

4 attributes that set entrepreneurs apart from employees

[Business](#), [Entrepreneurship](#)



“ What do you do for a living?”

“ I’m an entrepreneur.”

The answer has a sexy ring to it. Plus, there’s a hint of mystery -- as if you possess a quality others don't. You've shifted into an entirely different gear that sets you apart. Perhaps there’s a little ego involved in wanting to take on the identity of an entrepreneur.

More than any of those, though, is the freedom communicated by the word. Your status as an entrepreneur signals to others that you're willing to take risks, play by your own rules and create a better life for yourself while bringing something new to the marketplace.

The word also carries an inherent challenge. It's easy to say you're an entrepreneur but much more difficult to become one. Not long ago, I addressed an audience of future entrepreneurs. The idea of designing and launching their own businesses filled them with hope and excitement.

I asked, “ How many of you would love for me to show you, step-by-step, how to start your own business?” Almost every hand shot up.

I had a follow-up question: “ How many would like to look over my shoulder and work through the process?” Almost every hand shot up.

I wasn't done yet. “ How many of you would like for me to look over your shoulder and tell you exactly what to do?” I asked. Almost every hand shot up, and a few people even stood and clapped.

Leaning to the edge of the stage, I whispered, “ That’s called an employee.”

I didn’t mean it to be rude or condescending. I said it because I remembered the feeling of wanting to start my business but not being ready to take on the full risks. I wanted someone to tell me what to do and how to do it so it wouldn't be my fault if something went wrong. I wanted someone to tell me which tasks to perform without my having to decide. In a perfect world, I'd still get to own the company and makemoney. In truth, I wanted to be an entrepreneur but still have the security of an employee.

It doesn’t work that way, and it’s dangerous to assume it can. Here are four signs you’re an employee and not an entrepreneur -- yet.

1. Directions over decisions.

Employees receive directions. When they're hired, they get a job description that tells them when to show up and what it takes to do their work.

Entrepreneurs design their roles and decide which directives to pursue. They show up all the time. And they determine not only their own tasks, but the steps for everyone in the company.

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2. Rewards over risks.

Employees want guaranteed checks. They want to do their jobs and get paid for performing their duties without wondering about income.

Entrepreneurs assume the risk of not getting paid at times to ensure that others are compensated for their efforts.

3. Security over shifting.

Employees take jobs that provide benefits and pay enough to cover household expenses. They want to get paid when they take time off. They like knowing they work for a strong company and having the assurance they can stay as long as they want, with no thought to downturns.

Entrepreneurs know "steady" might be a short-term concept. They understand shifts in the marketplace or economy could require rapid response. Many thrive on these inevitable changes because they're forced to stay sharp and aware of all business facets.

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4. Responsive over responsibility.

Employees respond to the assignment or workload. If something goes wrong, they are quick to point to another part of the company to place blame. Their initial reaction often is to explain why the negative result couldn't be their fault.

Entrepreneurs take responsibility and the blame. It's not fun. It's painful and even embarrassing at times. When I had to take out a loan to pay my employees because I completely miscalculated revenue, I wanted to become an employee. The fact is, entrepreneurs are responsible because they helm the ship.

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If you're considering the move from employee to entrepreneur, you owe it to yourself and your business idea to weigh your wants against these four signs. Trying to bring your employee mindset to your new job as an entrepreneur will have a devastating effect on your success.