



## 5 .WHO SUPPORTS IT ALL? HOW?

### The role of the coach

The coach plays a central part in the fast learning process for entrepreneurs. His or her role consists basically of the following:

- (i) as an expert on the process, **helping the entrepreneurs understand** the main errors and pitfalls of each phase;
- (ii) **being a major motivator**, challenging them to take the next steps and encouraging them to continue with the process;
- (iii) creating a climate in which the leaders of the project **ask the right questions, talk to the right people and learn as they go**.

Like the shell concept inspired by computing, the cycles use the idea of sprints imported from Agile development methodologies. The Agile coach also encompasses the role of Scrum Master, whose mission is to ensure that the development team follows the process. In Scientific Entrepreneurship the coach performs a similar role. The premise is that the entrepreneur is not – and should not be! – an expert in entrepreneurship. That is the coach’s role. The coach offers important feedback without “telling anyone what to do”.

More practically, the coach is responsible for managing the recurring interactions with the entrepreneurs. This involves holding sessions,

at least once a month, and managing engagement throughout the application of the S4S.

The coach is responsible for oral and written assessments to facilitate absorption of the principles of the methodology during each interaction. The entrepreneur’s evolution happens throughout the process proposed by the S4S, but above all by means of feedback loops: the entrepreneur experiments in a confused manner, receives advice, and resumes experimentation with the coach’s comments in mind. As the cycle repeats, the process becomes consolidated as an entrepreneurial mindset based on data and real-world experiments.

The coach acts in two contexts: development of single teams, or development of teams in batches (as in accelerator and similar programs).

The Scientific Entrepreneurship pedagogy is even stronger when executed by batches of teams. Managing the framework is more complex but the collective learning process is greatly enhanced. We recommend that a coach should work with at most five to seven teams, devoting about 20 hours per month to this batch.

In addition to one-on-one sessions, coaches (i) collectively mentor

# 5 .WHO SUPPORTS IT ALL? HOW?

## The role of the coach

their teams (in the flipped classroom format); (ii) develop a collective assessment and feedback for the batch; and (iii) assure an open communication system for batch teams to exchange information. All this enables the entrepreneurs to achieve a significant increase in the number of feedback loops. It also injects a social effect that positively impacts performance. The coach performs several assessments during the program: (i) live in the flipped classroom; (ii) in writing after it; (iii) formal feedback after collective assessments, producing a comparative perception between themselves and the other teams in the batch.

Reinforcing collective assessment, the coaches meet once a month to analyze the status of each team, align the overall maturing of the teams and produce a ranking of the teams according to the degree of maturity reached during application of the methodology. This ranking can be based on a qualitative discussion or on the scores awarded to the teams at the end of each flipped class. The assessments have two main elements: dedication and performance. Dedication reflects indicators specific to each cycle, such as the number of interviews, for example, or the willingness to chase after new people or information. Performance relates to the coach's degree of confidence in the team's potential success. This division exists because highly dedicated teams sometimes fail to find a relevant opportunity, while there are also cases

in which teams that are not so dedicated do find an opportunity and get things right. These are exceptions, as teams with relatively little dedication do not usually perform very well.

As investor David Frankel said: "whenever I invest because I'm more excited about the opportunity than the entrepreneur, it's always a mistake."

The methodological support provided by the **S4S** framework combined with the figure of the coach leads to the need for a pedagogy that supports the activity of the coach.

## 5 .WHO SUPPORTS IT ALL? HOW?

### Pedagogy

Coaches are not mentors, or experts on specific markets. They are experts on the method. Their main job is to keep participants in the method, learning as much and as fast as possible from their potential customers. A very common mistake is wanting to make entrepreneurs experts on the method. No! They need to be experts on their customers. Supplying a load of literature, presenting multiple frameworks and requiring the founder to master all these techniques leads to a lack of focus on what really matters: building something useful for a real customer.

The pedagogy that emerges from Scientific Entrepreneurship combines three main elements: (i) experiential learning, (ii) team-based learning, and (iii) flipped classroom.

Experiential learning is a pillar that emphasizes the real entrepreneurial process, including experience with actual people in validations performed out of the office and classroom. In accordance with this pedagogical principle, the coach should intensively instigate the entrepreneurs to go out and get concrete real-world evidence that proves their business hypotheses.

### *EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, TEAM-BASED LEARNING, AND FLIPPED CLASSROOM.*

---

The pedagogical principle of team-based learning presupposes that the coach constantly stimulates the entrepreneurs to think. In this case, as business partners the founders should reflect, analyze the data and think about their conclusions before sharing them with the coach or with a mentor. In the case of the methodology applied as a program, this effect is even greater as it creates cross-learning between teams with different markets and challenges.

Lastly, the pedagogical element embodied in the flipped classroom format, especially when the methodology is applied as a program, assures a leading role for the entrepreneur who presents the project and is the central focus for the interactions, not the coach. The role of the coach in the flipped classroom is to understand the group's progress in the last sprint and provide feedback to help them move forward faster. In the program format, all the teams of a single coach participate together, and the teams are encouraged to exchange information, sharing the lessons learned at different stages of maturity.

The shell must be very clear to the coaches, and the basic principles of the pedagogy must be mastered in practice. If so, the Scientific Entrepreneurship methodology will effectively convert more and more technologies into startups by means of a clear process of crossing the early-stage chasm.