



# Teenage Perspective on Vital Entrepreneurial Characteristics

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## INTRODUCTION

Many high schoolers want to be entrepreneurs but are ill-equipped to make their entrepreneurial ideas into a reality. This research aims to discover the critical characteristics for a teenage entrepreneur to be successful by surveying students at Palo Alto High School and Gunn High School. Additionally, its application will allow for students to be higher-achieving entrepreneurs. Similar studies have been conducted at Tufts University, the University of South Florida, Vietnam National University, and the Atma Jaya Catholic University of Jakarta, but these studies asked experts rather than high school students. The premise for asking high school students was that they know their peers better to some extent than adults do.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

At Tufts University it was found that the young entrepreneurs that did best were the ones that selected difficult and unique goals, and that approached these goals with motivation, diligence, innovation, resourcefulness, and initiative (2012). Another study by Howard S. Rasheed at the University of South Florida found that students with training in entrepreneurship have greater overall entrepreneurial characteristics, but also higher achievement motivation, more personal control, and greater self-esteem. He also found that students that participate in enterprise activities have all of the aforementioned characteristics and also more innovation (n.d.) From the Vietnam National University, researchers Mai Nguyen and Anh Phan found that the most successful young entrepreneurs are open-minded, enthusiastic, optimistic, can adapt easily to new situations, are honest and responsible (2014). They also found that young entrepreneurs scored very low in the categories of risk taking and trust. Lastly, Ati Cahayani, Aristo Surya Gunawan, Kurnianing Isololipu from the Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia in Jakarta discovered by using a Likert scale that perseverance, responsibility, confidence, independence, and optimism were the most important skills (2016). These studies gave me a good background on the subject but did not directly contribute to my research or affect it in any way.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA

A sample of what part of the survey looked like.

This project was carried out through a 16-question Google Form survey. It was distributed by posting on Facebook, texting to people, and writing the link in classrooms. Of the 102 participants surveyed, 99 (97.1%) responses were from Palo Alto High School students and 3 (2.9%) were from Gunn High School students. 9 (8.8%) respondents were freshmen, 68 (66.75) were sophomores, 11 (10.8%) were juniors, and 14 (13.7%) were seniors. Students were also asked to choose their top three of the characteristics in terms of importance and were given an optional choice to add anything else they deemed important. Some of these included: technical skills, ability to prioritize and problem solve, efficiency, caution, passion, motivation, leadership, creativity and assertion. I used a modified version of the Likert scale to conduct the majority of these questions. The Likert scale is the preferred method of choice for creating surveys because it allows a respondent to rate a choice on a scale of five, usually ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

## RESULTS

Figure 1: Entrepreneurial Experience: Of the 22 (19.6%) respondents who self-identified as entrepreneurs, this is how they rated their experience.

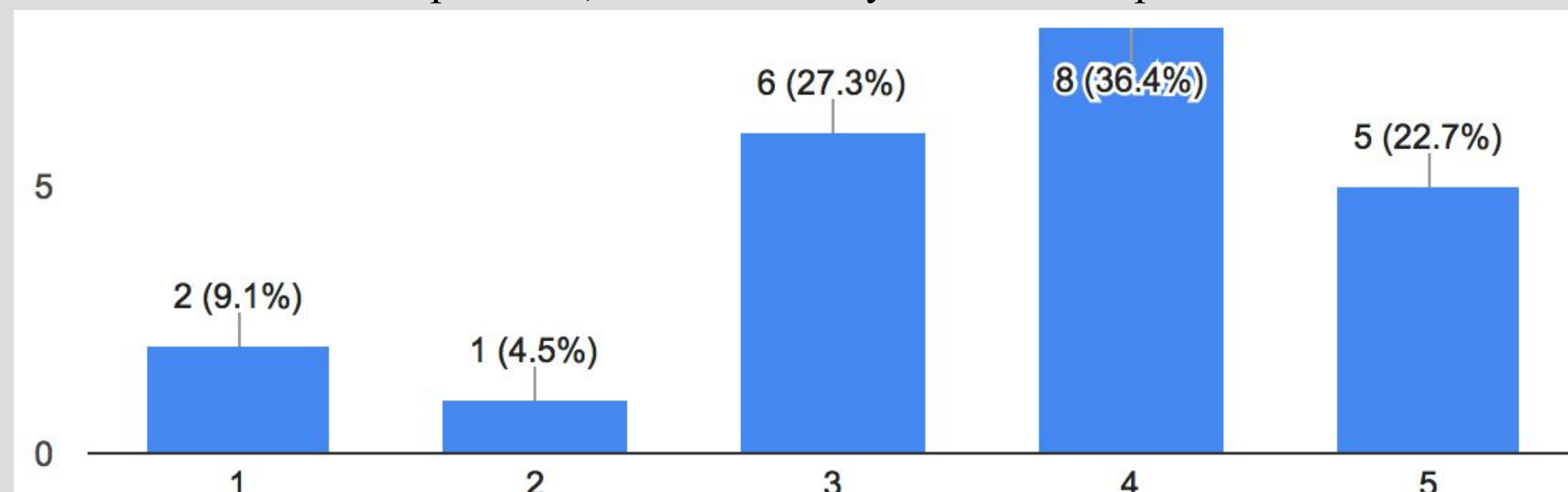
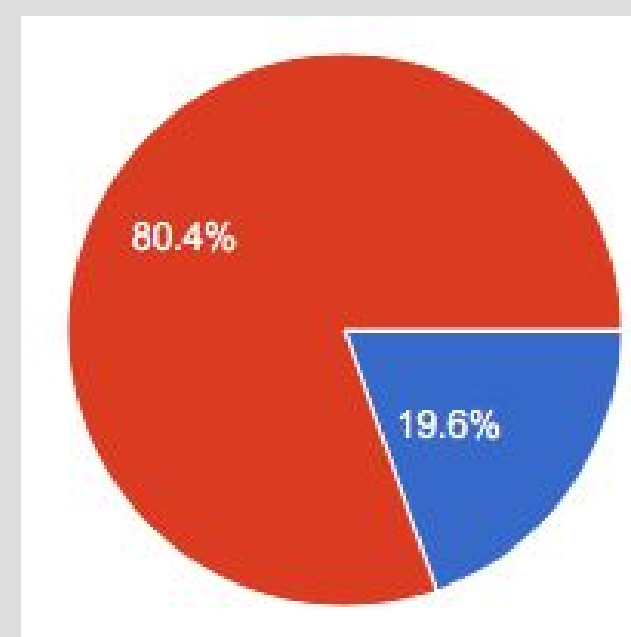


Figure 2: Characteristic Importance Ratings



## DATA ANALYSIS

The data shows that most entrepreneurs rated their experience as a 4 out of 5. Teenage entrepreneurs that responded to the survey mostly had a positive experience, with 13 rating their experience as a 4 or 5 and only 3 rating their experience for 2 or 1. The characteristic importance ratings also trended towards 4s and 5s. The mode was almost always a 5. The two that were rated in a different way were financial capital and flexibility. Financial capital was rated with the mode of 37 people rating it as an importance of 3, and flexibility was rated with the mode of 48 people at 4. However, the most interesting part of the data was the top three characteristics that people chose. The top characteristic was persistence, next was communication skills, and then time commitment. Financial capital was ranked lowest on the list, with only six students choosing it. This is most likely because with evolving technology, students do not need to have a large financial capital to start their business. Flexibility also did not have a mode of five.



Yes  
No

Percent of respondents that were entrepreneurs.

It can therefore be inferred that these two characteristics were of the least importance in the eyes of high school students. These results were different than the others but were still statistically significant because they were from the same respondents, had the same answer choices, and were phrased the same way. Some bias that may have been present in the data could stem from the fact that this survey was mostly shared with people I know or the friends of people I know. Since people tend to be friends with people that have similar opinions, this could have led to bias in the data because most people shared the same opinion. However, this is unlikely as the survey was taken by students in four different grades across two different schools—although there were very few responses from Gunn High School. Therefore, the responses from Gunn High School are only statistically significant as individuals, not as a representation of Gunn High School's student body. The data clearly demonstrates a trend towards the characteristics of persistence, communication skills, and time commitment as the most important, and financial capital and flexibility as the least important. This data can be used to help guide prospective or current teenage entrepreneurs about which skills to focus on and hone or to inform investors about what they should be looking for in teenage entrepreneurs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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