Foreword

Teaching entrepreneurship in a university context is typically a mixed experience. For students on one side of the metaphorical desk, the expectation of “secret knowledge” is likely preconceived. After all, they enrolled in an “Entrepreneurship” course and dreams of success can run rampant. On the other side of the desk, the desires of many to see their students succeed is also preconceived. After all, our students are enrolled in an “Entrepreneurship” course and our dreams of nurturing their success can run rampant as well.

Yet somewhere along the semester, expectations confront reality. For some of our students, their expectations concerning content, pace and so on, may conflict with the syllabus. Or sometimes, the “secret knowledge” is simply a phrase or concept learned in another course now revealed for its mediocre “secret-ness.” Entrepreneurship instructors confront (among other things) a curricular and classroom reality where students learn and gain experience at different paces, requiring different content delivery techniques and so on, based on the life experiences and dreams we will never know. Despite our desires for a student’s entrepreneurial success, students make choices based on their desires for a successful and intriguing life experience.

We should ask the following: is the entrepreneurship pedagogy we present in the classroom interconnected enough to allow our students to make an informed choice to move forward with an entrepreneurial venture or lifestyle? Assuming that nothing can be completely perfect, and that entrepreneurship pedagogy will never be perfect, I believe that as instructors we have a responsibility to create as dynamic and holistic an environment for our students as possible. Easier said than done.

Though the process of creating this dynamic and holistic curricular experience for students is unique for each instructor, perhaps one aspect of the result is universal: a desire to demonstrate what it is like to “entrepreneur.” And to create this experience, understanding that “to entrepreneur” from and in different contexts helps to provide that informed choice for students. Likewise, taking our own risks in the classroom clearly demonstrates an embracing of unpredictability—the one universal in an entrepreneurial lifestyle.
Indeed, many entrepreneurship instructors take classroom risks every day, and some are slowly seeping into this stream. What is needed at both ends of this continuum is a manual of risky behavior holistically empowering a hyperdynamic context. The following pages embrace the universal of unpredictability by providing both a pedagogical platform and a pedagogical choice: a classroom can be as entrepreneurial, unpredictable and “dream making” as an entrepreneurial lifestyle outside of the classroom.

The exercises contained in this book are—at their core—experiential as they ask both students and instructors to embrace the uncertainty of entrepreneurial action. However, this uncertainty is presented in a structural manner as instructors can choose the game that suits their classroom or daily classroom topic. This allows instructors to help guide students in various uncertainty scenarios through different types of activities: demonstrations, exercises, games and simulations.

By guiding students in this manner, instructors uncover a dynamic tool contained within the games. Specifically, regardless of teaching style or daily syllabus topic, there is likely an exercise to match. This broad-based approach not only helps instructors to tailor their syllabus but keeps the classroom active and engaged as the exercises in this book demand student action that can help them develop, test and (to some extent) experience aspects of an entrepreneurial idea/venture.

Yet the true value of this collection lies in its cross-disciplinary leveraging. Regardless of entrepreneurial program or course (business, arts, engineering, social, veteran, etc.), the games contained within are applicable to a wide variety of entrepreneurial sub-fields. Simultaneously, the collection also brings together the varied entrepreneurial idiosyncrasies of these sub-fields to create a truly holistic pedagogical tool. By leveraging some of the more well-known entrepreneurship classroom exercises originating from the business school, combined with new, unique and creative engagement activities, the true power of this pedagogical tool becomes apparent: it helps students uncover the “entrepreneurial body” of a proposed venture while testing and refining each student’s entrepreneurial mindset, tolerance for risk and, most importantly, creativity.

This is a collection of realization tools. For students dreaming of entrepreneurial success, value creation, social change or artistic sustainability, the creative and precisely timed experience of these games should help meet the preconceived expectations many often maintain throughout the semester. As experienced entrepreneurship educators know, much of the “secret
“knowledge” students seek lies internally, requiring only a timely revealing, and this collection can help both sides of the desk uncover this grail. Instructors no doubt will find this collection at least inspiring. To see how the creativity contained within these pages is applied in our pedagogical context should help spur new ideas to help our students achieve success and, arguably, satisfy some of our own preconceptions and desires.

Gary D. Beckman, PhD