Food4BrainTrain | Project Result 1
PROFESSIONAL PROFILE
of a food & beverage entrepreneur

Food4BrainTrain (F4BT)

Play Creative Grow Food Entrepreneur

KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training

PROJECT DISCLAIMER
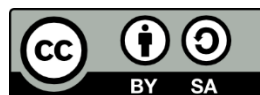
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Introduction

The objective of the realisation of this Professional Profile of a food & beverage entrepreneur is to develop a framework identifying competencies needed for the Food Entrepreneurs to innovate, be digitally competent, take on the risk of their own decisions and succeed in the market. It provides soft skills for entrepreneurship, digital skills, sustainability skills, dealing with the management of product and resources, revenue, sales and people.
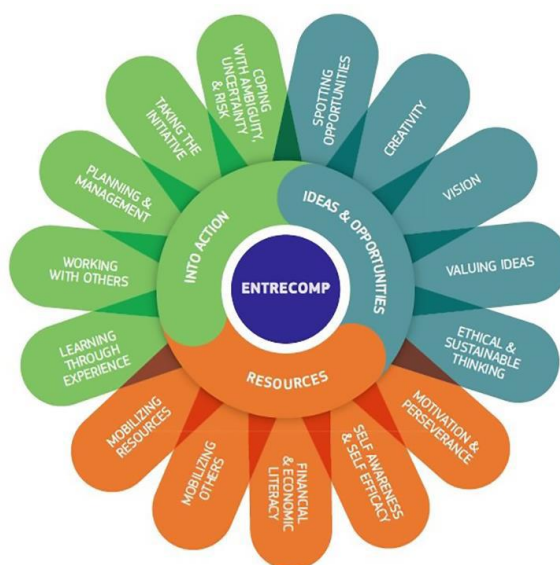
Competence Framework

Methodology

In order to facilitate the comparability, transferability, assessment and recognition of the learning outcomes that will be part of the training package (PR3), this professional profile was built upon 4 EfVET competence frameworks, listed below.

   a. Entrecomp: The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, also known as EntreComp, was developed by the European Commission as a reference framework to explain what is meant by an **entrepreneurial mindset**. The development of entrepreneurial competences has been a confirmed priority at European level for many years as part of the needs for a knowledge-based society. EntreComp offers a comprehensive description of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that people need to be entrepreneurial and create financial, cultural or social value for others. The framework identifies 15 competences identified into 3 areas (**Into action, Resources, Ideas & opportunities**) along an 8-level progression model and proposes a comprehensive list of 442 learning outcomes for all levels of education and training. Each learning outcome progressively built on previous ones creates a Life-Long-Learning sequence (Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced, Expert). The framework approaches entrepreneurship as a transversal mindset that can be found across different sectors, activities, and methodologies, including Food and Beverage. It is used in:
   ● supporting policy and practice to develop entrepreneurial skills
   ● assessing entrepreneurial skills
   ● supporting training of educators, trainers and teachers to deliver entrepreneurial skills
   ● to design programmes and learning opportunities
   ● to recognise and certify skills
   The framework has been recognized by the European Commission as being a key support for collaboration and development work by educators, trainers, employers, professional bodies and policy-makers, and is especially useful for

teachers of the formal and non-formal sector who are looking to develop entrepreneurial competences among their students. It has been used all over Europe as a tool to provide a common curriculum and set of competences across the EU.

b. GreenComp: the European Sustainability Competence Framework provides the knowledge, skills and attitudes to live, work and act in a **sustainable manner**. It is designed to provide education and training programmes for learners of any age, education and setting.

c. LifeComp: the European Framework for the Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence deals with the **interconnection and the constant changes of today's world**. It is a conceptual, non-prescriptive framework composed of **9 competences** fundamental to achieve personal fulfilment and satisfaction, develop ourselves and relate to others, learn how to learn and keep being employable. It is also essential for social inclusion and civic participation in society; its aim is to build a meaningful life, cope with complexity, create thriving individuals, responsible social agents, and reflective lifelong learners.

d. DigComp: the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens offers a tool to improve citizens' **digital competence**. It contains more than 250 examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes that help citizens engage confidently, critically and safely with digital technologies, including new and emerging ones.

A process of consultation among the project partners at the beginning of the project resulted in a synthesis of the salient competences belonging to the above-listed competence frameworks, which were used as a basis to design the questionnaire used for the **desk research** phase.

Professional Profile

Starting from the results (Annex 1, Annex 2), the partnership identified three macro-areas in which to identify and to frame the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to define the role of the Food Entrepreneur:

1. Entrepreneurial skills and competences

2. Digital skills and competences

3. Sustainability skills and competences

1. Entrepreneurial skills and competences

In the context of the ***EntreComp*** study, **entrepreneurship** is understood as a transversal key competence applicable by individuals and groups, including existing organisations, across all spheres of life. It is defined as follows:

"Entrepreneurship is when you act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural, or social".

This definition focuses on **value creation**, no matter what type of value or context: it covers value creation in any domain and possible value chain, referring to it in the private, public and third sectors and in any hybrid combination of the three. It thus embraces different types of entrepreneurship, including intrapreneurship, social entrepreneurship, green entrepreneurship and digital entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship as a competence applies to all spheres of life: it enables citizens to nurture their personal development, to actively contribute to social development, to enter the job market as employee or as self-employed, and to start-up or scale-up ventures which may have a cultural, social or commercial motive.

1.1 Building the right team with the right human resources

Two EntreComp *Resources* competences confirm the importance for a Food entrepreneur to build a team by exploiting and mobilising the right resources and people: by **mobilizing resources** is intended to gather and manage the material, non-material and digital resources needed to turn ideas into action, to make the most of the limited ones and to get and manage the competences needed at any stage, including technical, legal, tax and digital ones.

A Food entrepreneur should consider the financial, human and material **resources** needed to carry out a project, communicate with close networks to find what resources they have available, carefully track resources acquired and required and be aware of limited resources and confront this challenge. Many soft and specific skills can be used when mobilising specific resources: **numeracy skills, organisation skills** (retrieving and managing finances), **critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills** (coordinating the delivery and storage of tangible resources), **interpersonal skills, communication skills** (developing partnerships with skilled individuals).

A food entrepreneur should recognise that resources are not unlimited, appreciate the importance of sharing them with others, experiment with them to turn the ideas into action: he/she should be able to develop a plan for dealing with limited resources and to judge and to allocate enough of them to each step of the action plan, using them responsibly and efficiently (for example, energy, materials in the supply chain or manufacturing process, public spaces), taking into account the non-material cost of their use and designing innovative ways to lower the overall impact of the value-creating activity on the environment, the community and society, and measure the improvement.

Talking about **time**, a Food entrepreneur should be able to manage it effectively, using techniques and tools that help make him/her (or the team) productive, and then help others manage their time effectively, by putting in place effective time management procedures.

Finally, he/she should not forget to look for **support** when in difficulty, by identifying sources of help like public or private services (for example, incubator, social enterprise advisors, startup angels, chamber of commerce) and by finding digital solutions (for example, free, paid for, or open-source) or other kind of supports like advisor or consultancy services, peer or mentor. The Food entrepreneur should be able to effectively delegate tasks within and outside the organisation to make the most value (for example, outsourcing, partnering, acquisitions, crowdsourcing), developing a network of flexible and responsive providers from outside the organisation who support the activity.

Instead, by **mobilizing others** is intended to inspire, enthuse and get others on board, by involving relevant stakeholders, getting the support needed to achieve valuable outcomes and demonstrating effective communication, persuasion, negotiation and leadership. To do so, the objectives of a Food entrepreneur should be being aware of the main aspects of enthusiasm and **inspiration**, and of the importance of how to convince the target group. In order to convey ideas clearly and to get others interested and excited about them, **communication** is very important, as well as **persuasion** and **negotiation**.

By **inspiring** and getting inspired, a Food entrepreneur can show enthusiasm for challenges and thus inspire others, getting endorsement from them to support the activity and maintaining momentum with the team, partners and stakeholders when involved in a challenging situation.

Persuasion is the skill to share an idea in a passionate way, by providing a number of arguments and evidence, appealing to the emotions: this will lead to the ability to pitch effectively in front of potential investors or donors and to create a call to action that gets internal stakeholders on board, such as coworkers, partners, employees or senior managers. The ability to **communicate** effectively is fundamental to convey the team's ideas to stakeholders from different backgrounds persuasively by using different methods (for example posters, videos, role-play), to communicate imaginative design solutions, the vision for the venture in a way that inspires and persuades external groups (such as funders, partner organisations, volunteers, new members and affiliate supporters) producing narratives and scenarios that motivate, inspire and direct people, taking part in constructive discussions to get all relevant stakeholders to take responsibility to act on an opportunity for value creation. Finally, the effective use of media is essential to sustain and increase the support for the entrepreneur's vision: using appropriate media and social media, being aware of the target

audience and purpose, can influence opinions in relation to the business activity; the Food entrepreneur should be able to design effective social media and communication strategy campaigns to mobilise people.

1.2 Planning the tasks, organising and managing the team

The competence of planning and management belongs to the EntreComp *Into Action* area and it is the ability to set long-, medium- and short-term **goals**, to define priorities and action plans and to adapt to unforeseen changes. The Food entrepreneur must be able to clarify what his/her goals are (and also to identify alternative goals), in line with the strengths, ambitions, interests, achievements and vision for the value-creating activity. He/she will be able to design a strategy to achieve goals and to manage the balance between the need for creativity and for control.

It is fundamental to develop a sustainable **business plan** describing how to achieve the value by identifying the necessary steps to achieve the goals: by using planning methods such as business and marketing plans, keeping them updated and adapted to changing circumstances, the Food entrepreneur can organise the value-creating activities and deal with a range of different tasks at the same time. In this way he/she can design, develop and stick to a detailed project management plan, adjusting it to challenging circumstances to make sure goals are reached.

To do so, the entrepreneur should define **priorities**, identifying the steps needed in a value-creating activity and staying focused on them, despite changing circumstances.

At this stage he/she can **monitor progress**, that is the ability to recognise how much progress has been made on a task: the entrepreneur can set different milestones and observation indicators, identify different types of data (defining an appropriate way to collect them) and develop performance indicators that are necessary for monitoring progress towards a successful outcome in changing circumstances.

In addition, to cope with these skills and competences, the Food entrepreneur should be **flexible** and open to changes in a constructive way, in order to adapt plans to the needs of the team and to out-of-control events that could turn into new opportunities. With good monitoring and by analysing results, he/she will be able to anticipate changes to adjust vision, aims, priorities, resource planning, action steps or any other aspect of the value-creating process and to communicate to the organisation the reason for such changes and adjustments.

1.3 Learning through experience

Learning through experience belongs to the *Into Action* EntreComp area and it means learning by doing: it is the ability to use any initiative for value creation as a learning opportunity, to learn with others, including peers and mentors, and to reflect and learn from both success and failure (your own and other people's).

To do so, the Food entrepreneur must **learn to learn**, that means growing his/her abilities and competence with experience, through both successes and failures, reflecting on the relevance of learning pathways for future opportunities and choices. This will help to find and

choose opportunities to overcome the entrepreneur's or the team's weaknesses and strengths, designing and putting in place a strategy for the venture to continue to generate value.

It is very important to **reflect** on examples of temporary failures that have led to valuable achievements, identifying and judging their causes and learning from them: in this way the Food entrepreneur will be also able to help others reflect on their achievements and temporary failures by providing honest and constructive feedback, and therefore take the team or the organisation to a higher level of performance, based on the feedback collected and by learning lessons from achievements and failures.

Finally, reflecting on your own experience in taking part in value-creating activities and from interaction with others (including peers and mentors) and learning from it, leads to the **learning from experience**: the entrepreneur can filter the feedback provided by others and keep the good from it, integrating lifelong learning into his/her personal development strategy and career progress. At a more advanced and expert level, the entrepreneur is also able to help others reflect on their interaction with other people and help them learn from this interaction, designing impact-monitoring and evaluation activities to track the progress of the value-creating activity and establish them into his/her organisation's learning processes.

1.4 Flexibility (adapting to new situations)

It is the ability to **cope with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk**, described by the EntreComp framework in the *Into Action* macro-area: the Food entrepreneur should be able to make decisions when the result of that decision is uncertain, when the information available is partial or ambiguous, or when there is a risk of unintended outcomes. Within the value-creating process, to include structured ways of testing ideas and prototypes from the early stages, to reduce risks of failing and to handle fast-moving situations promptly and flexibly.

That means being able to actively look for, compare and contrast different sources of information that can help reduce ambiguity, uncertainty, and risks in making decisions, pulling together different viewpoints and setting up appropriate strategies for collecting and monitoring data, which help make decisions based on evidence.

Another aspect is the **risk calculation**, that is the ability to identify and describe examples of risks surrounding the value-creating activity, telling the difference between acceptable and unacceptable risks: the Food entrepreneur can weigh up the risks and benefits of self-employment with alternative career options, and make choices that reflect the preferences, assessing the risks the venture is exposed to as conditions change, being able to evaluate high-risk long term investments using a structured approach.

The last step is **risk management**, which means to critically evaluate the risks associated with an idea that creates value, taking into account a variety of factors, and then outlining a risk management plan with designed strategies for guiding the personal (or the team's) choices.

1.5 Self-motivation, self-efficacy, perseverance, team motivation and encouragement

These skills belong to two great EntreComp *Resources* macro-areas: **self awareness and self efficacy** and **motivation and perseverance**.

The first one means to reflect on the needs, aspirations and wants in the short, medium and long term, to Identify and assess individual and group strengths and weaknesses, to believe in the ability to influence the course of events, despite uncertainty, setbacks and temporary failures. The first step to take is to **follow the aspirations**, that means to identify and describe the needs, wants, interests and goals (both group or individual) and translate them into goals.

By **identifying strengths and weaknesses**, the entrepreneur can judge them and team up with others to compensate for their weaknesses and to use their strengths and abilities to make the most of opportunities to create value.

It is very important to **believe in our own abilities**, which means to judge the control we have over our achievements (compared with any control from outside influences) and to carry out what has been imagined and planned, despite obstacles, limited resources and resistance from others, also by influencing people and situations for the better and by understanding and taking the good out of experiences that others may label as failures.

In this way the Food entrepreneur can **shape his/her own future**, knowing and describing which qualities and abilities are needed for different jobs, and which of these are owned: the entrepreneur can describe the skills and competences relating to career options, including self employment, and he/she can use them to change the career path, as a result of new opportunities or from necessity.

By being able to discuss how a realistic understanding and evaluation of the personal attitudes, skills and knowledge can influence the decision-making, relationships with other people and quality of life, the Food entrepreneur can design professional development strategies for his/her team and organisation based on a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, in relation to both current and future opportunities to create value.

Motivation and perseverance, instead, is the ability to stay focused and be determined to turn ideas into action and satisfy the need to achieve, to be prepared to be patient and keep trying to achieve long term individual or group aims, to be resilient under pressure, adversity, and temporary failure.

The Food entrepreneur has to stay **motivated** by the possibility to do or contribute to something that is good for him/her or for others, regulating his/her own behaviour to stay **driven** and achieve the benefits of turning ideas into action.

He/she should be **determined** to set tasks as challenges to stay motivated and to drive effort and to use resources to overcome challenges and achieve his/her (or the team's) goals. In addition, the entrepreneur can coach others to stay motivated, creating the right climate to motivate the team (for example, by celebrating successes, by learning from failures and by encouraging innovative ways to tackle problems), considering all outcomes as temporary solutions appropriate to their time and context, and making sure they develop in a continuous cycle of improvement and innovation.

By reflecting on the social incentives and the personal and external factors that motivate ourselves or others when creating value, the entrepreneur can create strategies to stay motivated (for example, set goals, monitor performance and evaluate progress), designing effective ways to attract talented people, by rewarding initiative, effort, and achievement appropriately within his/her team and organisation.

By showing passion and willingness to achieve goals, that means to be **resilient**, the Food entrepreneur will learn to design strategies to overcome adverse circumstances (that also means to judge when it is not worth continuing with an idea), to cope with unexpected changes, setbacks and failures (for example, job loss) and to make sure that the team or organisation stay positive when making difficult decisions and dealing with failure.

So, in conclusion, the entrepreneur must **never give up**, that means to maintain effort and interest despite setbacks, also by delaying achieving the goals if necessary in order to gain greater value, thanks to prolonged effort. By staying focused on his/her vision and goals, despite challenges, the entrepreneur will inspire others to work hard on their goals by showing passion and a strong sense of ownership.

2. Digital skills and competences

Referring to the Framework for the Digital Competences of European Citizens also known as *DigComp*, which is a tool for improving the digital competences of citizens, **digital skills** are a set of competences in the digital and technological field. Basically, it is about knowing how to manage information, social relations and content using the tools and technologies of the so-called IST, the Information Society Technologies. It is a very broad set: it starts from more basic skills (such as the ability to use a PC) to more technical and advanced ones (such as knowledge of programming languages and software development). DigComp was developed by JRC (Joint Research Centre) as a scientific project and with strong stakeholder input and has become a reference for the development and strategic planning of e-skills initiatives, both at European level and in individual EU member states.

These skills derive directly from the great and rapidly progressing changes obtained from **technological innovation**, which has impacted all spheres: social, financial, institutional, economic.

Being intimately linked to technological development, digital skills are constantly evolving: new ones are added every year and are becoming more sophisticated.

In such a scenario, it is urgent for all entrepreneurs, including those in the food and beverage sector, to redefine processes and organisation and to incorporate highly qualified personnel in their workforce to meet the new challenges.

2.1 E-commerce and online commercialization of products

One of the new and alternative methods for the valorisation of agri-food products is to market them in so-called short supply chains. Short supply chains can be of different types: from simple direct sale on the farm, to mail order, **e-commerce**, home delivery to individuals or organised groups of consumers.

These initiatives are increasingly attracting interest from individual and group producers, but

also from consumers for different reasons: in the eyes of consumers, products marketed through short channels have the advantage of having undergone fewer steps through intermediaries that lengthen the time between the completion of the production process and consumption. Long supply chains, in fact, require storage and preservation that reduce the freshness of the product and can affect its organoleptic characteristics and nutritional properties and, in extreme cases, even its healthiness. More and more consumers fear illnesses or allergies caused by the food they consume, are concerned about the provenance, quality and safety of the food they bring to the table and believe they are not sufficiently informed. The overwhelming majority of decision-makers recognise that investment in solutions supporting **traceability** can offer a competitive advantage by enabling them to meet consumer expectations. Among the benefits that control and traceability technology solutions would provide there are risk reduction through proper handling, transport, storage of products, and perishability monitoring.

Mobile computers, thermal printers and portable barcode labellers, scanners and specialised label and tag printers will also be key elements in gaining consumers' trust, providing them with more transparent information and **digitally managing and monitoring** food products and related information.

Another consequence of the long and complex route taken by products along traditional supply chains is also the reduced clarity about the origin of products and, sometimes, its reduced certainty: instead, the possibility of directly knowing the producers and the geographical area of origin of the product is considered by some demand segments as a form of indication guaranteeing the very quality of the product. Moreover, some consumers appreciate the possibility of supporting small local enterprises in this way.

Finally, the limitation of transport and the number of steps can have the effect of containing prices, which increase progressively as they approach the final link in the distribution chain, which, also by virtue of the market power it holds, is able to appropriate a substantial part of the added value created along the entire chain.

On the producers' side, the inclusion of products on short supply chains has, therefore, the advantage of allowing the acquisition of a greater share of added value. Alongside this, there is also the possibility that a more direct, and in a certain sense more personalised, contact with consumers is a prerequisite for a trusting and long-lasting relationship that helps to increase the stability of commercial outlets.

The **Internet and e-commerce** offer important opportunities nowadays, both for companies that want to sell online and for entrepreneurs who want to open a new digital business.

E-commerce is usually created with a specific CMS, a platform to be customised through modules and plugins for building the web portal, from the product pages to the checkout process for finalising the order. The most widely used CMSs are WooCommerce, PrestaShop, Magento and Shopify.

Proper e-commerce management is essential to achieve concrete results:

1. **Complying with the laws governing commerce:** e-commerce management must first and foremost ensure compliance with the law, in order to avoid penalties and legal disputes that can cause financial and image damage. The portal must comply with all legal requirements, such as the GDPR and privacy regulations for the proper

2. **Carrying out accurate market analyses:** to run an e-commerce business consciously, it is necessary to have a marketing strategy. The business plan must be based on reliable information about the target sector, competitors and potential customers, using online big data to investigate the market in depth.

3. **Planning a content marketing strategy:** in the management of an e-commerce, the support of content marketing is essential in order to increase organic traffic and find new potential customers. Content can be conveyed via a blog integrated into the e-commerce portal or via external channels linked to the online store such as social pages and YouTube channels. Content marketing also serves to profile users and ensure that they receive visits in line with the products sold.

4. **Optimising product search filters:** the easier it is for users to find the products they need, the more likely they are to sell and achieve a high conversion rate. To make life easier for customers, e-commerce must have a simple and intuitive structure, with a clear menu and subcategories that help locate the items in the catalogue.

5. **Simplifying e-commerce checkout:** the checkout process is very delicate for e-commerce, as it is during this step that customers may abandon their purchase and leave the shopping cart with the selected products. To improve the conversion rate, the checkout must be simplified, call-to-actions must be used strategically to enhance the benefits, and guarantees must be provided, such as after-sales service and the possibility of returning the product. It is important to monitor these processes with special tools, to detect errors and correct them with precise action.

2.2 Online communication through social media

Social media represent the most important innovation in the world of communication, marketing and information. Their use is simple, free and within everyone's reach, which represents a risk but also a great opportunity to be exploited to the full.
Communicating, building relationships and marketing with social media is less simple and trivial than one might imagine; however, being present and active on social media is no longer a choice, but a real necessity. Communication-related activities are, as is well known, expensive and, in particular, require highly specific, non-recoverable investments. Furthermore, for a product to be recognisable on the market, adequate quantities and non-sporadic supplies are needed. These two circumstances make it difficult for the small companies that predominate in the agri-food sector to establish their name on the market in such a way as to make it a guarantee of quality for consumers. This is, in short, the main reason why product valorisation strategies characterised by the aggregation of a plurality of subjects, which can thus benefit from a visibility that they would otherwise not be able to have, as well as from the possibility of sharing the costs related to activities directly or indirectly linked to communication, are frequently affirmed in these markets.
The main objectives that can be pursued through social media are:

1. **Creating and consolidating** direct **relationships** with customers, partners and suppliers

2. **Collection of feedback** on the company's products/services and activities

3. **Active involvement** of customers, partners and suppliers in projects, offers and activities

4. **Targeting** and contextualisation of communication, to stimulate involvement and interaction

5. **Retention of users**, who become active and proactive participants

6. Opening of **customer** satisfaction and customer care channels

To start with, it is needed to understand the **target audience**, what they are talking about and what topics they are interested in: it may not make sense for a Food entrepreneur to be on all social networks, as each platform has different characteristics and audiences: when considering which one is most suitable for the business, there are several elements to take into account, such as the target (consumers or other businesses?), what is the target customer base and what are the most relevant demographics of the users of the different social networks. Furthermore, there are other details like the preference of sharing photos or videos, the payment for sponsored content, the time and money available to create and publish content. Photographs, for example, are perfect for Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest, while videos are perfect for both Facebook and Instagram (if they are short enough). If the entrepreneur produces a lot of them, however, he/she should consider opening a YouTube channel. If, on the other hand, he/she often publishes blog posts, papers or reports, he/she could link them from Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Both demographic and sociographic factors need to be taken into account to determine the main target audience, including **gender** (the tone of voice and images will change depending on whether the target audience is male, female or mixed), **age**, **education level** (to make sure to use language appropriate to the education level of the audience), **interests**.

It is important to be thoughtful and develop a **social strategy** that supports the overall marketing goals: there are several objectives that can be achieved through the use of social media like a certain number of **leads**, or **site visits** or **sales**, or maybe to **increase brand awareness** or improve the **brand perception**.

Once established the goals and the audience, the entrepreneur can reach them with content that creates engagement, brings value and stimulates conversation.

Different best practices can be used to engage followers: by content promotion, by sharing the content of others (not of competitors, but perhaps of important bodies and organisations), by quoting and sharing other people's posts and by sending and answering to private messages.

Once the posts are published, there are several ways to measure the results obtained in terms of followers, engagement, shares, clicks and some of the most common tools are:

- **Social Platform Analytics:** as an account administrator, there is access to tons of

data provided directly by Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram…

- **Google Analytics:** it allows the administrator to understand where the users go once they land on the entrepreneur's site and how long they spend there

- **Bit.ly:** it is a URL shortener which allows to track clicks when a unique URL is created

- **Scheduling platforms:** applications such as Hootsuite and Buffer not only allow the user to schedule posts, but also keep track of the most important data

2.3 Branding and Networking

A personal **brand** is a description of yourself. In essence, a personal brand is who you are. What are your passions, your career aspirations, your strengths: this gives people a brief insight into your professional self.

Brand is the combination of elements (such as name, slogan, logo, communication, history and reputation) that function as a distinctive and identifying sign of an entrepreneur or a company (and not only). The brand encapsulates the image, values, meaning, etc. that differentiate it from its competitors, determining the relationship with the target audience.

When it comes to entrepreneurs and companies, the brand is the reason why a consumer prefers one good (service or product) over another and is possibly willing to pay even more for one good than for another, given the same quality and attributes. It is, therefore, a decisive element in the relationship between company and consumer and, in this sense, can confer a high value to a product/service, without this necessarily having anything to do with its functionality or quality.

The brand is not born, it is built: unlike a product or service that is launched on the market, the brand is built and consolidated over time on the basis of very different elements and must also be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure consistency between the objectives set at the planning stage and actual consumer perception.

The brand must, therefore, be both built and managed, which is why there is also a dedicated professional figure, defined as a brand manager.

Brand image is the way customers perceive the brand, i.e. the impression they have of it and its products. It can depend on a number of elements including product quality, communication and everything related to brand identity.

Brand image concerns the way in which individuals interpret signals from a particular company. It encompasses associations, values and ideas that consumers connect to a particular brand and its products or services and summarises the opinions they have of the company's reputation and positioning (or brand positioning) in the market.

Brand image develops over time and is strongly influenced by aspects such as brand communication, company know-how, the quality of services and products offered, the quality of the customer experience and customer care services. In fact, every point of contact with the customer can determine the customer's perception of the brand, which is why the company-customer relationship must be well cared for and staff must receive guidance and training in this regard.

A well-defined and coherent brand identity can determine the image that consumers have of

the company, with the consequent choice of purchase. Brand image, and thus the opinion consumers have of a particular brand, is strongly linked to brand loyalty and brand value (or brand equity).

A professional network consists of the connections you have with people in your chosen professional field. These connections can be in person (colleagues, conference acquaintances, etc.) or virtual via social networks like Handshake or LinkedIn.

If used appropriately, your professional network can be the key to unlocking all kinds of career opportunities.

When an entrepreneur gets to the point where he has to present his idea to other stakeholders, **pitching** emerges as the most effective tool: its meaning refers to the promotional vehicle of a business idea, containing all the necessary information to persuade the investor. The synonym 'elevator pitch' also indicates a quick presentation in which to use the short time available to engage and impress the listener, in this case, the possible investor.

Pitch consists of a graphic representation, composed of several sections, used by the founder of the innovative enterprise to present his business idea and product to a possible investor or business angel. The primary aspect of being able to present oneself in such a short time (usually from 30 seconds to few minutes) is to organise one's ideas by using the brainstorming technique and synthesising the salient aspects through diagrams or creating concept maps to organise the discourse and lead the speaker towards one's intent.

The phase following the organisation of ideas is the writing of **slides**. The slides should be readable, meaning that care must always be taken that every textual element is visible, that images do not overlap the text, that the text is not too dense, even allowing some breathing space for the slides by keeping white spaces.

The purpose of the slides is to help you present yourself; each slide should talk about a single concept. The focus should be on oral presentation.

In concrete terms, a successful pitch can be divided into 5 sections:

1. **Problem statement:** each project arises from a need. Through well-explained reasoning, the entrepreneur must explain what the problem is and then lead to explaining how and why one's idea should solve it. It can also be very effective to present a demo. A practical example will help demonstrate that the entrepreneurial idea will solve a problem and satisfy a need.

2. **Market analysis:** it will be necessary to present analyses of the market where the product or service will be placed and to explain to investors all the preliminary analyses carried out, illustrate the uniqueness and added value of the proposed idea, present the business plan, marketing strategy, competitor analysis and how to deal with them.

3. Presentation of the **financial projections** for the first 3 to 5 years, which are the aspects that investors are most interested in: the entrepreneur will describe the business objectives not only on a monetary level, but also those that one would like to achieve on the level of market positioning, of targets. It is also a useful element to include a timeline and to describe the distribution of shares and try to communicate how one would intend to use their investments.

4. Talking about the **team** is something that many people overlook, but it is actually crucial. Presenting how the idea came about and introducing those who worked on the project will make the presentation less impersonal, make the passion and affinity of the team members clear.

5. Insertion of a **call to action**, which is necessary to make it clear what kind of funding is needed, how the entrepreneur intends to distribute the funds and be prepared to answer questions.

3. Sustainability skills and competences

The new European Sustainability Competence Framework, *GreenComp*, provides common ground for students and guidance for educators by advancing a definition of what sustainability entails as a competence.

The development of such a sustainability framework is one of the policy actions established in the European Green Deal (an investment plan to achieve the EU's goal of becoming the world's first climate-neutral block of countries by 2050) as a catalyst for promoting learning about environmental sustainability in the EU. Developed during 2021 in collaboration with experts from across Europe and internationally, GreenComp can therefore be used in education and training programmes in formal, non-formal and informal settings. According to the framework, **sustainability** means "prioritising the needs of all life forms and of the planet by ensuring that human activity does not exceed planetary boundaries".

The GreenComp thus identifies a set of sustainability competences to be included in educational curricula to support learning for environmental sustainability and help students develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote ways of thinking, planning and acting with empathy, responsibility and concern for our planet and public health.

A **sustainability competence** "empowers learners to embody sustainability values, and embrace complex systems, in order to take or request action that restores and maintains ecosystem health and enhances justice, generating visions for sustainable futures".

Moreover, referring to the *Ideas and opportunities EntreComp* area, the **ethical and sustainable thinking** is the ability to assess the consequences of ideas that bring value and the effect of entrepreneurial action on the target community, the market, society and the environment, to reflect on how sustainable long-term social, cultural and economic goals are, and the course of action chosen in order to act responsibly. In the Food & Beverage sector, to **behave ethically** means to recognise behaviours that show integrity, honesty, responsibility, courage and commitment and to apply them to consumption and production processes. In relation to gender, equality, fairness, social justice and environmental sustainability, the entrepreneur can take responsibility for promoting ethical behaviour in his/her area of influence, (for example, by promoting gender balance highlighting inequalities and any lack of integrity) and for taking action against unethical behaviour.

Specifically, **sustainable thinking** is the ability to identify examples of environmentally friendly behaviour (as well as not sustainable practices and their implications for the environment) and to produce a clear problem statement when faced with practices that are not sustainable, by discussing the relationship between society and technical developments,

relating to their implications for the environment, and by choosing adequate methods for analysing environmental impact based on their advantages and disadvantages.

By doing so, the Food entrepreneur can **assess impact**, which is the ability to identify the impact that taking up opportunities will have on the team, on the target group and on the surrounding community, identifying stakeholders affected by this impact (including those who cannot speak up like future generations, climate or nature). By choosing 'measure indicators' to monitor and assess the impact of the value-creating activity, the entrepreneur will be able to carry out impact assessment, impact monitoring, and impact evaluation.

All these solutions lead the Food entrepreneur to design methods to be **accountable** (for both functional and strategic accountability), in order to remain responsible to internal and external stakeholders.

3.1 Circular economy

Circular economy is a new economic system of production and consumption that is based on the reuse, repair and recycling of products and materials.

Its aim is to reduce waste and extend the life cycle of products. By doing so, products can be reused several times and create value. This new type of model moves away from the concept of the traditional economic system based on consumption and waste and ushers in the new era of cheap and easily accessible materials and products.

All the spotlight is on the food sector: preserving the Earth's resources has become a major challenge, and the traditional linear 'produce, consume, dispose' model no longer works.

Even relying on materials that can be recycled by the end user, once considered the best way to save the environment, is now seen as a 'lazy' option.

Consumers are more eco-conscious than ever before and choose food and drink with great care. This creates pressure for food companies to integrate sustainable practices in every part of the supply chain, from field to fork.

Being sustainable is not only about doing the right thing for the environment, it can also be a way to cultivate customer affinity with the brand or even to save money.

True sustainability is not linear, but circular: resources are recovered in the best possible quality, reused and kept in use for as long as possible. This approach to resource management is known as the circular economy.

It can be applied to everything from food processing to packaging: if implemented correctly, it reduces waste, increases efficiency, adds lasting value to the company and gives products a competitive advantage. It can also strengthen a company's reputation by demonstrating that it listens to and values customer opinions.

Circularity is the direction to follow but, despite the many challenges, implementing a circular economy in the food sector brings important benefits, for example:

1. improved **brand reputation** through recognition of customer values

2. improved relations with **stakeholders**

3. reduced **material use** and lower energy costs

4. potential development of new/innovative **resources**

5. **mitigation of risks** associated with fluctuating resource costs

3. 2 Preservation of local knowledge

Food plays a considerable role in the **valorisation** of territories, local production, agro-food heritage and food and wine excellence, as well as tourism and local economy: since the spread of large-scale industrial distribution, the nutritional quality, diversity and traceability of goods available on the market has been radically compromised, as well as the food sovereignty of entire geographical areas and regions, now dependent on exports for their food supply.

Farmers' markets, solidarity purchasing groups and sales outlets for typical, local and natural products are beginning to appear in many cities. The need to produce and buy poison-free food, obtained respecting ecosystems and their diversity, is beginning to be felt by an increasingly large segment of the population.

There is a growing participation and interest in initiatives that go in this direction, particularly among young people, with the aim to offer communities, particularly urban dwellers for whom finding fresh, local products is more difficult, the opportunity to have access to healthy, natural, nutrient-rich food produced with respect for the environment and people. The answer to the externalities, limitations, and monopolies associated with industrial agrifood production, based on maximising profits and returns, lies in the hands of those who work, know and respect the land like small-scale producers and farmers.

Nowadays, a conversion from uniform, chemical and globalised food production to **diversified, natural and local small-scale ecological food production** is feasible by creating concrete alternatives to mass consumption and by strengthening the links between food & beverage sustainable producers: the acceleration of climate change and global warming, the pollution and degradation of water and ecosystems, the loss of soil fertility, and the growing evidence of the health damage of chemicals, require an urgent and radical change of course.

Another possible path for the collective valorisation of agri-food quality is the one that sees producers **join together in initiatives**, even temporary and of a varied nature, to promote products that are not necessarily homogeneous in terms of merchandise, but somehow synergic: sometimes these initiatives are part of more complex territorial marketing strategies with the aim to promote the knowledge of an entire territory with the different activities located there, from production to tourism and recreation.

These initiatives - which can take the form of very different activities, such as fairs, festivals, thematic markets, tastings, short thematic courses, competitions, opening of businesses to the public, opening of monuments, targeted promotion campaigns, and much more - have in common a considerable complexity that derives from the presence of several orders of objectives and from the plurality of subjects involved. In fact, more than the simple promotion of one or more products, the aim is to promote a whole series of goods and services and the knowledge of the entire territory with its artistic, landscape-naturalistic, recreational, gastronomic and broader cultural attractions. The fulcrum of this type of strategy is the

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territory and its intimate link, unique and inseparable, with the various activities that take place there. All this implies an organisation and coordination that is by no means trivial, precisely because several levels of connection are required between subjects that are also very different and distant from one another. In addition to the participation of farms, the involvement of restaurateurs, hoteliers, shopkeepers, and public entities that can usefully coordinate with the initiative such as museums, nature reserves, etc. is required.

3.3 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the degree to which customers are satisfied with a product, service and/or company. We speak of customer satisfaction when the customer's expectations with regard to various elements, such as benefits, value for money, promises made, etc., have been met or even exceeded. In fact, it represents the perception or evaluation of how well an organisation is able to keep the promises communicated to its target audience.

Expectations, in fact, concern the anticipation of what will be experienced through a product or service and thus basically of the added value that individuals expect to detect in this good. These expectations arise from various elements, including marketing actions and brand image, factors over which the company has greater control and on which it must work to enable consumers to have realistic expectations of its offer.

However, there are some elements that also influence expectations but which the company cannot manage so easily or directly: these include consumer reviews on the Net, conversations around the brand and word of mouth. Clearly, in addition to all this, there are the previous experiences that consumers have had with the company.

Having purchased the product, consumers may perceive its value in different ways, depending on its quality and characteristics, but also on other aspects such as customer experience and interaction with company staff or even perceived economic value.

To summarise, according to the model mentioned, customer satisfaction thus depends on the comparison between pre-purchase expectations and the perception of performance and, more specifically, on the possible gap between these two elements.

To increase customer satisfaction, a Food entrepreneur can take various actions and adopt different strategies:

1. **Optimisation of the customer experience** and adoption of multiple touchpoints, enabling consumers to interact with the brand with a minimum of effort and obtain staff support when they need it

2. **Pricing strategies** and price setting that promote realistic expectations of the product and services

3. Loyalty programmes and actions to reward **brand loyalty**

4. Requesting the **opinion** of customers with a certain frequency, in order to identify possible problems to be solved but also the needs and preferences of the target group so as to respond more efficiently to their needs

The specific performance indicator for measuring the level of customer satisfaction is the Customer Satisfaction Score (**CSAT**): it is necessary to start by **collecting data**, generally obtained through questionnaires, administered through different channels and at different times. Entrepreneurs may ask users visiting their website or app to fill out questionnaires, or they may send them by email to customers on their mailing list, or they may ask them to fill them out in-store, following a purchase experience or interaction with the brand. The larger the number of respondents, the more accurate the CSAT survey conducted will be. Different types of **questionnaires** can be used for data collection. There are some that propose a fairly general question (such as "Are you satisfied with our services?") and ask customers to indicate, on a scale of different emoticons, the smiley face corresponding to the degree of customer satisfaction experienced (ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied"). Another possibility is to ask customers to rate a purchased product or service, on a scale ranging for example from 1 to 5 stars, where 1 represents dissatisfaction and 5 maximum satisfaction.

Some questionnaires, on the other hand, are more elaborate, useful for companies wanting to obtain feedback on different aspects of the business. For this, customers are asked to specify the degree of satisfaction with different aspects or characteristics of a product or service (e.g. 'the taste of the product', 'the speed of the service' or 'the friendliness of the staff'), indicating the most appropriate level.

In order to correctly evaluate the CSAT survey, it is therefore necessary to calculate what the percentage of individual options, together with the share of satisfied customers, is in relation to the total number of customers surveyed. Specifically, the Customer Satisfaction Formula involves dividing the number of positive responses by the total number of responses collected, and then multiplying the value obtained by 100: achieving 75% or 85% is already a good target to aspire to.

In summary, conducting a CSAT survey has the following advantages:

1. **To show interest:** customer satisfaction surveys show to customers an interest in their opinion and testify to the entrepreneur's continuous work to improve the customer experience.

2. **To define an action plan:** clear and fast feedback outlines the necessary steps to be taken to optimise the customer experience. A good CSAT value is also important, as it ensures that the business plan runs smoothly.

3. **It illustrates the health of the business/customer relationship:** customer satisfaction surveys answers to different questions regarding the late investments success, the positioning in relation to the competition, etc.

Some of the **disadvantages** of CSAT, on the other hand, are the speed of processing, if the customer has not had enough time to fully evaluate the interaction with the entrepreneur, and its inconclusiveness due to obtaining a single value that summarises the entire business/customer relationship.

In order to obtain a picture as complete as possible of the health of the company/customer relationship, the CSAT survey must necessarily be supplemented with additional surveys

focusing on customer satisfaction, such as the **Net Promoter Score:** an NPS survey is carried out by starting with the customer satisfaction questionnaire in order to collect customer feedback, and then applying the NPS formula. Three categories can be derived based on the value assigned by customers (0 to 10):

- **0 to 6 - Detractors**: not only will these customers not recommend the company, but they may also advise friends and acquaintances against its services. In short, they are those who leave negative reviews.

- **7 to 8 - Passives:** these customers, although they have no particular complaints about the products or service they use, would not recommend the company. Their position is extremely neutral and is therefore negligible in the NPS calculation.

- **9 to 10 - Promoters:** customers in this group are the most satisfied and most likely to recommend the company to their circle of acquaintances.

Based on these categories, the percentage of Detractors and Promoters is calculated. The NPS value is the subtraction of the total percentage Detractors from the total percentage Promoters. The Net Promoter Score is always a whole number (never a percentage) between -100 and 100, so the NPS can have a negative value.

The main advantages of the NPS are:

1. **Intuitive even for non-experts:** an NPS survey does not require any knowledge of statistics and is therefore a valid option even for small businesses.

2. **Possibility of benchmarking:** the NPS is considered a standard measurement worldwide and can therefore be compared with its competitors in the industry.

3. **Commonly used labels for customer classification:** the terms Promoters, Detractors and Passives are now accepted in current business slang and allow for a clear and shareable subdivision of one's customer base.

4. **Valuable business management tool:** the NPS score of a given company can vary from department to department, so the management team can use this data as a basis for decision-making for any corrective action.

5. **Influence on business growth:** it is well established that NPS surveys are closely correlated with business growth.

On the other hand, The NPS value is indeterminate and generic especially when used as a benchmark between different companies and, without a good action plan to follow it, the NPS survey does not help business.

The questionnaires mentioned only allow the collection of **quantitative data**: for this reason, they often do not offer information on 'why' consumers are satisfied or dissatisfied with a product or service. The inclusion of an open-ended question in questionnaires can thus enable companies to collect **qualitative data**, which is useful when analysing the results.

The learning outcomes of the Food & Beverage Entrepreneur Curriculum

1. Entrepreneurial skills and competences		
	1.1	Building the right team with the right human resources
	1.2	Planning the tasks, organising and managing the team
	1.3	Learning through experience
	1.4	Flexibility (adapting to new situations)
	1.5	Self-motivation, self-efficacy, perseverance, team motivation and encouragement
2. Digital skills and competences		
	2.1	E-commerce and online commercialization of products
	2.2	Online communication through social media
	2.3	Branding and networking
3. Sustainability skills and competences		
	3.1	Circular economy
	3.2	Preservation of local knowledge
	3.3	Customer satisfaction

Conclusion

In conclusion, embarking on the path of the food entrepreneur requires different sets of skills, knowledge and competences, both attitudinal and practical and technical, especially when related to the growing number of digital technologies that have changed the way people relate to others, sell products and promote their brands.

In addition, the food and beverage sector is particularly in the spotlight when it comes to environmental sustainability and material recycling, and offers several interesting links towards the tourism sector, the enhancement of local areas and the relationship with

customers that can act as a great stimulus and offer great freedom of business and lifestyle choices for the food entrepreneur.

Annex 1 - Desk Research

A survey has been provided to collect data to define the ideal professional profile of a food&beverage entrepreneur and to complete the Task 1 - Competence Framework:

- ITKAM and WISAMAR gathered at least 5 responses each from the result target in Germany.
- IN-PRESA and MATERAHUB gathered at least 5 responses each from the result target in Italy.
- INSTALOFI gathered at least 5 responses each from the result target in Spain.

Materahub has provided a guideline for focus groups with the following results :

- IN-PRESA and Materahub hosted a focus group on 12.04.2022 with 1 Entrepreneur (Andrea Capozza - producer of Italian EVO Oil "Olio Serio"), 2 Trainers and 6 Students from Italy, and translated the results into English.
- INSTALOFI hosted a focus group on 02.05.2022 with 5 Young Entrepreneurs, 5 Food&Beverage Experts (the founders and entrepreneurs of the Spanish beverage brand "Malferida", including the main founder Lucía Mompó, who joined the focus group online) and 2 Trainers from Spain, with an English translation of the results.
- ITKAM and WISAMAR hosted a focus group on 24.05.2022 with 6 participants between young entrepreneurs and food&beverage experts (Mark Leinemann - founder and president of "Crowdfood", Stefania Lettini - founder and owner of Italian gourmet store in Düsseldorf, Francesco Schapira - Project Manager for Events and projects in the food sector at ITKAM) and translated the results into English.

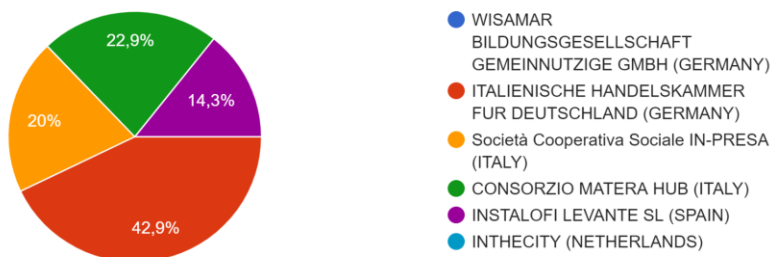The survey is divided into 3 sections:
- **Section 1** is dedicated to general information about the addressee like age range and target category (e.g. high school student, university student, professional)

- **Section 2** is focused on skills and knowledge considered most important for food&beverage entrepreneurs; they are divided into 5 macro-categories: Finding, learning and using information; Sustainability; Business knowledge and skills; Teamwork and leadership; Personal skills and competences.

- **Section 3** is dedicated to some best practices suggestions

Section 1: profiling of survey respondents

The survey research has been conducted by the project partners in Italy (Consorzio Matera Hub, In-Presa), Germany (Wisamar, Italienische Handelskammer Fur Deutschland), Spain (Instalofi) and Netherlands (Inthecity). The age range of the respondents to the survey is 30+ years old (47.74%), followed by young people 16-20 and 20-25 (both at 18.4%) and finally by the 25-30 segment (15.8%).
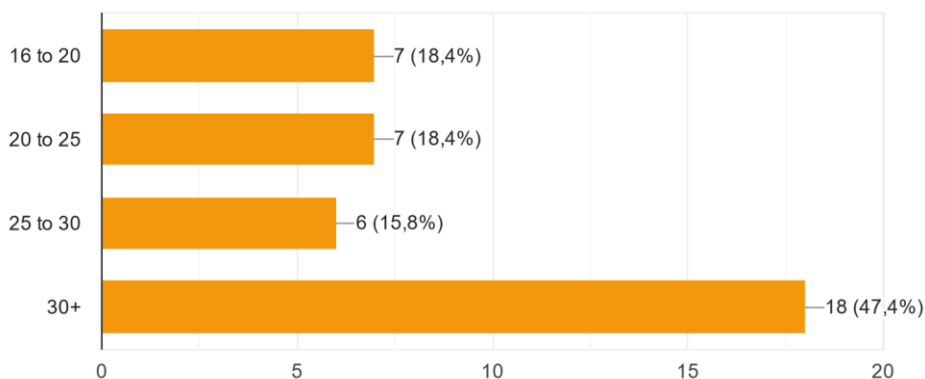
Who has asked you to fill in this survey?
35 risposte

- WISAMAR BILDUNGSGESELLSCHAFT GEMEINNUTZIGE GMBH (GERMANY)
- ITALIENISCHE HANDELSKAMMER FUR DEUTSCHLAND (GERMANY)
- Società Cooperativa Sociale IN-PRESA (ITALY)
- CONSORZIO MATERA HUB (ITALY)
- INSTALOFI LEVANTE SL (SPAIN)
- INTHECITY (NETHERLANDS)
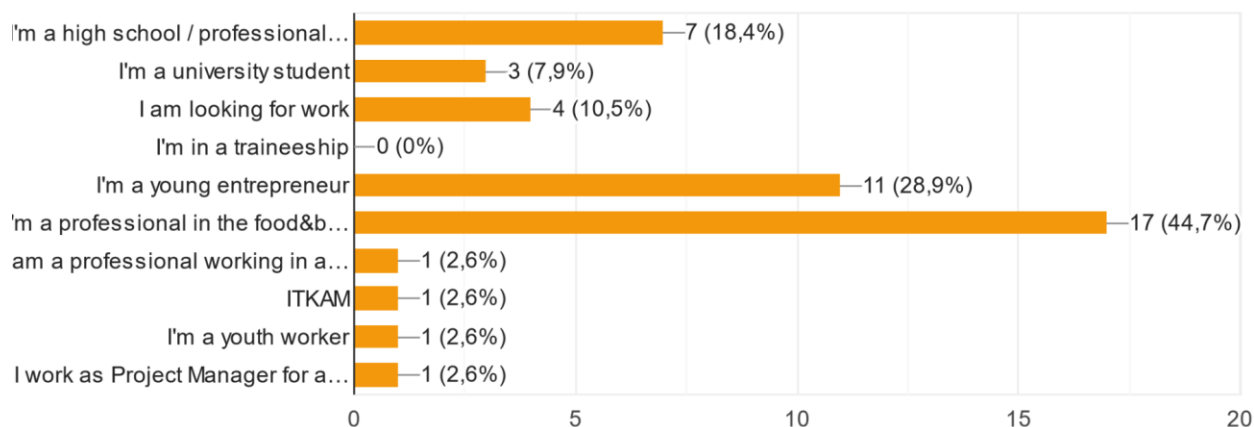
What is your age range?
38 risposte

The three major categories to which they belong are "Professional in the food&beverage sector" (44.7%), "Young entrepreneur" (28.9%) and "High school/professional school student" (18.4%).

As food&beverage sub-sector, the two most relevant categories emerged are "Restaurant" (11.2%) and "Catering" (5.6%).

Which option best describes you?
38 risposte

I'm a high school / professional…	7 (18,4%)
I'm a university student	3 (7,9%)
I am looking for work	4 (10,5%)
I'm in a traineeship	0 (0%)
I'm a young entrepreneur	11 (28,9%)
I'm a professional in the food&b…	17 (44,7%)
am a professional working in a…	1 (2,6%)
ITKAM	1 (2,6%)
I'm a youth worker	1 (2,6%)
I work as Project Manager for a…	1 (2,6%)

In which sub-sector of food and beverage?
36 risposte

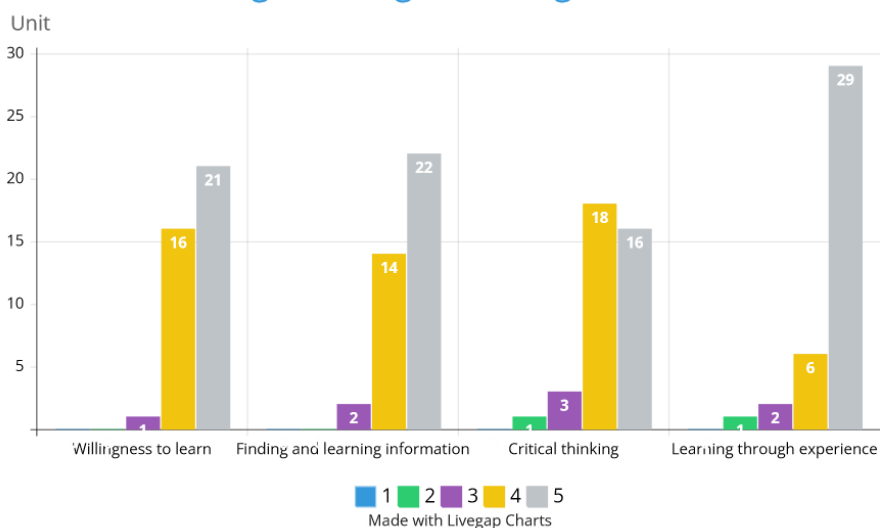

Section 2: skills and competences

Each macro-category is composed of different skills and competences considered important for entrepreneurs in the food & beverage sector, rated on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Based on 38 respondents, the skills that received the highest values on the 4-5 scale were assessed in order of importance:

1) **Finding, learning and using information** includes:
   - Willingness to learn (being curious, staying humble and continuously updating)
   - Finding and learning information (for example, about trends or funds and financing for my project)
   - Critical thinking (analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing and applying the information that I find; choosing the most useful for me)

- Learning through experience (learning by doing things, learning from my mistakes and successes)

Finding, learning and using information

All 4 skills and competences appear to be important, but in particular it received the most unanimous votes "Learning through experience", demonstrating how the young entrepreneurs are willing to improve through practical experiences, even at the cost of making mistakes in order to have a real chance to get involved.

2) **Sustainability** includes:
   - Circular economy (reducing, reusing, recycling, etc. for example, using recyclable packages)
   - Preservation of local knowledge for food production (Slow Food Presidia; Protected Geographical Indication; etc.)
   - Treating my customers well (offering a valuable experience and encouraging them to choose my business again)

Sustainability
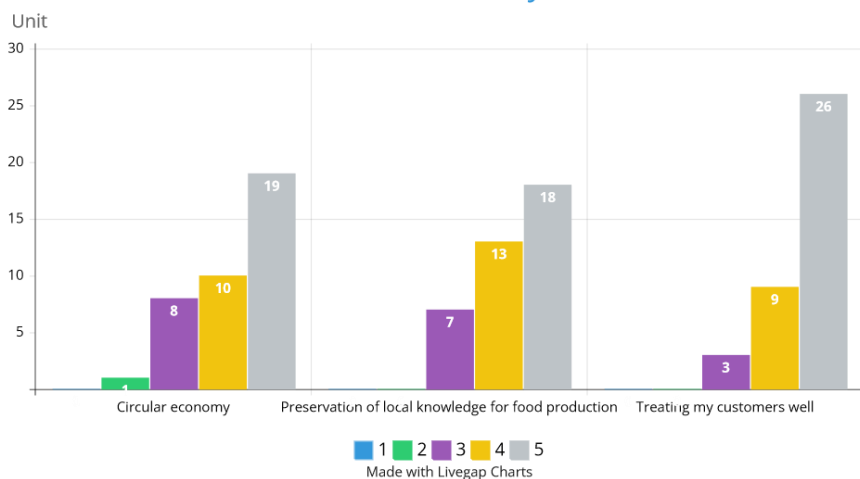
Although all 3 options received favourable votes, most of the young entrepreneurs prefer to focus on the welfare of their customers rather than on the surrounding environment (eco-sustainability, recycling, local food presidia…), aiming for a short and medium term that encourages the return of customers to their business.

3) **Business knowledge and skills** includes:
   - Developing a business plan (including market positioning and customer targeting; knowledge of economics figures)
   - E-commerce and digitalization of products (opening and managing my store online)
   - Branding (creating an image for me and/or my company; storytelling)
   - Networking (building and taking part in food & beverage networks (ex. clusters, local food districts, local action groups, solidarity purchasing groups, fairs etc.)
   - Online communication (use of social media and/or websites to promote me/my business)


Business knowledge and skills
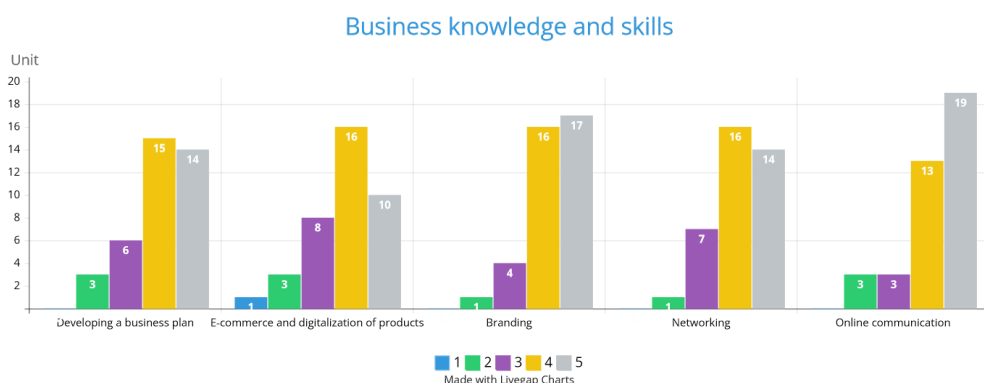
For this set of skills and competences, the 3 answers considered most important are Branding, Networking and Online communication, underlining above all the need for entrepreneurs to adapt to the new forms of online communication, mastering the use of social media and/or websites to promote their business and to increase their network, also taking part to local events.

4) **Teamwork and leadership** includes:
   - Building the right team with the right human resources
   - Planning the tasks, organizing and managing the team
   - Leading, encouraging and motivating the team
   - Managing conflicts in the team
   - Taking the initiative
   - Live communication and relational skills with the customers

Teamwork and leadership
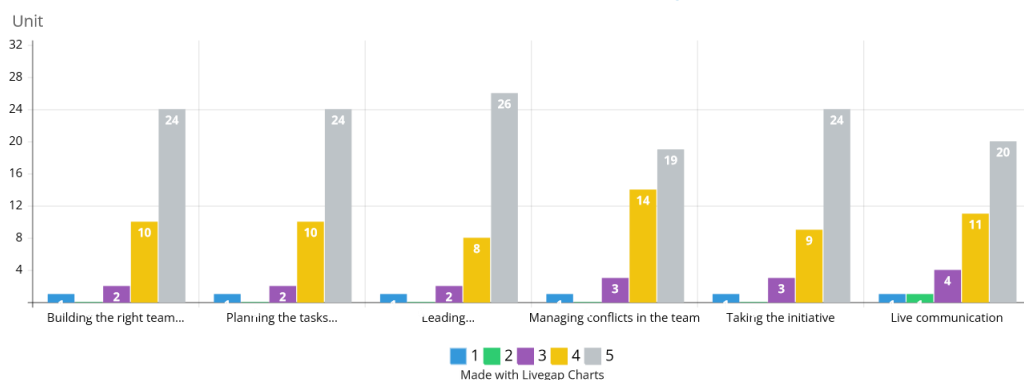
According to the survey, "Leading, encouraging and motivating the team" received the most highest votes, followed by "Building the right team with the right human resources" and "Planning the tasks, organising and managing the team", both with tied votes. With just one vote less we find "Taking the initiative".

5) **Personal skills and competences** includes:
   - Self-regulation
   - Flexibility (adapting to new situations)
   - Growth mindset
   - Spotting opportunities/Valuing ideas
   - Creativity/Vision (thinking outside the box, finding new and innovative solutions
   - Self-motivation and perseverance
   - Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk
   - Self-efficacy (the sense that you have influence on your situation)

Personal skills and competences
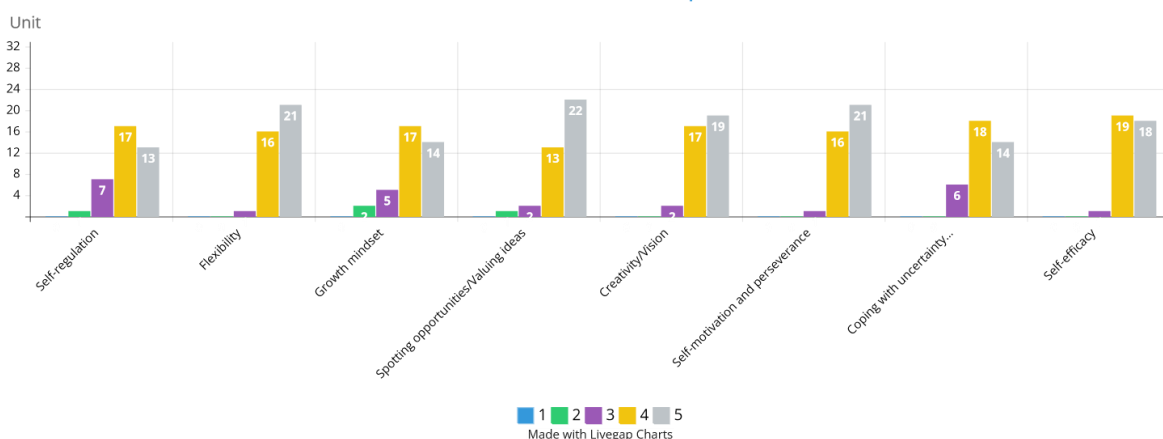
On equal points we find 3 skills and competences which received the highest marks: Flexibility (adapting to new situations); Self-motivation and perseverance; Self-efficacy (the sense that you have influence on your situation.

Extra Skills

Some participants also contributed with extra considerations, skills and knowledge considered relevant to become an entrepreneur in the food & beverage sector, which in all

cases were confirmed by the results of the survey: the importance of networking, self-motivation and flexibility have all emerged as fundamental skills in the graphs above.

In addition, 2 participants have emphasised the importance of passion and patience (which also contributes to hospitality): "It's not just a matter of the mind, but also a matter of the heart, a passion for good food", as quoted by one of them.

Other participants also recommended quality, management skills and problem solving.

Section 3: best practices

A great list of best practices of food & beverage entrepreneurship and practical examples of names and companies has also been advised by participants:

- Green technology: proliferation of plant-based, biodegradable packaging options that keep food safe while also offering an alternative to plastic and other less eco-friendly materials
- Vytal, Too good to go, Recup, Impact Cafè by Plastic2Beans
- To be honest, trust in you skills, don't be 'over-trendy'
- John Ruskin (1819-1900): "There is hardly anything in the world that someone cannot make a little worse and sell a little cheaper, and the people who consider price alone are that person's lawful prey. It's unwise to pay too much, but it's worse to pay too little. When you pay too much, you lose a little money — that is all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything, because the thing you bought was incapable of doing the thing it was bought to do. The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot — it can't be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder, it is well to add something for the risk you run, and if you do that you will have enough to pay for something better."
- Finding your own spaces with those who trust in you and a common ethic , without negative, selfish and fake people. This is an important base that could be better if you apply a good social engineering
- Eco Factory Alpe Pragas (IT), Soul Spices (Ger), Gimber (Be), Copenhagen Sparkling Tea (DK), Lakrids by Bülow (DK), Sal de Ibiza (Berlin), Heinde & Verre (NL), Italiana Vera (IT)
- The key is to develop a non replicable product or business model
- Slow Food, Feinheimisch, Premium Cola, uvm
- Stay hungry & motivated: try harder than the rest
- Pasticceria La Rosetta (Seregno IT)
- Osteria La Lanterna (Cressogno IT)
- Fratelli Spigaroli (IT)
- Vivi Il Dolce (Desio IT)
- Grand Hotel Alassio (IT)

Annex 2 - Focus Group

Name of the organisation	Date of the focus group	N° of student	N° of young entrepreneurs	N° of experts	N° of trainers	Other

		s				
INSTALOFI (Spain)	02/05/2022		5	5	2	
IN-PRESA, MATERAHUB (Italy)	12/04/2022	6	1		2	
ITKAM, WISAMAR (Germany)	24/05/2022			3		3

Spain Focus Group (INSTALOFI)

The focus group met Lucía Mompó and her team of Malferida, a famous beverage brand in Spain. This drink is the original Coca-Cola recipe, the authentic original flavour that later went viral through the Coca-Cola brand.

Lucía is the main founder of the brand, she had heard since she was a child the stories told in her mother's village, Aielo de Malferit, in the south of the province of Valencia, that Coca-Cola had been invented there. So when she had to develop a project for his internship and final degree project, she decided to create a product that would pay homage to that story. In 2018, Malferida, the cola with a natural formula and no secrets, was launched.

The oral story that survives tells that at the end of the 19th century in a distillery in the town they bottled a syrup made from cola nut, which they called Kola-coca. He also says that the drink was presented in the United States by one of its producers, who went to fairs to promote his products. "A priori, that's the story. Only one year a company called The Coca-Cola Company came to buy the brand", she says.

Mompó wanted to give the script a twist four years ago. "Everyone says that it was invented here in Aielo, but if I want to drink one from here, let's say, it doesn't exist," thought the 25-year-old graduate in Business Administration and Management from L'Olleria. She got down to work and began to investigate the market, the production process and to give shape to a project that today has a turnover of around 150,000 euros.

Malferida makes transparency one of the hallmarks of her proposal: "Our formula is not secret and is made with natural ingredients", says the entrepreneur. For example, the caffeine comes from cola nuts and the sweetness from stevia. "The idea is to be a point of reference in the world of healthier soft drinks, to bring it closer to the people, to make it easy to find, to consume and aimed at a more rebellious, restless public, who are looking to break away from the ordinary". This public can find their bottles in hotels and local shops. "It was the first sales channel we started to work with. We have between 400 and 500 points of sale around the

Valencian Community, Catalonia, some in Madrid, in Murcia...", says the founder and CEO. They also sell in the Carrefour and Aldi supermarket chains in the Valencian Community and Casa Ametller in Catalonia, and online, to the whole territory.

"The project is currently in a state of expansion and of making it known", she affirms. The team is made up of three people, plus five indirect workers, and the company is not yet generating profits. The aim is to continue to strengthen the brand and bring it closer to the consumer. "Let them try it, let them talk about it and keep growing. And with that, to be able to expand the range with new formats and flavours. And in the end, to create a brand of healthy soft drinks that is in tune with what the market demands. And to continue with our principles of transparency, sustainability and not forgetting the origin".

According to your point of view and/or experience, do you agree and find these results realistic? If yes/not, why?
Of course, it is well focussed and with the previous study we are carrying out we have possibilities to make some really useful and practical results.

What are the key skills when starting up a business in the food sector?
To start a business in this sector you really have to be willing to do a lot of different tasks and touch several areas. Multitasking is very common among young entrepreneurs.
 In addition, it is very important to be aware of the needs of different clients and to know how to deal with both small and larger clients; to understand that some clients may have more traditional ways of working. Therefore the ability to adapt to different customers is essential. Of course, the basis must be desire and patience. The engine of desire is essential.

What are the key skills for managing a business in the food sector?
Have a global vision of the whole company from the beginning: make a good business plan and not only focus on one area such as the distribution part but also put the focus on marketing, communication, sales strategy, etc...
It is essential to know the market very well to know the tools that are available and also the solutions that can help us: for example to identify and know marketplaces, to be up to date with the novelties in the sector, to be very updated and very up to date.

What shouldn't miss in a training for young food & beverage entrepreneurs?
It is not until you enter the world of entrepreneurship that you are really aware of the number of doubts or problems that can arise. Therefore, it would be very interesting to include the following aspects in the training:
- having a basic understanding of what the business is: from how to invoice (from the basics) to the business strategy, how to scale in the market to launch the business, etc.
- Identifying the target audience and targeting the options there.
- Digital entrepreneurship issues: web, programming, creating your own website with templates, SEO, SEM, etc..
- In terms of tasks: sales and distribution, knowing how to use linkdin, developing commercial skills, learning how to create a coherent personal brand...

It is also important to know which events can fit and serve to promote the product, to be present in the market looking for events and fairs that can be useful to make the product visible.

Italy Focus Group (IN-PRESA, MATERAHUB)

In-Presa and Materahub hosted a focus group with young entrepreneurs of the food & beverage sector, with an online meeting with the students of an Italian high school class. Together they discussed the skills and competences needed to start a food & beverage business and to face the challenges of the sector.

Katia from In-Presa showed a presentation of the project, also mentioning the challenges emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic: how it affected the business but also how it contributed to create opportunities such as new online business models, blending together food and technology.

Giovanni from Materahub presented the Creative Business Cup to the group, a global competition for startups with the global finals to be held in Copenhagen on 27th and 28th of June. This competition provides different benefits and accelerator programs for ambitious entrepreneurs: in particular one of the Italian partners, Italian Food Experience, provides a specific award for the startup winner of the food & beverage sector.

A young entrepreneur from the city of Matera, Andrea Capozza, met the group through an online video call: he is a local producer of olive oil, "Olio Serio", who started launching his activity some months earlier. He answered the questions having a collective constructive debate with the young students and their upcoming approach with the working and business world.

With the practical experience of Andrea, it emerged that the best skills and competences to start and then run a business in the food sector are passion and commitment, courage to cope with adversity, and curiosity, which leads to research which in turn leads to innovation and always increases knowledge. It is often thought that the most difficult challenge is to start from scratch, yet the most important thing is to begin, after which the difficulties will diminish and constancy and perseverance will enable us to continue and tackle the obstacles along the way.

Germany Focus Group (ITKAM, WISAMAR)

The focus group hosted 3 food & beverage experts: Mark Leinemann (ML), founder and president of Crowdfoods (https://crowdfoods.com/) the first transnational association for founders, startups, innovators and entrepreneurs in the food industry in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein (DACHLI). Stefania Lettini (SL) founder and owner of an Italian gourmet store in Düsseldorf, very active in promoting Made in Italy products by organising show cookings and presenting Italian food in the German Morning TV show "Volle Kanne". Francesco Schapira (FS) Project Manager for Events and projects in the food sector at ITKAM. Since many years he is responsible for supporting and connecting food producers, gastronomes, wholesalers and clients in Germany and Italy and for organising show cookings, food markets, B2B events and market entry for companies and organizations related to Food and Beverage.

In your opinion and/or experience, do you agree and think these results are realistic? If yes/not, why?
ML: Especially regarding **social media skills**, they are overestimated. It is necessary especially when talking about plant-based products or meat substitutes because the target

group can be a niche group and especially targeting younger people that use social media. However, the biggest age group starts from 50 years and that represents the biggest part in consumers and retail. Generation Z (16-30 years) is only a small group, but the main consumer of mass products are people over 50 years. Young Entrepreneurs do not have to forget that typical advertisement means (billboard, posters etc.) can have a high effect when positioned in the right way. This goes especially for startups that are looking for scaling and for investors. They need to place their products in the supermarkets and stores.

SL: Social Media skills are sometimes overrated; they will not or in the least cases ensure the startup/entrepreneur to be able to pay rent and production. It would be important to focus on both; on and offline skills. For example: traditional values, social contact and networking, and offline media.

ML: observes especially in GenZ that some youngsters are great in using social media, but are less skilled when it comes to personal contact. They have to learn how to interact with possible clients in order to sell (important!) and in order to interact with peers in order to learn from their best practices.

What are the most important skills when starting a business in the food sector?
ML: Resilience, flexibility, being focused, not being bogged down, have in one's mind very clear goals.

SL: Standing behind your product, customer contact.

What are the most important skills for running a business in the food sector?
Ability to learn, to be good at dealing with people, to be able to sell, know that if you produce something it must taste good, be unique and non-copy-able, share best practices with other founders. Specialist knowledge is very important.

SL: being in love with your products, persistence and passion, following your heart, doing exactly what you love, positive mindset.

FS: achieving skills by training and exposing yourself to critics and learning also from negative feedback in order to improve.

What should not be missing in a training for young entrepreneurs in the food and beverage sector?
ML: most importantly: Resilience, never give up, always stand up, and always be ready to have new solutions, social media skills. But on the other hand: managing skills have to be transmitted, **Best Practices** shared, **Hot Seat & Pitching Sessions** that serve as trainings for reality (especially important when the young entrepreneurs want to pitch in front of investors) , **trainings for sales with experts**. It would be great if the platform would have the opportunity for the participants **to exchange with mentors** and experts.

FS: pitch training for the purpose of a practical implementation, receiving many "no", "that's not possible" for being prepared for the reality.

Other observations:

ML: allocate a lot of money for research. Promote local producers because they are dying due to mass market after Corona pandemic.

Observation: it would be important to divide between: a) innovative startup and b) traditional/artisanal food producers. They both pursue different intentions:

a) Innovative food startups that want to attract investors and sell their products to masses have to be scalable and have to reach a wide target (see above the average consumer is about 50 years old; product has to taste good and reach the target. Startups have to keep in mind that only 5% of the population are vegans so the need for further vegan food is not as big)

b) Artisanal food producers that put focus on quality of ingredients might have different intentions: no need for being scalable, no need for investors. That means they will follow a different approach for setting up their business and rather reach a local target and can have higher prices since the customer and clients will probably be willing to pay a higher price for high quality. (example: https://www.kumpelundkeule.de/)

Another interesting topic regarding sustainability and the delicacy of promoting products:
The case of the startup AIRUP: were claiming that a part of their product is made of recycled resources but then it turned out that this part of the product was only recyclable. https://de.air-up.com/pages/air-up-sustainability

Last question to participants: choose 1 competence / strength / keyword that for you was most important for your career and that you want to pass on to young entrepreneurs:

FS: Persistence
SL: Persistence + Passion, you have to love what you do
ML: Resilience