From IT Employee to IT Entrepreneur: The Concept of IT Entrepreneurial Epiphany
Gaëtan Mourmant and Katerina Voutsina

Summary
Martti Vasar

Background

IT personnel turnover is one of the fields which are understudied. As this is real world problem it should have better overview within the literature. Getting the idea why people tend to leave is hard, because there is little data available and it is scattered between different studies. This study tries to link different methods to get better understanding why people are leaving and what gives them the cause for making their own companies.

This paper introduces a conceptual model to describe the turnover and starting own business process and authors of this paper call it as IT Entrepreneurial Epiphany (ITEE). Epiphany means according to Webster dictionary following: “an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure”.

This study includes IT Entrepreneurial Turnover model that will frame and set the scene for the factors that triggers changes in workers’ attitude and introduce theoretical construct of IT Entrepreneurial Epiphany. 57 cases were collected for this study from France, Canada, the US and Greece.

Proposed Model for Determining Turnover

This paper tries to find turnover models from different studies. One that suits the best is IT Entrepreneurial Turnover model proposed by Mourmant et al. (2009) and was attempt to get better overview between intention and actual turnover behavior among the employees. This contains Readiness To Quit (RTQ) and Necessary Conditions To Quit (NCQ) models. RTQ is an image representing the current configuration that influences the decision to quit by employee in current timeframe. The latter one NCQ is RTQ in the moment when employee is actually leaving their job. When RTQ dimensions meats the NCQ configuration then the worker realizes that it is right time to move on. It is called Image violation in the study.

There are two events when employee is ready to quit his/her job and start a new venture: (i) the first is when RTQ gradually changes and meats NCQ requirements and (ii) the second is when catalytic event occurs and changes employee’s attitude significantly. First event is more predictable than the second one and therefore the study mainly looks for events based on the RTQ/NCQ model image violation.

Three main dimensions for RTQ and NCQ were selected out that were mostly influencing workers decisions in quitting: perceived level of self-efficacy in marketing skills, perceived
level of self-efficacy in IT skills and perceived state of job satisfaction. These dimensions are measured by degree of intensity in the form of low to high. Study concluded from interviews that marketing skills are very important, when people tend to leave their job, as it reduces risks and nascent (to-be) entrepreneurs can get better overview of the business rules.

Bad side about the Mourmant model is that it does not show the worker’s epiphany moment. Therefore current study takes it little bit deeper and tries to connect turnover with making a new business. Based on interview data and other studies conceptual model of IT Entrepreneurial Epiphany has proposed by authors, which includes 5 lower-level concepts:

- Understanding the business game
- The estimation of the risk involved in the new venture
- External environmental context
- Dimension of time
- Long-term considerations

**Findings**

Many nascent (to-be) entrepreneurs seem to vividly remember the point of time when epiphany moment happened. Also it should be mentioned that not all epiphanies are so obvious or memorable. The paper authors seems to think that most nascent entrepreneurs took that big step to make own business related to improving their skills in marketing. Many of the people had previously read marketing books and therefore they get to know and understand the rules of business game. This is one of the proposed lower-level concepts of the ITEE.

Not surprisingly, the IT entrepreneurs that were interviewed mentioned that marketing skills, negotiation skills, business and communication skills were the skills that they felt they lack the most.

Quitting a job and starting a business is risky step to take. Social network is one good way to reduce such a risk, as employees have built their trust among the others and if your name is known, you already have a backup contract in a pocket. Also new lower-level concept was proposed referring to the risk. It is (voluntary) naivety, as people were making rash decision and were not aware what starting a business can mean.

**Conclusion**

Being aware of the models and purposes why employees tend to leave from salaried employment and move on is a critical issue for CIOs, future IT entrepreneurs and policy makers. These proposed models can reduce the risk that workers may leave theor job as entrepreneurs could be more active and take pro-actions to avoid this. Policy makers can aim at fostering entrepreneurship as it is beneficial for country’s marketing. Last but not least IT employees can get some guidance from this paper to get better overview, what they might expect or what they have to concern when really taking this big step to leave their salaried job.