

Mistaken Identity by Paul Wilson, Jr.

Identity theft is a problem that seems to be getting worse the more that our personal information is digitized and easily accessed online. Interestingly, that is not the type of identity theft that impacts most entrepreneurs. There's another type of identity theft that happens to them everyday as they pursue ventures and opportunities that were not meant for them.

Who Are You?

That is not a question that we often hear asked of ourselves or that we ask others. Usually, the question that's asked when we meet other people is, "*What do you do?*" Some people would look at those questions and provide the same answer to each. Others, while readily willing to give an answer to the second question, would just stare at you blankly when asked the first one. The blank stare or confused look is the most common response that I receive when I ask people that question.

Why is the question "*who are you?*" so difficult to answer. It's probably because most people don't think about who they really are outside of their vocation. They have aligned their personal identity so closely aligned with their professional image, that their profession (almost) becomes the totality or essence of their existence. I have determined that many entrepreneurs suffer from a bad case of "mistaken identity."

When an entrepreneur has this syndrome, they spend most of their time focusing outside-in versus inside-out. This means that they are more concerned by what they do more than on who they are as a person. Many entrepreneurs often don't take the time to do a self-inventory. They spend more time inventorying their businesses than they do inventorying their personal lives. It's sad to say, but they don't have a strong sense of who they are outside of their daily business activities.

One of the dangers for those individuals who have placed their entire identity solely in their business or profession is that if something causes a sudden or dramatic change in their professional status or job situation, a severe emotional upheaval often follows. We have all heard of those individuals who have done radical and even violent things to themselves or others as a result of a job loss.

Change can be traumatic for anyone. However, it's even worse for those whose identity is so closely tied to the things that are changing. The reality is that you don't stop "being" just because your situation changes. Who you are stays constant. The key is knowing who you are prior to change coming. And since you can't predict when the change is coming, you must commit to a continual process of discovering and reaffirming who you are.

The truth is your value to your family, community, and society is worth so much more than what you do in your 9 to 5. Your real value is in who you were created to be. What you do as an entrepreneur should flow out of your understanding and appreciation of your life purpose and mission.

So, even when your business or profession experiences challenges that force change on you, your clear understanding of why you are alive will help to guide you confidently to your next opportunity. You may not like changing and changing may be inconvenient for you; however, you will be able to quickly adjust and prepare for the next opportunity that's coming to you. Your business or job may change, but your identity stays the same.

Identity Inventory

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Entrepreneurs are often told that in order to grow their businesses, they need to spend more time working “on” their business versus working “in” their business. I agree with this, but a more important piece of advice is often overlooked or undervalued. That advice would be that entrepreneurs need to spend more time working “on” *themselves*. If an entrepreneur spends quality time working on themselves, they will be that much more effective working on and in their business.

The first step to working on oneself is discovering who you are, so that you can determine what you need to work on and develop. How do you figure out who that person is at the core of your existence? I mentioned earlier that many people don't perform a self-inventory, although they inventory their businesses. Simply stated, a self-inventory is the combination of your:

- Goals and dreams
- Personality/temperament in professional and non-professional settings
- Beliefs and values
- Natural talents and learned skills
- Strengths and weaknesses
- The things that you are passionate about and driven by
- The key lessons from your significant life experiences

When was the last time that you sat down and wrote this kind of list about yourself? Have you thought about how these areas impact your thinking as an entrepreneur or how you operate your business? Have you thought about how to incorporate these areas into your business, so that it is easy to see how your business is an extension or expression of your core identity?

Some people think that just taking a personality test will tell them all they need to know about themselves. While there are lots of tests out there that can tell you your personality type and best work style, they are nothing more than tools that only give you part of the entire picture. One of the caveats with these tests, though, is that they attempt to slot people into narrow categories. Unfortunately, many people don't understand that there is no single test that can give them the whole picture of their own special and unique identity. Something more significant is needed to give you a deeper understanding of who you are.

Introspection will help you to discover your purpose/mission in life. Having a firm understanding of your purpose/mission will make you a more effective entrepreneur and leader. You will have a better appreciation of why you're in the business that you're in and whether or not you're in the right business. It will also help you to more effectively operate your business, engage and manage employees, serve customers, work with suppliers, assess partnerships, and execute business deals.

If you have never done this, or it's been a while since you've spent some quality time peering into your own soul, then you need to begin today. Continual introspection is needed to begin to understand who you truly are as a person. It is easy to get off course in business and in life when our foundation is not solid. Going through this kind of exercise – continually – will help you to solidify your foundation.

Being vs. Doing

There is a very good reason why we're called human "beings" not human "doings". It's because "being" precedes "doing". What you do should be a result or representation of who you are. Unfortunately, many people are running businesses or performing jobs that they were never meant or wired to do. That's one of the key reasons why so many people are dissatisfied with their lives. In effect, they are misappropriating too much of their talent, time, skills and experience to a profession or occupation that does not align with their core identity.

So, how do you ensure that you know who you are – the person at the core of your being - outside of what you do? First, you have to be honest about whether or not you have a case of mistaken identity. Next, as I mentioned earlier, you must perform a self-inventory to begin to truly understand "*who you are*" versus "*what you do.*" Once you have developed that list of personal traits and characteristics, you then can ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) ***Do you know what is your life purpose?*** What are you going to do with all the things that you uncovered or discovered in your life inventory? In order to answer this question most effectively, you need to connect with God. It just makes sense that the inventor of something would know the most about the thing that he invented. He knows why He created you and He still has your instruction manual!
- 2) ***Are you able to define yourself beyond the work that you do?*** When performing your self-inventory, was it challenging for you to think about yourself outside of your work environment? What ratio of all of your answers were work related versus the ones that were non-work related?
- 3) ***Are you wearing a mask?*** Do you project an image to other people that is not the real you? This can be easy for businesspeople, because of the pressure to always present a *professional* image. Nevertheless, your professional image should be an extension of your core identity. If a person doesn't know or like his/her core identity, then it's easy to project a false image to other people to make them think that is the real you.
- 4) ***Are you caught up in "comparisonitis"?*** Who you are as a person and as an entrepreneur is special and unique. Just because you think or do things differently doesn't mean that you're wrong. It just means that you're different. You do what works for you, as long as it's not hurting anyone else.
- 5) ***Are you living or working to please other people?*** You can't live someone else's life and you can't be overly concerned with living up to someone else's expectations. Other people's expectations, especially when they're unrealistic, add an unneeded burden on you that can be difficult to overcome. You don't need to deal with that kind of stress.
- 6) ***Are you working in your profession for the wrong reasons?*** Chasing only after money or fame is tiring and frustrating. If you're in a business or job doing work that you wouldn't do for free, then you're probably doing the wrong thing. Also consider that when you're working in something that you love to do, then it's not really work.

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When a person is cured of the effects of mistaken identity, they will have a much more fulfilling work/life experience. That's because fulfillment comes when a person discovers who they are and then begin doing the things that align with their core identity. They clearly recognize and understand that what they do is an extension and representation of who they are. Furthermore, the quality of what they do becomes a accurate reflection of their inner character.

If you want to see your business or life thrive, take the time to discover your core identity by asking yourself the hard questions. Seek God for wisdom and to reveal His purposes for you personally and professionally. Then once you get the real answers, realign your passions and pursuits. You'll be more than glad you did.

As a chosen igniter for those who yearn for a more purposeful, passionate, and prosperous life, Paul Wilson Jr. is deemed the "Dream Catalyst" for such transformation. God has anointed him with a special gift to understand and effectively teach the powerful connection between our dreams and His divine purpose for our lives. Paul is a dynamic author, powerful teacher, and leadership developer. His first book, [Dream B.I.G. in 3D: How to Pursue a Bold, Innovative God-Inspired Life!](#), has helped countless numbers of people transfer the concept of a fulfilling life purpose into a meaningful reality.

Throughout his corporate career, business ventures, and ministry roles, Paul consistently has led capacity building efforts to equip individuals and organizations to successfully achieve their missions. As a champion for spiritual empowerment, economic advancement, and community development for more than 15 years, he has focused his life on inspiring people to profitably integrate the values and benefits of entrepreneurial thinking into every area of their lives. Learn more about Paul at www.paulwilsonjr.com.