

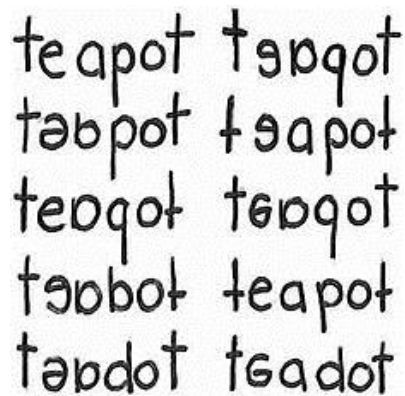
Dyslexic Revolutionaries

Around a third of successful entrepreneurs and innovators are dyslexic¹, which is a significant higher prevalence than in the general population. Examples are Richard Branson, Rubber Tarzan, Charles Schwab, Walt Disney, Henry Ford and Ingvar Kamprad, the founder of IKEA. There are two possible interpretations of this: (i) this subgroup of people have triumphed **despite** this set back of being dyslexic. They are so smart and creative that nothing, not even a lifetime of struggling with reading, could stop them. The second (ii) interpretation is that they succeeded, in part, **because** of this disorder. They learned something in their struggle that proved to be of an enormous advantage.

Certain personality traits tend to be found in successful dyslexic entrepreneurs. Those would be inventiveness or the ability to imagine things that others cannot and to be willing to challenge their own preconceptions. They also need to be conscientious.

An innovator who has brilliant ideas but lacks the discipline and persistence to carry them out is merely a dreamer. Moreover, a trait that is perhaps found disproportionately more in dyslexic innovators and revolutionaries would be agreeableness... or rather the willingness to be less socially agreeable in order to successfully implement strategies or ideas. Disagreeableness in this sense does not imply obnoxiousness or unpleasantness, but rather a higher level of social risk taking. Be less impressionable. More independent.

In the middle of the last century, Ingval Kamprad realized that cost of furniture manufacturing and retail was tied up in the assembly and distribution of fully assembled furniture. In order to sell lower priced furniture, Kamprad started selling unassembled furniture in easily stored and movable crates. Business soared. Displeased Swedish furniture manufacturers started boycotting IKEA, putting the company in considerable operational risk. Desperate for a solution, Kamprad looked south past the Baltic Sea to Poland, a country with much cheaper labor and plenty of wood. Despite lax proprietary laws and infrastructure, untrained labor, outdated machinery and the Soviet Union, Kamprad successfully implemented the manufacturing transfer. This is in the early 1960s; the Berlin Wall was up, the Cold War was at its peak and the East and West were at the brink of nuclear annihilation during the Cuban Missile Crisis. This move was akin to Tiffanys setting up shop in North Korea today. Most people would not risk being branded a traitor by doing business with the enemy. Not Kamprad. He didn't care. He was disagreeable.



¹ According to Malcom Gladwell's book, David and Goliath.

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Not all people have the creativity of selling unassembled furniture in flat boxes. Even less have the insight and discipline to build a first-class manufacturing operation in an economic backwater in the 1960s. And even less the political and social strength/indifference to defy the Cold War. Dyslexia doesn't necessarily make people more open or for that matter, conscientious. However, it may increase the likelihood of making it a bit easier to be disagreeable.

Summarized by Björn Jóhannesson and Jón. Sch. Thorsteinsson.