

The Influence of Entrepreneurs' Behaviors and Decisions on Operating Structures

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[Abstract] The intent of this qualitative study was to identify how entrepreneurs experience the implementation of operating systems and how their leadership and decision-making influence the adoption of tools. Semi-structured interviews and personality surveys were used to gather data about founders' experiences adopting a structured system. The research revealed influencing factors about when the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) is selected as the framework and how the founding Visionary's experiences and traits impact the organizational construct. The findings indicated that trust was a significant influential factor that needs to be evident in all facets of the operations for effective EOS implementation which can help nurture a strong foundation for company development.

Understanding the factors influencing adoption of structures, such as EOS, can assist entrepreneurs in establishing effective systems and tools. Specifically, it brings perspective to founders, small business investors, consultants, advisors and EOS stakeholders in understanding why any factors impacting a founder's control and flexibility in running the business become critical decision points for entrepreneurs. The perceived rigid structure and purist teachings of some operating frameworks, such as EOS Worldwide, can create friction with common traits found in Visionaries. The findings reveal how EOS may be more effective when tools are thoughtfully flexed by the Visionary and Integrator within boundaries to meet the needs of the company.

[Keywords] entrepreneurial operating system, EOS, founder, leadership behavior, trust, visionary, integrator

Introduction

Small businesses and entrepreneurs have a positive impact on economies promoting innovation and change (Taneja, Pryor, Hayek, 2016). Worldwide there are over 200 million micro and small businesses which make up 95% of all employer firms, accounting for almost 70% of employment (Punjwani & Campbell, 2024). Entrepreneurs can struggle with many challenges including financial constraints, marketing complexities and tech hurdles potentially exasperated by lack of access to specialized skillsets (Sapna, 2024). To continue evolving, companies need to find a balance between visionary leadership and effective management (Nakitende, 2024).

Some business challenges can be addressed by implementing operating processes. There are different methods that can be applied to define and operationalize the who, what, how and why of a business (Gassmann et al., 2020). A founder will choose a framework or operating management practice with the promise that it will deliver an efficient structure for its company resources, eliminate waste and be a planning guide. The perceived effectiveness of an operating system or lean tools is influenced by how well it is implemented This is often at the direction of the founder and can be influenced by many factors.

The Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) was the framework of choice for this research. EOS is a structured operating system designed for companies with 10 – 250 team members (Wickman & Bower, 2017). EOS is a compilation of tools and processes which provide a well-defined structure facilitating clarity for all team members about the entrepreneur's vision which promotes clear direction (Wickman & Bower, 2017). An entrepreneur's leadership behavior and decision-making styles are critical factors that will directly influence how much or how well EOS organization constructs and processes are implemented.

Wickman and Winters (2015) identify common challenges Visionaries experience in their organizations including dysfunction due to lack of openness, underdeveloped leaders and managers, lack of patience and organizational whiplash driven by a tendency to get bored easily. This research fills a gap in understanding what leadership behaviors and decision-making processes of entrepreneurs determine the level of adoption of EOS organization constructs and tools. This explores how entrepreneurs experience structure and factors that influence the effectiveness of frameworks. This research identified key traits and actions to maximize the value of operating frameworks such as EOS in small companies.

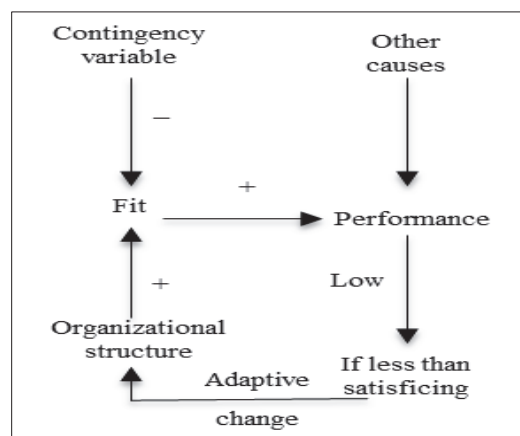
Literature Review

An entrepreneur's environment includes numerous internal and external variables which can influence their decision making. The contingency theory in organizational research indicates that there is no one optimized way of organizing a company because it is dependent on several characteristics of the environment (Donaldson, 2001). The fluid state of an entrepreneurial business drives the constant need to adapt its structure. Environmental dynamism is the unpredicted rate of change in an industry which can impact an entrepreneur's resources in numerous ways (Hmieleski et al., 2015). Donaldson's (2001) SARFIT (structural adaptation to regain fit) model submits that an organizational structure fluidly changes when performance indicates that it no longer is a fit for the how the contingency variables changed.

Figure 1 depicts the model showing the flow of change. In selecting operating frameworks, an entrepreneur may benefit from adopting a system that can adapt and change with the needs of the organization while maintaining its structural integrity and intended value purpose.

Figure 1

The Contingency Theory of Structural Adaptation to Regain Fit (SARFIT)



Note. SARFIT model of contingency theory from *The Contingency Theory of Organizations* by L. Donaldson, 2001. Copyright 2001 by Sage Publications, Inc.

Donaldson's (2001) SARFIT model depicts the dynamic nature of small business. To remain a viable business, all companies need to evolve and grow (Hmieleski et al., 2015). One barrier to small business success is the lack of time a founder has to address competing roles and responsibilities (Jorgensen et al., 2022). At some stage of a company's growth, structure guides the necessary separation of founder duties. The implementation and adoption of an operating structure will impact the ways of working and perceived progression toward company goals. How well all processes and tools are utilized regularly is impacted by a founder's commitment to integrate them into daily operations. Effective habits and creating a pulse or rhythm for the company facilitate entrepreneurial learning which is critical for small companies (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; Harnish, 2014).

A well-defined framework will provide balance between visionary leadership and effective management. Some organizational constructs, such as EOS, promote strong leadership team dynamic facilitated through disciplined meeting structure. Delegation and quality decision making by entrepreneurs are important factors for scaling a small company (Carr & Blettner, 2010; Harnish, 2014; Hendricks, et al., 2019). According to Fishkin, "the best leaders know when to lead and when not to." (2018, p. 58).

Leadership Traits and Behaviors

A Visionary's experiences and their personality traits may inform leadership behaviors which impact the company's foundation. How they experience change and implementation of structure informs how operating systems are adopted. Regardless of the area of expertise studied, formal education is correlated with standard practices and procedures, an awareness of peer competitors, and an analytical decision-making process. (Hmieleski et al., 2015). This can support a founder's acceptance of some structures and processes to better leader the organization.

Psychological capital shapes leadership behaviors and builds confidence which can help elicit trust among stakeholders (Hmieleski et al., 2015). Companies that establish trust realize greater speed, effectiveness, and profitability (Covey & Merrill, 2006). Trust develops when a leader remains focused and confident through all stages of company development with a consistent cadence of clear communication (Hmieleski et al., 2015; Scott, 2017). Resilience is a state of psychological capital discussed in academic research and industry journals when describing entrepreneurs (Elsafty et al., 2020; Envick, 2005). According to Passi and Riggio (2024), "founder personality traits like openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness" have a direct correlation with positive outcomes.

Transformational and adaptive leadership theories describe styles that may be commonly found in successful entrepreneurs. Adaptive leadership is exhibited when behavior changes to flex to a situation (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Adaptive leadership requires high cognitive capability and social intelligence to think through complex changing matters (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Transformational leaders inspire and influence their followers through a shared meaning (McCleskey, 2014).

Entrepreneurial Decision Making

Entrepreneurs' decisions are influenced by several factors including their leadership style and available resources in dynamic and sometimes uncertain environments (De Winnaar & Scholtz, 2017). Perspectives influence the way an entrepreneur views a situation (De Winnaar & Scholtz, 2017). As explained by Tversky and Kahneman (1985), the decision frame can influence the decision-making process. The decision frame may change with different situations. Entrepreneurs may feel comfortable making "gut" decisions in certain situations but choose an analytical process

for other situations dependent on their access to information and resources in different conditions. Simon (2000) suggests that organizations can learn through their members who contribute different knowledge to a matter decentralizing decision-making.

Both the nature of the decision and the strategic decision-making process may influence what kind of biases, social, informational, political, etc. that may be present through the process (Das & Teng, 1999). Entrepreneurs who have a desire to, can overcome biased decisions by implementing processes that support an informed decision-making process. This invites more data and perspective from leaders and experts which facilitates more informed decisions (De Winnaar & Scholtz, 2017). Establishing a repeatable process can also help encourage accountability throughout the organization. This provides perspective that entrepreneurs could benefit from the support of a structured operating system for a variety of tasks, planning and decision-making; however, require a dynamic and fluid process to accommodate the changing factors that can influence entrepreneurial decision-making. Analyzing the results and findings in context of organizational constructs and leadership traits and behaviors informs why and when entrepreneurs implement structures such as EOS.

The Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS)

The Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) is an operating system which provides a well-defined structure facilitating clarity for small business team members which helps entrepreneurs operationalize and achieve their vision. (Wickman, 2012). The Accountability Chart defines the organizational structure and roles of the Visionary (V) and Integrator (I). According to the EOS model, value is maximized when the founder focuses on the vision and direction of the company and another individual drives the operations. As outlined in *Rocket Fuel* by Wickman and Winters (2015), there are common challenges observable among Visionaries related to operations including: dysfunction and lack of organization, appetite for big ideas but inability to prioritize and execute on the details, and an unwillingness to let go of control. Founders may have the skills necessary for initial growth in a start-up but often lack the organizational skills for continued sustainable growth (Hendricks et al., 2019). EOS prescribes the Accountability Chart to address this issue by facilitating delegation of executing plans. See Table 1 for common EOS definitions.

Table 1

Key EOS Terms and Tools (this is not a comprehensive list)

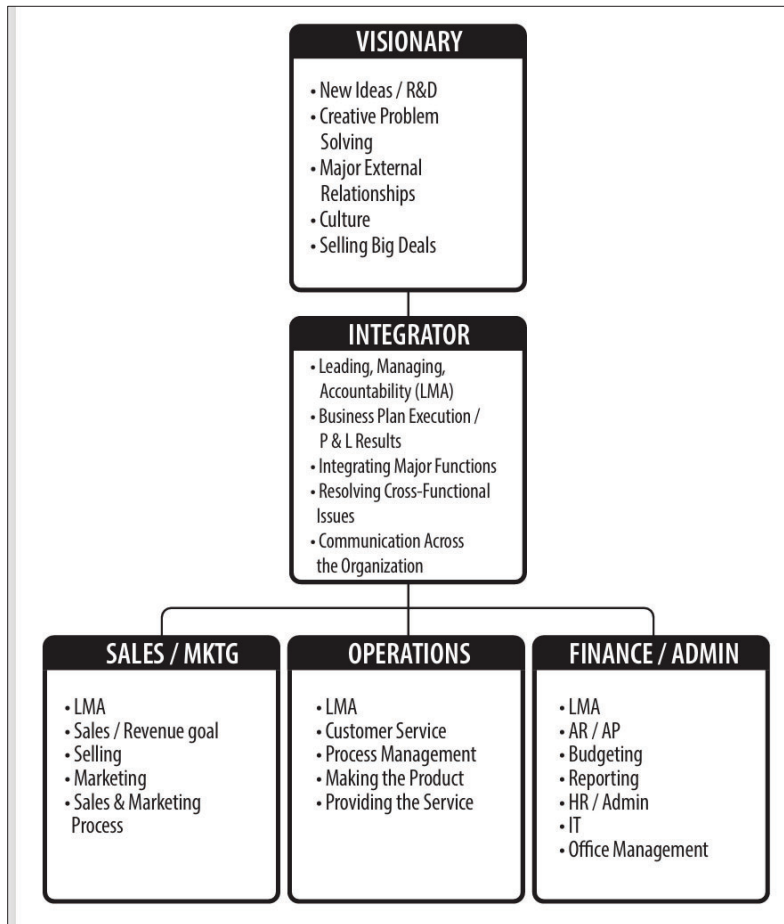
Term/ Tool	Description
Accountability Chart	Illustrates the organizational chart defining “seats” with 5 or so bullet points to describe the role of the seat
Implementer	An EOS Expert that coaches a Visionary, with their Integrator and leadership team through implementation of EOS tools and processes
Integrator	Typically, the operation persons, in the company, executes all of the ideas
Visionary	Typically, the founder and CEO, the creative mind of the company that has all of the new ideas

Note. EOS Terms and Tools are unique to the EOS structure and are not a comprehensive list or description of the EOS construct. From *What the Heck is EOS?* by G. Wickman and T. Bouwer 2017.

The Accountability Chart is a dynamic tool, one of many, that is meant to flex and grow with the company. See example in Figure 2 as documented in *Rocket Fuel* by Wickman and Winters (2015). The chart can be expanded in the third tier and beyond as the number of team members grows. This concept is about identifying the right people in the right seats to accelerate the movement toward the goals. Specific to EOS, the V/I roles are separated to free up Visionary for creative ideation, selling, and developing important relationships. The Integrator delegated the operational responsibilities of leading, managing and planning the business administrative items and communicating with the team.

Figure 2

Example EOS Accountability Chart



Note. Sample EOS accountability chart demonstrates a simple five member structure which can be expanded. From *Rocket Fuel* by G. Wickman and M. Winters 2015. Copyright Gino Wickman

As a holistic operating system, EOS offers several tools to assist entrepreneurs in ensuring the best decision for their business can be made with less bias and absent an authoritarian style. The EOS meeting structure and tools provide a cadence to communicate regularly at all team levels supported with a process to address issues (Wickman & Bouwer, 2017). When and how an entrepreneur implements different aspects of an operating system is influenced by leadership behavior and decision-making styles.

Methodology

This research focuses on the population of entrepreneurs running small companies that have adopted an operating framework. To remove variability that may be uniquely associated with encounters using different frameworks, the research focused on one structure, the application of Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS). Participants included only entrepreneurs of a small business that practiced EOS and assumed the Visionary role for at least one year. This facilitated common vernacular and ability to compare experiences with a single structure. Qualitative research was conducted to gather primary data through semi-structured interviews and an online third-party survey assessing personality and leadership traits. An EOS Expert provided insights and perspective as a professional that has worked with over 125 founders implementing EOS and coaching over 60 CEOs. Data was gathered through video conference interviews with five participants. For this inaugural exploration of the topic, the recruitment was intentionally terminated after reaching five candidates.

The interview structure was purposeful in addressing three main points in one hour or less to maintain participants’ engagement with their limited volunteered time. Ten open-ended questions invited discussions to gather data about leadership behaviors, decision making styles, and the implementation experiences of EOS. As the goal for this study was not data saturation, future research could enhance the data collected on this topic by increasing sample size and expanding the questions. The EOS Expert shared their observations about founders’ behaviors through the lifecycle of EOS adoption. The researcher identified secondary data including industry and academic content.

The participants’ key attributes as related to the research topic are in Table 2.

Table 2
Attributes of Participants

Participant	Service (S) / Product (P)	Education (degree, certification, professional license)	Corporate Experience in # of years	Sole Proprietor (SP) / Partnership (P) / Investors (I)	SME in the field (Yes/ No)	Prof. peer groups: Vistage (VG) / Scaling Up (SU) / EO/ Coach (C)	Visionary (V) or Integrator (V/I)	Integrator seat initially filled by:
1	S	BS + cert.	10+	SP + I	Y	VG + C	V/I	V
2	S	MBA + cert.	10+	SP	Y	SU + C	V	PT New Hire
3	S	MBA + cert.	16+	P	Y	SU	V	Employee
4	S	BS + license + cert.	<1*	P	N	VG + C	V	P

The research analysis was conducted using a three-stage coding strategy: Open, Axial, and Selective Coding (Williams and Moser, 2019). Codes were determined using the “5W-1H” questions addressing who, what, where, why and how to organize the data (Williams & Moser, 2019). A qualitative software program, Delve, was utilized to support the process. The coding process with resulting themes can be viewed in Table 3 which informs the results and findings with discussion.

Table 3
Coding Process and Resulting Themes

Open	Axial 1	Axial 2	Selective	
Interview Question #	Emerging Themes	Major Themes	Selective	
Q#1,2,3	Many years of experience Education and coaching Culture/ team chemistry important People-oriented Transparent communication Creative and adaptable	Leadership Traits	Visionary Traits	Research Question 1 What leadership behaviors influence the different implementation decisions made about the Visionary-Integrator relationship in the Accountability Chart?
Q#4,5,6	Limited resources In the day-to-day details Pivot and change Used coaches & peer groups Chaotic environment Challenge balancing things	Dynamic environment Need flexibility Challenges	Timing of Selection	Research Question 2 How do entrepreneurial visionaries in small companies implementing the EOS model experience the separation of Visionary and Integrator roles?
Q#8,9,10	Needed to know everything Letting go was hard Expert in the field Transparent metrics & reports Difficult to separate from duties Afraid structure will ruin chemistry	Trust V/I relationship Control	Trust	Research Question 3 How do entrepreneur leadership behaviors effect how EOS implementation impacts progress toward their company vision?
RQ9 RQ10	Relief after letting go Filtering of big ideas Focus on what they are good at Efficient decision making	Benefits of structure realized	Perception of Progress	

Results And Findings

The findings show that founders with many years of experience who become consciously aware of opportunities for improvement are receptive to organizational and operational changes. Transformational and people-oriented leadership styles are successful in adapting tools and structures such as the EOS framework to support positive outcomes for their companies. In this study, EOS was not wholly adopted as prescribed. The sample size is too small to assess if there are missed opportunities in not fully implementing the construct. Paradoxically, there was a clear indication that Visionaries experienced or anticipated negative results if strictly enforcing EOS methods and preferred what was seemingly a more successful method of flexing the model to make it fit for purpose.

Themes and Significance of Findings

Several influencing dynamics about the implementation of EOS constructs emerged from the data: Timing: EOS Decision Point, Visionary Traits, Trust, Perception of Progress. Each of these themes

was identifiable in many or all the participants' responses, with the theme sometimes present across multiple questions. The small sample size does not facilitate extrapolation about all the factors and how they influence Visionaries. However, observations made by the EOS Expert based on working with a large volume of CEO's and Visionaries, corroborated with secondary data and participant interviews, provides strong foundational support for the significance of these research findings.

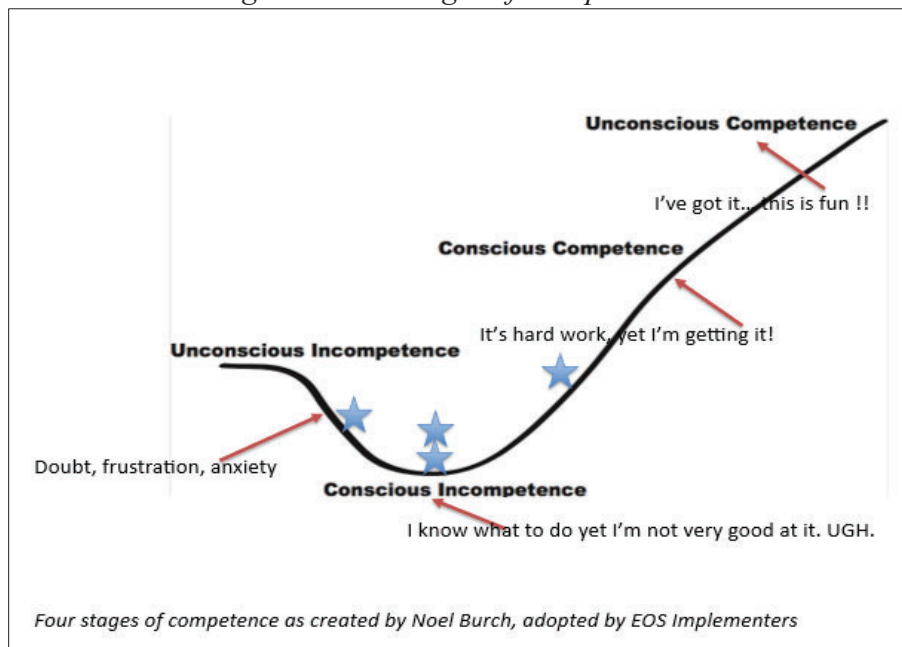
Timing: EOS Decision Point

The decision point for implementing a formal structure such as EOS and naming an operations leader, the Integrator, came at varied company sizes and years in business for each founder. All founders had extensive corporate experience, entrepreneurial backgrounds and both. Founders stated that experience with Scaling Up, Vistage (Vistage, n.d.) and coaching led to decisions to implement a robust model such as EOS. Consistent with theory that bounded rationality may play a larger role in decision making process for new entrepreneurs who rely on their own limited knowledge base (De Winnaar & Scholtz, 2017), these seasoned participants may have reached a stage of confidence and experience to allow the decision-making process to become part of the organization through the V/I structure.

In Figure 3, the concept of the four stages of competency, credited to Noel Burch from Gordon Training Institute (Adams, n.d.), was combined with the familiar entrepreneurial feelings during each stage. Founders positioned themselves between the downward curve of unconscious incompetence to the upswing curve toward conscious competence at the time of implementing EOS. The responses are noted as stars on Figure 3. The strategic decision to adopt EOS came at the similar stage of self-awareness experienced by entrepreneurs. All participants acknowledged an improved position on the curve at or above conscious competence after implementation of EOS which suggests that EOS adoption may function as a mechanism for managing the cognitive load associated with entrepreneurial growth transitions. All the founders stated that EOS brought structure and methodology which eased operational processes.

Figure 3

Entrepreneur's Emotions Through the Four Stages of Competence



The Expert worked with entrepreneurs who were driven to EOS because of an imbalance in the founder's ability to do everything themselves. "It can be chaotic. It can be overwhelming. It can take over your life." A common issue to growth is the lack of time a founder has available to address competing roles and responsibilities (Jorgensen et al., 2022). All founders acknowledged that they recognized the need for change and trying something different. As a result, they were able to cope with the demands of business and find better work-life balance through implementation of EOS. As shared by one Visionary "I think EOS is really good at providing structure to get a hold of your business so that it doesn't take over your life so that you can have an existence outside of your business." Internal capital in the form of confidence and resilience in pursuing change was evident at time of adoption.

Reaching a point of conscious incompetence as shown in Figure 3 aligns with self-awareness acknowledging that balance is beneficial for their company. Participants' experiences were extensive and included exposure to different operating systems. This might reflect that EOS, or other robust operating systems, may be easier to implement, or more sustainable with seasoned founders.

Visionary Traits

There was a common acknowledgement among the participating entrepreneurs that change is necessary and inevitable. This echoes the SARFIT model which depicts the fluid environment of an entrepreneur (Donaldson, 2001). A flexible structure may ideally balance an entrepreneur's need for adaptability in different situations, facilitating a methodological way to evaluate information with leadership team member input through tools and processes. Unique experiences over time nurtured adaptive leadership behaviors among the participating founders which were evident in the decisions they made to flex to company needs (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

It is at different points of an entrepreneurial journey that leaders recognize when to lead and when not in their quest to be the best leaders for their company (Fishkin, 2018). When founders exert too much control, they can prevent progress (Hendricks et al., 2019). Founders volunteered reflections about their leadership styles "It is as important to me to maintain that integrity, the combination of feeling compassionate about the people that I'm working with and the work we do and achieving business results." The transition from unconscious incompetence to conscious competence embodies self-awareness and is experienced by entrepreneurs at different times and company stages. Founder's trap can be a result of entrepreneurial decision-making biases and heuristics including overconfidence and representativeness (Busenitz & Barney, 1997). Research suggests that founders can avoid or overcome founders' syndrome by building strong leadership to strategically increase their abilities through other team members and decentralizing decision making (Muriithi & Wachira, 2016).

The findings suggest that operating structures providing robust organizational constructs like EOS may provide a mechanism to overcome founder's trap. Founder's trap may be exacerbated by the complex nature of decision-making entrepreneur's experience in leading their business "As an entrepreneur, you want to do everything because you don't trust that anyone can do it the right way." The findings suggest that entrepreneurs may find it easier to delegate, plan and navigate decision-making by applying EOS tools.

Trust

Trust was a recurring theme in discussions with Visionaries about their relationship with team members. Companies that establish trust realize greater speed, effectiveness, and profitability

(Covey & Merrill, 2006). Having a trusted partner or employee with experience in the business prior to implementing EOS, eased separation of duties as evident by when the Integrator role was filled. Founders who are SMEs in their field had difficulty delegating duties because of their deep knowledge and expertise that they found challenging to translate to others. “I started the business because I knew I could do a better job than what I was seeing other people do. They (my team) are missing pieces of me and my leadership (in learning how to execute services)”

The common theme was the Visionary’s discomfort of feeling like they may not know everything that was happening because team members no longer reported to them directly. This finding suggests that not all entrepreneurs have an innate ability to trust, but a conscious awareness of the weakness facilitates an openness to change. An individual’s attitude toward trust is influenced by innate and environmental factors (Oskarsson et al., 2012). Founders stated that the EOS structure provided a cadence in reporting with transparency. “I could trust things are getting done. When you don't have systems like EOS to show the accountability and that people are doing it, it stays, you just worry about it and wonder what is happening.” Another Visionary shared “Because the reporting was pretty robust, that allowed me to give full autonomy to people. And that allowed them to make important decisions without me, which decreased my stress level and allowed me to work on larger things.” A founder’s conscious awareness of their need to trust in others which was met with resistance or inability to do so prior to EOS implementation, suggests that EOS implementation may provide a more robust mechanism than other operating systems to facilitate letting go for growth.

Perception of Progress

Most Visionaries expressed a relief after implementing an org structure that separated duties, specifically as related to the V and I roles. They noted being able to focus on the strategy, big ideas, big customers, and traveling as needed, spending less time on things they were not good at doing. There was also a realization that their multitude of big ideas needed to be filtered for execution, which was not happening efficiently prior to EOS. These findings suggest greater value in identifying another team member to fill the Integrator role as part of EOS adoption. Each entrepreneur expressed a commitment to adopting the EOS structure when it was implemented. “We had all agreed upon a process and we were just going to follow it.” It is significant to acknowledge that the Visionary’s led by example which helped their team members adopt changes.

The overall conclusion is that Visionaries feel EOS had a positive impact on their company; However, it was not directly related to or individually responsible for the progress toward their company goals. Each founder viewed their business and team as unique and there was a resistance to 100% implementation, which is paradoxical and nuanced deviation from their 100% commitment to adopt EOS. More than one Visionary even noted that when they did “do it by the book”, they felt a negative impact on their companies. There was a concern that their unique cultures would be negatively impacted by rigid structure. Consistent with research suggesting that a firm’s performance reflects the founder’s characteristics and behaviors (Hmieleski et al., 2015), the Visionaries adapted and flexed tools to fit their company. The SARFIT model (Figure 2) explains the need to flex to different situations which are often experienced by entrepreneurs. With small businesses being more susceptible to changes driven by unplanned variables, any operating system or tool needs to be flexible to maintain their value. The participants expressed value from modified EOS tools. “We took a more creative approach to it. It wasn’t as regimented.” In contrast to the formal structure driving the value-add tenets of EOS, it may be consistency over rigidity that entrepreneurs identify as the value proposition provided by structured operating systems.

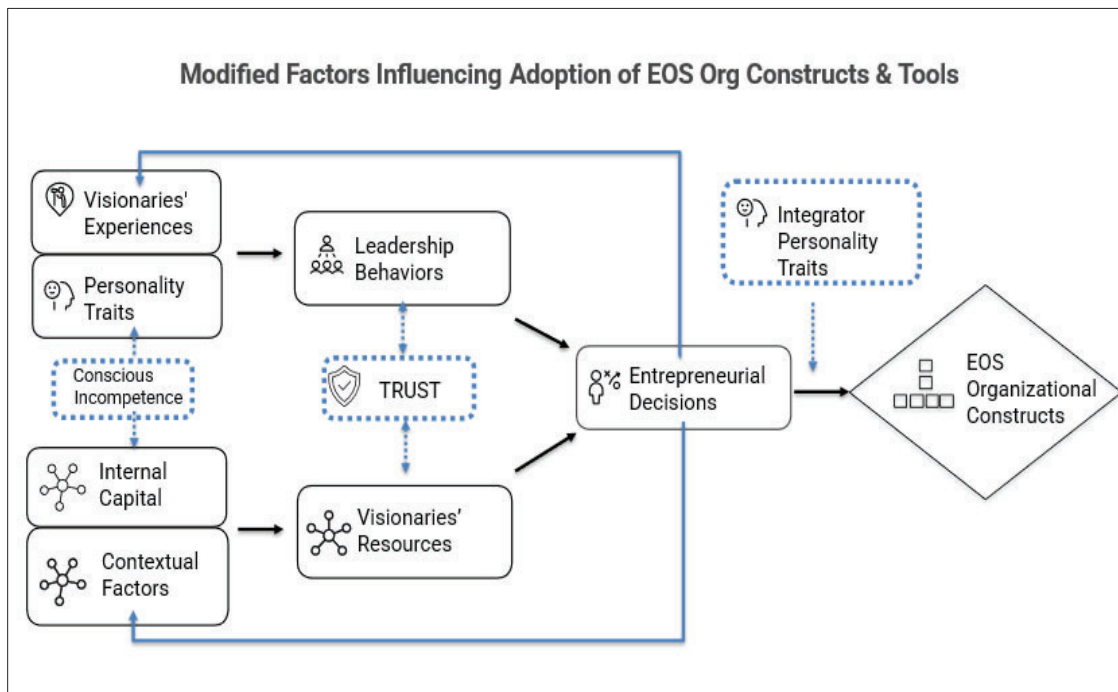
Discussion

The results of this research provided insights into entrepreneurs’ decision-making processes impacting adoption of EOS representative of a formal operating structure. The results also brought light to how entrepreneurs experience formal operating constructs. There is limited direct academic research that links entrepreneurial leadership behaviors with how founders, specifically Visionaries choose to implement formal structures such as EOS. The researcher constructed a theoretical framework to conceptualize the factors influencing adoption of EOS constructs and tools which were enhanced through discovery of these research findings (Figure 4). Visionary resources and leadership behaviors, combined with an entrepreneur’s ability to trust will influence entrepreneurial decisions and ultimately how EOS is implemented.

The research revealed that transformational and adaptive leadership behaviors are positive influences in the successful adoption of EOS processes. The data set consisting of seasoned entrepreneurs also facilitated the correlation of time and experience to self-awareness and a willingness to utilize the V/I construct and EOS processes to change the decision-making process. The decisions to separate the defined roles were supported by EOS’s robust reporting and cadence of communication. Trust was a recurring theme in discussions with Visionaries. It was important for the Visionaries to have a structure that provided visibility and clarity.

Figure 4

Theoretical Framework: Modified Factors Influencing Adoption of EOS Org Constructs & Tools



Implications

This research was interested in identifying ways to help small company entrepreneurs maximize the benefits of a formal operating structure, specifically EOS. It was not confirmed through this research whether Visionaries who do not fully adopt EOS’ framework limit progress toward company goals. Further, the data suggested that by taking a flexible approach to how certain tools are adapted could be more valuable to each company versus fully adopting the EOS tools as

prescribed. By exploring entrepreneurial experiences with EOS, benefits and challenges of different aspects of the structure were uncovered.

The findings showed that control, flexibility and culture are critical considerations for entrepreneurs in operating their companies. By acknowledging these common decision factors, coaches and operational leaders, specifically Implementers and Integrators as related to EOS can be more effective in supporting a founder's need to adapt tools and processes. The perceived value of EOS by entrepreneurs can be maximized through thoughtful changes personalized to meet the needs of the company

Trust in people and processes are necessary for Visionaries to allow other people to lead company activities. The research confirmed that entrepreneurs need a mechanism, such as EOS to feel confident that they know what is happening in their company. This allows Visionaries to focus on their strengths and embodies the essence of Rocket Fuel. EOS helped Visionaries find balance in their management of activities. EOS tools and the organizational construct were maximized when they were flexed to meet the needs and culture of the organization. Most notably, meetings maintained the cadence and spirit of the EOS agenda but were changed to fit the company culture and team member needs. The research confirmed that it is not necessary to separate the operational duties utilizing the V/I construct, however a significant benefit is realized by Visionaries when they do. With the critical trait of self-awareness serving as a foundational tool for growth, entrepreneurs should utilize coaching and assessments for themselves and team members in preparing for adopting a construct such as EOS which relies on a healthy V/I relationship.

Limitations

The data set is limited in size and does not support deep inferential statistical modeling on the whole population of entrepreneurs practicing EOS in their small businesses. Third-party personality testing is not an in-depth survey and may provide only superficial characteristics that can be reasonably related to leadership behaviors of Visionaries.

Recommendations For Further Research

Future research to expand the sample size would help validate this study's findings about common benefits and challenges of EOS, potentially identifying new themes. It would also be beneficial to include more Visionaries that maintained the Integrator role themselves to explore founders' challenges and hesitations about filling the role with someone else. It would be interesting to gather information from: 1) founders who evaluated EOS but did not choose to adopt it or 2) founders who adopted EOS but then abandoned it. It could be beneficial for entrepreneurs to understand the challenges these founders perceived in adopting EOS.

Conflicts of Interest

The researcher is not aware of any conflicts of interest; however, they acknowledge potential bias in interpretation of results based on their personal experience as an EOS Integrator

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