

The Appriser

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Entrepreneurship is Not a Bed of Lillies, or is it?

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Yes, the phrase is normally "bed of roses" but lillies are soft, beautiful flowers too, making for a comfortable rest should one decide to make a bed of them. Either way, deciding to take entrepreneurial risk moves one away from such comfortable beds. It is a decision to shine full light of praise or blame on one's own efforts and to forgo luxury and rest, especially as an enterprise starts up and then leverages upward.

The "bed of lillies" phrase kicks in after reading a brief Thanksgiving essay in Sam Portaro's book *Brighest and Best*. He writes:

"The life of a lily begins not as a flowering blossom, but as a seed that matures into a rather ugly tuber, a brown bulb whose soft and vulnerable interior is covered by a layer of dead amber skin. Within that unseemly bulb lies only the dormant idea of the blossom. Buried within the ground, the bulb endures darkness and cold before it can respond to the warmth of the springtime sun. To consider only the lily's bloom is to overlook the greatest of its life" (p. 215).

Stories of success in enterprise are built on stories of failed attempts, the successes often taking their lessons from the failures. And those successes are usually built on years of laboring in obscurity, thanklessness, being told the mission cannot be accomplished, and unanticipated setbacks. All this dark and cold is necessary to push something forward that can survive in the light of the marketplace.

And, like the life of the lily, the lifetime of an enterprise's great success may be short-lived, a season in the marketplace, from which new seeds of entrepreneurship have to emerge and then endure the dark and cold so the business has a hope of living on.

It is out of this bed of lillies that new jobs, new industries, and improved living emerge. There is much we can do to fertilize these neglected seed beds, starting with our giving thanks for those who believe in a mission enough to risk their wealth and well-being to create an enterprise.

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