

**Succeeding as an entrepreneur**

**Old ways won’t open new doors**

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An entrepreneur is someone who sees a new opportunity and creates a business or social enterprise to exploit it.

Throughout the Pacific are examples of young, and not so young, entrepreneurs who have seen an opportunity to do something for themselves and grasped it with both hands.

In this series I am exploring what it means to be an entrepreneur in the Pacific. Today my focus is on the support available to entrepreneurs and how to find it.

A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could. As you develop your entrepreneurial journey do not try and do it on your own. Remember that two heads are always better than one.

Make a list of all the possible places and people that can support you on your journey. Start with friends and family, especially any that have business knowledge or experience. Think about the people you know in your wider community that you would feel comfortable talking to. Think about your online friends and contacts – are you making good use of your LinkedIn or Facebook networks?

Identify what organisations or groups exist near you that offer support to small businesses and entrepreneurs. These could include local Chambers of Commerce; Co-operative groups and organisations; Government support; tourism organisations; specialist groups such as accountants and financial advisors, lawyers, builders, transport, handicrafts; organisations for women, young people and people with disabilities.

There are organisations dedicated to supporting the development of entrepreneurs in most Pacific Countries – V Lab in Vanuatu, YECSI in Solomon Islands, TYEE in Tonga, Samoa Business Hub and a variety of organisations in PNG and Fiji.

The value of these dedicated innovation centres or hubs is enormous. You will be able to network with other entrepreneurs, you will make new friends, you will be able to access new technologies, you will be exposed to new ideas and new ways of thinking and you are likely to do business!

Another source of support is through local consultants, coaches and mentors. We all need someone who inspires us to do better than we know how. That is what a coach or mentor will do. They will provide you with a brain to pick, an ear to listen and a push in the right direction. Obviously, all journeys are different and unique, but you will benefit from hearing about someone else’s journey and the obstacles they faced and how they overcame them. Something you hear might inspire you to solve a similar problem or challenge.

Take care when choosing a coach or mentor. I always offer a free diagnostic session which gives me the opportunity to get to know the client and him/ her the opportunity to get to know me, before we enter into any contractual arrangement!

In the Pacific there are a number of donor funded schemes to support entrepreneurs in different ways. The more you become involved with organisations like your local Chamber of Commerce or Innovation Centre the more you will be able to access information on these sorts of programmes. Make good use of your on line networks to keep up-to-date with what is going on or seek help from others.

Starting out on your journey as an entrepreneur will be challenging as everything will be new. This is why it is important to seek the company of other entrepreneurs where you can not only support each other but also learn from each other. Co-working spaces like Yumi Work in Port Vila offer the opportunity for entrepreneurs to rent a small space to work from while meeting others and developing the confidence required for effective networking.

Take time to build your entrepreneur toolkit. This might include tools and ideas from training courses or workshops or networking events or from doing your own research. Collect information that you think might be useful, especially case studies which show what other entrepreneurs are achieving. These will not only inform but they will be inspirational. Become inquisitive! Ask questions!

**Do not give up, the beginning is always the hardest.**

Next week, I will have a further look at the habits of effective people and how these can help all entrepreneurs reach their goals.

If you need any contacts or advice, then do get in touch.

I hope you enjoy this series. As always, please contact me if you have an interesting story to tell and are happy for it to be told.

*Breadfruit Consulting (www.breadfruitconsulting.com) is a Vanuatu-based business providing advice, training, coaching, and mentoring to businesses throughout the Pacific islands. Breadfruit specialises in a range of business development activities including ‘business continuity planning and action’, helping businesses to survive in a crisis, designing and starting new, sustainable businesses. Contact* [*chris@breadfruitconsulting.com*](mailto:chris@breadfruitconsulting.com) *or* [*hazel@breadfruitconsulting.com*](mailto:hazel@breadfruitconsulting.com)