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A HANDBOOK FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Essentials, Artificial Intelligence-based Tools and Complementary Guidelines

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Foreword

In a world characterized by rapid change, accelerated digitalization and economic uncertainty, entrepreneurial skills are no longer just an option for those who want to start a business, but are becoming an essential component of professional and personal development. The ability to identify opportunities, test ideas, work in teams and use smart digital tools is becoming relevant for students in almost all fields. This book was designed to meet this need by providing a practical, structured and practice-oriented framework for learning entrepreneurship in the current context. The book is addressed to students who want to start learning about entrepreneurship. In the same time, it is addressed to trainers who want to practice with their students various entrepreneurship-related elements. The purpose of the book is to guide the reader through theoretical notions, practical guidelines and concrete examples.

A distinctive element of this book is the integration of tools based on Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the entrepreneurial learning process. AI is not presented as an isolated subject, but as a set of concrete tools that can support idea generation, market analysis, business modeling, plan writing and decision-making. The goal is not only to familiarize readers with these technologies, but to support the critical and responsible use of these tools in educational and business contexts. We have opted for an integrated approach to entrepreneurial competences. Beyond business tools and digital technologies, the success of an initiative depends on fundamental human skills: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and the ability to work in a team, leadership. Therefore, the chapters dedicated to project management, soft skills and team dynamics naturally complement the entrepreneurship and technology sections, offering a comprehensive perspective on the process of building and developing an initiative.

Consequently, the book has a unique structure that focuses on two elements: entrepreneurship and AI-based tools for businesses, which constitute the first two chapters of the book. These are followed by three chapters on complementary elements–research project management, soft skills and team management–that we consider to be necessary and highly relevant when starting a business. The chapters are designed as a coherent learning path, but can also be used as stand-alone units. Readers may follow the complete learning path from opportunity identification to implementation and team development or select individual chapters according to their immediate learning or teaching needs. This flexibility supports both self-study and structured course delivery.

Chapter 1 Entrepreneurship was written by Dana Lupșa-Tătaru, Chapter 2 AI Tools for Entrepreneurs was written by Alexandra Băicoianu and Camelia Schiopu (Mîzgaciu), Chapter 3 Research Project Management was written by Mihai Ivanovici, Chapter 4 Human Skills was written by Mihaela Voinea and Chapter 5 Team and Team Management was written by Daniela Necșoi. All the authors contributed to the design of the structure of the book, as well as to delivering the corresponding lectures. The content of the book was first developed as a pilot course delivered on 7-11 April 2025 at the R&D Institute of Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania, within the framework of the SEEN Erasmus+ project. The lecture notes of the pilot course on entrepreneurship are available as open access on Zenodo at `https://zenodo.org/records/16983067`.

To facilitate understanding and coherence of the learning process, the book uses a recurring example–the bicycle repair shop–which is developed across multiple chapters. This narrative thread allows the reader to observe how the same concepts are applied progressively: from idea and business model, to validation, AI tools, project planning and team organization. Examples have a didactic role and can be easily replaced or adapted by trainers with other contexts relevant to their group. Throughout the book, we use the specific symbols to designate various proposed tasks: ⚠ for assignment, ⓘ for observation, ⓘ? for reflection, Ω for additional resources and ◈ for tips and tricks.

The authors would like to address special thanks to Matei Debu, PhD student, for helping with the editing of this book. Also to the European Union, for the provided financial support. The book was developed within the framework of the SEEN Erasmus+ project Co-funded by the European Union and coordinated by the Technical University of Varna, Bulgaria. The SEEN project received funding from the Erasmus+ programme under the grant agreement 2024-1-BG01-KA220-HED-000255491.

In the end, we hope that this book will not be just a study resource, but a starting point for real initiatives, bold experiments and team-driven projects. We encourage readers to treat the content as a working toolkit, to test, adapt and build on it. Entrepreneurship is best learned through experimentation and this book is a guided and informed invitation to action.

The authors,
Brașov, Romania
February 2026.

Chapter 1

A Practical Approach to Entrepreneurship

This chapter aims to impart knowledge and practical skills in the field of business, ranging from mindset and entrepreneurship way of thinking to complex business plans and testing business ideas. The participants will familiarize themselves with specific concepts in the economic field, such as SWOT analysis, business canvas, business plan template. The chapter is experiential and hands-on, with equal emphasis on how entrepreneurship will be taught and the students' experience, as well as on how the concepts can be applied in the current economic reality.

1.1 Mindset, opportunity discovery & evaluation

The entrepreneurial mindset is the foundation of any start-up, preceding financial models, customer validation or scaling strategies. If the entrepreneurial mindset is about perceiving opportunities, then opportunity recognition and evaluation are the systematic ways of channelling that mindset. Ideas are abundant, yet only a small fraction mature into viable opportunities. Also, successful entrepreneurs rarely rely on a single breakthrough idea, instead, they continuously generate, test and refine ideas [14] [53]. This section is focused on what entrepreneurship truly is, why having the right mindset is crucial in today's world and how it can be cultivated through practice and reflection. The approach follows Babson's Entrepreneurial Thought & Action® framework [45], combining theory with examples and highlighting the translation of concepts into practice. This section is also focused on frameworks that help distinguish between genuine opportunities and passing fads and on examining how entrepreneurs identify opportunities through structured problem-solving and a disciplined ideation process, often referred to as *design thinking* [45] [14] [53] [31] [60].

What is entrepreneurship? Besides building a business, entrepreneurship entails self-control to recognize possibilities, attract the necessary resources and produce value – be it economic, social or cultural – through the fusing of innovation and the taking of the risk [28]. An entrepreneur is not hit by a sudden, unexpected idea but rather a methodical journey of exploring and acting, where he/she researcher the markets, listens to customers, keeps up with the latest trends and turns the business ideas into products or services by utilizing money, human resources and social connections.

"Entrepreneurship is a way of thinking, acting and being that combines the ability to find or create new opportunities with the ***courage*** *to act on them." [65]*

Entrepreneurs have been, at various times, the main drivers of change: during the Industrial Revolution they made inventions be the sources of economic growth. In the Digital Era they changed the way people communicate and share information and nowadays they are the ones who are ushering in the clean energy field and creating new technologies for a planet in crisis. Even very small and simple instances like the bicycle becoming the most affordable means of transportation in the 19th century or community startups that address climate change, demonstrate that not only does entrepreneurship change the industry but it may also revolutionize the society [47]. Entrepreneurship is essentially the blend of what is vision and what is practical: being able to see new worlds and still function in the current one. Through imagination and action, risk and strength, one is always at the centre of entrepreneurship, a paradox that ultimately makes it the most potent engine of a human race's advancement. The history of the concept supports this perspective. The French word *entrepreneur* refers to "one who undertakes," and one of the first economists, Richard Cantillon (1755) [20] and Jean-Baptiste Say (1803) [85], characterized entrepreneurs as the people who take risks and merge resources to get new value. The next turn was when Joseph Schumpeter (1934/1942) [86] went beyond to link the idea with "creative destruction" to depict entrepreneurs as the ones who tear down old systems and replace them with the innovative ones. Now, entrepreneurship is seen at different levels. It is from micro-entrepreneurs in developing economies—street vendors, minor repair shops or community cooperatives—that we draw the most vibrant examples of revival, next to digital creators selling globally via platforms like Etsy or Shopify and the corporate entrepreneurs who are changing business models within large organizations. Still, the stages for becoming entrepreneurs are identical for all these types of entrepreneurs: looking for needs that have not been met, coming up with solutions, testing the prototypes and quickly changing according to the feedback.

Anchor abstract concepts in examples familiar to students such as food delivery apps, bike rental services or digital platforms, to make them tangible and relatable.

1. Identify one entrepreneurial figure from the industrial revolutions and describe how she/he was more than inventor, considering her/his role.
2. Find one example of a micro-entrepreneur who reached a global market and analyse what resources and behaviours enabled his/her success.
3. Compare two cases: one entrepreneur driven by necessity (e.g. a street vendor) and one driven by innovation (e.g. a tech founder). List the similarities and differences in their motivations and challenges.

1. What changes does exploring entrepreneurship through the culture and history of different places mean for a modern-day definition of entrepreneurship?
2. Do you see more of the businesses that are started because of the lack of necessary resources or those that are started for the pure purpose of innovation? What can you interpret about your local economy by this?
3. Are community-based or necessity entrepreneurs only just as powerful as the digital innovators? In which ways?

- Entrepreneurship was and still is a cultural phenomenon that is outside the area of economics which is the core of its economic interpretation. Besides that, cultural and historical things also influence its essence.
- Along with the industrial revolutions, it came to light that the entrepreneurs were the ones who were dealing with organizations, managing communities as well as influencing politicians, rather than only being inventors.
- Digital innovations make it possible for micros entrepreneurs to get access to the global market just at the moment they decide to go international.

- Persons who start a business because of the lack of better choices is more likely to be a resilient person rather than an innovative one. This is especially true in the case of developing countries' economies.
- At first, the economists (Cantillon, Say) saw the entrepreneur as a person who took the risk and brought together the resources needed for an enterprise; Schumpeter changed the concept to one where the entrepreneur is the innovator who uses creative destruction to introduce new.
- Entrepreneurship is not a one way street; it can be found in the solo founders, community cooperatives as well as corporate intrapreneurs. However, common traits such as observing needs, imagining solutions, prototyping and iterating are always there.

Innovation and value creation. Peter Drucker (1985) [28] pointed out that innovation is never accidental but intentional. Innovators do not see changes in demographic trends, technology, industry structures and social norms as dangers to them, rather they recognize them as needs that have not been met and hence, for them, new possibilities to create value. Practically, entrepreneurs' endless pursuit of gaps perpetuates their involvement in the business arena, whether it be through the introduction of a new product, a different service model or the mere application of a more efficient method. At the heart of it, however, innovation is not always a complete overhaul of the market: the first could be by improving customer experiences, devising new marketing strategies, or simplifying operations. Companies that remain set in their ways face greater long-term risk than those willing to experiment and adapt to change. By such evolutions in the markets, organizations which are losing their relevance one after another because they do not innovate in time are the main reasons for such a trend a growing number of corporate accelerators, intrapreneurship programs and partnerships with startups. Within these frameworks, the entrepreneurial thinkers spot the unfulfilled needs, the unexploited areas or "white spaces" where there is the possibility of profit and advance the change. As per the OECD/Eurostat [71], "a new or better product or process—or a combination of both—that differs significantly from the unit's previous outputs and has been made available to users (product) or implemented in practice (process)." The examples are countless: in the healthcare sector, brilliant entrepreneurs rethink the patients' journey; in education, they develop digital platforms for learning; in mobility, bike-sharing systems and electric scooters are solving the problem of urban congestion, cutting emissions and promoting the citizens' well-being. The entrepreneurial spirit that is most notably synonymous with business activities- experimenting solutions, ral-