



## **SOLODSI – Solopreneurs' Digital Social Innovation**

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# **IO1: Educational Framework for Solopreneurs Education**

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**Social innovation aspects related to an autonomous job**

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## Contents

Possible solutions to carry out the educational program .....	5
Social innovation aspects related to an autonomous job.....	5
Course Schedule.....	5
Discussion Topics.....	5
Presentations .....	6
Reading .....	6
Assignment / Final work.....	6
Pass .....	6
Social solopreneurs' education .....	7
Introduction to the course .....	7
Social innovation .....	7
Development of social innovation in solopreneurs .....	8
Characteristics of a social innovation .....	8
Autonomous job.....	9
Autonomy in the operation of the enterprise .....	9
Entrepreneurship and self-employment .....	9
Social innovation applied to autonomous job .....	10
Characteristics of social innovation in an autonomous job .....	11
Skills to create a social solopreneur innovative business .....	12
Solopreneurs' Digital Social Innovation .....	13
Introduction .....	13
What are the characteristics of a solopreneur? .....	13
What are the types of solopreneur? .....	14
Solopreneur vs Entrepreneur .....	15
Description .....	15
Business Functions .....	15
Client Interaction.....	15
Business Presence .....	15
Funding.....	15
Freelancer vs Self-employed .....	15
Issues affecting self-employed and freelance workers.....	16



SOLODSI  
Solopreneurs' Digital Social Innovation

Advantages of solopreneurship.....	16
Disadvantages Of Solopreneurship.....	16
Tips To Become A Successful Solopreneur .....	17

## Possible solutions to carry out the educational program

The course can be developed in two phases:

- a. The virtual part
- b. Face to face – blended part

To be able to implement the first face, each partner should prepare:

1. Syllabus of their topics:
  - Objectives
  - Topic schedule
  - Methodology to be used
2. Course content:
  - Introduction
  - Topics developed
  - Check questions
3. PowerPoint - video materials

To be able to implement the second phase: Face to face – blended part, the partners should prepare

1. Workshops using collaborative learning
2. Case studies

## Social innovation aspects related to an autonomous job

**[INBIE-Topic]**

### Course Schedule

- Introduction to the course
- What is social innovation
- Development of social innovation in solopreneurs
- Characteristics of a social innovation
- What is an autonomous job
- Autonomy in the operation of the enterprise
- Entrepreneurship and self-employment
- Social innovation applied to autonomous job
- Characteristics of social innovation in an autonomous job
- Skills to create a social solopreneur innovative business

### Discussion Topics:

Learners will discuss in groups and give reports of the results to the learning community. Some examples of the topics to be discussed during lessons [workshops]

- What is social entrepreneurship?
- What is social innovation?
- What is solopreneurs?
- What is an autonomous job?
- Who is Social entrepreneurs?
- How to Identity an Opportunity?
- What is causing these new kinds of companies to be forming worldwide, i.e. why are entrepreneurs creating them? What need are they filling?
- How are they similar and/or different than non-profit organizations and other social service providers?
- Who is creating social enterprises?
- Are they successful? In what terms?
- What are some examples?

#### Presentations:

Course materials will be pass to learners before the course start

PowerPoint Presentation will be soon available after the teaching topic has been presented

#### Reading:

Gródek-Szostak, Zofia & Ochoa Siguencia, Luis & Kajrunajtys, Danuta. (2019). IMPACT OF BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTIONS ON EFFECTIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION. 10.21125/edulearn.2019.2702 [<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334491045>]

#### Assignment / Final work:

- Working in teams, a business plan will be developed for a new social enterprise of your own design.
- Each student will be given an opportunity to present their initial idea to the class.
- Teams will then be developed based on the idea.
- The social venture plan will encompass how the venture will achieved its impact and the plan itself.

#### Pass

Successful discussion of the final projects by the groups

## Social solopreneurs' education

### Introduction to the course

Innovations have a direct impact on the emergence and development of new technologies, new business solutions and the increase in the competitiveness of enterprises. The turbulence of the local and international environment forces business entities to take specific actions, including following the expectations of customers and a quick and appropriate response to social changes.

The change in the attitude of the economy from product to customer as the most important element of the market has also contributed to a change in the perspective of creating innovation and social innovation.

The classic division of innovation can be presented in three trends:

- product,
- process,
- marketing
- organizational innovations,

To the classic division, a new trend began to take shape social innovation.

### Social innovation

The main determinant of the popularity and development of social innovations are also open innovations, which are characterized by the use of both internal and external ideas in the market activity of enterprises

The existing definitions of social innovations are shaped primarily around the emerging benefits for a selected social group. One of the more general definitions points to "A new solution to a social problem that is more efficient, effective, sustainable or equitable than the existing solutions, and the benefits of this innovation primarily accrue to society as a whole, and not to private persons.

Innovations are not only created as a result of the desire to solve problems, but also as an additional, unexpected value, resulting from coincidences, or simply due to the development of technology. Often there are social innovations determinants of social, demographic, geopolitical, urban changes or any cultural changes reflected in the selected society.

The European Commission adopts a fairly general definition, which can be found as new ideas, services or models that better address social issues<sup>1</sup>. Entrepreneurship and self-employment help:

- create jobs
- develop skills

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<sup>1</sup> Employment, social Affairs & inclusion. (n.d.). Retrieved April 05, 2021, from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/>

- give unemployed and vulnerable people an opportunity to fully participate in society and the economy.

The Europe 2020 strategy recognises *entrepreneurship* and *self-employment* as key for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In its support to entrepreneurship and self-employment, the European Commission focuses its efforts on<sup>2</sup>:

- business start-ups by unemployed and people from vulnerable groups
- support for social entrepreneurs
- microfinance

The stimulus to create innovation is often the observation of the market,  
demographic processes or social attitudes



### Development of social innovation in solopreneurs

The basis for the further development of social innovations seems to be the information society, where one of the most important determinants is the efficiency of using resources in the form of information.

Active participation of society in shaping changes is a consequence of the will to improve the quality of life. Where the quality of life can be understood as the comfort of life, taking into account the prohibition of wasting those elements that may raise it or prolong its duration

Social innovations, similarly to other types of innovations, should be characterized by an element of innovation, which does not necessarily have to be on a global scale. It is enough to refer to the country, local community, industry or even the enterprise itself.

The second important element is the implementation, i.e. the practical application of a specific solution or product. In the context of social innovations, the social benefits resulting from the implementation are also an important element.

The profits from exploitation should primarily target the users (group or society as a whole).

### Characteristics of a social innovation

The main characteristic of a social innovation is the implementation of a new solution or product characterized primarily by social benefits and the lack of financial benefits for bidders at the expense of users.

To be more specific, it should be noted that the term "new" depends on the point of reference, changes may be qualified here only from the point of view of enterprises and new products on a global scale.

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<sup>2</sup> Supporting entrepreneurs and the self-employed. (n.d.). Retrieved April 05, 2021, from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=952&langId=en>



On the other hand, social benefits are recognized as an improvement in the quality of life, and at the level of online business, an improvement for the e-customer online, both in terms of security, duration, economic benefits, as well as convenience and usefulness.

### Autonomous job

Can be defined as independence, ability to make decisions on one's own. Autonomy means the ability to manage one's own actions responsibly and to take full responsibility for them.

We can distinguish six types of autonomy:

- *behavioural*: ability to make an independent choice and behaviour, regardless of the expectations and opinions of others
- *emotional*: emotional independence regardless of someone's acceptance
- *cognitive-evaluative*: having your own opinion, values, the ability to evaluate and responsibility for your behaviour
- *identity*: ability to perceive oneself through the prism of uniqueness, noticing the differences between "I" and "others"
- *instrumental*: ability to fulfil social roles, perform tasks and activities
- *economic*: ability to ensure one's material existence

### Autonomy in the operation of the enterprise

SOLODSI enterprises must follow certain rules in their business activities.

The most important are the principle of entrepreneurship, profitability entrepreneurship. Profit maximization, and autonomy are also often mentioned. In a small businesses and self-employed, we can distinguish two types of autonomy:

- internal autonomy (it gives the owner or persons authorized by him the exclusive right to make key decisions regarding the business activity of the enterprise)
- external autonomy (it means leaving the company a free hand, full freedom to take advantage of the opportunities that appear on the market without outside interference.

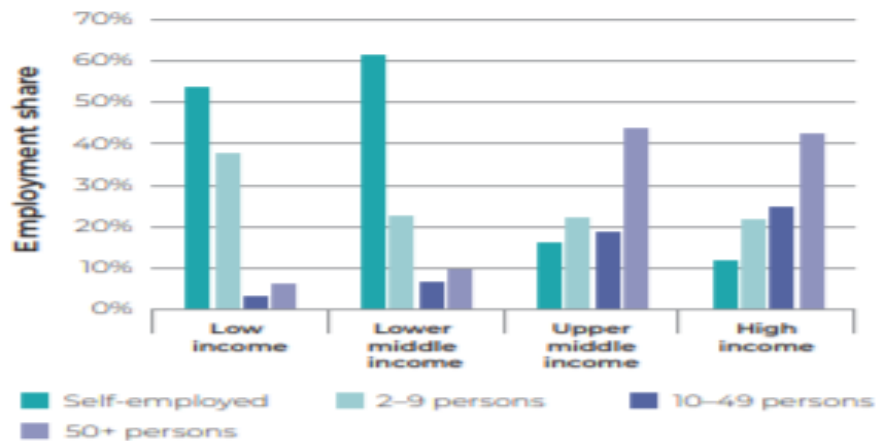
### Entrepreneurship and self-employment

The most recent estimates published in the “*International Labour Organization*” report, suggest that the self-employed and micro-enterprises alone have a combined share in total employment of between 80 and 90 per cent in low - and middle - income countries. The contribution of small economic units to worldwide total employment is significant, but there remain considerable challenges such as widespread informal employment (especially in developing countries), gender gaps, and issues related to the productivity and quality of the jobs offered by smaller firms<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> ILO, SMALL MATTERS: Global evidence on the contribution to employment by the self-employed, micro-enterprises and SMEs. (n.d.). International Labour Organization 2019. Downloaded 5.04.2021 from: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_723282.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_723282.pdf)

**New estimates (2019) of the employment share of the self-employed and different firm size classes, by country income group (%)**



Source: ILO calculations, August 2019.

This fact is important to take into account when planning our own business

Entrepreneurship and self-employment help:

- create jobs
- develop skills
- give unemployed and vulnerable people an opportunity to fully participate in society and the economy.

The Europe 2020 strategy recognises entrepreneurship and self-employment as key for achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In its support to entrepreneurship and self-employment, the European Commission focuses its efforts on<sup>4</sup>:

- business start-ups by unemployed and people from vulnerable groups
- support for social entrepreneurs
- microfinance

### Social innovation applied to autonomous job

A SOLODSI managed enterprise should take into account social needs in its strategy and treat the society and various social groups as important stakeholders having an impact on its functioning and the possibility of achieving market success. This is due to the fact that social needs are not only pure charity activities, but can be a source of generating new ideas, creating new markets, offering new values and technologies. Satisfying these needs can translate not only into profits, but also into improving the enterprises' image as innovative and serving the environment.

A solopreneur should therefore build its reputation by engaging in activities that make strategic stakeholders perceive it as a reliable, trustworthy, responsible and credible organization.

<sup>4</sup> Supporting entrepreneurs and the self-employed. (n.d.). Retrieved April 05, 2021, from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=952&langId=en>

The credibility of an organization is of great economic value. It is an essential aspect of the identity of each subject and determines the nature of its relationship with the environment. Creation of high credibility takes place through excellent marketing and innovation as well as activities for the common good.

Social innovation in "autonomous job" should use both internal and external ideas to generate innovation and internal and external channels for diffusion of innovation into the market. The concept of an open innovation is based on the following principles<sup>5</sup>:

- you have to cooperate with people both inside and outside the business
- external R&D can create significant value, and internal R&D is needed to capture some of that value;
- you do not need to initiate research to profit from it
- building better business models is better than being the first in the market
- if the organization makes the best use of internal and external ideas, it will win
- the enterprise should benefit from the use of its intellectual property by others and should buy the intellectual property of others whenever it is beneficial for its own business model

### Characteristics of social innovation in an autonomous job

The system of social innovation is therefore open, as well as multidisciplinary, integrated and participatory (with a large participation of citizens and users). It is driven by demand, not supply, and is geared to individual needs rather than mass production.

Social innovations include novelty, transition from idea to implementation, effectiveness, meeting a social need, and improving society's ability to act.

Social innovations in an autonomous job are characterized by features such as:

- *Cross-sectoral* - these innovations often "shift" between sectors, occur on the border between them and involve people working in different sectors in joint action.
- *Collaboration* - social innovation often involves a large number of people and community organizations.
- *Bottom-up actions* - social innovations are often bottom-up actions, they are distributed and local actions.
- Prosumers and co-production - the boundary between producer and consumer is becoming increasingly blurred. Users become producers (they are then called prosumers). Users are involved in the provision of services, responsibility and resources are transferred from professionals to users, which is referred to as co-production.
- *Mutualism* - These innovations come with the belief that individual and collective well-being can only be achieved through mutual help. In recent years, a new mutualism has emerged - thanks to new ICT it is possible to exchange within spontaneously emerging networks, such as peer to peer networks.
- *Creating new roles and social relationships* - social innovations are associated with and developed by users, not just delivered to users. This means that they can create new

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<sup>5</sup> W. Kwaśnicki, Innowacje społeczne – nowy paradygmat czy kolejny etap w rozwoju kreatywności człowieka? <http://kwasnicki.prawo.uni.wroc.pl/todownload/InnowacjeSpoleczneWK.pdf>, 4.05.2014, s. 4.

social relationships. They can also create new roles for users and beneficiaries, empowering them in society and enabling them to better meet their needs in the long term.

- *Better use of funds and resources* - These innovations often allow for a better use of resources and assets that in many situations could be wasted, unused or not used at all.
- *Resource and Capability Development* - Many social innovations are clearly aimed at developing the capacity of beneficiaries to meet their needs in the long term.

### Skills to create a social solopreneur innovative business

To create a social innovation solopreneur organization / business with an autonomous characteristic, it is necessary to develop soft, marketing skills in our target group:

- *Human Resource management and coordinating with others*: communication skills as listening, non-verbal communication, persuasion, ability to collaborate in conflict situations, accepting divergent thoughts
- *Critical thinking and complex problem solving*: attitude to critical, lateral and logical thinking
- *Judgement and decision making*: ability to work under stress and management and solve problems and disputes
- *Emotional intelligence*: handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically
- *Negotiation and cognitive flexibility*
- *Ability to seize an opportunity*
- *Creativity and innovation*, sources of ideas, from ideas to opportunity
- *Support system for start-up* of solopreneur business
- *Tools and resources* available
- *Time management*

## Solopreneurs' Digital Social Innovation

### Introduction

When starting a business, a senior must make many key decisions. A business owner might choose to branch out, establish different departments and ultimately hire employees.

Or they might go solo.

Solopreneurship at its core work on a very simple principle – grind and hustle alone. But what makes it different from entrepreneurship? What dimensions a senior must be aware of before venturing into this field?

Let's find out.

A solopreneur is an individual who owns, manages and runs a venture independently without the support of co-founders, partners, and employees, taking on greater than normal financial risks in order to do so.

Solopreneurs prefers to work alone and handle all key business functions. They are responsible to:

- Develop the offering with independent R&D,
- Introduce the offering to the market,
- Advertise, market and build clientele,
- Manage the entire supply chain from sourcing to final delivery to the user,
- Handle finances of the business

An artist working independently is an example of solopreneur. Their responsibility ranges from building connections, sourcing the required materials, financing, marketing, to delivery of the end product.

They may choose to hire independent contractors to achieve each task but all of the business functions are managed by them and them alone.

### What are the characteristics of a solopreneur?

There is no strict criteria to become a solopreneur. All it takes is an individual to convert an idea into an offering without any external help, taking more than normal financial risk.

However, every solopreneur shares some common characteristics:

- **Business Ownership:** They reside at the highest managerial level and do not report to anyone — they are their own boss. Moreover, they do not have cofounders, partners or shareholders to share profit from the business.
- **High Risk Taking:** Solopreneurs take more than normal financial and emotional risks as they run the venture alone.

- **Versatility:** They don't have a team of specialists to help them in business operations. They are highly versatile individuals that handle a variety of tasks over the course of a day.
- **Accountability:** They are accountable for everything they or their business does.
- **Resourcefulness:** A solopreneur usually has limited resources. But because of that, they learn to find ways to get affordable resources to make their business happen.
- **Independence:** A solopreneur is independent to take the decisions they deem fit for their venture.
- **Extroversion:** They are the only face of their business. Hence they need to be extrovert to sell the same.
- **Strategist:** They are the strategist who always think a few steps ahead, carefully planning the future of their venture and their growing role in the venture.

### What are the types of solopreneur?

Solopreneurs are prevalent in every business domain and sector. Innovation and networking have opened up many career opportunities for them, which consequently diversified both their presence and function.

Following are the common types of solopreneurs in business ecosystem:

- **Freelancer:** They are self-employed individuals that provide an offering. For example, an independent App Developer is a freelancer.
- **Professional:** They provide independent professional services in the area of their expertise. For example, a Chartered Account is a professional.
- **Business Owner:** They own and run their business or agency but work alone. For example, an individual owning their graphic designing firm is a Business Owner.
- **Consultant:** They provide business advice and differ in their area/s of expertise. IT Consultants, Business Consultants, Travel Consultants are a few examples.
- **Infopreneur:** Infopreneurs collect, organise and sell information as an offering to consumers in niche markets. They can be course creators, bloggers, speakers or coaches.
- **Influencer:** These individuals use their media presence across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, etc. to provide an offering to their followers.

There are many other business ideas to become a solo-preneur. A person can become a digital marketer, independent instructor or open up a small flowering shop of all things. New technologies and policies have paved the way more diversity and in coming years, more and more opportunities will be created.

## Solopreneur vs Entrepreneur

The terms 'solopreneur' and 'entrepreneur' are often used interchangeably but they are some crucial differences that an individual must take into account before starting their own business:

### Description

- Solopreneurs run business alone without support of partners, co-founders and employees.
- Entrepreneurs run their own business with the support of their partners, co-founder and employees.

### Business Functions

- Solopreneurs They manage all aspects of their business from R&D, marketing, supply chain to sales.
- Entrepreneurs They diffuse business responsibilities to employees within different departments.

### Client Interaction

- Solopreneurs They interact with clients directly.
- Entrepreneurs They interact with clients either directly or assign an employee in their place.

### Business Presence

- Solopreneurs Their business generally have a local or online presence.
- Entrepreneurs Their business may branch out to other regions with an headquarter and multiple offices, each one operated by different set of employees.

### Funding

- Solopreneurs generally fund their business on their own (called bootstrapping).
- Entrepreneurs may bootstrap their business or seek financial support from external sources like VC firms, Angel Investors, etc.

## Freelancer vs Self-employed

Legally, freelancers and self-employed are the same thing, but there are a few differences. Firstly, all freelancers are self-employed, but not every self-employed person is a freelancer. Freelancers typically work on multiple short-term projects for different businesses, whereas self-employed are more likely to be entrepreneurs, business owners or start-up founders.

When it comes to paperwork and your legal status, however, both are the same.

The main difference between freelancers and self-employed is how you work. Legally, they're the same thing, but freelancers will tend to do multiple short-term jobs for lots of different businesses, while self-employed people are probably running their own business and have more autonomy.

Freelancers almost always work alone. For example, they work on a particular project for a client, usually for an hourly or set fee. However, what you usually think of as self-

employed are people who work for themselves in a registered business, who can also bring in employees or even freelancers to undertake work for them.

### Issues affecting self-employed and freelance workers

There are lots of advantages to being self-employed and freelance, as well as plenty of issues, namely insecurity. Unlike being employed, work isn't guaranteed. You will have to find work and clients yourself, which can be stressful at the best of times. This means your income could fluctuate every month, making it difficult to plan ahead or feel too secure.

It's also worth considering the price of becoming self-employed and starting your own business. There can be high start-up costs depending on the type of business you're setting up.

Even freelancers will have to deal with set up costs, like specialist equipment, software or more. With the switch from employment being a big investment, the right business insurance and freelance insurance can help protect you from financial insecurity.

### Advantages of solopreneurship

Perhaps the biggest advantage of being a solopreneur is 100% business ownership. But that is not the only advantage. Listed below are a few benefits that come with solopreneurship:

- **Decision Adaptability:** With no strings attached with shareholders or employees, a solopreneur has the flexibility to change and revamp business strategies, operations, target customers, etc.
- **Flexible Time:** They do not have designated work hours and can allocate work-time as per their convenience.
- **Less Financial Liability:** Since a solopreneur does not hire employees, they are not liable to pay salaries to anyone in the event of business failure.
- **Side Gig:** They can run their business as a side gig while having a full-time job.

### Disadvantages Of Solopreneurship

Being a solopreneur is not an easy endeavor and comes with its own challenges and shortcomings. Following are the common disadvantages of solopreneurship:

- **Hustle every day:** Lack of work hours often take a toll on a solopreneur's daily schedule with work frequently extending to bed-time.
- **Work during emergency:** When a client demands an offering urgently, a solopreneur either has to lose them by denying their request or make last minute changes to their work schedule to meet the demand.
- **Poor financial management:** They often mix personal and business finances (money used for the business) and budget poorly.
- **No added benefits:** They do not receive additional benefits like health insurance, rent allowance, travel allowance, etc., that are otherwise guaranteed by a company.



- **High risk:** They may not be adept in one more or business functions like marketing, finance, etc., which increases the risk of business failure.

## Tips To Become A Successful Solopreneur

To complete this work I decided to include some tips on how to become a successful solopreneur.

Going solo may be an intimidating and challenging venture but not impossible. Following are some tips of becoming a successful solopreneur:

- **Understand business:** Before deciding to become a solopreneur, it is important that an individual understands all the aspects of business. Understanding the business model, its functions, operations etc. are essential to succeed as a solopreneur.
- **Network, network, network:** A solopreneur is alone responsible to build their clientele through extensive networking.
- **Be Tech-savvy:** Technology is solopreneur's best friend. With technical tools for SEO, Analytics, digital marketing, web designing, etc., a solopreneur can not only build a steady only online presence but also grow their existing business further.
- **Automate:** By automating human capabilities wherever possible, a solopreneur increases business efficiency, and cuts down both time and costs.
- **Collaborate:** At times, solopreneurs can collaborate with other like-minded individuals and businesses to gain additional clients and increase presence.

Solo-entrepreneurship is ridden with risks and sacrifices. When venturing into this field, one must not only be passionate and confident but also willing to take risks that at any moment can take it all. But even with all its challenges, it is an exciting field with a plethora of opportunities and scope of learning.