**INTERVIEWING AN ENTREPRENEUR**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION: POSSIBLE ENTREPRENEUR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Basic Questions**

1. What is your definition of an entrepreneur?
2. Why did you choose to be an entrepreneur?
3. How do you motivate yourself?
4. Why did you choose the type of business you are presently in?
5. Have you been in any other type of business that you owned ?
6. What are some of the pros and cons of being an entrepreneur ?
7. When did you first decide that you wanted to work for yourself?
8. What were your career plans when you graduated from high school?
9. How many hours do you work per week?
10. Do you enjoy doing something just to prove you can?
11. Do you believe that there should be security in a job?
12. Do you plan your tasks before getting started?
13. What are your hobbies?
14. How much time do you spend watching television?
15. How much time to you spend with friends and family?
16. Do you feel that owning your own business has been worth the conflicts that you had to deal with?

**Background of the Entrepreneur**

1. Were any of your relatives or close friends involved in entrepreneurial activities?
   1. If so, briefly describe these activities.
2. Describe your secondary school education experience (courses taken, subjects liked, extracurricular activities, particularly as these relate in some way to entrepreneurship).
   1. Which of these experiences proved valuable and which proved irrelevant to your present endeavour?
3. What previous types of work experiences did you have?
   1. How was this experience helpful to you in relation to your present enterprise?
4. Had you any sales or marketing experience prior to starting your own enterprise?
   1. How important was this experience, or lack thereof, in starting your own enterprise?
5. How did you spot the opportunity or develop the idea for your enterprise?
6. What types of goals did you have just prior to starting your own enterprise?
7. What type of lifestyle did you have just prior to when you started your enterprise?
8. How did you evaluate your idea or opportunity in terms of:
   1. Market?
   2. The competition?
   3. Key elements of success?
9. What type of planning did you do prior to starting up?
10. How did you obtain the necessary funds to start up your enterprise?
11. Did you prepare an entrepreneurial plan prior to start-up?
    1. (If answer is yes:) Was the plan helpful in the preparation for your start-up?
    2. What lessons did you learn from the preparation of an entrepreneurial plan?

**Operations (Early Stage)**

1. How much capital was invested in your enterprise?
2. How long did you take to reach a positive cash-flow position (break-even point)?
3. How long did it take for your company to show a profit?
4. What pressures did you face in the early stages of your enterprise?
5. What type of outside help were you able to obtain? (Lawyers, accountants, tax experts, patent and trademark specialists, etc.)
6. Explain how these experts were able to help you in your enterprise.
7. What did you learn about yourself during this start-up experience?
8. What did you discover about your strengths and weaknesses?
9. What has been the highlight of your entrepreneurial career to date?
10. What has been the low point of your entrepreneurial career?
11. What do you see as the strengths of your enterprise?
12. What do you see as the weaknesses of your enterprise?

**Operations (Later Stage)**

1. What problems did you discover once your operation was well under way?
2. How did you find the key people for your enterprise?
3. What personal attitudes, characteristics, and skills were necessary for the success of your enterprise?
4. Do you spend more or less time at your enterprise now than in the early stage?
5. What are your future plans for this enterprise?
6. Have you met your initial goals?
7. Have your goals changed?
8. What are your present goals ?

**Personal Observations**

1. Has your personal life changed as a result of this enterprise ?
2. What would you do differently if you were to start all over again?
3. What things would you not change if you were to do this all again?
4. Looking back on your experience, which of the following do you feel are the most critical:
   1. Skills?
   2. Attitude?
   3. Knowledge?
5. What are the things that you find personally satisfying and rewarding as an entrepreneur ?
6. What advice would you give an aspiring entrepreneur?
7. What are the most important lessons you have learned as a result of your experience?

(adapted *from Jeffrey* A. Timm New Venture Creation: Entrepreneurship in the 1990s. *3rd. ed.* Boston, MA: Publications, 1990)