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What Do Entrepreneurs Actually Do? An Observational Study of Entrepreneurs' Everyday Behavior in the Start-Up and Growth Stages

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In this study, we used the sociological method of structured observation to investigate the everyday behavior of six entrepreneurs in the start-up stage and six entrepreneurs in the growth stage. Our results suggest the existence of both commonalities and differences between these two stages with regard to activities, functions, exploration vs. exploitation, and communication. Building on these detailed observations, we develop a taxonomy specifying the constitutive elements of entrepreneurs' behavior on a continuum that spans from single, discrete actions of entrepreneurs to actions concerning the broader organization.

Entrepreneurs' behavior plays a central role in the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities that fuel the emergence and growth of business ventures. A perspective that provides new insight into the behavior of entrepreneurs in emerging and growing organizations would, therefore, make a significant contribution to the growing field of entrepreneurship. Because of this, several studies of entrepreneurs' behavior have been conducted to date (e.g., Cooper, Ramachandran, & Schoorman, 1997; Corbett, 2005; Lichtenstein, Dooley, & Lumpkin, 2006).

With the notable exception of the Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics (PSED), which captures more than 30 different activities in which entrepreneurs might engage (Reynolds & Curtin, 2010), many of these studies build on self-reports, rely on vague behavioral constructs, or capture only one selected behavior at a time (e.g., planning, registering a business, or acquiring resources). As a result, academic understanding of the nature of entrepreneurs' behaviors remains highly fragmented, and prevents the

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advancement of research on the contributions that specific behaviors can make to the emergence and growth of new business ventures. Along these lines, Bird and Schjoedt remarked that there is "a paucity of empirical research and a lack of conceptual clarity on entrepreneurial behavior" (2009, p. 334).

In light of these challenges, several scholars have, therefore, called for both in-depth studies of entrepreneurs' behavior and the increased use of data collection methods that focus on what entrepreneurs actually do (cf. Gartner, Bird, & Starr, 1992; Gartner, Carter, & Reynolds, 2010; Sarasvathy, 2001). Since entrepreneurs' behavior is crucial to the creation and development of new ventures, it follows that attaining a better understanding of what entrepreneurs actually do would greatly benefit the growing discipline of entrepreneurship.

Interestingly, most research into organizational behavior (what individuals in organizations do, and why they do it) over the past decades has been primarily focused on existing organizations. For example, numerous empirical studies based on participants' observations, critical incidents, personal diaries, interviews, and questionnaires have analyzed the nature of managers' behavior (Kurke & Aldrich, 1983; Mintzberg, 1973; Stewart, 1967). Yet, there are several reasons why the findings documented in the management literature do not necessarily apply to the field of entrepreneurship. First, entrepreneurs' behavior differs fundamentally from behavior within established organizations. Entrepreneurship is a process of "emergence," and emerging organizations are characterized by equivocal realities that the speech and actions of entrepreneurs render unequivocal (Gartner et al., 1992). Entrepreneurs are, therefore, less likely to participate in routine activities, and tend to operate at a faster pace and with greater fragmentation (Casson, 2000). Second, new ventures and established organizations essentially pursue different types of business opportunities. Therefore, the routines and competencies of the entrepreneurs behind genuinely innovative organizations vary significantly from those of managers (Miller, 2003).

To advance academic research on the nature and contributions of entrepreneurs to the emergence and growth of their new business ventures, we identify in this study the constitutive elements of entrepreneurs' everyday behavior pertaining to the start-up and growth phases of a business venture. More specifically, we pose the following research questions: What actions do entrepreneurs perform? What variability exists among start-up stage and growth-stage entrepreneurs? What are the relevant dimensions for capturing and meaningfully interpreting entrepreneurs' behavior? To answer these questions, we utilize structured observation to analyze the behavior of six entrepreneurs in the start-up stage, and that of a further six in the growth stage. In line with Bird (1989), we define entrepreneurs' behavior as the concrete enactment of an individual task or activity required to initiate, grow, or transform a business venture. Entrepreneurs' behavior is, thus, composed of "discrete units of individual activity that can be observed by an 'audience' and that have a meaning that is likely to be shared between actor and audience" (Bird & Schjoedt, 2009, p. 335). Since we are studying entrepreneurs and their behavior, we will speak of "entrepreneurs' behavior" rather than of "entrepreneurial behavior." As Mintzberg (1973) demonstrated, managers can sometimes behave in an entrepreneurial manner, but that is not within the purview of our study.

Theoretical Background

The entrepreneur is the central actor in the creation of a new venture. Although economic circumstances, social networks, and even the assistance of public agencies can

all play an important role in the emergence of new business ventures, it is ultimately the entrepreneur who identifies and shapes a business opportunity, and who must sustain the motivation to persist until the job is done (Shaver & Scott, 1991). Entrepreneurs' behavior is, therefore, essentially rooted in human volition, leading to concrete actions like developing a prototype, registering a business, lodging a patent application, acquiring resources, selling, and so forth. This implies that the overt or covert actions of the individuals who perform the social function of the entrepreneur will be reflected in their behavior.

Past research on entrepreneurs' behaviors proceeded along two main strands. The first strand deals with the multiple activities leading to organizational emergence. The second strand encompasses the set of tasks and roles undertaken during the later stages of a venture. This distinction is supported by empirical research showing that the entrepreneurs' behavior changes over time (e.g., Hambrick & Crozier, 1985; McCarthy, Krueger, & Schoenecker, 1990). It is also consistent with the life cycle theory, which proposes "that businesses tend to operate in some definable state for some period of time," and that "within a specific range of conditions, including industry and market dynamics, these states and their changes may be fairly consistent across firms" (Levie & Lichtenstein, 2010, p. 330). In the following paragraphs, we examine the contributions of each strand.

Behavior of Start-Up Entrepreneurs

Various studies have examined the start-up activities completed by entrepreneurs (Carter, Gartner, & Reynolds, 1996; Reynolds & Miller, 1992). Common start-up activities and behaviors typically include writing a business plan, organizing a start-up team, hiring the first employee, looking for a location, and so on. Among these studies, the PSED is virtually alone in having examined entrepreneurs' actions during the organizing of their businesses by drawing on large random samples (Reynolds & Curtin, 2010). More concretely, the PSED project measures entrepreneurial behavior with a series of potential activities (26 activities in PSED I and 34 in PSED II) that entrepreneurs might perform during the start-up process.

Among the activities most frequently reported were "serious thought given to the start-up," "actually invested own money in the start-up," and "began saving money to invest in the start-up" (Gartner et al., 2010). Using the PSED data, Delmar and Shane (2004) found that completing a business plan and establishing a legal entity both enhance the legitimacy of new ventures, thereby increasing the likelihood that the venture will initiate marketing and promotion, obtain inputs, and talk to customers.

In another longitudinal study, Lichtenstein et al. (2006) drew on a case study to explore, in a broad way, how venture creation activities are undertaken over the entire venture creation process. This approach explored when start-up activities take place, that is, their temporal dynamics. The authors borrowed from the PSED list to identify nine start-up behaviors pertaining to the "tactical organizing" during the business launch. Typical start-up behaviors included investing personal capital, developing a prototype, defining an opportunity, organizing a founding team, forming a legal entity, installing a business phone, purchasing major equipment, opening a bank account, and asking for funding.

Other scholars analyzed entrepreneurs' allocation of time to various activities relying on self-reports. Using the National Federation of Independent Businesses data and taking the preceding 12 months as a reference point, McCarthy et al. (1990) and Cooper et al. (1997) measured behavior by way of the question "Approximately how much of your time is allocated to the following activities?" The survey then listed the following eight activities: dealing with employees, record keeping, selling/customer contacts, production

of products or services, maintenance, dealing with suppliers, arranging financing, and planning.

Behavior of Growth Entrepreneurs

As we noted above, the role and behaviors of entrepreneurs generally evolve as the firm becomes more and more established. For example, Hambrick and Crozier (1985) remarked that as their venture grows beyond the initial team, and evolves into a differentiated and systematic organization, founders can expect important shifts in both their responsibilities and in what they expect of others. Along these lines, Hanks and Chandler (1994) suggested that entrepreneurs focus their attention on product development during the start-up stage, with a shift in priority toward sales and accounting during the growth stage.

For their part, Van de Ven, Hudson, and Schroeder (1984) examined chief executives' allocation of time in a pioneering study comparing six companies in their early stages with six in their later stages of growth. They found that later stage entrepreneurs had a significantly higher level of education, were more experienced, worked harder, and were more deeply involved in both strategic planning and the operational decision-making process. Later stage entrepreneurs also maintained richer and broader networks of ongoing relationships both inside and outside the firm.

Although empirical studies vary greatly in the methods used, they have contributed to identify important differences in the activities and behavioral patterns characterizing the start-up and growth stages (Table 1). During the start-up stage, entrepreneurs focus their attention on the business opportunity they are hoping to capitalize on, as well as on

Table 1

Common Management and Behavioral Patterns Across Life Cycle Stages

	Start-up stage	Growth stage
Churchill and Lewis (1983)	Entrepreneur as a spider in his web	Recruiting professional staff who take on supervisory roles
	Obtaining customers and delivering the product	Marshaling resources to finance rapid growth
Van de Ven et al. (1984)	Entrepreneur works on average 47.7 hours/week	Entrepreneur works on average 63.0 hours/week
	Entrepreneur focus on internal activities (e.g., product development)	Entrepreneur focus on external activities (e.g., strategic alliances and relationships with supplier)
Scott and Bruce (1987)	Obtaining customers	Managing and financing growth
	Economic production	Maintaining control
Kazanjian (1988)	Technology development	Produce, sell and distribute in volume;
Kazanjian and Drazin (1990)	Set up task structure, gearing up for first marketing	overcoming functional crisis; growth related personal problems
Hanks and Chandler (1994)	Broad overlapping roles	Specialized roles
	Specialization limited to research and development, and sales	Additional specialization in manufacturing, marketing, and administrative roles
McCarthy et al. (1990)	Dealing with customers	Dealing with employees, arranging financing, planning future activities
Lichtenstein et al. (2006) for start-up stage Andersson and Tell (2009) for growth stage	Investing personal capital, developing a prototype, defining an opportunity, organizing a founding team, purchasing major equipment, asking for funding	Employee empowerment, strategic management, management of culture and vision, personal networking

concrete start-up activities such as developing a prototype, organizing a founding team, and purchasing major equipment (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). At this stage, acquiring customers and delivering the product contracted to them present the greatest challenges (Churchill & Lewis, 1983). Invariably, the initial product or service has some problems that require the entrepreneurs' attention (Kazanjian, 1988; Kazanjian & Drazin, 1990).

Accordingly, entrepreneurs often take the roles of technical innovators and/or market controllers. Because the size of their firm remains small, the structure of the organization is straightforward, with the entrepreneur taking central stage. Communication proceeds on a face-to-face basis; there are few rules and regulations, and entrepreneurs make decisions quickly and informally. Since staff is minimal, communication partners are often external, and the entrepreneur works closely with suppliers and early adopters to fine-tune their products (Hanks & Chandler, 1994).

As the business expands, the problems shift to managing and financing growth (Churchill & Lewis, 1983; Scott & Bruce, 1987). The production, sale, and volume distribution call for additional specialization in manufacturing, marketing, and administrative roles (Hanks & Chandler, 1994). As such, specialization is a by-product of the entrepreneur's delegation of certain tasks to managers. The transfer of responsibility and control to others goes hand in hand with the establishment of organizational structure, processes, and routines (Churchill & Lewis). Decision making then becomes more formal, involving a clear process and supervisors. The entrepreneur is, therefore, more likely to take on organizational tasks, to coordinate activities, and to engage in building up an efficient system (Scott & Bruce). Similarly, McCarthy et al. (1990) demonstrated that entrepreneurs redistribute their efforts as the business becomes established. For example, later stage entrepreneurs spend more time dealing with employees, planning future activities, and arranging financing, and less time with customers.

All in all, past studies suggest that as their business ventures move beyond the challenges inherent to the start-up phase and begin expanding, founders tend to replace "first-hand direct" activities with managerial ones, whereas the time allocated to other activities (e.g., record keeping, maintenance, and dealing with suppliers) does not significantly change (e.g., McCarthy et al., 1990). It further appears that most of the actions performed by start-up entrepreneurs are open-ended (e.g., defining an opportunity, developing a business plan, building a prototype, obtaining the first customers), and this requires significant chunks of time and a capacity to scan the environment for resources. As the venture grows, the pace of work is likely to increase as entrepreneurs have to deal with an increasing number of subordinates, and coordinate additional activities to produce and distribute in volume.

Nevertheless, empirical studies remain difficult to compare. In addition, most of them fail to make use of the potential of inductive analysis to uncover what constitutes entrepreneurs' behavior in a holistic manner. In order to advance the field and capture the complex phenomenon of the entrepreneur's behavior, Bird and Schjoedt (2009) suggested to clearly define the behavior, and to depart from self-reports and single items. With this study, we aim to provide further insight about what entrepreneurs actually do by observing them directly in their work environment.

Methodology

We used the sociological method of structured observation to capture the nature of the entrepreneur's behavior. Concretely, structured observation makes it possible to identify theoretically meaningful patterns inductively by coupling "the flexibility of open-ended

observation with the discipline of seeking certain types of structured data" (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 231). According to Martinko and Gardner (1985), three commonly accepted criteria distinguish structured observation from other methods: "(a) the method relies on observation by a person other than the subject; (b) the method must rely on the use of category systems; and (c) the method does not use randomized activity sampling procedures" (p. 676). We specifically followed these criteria in the design and execution of our study's methodology, from sampling and data collection procedures to analysis and interpretation.

Sample

We selected a sample of six entrepreneurs in the start-up stage and six entrepreneurs in the growth stage. For both groups, we used purposive sampling procedures—where "a researcher handpicks sample members to conform to some criterion" (Emory & Cooper, 1991, p. 275). Table 2 highlights the criteria we followed, and provides an overview of the selected entrepreneurs and range of industries in which they operated. All sampled entrepreneurs and their firms operate in the German-speaking region of Switzerland, Austria, and Germany.

For the start-up entrepreneurs, we selected founders from a variety of industries whose companies had been incorporated no more than 12 months prior to the observation. For the entrepreneurs in the growth stage, the selection criteria required the entrepreneurs to be both the founder and manager of an established, expanding business. Accordingly, the companies were from 5 to 10 years old at the time of the observation. These growth-phase entrepreneurs were all recipients of the Ernst & Young "Entrepreneur of the Year"—an award for the entrepreneurs behind innovative, high-growth business ventures. The average turnover growth rate over the past 4 years further indicates that their businesses were experiencing substantial growth at the time of our study. Similar to start-up entrepreneurs, growth-oriented entrepreneurs came from a wide range of industries.

Data Collection

We followed the entrepreneurs during 4 days of work each for a total of 542 hours of observation. We asked entrepreneurs to propose 4 days during which we could follow all of their activities. To ensure that the selected days were representative of the entrepreneurs' day-to-day behavior, we asked them to select a set of workdays that were not affected by unusual events. In consequence, the observations were not necessarily made over consecutive days. Data collection took place between January 2009 and March 2011.

The coauthors made all observations directly: One of us would meet with an entrepreneur at his place of work at the beginning of the workday, and followed him for the rest of the day. We recorded every action the entrepreneurs took during their workday using the observation template reproduced in Table 3. This template was inspired by Mintzberg's (1973) pioneering work on managers' work. It included the following seven analytical dimensions: date, starting time, short description of the behavior, participants involved, location, scheduled vs. unscheduled action, and initiator of the action.

Through the course of observation periods, we "shadowed" the entrepreneurs all day long, with the exception of a few highly confidential meetings or work done at home. In the latter cases, we asked the entrepreneurs to record their actions using the observation template. Overall, 98% of the actions were recorded by the coauthors, which accounted for 94% of the working time.

Table 2

Sample Overview

Entrepreneur	Education	Industry	Age of company	Number of employees	Turnover (€) (Ø growth, past 4 years)
Start-up stage					
Entrepreneur 1	Business administration	E-commerce	5 months	9	100,000
Entrepreneur 2	Marketing and design	Catering	3 months	23	n.a
Entrepreneur 3	Business administration	Mobile advertising	7 months	17	n.a
Entrepreneur 4	Engineering	Thermoelectric generators	12 months	7	12,000
Entrepreneur 5	Insurance	Insurance services	4 months	0	0
Entrepreneur 6	Engineering	Instrument for medical technology	8 months	0	0
Growth stage					
Entrepreneur 7	Business administration	Internet services	8 years	165	47 m (8%)
Entrepreneur 8	Pharmacy	Drugstore	5 years	20	2.5 m (38%)
Entrepreneur 9	Business administration	Software	9 years	65	n.a (4%)
Entrepreneur 10	Engineering	Robotic rehabilitation	9 years	104	21 m (16%)
Entrepreneur 11	Agriculture and management	Fencing franchising	10 years	Franchise group: 300	Franchise group: 26 m (28%)
Entrepreneur 12	Engineering	Clean technology	5 years	60	4.8 m (60%)

Table 3

Observation Template With Examples of Actions Recorded

Entrepreneur	Date	Starting Time	Description of action	Participants involved (for direct conversations)	Location	Scheduled action?	Self-initiating of action	Observer did not participate
Entrepreneur 11	January 26, 2009	07:11	Rework product catalogue: Check printing template.	None	Office	No	Yes	
Entrepreneur 8	March 9, 2009	08:04	Briefing with employees: Each employee states the most relevant events of the previous week.	All employees from pharmacy	Pharmacy	No	Yes	
Entrepreneur 9	March 26, 2009	11:00	Calls head of sales and discusses a letter to the shareholders.	None	Office	No	Yes	
Entrepreneur 6	March 10, 2011	13:34	Fine-tuning of machine to be delivered next day.	None	Lab	No	Yes	
Entrepreneur 7	March 17, 2009	15:02	Videoconference with subsidiary in Boston: review of monthly sales.	1 person in Germany, 3 persons in the United States	Videoconference-room	Yes	Yes	

Throughout our data collection procedures, we attempted to identify the basic units of action performed by entrepreneurs. In other words, we anchored an entrepreneur's behavior at the "atomic" level. We used Newtson's (1973) break points—moments in which the physical features of an action are changing—in order to identify individual forms of the entrepreneurs' behavior. Typically, a new action began whenever the location, the medium of communication, the individuals present, or the focus of the action changed. In total, our observations include 4,479 units of action.

Data Analysis

Having created a database from the recorded actions, the three coauthors devised further categories depicting the nature of entrepreneurs' behavior using an inductive and iterative process. We articulated this process in three main steps:

1. *Reaching an understanding of categories needed to capture the entrepreneurs' behavior.* At this stage, we developed a series of categories to aggregate the data in a meaningful way. We identified six relevant categories; three of them captured the actions' *content* (i.e., activities, functions, and exploration vs. exploitation), and three captured their communication aspects (i.e., communication status, communication partner, and media). We subsequently defined appropriate subcategories (e.g., marketing, sales, and PR as a constitutive element of the category "function"). Subcategories can, thus, be defined as the specifications within a certain category. We explain each of these categories in more detail below.

The category "activities" tries to capture the entrepreneurs' action without interpreting the *purpose* of the behavior from an organizational perspective. The subcategories were inductively developed based on the recorded actions. Unlike the PSED and other past studies, we did not use a predefined set of activities. However, the level of abstraction is comparable with Fayol's (1916) management tasks (forecasting, planning, organizing, etc.).

The category "function" differentiates the actions according to their organizational context. The subcategories encompass functions as they appear in entrepreneurship textbooks (e.g., Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2008) or in organizational structures (Carroll & Gillen, 1987). Some of the functions show resemblance to the categories used by Cooper et al. (1997). Yet, as with the "activity" codes above, we did not devise the functions subcategories with a predefined set but derived them inductively, directly from our observations.

The category "exploration versus exploitation" stems from the literature on ambidexterity, that is, the capacity to simultaneously explore and exploit (e.g., Gupta, Smith, & Shalley, 2006; March, 1991; Simsek, 2009). Although ambidexterity has mainly been analyzed in the context of larger organizations, the concept seems to be an essential element of entrepreneurship. Shane and Venkataraman (2000, p. 218) defined entrepreneurship as "the processes of discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate, and exploit them." Similarly, Kuckertz, Kohtamäki, and Droege (2010) remarked that the description "entrepreneurial behaviour" is only justified when exploration *and* exploitation come together. Accordingly, it seemed theoretically and practically relevant to examine the nature of the entrepreneurs' behavior along these lines.

The three communication categories are drawn from Mintzberg's (1973) contact record. Mintzberg also looked at the communication partner and the media used by the observed managers. Of course, we had to adjust the subcategories of media to today's

communication tools. Table 4 provides an overview of the categories and subcategories used in our analysis.

2. *Coding procedures and assessment of reliability.* The three researchers independently completed a series of five rounds of coding, each of them comprising 100 units of action (i.e., each action was coded along the six categories). Between each round, we met to discuss coding discrepancies, and if necessary, to clarify or amend the categories and subcategories. During this process of "coding-feedback-change," we therefore coded a total of 500 actions (representing 10% of all recorded actions) independent of one another, reaching an interrater reliability of 85%.

3. *Final coding.* Having refined the specifications of each coding categories, we proceeded to code all remaining observations. To ensure consistency, two separate authors coded each unit of activity: the author who conducted the observations, and a second one who was not present during the observation. The authors discussed all coded discrepancies until they reached agreement.

Given the small number of observed entrepreneurs, we could not meet the normality assumption. We, therefore, used the Mann–Whitney *U*-test to analyze the difference between entrepreneurs in the start-up stage and entrepreneurs in the growth stage. Mann–Whitney *U* is the most powerful (or sensitive) nonparametric alternative to the *t*-test for independent samples (Hill & Lewicki, 2006, p. 389).

Findings

In this section, we present the results with regard to the workload, frequency of actions, work content, and usage of communication and media. Tables 5 and 6 provide more details on entrepreneurs' time allotment to the different categories of actions.

Working Hours and Duration of Activities

The start-up entrepreneurs in our sample had longer working hours than growth-stage entrepreneurs: On average, 11.8 hours per day for the former and 10.6 hours for the latter. Given the small sample size and large within-group variance, however, this 1.2-hour difference was not statistically significant. Nevertheless, the long working hours confirm the picture of start-up entrepreneurs propagated by the popular media.

Across both samples, entrepreneurs' work was characterized by brevity and high levels of fragmentation. On average, start-up entrepreneurs performed 90.6 actions per day, whereas growth entrepreneurs performed 94.8 actions per day. For both groups, most actions lasted less than 5 minutes. For start-up entrepreneurs, 63% of all activities took 5 minutes or less (accounting for 19% of their working time). The percentage was even higher for later stage entrepreneurs (with 70% of their actions lasting 5 minutes or less, accounting for 24% of their working time).

Entrepreneurs in our sample often engaged in short, sporadic actions that change in an abrupt, sometimes unpredictable manner. Two minutes of deskwork are interrupted by 1 minute of phone calls, which is followed by a 30-second unscheduled meeting, then 5 minutes responding to an e-mail. These observations depart substantially from research on managers' behavior, where lower numbers of activities were observed. For example, Mintzberg (1973) reported 22 activities, Kurke and Aldrich (1983) reported 35 activities, Florén and Tell (2003) reported 57 activities, and O'Gorman, Bourke, and Murray (2005) reported 35 activities.

Table 4

Categories and Subcategories—Work Content

Categories	Definition	Examples
Activities	Captures what the entrepreneurs do without interpreting the purpose or the content of the actions	
Exchanges information and opinion	General exchange of information to keep up to date, or inform others about current tasks, issues, project status	Reading incoming e-mails, sending e-mails, talking about a customer interaction with cofounder
Directs	Actions related to directing and giving orders to employees	Asking secretary to copy a certain document, telling external service provider what needs to be done, delegating a task
Consults and sells	Actions related to consulting or selling to (potential) customers, partners, or investors	Calls a (potential) customer; sends an e-mail to a potential customer
Works analytically and conceptually	Actions related to conceptual or analytical work (alone or with others) and actions related to the executing of a task	Updating the business plan, writing an offer, conducting Internet research, writing a protocol, placing an order in the system
Networks and maintains relationships	Actions related to the development and nurturing of relationships with colleagues and business partners	Having a coffee with employees, having lunch with other entrepreneurs, socializing via Facebook or Skype
Monitors and controls	Activities related to monitoring and controlling work processes and results	Asking employees about status of their work, testing the functionality of the company's website, checking prices in a product catalogue
Organizes and coordinates	Organization and coordination of meetings, tasks, and own work	Updating to-do list, organizing folders and documents; scheduling a meeting with employees; printing a document; capacity planning
Functions	Differentiates the actions according to their organizational context	
Administration	Actions related to administrative and supporting processes of the company	Checking e-mails, filing, scheduling meetings, fixing IT problems, self-organizing, discussing filing system with secretary
Environmental monitoring	Actions related to keeping up to date in the own field and adjoining areas by targeted information research or undirected approaches	Reading blogs, discussing a possible cooperation with a business partner, having lunch with business partner
Purchasing	Actions related to purchasing needed material for the production of goods and services, or operating the business in general	Purchasing office supplies, purchasing a car for the vehicle park, renting or negotiating office space, buying medications for the pharmacy
Controlling and finance	Actions related to financing the venture, securing current cash flows, and monitoring financial data	Preparing a presentation for investors, reviewing financial statements, invoicing
Marketing, sales, and PR	Actions related to selling products and services	Meeting with clients, calling (potential) customers, updating the company's website, writing an offer for participating in a tender
Business and organizational development	Actions related to the strategic development of the company, company growth, and adaptation of corporate structures and responsibilities	Talking to partners about outsourcing administrative processes, opening a subsidiary, adapting the organizational chart
Production of goods and services	Actions related to the production of products or the supply of services	Making of a product catalogue (in the case of a franchisor), coordinating a delivery (in the case of a catering company)
Human resources and employee relations	Actions related to the recruitment, organization, development, and compensation of human resources and maintaining good employee relations	Conducting a recruitment interview, job performance review, having lunch with employees, personnel evaluation meeting
Product development	Actions related to the development and improvement of products and services	Discussing progress on prototype development, discussing new offers with cofounder or employees, patent investigations
Exploration and exploitation		
Exploration	Actions related to searching, recognizing, exploring, and enacting opportunities	Working on the software for a prototype, talking about internationalizing the business with cofounder, setting up a subsidiary
Exploitation	Actions related to the implementation and execution of existing opportunities	Choosing a software to increase productivity, checking e-mails, talking to investors, selling products to existing customers
Travel times	Travel time that is not used for any other purpose	

Private actions and researcher interactions were not attributed to any dimension and were not counted as working time.

Table 5

Entrepreneurs' Workload, Actions per Day and Time Allocation to Activities, Functions, and Exploration vs. Exploitation

	Start-up entrepreneurs		Growth entrepreneurs		Mann–Whitney *U*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*z*	*p*
# working hours per day	11.8	3.65	10.6	1.27	−1.281	.240
# actions per day	90.6	46.52	94.8	25.98	−.160	.937
Activities						
Exchanges information and opinions	36%	18%	54%	14%	−1.607	.132
Works analytically and conceptually	28%	11%	12%	8%	−2.166	**.026**
Networks and maintains relationships	10%	12%	9%	3%	−1.061	.310
Organizes and coordinates	11%	5%	7%	4%	−1.125	.310
Directs	4%	2%	8%	4%	−1.851	.065
Monitors and controls	5%	4%	5%	4%	−.081	.937
Consults and sells	3%	3%	4%	7%	−1.006	.394
Travel times	2%	2%	2%	2%	−.341	.818
Functions						
Human resources and employee relations	16%	10%	20%	7%	−0.968	0.394
Marketing, sales, and PR	14%	4%	18%	6%	−1.044	0.310
Product development	21%	15%	9%	6%	−1.524	0.132
Administration	14%	4%	14%	5%	0.000	1.000
Controlling and finance	13%	7%	8%	8%	−1.286	0.240
Environmental monitoring	11%	6%	5%	3%	−2.009	**0.041**
Production of goods and services	2%	2%	12%	17%	−0.499	0.699
Business and organizational development	2%	2%	8%	5%	−2.108	**0.041**
Purchasing	5%	4%	5%	5%	−0.322	0.818
Travel times	2%	2%	2%	2%	−0.167	0.937
Exploration and exploitation						
Exploration	33%	20%	22%	8%	−1.604	.132
Exploitation	65%	20%	77%	8%	−1.524	.132
Travel times	2%	2%	2%	2%	−.167	.937

SD, standard deviation.

We acknowledge that comparisons with previous studies are difficult, not least because of the definition of what constitutes an action or an activity. Nevertheless, we observe that one possible explanation for the brevity we observed could be the absence of a gatekeeper preventing interruptions from employees who needed to clarify issues or ask for information. Interruptions were especially prevalent when the entrepreneur had an open-door policy, or shared his office with other employees. Another reason for the extreme brevity was entrepreneurs' use of new media technologies. Each received or sent e-mail, each SMS, and each Skype call constituted a new action, and therefore increased work pace. All in all then, we are not claiming that the work of entrepreneurs is characterized by more or less brevity and fragmentation than that of other professionals, as we solely observed entrepreneurs.

Finding 1: The job of the observed start-up and growth entrepreneurs was characterized by both brevity and fragmentation.

Table 6

Entrepreneurs' Time Allocation to Communication, Communication Partners, and Media

	Start-up entrepreneurs		Growth entrepreneurs		Mann–Whitney *U*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	*z*	*p*
Communication status						
Communication	64%	22%	82%	8%	–2.089	**0.041**
No communication	34%	21%	17%	8%	–2.166	**0.026**
Travel times	2%	2%	2%	2%	–.167	0.937
Communication partner						
Internal communication partners	29%	17%	56%	24%	–2.242	**0.026**
External communication partners	31%	12%	22%	14%	–1.203	0.240
Unspecified communication partner	4%	2%	3%	3%	–0.736	0.485
No communication	34%	21%	17%	22%	–2.166	**0.026**
Travel times	2%	2%	2%	2%	–0.167	0.937
Media						
Face-to-face communication	28%	20%	53%	21%	–1.925	0.065
E-mail	22%	13%	11%	9%	–1.774	0.093
Telephone	7%	3%	14%	10%	–1.446	0.180
Other media	7%	7%	3%	4%	–0.830	0.485
No communication	34%	21%	17%	8%	–2.166	**0.026**
Travel times	2%	2%	2%	2%	–0.167	0.937

SD, standard deviation.

Activities

We used the category "activity" to capture the entrepreneurs' action without interpreting the purpose of the behavior from an organizational perspective. We found that the observed start-up entrepreneurs allocated their time on two main activities: exchanging information and opinions (36%), and working analytically and conceptually (28%). Taken together, these activities accounted for 64% of the start-up entrepreneurs' time on average. The dominance of these two activities was also prevalent on an individual level: All early-stage entrepreneurs spent at least 16% of their time exchanging information and opinions, and 17% working analytically and conceptually.

Entrepreneurs in the growth stage spent most of their time exchanging information and opinions (54% on average). Analytical and conceptual work had the second highest mean, albeit with a much lower percentage value (12% on average). Interestingly, we noted that for three of the six growth-stage entrepreneurs, this latter category of activity was not very prevalent as it accounted only for 8%, 6%, and 4% of their time, respectively. Evidence, thus, suggests that analytical and conceptual work is not a core activity for this subsample of growth entrepreneurs. Indeed, this difference between the start-up and growth entrepreneurs is statistically significant; start-up entrepreneurs in our sample spent significantly more time than their growth counterparts working analytically and conceptually ($z = -2.166$, $p < 0.05$).

Finding 2: Our early-stage entrepreneurs focused on two core activities: working analytically and conceptually, and exchanging information and opinions. Only the latter was a core activity for growth-stage entrepreneurs in our sample. Start-up entrepreneurs in our sample spent significantly more time working analytically and conceptually than growth entrepreneurs did.

Functions

Start-up entrepreneurs in our sample spent most of their time on the following six functions: product development (21%); human resources and employee relations (16%); marketing, sales, and PR (14%); administration (14%); controlling and finance (13%); and environmental monitoring (11%). Together, the time allocated to these functions accounted for 89% of their work time. At least four out of six entrepreneurs spent at least 10% of their time on each of these functions. The prevalence of product development during the start-up phase supports the findings of Hanks and Chandler (1994).

By comparison, growth-stage entrepreneurs in our sample allocated the majority of their time on the following three functions: human resources and employee relations (20%); marketing, sales, and PR (18%); and administration (14%). Together, these functions account for 52% of the growth-stage entrepreneurs' time. All six growth-stage entrepreneurs spent at least 10% of their time to each of the functions, with the exception of administration where this was the case for five out of six entrepreneurs. Although production of goods and services accounted for 12% on average, this result derives from two outliers, who respectively spent 22% and 41% of their time on this function. As such, it thus does not appear that production activities are consistently important functions across growth-stage entrepreneurs.

All in all, our observations indicate that growth-stage entrepreneurs appear to spend less time on core functions compared with early-stage entrepreneurs. On the one hand, three functions were relevant for the majority of entrepreneurs in both groups: human resources and employee relations; marketing, sales, and PR; and administration. Yet, our analyses revealed two statistically significant differences between the two groups: Start-up entrepreneurs appear to spend significantly more time on environmental monitoring (11% vs. 5%; $z = -2.009$, $p < 0.05$), while later stage entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on business development (8% vs. 2%; $z = -2.108$, $p < 0.05$). Environmental monitoring appears to be even more prevalent for companies in their start-up phase as they still have to scan the environment for opportunities. Conversely, organizational development actions are more prevalent in growing ventures where the entrepreneurs have to adjust the organizational structure while pursuing further business opportunities. Taken together, these observations point toward the following finding:

Finding 3: Both start-up and growth entrepreneurs focused their actions primarily on three core functions (human resources and employee relations; marketing, sales, and PR; and administration). By comparison, start-up entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on environmental monitoring, whereas later stage entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on business development.

Exploitation vs. Exploration

March (1991, p. 71) defined exploitation activities as concerned with "refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation and execution"; this is in contrast with exploration activities, which involve "search, variation, risk-taking,

experimentation, discovery and innovation" (March, p. 71). In this vein, we categorized actions taken to run or improve existing business operations as "exploitation." Such actions included time spent with administrative tasks, actions taken to increase efficiency, or maintaining relationships with employees. In contrast, we categorized actions taken to explore or develop new business options as "exploration" (e.g., product development, meetings to discuss new business options, opening a new subsidiary).

As shown in Table 5, entrepreneurs in our study tended to allocate more time for exploitation (65% in the start-up stage and 77% in the growth stage) than exploration (33% in the start-up stage and 22% in the growth stage). The difference between the two subsamples was not statistically significant. Interestingly, we observed considerable variance among the early stage entrepreneurs in their time allocation toward explorative and exploitative activities. For example, some early-stage entrepreneurs kept working on their prototype and developing different types of partnerships after the business had been registered, while others had a finished product and already identified their main business partners. These exceptions, notwithstanding our observations, point toward the following finding.

Finding 4: Although entrepreneurs in the start-up phase might exhibit more variance in their pursuit of exploration activities, the vast majority of the actions performed by both start-up and growth entrepreneurs in our sample were related to exploitation.

Communication

As we explained above, we devised three categories to describe the observed actions in terms of communication: communication status (whether or not the entrepreneurs communicate at all), communication partner (internal, external, unspecified), and media (e-mail, telephone, other media).

We observed that most actions performed by the entrepreneurs required some sort of communication (synchronous or asynchronous, one-to-one or one-to-many, face-to-face or via a media). We found that 64% of the working time of the start-up entrepreneurs in our sample was spent on communication activities. The percentage was significantly higher for the entrepreneurs in the growth stage ($z = -2.089$, $p < 0.05$): 82% of their working time entailed some form of communication. These results are consistent with O'Gorman et al. (2005), who reported that growth-oriented small and medium-sized enterprise managers spend 78% of their time communicating with others.

Finding 5a: Both start-up and growth-stage entrepreneurs in our sample spent the majority of their working time communicating with others. For growth-stage entrepreneurs, the percentage of time spent on communication was significantly higher compared with early-stage entrepreneurs.

Interestingly, 29% of start-up entrepreneurs spent their time communicating with individuals within the organization, while 31% of their working time was spent communicating with external partners. Our start-up entrepreneurs communicated mostly face-to-face (28%), followed by e-mail (22%), telephone (7%), and other media (7%).

For their part, entrepreneurs in the growth stage spent 56% of their working time communicating with internal communication partners, and 22% communicating with external communication partners. In terms of media, face-to-face communication dominated (53%), followed by telephone (14%), e-mail (11%), and other media (3%).

In terms of analysis, we only found one statistically significant difference between the two subsamples. Growth-stage entrepreneurs in our sample spent significantly more time communicating with internal communication partners than start-up entrepreneurs

($z = -2.242$, $p < 0.05$). This result is consistent with McCarthy et al. (1990), who found that later-stage entrepreneurs spend more time on activities related to "dealing with employees."

Finding 5b: Growth-stage entrepreneurs in our sample spent significantly more time on communicating with internal communication partners than start-up entrepreneurs do.

Discussion

What do entrepreneurs actually do? This study provides insight about entrepreneurs' everyday behavior in their work environment. Although our results indicate a great variance in the allocation of time and behavior observed, we could identify some commonalities and significant differences between start-up and growth entrepreneurs. In addition, our results suggest that there are different levels to capture and interpret entrepreneurs' behavior in a meaningful, comprehensive way. These levels can form the base of a taxonomy to capture entrepreneurs' behavior.

Variance in Time Allocation

We noticed large differences regarding how the entrepreneurs allocate their time to exploitation vs. exploration actions, functions, and activities. One explanation for this heterogeneity could be related to the very nature of the job of the entrepreneur. In her seminal study of how managers allocate their time, Stewart (1967) found that while the organization and the individual played a role in time allocation, the most important factor was the managers' job. Managers with similar job descriptions often allocate their time in comparable patterns. None of our entrepreneurs had a job description. Accordingly, we believe that entrepreneurs can fashion their jobs around the current needs of their company and their personal preferences.

In addition, entrepreneurs enjoy a high level of autonomy. The rather large proportion of self-initiated actions supports this. For example, the six later-stage entrepreneurs in our sample initiated more than 80% of the actions by themselves. Similarly, Florén and Tell (2003, p. 7) found that owner–managers in small firms "acted in six out of ten cases on their own initiative." Therefore, it is difficult to speak of *the* entrepreneur's job. We believe that it is this high level of autonomy that causes the high variance within our two subsamples.

Commonalities and Key Differences Between Start-Up and Growth Entrepreneurs

The entrepreneurs' behaviors in our sample were characterized by key commonalities and differences between the start-up stage and the growth stage. The common patterns included high pace and fragmentation of the work, a focus on exploitative tasks, and a high proportion of working time spent on communicating with others. We also found commonalities with regard to functions and activities. Three core functions (human resources and employee relations; marketing, sales, and PR; and administration) and one core activity (exchanges of information and opinions) were prevalent for the majority of start-up and growth-stage entrepreneurs in our sample.

However, we observed that the nature of the actions pertaining to the same function could evolve. For example, in the case of marketing and sales, start-up entrepreneurs were often drafting their product leaflet and acquiring customers themselves with numerous calls, e-mails, and sale pitches, while later-stage entrepreneurs were reviewing sales material prepared by their staff, participating in marketing and sales meeting, and coordinating activities with their marketing and sales staff. Similarly, administrative activities were also relevant for both groups, however with a completely different character. For early-stage entrepreneurs, administration was often linked to elementary actions, such as drafting a contract for an intern or amending the businesses website. For later-stage entrepreneurs, administration involved instead the coordination of tasks with other people or organizing their personal "to-do list," while standard workflows were taken care by employees.

Five key differences emerged when comparing start-up with growth entrepreneurs. At the activity level, start-up entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on analytical and conceptual work. At the function level, start-up entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on environmental monitoring, while growth entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on business and organizational development. Finally, growth entrepreneurs spent significantly more time communicating with others, and their communication involved internal partners more often. These differences reveal a broadly logical pattern of organizational evolution.

During the start-up stage, the firm employs few staff (the biggest start-up in our sample had 23 staff) and the organization is straightforward. Kazanjian (1988) suggested that firms at this stage focus on problems associated with resource acquisition and technology development. The acquisition of such resource (e.g., financing, information, talents, identification of potential suppliers, and development partners), together with the fine-tuning of initial products and services, tends to require some conceptual work. For example, one of the start-up entrepreneurs we observed was working over several days on the development of the technology to manufacture a first series of his product. Others were updating presentations for investors to obtain further funding or to obtain the commitment of a business partner. At the same time, start-up entrepreneurs in our sample spent a considerable amount of time monitoring the environment to keep up with trends and market development.

As the business grows, entrepreneurs' leadership behavior entails pursuing new opportunities and enabling the organization to transform its transactions sets (Venkataraman & Van de Ven, 1998). Accordingly, firms in the growth stage will be more likely to deal with "sales growth, market share growth, and internal organization mechanisms" (Kazanjian, 1988, p. 267). Thus, the task of an entrepreneur is not only to add new products to the portfolio but also to adapt the organization's structure in order to respond to internal (e.g., a growing number of employees, span of control) and external constraints (e.g., meeting customer demand, entering a new market) (Churchill & Lewis, 1983).

This need to adapt organizational structure was also shared by the later-stage entrepreneurs in our sample who spent significantly more time on business and organizational development than start-up entrepreneurs. This involved, for example, talking to partners about outsourcing administrative processes, opening new subsidiaries, internationalizing the business, implementing a knowledge management system, and adapting the organizational chart.

Similarly, interaction and communication processes with an ever-bigger team play an important role as the business grows. In this vein, Van de Ven et al. (1984) remarked that later-stage entrepreneurs maintain a richer, broader, and more complex network of ongoing relationships with people both within and outside the firm. We found such a

characterization among the later-stage entrepreneurs we observed. They spent significantly more time on communication, and the time spent communicating with internal partners was nearly double as much as for early-stage entrepreneurs. In addition, face-to-face communication played an important role for later-stage entrepreneurs. In order to share their vision and maintain alignment with their employees, communication behavior eliciting involvement and participation appeared crucial for growth entrepreneurs.

Toward a Taxonomy of Entrepreneurs' Behavior

One of the key challenges in studying organizational behavior is determining the appropriate dimensions for capturing the behavior (e.g., a puzzle of the same picture can be broken down in say 10 or 100 pieces) and explaining how these dimensions fit together (the pieces of the puzzle, when assembled, must re-situate a picture that can be understood). In this respect, partonomic and taxonomic structures can help us determine the appropriate size or "chunk" of behavior that is meaningful and useful for research. Zacks and Tversky (2001) suggested that actions and events, like objects, could be regarded as organized into partonomic hierarchies, reflecting "part of" relations, or into taxonomic hierarchies, reflecting "kind of" relations.

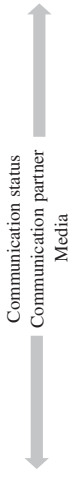
In Table 7, we present the taxonomy that we developed during the course of our study and that contains the constitutive elements of the entrepreneurs' behavior. The behavior is described on a continuum ranging from the basic, atomic level to the superordinate, galactic level, with different intermediary levels (molecular and molar levels).

At the atomic level, an action is defined as a discrete unit of individual activity. It constitutes the smallest element of behavior that can be observed by an audience. At the molecular level, the activity captures what the entrepreneurs are doing without

Table 7

Taxonomy of Entrepreneurs' Behavior

Level	Label	Definition	Subcategory
Galactic	Form	Actions taken to increase efficiency and productivity through choice, execution, and variance reduction (exploitation) vs. actions taken to search, experiment, increase variation (exploration)	Exploitation (chooses software to increase productivity; resolves problems occurring in existing business activities) vs. exploration (develops a new product line, seeks to internationalize activities)
Molar	Function	Differentiates the actions according to their organizational context	Human resources and employee relations; marketing, sales and PR; product development; administration; controlling and finance; environmental monitoring; production of goods and services; business and organizational development; purchasing
Molecular	Activity	Captures what the entrepreneurs were doing without interpreting the purpose or the content of the actions	Exchanges information and opinions; works analytically and conceptually; networks and maintains relationships; organizes and coordinates; directs, monitors, and controls; consults and sells
Atomic	Action	Discrete units of individual activity that can be observed by an audience	Writes an e-mail to a supplier, reads a report, prepares slides for sales pitch, visits a client, meets with sales manager, etc.



interpreting the purpose of the actions in relation to organizing. At the molar level, the function differentiates the actions according to their organizational context. At the galactic level, we draw on March's (1991) seminal work to operate a distinction between exploitation and exploration—two fundamental forms of organizational behavior.

The communication is an underlying element in the taxonomy: All levels can imply some form of communication. We used three categories to describe the entrepreneur's actions in terms of communication: the communication status (whether or not the entrepreneur communicated at all), the type of communication partners (internal vs. external partners), and the media (face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, and other media).

This taxonomy could serve as a framework to clarify, differentiate, and structure entrepreneurs' behavior. For example, the development of a prototype is a relatively discrete and observable action at the atomic level. At a molecular level, this action entails, for example, that the entrepreneur works conceptually (as he draws the prototype on his computer) or that he exchanges information with a supplier providing components. At a molar level, this action relates to product development. At galactic level, this action is fundamentally of an explorative nature since it deals with searching and experimenting.

Conclusion

The entrepreneur is a central actor of any new and growing business venture. In this study, we used the sociological method of structured observation to capture everyday behavior of entrepreneurs during the start-up and growth stages. We posit that the behavior is anchored in the actions of the entrepreneurs, and pertains to the enactment process underlying the launch and expansion of a venture. We believe that this study makes two important contributions to the literature.

First, we provide an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of entrepreneurs' behaviors in the start-up and growth stages. Our results suggest the existence of both commonalities and differences between these two stages. Commonalities between the two groups included a high pace and fragmentation of the work, a focus on exploitative tasks, and the considerable time spent on communication with others. In addition, three functions (human resources and employee relations; marketing, sales, and PR; and administration) and one core activity (exchanges information and opinions) were also prevalent for the majority of start-up and growth-stage entrepreneurs in our sample.

Five key differences emerged when comparing start-up with growth entrepreneurs. Overall, these differences reveal a fairly logical pattern of organizational evolution, and they match the characterizations of the life cycle literature (Churchill & Lewis, 1983; Hanks, Watson, Jansen, & Chandler, 1993; Kazanjian, 1988). At the activity level, start-up entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on analytical and conceptual work. At the function level, start-up entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on environmental monitoring, while growth entrepreneurs spent significantly more time on business and organizational development. Finally, growth entrepreneurs spent significantly more time communicating with others, and this communication involved primarily internal partners. Overall, these patterns clearly confirm a switch from "doing" to "managing" (McCarthy et al., 1990).

The second contribution of the study is the derived taxonomy itself. This taxonomy presents a picture of the constitutive elements of entrepreneurs' behavior on a continuum ranging from the basic, atomic level to the superordinate, galactic level, with different intermediary levels. By examining the actual actions of entrepreneurs in their natural (organizational) environment and by specifying the crucial structural components of these

behaviors, we follow Venkataraman, Sarasvathy, Dew, and Forster's call to "open up a research agenda that can tackle issues that span micro and macro levels of analysis" (2012, p. 29). Therefore, our taxonomy could help researchers clarify the "chunk" of behavior they are studying, and link this behavior to some organizational dimensions and possibly performance indicators. The adoption of this taxonomy by other researchers could help compare studies and develop a critical mass of observation about entrepreneurs' behavior.

Our study also has interesting implications for practice. In this regard, we noted that the entrepreneurs in our sample greatly appreciated having the opportunity to reflect about their behavior and to compare their allocation of time with other entrepreneurs. As a result, they got further insights about the nature of their job. Interestingly, a few of them told us that after they were confronted with the results, they had changed their behavior by establishing new priorities and/or delegating additional tasks (one entrepreneur even hired a chief executive officer for the existing business in order to focus on new opportunities). The replication of this study could help entrepreneurs compare their allocation of time with that of their peers from the same industry. The freedom to set own priorities was considered as a positive issue by the observed entrepreneurs—but also as a challenge. Accordingly, a self-assessment tool and benchmarks would add real value for entrepreneurs, especially if some performance measures are included.

It should be recognized that there are a number of limitations to this research, many of which suggest further opportunities for research. One limitation of this contribution is related to the small sample size, which constrains the generalization of the results. Therefore, we are not claiming that our observations are typical of entrepreneurs everywhere. A second limitation is the limited duration of the observations we conducted. Although we collected our data over 4—not necessarily consecutive—days, our study gives a minor consideration to the influence of time. A third limitation is that we observed solely entrepreneurs, and we did not contrast their behavior with other individuals. It is possible that other professionals share some elements of entrepreneurs' behavior we identified (e.g., the high pace and fragmentation of activities, or the combination of exploration and exploitation).

We hope that our research is followed by more empirical studies focusing on entrepreneurs' work. We call for in-depth ethnographic case studies where researchers could monitor the actions of entrepreneurs over a longer period of time. Also, our research provided evidence that one key activity of entrepreneurs revolves around interaction and communication with a network of others. It would, therefore, be of interest to gain further insight in the role set of the entrepreneurs—the different people with whom the entrepreneur has contact, who hold expectations about and have a stake in the entrepreneur's performance in the job (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Finally, observational studies including serial entrepreneurs would be beneficial. If the variations between the behaviors of serial entrepreneurs are smaller compared with first-time entrepreneurs, we might be able to identify action patterns linked to the entrepreneurs' success, something that would be extremely valuable to entrepreneurs.

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