

**"A MUST-READ!"**

—Steve Blank, father of the Lean Startup movement  
and coauthor, *The Startup Owner's Manual*

**How **Builder Personality**  
Shapes Your Business,  
Your Team, and  
Your Ability to Win**

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# BUILT FOR



# GROWTH

**CHRIS KUENNE | JOHN DANNER**

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PRESS



**How Builder Personality  
Shapes Your Business,  
Your Team, and  
Your Ability to Win**

THE ASIA FOUNDATION  
NOT FOR RE-SALE

QUÀ TẶNG CỦA QUỸ CHÂU Á  
KHÔNG ĐƯỢC BÁN LẠI

# BUILT FOR

GROWTH

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**CHRIS KUENNE AND JOHN DANNER**

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# 1

## BUILDER PERSONALITY

### The Essential Force for Growth

Building for growth is *the* business imperative for every entrepreneur, leader, manager, and company. So, are you built for growth? Because who you are shapes how you build.

If you're a builder of a new business—whether you're running an independent startup or a new venture inside an existing company—you face a unique set of challenges. You must convert your ideas into products, galvanize individual talent for collaborative impact, transform buyers into partners, align financial and executive support, and elevate your business to meaningful scale. And all the while, you're fighting the status quo—often meeting powerful resistance to your new idea from people who don't get it.

We've been intrigued with these challenges—as advisers and consultants to organizations and startups, as investors in new businesses, as professors, and as business builders ourselves. Over our careers, we



## BUILT FOR GROWTH

have shared with hundreds of management teams and thousands of Princeton and Berkeley students the principles of starting and growing new businesses, and we have made investment decisions on dozens of fast-growing startups across the market landscape. Through each of these vantage points, we are constantly amazed by the variety of paths leaders and entrepreneurs take to build successful, growing ventures.

Probably like you, we wondered if it's possible to codify the different paths of success. Who succeeds, and how? Are there hidden patterns that determine the success of building and growing a new business? How can someone get better at it?

To answer these questions, we employed a patented research methodology to better understand who builds successful new businesses and how they do so (see "Our Research Approach" in the shaded pages at the end of this chapter and Appendix A for a discussion of our research methodology). In addition, we reviewed the literature on successful entrepreneurs and conducted in-depth interviews with dozens of seasoned business builders.

Our conclusion—and the core idea on which this book is based—is that the personality of the leader or founder is *the* animating force in building any new business. That is, the particular combination of beliefs and preferences that reflects his or her motivation, decision-making mode, management approach, and leadership style. These factors play out dramatically throughout the startup and scaling of a new business. The Builder's Personality is the essential engine of shaping the team, product, and overall business—but can also be a formidable obstacle to them. Anyone involved in leading, supporting, or funding new businesses needs to understand how the force of the Builder Personality impacts the growth process.

Of course, many elements shape the success or failure of a new business, whether it's a stand-alone startup or a new venture inside



a larger corporation. Regardless of the setting, both builders are engaged in “the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled,” as Howard Stevenson, the renowned Harvard Business School professor, defined entrepreneurship.<sup>1</sup> But unlike the other resources you need to successfully grow a business, personality is the one directly—and quintessentially—in your control.

This book decodes the interplay between the business founder’s personality and the dynamics of growing a business. Our research has revealed four Builder Personalities, and we demonstrate how each one succeeds and fails in different ways in growing a new business. In this practical book, we provide you with tools and examples for assessing your own personality and blueprints to help you apply these ideas to grow your business, build your team, and win.

## **The Four Business Builder Personalities**

Our research has discovered there is no single type of highly successful business builder, but rather four distinct Builder Personalities. We call them the Driver, Explorer, Crusader, and Captain. Each Builder Personality Type builds for growth in markedly different ways, based on four discriminating factors—their motivation to become an entrepreneur and their styles of decision-making mode, management approach, and leadership style. Chapters 2 through 5 discuss each of these builder personalities and give examples and stories illustrating how they work. For now, here are brief descriptions of each personality. Which one sounds most like you? After you have read these summaries of the four types, look for the section “Which Builder Personality Is Most Similar to Yours?” for guidance on deciding which personality you are most like.