Taking Enterprising Action

Marco van Gelderen

VU University Amsterdam

Email: m.w.van.gelderen@vu.nl

Version 2017

ABSTRACT

Enterprising behavior typically involves 'making waves', and enterprising people tend to be good at taking action. This paper offers a conceptual investigation of the behavioral and cognitive strategies that allow people to take effective action. I outline a conceptual framework using the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the base and identifying action enablers in relation to the TPB constructs, and discuss a range of factors that facilitate the taking of enterprising action.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial-intentions; entrepreneurial-action; intention-action-gap.

Acknowledgement: Wendelin Kuepers and Ralph Bathurst provided valuable comments.

Taking Enterprising Action

INTRODUCTION

Enterprising plans – such as starting a business, taking a trip around the world, organizing a neighborhood street party – do not always materialize. Occasionally, situational constraints may explain this lack of action: now is not the right time in the market place, I want to gain work experience first, I first need to save money, the mortgage must first be paid off, I am too busy now, and so forth. People often have good reasons to delay acting on their enterprising intentions (Brenner, Pringle, and Greenhaus, 1991; Dimov, 2007; Van Gelderen, Brand, Van Praag, Bodewes, Poutsma and Van Gils, 2008). They may want to garner experience, knowledge, networks, savings, or other resources first, or they may be waiting for the right opportunity or the right moment. There is no conflict between desire and action if acting on enterprising ambitions is deliberately postponed or, alternatively, if newly emerged constraints or changed preferences lead to the abandonment of the original aim. However, if no action is taken, unwillingly and in spite of continuing intentions, then intentions and actions will be at odds. A lack of action means that potentially fruitful enterprising initiatives will not be realized.

There is ample anecdotal evidence that the key to enterprising behavior is getting started and doing it (see, for example, the case studies in Livingston, 2008). The British entrepreneur Richard Branson expressed this notion through the title of one of his books: *Screw it, let's do it* (Branson, 2010). What allows some people to be so much more adept at taking action swiftly and easily, whereas others hold back and procrastinate? This article aims to uncover some of the strategies and attributes that allow enterprising people to turn to action quickly. It reports on the theory and research base that refer to these factors and shows

how they are linked. For this purpose, so-called action enablers are linked to the constructs that make up the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2013). As such, this research helps bridge the "thinking-doing" link in entrepreneurship research (Mitchell et al., 2007). The model will be described in the next section.

ACTION MODELS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

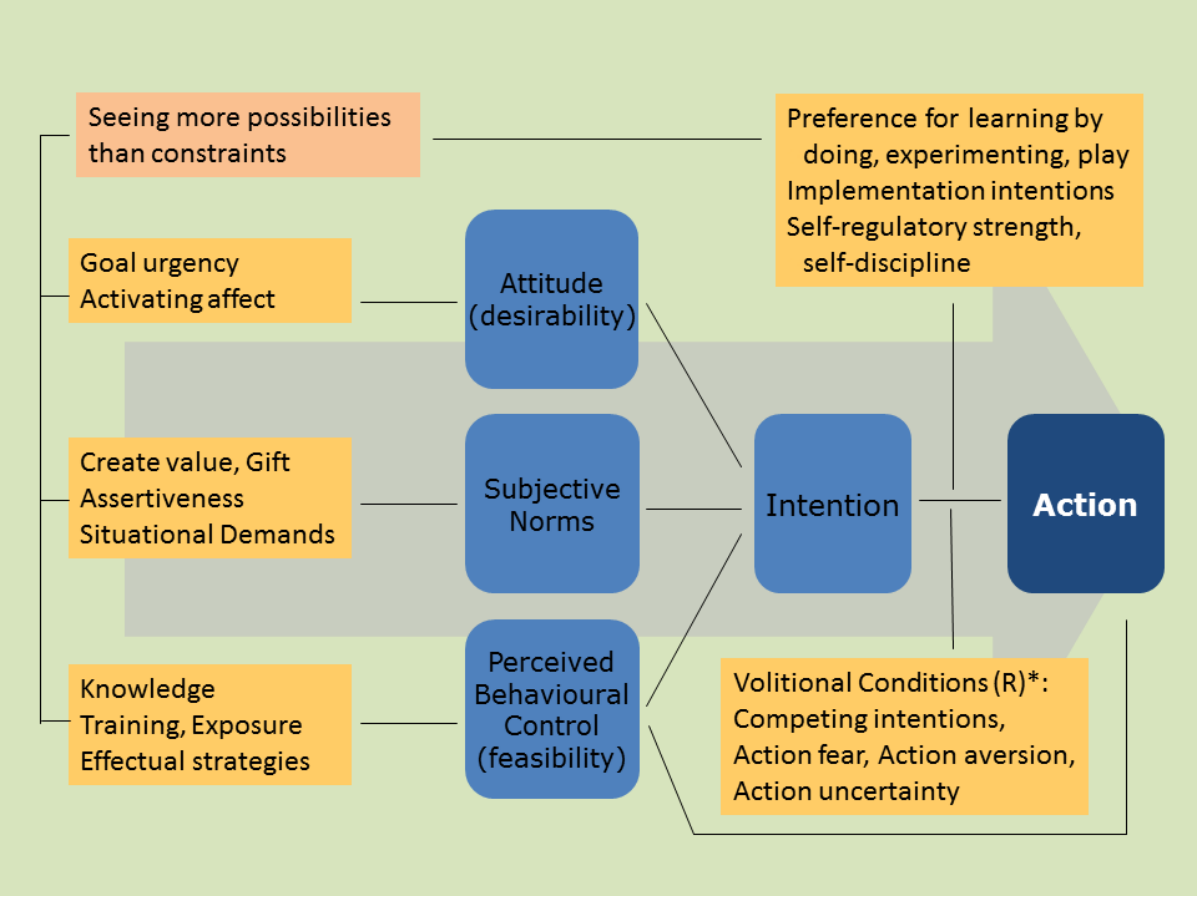
In the realm of entrepreneurship research, two models of entrepreneurial action dominate the literature. The first is Ajzen's (1991, 2013) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which models intentional action (see Figure 1). Ajzen (2013) defined intention as "a person's readiness to perform a given behavior." Intention has three cognitive antecedents (Ajzen, 1991): attitude refers to the individual's evaluation (favorable or unfavorable) of the target behavior; subjective norms capture the opinions of social reference groups (such as family and friends) regarding whether the individual should engage in the behavior; and perceived behavioral control (PBC) denotes the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior. PBC comprises both internal (person) and external (situation) assessments (Ajzen, 2002) and, as such, is a higher-level construct. Intention fully mediates the effects of attitude and subjective norms on behavior, whereas PBC has a dual role in the TPB. Firstly, perceived behavioral control influences whether a person intends to perform a given behavior; secondly, PBC serves as a proxy for actual behavioral control, influencing behavior directly (Ajzen, 1991, 2002).

A second model is the entrepreneurial event model proposed by Shapero and Sokol (1982), which explains entrepreneurial action on the basis of perceived desirability and feasibility, along with the propensity to act. Thus, the two models share the notion that intentions are predicted by perceived willingness and perceived capability. This article refers to the TPB because of its consistent and detailed specification; the great volume of research

across disciplines that has been dedicated to applying, criticizing, and advancing the model (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Sheeran, 2002); and because it presents the opportunity to compare, and thus cross-validate, findings with those found in a range of other research domains. Research testing the TPB in the context of new venture creation has found support for the model (Kautonen, Van Gelderen, & Tornikoski, 2013; Kautonen, Van Gelderen & Fink, 2015).

According to the TPB, the question of whether action is taken should be a function of intention strength. If people are willing and able to take action, but do not do so, their intention is not strong enough. Alternatively, actual behavioral control may be lacking. It should be noted that the TPB is a theory that employs proximal constructs (Kanfer, 1990): constructs that are direct predictors that need to be predicted and explained themselves. Moreover, intention predicts action, but does not explain it (an example of a meaningless explanation is: “Why did you drink the glass of milk?” “Because I intended to drink it”; cf. Greve, 2001). However, intentions are explained by attitudinal, control, and norm beliefs. The present paper concentrates on those factors that enable action, not just any factor that predicts or explains the TPB constructs.

Figure 1 provides an overview, and the remainder of this article will briefly discuss each action-enabling factor (volitional conditions being action inhibitors). These enablers are readily implementable cognitive and behavioral strategies. As such, I am not interested in relatively stable personality factors that signify a propensity to take action, such as regulatory focus (Brockner, Higgins and Low, 2004), impulsiveness (van Eerde, 2003), need for achievement (McClelland, 1961), proactive personality (Bateman and Crant, 1999), or action orientation (Kuhl and Beckman, 1994). Although these personality characteristics may influence whether action is taken, the focus in this program is on learnable behaviors, not on factors that are relatively fixed (Van Gelderen, 2014).



* R=reversed: inhibitor rather than enabler

Figure 1 Factors enabling action organized by means of the TPB

ACTION ENABLERS AFFECTING PBC

The PBC is discussed first because it plays an important dual role in the TPB, influencing behavior directly as well as through intentions. Generally speaking, people will act if they feel that they are able to make things happen. There is one caveat to this. As Richard Branson said, “dream big by setting yourself seemingly impossible challenges. You then have to catch up with them”. Thus, Branson is motivated by challenges rather than by the feasibility of a venture. Also, in the context of enterprising behavior, PBC should be understood as self-efficacy in relation to challenging goals, not easy ones.

A first set of action-enabling factors can be derived from research on courage (Rachman, 2004), which gives some good insights into why certain people are able to take actions that entail significant risks of failure. Rachman's study investigates the factors that make it possible for people in risky professions such as bomb-removal specialists, fire-fighters, combatants, and astronauts, to do their work. Rachman (2004) defined courage as acting in spite of being afraid, distinguishing it from taking unconsidered risks (recklessness) or not feeling fear (fearlessness). Courage turns out to be determined by three factors: exposure, skills and knowledge, and situational demands. Situational demands relate to how other people's expectations sometimes stimulate action in spite of being afraid, and will therefore be discussed in the section on subjective norms.

Exposure. Mere exposure often makes it easier to take action. Practice helps parachutists (after five successful jumps, on average), public speakers, and bomb-removal experts to mitigate their fear, as long as no disasters occur. Through exposure, fear is reduced, while a lack of exposure means that initial fear levels continue to persist. Moreover, exposure through trial-and-error behaviors and experimentation can prove helpful when trying to reduce uncertainty, or when learning needs to take place. Exposure also helps in another sense. Those people who put themselves out there make themselves vulnerable by doing so. Paradoxically, however, this vulnerability is reduced at the same time because of the experience of exposure. Resilience is developed through exposure: the more often one makes oneself vulnerable, the less vulnerable one becomes.

Skills, knowledge and training. Studies on courage also show that skills, knowledge, and training help to facilitate courageous action. A common characteristic of bomb-removal specialists, fire-fighters, combatants, and astronauts is that they are usually very well trained. Their skills and knowledge give them the confidence to meet with the challenges that will be presented to them. It also enables them to opt for certain actions over others and recognize

what courses of action might be unsuitable. Over time, skills and knowledge become part of procedural knowledge, enabling actors to consciously attend to whatever is most required. Then, action is facilitated by automating one's action repertoire. For entrepreneurs, Mitchell, Smith, Morse, Seawright, Peredo, and McKenzie (2002) and Mitchell, Smith, Seawright, and Morse (2000) labeled these automated action patterns as arrangement and readiness scripts. Arrangement scripts concern the resources, relationships, and assets that are needed to engage in entrepreneurial activity. Ability scripts are thoughts and mental frameworks concerning the skills, knowledge, and capacities needed to create a new venture. It should be noted that the enabling function of knowledge applies to actions that an individual intends to pursue, but not to any action – knowledge can also prevent unwise actions from being taken. In contrast, according to the hubris theory of entrepreneurship, many enterprising actions are driven by overconfidence in one's own knowledge (Hayward, Shepherd and Griffin, 2006).

Effectual strategies. Sarasvathy's (2001) groundbreaking work contrasts two sets of principles: causation and effectuation. These sets are derived in work on entrepreneurs, but can apply to enterprising behavior in a more general sense. In causation, one works from the end backwards. In causation, prediction of market developments leads to the establishment of aspirational goals (for example, a certain level of profit, turnover, or market share). Given the goal, various means to reach the goal are considered, from which one or more is chosen. This also resembles the typical approach in business planning in which projected revenues and costs are outlined based on the best possible evidence for the strategies to reach these aims. The problem with this approach is that many entrepreneurs do not seem to follow it, instead resorting to effectuation strategies. In effectuation, one proceeds from one's means (material resources, network, knowledge, identity) rather than ends (although an overall ultimate goal should guide the process). From that starting point, one seeks to leverage contingencies and seek partnerships to build the enterprising venture. Another supporting strategy, labeled

affordable loss, helps to outline the maximum investment that one is prepared to lose in the process (rather than seeking a certain amount of investment based on the causal predictions). All of these principles help the enterprising person to proceed from actions rather than preparation and plans; the emphasis is on the power to create one's own fortune. Hence Sarasvathy's dictum: effectuation allows for the control of an unpredictable future, rather than prediction of an uncertain one (Read, Sarasvathy, Dew, Wiltbank & Ohlsson, 2011). Effectual strategies are particularly applied under conditions of uncertainty and novelty (Read et al., 2011).

ACTION-ENABLING SUBJECTIVE NORM BELIEFS

Creating value. Perceived norms of others can both inhibit and enable action. A first subjective norms-related factor is a perception of enterprising individuals that he or she is creating value for others. The actions being taken can be seen as a gift to other people, enriching their lives. In such a case, an enterprising project or venture will be seen and communicated as a valuable opportunity for others to be participating in. The converse case – even though it can concern exactly the same project or venture – would be to perceive and present it as something for which one needs the help and support of others, who are then approached in a mode of dependency and asked for their commitment. Whether one perceives oneself to be 'giving' or 'taking' is a mindset that can be altered and trained. It requires enterprising projects that the person believes in and cares for and feels competent to execute. This will raise confidence in the value created by the person's actions, particularly if a valid connection is made to other people's needs, beliefs and feelings; that is, the perception that the project or venture is creating value is shared. When perceiving and presenting an individual's contributions as a gift and an opportunity to and for others, the perceived norms of others, by extension, serve as an action-enabling factor.

Assertiveness. According to derotterdamseschool.nl, assertiveness is a function of two perceptions: internal authorization, which refers to whether a person feels justified to make a contribution; and external authorization, which refers to the perception of whether others will accept such a contribution. These axes are posited to be independent. Some people will generally feel justified to make contributions, but in the company of particular people will feel restrained from doing so. Other people will generally feel unjustified to make a contribution even if the environment is very safe and inviting. In the model of derotterdamseschool.nl, the axes can shift for each person. Those who generally feel justified expressing themselves and feel that others will accept it (or do not care about whether others will accept it) clearly have an edge when it comes to taking action. Some enterprising people appear to be exceptionally brash – they apparently feel highly authorized to act.

Situational demands. A third action-enabling factor related to norm beliefs, derived from research on courage (Rachman, 2004), is so-called situational demands. These are features in the environment that induce actors to behave in a courageous way. For example, in a group of four combatants, where each member of the team has been assigned specific tasks that the others are dependent upon, there is a strong pressure to perform. Failing to carry out one's tasks would place the others in danger. This can lead to the performance of courageous acts that were less likely to be performed if tasks had not been assigned and arranged in an interdependent way. This works particularly if the others are seen as performing their tasks, thus serving as role models. In the context of enterprising behavior, situational demands can be created in a team by assigning actions in such a way that others depend on it. This helps to activate norms of others that the intended behavior will be forthcoming – thus, the subjective norms ascribed to oneself and other people serve to facilitate action. An example is when three people work on a new venture and agree that each

person will approach 20 strangers to validate their idea. Knowing or seeing that the others also do their share puts a subjective norm in place that motivates a person to take action.

ACTION-ENABLERS AFFECTING ATTITUDE

Goal urgency. A sense of urgency will mean that attention and energy is directed towards this goal rather than another and can help to keep enterprising goals at the forefront of attention. The often effortful, ambitious, and challenging goals that are involved in enterprising behavior need to be protected from competing goals and distractions in order to be worked on. People have multiple goals organized within a goal hierarchy (Austin and Vancouver, 1996). All goals and intentions compete for time, attention, and other resources. For example, leisure, hobbies, family demands, and social activities can all have great pull. An enterprising individual may have to choose between spending the evening with his/her family or taking enterprising action, and on some evenings the family may have greater pull. Goals also compete in terms of time frame and urgency. Enterprising goals are often medium-range goals and may serve to achieve higher-level, long-range life goals such as self-actualization or becoming rich. This carries the risk of being caught up in goals that are more important in the short term. Although higher-level goals are considered of the utmost importance, they are often not in the foreground of attention (Frese, 2007). Short-term goals may have more regulatory power, leading to procrastination (Steel, 2007).

Activating affect. A second enabling factor that impacts the attitudinal determinant of action is whether the idea or project is activating. Emotions not only differ in valence (positive/negative), but also in activation potential (DeDreu, Baas & Nijstad, 2008). For example, sereneness and enthusiasm are both positive emotions, but they have differing activation levels, as do sadness and anger. Activation has a motivating function (Bagozzi, Dholakia and Bazuroy, 2003) and activating feelings such as passion can help pull off an

enterprising project (Cardon, Zietsma, Saparito, Matherne, and Davis, 2005). Also, negative feelings such as a fear of losing out (Baron, 1998) can propel people into action. Some people get so excited by a project that they can hardly stop themselves from taking action. Other enterprising ambitions may evoke feel far less excitement and enthusiasm. The level of activation is not only an enabler of taking action, but can also serve as an evaluation criterion as to whether a venture or project is worth pursuing. If little enthusiasm is evoked, this could be a signal that the venture should perhaps be discarded.

INTENTION QUALITY: STABILITY AND ELABORATION

Enthusiasm about an ambitious and possibly risky aim, such as starting a business, may vary during a given day, week, month, or year. What seemed like a great idea last night in the pub may evoke less enthusiasm the next morning. Although the intention may be continuously present, its strength may vary, which may cause difficulties for action control when strength diminishes. Enterprising behavior requires effort, often in novel, uncertain contexts, and strength is needed in order for intentions to drive the action. Low intention strength can also be caused by a lack of intention elaboration (Anderson, 2003; Sheeran, 2002). Some people have thought about their enterprising goals longer and harder than others. Those who have formed their enterprising intentions on the basis of a superficial analysis may never get started, or may give up once the first reality checks appear. They may experience anxiety and/or task aversion when actually attempting to take action. Having underdeveloped ideas of when, where, and how to take actions, they run into action problems. Refraining from action in the case of pre-decisional issues such as intention instability, lack of intention elaboration, and lack of excitement can be a good choice. Starting a business takes commitment and resources. If the business is only desired sometimes, if it is superficially decided upon, or if

does not generate excitement, the enterprising person may want to reconsider the validity of the intention.

ACTION-ENABLING MODERATORS OF THE INTENTION-BEHAVIOR LINK

Even strong, stable, and well considered intentions do not necessarily translate into actions. Evidence that people are sometimes unable to translate their intentions into actions can be found in many academic fields, notably health psychology (Sheeran, 2002). Good intentions are common in the domain of healthy living. People intend to exercise, take their medication, eat healthier, or perform other health promoting or illness preventing behaviors, but often fail to do so. A similar picture can be drawn in other life domains. In a meta-analysis of meta-analyses, Sheeran (2002) found that, across a variety of domains, intentions predict an average of 28 percent of variance in subsequent behavior. Data regarding the entrepreneurial intention–action relationship are only recently starting to emerge and provide a comparable picture (Kautonen, Van Gelderen & Fink, 2015; Van Gelderen, Kautonen & Fink, 2015). However, the dynamics may be different relative to other domains where the relation between intention and behavior has been studied. This is because enterprising behavior is characterized by uncertainty, risk, novelty, change, complexity, resource constraints, and both financial and psychological ownership (Baron, 1998; Gibb, 1993). Enterprising behavior is self-starting and requires initiative (Frese & Fay, 2001) and pro-activeness (Parker, 2000) in order to conduct the multiple gestation activities necessary to start the project or venture. Given these characteristics, it is unsurprising that intentions are sometimes unwillingly not converted into actions.

In this section, we propose three factors as action-enabling moderators of the intention–action relationship. Given equally strong intentions, people are more likely to take

action if they have a preference for learning by doing, experimenting, and play; if they are high in self-regulatory strength; and if they employ implementation intentions.

Preference for experimentation, play, and learning by doing. A first factor that helps to convert intentions into actions is a personal attribute and refers to emergent versus deliberate learning (Mintzberg & Wesley, 2001). Some people prefer to learn by doing; rather than spending much time on planning or preparation, they plunge right in and learn along the way. A comparable preference is for play (Mainemalis & Ronson, 2006) and experimentation (Zahra, Davidsson & Sapienza, 2006). By taking action, uncertainty regarding enterprising opportunities is reduced (Van Gelderen, 2017a). In contrast, others prefer to be well prepared before taking action: they reduce uncertainty in order for the action to be taken, rather than reducing uncertainty by means of the action taken. Conditions sometimes force people into learning by doing: the characteristics of some enterprising situations (time pressure, novelty, resource scarcity, uncertainty) sometimes even induce planners and thinkers into experimenting and trial-and-error behavior.

Self-regulatory strength. Volition concerns the translation of existing goals into action and, specifically, the regulation of these processes (Brandstatter et al. 2003). From a self-regulatory perspective, forming a strong goal intention is only a prerequisite for successful goal attainment as there are a host of subsequent implemental problems that need to be solved (Gollwitzer, 1996). Distinct psychological principles are thought to govern the processes of goal-*setting* and goal-*striving* (Achtziger and Gollwitzer, 2008). Whereas goal-setting is a motivational issue, goal-striving entails the volitional issue of behaving with respect to set goals and, therefore, of how a person moves most effectively toward a chosen goal (Gollwitzer, 2001). Self-regulatory strength is a measure of a person's willpower capacity (Baumeister and Heatherton, 1996; Baumeister, Gaillot, DeWall, and Oaten, 2006).

Self-regulatory strength refers to the ability to use conscious, systematic processing in action regulation. It can become depleted when being used (Baumeister and Heatherton, 1996; Baumeister, Gaillot, DeWall, and Oaten, 2006). For example, a dieter may succumb to the temptation to eat chocolate in the evening, having resisted it all day (Muraven and Baumeister, 2000). Laboratory research shows that when people have exerted self-control on an initial task, they are subsequently less successful at other tasks that require self-control (Schmeichel and Baumeister, 2004). A person can become exhausted from many simultaneous demands. However, not all tasks equally deplete self-regulatory strength – for example, intrinsically motivating tasks require far less strength.

Self-regulatory strength can be replenished, for example, by sleeping or distractions. When enterprising individuals exhaust their regulatory capability, they can nevertheless persevere by regaining their strength (Van Gelderen, 2017d). The capacity for conscious processing can also be increased structurally (Baumeister et al., 2006; Bauer and Baumeister, 2011). Reporting on their research program, these authors showed that the exercise of self-regulatory strength leads to improvements in self-control that extend to domains unrelated to the practice. If self-regulatory strength is practiced in one area, it generalizes to other, unrelated areas. In comparison to a control group, those who adhered to a two-month-long physical exercise program not only became fitter, but they also did better on a visual tracking task, decreased impulsive spending, and washed their dishes more often. Those who signed up and adhered to a money management program spent less, but also performed better on a subsequent visual tracking task, showed better maintenance of household chores, and ate healthier food in spite of the increased costs. The implications of this research are profound because it suggests that one can become better at enterprising behavior, including taking action, by practicing completely unrelated exercises.

Implementation intentions. Another volition-based way to increase one's capacity to translate intentions into actions is by using implementation intentions (Gollwitzer, 1999). Implementation intentions supplement goal intentions by specifying the where, when, and how of behavior. For example, if the goal is to approach a possible financier at a networking function, the implementation intention might be formulated as "as soon as the financier stands alone, I will approach this person and start a conversation." By specifying the situational cues that trigger action, behavior is automatized. The control of the action is passed on from the person to the environment and cognitive processing capacity is liberated, which can now be used to deal with other aspects of the situation. Implementation intentions can be regarded as instant habits. There is now a large body of evidence showing the effectiveness of implementation intentions (Sheeran, 2002). They help to initiate action and shield actions from distractions.

VOLITIONAL CONDITIONS

Volitional resources and strategies such as self-regulatory strength and implementation intentions help to convert enterprising intentions into actions. Still, certain conditions may be encountered, once the moment to take action draws close, that were not fully anticipated when the intention was formed. This is caused by two factors: firstly, intentions are formed on the level of the project or the venture, and sometimes fail to carefully consider the ramifications of specific actions. This is augmented by the second issue, which is one of timing: certain action problems emerge only when the moment to take the action comes close, and less so when originally intending the enterprising project.

Action fear. The time frame between intention formation and its realization gives rise to a phenomenon that can cause stalling. As the prospect of an uncertain, risky event approaches, fear tends to increase (Loewenstein et al., 2001). The urge to back out is

augmented by the tendency to think about practical considerations and loss implications as the moment of action draws near (Loewenstein et al., 2001). Fear may trigger automatic avoidance responses (Gable et al., 2000) and also lead to reflection (Baumeister et al., 2007). Such questions as “do I really want to give up my job?” and “do I really want to invest a sizeable amount of my hard-earned savings?” may arise. Fear also shifts the focus on the magnitude of outcomes as opposed to their probabilities (Loewenstein et al., 2001). Fear of loss can energize and propel aspiring entrepreneurs into action; for example, when they become afraid of missing out on an opportunity (Markman et al., 2005), or when a commitment, either financial or otherwise, has to be earned back. However, fear of loss or failure and anticipatory feelings of regret may lead others to become more cautious when the time arrives to implement one’s intentions. With increased attention for the immediate loss implications of risky and uncertain courses of action, inaction may be preferred over action.

Action aversion. Starting a business requires that numerous diverse activities be conducted, and it is likely that at least one will be unfavorable to the entrepreneurial intention. People may feel aversion toward such activities as bookkeeping, dealing with governmental regulations, conducting acquisitions, raising finance, and recruiting and managing employees. Entrepreneurial intentions are typically formed with regard to the venture. The different level of analysis of intentions and actions can mean that, in spite of perceived desirability and feasibility on the level of the opportunity or the venture, actions can be involved that arouse aversion or apprehension. In order to avoid the aversive feelings that these tasks bring about, people sometimes delay these activities (Steel, 2007; Van Eerde, 2003).

Action uncertainty. Inaction and procrastination can also occur as a consequence of action uncertainty. Perceived feasibility at the business or opportunity level does not necessarily mean that a person will know what to do at the action level. The person intending

to start a business may not know where to start and/or how to go about the start-up process. Uncertainty about courses of action may be a function of entrepreneurial experience. Experienced entrepreneurs may possess entrepreneurial action scripts such as arrangement and ability scripts (Mitchell et al., 2000; Mitchell et al., 2002). Those with developed entrepreneurial action scripts can get into action quickly, without much cognitive processing, whereas inexperienced entrepreneurs need to consider each step along the way. A lack of skills and knowledge can mean that taking action involves a high expenditure of time, energy, and cognitive capacity, which can cause inexperienced aspiring entrepreneurs to avoid experimentation and to procrastinate (cf. Frese, 2007 and 2009, for applications of action theory to entrepreneurship).

Competing intentions, demands, and habits. Despite the perceived urgency and priority of the enterprising action, other goals, habits, and demands may interfere when the time to take action comes close. Particularly when the other volitional conditions discussed above are encountered, other goals, demands, and habits may take over. This is aggravated when self-regulatory strength is low and attention is directed towards activities that require the least effort, such as watching TV.

Initial empirical evidence shows mixed support for the moderating effects of volitional conditions (Van Gelderen, Kautonen & Fink, 2015). Only action uncertainty stifles entrepreneurial action, and those individuals who are high in self-control (or self-regulatory strength) are found to be able to ameliorate these negative effects.

AN UNDERLYING FACTOR INFLUENCING ALL ACTION ENABLERS: SEEING MORE POSSIBILITIES THAN CONSTRAINTS

The action-enabling factors that influence attitude, subjective norms, and PBC and that moderate the intention-behavior relationship all appear to have one element in common: the

enterprising person sees more possibilities than constraints. Seeing constraints is important; otherwise, dangers and risks are not noted and are therefore not managed. For the purpose of effective enterprising action, it is even better to see not only constraints, but also the possibility of overcoming those constraints. Concerning attitude, enterprising people have a vision of an enterprising action that inspires and enthuses and figure out ways to manage competing goals and demands. With regard to subjective norms, enterprising people see opportunities to create value and add to other people's lives, rather than believing that things are not well possible. There is a perception that one's contributions are welcome and justified, even if they may not initially or immediately be received as such by everyone. Situational demands encourage an enterprising person to find ways to evade or overcome constraints in the service of living up to the expectations of people who depend on the enterprising person. Action-enablers that influence perceptions of feasibility (or PBC) all require the envisioning of possibilities, including the possibilities to overcome constraints. Possibilities are seen to apply or gather knowledge, and to gain exposure. Finally, the strategies outlined by effectuation theory are all expressions of the ability to see possibilities: possibilities to apply one's means, to form partnerships, to leverage contingencies, and to do so without making unacceptable losses. Also, some of the action-enablers that are proposed to moderate the intention–behavior relationship depend on the ability to see possibilities, including possibilities to overcome constraints. Implementation intentions are a case in point, as they require an envisioning of the exact conditions under which a future behavior will be enacted. Those who prefer learning by doing, experimenting, and play will typically see opportunities to take action and to deal with obstacles as they come along. Amongst the various antecedents of the ability to see more possibilities than constraints are imagination and optimism.

CONCLUSION

Because enterprising behavior can only exist in practice, it requires actions to be taken. A wide variety of factors affect the ability to take action quickly. It is clear from the literature that certain enabling factors in the composition of desirability (attitude), feasibility (PBC), and subjective norms greatly facilitate action, particularly when combined with a preference for emergent learning and high volition. Obviously, the purpose of enterprising behavior is not action for the sake of action itself. However, actions serve as indispensable steps in the process of the creation of value for others, and for oneself.

REFERENCES

Achtziger, A. & Gollwitzer, P. M. (2008). Motivation and volition during the course of action. In J. Heckhausen & H. Heckhausen (Eds.), *Motivation and Action*, pp. 272–295. London: Cambridge University Press.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 50, 179–211.

Ajzen, I. (2002). Perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32(4), 665–683.

Ajzen, I. (2013). Theory of planned behavior. Retrieved from: http://people.umass.edu/aizen/tpb.html (last accessed 21 May 2013).

Anderson, C.J. (2003). The psychology of doing nothing: Forms of decision avoidance result from reason and emotion. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(1), 139–167.

Armitage, C.J. and Conner, M. (2001). Efficacy of the theory of planned behaviour: A meta-analytic review. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 471–499.

Austin, J.T., and Vancouver, J.B. (1996). Goal constructs in psychology: Structure, process, and content. *Psychological Bulletin*, 120(3), 338–375.

Bagozzi, R.P., Dholakia, U.M., and Basuroy, S. (2003). How effortful decisions get enacted: The motivating role of decision processes, desires, and anticipated emotions. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 16, 273–295.

Baron, R.A. (1998). Cognitive mechanisms in entrepreneurship: Why and when entrepreneurs think differently than other people. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 13, 275–294.

Bateman, T.S., and Crant, J.M. (1999). Proactive behavior: Meaning, impact, recommendations. *Business Horizons*, 42(3), 63–70.

Bauer, I., & Baumeister, R.F. (2011). Self- regulatory strength. In: Vohs, K., & Baumeister, R.F. (eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* (2nd edition), pp. 64–82.

Baumeister, R.F., and Heatherton, T.F. (1996). Self-regulation failure: An overview. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7(1), 1–15.

Baumeister, R.F., Gailliot, M., DeWall, C.N., and Oaten, M. (2006). Self-regulation and personality: How interventions increase self-regulatory success, and how depletion moderates the effects of traits on behavior. *Journal of Personality*, 74(6), 1773–1802.

Baumeister, R.F., Vohs, K.D., DeWall, C.N., and Zhang, L. (2007). How emotion shapes behavior: Feedback, anticipation, and reflection, rather than direct causation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 11, 167–203.

Brandstatter, V., Heimbeck, D., Malzacher, J.T., and Frese, M. (2003). Goals need implementation intentions: The model of action phases tested in the applied setting of continuing education. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 12(1), 37–59.

Branson, R. (2010). *Screw it, let's do it. 14 Lessons on making it to the top while having fun & staying green*. London: Virgin Books.

Brenner, O.C., Pringle, C.D. and Greenhaus, J.H. (1991). Perceived fulfilment of organizational employment versus entrepreneurship: Work values and career intentions of business college graduates. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 29, 62–73.

Brockner, J., Higgins, E.T., & Low, M.B. (2004). Regulatory focus theory and the entrepreneurial process. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 19(2), 203–220.

Cardon M.S., Zietsma C., Saparito P., Matherne B.P., and Davis, C. (2005). A tale of passion: New insights into entrepreneurship from a motherhood perspective. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 20, 23–35.

Covey, S. (1989). *The seven habits of highly effective people. Restoring the character ethic.* New York: Fireside Books.

De Dreu, C. K. W., Baas, M., & Nijstad, B. A. (2008). Hedonic tone and activation in the mood creativity link: Towards a dual pathway to creativity model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 94*, 739–756.

Dimov, D. (2007). From opportunity insight to opportunity intention: The importance of person- situation learning match. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, 31(4), 561–583.

Frese, M. (2007). The psychological actions and entrepreneurial success: An action theory approach. In: Baum, J.R., Frese, M., & Baron, R.A. (eds.), *The psychology of entrepreneurship*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Frese, M. (2009). Toward a psychology of entrepreneurship: An action theory perspective. Foundations and Trends in Entrepreneurship, 5(6), 435–494.

Frese, M., and Fay, D. (2001). Personal initiative (PI): A concept for work in the 21st century. Research in Organizational Behavior, 23, 133–188.

Gibb, A.A. (1993). The enterprise culture and education. *International Small Business Journal*, 11(3), 11–34.

Gollwitzer, P.M. (1996). The volitional benefits of planning. In: P.M. Gollwitzer & J.A. Bargh (Eds.), *The psychology of action: Linking cognition and motivation to behavior*, pp. 287–312. New York: Guilford.

Gollwitzer, P.M. (1999). Implementation intentions. Strong effects of simple plans. *American Psychologist*, 54(7), 493–503.

Gollwitzer, P. (2001). Volition. In: Kazdin, A.E. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greve, A. (2001). Traps and gaps in action explanation. *Psychological Review*, 108, 435–451.

Hayward, M. L. A., Shepherd, D. A., & Griffin, D. (2006). A hubris theory of entrepreneurship. *Management Science, 52*, 160–172.

Kanfer, R. (1990), Motivation theory and industrial and organizational psychology, In: Dunnette, M. D & Hough, L.M. (Eds), Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology. Vol. 1 (2nd ed.), Palo Alto, CA, US: Consulting Psychologists Press, pp. 75–170.

Kautonen, T., Van Gelderen, M.W., & Tornikoski, E. (2013). Predicting entrepreneurial behaviour: A test of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. *Applied Economics*, *45*, 697–707.

Kautonen, T., Van Gelderen, M.W., & Fink, M. (2015). Robustness of the Theory of Planned Behavior in predicting entrepreneurial intentions and actions. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, *39(3)*, *655-674*.

Kuhl, J., & Beckmann, J. (1994). *Volition and personality: Action versus state orientation.* Seattle, WA: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers.

Livingston, J. (2008). *Founders at work*. New York: Springer.

Loewenstein, G.F., Weber, E.U., Hsee, C.K., and Welch, N. (2001). Risk as feelings. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(2), 267–286.

Mainemelis, C., & Ronson, S. (2006). Towards a theory of play and creativity in organizational settings. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 27*, 81–131.

McClelland, D. C. (1961). *The achieving society*. New York: Van Nostrand.

Mintzberg, H., and Westley, F. (2001). Decision making: It's not what you think. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 42*, 89–93.

Mitchell, R.K., Smith, J.B., Morse, E.A., Seawright, K.W., Peredo, A.M., and McKenzie, B. (2002). Are entrepreneurial cognitions universal? Assessing entrepreneurial cognitions across cultures. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice,* 26 (4), 9–33.

Mitchell, R.K., Smith, J.B., Seawright, K.W, and Morse, E.A. (2000). Cross-cultural decisions and the venture creation decision. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43 (5), 974–994.

Mitchell, R.K., Busenitz, L.W., Bird, B., Gaglio, C.M., McMullen, J.S., Morse, E.A., and Smith, J.B. (2007). The central question in entrepreneurial cognition research. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, 31(1), 1–27.

Muraven, M.R., and Baumeister, R.F. (2000). Self-regulation and depletion of limited resources: Does self-control resemble a muscle? *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 247–259.

Parker, S. K. (2000). From passive to proactive motivation: The importance of flexible role orientations and role breadth self-efficacy. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 49, 447–469.

Rachman, S.J. (2004). Fear and courage: A psychological perspective. *Social Research*, 71(1), 149–176.

Read, S., Sarasvathy, S., Dew, N., Wiltbank, R., & Ohlsson, A-V. (2011). *Effectual entrepreneurship*. London: Routledge.

Sarasvathy, S.D. (2001). Causation and effectuation: Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 243–263.

Schmeichel, B.J., and Baumeister, R.F. (2004). Self-regulatory strength. In: Baumeister, R.F., and Vohs, K.D. (eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation. Research, theory and applications*, pp. 84–98. New York: Guilford Press.

Shapero, A., & Sokol, L. (1982). Social dimensions of entrepreneurship. In: C. Kent, D. Sexton and K. Vesper (eds). *The encyclopedia of entrepreneurship*, pp. 72–90. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Sheeran P (2002). Intention-behaviour relations: A conceptual and empirical overview. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 12(1), 1–36.

Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrationation: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(1), 65–94.

Van Eerde, W. (2000). Procrastination: Self-regulation in initiating aversive goals. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 49(3), 372–389.

Van Gelderen, M.W. (2014). *Empowerment through enterprising competencies. A research based developmental program*. Published at www.enterprisingcompetencies.com.

Van Gelderen, M.W. (2017a). *Generating initial ideas for new venture opportunities*. Published at www.enterprisingcompetencies.com.

Van Gelderen, M.W. (2017d). Perseverance strategies of enterprising individuals. Published at www.enterprisingcompetencies.com.

Van Gelderen, M.W., Brand, M., van Praag, M., Bodewes, W., Poutsma, E., and van Gils, A. (2008). Explaining entrepreneurial intentions by means of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. *Career Development International*, 13, 6, 538–559.

Van Gelderen, M.W., Kautonen, T., & Fink, M. (2015). From entrepreneurial intentions to actions: Self-control versus action-level doubt, fear, and aversion. *Journal of Business Venturing, 30*(5), 655-673.

Zahra, S., Sapienza, H. & Davidsson, P. (2006). Entrepreneurship and dynamic capabilities: a review, model and research agenda. *Journal of Management Studies, 43*, 917–955.