclusions to be found. The first is regarding passion and asymmetric passion between team members. If some of the team members loses their passion the others are likely to lose theirs as well, which in the long run makes cooperation harder within the team. I also, unlike the literature which is the basis for the theoretical framework, that there is something like non-egoistic passion. Looking at these two cases shows me that people will work on what they love, and if they start to lose their passion they will eventually move on to something new, regardless of the team and their passion for the venture or organization.

Need for achievement is a rather personal motivation. Regardless of the different team members' needs the entrepreneur still has a perception of what he or she needs to achieve, in the team and as an entrepreneur, which could make it hard if the team members do not share the same vision. Thus it is important to communicate all the needs for achievement in the team.

Drive and self-efficacy are closely intertwined without self-efficacy an entrepreneur could have all the ambition in the world, but no way of managing his or her skill to do the right things in order to pursue a given opportunity. On the other hand without a drive to go forward the entrepreneur will not be able to use his or her self-efficacy till something good regarding the opportunity. This was the case in the first project, the team did not manage to direct their competences to the right task and therefore started to lose motivation in both drive and self-efficacy.

The desire to be independent is one of the main things that make a general individual an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is seeking more independence and does not necessarily want a boss or taking orders and he or she is also seeking more internal control which makes this motivation go together with locus of control.

As I stated before the indirect effect is hard to evaluate and thus it is easy to use as an explanation to unexplained drops in motivation. Therefore it is both good and bad, it is good to use in the sense that could help to explain external specific

events affecting the entrepreneur. But it can be hard to deduce where the specific indirect effect comes from.

Finally it stands clear to me that most of these motivations are deeply intertwined with one another and thus could affect an entrepreneur in many ways. But success breeds' success and thus success breeds' the motivation of an entrepreneur in an entrepreneurial process. But on the other hand, losing one's motivation could be the downfall of one's entrepreneurial career. Entrepreneurs live on their motivation and traits, if they start to lose this they could lose themselves as entrepreneurs. Nonetheless most entrepreneurs have the persistence to start over and rediscover their motivation and pursue new opportunities.

4.1 Further research

Suggestions for further research could be that one analyzes the importance of the different motivations. This research could be done as a quantitative research where the researcher measures successful new ventures and unsuccessful. By measuring the different types of motivation in the moments of success or failure there might be an opportunity to determine which motivations are more important in a specific part of the entrepreneurial process.

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