

Teaching notes

Dribbling Covid-19: Challenges and dilemmas of an entrepreneur

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Abstract

Objective: to investigate the motivations, profile and skills of the individual who chooses to undertake; promote reflection about the entrepreneur's position in the face of a major crisis; and seek an answer to the question: Is digital influencer to be an entrepreneur? **Methodology/ Approach:** teaching case. **Main results:** in the "teaching notes", discussions are suggested on entrepreneurship itself, the use of the business model and the internationalization of small companies. **Theoretical and methodological contributions:** the structure of the case contributes methodologically to the dynamics in the classroom, constituting one more tool for learning the subject in question. **Relevance/originality:** the case is relevant because it shows the story of an entrepreneur (Breno) who, after realizing his dream and creating a promising business (a travel agency), as a result of a major crisis (Covid-19, lockdown and its impact on the travel industry, as well as the depression and feeling of impotence generated by it), needs to reinvent himself professionally (becoming a successful online consultant for entrepreneurs). With the end of the pandemic and the resumption of business, the impasse arises: Remain as a digital influencer or reactivate the old company (since tourism has grown again)? **Social contributions to management:** the case shows the reality of the entrepreneur in Brazil and raises questions about the regulation of the digital influencer profession.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial behavior. International entrepreneurship. Business strategy. Crisis management. Decision making.

Driblando a Covid-19: Desafios e dilemas de um empreendedor

Resumo

Objetivo: investigar as motivações, o perfil e as competências do indivíduo que escolhe empreender; promover a reflexão acerca do posicionamento do empreendedor perante uma grande crise; e buscar resposta para a questão: ser digital influencer é ser empreendedor? **Metodologia/Abordagem:** caso de ensino. **Principais resultados:** nas "notas de ensino", são sugeridas discussões sobre o empreendedorismo, propriamente dito, o uso do modelo de negócio e a internacionalização de pequenas empresas. **Contribuições teórico metodológicas:** a própria estrutura do caso contribui metodologicamente para a dinâmica em sala de aula, constituindo-se uma ferramenta a mais de aprendizagem do assunto em questão. **Relevância/originalidade:** o caso é relevante porque retrata a história de um empreendedor (Breno) que, após realizar seu sonho e criar um negócio promissor (uma agência de viagens), em decorrência de uma grande crise (Covid-19, lockdown e seu impacto no segmento de viagens, bem como a depressão e sentimento de impotência por ela gerados), precisa se reinventar profissionalmente (tornando-se um bem-sucedido consultor on-line para empreendedores). **Com o fim da pandemia e a retomada dos negócios, surge o impasse:** permanecer como digital influencer ou reativar a antiga empresa (pois o turismo voltou a crescer)? **Contribuições sociais para a gestão:** o caso retrata a realidade do empreendedor no Brasil e traz questionamentos sobre a regulamentação da profissão de digital influencer.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento empreendedor. Empreendedorismo internacional. Estratégia empresarial. Gerenciamento de crise. Tomada de decisão.

TEACHING NOTES

Suggestions for analyzing the case

For a proper understanding of the case, in addition to individual responses to the suggested questions, it is recommended to encourage the student's protagonism, requiring their active participation in the discussions

This can be done as follows: (1) divide the room into groups of students to analyze (a) the effects of the pandemic on entrepreneurs, (b) the motivations to undertake, need or opportunity, (c) the profile and skills of an entrepreneur, and, (d) the use of the business model as a management tool (estimated time of 30 minutes for the activity); (2) discussion between groups and analysis guided by the teacher (estimated time of 30 minutes for the activity); and (3) closure of the case discussion by the professor (estimated time of 10 minutes for the activity).

After the analysis of the case by the students and professor, it is also suggested the presentation of cases of international entrepreneurship that were successful, to encourage the creation of a business model, with the identification of partnership possibilities and labor abroad or domestically, to show the best decisions taken and minimized business risks.

Theoretical content suggested for discussion of the proposed themes

Entrepreneurship, motivations, and skills of the entrepreneur

Breno was no longer feeling free, working on something that didn't make sense and didn't find a purpose. Starting a business to call "his" could, then, represent freedom for him, as there would be flexibility in working hours and decision-making power over the company's direction in his hands. This motivated him to undertake it.

The term "entrepreneur", for Dolabela (2008), refers to that person who has a dream and, like Breno, is motivated to make it happen. For Filion (1991, p. 2), in turn, an entrepreneur "is a person who imagines, develops and realizes visions".

The term "entrepreneurship" originated from the free translation of "entrepreneurship" - a word directly related to innovation and initiative. Richard Cantillon was the first to use it, in 1755, trying to explain the receptivity to risk of acquiring something for a certain price, later selling it in an uncertainty regime (Hashimoto, 2017).

In 1803 Jean Baptiste Say, a French economist stated that entrepreneurship is related to that which transfers economic resources from a low-profit sector to another, with high productivity and which leads to greater economic performance (França et al., 2012).

As for academic research, the theme of entrepreneurship only gained prominence from the 1970s onwards. Changes in the industrial structure, deregulation of markets, rapid emergence of new technologies, greater debate about the role and importance of small businesses, recessions, and globalization strengthened the role of innovation and the creation of new organizations, thus boosting studies related to the subject.

It is also worth mentioning, as factors (until today) motivating entrepreneurship for survival or due to lack of options, the decrease in job opportunities and their precariousness, unlike entrepreneurship that comes from an opportunity and aims at generating wealth.

From the 1990s, studies on entrepreneurship increased significantly, lasting until the present day (Chandra, 2018; Landström, 2020; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

It can be said that the human species, as a whole, is enterprising. That is, entrepreneurship is not a fad, as it is part of the first human actions, whose purpose was to innovate and improve relations between men and nature (Dolabela, 2008).

It should also be mentioned that entrepreneurship is something collective and not individual (or genetic). For this reason, societies must provide a better environment for entrepreneurs to develop, given the importance of context for the creation and success of a business (Dolabela, 2008).

Regarding the entrepreneurial profile, competencies, and skills, Snell and Lau (1994) characterize them as a composite of knowledge, area, skill, personal qualities, characteristics, attitudes, visions, and motivations, which, in some way, help when putting the business into action. Therefore, the entrepreneur's life plan is directly linked to the art of creating and managing a business, reflecting values and personal characteristics (Table 1).

Table 1
Skills of an entrepreneur

Skills of an entrepreneur	Description	Main character traits
Opportunity Skills		
Relationship skills		
Conceptual skills		
Administrative skills		
Strategic skills		
Commitment skills		

Note: Adapted table from Man e Lau (2000); Zampier e Takahashi (2011).

Schmidt e Bohnenberger (2009), among a variety of studies about the entrepreneur's profile, highlight some characteristics, such as the search for originality and professional achievement, willingness to take risks, and detection of opportunities. Such characteristics can be observed in Breno's profile: a born leader, fearless and visionary who, from a very young age, was a trailblazer, not content with being just like everyone else.

According to Man and Lau (2000), micro and small companies have their competitiveness inspired by the competencies of entrepreneurs, which can be categorized into six different areas: opportunity competencies, relationship competencies, conceptual competencies, administrative competencies, strategic competencies, and commitment competencies. By analyzing Breno's trajectory, it is possible to identify some of these characteristics in him (Table 2).

Regarding a person's motivation to undertake, need or opportunity are the factors taken into account. Breno was motivated to open his travel agency not out of necessity, but because he saw a possible opportunity.

Unlike entrepreneurs who act out of necessity, those who observe a business opportunity or a market niche to be explored, decide to undertake to fulfill a dream and obtain financial profits and personal achievements, even though they have alternatives for employment and income.

Table 2

Categorization of Breno's Skills

Skills	Description	Characteristics of the protagonist
Opportunity Skills	Regarding the identification, evaluation, and pursuit of business opportunities.	Observer, curious, explorer, and restless.
relationship skills	Concerning the entrepreneur's relationships.	Good communication and networking.
conceptual skills	Regarding the evaluation of different situations, calculating the risks that arise.	Search for up-to-date market information; research and studies; emotional intelligence, and analysis of variables, before making a decision.
administrative skills	Regarding the efficient allocation of human, technological, physical, and financial resources.	Administrator by training, saver.
strategic skills	Regarding the choice and implementation of the best strategy, without forgetting the deadlines.	Analysis of the variables, before deciding on the best one, systemic vision, creativity.
Commitment skills	Referring to the ability of dedication and focus, regardless of adverse situations.	Self-awareness and long-term vision.

Note: Adapted table from Man e Lau (2000) and Zampier e Takahashi (2011).

Digital influencer activity, Breno's motivation was the need to survive during a major crisis, aiming at his professional reinvention. Entrepreneurship by necessity is related, in general, to the lack of work and income options, to one's own and family subsistence, given the absence of better livelihood alternatives.

In addition to the previously mentioned motivations, one can follow, as Dolabela (2008, p. 25), the path of entrepreneurship through other influences, because "entrepreneurship is a cultural phenomenon, that is, entrepreneurs are born under the influence of the environment in which they live".

In this sense, entrepreneurs always have a role model, someone who influences them. The protagonist of the case study is no exception, as his enterprising parents encouraged Breno to make his dreams a reality.

Another major influence on entrepreneurship today is the use of information technologies, such as digital media. Nevertheless, the discussion about the relationship between digital influencer activity and entrepreneurship is still on the agenda.

Oliveira Junior (2020) argues that digital influencers use technology to undertake, which therefore denotes a profile similar to that of the traditional entrepreneur. The work of the digital influencer is carried out exclusively in the virtual world – a new and innovative space, which gives credibility, reputation, and prestige. This is a set of attributes capable of making the digital professional independent and able to manage his own business, to which he dedicates most of his time.

Hagberg et al. (2016) classify digital entrepreneurship as the adaptation or creation of new businesses, based on the use of digital resources to offer products/services, not limited to e-commerce, as it encompasses the transformation of products into digital services, the interaction of consumers on social networks, and the introduction of digital devices in the purchasing process. The main role of the digital influencer is to "influence" the consumption of a certain product or service, through a recommendation on their channel.

The so-called digital entrepreneurship is characterized by the use of digital resources as an organizational strategy to deliver goods and services (Bezerra et al., 2022). Digital influencers emerged due to technological advances, the internet, and social networking sites, reflecting a society that began to show its daily life, its preferences, and its way of living. This began to influence trends in ways of being in today's world.

In this sense, the digital influencer "undertakes" to generate trust and credibility, by publicizing brands and awakening greater interest from their audience in the products and/or services conveyed in their media. Therefore, the messages transmitted by these professionals, in this virtual universe, exercise power over their followers (Oliveira Junior, 2020).

Regarding the norms and laws that regulate the activity of the digital professional, in Brazil, there is the General Law of Micro and Small Companies and Simples Nacional (Complementary Law nº 123/2006), which establishes the National Statute of Micro and Small Enterprises, changing, with this, provisions of Laws nº 8.212 e 8.213, of July 24, 1991, on the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT) for the entrepreneur (Jor Accounting Final, 2022).

Specifically, to regulate the professionalization of digital influencer activity, Bill (PL) nº 2.347/2022 (PL 2347) is being processed. If the law is approved, professional digital influencers must register to obtain authorization to exercise their profession. To do so, technical knowledge will be required, proven by an undergraduate degree in the subject you intend to address.

International Entrepreneurship

International entrepreneurship and its motivations can be understood, according to Cavusgil and Knight (2015) and Machado (2018), as the process of creative discovery and exploration of new opportunities outside the national market, to obtain competitive advantages.

The internationalization of companies allows reaching different markets around the world and can occur for different reasons. For Leite et al. (2014), it is possible to categorize internationalization according to its cause (Table 3).

Table 3

Causes of Internationalization of Companies

Causes of Internationalization	Author
Product lifecycle stage	Vernon (1966)
Market imperfections	Hymer (1983)
Increased competition in the home country	Vernon (1966)
Identification of opportunities	Johanson e Vahlne (1977)
Internal market stagnation	Root (1994)
Resource transaction	Potter (1998)
Technology	Dhanaraj e Beamish (2004)
Cooperation between rivals	Porter (1998)
Company size	Dhanaraj e Beamish (2004)
Purpose of prospecting immediate sales	Root (1994)
Host country government incentives	Porter (1998); Root (1994)
Relationship networks	Johanson e Vahlne (2009); Porter (1998)

Note: Adapted table from Leite et al. (2014) e Costa et al. (2017).

In this sense, it is possible to state that one of the reasons for the company "Caminha Esse Mundo" to start operating globally would be the protagonist's relationship network, formed by friends and people known abroad, who could help in this internationalization.

Another motivation for the creation of the company Breno would be the identification of an opportunity: after researching the market, on renowned websites and magazines, which pointed to the tendency of people to seek outdoor destinations, in contact with nature, he thought he could undertake, for example, giving Brazilians their first contact with snow.

Business model

The business model, among many available definitions, is seen as the explanation of how a company creates, delivers, and captures value. That is, how the company intends to solve a certain problem and what amount it will charge the customer to do so.

The term “business model” gained more visibility in Brazil in the 1990s, as an objective and direct representation of how an organization produces, buys, and sells its products and/or services, and obtains financial resources from these transactions (Gonçalves, 2012).

In this sense, the “business model” summarizes what customers want; how and how much they will pay for that good or service; what is the best way for the company to satisfy these needs; and how to earn adequate payment for what was offered to the customer.

The Business Model Canvas, created by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2011), lists nine main elements of a business model, as well as how they must be arranged, in a way that they relate to the whole. It is a visual and dynamic tool for business planning, supported by four central pillars: (1) value offer – value proposition; (2) customers – customer segment, channels, and relationships; (3) infrastructure – key resources, key activities, and key partnerships; and (4) financial viability – cost structure and revenue sources.

The set of these nine elements supports the entrepreneur in converting knowledge of his own business into clear and visual information, either for other participants in the enterprise or for potential investors.

Considering the elements presented in this case study and the dilemma experienced by the company in question, it was possible to develop a Canvas business model, to assist Breno in creating a plan for the company “Caminha Esse Mundo” (Figure 1).

The business model is an extremely important tool for the entrepreneur because it allows him to develop his ideas or rethink an existing business (Sebrae, 2020b).

Figure 1

Business model canvas

KEY PARTNERSHIPS Outsourcing: airline tickets, hotels and insurance. Tour guide for some specific attractions, parks.	KEY ACTIVITIES Travel planning (definition of date, hotel, itinerary, transportation). Marketing. Execution.	VALUE OFFER Inspiring people through innovative travel to unconventional destinations.	CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP Human interaction (company representatives on social media).	CUSTOMER SEGMENT Brazilians aged between 25 and 65 years old, who are curious about taking a road trip through the Patagonia region, and who appreciate eco and adventure tourism.
	KEY RESOURCES Physical: hotel, transportation (microbus, motor home,), PC. Intellectual: photographer, tour guide, driver HR: team of 2 to 3 people. Financial: start up and working capital.		CHANNELS Social media; E-mail, website and phone Ads google. Inbound marketing.	
COST STRUCTURE Fixed costs: rent and expenses for a commercial room. (if necessary) website development and maintenance, management software and marketing. Variable costs: fuel for the execution travels, hotel, tour guide and photographer.			SOURCES OF REVENUE Revenue from direct sales: e-commerce through credit card, deposit transfer and bank slip.	

Note: Adapted figure from Sebrae (2020b).

Case Study

This teaching notes is an integral part of the case study:

Grezole, B., & Bueno, G. (2023). Dribbling Covid-19: Challenges and dilemmas of an entrepreneur. *REGEPE Entrepreneurship and Small Business Journal*, 12(3), e2304. <https://doi.org/10.14211/regepe.esbj.e2442>

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors’ statement of individual contributions

Roles	Contributions	
	Grezole B.	Bueno G.
Conceptualization	■	
Methodology		■
Software		N. A.
Validation		■
Formal analysis		■
Investigation	■	
Resources	■	
Data Curation	■	
Writing - Original Draf	■	
Writing - Review & Editing	■	■
Visualization	■	■
Supervision		■
Project administration	■	■
Funding acquisition	■	■

Note: Acc. CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy): <https://credit.niso.org/>

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