

Engineers, Entrepreneurs and the Asimow Projects

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Abstract: *The primary objective of this discussion is to describe a unique and rather remarkable example of a group of engineers functioning in the entrepreneurial role with particular reference to the activities of the Asimow Project. The engineer is the individual responsible for the translation of scientific knowledge into practical applications of human value. Engineers are involved in such activities as the planning, design, construction and management of such items as machinery, manufacturing plants, roads, bridges, buildings, and so forth. In the Schumpeter sense, the entrepreneur is the individual most closely responsible for the initiation of innovations of a commercial nature and the individual who assumes the major share of the risk of commercial innovation. The important thing to recognise is that the Schumpeter entrepreneur is the principal risk-bearer in society. In effect, the entrepreneur is the driving force of economic progress in any economic system, whether centralised or decentralised. Psychologists have described entrepreneurs as being strongly individualistic, independent, optimistic and often somewhat disagreeable in personality. In many respects, the personality of the typical engineer differs widely from that of the entrepreneur. The engineer is professionally oriented, and derives satisfaction from perfection on the job. The question may be raised to the ability of the typical engineer to assume the entrepreneurial function. Nevertheless, at different periods of history, engineers have established significant reputations as entrepreneurs.*

Keywords: *Engineers, entrepreneurial function, Schumpeter, Asimow Project*