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7 Steps to encourage youth entrepreneurship in Europe

Once upon a time I had dreams. Many dreams. Sacks full of little spaceships that shoot me to the stars and beyond. I would take care of these dreams. I would fuel my spaceships, wash them up, do everything in my little hands to protect them. But one day, I found them destroyed. Torn. Bleeding. Demolished.

And that's how I learned that the world isn't filled with unicorns and marshmallows. That's when I realized that the dreams of the younger generation are often demolished. That the strong don't always care for the weak and the young.

That's when I realized that things need to change... That's when I realized that I needed to help secure positive change, for the sake of all the new generations. That's why I write this.

I may not know all the decisive details regarding the economy. I may not know exactly how a government runs. But I do know what needs to be done to encourage youth entrepreneurship. And even if it seems like a complicated issue, it can be summarized in seven simple steps; seven steps that can change lives and generations.

Step one: Build trust. As vague as it sounds, this is in my opinion the most important step. The world is gigantic. It is exciting, adventurous, but also terrifying. Youth needs to know that there are people out there that they can rely on, when in need. Listen to the youth, have conversations with them. In the technologically advanced world we live in the distances are continuously getting smaller and smaller. With the click of the button a person from Europe can speak with one from North America. There are endless possibilities to the use of technology; it is just a matter of actually using it. Even if spending one hour- only one hour- seems like nothing important, it can actually lead to the change a million euros will not have the strength to cause. So sit down and actually listen to what the new generation has to say. Don't just hear them, but listen and understand them, their fears and their dreams.

Step two: Inform. What's the point in kick starting hundreds of new projects when the people that they concern are completely unaware of their existence? It is a fact that access to

multiple sources of information has made enormous leaps in the past couple of decades. What is crucial is that one uses new media wisely. According to various researches conducted over the past years 95 percent of teens ages 12-17 use the Internet, and 81 percent of them use social networks. Therefore it is clear that social media are a powerful tool; a tool that allows the spreading of information faster than the speed of light. Use this tools to inform youth, not a percentage of youth, not some of youth, but the majority. And don't overcomplicate the language, something that brings me to step three.

Step three: Please, do use simple, everyday language when addressing youth and children. This is of course not to say that we are unable to understand you, but there is no need to overcomplicate matters that might already seem daunting without the advanced language. As Einstein once said, "If you can't explain something simply, you don't understand it well enough." Yes, I do acknowledge that you are educated individuals. And I certainly do understand that you have years of experience that definitely leave their mark on your language and ways of expressing yourself. But, before you label me as ignorant and consider this step as unimportant, let me clarify; Language is much more than a choice of words. The terms one uses act as a reflection of the person uttering that term. They show education, as well as social class, among others. So when you use simpler language you actually come down to the level of the new generation and treat them as equals. Of course, everything has its limits. There is a fine line between simple and patronizing that you should bother to find. Don't go ahead treating young adults and older children like they are two years old.

Step four: Even though you should definitely not treat the new generation like two year olds, you also should not treat us like we have had years of experience. Be understanding and accept mistakes. From the ages of five to eighteen and up until the end of one's education, mistakes are penalized. However, the real world does not work on a system of right and wrong. Life is not black and white. You should therefore show the new generation that a seemingly bad decision could lead to something incredible. Show that you understand and this will encourage the new generation to take a bold step with more confidence to succeed and less anxiety of failure.

Step five: Do not only work for youth, work with it. Yes you have your youth projects but, when was the last time you actually consulted youth in the preparation of a program. Ask them for their opinion, show them that you care and that you try to fulfill the needs they have and not the needs you think they have. This will not only help bridge the generation gap that clearly still exists, but can also lead to initiatives that you wouldn't even be able to imagine without the new, fresh ideas of the new generation. No offence however, the old generation still rocks! But when the new and old generations work together, that is when we can change the world. So do acknowledge the right to participation that every human is born with.

Step six: Don't exclude children. According to the Constitution for the Rights of the Child, any human being up until the age of eighteen is considered a child. And let's not forget that the official definition of youth by the United Nations includes people between the ages of 15

and 24. Despite this, more often than not anyone under the age of eighteen is excluded from trainings, workshops and conferences. Even if we are young it does not mean we are stupid. It does not mean we are immature. We have a lot to offer if only you give us the chance. This contest is an exception and I sincerely do hope that even more contests and trainings allow the involvement of younger ages, to the point that training with children is not an exception, but the norm.

And lastly, step seven: Educate. Provide the young generation with the resources they need to succeed. Organize courses, especially online ones that allow the maximum number of youth to participate. An online course not only is significantly cheaper, but it also allows the participants to get the maximum out of a course. Why? Because the courses can be taken in a person's own time. We all have different schedules that sometimes prevent us from doing all we want. So, provide trainings and courses with flexible schedules that can adapt to the needs and the everyday lives of the new generation.

That's it. This is how you encourage youth entrepreneurship. To recap: build trust, inform, use simple language, show respect and understanding, include all ages and educate. These are not hard steps. They do not require large amounts of resources; neither do they require endless hours. But, what is indeed required is the will; The will to support and encourage the new generation to take bold steps that will lead to a brighter future for them, and for the whole of the world.