

# FROM IDEAS

# to *Impact*



A Young  
Entrepreneur's Guide

TO MASTERING

# SOFT

# SKILLS

# AND BUILDING A BUSINESS

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**Funded by  
the European Union**

# **1** INTRODUCTION

## **ABOUT THE PROJECT: SOFTPRENEUR**

The SOFTPRENEUR project is a Erasmus+ KA153 Youth Workers Mobility Project designed to empower youth workers and young people by enhancing their entrepreneurial mindset and soft skills. Recognizing that soft skills are just as critical as technical knowledge in today's competitive job market, the project aims to support young individuals in their personal and professional development. The project brought together partner organizations and participants from Türkiye, Spain, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Germany, and Malta, creating a rich and diverse learning environment through intercultural exchange and collaboration.

The main activity of the project—a 7-day international training course—was held in Istanbul, Türkiye between Feb 2–8, 2025. During this activity, youth workers and participants took part in a variety of non-formal learning sessions including:

- Business Model Canvas workshops
- Team-building activities
- Elevator pitch and presentation exercises
- Problem-solving simulations
- Soft skill development modules (e.g., communication, leadership, adaptability)

Through interactive workshops, mentoring, and group work, the project helped participants:

- Map and strengthen their soft skills
- Learn how to turn an idea into a viable business model
- Practice pitching and entrepreneurial thinking
- Build networks across Europe
- Gain tools to mentor other young people in their local communities

The SOFTPRENEUR project not only contributed to individual growth but also aimed to create a multiplier effect—enabling youth workers to guide and support more young people toward employability and entrepreneurship after the project.

## **WHY THIS GUIDE?**

This guide is designed to serve as a practical resource for young individuals interested in entrepreneurship. It introduces fundamental entrepreneurial concepts and highlights the importance of soft skills in business and career development.



# PROJECT'S GALLERY





# 2

# UNDERSTANDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

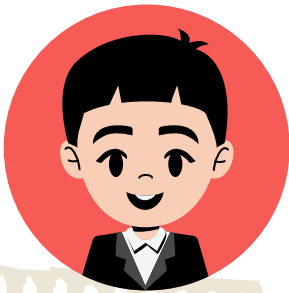
Entrepreneurship is the process of identifying opportunities, creating innovative solutions, and taking risks to build a business or project. Entrepreneurs drive economic growth and bring new ideas to life.



## KEY TRAITS OF AN ENTREPRENEUR



## TYPES OF ENTREPRENEURS



### COMMERCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

These entrepreneurs primarily aim to generate profit by offering goods or services that meet market demands. They focus on building scalable and sustainable businesses that create value for customers and revenue for themselves.

Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, is a well-known commercial entrepreneur. He started Amazon as an online bookstore in 1994 and gradually expanded it into the world's largest e-commerce platform. His focus on customer experience, innovation, and profit-driven growth makes him a textbook example of a commercial entrepreneur.



### INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

These entrepreneurs invent new products, services, or technologies that can disrupt or revolutionize industries. They are visionaries who think far ahead of market trends.

### SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Social entrepreneurs address social, cultural, or environmental challenges using innovative business models. Their goal is not only to be sustainable financially but also to create a positive impact on society.



Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, pioneered microfinance to help low-income individuals—especially women—gain access to small loans.

### INTRAPRENEURS

Intrapreneurs act like entrepreneurs within a larger organization. They use their creativity and leadership to launch new products, improve processes, or start internal ventures, all while operating inside an existing company.



Ken Kutaragi, a Sony employee, developed the PlayStation as a side project, which later became one of the company's most successful product lines.



### HUSTLER ENTREPRENEURS

Rather than relying on significant funding, hustler entrepreneurs start small and grow through sheer determination, persistence, and hard work.

Daymond John, founder of FUBU, started his fashion business by selling handmade hats on the streets of New York before growing it into a global brand.



### IMITATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

These individuals replicate existing business ideas but add improvements, localize them for a new market, or simply execute them more efficiently.



### RESEARCHER ENTREPRENEURS

Before launching a business, researcher entrepreneurs conduct extensive market research, feasibility analysis, and data-driven planning. They prefer minimizing risks through preparation and validation.



Sara Blakely, founder of Spanx, spent years developing and testing her product before launching, ensuring it met real consumer needs.

**SPANX®**

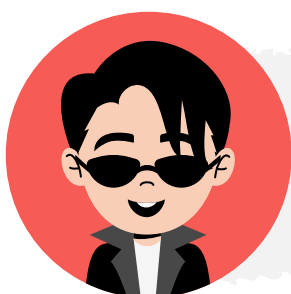
### BUYER ENTREPRENEURS

Instead of building something from scratch, buyer entrepreneurs purchase existing businesses or franchises and scale them by improving operations, marketing, or strategy.



### SMALL BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS

These entrepreneurs run local or family-owned businesses focused on serving a specific community. Their goals are often stability, personal satisfaction, and steady income rather than rapid expansion.



Jeff Wilke, former CEO of Amazon's Worldwide Consumer business, led initiatives that helped scale Amazon Prime and streamline operations.

### LARGE COMPANY ENTREPRENEURS

These are entrepreneurs within large corporations who drive innovation through new product lines or business units. They must balance creativity with corporate structure and resources.



# 3 SOFT SKILLS FOR ENTREPRENEURS

## WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS?

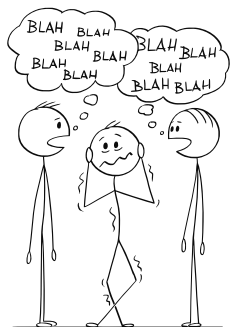
Soft skills are personal attributes that enable individuals to interact effectively with others. Unlike technical skills, soft skills are transferable across various professions and industries.



## WHY ARE SOFT SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Research shows that 85% of job success comes from well-developed soft skills, while technical skills contribute only 15% (*Harvard University, Carnegie Foundation, and Stanford Research Center*).

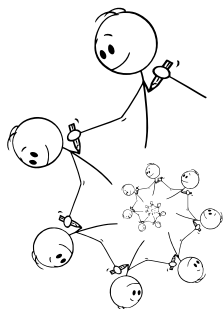
## ESSENTIAL SOFT SKILLS FOR ENTREPRENEURS



### 1. Effective Communication

Clearly expressing ideas and actively listening.

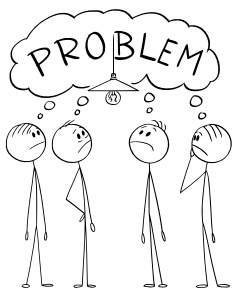
*Example: A startup founder presenting their idea to potential investors uses simple, impactful language and answers questions clearly, making the concept easy to understand and persuasive.*



### 2. Teamwork & Collaboration

Working well with others and leveraging different perspectives.

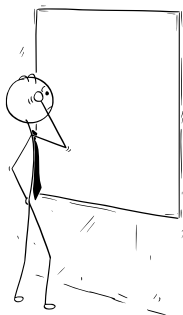
*Example: A project team in a company brings together different departments to launch a new service.*



### 3. Problem-Solving

Finding creative solutions to challenges.

*Example: A bakery owner adjusts recipes when an ingredient is out of stock.*



### 4. Adaptability

Adjusting to changes and staying flexible.

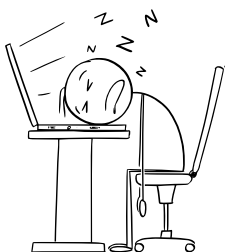
*Example: A student adapts to remote learning during a sudden shift to online education.*



### 5. Leadership

Inspiring and guiding teams toward a common goal.

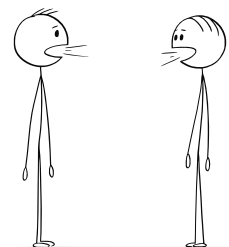
*Example: A class representative organizes a study group and helps resolve issues between students and teachers.*



### 6. Emotional Intelligence

Understanding and managing one's emotions while empathizing with others.

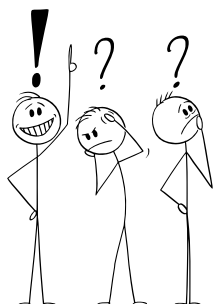
*Example: A team leader listens to an anxious colleague and adjusts workloads compassionately.*



### 7. Negotiation Skills

Reaching agreements that benefit all parties involved.

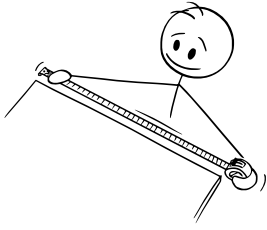
*Example: A founder negotiates a better deal with a supplier*



### 8. Creativity & Innovation

Thinking outside the box to develop unique solutions.

*Example: A founder creates a product with a unique feature that solves a customer pain point.*



## 9. Problem-Solving

Critical Thinking

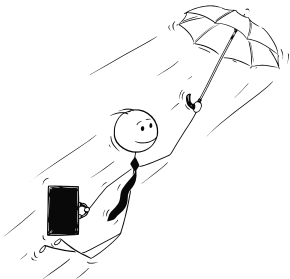
*Example: A student critically evaluates sources for a research paper instead of accepting the first result on Google.*



## 10. Time Management

Prioritizing tasks effectively to maximize productivity.

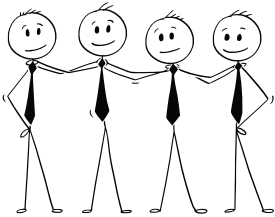
*Example: An employee sets realistic daily goals using the Pomodoro Technique to stay focused.*



## 11. Resilience

Bouncing back from setbacks and remaining persistent.

*Example: A job seeker applies to multiple positions after initial rejections and finally lands an interview.*



## 12. Networking Skills

Building and maintaining valuable professional relationships.

*Example: A startup founder attends events and follows up with potential partners.*



# **4 BUILDING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET**

## **GROWTH MINDSET VS. FIXED MINDSET**

A growth mindset fosters continuous learning and resilience, while a fixed mindset assumes that abilities are static. Entrepreneurs thrive when they embrace challenges as learning opportunities.

### **OVERCOMING FEAR OF FAILURE**

Failure is a stepping stone to success. Entrepreneurs should:

- Reframe failure as a learning experience.
- Seek feedback and improve.
- Stay persistent despite setbacks.



### **RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY**

Being an entrepreneur requires bouncing back from failures and adjusting to ever-changing markets. Successful entrepreneurs understand that setbacks and market fluctuations are inevitable, but how they respond to these challenges defines their success.

For example, Steve Jobs was fired from Apple, the company he co-founded, yet he returned years later to transform it into one of the most successful tech companies in history. Similarly, Oprah Winfrey faced numerous rejections early in her career but remained persistent, ultimately becoming a media mogul.

Resilience involves learning from failures, maintaining a positive mindset, and continuously improving. Adaptability, on the other hand, means staying flexible and open to change, whether that involves shifting business strategies, embracing new technologies, or responding to customer feedback. Entrepreneurs who cultivate these skills can navigate uncertainty and thrive in dynamic environments.

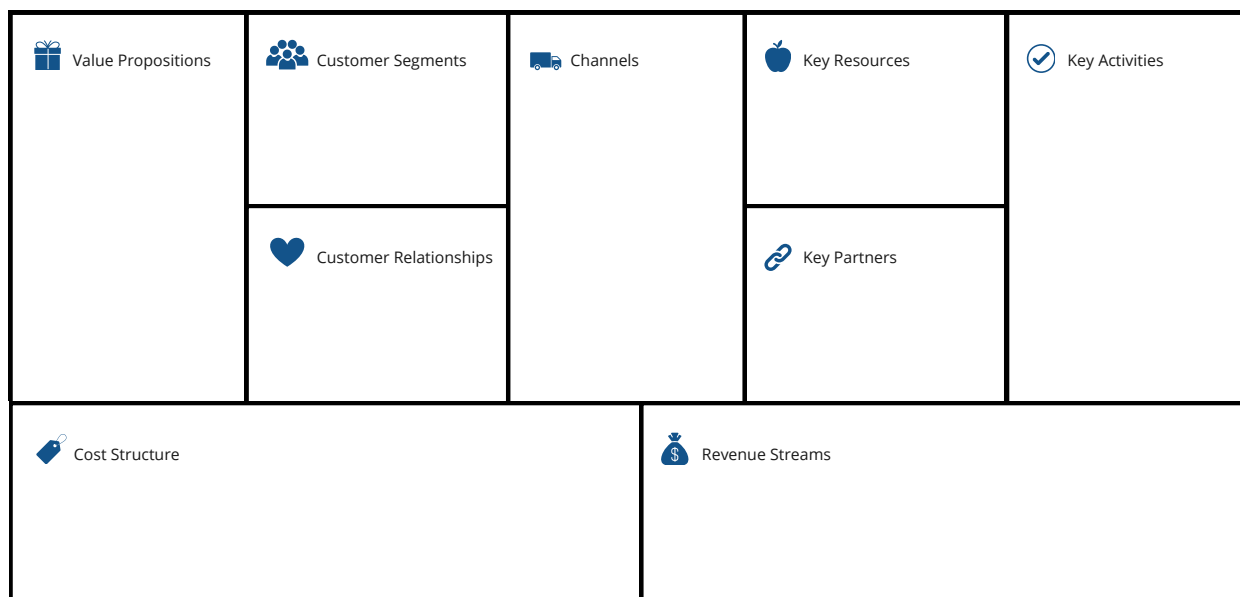
# 5 FROM IDEA TO BUSINESS

## HOW TO DEVELOP A BUSINESS IDEA



## BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

A Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a strategic tool that helps entrepreneurs visualize key business components. It consists of nine essential building blocks.



*Business Model Canvas Template*

# 9 ELEMENTS OF BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS



## VALUE PROPOSITION

The unique value that a business offers to customers, solving their pain points or fulfilling their needs.

*e.g., Airbnb – Offers affordable stays by connecting hosts and guests worldwide.*



## CHANNELS

The means through which a company delivers its value proposition to customers.

*e.g., e-commerce websites, social media, physical stores.*



## REVENUE STREAMS

The ways a company generates revenue from its customer segments (e.g., product sales, subscriptions).

*e.g., Spotify – Freemium model with premium subscriptions.*



## KEY ACTIVITIES

The crucial tasks a business must perform to operate successfully, such as production, or marketing.

*e.g., Tesla – R&D and manufacturing.*



## COST STRUCTURE

The expenses involved in running the business, such as fixed and variable costs.

*e.g., Uber – Revenue-sharing with drivers.*

2

4

6

8

## CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

The specific groups of people or businesses that the company aims to serve.

*e.g., young entrepreneurs, small businesses, online shoppers.*



## CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

The type of interaction a company maintains with its customers, such as personalized service, or self-service.

*e.g., Netflix – Personalized recommendations*



## KEY RESOURCES

The essential assets (physical, intellectual, human, or financial) required to deliver the value proposition.

*e.g., Google – Data and algorithms.*



## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic alliances with suppliers, distributors, or other organizations that help enhance efficiency and scalability.

*e.g., Starbucks – Coffee bean suppliers.*





## PITCHING YOUR IDEA (ELEVATOR PITCH)

An elevator pitch is a concise, compelling introduction of a business idea. The term "elevator pitch" comes from the idea that you should be able to explain your concept to a potential investor or stakeholder in the time it takes for a short elevator ride—typically 30 to 60 seconds. It is designed to capture interest quickly and leave a lasting impression.

A successful elevator pitch should be:

- Short (30-60 seconds): Keep it brief yet impactful.
- Clear and engaging: Use simple language and avoid jargon.
- Focused on solving a problem: Highlight the key issue your business addresses and how your solution stands out.

For example, if you meet a potential investor in an elevator, you should be able to articulate your business idea succinctly before reaching their floor, sparking interest for a follow-up discussion.



# 6 SOFT SKILLS IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## COMMUNICATION AND NETWORKING

Being able to clearly express ideas and actively listen is vital in any career. Effective communicators build trust, manage teams efficiently, and inspire action.

*Example: A startup founder must confidently pitch their idea to investors, negotiate with suppliers, and communicate with their team.*

Networking enhances career prospects by connecting individuals with mentors, peers, and potential collaborators.



## LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

Successful entrepreneurs are effective leaders and cooperative team players. Leadership includes setting a vision, motivating others, and taking responsibility. Teamwork ensures collaboration and collective problem-solving.

*Example: Elon Musk leads large engineering teams at Tesla and SpaceX while encouraging a culture of innovation.*



## PROBLEM-SOLVING AND CRITICAL THINKING

Entrepreneurs regularly face complex challenges that require analytical thinking and creativity.

*Example: A café owner might face a sudden drop in customers and must brainstorm new marketing strategies or menu adjustments to attract clientele.*

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

This refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your own emotions, while also empathizing with others.

*Example: A leader with emotional intelligence can navigate employee conflicts with empathy and fairness, fostering a positive work environment.*

## TIME MANAGEMENT AND PRIORITIZATION

Time is a limited resource, especially for entrepreneurs juggling multiple tasks. Learning to prioritize using methods like the Eisenhower Matrix or time-blocking increases productivity and reduces burnout.

*Example: Setting SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) helps entrepreneurs focus on what matters.*



## RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY

Setbacks are inevitable. Resilient individuals recover quickly, and adaptable ones adjust to changes without losing momentum.

*Example: During the COVID-19 pandemic, many small businesses shifted to online services to survive.*

## NEGOTIATION AND PERSUASION

From funding pitches to pricing deals, entrepreneurs must negotiate effectively and influence stakeholders.

*Example: Persuasive language and empathy during a sales pitch can turn a hesitant customer into a loyal client.*

## CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

The business landscape changes rapidly. Thinking outside the box allows entrepreneurs to stay ahead of trends and solve problems uniquely.

*Example: Airbnb's founders turned their personal rent problem into a multi-billion-dollar global business.*

## SELF-MOTIVATION AND DISCIPLINE

No one is pushing entrepreneurs to work—it's up to them. Intrinsic motivation, goal setting, and consistency are key.

*Tip: Maintain a daily or weekly routine to stay on track, and celebrate small wins to keep motivation high.*





## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicts can arise among team members, partners, or clients. Handling them constructively avoids disruption and preserves relationships.

*Example: A co-founder dispute resolved through structured dialogue and third-party mediation can save a startup.*

## CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND INCLUSION

Entrepreneurs working in global or diverse markets must understand different cultural norms and promote inclusivity.

*Tip: Learn about your customers' and employees' backgrounds to build trust and respect.*



# PRACTICAL TIPS FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

## 1. START BEFORE YOU'RE READY

Don't wait until everything is perfect. Many successful businesses began with a simple idea and grew over time.

*"If you're not embarrassed by the first version of your product, you've launched too late." – Reid Hoffman, LinkedIn co-founder*

## 2. LEARN BY DOING

Entrepreneurship is not just theory—it's practice. Build a prototype, create a small campaign, or offer your service to one client to test your idea.

*Try This: Create a minimum viable product (MVP) and ask for feedback.*

## 3. STAY CURIOUS

Keep learning. Read books, listen to podcasts, watch documentaries, and talk to people with different experiences.

- *Recommended Podcast: "How I Built This" by Guy Raz*
- *Book: "The Lean Startup" by Eric Ries*

## 4. FIND A MENTOR

A mentor can offer advice, share experience, and help you avoid common mistakes.

*Tip: Reach out to local entrepreneur networks, alumni groups, or online platforms like LinkedIn.*

## 5. MANAGE YOUR TIME WISELY

Use productivity tools like Trello, Notion, or Google Calendar. Break large goals into small daily tasks.

*Techniques to Try:*

- *The Pomodoro Technique (25 min focus, 5 min break)*
- *Eisenhower Matrix for prioritizing tasks*

## **6. BUILD A SUPPORTIVE CIRCLE**

Surround yourself with people who inspire and support you—other young entrepreneurs, creatives, developers, etc.

*Tip: Join coworking spaces, youth organizations, or online communities like Startup School or GenZ VCs.*

## **7. DON'T FEAR FAILURE—USE IT**

Every mistake is a lesson. Many successful entrepreneurs failed multiple times before they made it.

*Example: J.K. Rowling was rejected by 12 publishers before Harry Potter was published.*

## **8. TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH**

Being an entrepreneur can be stressful. Make time for breaks, social life, exercise, and sleep.

*Tip: Journaling, mindfulness apps, or regular walks can help clear your mind.*

## **9. KNOW YOUR WHY**

Always remember why you started. This purpose will keep you going through tough times and help shape your brand.

*Ask Yourself: What problem am I passionate about solving? Who do I want to help?*

## **10. CELEBRATE SMALL WINS**

Acknowledging progress, even in small steps, boosts motivation and builds momentum.

*Create a “Win List” – write down things you achieved each week.*

## **11. LEARN TO SELL**

No matter what your product or service is, you need to sell it—whether to customers, investors, or partners.

*Tip: Practice your elevator pitch regularly and ask for feedback.*

## **12. TAKE RISKS—SMARTLY**

Not all risks are equal. Analyze potential outcomes, plan contingencies, and make informed decisions.

## 13. BE AUTHENTIC

Your values and personality are part of your brand. Let your uniqueness shine—it builds trust.

Tip: Share your story on social media or your website. People connect with people, not just products.

## 14. STAY FLEXIBLE

Your first idea might not be your best. Be ready to pivot based on what you learn from users and the market.

*Example: Instagram started as a check-in app before it became a photo-sharing platform.*

