

From student to CEO: 8 lessons for young entrepreneurs

By Kimberley Taylor^{30 May 2025}

There was a point in my entrepreneurial journey where I went from being the person asking others to being the one asked - for advice, for insights, to listen to my pitch, for the “secret” to building business, or to facilitate introductions. And while I'm a long way off from knowing it all because neither can I know it all, nor do I want to know it all, here are eight of the lessons I've learned in building Loop.



Kimberley Taylor, founder & CEO of Loop

1. Assumption error

Too often we assume rather than ask. We assume somebody else is going to solve the problem, or that the solution already exists. But everybody else is assuming the same, leaving plenty of room for solutions and opportunities.

Curiosity is key. Be curious about the problem, the process, the people and the possibilities.

Test your assumptions constantly. Both about how the world could look and what you believe it should look like.

2. Try on new things

As an entrepreneur I give myself permission to try on new things, almost like stepping into a character. It could be that I'm inspired by how someone carries themselves in a meeting - I allow myself to “try it on” for myself.

It's about stepping into a space that you want to. Or to draw on what inspires you. As entrepreneurs we are and have to be - curious and willing to grow and evolve constantly. A big part of that is trying on new things to see what fits, what is flattering and what is functional.

3. Build in boiler rooms, not boardrooms

In business you need to get your hands dirty. We can't only theoretically conceptualise solutions to business problems in boardrooms. We need to get into the boiler room to understand what the actual problem is we're trying to solve.

I also believe we need to feel the problem. When we have empathy with the person whose business challenge we're trying to solve, we're better able to understand the nuances and complexity and thus more likely to solve in an effective and relevant way.



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4. So, what?

In my experience, entrepreneurs are innately curious. We've only got to look at children to know that's true for all of us.

Beyond just being curious, we need to constantly ask "so what?"

"So what?" is a question that prompts us to think further, to think beyond the obvious, to embrace the unexpected. It needs to be asked all the time and about everything in business (and life).

5. Be the HGB

HGB is for "hot girl or guy at the bar". Hear me out on this one. It's about attracting, not hard selling.

In business that means ensuring your product is able to sell itself (attracting) because the features and functionality are appealing to the potential customer as it solves a specific business problem.

When your product is the hot girl or guy at the bar, it doesn't shout "look at me, buy me a drink" but rather it carries itself in a way that others find interesting and appealing. Everything that looks good must be supported by the substance on the inside.



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6. Make yourself the villain

When things don't work out the way we'd like, it's easy to play the blame game. But imagine the situation as a story where you're the villain to allow yourself to take responsibility for your part in it.

I have found this to be an effective way of regaining control - and finding the lesson in it. We're not in control of the people around us, so we can only - and must - control our own actions. We also tend to spend less time being angry at ourselves than at others, so the sooner we recognise and accept our role in an undesirable situation, the faster we can learn from it and move on.

Blame limits, but bravery creates an opportunity to learn.

7. One small step

The difference between having an idea and a business is action. Action is what sets us apart - you are either the person that talks about being fit, or you're the person who gets up consistently to go for a run. You're either the person who talks about the big idea, or the one that builds the deck or makes the call.

Big things are overwhelming so start small. I believe that courage builds confidence, and the way to be courageous is simply to find the next small thing to do - make a list of potential clients, write a script of what to say to these clients - whatever small thing you can manage. But keep moving forward because that's what momentum is.



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8. The struggle is real

Not only is the struggle real, it is also very important. People will make assumptions about you or try to put you in a box. One I hear often is "your dad must be rich" (that is not the case). I am the product of my past this is true for all of us - and because of a chaotic home life in my early years, I learned that life's not fair, but we must find purpose in it anyway.

As a child I loved the story of *Matilda* by Roald Dahl. The young character's ability to think herself out of an undesirable situation is something that I recognised as a superpower at age eight. Today, my version of Matilda's abilities is to write down what I want the end story to be. I ask myself what, when I eventually look back on a particular period or project or challenge, what is it that I want it to look like, ideally. Call it reverse-engineering but I have found it to be a powerful way of taking ownership of a situation. And recognise the struggle in that and do it anyway.

There is purpose on the other side of the hard things we go through. This belief has really helped me build resilience through the many challenges I've faced in life and business.

As countless entrepreneurs have said before me, and will no doubt continue to say, business is a combination of luck and timing. But you still need to work hard and smart, and do all the things.

Together with the working and the doing, lean into what inspires you and the eventual outcome is certain to be beyond what you could imagine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kimberley Taylor, is the founder & CEO of Loop.

Taylor is a young, tech savvy female entrepreneur who is making waves through invaluable technology applications in the logistics space. She is the brains behind Loop – an adaptable, intuitive delivery management platform that empowers companies through enabling them to cleverly optimise and scale their delivery systems.

She wrote an algorithm that has helped to solve some real-world problems in the logistics space. This platform has enabled South Africa's largest nationwide grocery business to deliver within 60 minutes.

Loop connects delivery companies with all the players in their operation, from suppliers to customers. It allows dispatch managers to make delivery decisions based on efficiency and cost, guided by data from daily operations, which Loop scrutinises so that businesses can save time and money. It's a completely customisable app that supports each operational tier from the top down.

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