

ENTP 351: Alternate Entrepreneurial Challenge Assignment

A Thought Experiment

This is a thought experiment. I want you to take an idea and develop it as though there were no chance of failure. Then I want you to list any obstacles (internal and external) you perceive to this idea being born. Finally, I want you to choose two of those obstacles and test them: Are they true? Is there any other way? The experimental part is this: you'll take an idea, examine your assumptions about it, and then test them for validity.

Take no more than three hours to work on this. You can spread them out over a few days, or do it all at once. If you complete it in less time, that's fine so long as your answers are thorough and well developed.

You can write on a computer or by hand. Submit all your work. If you write by hand, scan the pages and email them to me, or take a very clear picture of each page with your cell phone and email them to me. Be sure to name all of your files clearly: <lastname-thought-experiment-1>, <lastname-thought-experiment-2>, etc.

This assignment is due by midnight on Tuesday, February 25.

Part One

Start with an idea: something you'd like to do, or something you'd really like see happen. There are no limits, except that it should be something you'd actually want to do one day, if you had the chance. This might be the sort of idea you'd normally dismiss once it crosses your mind: perhaps you think it's not practical, or not fundable, or not doable because it's never been done before, or because you don't know the right people.

Here are some examples from musicians I know:

- I want to go to Antarctica and play a recital there.
- I want to play violin with a rock band and go on tour.
- I want to be a radio host and change how people listen to classical music.
- I want to write music for video games.
- I want to expand the audience for my obscure musical genre by playing in different venues.
- I want to make a solo electronic music project, like a Bjork with a trumpet.
- I want to open a farm that blends programs in food awareness with music education.
- I want to make a concert with oboe players from Armenian and Indian music.

So, start with an idea. Then, I want you to banish all notions of failure, and write about that idea as though it were going to happen. Paint a vivid picture. Show how this idea

excites you. Show what needs it fills or what problems it could solve. Do this in a couple of paragraphs.

Here are some prompts you can use:

- “I want to ...”
- “I want to do this because...”
- “This idea came to me when I was ...”
- “This idea excites me because...”
- “The way I want to feel when I’m doing this:....”
- “This is the way I want the people around me to feel...”
- “The kind of people I’ll work with will be...”
- “Other people are doing this sort of work already, but this is different because...”
- “I imagine this work taking place in...”
- “People need [...] and this project fills that need by... “
- “The people who would benefit from this are...”

Part Two

Now flip over to the other side and describe every obstacle, doubt and hesitation that occurs to you. What are the “buts” and “this will never work” and “I couldn’t” statements that cross your mind? Some sample obstacles, again from musicians I know:

- No one cares about my obscure music.
- I only know classical musicians; I don’t know anyone in a rock band.
- There probably aren’t grants for travel to Antarctica, and I can’t afford the plane fare. What does that even cost?
- I’m too busy, and I don’t have time to take on a new project.
- I don’t know where to begin.
- I’m not good enough/I don’t have the skills.
- I don’t know any Armenian or Indian musicians.
- There’s no music written for this instrumentation.
- I don’t know who would present a concert like that.
- I’m not an extrovert, so I can’t hustle the way other people do.

Part Three

Look at the obstacles you listed in Part Two, and choose the two most significant ones (to you). For each of these, answer the following three questions:

1. Is this true? If so, how do I know?
2. So what?
3. What else?

Examples for Part Three:

I want to play violin in a rock band and go on tour, but I only know classical musicians; I don't know anyone in a rock band.

1. Is this true? How do I know?
 - a. Yes, I really do only know classical musicians.
2. So what?
 - a. I guess there are others ways to meet different musicians.
3. What else?
 - a. I could go to shows by bands I like and see if I could talk to the musicians afterward.
 - b. I could tell people about my interest in playing rock bands, and see if anyone knows anyone who can introduce me to some musicians.
 - c. I could find violinists who play in bands I like now, and write to them to ask them how they got where they are, and see if I could take a lesson.
 - d. I heard that some students at NEC have bands. I could check out their shows, talk to them about their projects, and maybe play with them.

I want to go to Antarctica and play a recital there, but there are no grants for travel and I can't afford the plane fare.

1. Is this true? How do I know?
 - a. It's true that I can't afford the plane fare. But the rest, I don't know about. I haven't researched grants or other funding opportunities.
2. So what?
 - a. There might be ways to get there.
 - b. Other people might have already done it: maybe I can learn something from them.
3. What else?
 - a. I don't even know how to get to Antarctica, so I should check out how people get there. Google search: Antactical travel wiki → <http://wikitravel.org/en/Antarctica>
 - b. I see there are lots of tour operators doing boat and air travel. Maybe I could partner with one of those companies.
 - c. There are Antarctic cruises: maybe I could get sponsored by one of those ships, and that would pay for my travel there.
 - d. Has anyone ever played a concert in Antarctica before? Google search: "Antarctica concert piano" → <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1630976687/classical-piano-concert-in-antarctica-with-kimball>
 - e. Kimball Gallagher has partnered with Chilean Antarctica Institute, a Chilean airline, and raised money on Kickstarter: more ideas to follow.

I want to expand the audience for my obscure musical genre, but no one cares about my obscure music.

1. Is this true? How do I know?
 - a. No. I care about my obscure music, and so do my friends, and apparently so do a lot of players and audience members around the world: I see them on the internet.
2. And... So what?
 - a. Well, when I was growing up in a small city, bands playing my kind of music never came through. It would have been nice if I had known I could play this kind of music on my instrument.
 - b. Maybe the problem is really in how the music is presented. The venues I play in are usually stuffy, private, uninspiring. I mean, I don't even want to go to those places.
3. What else? Are there any other ways?
 - a. I could book a tour for my group that focused on smaller cities where people don't normally get to hear my kind of music.
 - b. I could focus on venues that put music in contact with people in a more immediate way: House concerts? Pop-up concerts?
 - c. I could try to understand why people don't "get" this music. I could talk to people outside my circle to try to understand how they perceive it, and then use that information to present my music in ways that people will understand why it's actually exciting and important.
 - d. I could do a trial run, a pilot performance in a totally different environment, and experiment with using all the other elements of performance around the music to help the music reach people.