

10 Reasons good teachers make great entrepreneurs



By [Nokwazi Mzobe](#)

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Teaching is one of the oldest and most respected professions and yet one of the most undervalued (in some circles) and underpaid. All this is changing, with the gig-economy and 4IR.



Nokwazi Mzobe, founder of Matoyana and author of the *Small Business Handbook*

In this day and age, many of the skills needed to teach well are similar to those of starting a business - so it's no coincidence that good teachers often make great entrepreneurs. Look at Jack Ma and Jim Collins as an example.

Here are 10 reasons why good teachers make great business people:

1. Love of learning

"A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instil the love of learning." - Brad Henry.

Teachers are often as curious as are their students. They need to be, to keep lessons fresh and inspire learning in the classroom. This also applies to have an entrepreneurial mind – people who start their own businesses know that continuous learning is one of the keys to success. Above and beyond teaching or business, as Vivek Wadhwa wrote in his *Washington Post* article, "The love of learning is the key to success in the jobless future."

2. Service leaders

“Life’s most urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” - President John Quincy Adams

Both teachers and entrepreneurs can have a significant impact on the lives of people. In fact, successful business people often cite teachers and mentors as the reason for their achievements. As a teacher, you are there to serve your students and likewise, a great entrepreneur is always looking for better ways to assist their customers through improved products and services.

3. Passionate

“Edupreneurs are game-changing innovators who are bursting with education technology ideas and creativity.” - Robyn D. Shulman

As teacher and writer, Robyn D. Shulman says in the *Huffington Post*, “Effective classroom teachers make some of the best startup leaders or colleagues because their traits run parallel to entrepreneurs. If an educator finds something to believe in, that passion can yield great results.”

In other words, teachers very often have such love for something they branch out into another field, while still teaching – this is the rise of the “edupreneur”.

4. Communicators

A teacher’s life is not only about educating students. There’s the hierarchy of other people they interact with – from staff to parents. So, a good educator knows how to communicate well with all different types of people.

This is an invaluable skill for an entrepreneur too as startups are all about getting the right people on board and making sure suppliers and customers are constantly updated. Plus, starting a business means you’re dealing with a full spectrum of different people - from lawyers to bankers to builders!

5. Knowledge sharing

“The basic economic resource - the means of production - is no longer capital, nor natural resources, nor labour. It is and will be knowledge.” - Peter Drucker

“Know-why is often more important than know-how as it allows you to be creative - to fall back on principles - to re-invent your know-how.” - David Gurteen

The best teachers make learning accessible through storytelling and demonstrating – sharing knowledge rather than dictating facts. Great entrepreneurs build big businesses on their knowledge sharing skills too. In the words of Hannah Price, “Collective knowledge of a company can be enormous; however, it has limited value unless the knowledge is shared.”

6. Problem solvers

“If your only tool is a hammer then every problem looks like a nail.” - Abraham Maslow

“Too often we give our children answers to remember rather than problems to solve.” - Roger Lewin

Some key problem-solving skills include: Active listening, analysis, research, creativity, communication, dependability, decision making and team-building. Some of which are on this list, all of which are needed to be a good teacher or great entrepreneur.

The best problem solvers are able to give an analysis of a situation and put a creative spin on it. Thus seeking new ways of looking at the issue –this is invaluable in both the classroom and the boardroom.

7. Tech-savvy

“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” - Arthur C. Clarke

Modern educators are advocates of 21st-century learning. As education technology (edtech) continues to grow and be incorporated into classrooms, good teachers are tech-savvy – inhabiting the world of technology the same way their students do.

In the entrepreneurial world, the business owner needs to know what technology his customer uses, to reach them on any of the latest omnichannel sales touchpoints.

8. Confidence

“An important key to self-confidence is preparation.” - Arthur Ashe

It takes self-confidence to be an inspiring teacher – using all the skills on this list and educating while changing students lives. In much the same way, self-belief is at the core of being a great entrepreneur.

We’re not saying all teachers and business owners are born confident, but passion and preparation go a long way towards building confidence. Both educators and business owners are challenged daily and need to believe deeply in what they’re doing - even in the face of failure or rejection.

9. Disruptive

“I’m on a mission to disrupt and shape education.” - Kirsten Winkler

“Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.” - Dale Carnegie

The world of education is an area where disruption is predicted on a large scale. As we become more connected online, there’s no reason why the very notion of schools and classrooms shouldn’t need to be relooked. Disruptive teachers will lead the way in the same way as disruptive entrepreneurs have reshaped the world in the last decade (think Amazon, Airbnb and Uber).

10. Fun loving

“Fun is one of the most important — and underrated — ingredients in any successful venture.” - Richard Branson

Any fun-loving teacher or entrepreneur will have a better time than those “white-knuckling” their way through their business strategy. Easier said than done to laugh things off, but seeing the bright side, the irony, the sheer Murphy’s Law in some situations and looking at the big picture can help.

ABOUT NOKWAZI MZOBE

Nokwazi Mzobe, Founder and Lead Consultant of Matoyana Business Solutions, a boutique business consulting company located in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is targeted at start-ups, small and medium enterprises across Africa.

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