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## Upfront

**The Enterprising Type: How the personalities of entrepreneurs  
and managers differ. By Alana Conner Snibbe**

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# The Enterprising Type

## *How the personalities of entrepreneurs and managers differ*

time. They were more likely to help in the experimental condition, when the caretaker showed that she wanted the object, than in the control condition. "It's not like fetch with a dog," says Warneken. "The chimpanzees were sensitive to the person's goal."

The researchers also explored how 18-month-old human infants would act under similar conditions. Like the chimpanzees, human infants helped the experimenter pick up accidentally dropped objects, but not intentionally thrown ones. And they did so without being asked, praised, or rewarded. Unlike their hairy counterparts, however, the human infants were able to aid the experimenter with more complex tasks, like pointing out a second way to get inside a box into which he has dropped a spoon. Human infants were also quicker to help.

Combining these findings, Warneken concludes that "the common ancestor to chimpanzees and humans already had rudimentary helping skills. And so not much moral instruction is necessary to develop them."

So why haven't we all become saintly Nobel Peace Prize nominees? Warneken speculates that part of growing up is learning not to be helpful all the time: "It's not a good thing to be altruistic to everyone. You wouldn't want to be altruistic to a cheater, or to benefit someone who doesn't benefit the group. You become more selective and understand when it's appropriate to perform this behavior."

He also points out that our philanthropic urges are not our only tendency. We also have a strong selfish streak. "But at least under some circumstances," he adds, "we are automatically altruistic."

—Alana Conner Snibbe

"THE CORE IS PERSONALITY, A TEMPERAMENT THAT SIMPLY CAN'T stop." That's partly how Ashoka's CEO Bill Drayton defined "social entrepreneur" in an interview with *SSIR* (see our Spring 2004 issue).

Entrepreneurs do indeed have distinct personalities, conclude Hao Zhao of the University of Chicago at Illinois and Scott E. Seibert of the Melbourne (Australia) Business School. They report their findings in the March 2006 issue of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Using meta-analysis, a sophisticated technique that integrates the findings of many different studies, the authors compared thousands of entrepreneurs and managers on the "big five" factors of personality. Many psychologists think that these five factors – conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness – are the basic ingredients of human temperament.

"What was most surprising," says Seibert, an associate professor, "is that we found differences between managers and entrepreneurs on four out of the five dimensions. This goes against the conventional wisdom of the field, which had concluded that personality does not contribute to whether people become entrepreneurs. We said that no one has done a really good job at this question, and so we wanted to provide empirical evidence, instead of just argument."

As Drayton's definition foreshadowed, the researchers found that entrepreneurs score higher than managers on conscientiousness, which reflects how motivated people are to achieve their goals. "The entrepreneur simply knows in a very deep way that 'I have got to change the whole society,'" Drayton says.

Entrepreneurs are also more open to experience, which means that they are more curious and creative, and are less neurotic, which means that they are less anxious and hostile and more self-confident and calm.

Entrepreneurs score lower on agreeableness than do managers, however, suggesting that they are less trusting, forgiving, and caring. "This reflects the fact that entrepreneurs are a little manipulative," explains Seibert. "It's not that they're always uncooperative. They just know how to act to achieve their goals."

Managers and entrepreneurs are equally extraverted. Previous research suggests that both groups are more extraverted than the average person, notes Seibert.

He recommends that although personality is hard to change, aspiring entrepreneurs could apply these findings to a "bootstrapping strategy": "If you know what works for entrepreneurs, try to model the behavior yourself," Seibert says. For example, because entrepreneurs are more conscientious, "you can try to do more of the things that conscientious people do – set moderately difficult goals, act responsibly and reliably, have strong moral character, do a lot more forward planning, and strive for feedback," he says.

He also notes that "while certain personality traits may increase your odds of becoming an entrepreneur, they do not determine whether you can be an entrepreneur." Personality comprises only a fraction of the ingredients that go into the making of an entrepreneur. Others include good connections, well-timed chutzpah, and that perennial predictor, dumb luck.

—Alana Conner Snibbe