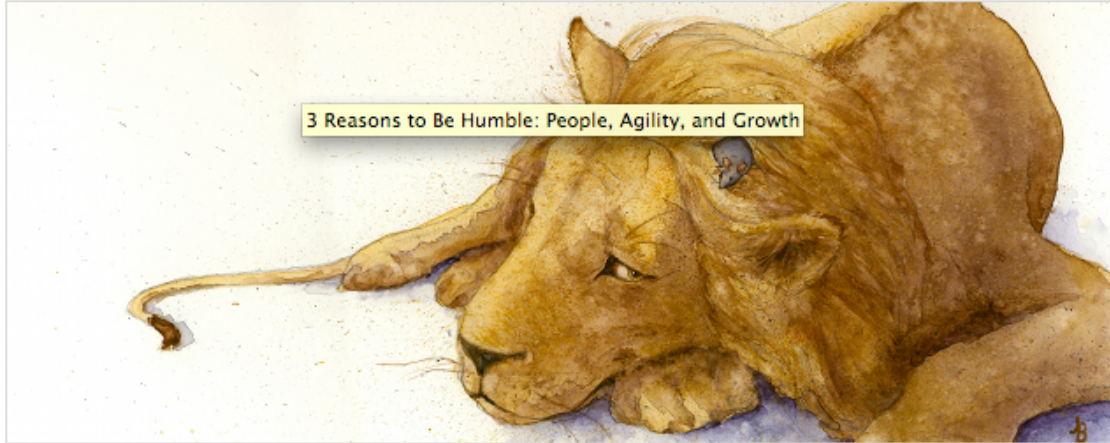


3 Reasons to Be Humble: People, Agility, and Growth



“If only I had a little humility, I’d be perfect.” -Ted Turner

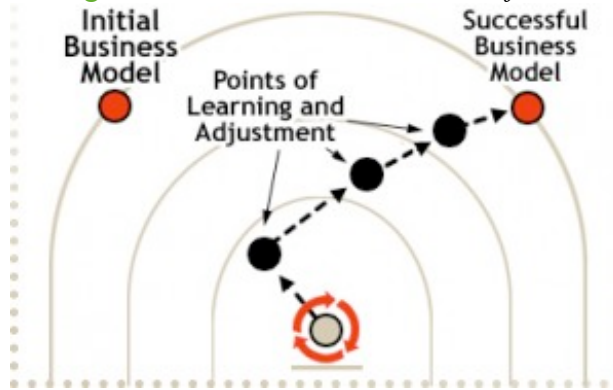
To develop our selection process here at the Unreasonable Institute, we surveyed a number of well-reputed investors with good track records for selecting successful entrepreneurs. We asked them: “What single characteristic is most likely to predict failure in entrepreneurs?” The answer we got time and time again, especially from the good folks at [TechStars](#): ego. Humility, therefore, is paramount to being a successful social entrepreneur and something we search for in our Fellows.

Here are 3 reasons why entrepreneurs should strive to be humble.

1. *Genuine curiosity in others.* As we learn in the famous fable, “[The Lion and the Mouse](#),” you never know how someone can be of service to you, no matter how they initially appear. That’s why, as Unreasonable Institute President Daniel Epstein blogged, that one of the [keys to developing powerful relationships](#) with other people is to treat them like they are the “Messiah in the Room.” Humility, or in this case, the belief that you have something to learn from whomever is sitting across the table from you, is crucial to having this genuine curiosity in other people. One of the things that I admire most about International Development Enterprises (IDE) founder Paul Polak is his willingness to learn from anyone, even illiterate women earning less than a dollar a day.

In fact, in a [video interview we conducted with him](#) a few weeks ago, he cites this curiosity in what the poor had to say as one of the most important reasons why IDE has been able to lift over 19 million farmers earning less than a dollar a day out of poverty (Full Disclosure: Paul Polak is an Unreasonable Institute mentor).

2. Agile Development. We learned from our first video interview with [Elnor Rozenrot of Innosight Ventures](#) that 90% of *successful* ventures start out with the wrong business plan



(Full Disclosure: Elnor Rozenrot is an Unreasonable Institute mentor).

Successful entrepreneurs, therefore, don't become too attached to the *way* in which they create impact but to the ultimate impact they want to create (with the exception of values,

like non-violence for Gandhi). Altering course, even after tremendous time and energy has been spent in developing a strategy, requires an ability to admit mistakes and a need for change that stems from humility.

3. Honesty and Growth. Here at the Unreasonable Institute, we pride ourselves on being able to answer even the most difficult questions thrown at us. We either a) produce the right response or b) say we don't know the answer. And the latter response has been one of the single most important catalysts for developing trusting relationships with others and for our growth as an organization. We take that growth really seriously. Daniel instituted a policy of militant transparency, where we hold each other to fully admitting when we make mistakes or drop the ball so that as a team, we can identify why and work to make sure it doesn't happen in the future. We also work hard to do this personally so we can grow as individuals. One of the best examples I've seen of the disciplined, personal reflection it takes to develop as an entrepreneur comes from FORGE Founder and Unreasonable Institute mentor Kjerstin Erickson, in her blog post entitled [“Things I Suck At.”](#)

So What? Genuine relationships, agile development, and growth are vital to entrepreneurial excellence and humility is key to having all three. For some tips on how to be humble, check out [Three Ways to Keep Your Ego in Check](#) by John Baldoni of Harvard Business Publishing and [How to Be Humble](#) from wikiHow.