



Is passion contagious? The transference of entrepreneurial passion to employees

Melissa S. Cardon*

Pace University, Lubin School of Business, 861 Bedford Road, Goldstein AC 227, Pleasantville, NY 10570, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Passion
Emotional contagion
Entrepreneurship

ABSTRACT

The scholarly entrepreneurship community is coming to recognize what practicing entrepreneurs have known for some time — that passion is a central element of the entrepreneurial process. Recent developments have more carefully defined the construct of entrepreneurial passion and modeled its impact on entrepreneurial behaviors. This paper takes the next step by building a model of how that passion may be transferred from entrepreneur to employees. The question of interest is how entrepreneurs can facilitate the contagion of their own passion to others.

© 2008 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

An emerging stream of research concerns the powerful role affect plays in enhancing the success potential of would-be entrepreneurs. For example, positive emotion may enhance entrepreneurial creativity, which can aid in recognition of new opportunities (Baron, 2008), and entrepreneurs that are passionate for their ventures may be more creative and persistent, and may become more absorbed in venture-related activities, which should enhance key venture outcomes (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, *in press*). More broadly, entrepreneurs who are passionate have been thought to be more successful than those who are not by both academics (e.g. Baum & Locke, 2004; Cardon, Zietsma, Saporito, Matherne, & Davis, 2005) and practitioners (e.g. Moses, 2001). Chang (2001: 106) argues that, “Passion inspires us to work harder and with greater effect. The irony is that we hardly notice our effort. It comes easily and enjoyably.”

Yet entrepreneurs do not act alone; successful recruitment and management of employees are critical factors influencing the success of emerging ventures (Baron & Hannan, 2002; Deshpande & Golhar, 1994; Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990). A growing body of literature on alternative models of human resource management in such firms has emerged (e.g. Baron, Burton, & Hannon, 1996; Baron & Hannan, 2002; Baron, 2003; Heneman & Tansky, 2002; Heneman, Tansky, & Camp, 2000). This research suggests that firm performance can be enhanced by effective HR practices such as attracting and retaining key talent (Barber, Wesson, Roberson, & Taylor, 1999), providing appropriate compensation and incentives (Graham, Murray, & Amuso, 2002), and developing employees through training (Chandler & McEvoy, 2000).

If passionate entrepreneurs make for more effective organizations, and employees are also a critical input to firm performance, then it follows that having passionate employees would also be beneficial. We know that, in general, affective experiences at work influence the direction, intensity, and persistence of employee behavior (Seo, Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004). Yet interestingly, we have only anecdotal evidence concerning the role that emotions and feelings of employees of entrepreneurial firms play in influencing firm survival and success. It is a theoretical and empirical puzzle whether strong emotions of entrepreneurs themselves, perhaps combined with effective HRM, are enough to lead to firm success, or whether in small firms the emotions of the employees are also important. Further, if employee passion is beneficial, the question becomes how entrepreneurs can transfer their passion to employees.

* Tel.: +1 914 773 3618; fax: +1 914 773 3920.
E-mail address: mcardon@pace.edu.

Drawing from the psychological literature on emotions and feelings (e.g., Russell & Barrett, 1999) and emotional contagion¹ (e.g. Sy, Cote, & Saavedra, 2005), as well as literature on transformational leadership (e.g., Bass, 1985), we build a model of emotional contagion within the entrepreneurial context, from entrepreneurs to employees. In the following sections we discuss entrepreneurial passion in general, then how it leads to the emotional displays of entrepreneurs. We then build a model of emotional contagion, drawing a distinction between contagion through primitive emotional mimicry and through social comparison processes. We discuss how transformational leadership can enhance contagion through social comparison, and ultimately suggest that for contagion of passion from entrepreneur to employee to occur, employees must experience both positive intense feelings for their activities and a sense of meaningfulness or identity connection to those activities within the entrepreneurial firm. This draws directly from a recent definition of passion, where our discussion begins.

2. Entrepreneurial passion

Passion involves “consciously accessible positive intense feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur” (Cardon et al., *in press*: 12). There are two key elements of this definition, according to the authors. First, passion involves positive and intense feelings that occur over time, instead of in response to episodic or immediate triggers in the environment. Thus, passion is enduring rather than momentary. Second, passion feelings are for venture-related objects, such as roles, that are identity meaningful to the entrepreneur. As such, entrepreneurial passion involves more than just positive emotions (see Baron, 2008 for a discussion of emotions in entrepreneurship); passion also involves a deep identity connection between the entrepreneur and the venture or salient role (see also Murnieks and Mosakowski, 2006 for further discussion of the entrepreneurial role identity). Identity relevance involves finding personal meaning in the activities one is engaged in, typically because they relate to an enduring and central characteristic of a person's sense of who they are as an individual (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Thus, an entrepreneur who is passionate for being the founder or owner of their venture will experience positive and intense feelings for the firm, and will also have the role of “founder” as a central part of their self-identity. As a result, the venture becomes an essential and unifying theme for the entrepreneur's life and defines his or her identity. “When an entrepreneur's attachment is strong, the entrepreneur is likely to respond to cues in the venture that others may not notice, feeling every pain of the new venture, and taking every attack on it personally” (Cardon et al., 2005: 33). Because of this identity connection, entrepreneurs may attribute business accomplishments to themselves, just as deficiencies in the business are felt to reflect their own failings or inadequacies (e.g., Shepherd, 2003).

It is important to note that while passion is long-term and is typically positive and intense (Cardon et al., *in press*), entrepreneurs who feel passion for their venture may also experience shorter-term emotions that vary in intensity and valence. For example, the loss of a client may yield a negative short-term emotion such as frustration, even when the entrepreneur still holds positive feelings for the venture and its future potential. Recent work in psychology and neuropsychology has demonstrated that feelings (long-term) and emotions (short-term) are distinct in how they are experienced and in how they influence cognitions and behaviors (Damasio, 2003; Dolan, 2002). An extensive review of these differences is outside the scope of this paper (see Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2005; Russell, 2003), but the simplistic understanding of this difference is that feelings such as passion are long-term enduring affects that persist over extended periods of time, such as the love of a parent for a child, while emotions are shorter-term episodic affects that are in direct response to immediate stimuli, such as anger when your child breaks a plate. There is also a distinction between these and moods, which are low intensity, generalized affects that are unrelated to events and circumstances that created them (Cross & Travaglione, 2003). An example of this is “she is in a bad mood today” regardless of what caused that mood. While passion has been argued to be a central element in entrepreneurship (Bird, 1988; Cardon et al., *in press*; Smilor, 1997), emotions may also play an important role in the broader affective system for entrepreneurs and their employees (Baron, 2008; Cardon et al., 2005).

Passion has been argued to have strong effects on the creativity, persistence, and absorption of entrepreneurs (Cardon et al., 2005; Murnieks & Mosakowski, 2006). For example, positive intense affect, such as passion, lead to people setting more challenging goals (Seo et al., 2004), using more creativity in tackling those challenges, and persisting longer in tasks, even when overcoming obstacles (Sy et al., 2005). Passion has been credited with giving entrepreneurs the power to do whatever it takes to realize their visions (Chang, 2001; Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003), to guide their thoughts, actions, and pursuit of activities (e.g., Baum, 2003; Baum, Locke, & Smith, 2001), and to work on tasks with tenacity (Brush, Greene, & Hart, 2001). More specifically, passion has been said to improve one's ability to pitch their ideas (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003) and to raise funds from venture capitalists (Chen, Yao, & Kotha, *in press*). However, excessive levels of passion may ultimately be dysfunctional, leading to blind persistence (Branzei & Zietsma, 2003), irrational escalation of commitment, or even obsessive behaviors (Vallerand et al., 2003). Such dysfunctional outcomes of passion are outside the scope of the current manuscript.

3. Emotional display of entrepreneurial passion

Individuals vary in their ability to control the experience of affect, such as passion (antecedent-focused emotional regulation, Gross, 1998). Individuals also vary in their ability to control the expression or display of affect once they do experience it (response-focused emotional regulation, Gross, 1998). Often we suppress emotions we experience from being displayed outwardly, either because of

¹ Note that emotional contagion is used in this paper to refer to contagion of all affect, including emotions, feelings, or moods. This is consistent with other research that uses the term emotional contagion to refer to contagion of moods rather than emotion (Barsade, 2002).

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات