

PDF Supplement: UU – Integral Entrepreneurship – Integral Leadership

IE – Integral Leadership Development – Lesson 1 – Optimal Performance – Video

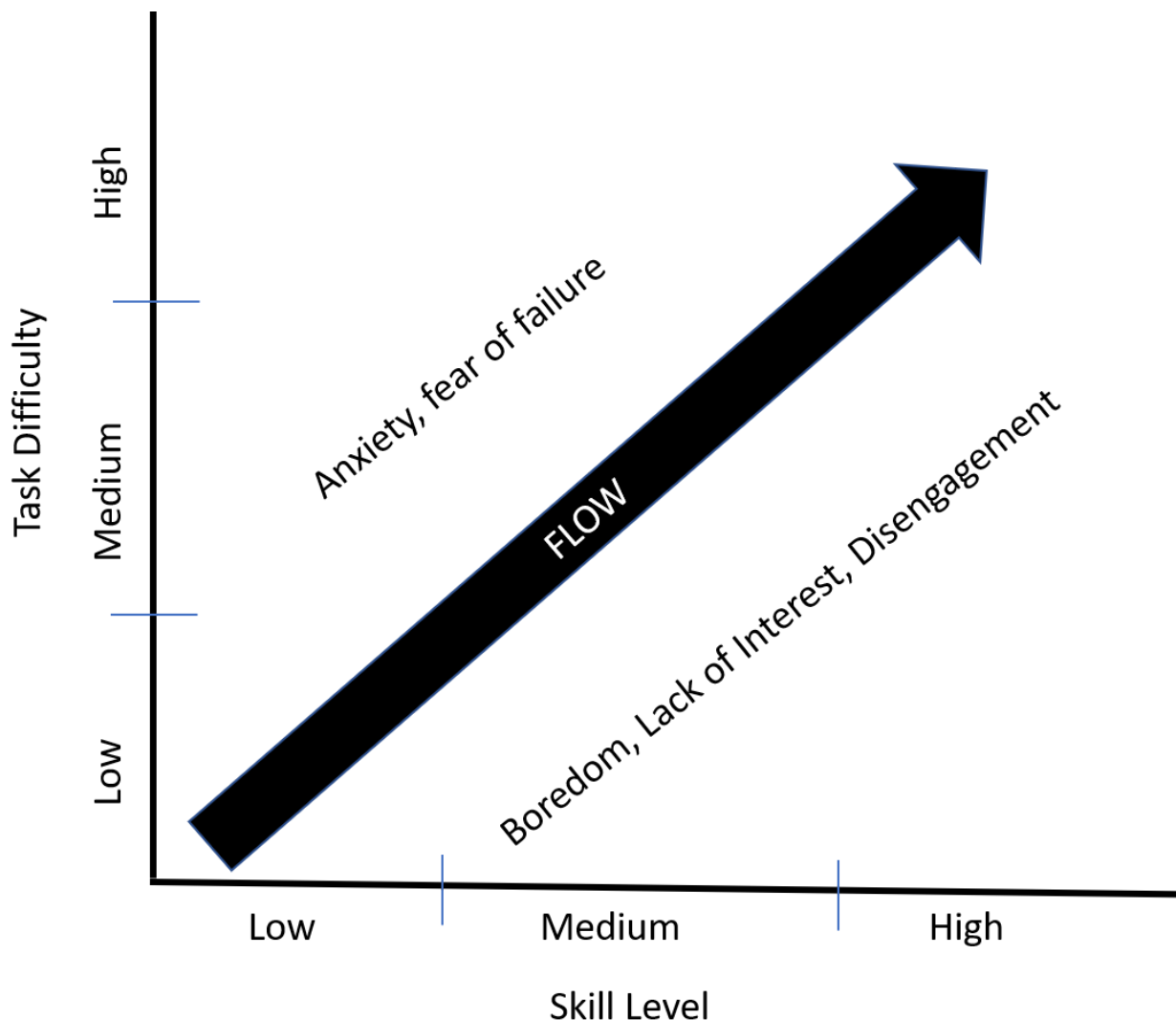
Summary

1. The core responsibility in starting a business is that of the entrepreneur. The success of the entrepreneur is dependent on qualities like judgement, energy, creativity, the ability to attract support and business acumen.
2. The objective of this class: you self-assess your strengths and weaknesses as an entrepreneur and lay out a plan to grow by creating your own model for success and setting out practices that support your growth.

First attribute of entrepreneur: energy level. Entrepreneurs are often like those ships in the Arctic, “ice-breakers” who forge new paths. This requires a high level of energy that is productively directed.

3. “Flow” is a concept that speaks to optimizing one’s energy level. It occurs when our whole being is aligned with an important goal. We are authentically committed to something and bring our best to it because we recognize personal meaning from this focus.
4. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is a pioneer of the research into flow and optimal performance. (Key book: *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*)
5. One of Csikszentmihalyi’s core assertions: Flow is most possible when the level of a challenge and the individual’s skill level are in equilibrium in the service of something that matters to that person. When this happens as a long-standing pattern in living, we grow our performance and competency level together and this increases our experience of flow.
6. When we experience flow, we experience an intrinsic sense of satisfaction. All of our intention is focused and we perform with confidence and trust, without self-doubt or internal conflict.
7. So “flow” (or optimal performance/optimal enjoyment) is the result of a mixture of purpose (the challenge actually matters to you, on your own terms) plus the level of challenge that is right at the edge of your current abilities – you can do it, if you are fully engaged. When we watch children “play”, what they are often doing is pushing their learning of various skills – from building with blocks to riding a bicycle, to role-playing complex family dynamics with dolls.
8. One of the key premises in the whole course of Integral Entrepreneurship is a process that encourages (and requires!) growth by the entrepreneur in comprehensive ways.

9. Two key points. First, when I say “optimal enjoyment”, not every moment of this kind of focus will be pleasurable – it may often require intense focus or be a struggle in the short term. But, because that pursuit truly and authentically matters to us, you build a sense of self respect, pride and meaning as a result. Second, “flow” as an experience (one often encounters the idea of “peak experience”) is not something one can directly create. It is, rather, the result of a process of greater and greater focus, trust and optimism as we recognize that we are, in fact, growing more accomplished in what matters to us through our sustained efforts. (As one attains deeper access to states of consciousness through meditation, peak experiences become more directly accessible).
10. This model sets this idea of the complementary relationship between the challenge of the activity and the level of competence. “Flow” is the consequence when these two are in balance with each other.



2nd competency: Judgment and reason in environment of complexity and ambiguity

- There are enormous amounts of information flowing at us and this trend is accelerating. One of the core challenges of the entrepreneur is learning which information is critically important, versus which is just noise that deserves limited attention.
- Amount of decision-making is also accelerating. In every step, there is a myriad of choices. It is easy to spend incredible amounts of time weighing pros and cons of matters that, in the end, are not worth the effort.
- These facts (and others) require that we develop maturing judgment. This happens more-or-less automatically as we grow, except for the influence of our invisible (to us) biases.
- Judgment is predicated on our unconscious biases. We see through the lens of our core assumptions. They often short-circuit our rational assessment of our environment. Until we learn to see them as biases, we experience them as absolute facts, as reality itself, and not as merely our perspective. One place people can often see this at work is in their inner “them” that they carry around in their own mind’s eye. “Them” is their projection of those who they are engaged with in their own inner, mental dialogue/discussion/debate, and often play a powerful role in shaping how we assume “people” are. As a result, this subtly but profoundly influences how one can make decisions, because people take their inner “them” instinctively into account, until they learn to recognize “them” as their own inner mental processes.
- So, one major part of growing clearer, more reasoned judgment is becoming more aware of our assumptions as “data”, so that we can observe and evaluate (versus having their influence remain invisible), making us freer to make decisions based on information and context.
- The entrepreneur is the decider in his or her business. Developing increasingly mature judgments without bias of misleading, unconscious emotion create a positive trajectory in the context of complex information.

Reflection Tasks:

Leadership Attribute 1: Flow:

- Result of focus on something that truly matters to you, when the difficulty presents the right amount of challenge to your skills and competencies, so that you can perform if you fully engage your full resources.
- Builds self-respect, optimism, sense of purpose over time.
- Process of building flow leads to greater likelihood of peak experiences.

Thought exercise 1

- Think about times of state of flow – identify a time of you experienced flow. When was that? What happened that catalyzed it?

Leadership Attribute 2: Judgment and reason in environment of complexity and ambiguity

- Amount of information, its complexity and ambiguity, requires skillful ability to focus on most useful input.
- The more we can discover our invisible (to us) biases and assumptions and see them as data instead of the absolute truth, the better we can assess information.

Thought exercise 2

- What about this idea is useful to you, and what is not useful? Why?