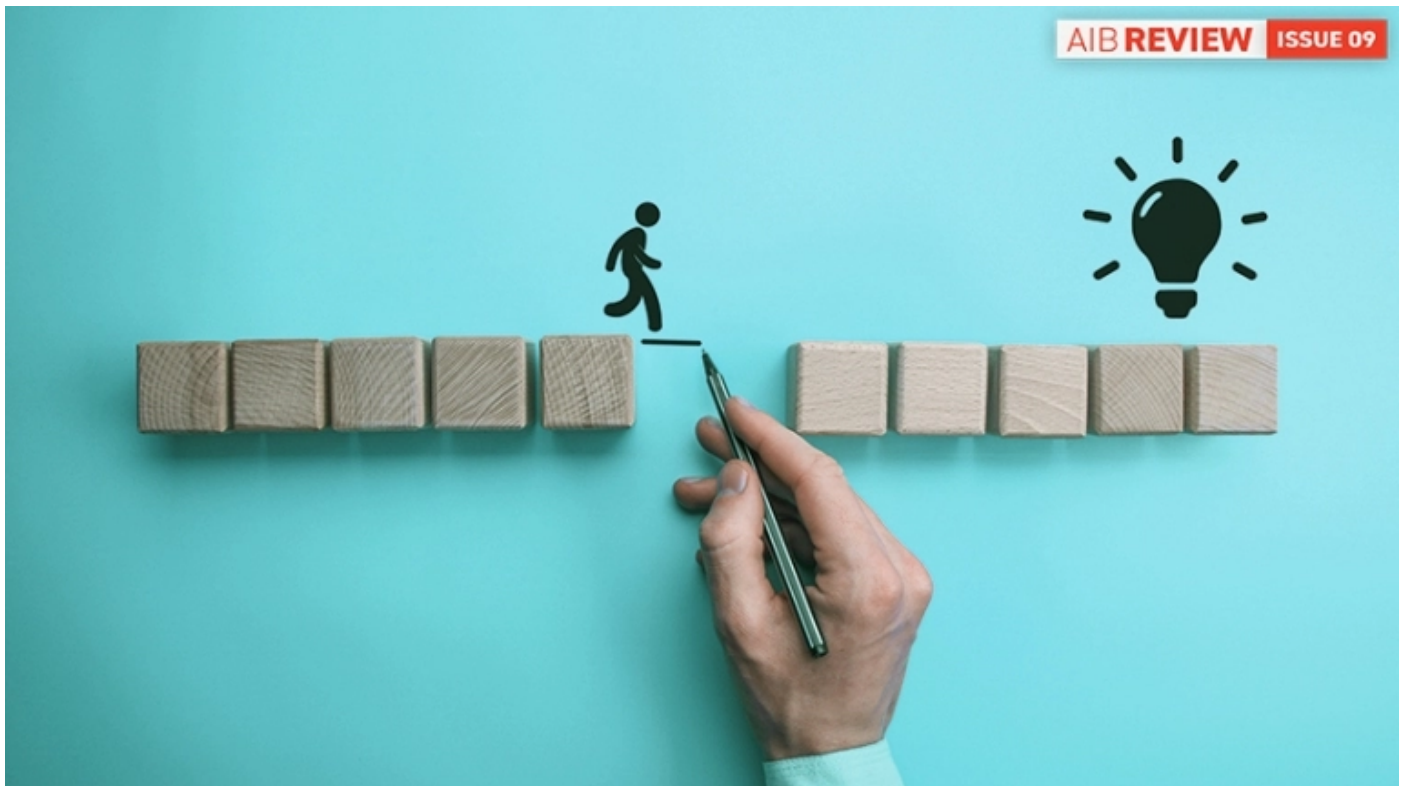


# Helping Entrepreneurs Rebound from Disruption: Role Of Academic Incubators

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Repeat after me

**"I get knocked down, but I get up again**

You are never gonna keep me down"

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We all know this famous song [Tubthumping](#) by Chumbawamba. Entrepreneurs pride themselves on their ability to bounce back from change or misfortune – to get up again. This used to be the secret recipe for entrepreneur's success – being resilient. Not anymore. Entrepreneurs are hit with multiple disruptions all at once (decline in markets, war in Ukraine, [global pandemic](#), [supply chain fragility](#), [talent shortage](#), [burned out workers...](#)).

It is not enough for entrepreneurs to absorb these shocks and rebound. They need to reorient, quickly assess and turn disruptions into sustainable opportunities. Entrepreneurs need to develop a [resilience muscle](#) to pivot swiftly out of disruption through sensing early and responding immediately.

Entrepreneurs with minimal funding can significantly challenge incumbent organisations who respond to these challenges in a flawed defensive approach to mitigate risks and minimise threats. Entrepreneurs can devise [defence/offence](#) risk management strategies resulting in a portfolio of opportunities. It is human nature to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Entrepreneurs are a different breed where failure is just another [iteration](#), another opportunity.

Entrepreneurs think differently, their processes are iterative and circular compared to organisations' linear-boxed process maps going in one direction. Entrepreneurs possess [adaptive resilience](#) traits like optimism, perseverance, motivation and self-efficacy. They are better equipped to navigate disruptions. Entrepreneurs seek the challenge; they have a different growth mindset.

The truth is, however, being self-made is a **myth**. One cannot build a successful business alone. Entrepreneurs need a support structure to enhance their survival and allow them to capture more opportunities. The interaction between self-factors and support initiatives can help create sustainable ventures and harness entrepreneurship resilience.

How can we be pro-entrepreneur? Bring back [incubators](#). And yes, resilience can be taught.

In recent times, the thinking moved from the idea that incubation does not work to being an integral part for sustainable growth. Incubators are ideal support structures capable of helping entrepreneurs build up their muscle. They can buffer, bridge and curate. Through **buffering**, entrepreneurs are protected for a while from external predators. Through **bridging**, entrepreneurs are connected to outside [social capital](#), knowledge and resources. Through **curating**, entrepreneurs are matched with the most appropriate social networks. Incubators can also strengthen linkages and leverage capabilities from mutually beneficial supply networks and clusters.

Academic institutions are in an ideal position to set up incubators. Their influence is far greater on their local communities. Academic institutions need to remain relevant as well and rethink their position to speed up innovative ideas, facilitate connections, and eventually establish strategic partnerships with the industry. An academic institution's purpose can no longer be just elite education or research. They need to build up external links and exploit better yet influence the know-how. Academic institutions economic involvements also need to be expanded to increase innovation. Academic institutions possess an untapped wealth of lecturers and students output ready to be commercialised. [Business linked research](#) can enhance networking and technology transfer.

Students expect more than a degree from an academic institution. Many aim to launch a business or start a social movement. Learners are putting more emphasis on being creative and innovative. They are coming up with more and more ideas but they are reluctant to put this into practice due to lack of entrepreneurial skills, fear of failure or lack of support structures. Financial structures like loan or capital programmes are not sufficient. Non-financial structures that create spatial proximity, virtual connectivity and synergies are equally important.

It is extremely important to create a collaborative network of innovative companies capable and willing to support researchers and students proposed ventures. Let us call them [Academic Incubators](#).

Academic incubators need to focus on strategic services like consultancy, management, training, research and development, technology transfer, innovation and above all network orchestration. Academic incubators facilitate the creation of value-added clusters, system of [interconnected nodes](#) in a dynamic governance structure. Through these interactions territorial synergy and relational symbiosis, trust and cooperations are fostered. Academic incubators are crucial in the development and supply of internal business networks for the incubated entrepreneurs. Sharing of all kinds of resources and experiences can eventually accelerate the creation of formal and informal partnerships.

Connecting ideas in these settings can be done using bottom up and top-down approaches. In the top-down model, academic incubators can set one or several central links. These include the creation of common goals, incentives for cooperation and orchestrating appropriate revenue streams. The bottom-up model facilitates networks effortlessly emerging from common interests, perspectives and continued interactions with the larger academic setting.

Academic incubators' most important goal is the creation of [spin-offs](#). Their main task is to encourage and motivate students and researchers to commercialise their ideas. Academic incubators can be entrepreneurial as well providing a credible medium for knowledge and technology transfer. The connection with the wider network of innovation is expected to entice entrepreneurs' appetite to seek opportunities from disruptions. Academic incubators also provide reputation and more credible supplier – customer relationships.

Academic incubators need to take centre stage in these challenging times. They are unique in their ability to swiftly change focus on specific sectors or variety of value-added interventions. Academic incubators have unsurpassed access to experts and specialists. This makes such incubators extremely influential to develop entrepreneurial skills and opportunities. They are more likely capable to [co-create value](#) and support the development of entrepreneurial supply networks due to the power of proximity. This principle basically asserts that entrepreneurs are more likely able to form relationships with others close to them.

So let us create those support structures to assist entrepreneurs create those vital networks "take risks", "fail fast", "get up again", "reorient" and eventually "voila – opportunity found".



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More than 15 years of lecturing experience (University of Newcastle / Edith Cowan University and several International Universities). Extensive industry analysis and management consultancy experience helping SMEs commercialise their ideas, enhance their operations/processes/supply networks, improve project governance and management, and continuity planning and execution. My areas of research interest lie in Entrepreneurial best practices, Operational improvement and Logistics/Supply Chain Management.