

Align Your Business With Your Strengths

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Know thyself is an ancient Greek aphorism, one of the maxims inscribed in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. That advice can be extended as "know thy entrepreneurial self." By aligning your strengths with your startup passions you can help make it easier to attract funding and build a solid business DNA at the same time.

Joe Abraham's book *Entrepreneurial DNA* identifies four basic entrepreneurial types:

The Builder likes to build scalable businesses quickly and easily attracts the best talent, customers, and investors. They can also have difficulty with personal relationships, so these relationships don't always last.

Opportunists enjoy marketing and selling. They are great at finding the next big opportunity and get in on the way up, surfing their way to the top where, hopefully, they are able to apply a solid exit strategy and look for the next wave.

Specialists are a cooler breed of entrepreneur. They are experts in their field or fields, but they are very analytical and risk averse. Specialists generate much of their new business through referrals and networking, resulting in slower growth and earlier plateauing.

Innovators are people doing something that they love and are authentically passionate about who suddenly find themselves running a business. These people like to create and improve more than they like to run a business.

When choosing your startup project, you should spend some time looking at the way you approach your business, your idea, your product or service. How are you at handling failure? Success? Where are the areas of discomfort? Finance? Marketing? Operations? Whatever it is, that is where you should start looking at things, because it's an area of weakness or at least of perceived weakness that potential investors, partners, and customers will pick up on.

When you discover what your entrepreneurial DNA is, you will have the tools to assess the needed strengths to bring your startup from planning to execution. If the necessary strengths are not those you possess, or are areas of direct weakness, then you have two choices. You can choose to walk away from the project and continue to search for a startup that is closely aligned with your strengths, or you can work hard to build a team of partners and managers that compensate for any weakness you have in that area. That is your decision to make, but you will make it with the best data possible at your disposal.

In a recent article startup mentor and angel investor Martin Zwilling notes that many large investors and startup labs such as CoFoundersLab use software or other systems to assess entrepreneurs' personal potential. "If they find your strengths are not consistent with the project you are bringing forward, their interest may come to an abrupt end," he flatly states.

At the same time, your personal analysis will also help reveal what's important to you, which serves as a starting point for what will be the core values of your business. This information is also invaluable, and the more that you can align your personal strengths, the necessary elements for success of your startup, and your startup's core values, the more readily investors will be willing to fund your business.