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Endmoor Faunce

### Founder Taste: Aptitude (v4)

This piece is the 10th piece on founders ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)) and the fifth iteration of the founder taste series ([v3](#), [v2](#), [v1](#), [v0](#)). This piece specifically highlights aptitude in founders.

### Importance of Aptitude

The definition of aptitude is *a natural ability to do something*. It's self-explanatory that aptitude is merit in business-building, and this is historically supported:

| Founder         | Early Evidence of Aptitude  |
|-----------------|---|
| Mark Zuckerberg | Microsoft tried to buy his company and hire him when he was still in high school at Exeter.     |
| Bill Gates      | Built Traf-O-Data at 16 years old to tens of thousands of revenue selling software, in the 70s. |
| Steve Jobs      | Got a summer job at HP in the 60s and built his first electronics company, Blue Box, at 16.     |
| Elon Musk       | Built and sold a computer game in the early 80s in the ghettos of Pretoria, Africa.             |
| Jeff Bezos      | Nationally recognized gifted child at 12 after they wrote a book about how smart he was.        |
| Larry Page      | Invented BackRub which became PageRank as his Stanford PhD dissertation.                        |
| Jensen Huang    | Top 5% nationally ranked in chess at 10 and fastly promoted to manager at LSI and AMD.          |

### Flavors of Aptitude

There are a few common types of out-of-distribution aptitude:

| Flavor   | Description   | Examples                                    |
|----------|---|---|
| Genius   | High intelligence & clarity of thought              | Patrick Collison, Scott Wu, Alexandr Wang   |
| Executor | High operational excellence to GTS                  | Michael Dell, Eric Glyman, Brendan Foody    |
| Builder  | High ability builders, tinkerers, and technologists | Marc Andreessen, Palmer Luckey, Dylan Field |

## Flashes of Aptitude

While sometimes it takes time to identify how strong each flavor of aptitude is in the founder, at other times it is so overwhelmingly immediately clear where the out-of-distributionness is. In the former cases, there are some flashes of aptitude that we verbalize into [founder archetypes](#) – these flashes are evidence that might make one think that there exists aptitude:

| Flash               | Description   | Personified     |
|---------------------|---|-----------------|
| Sparkling Intellect | The type of founder who exudes elite excellence or uniqueness in their way of thinking, is super sharp, thinks on their feet, and high velocity mind.   | Mark Zuckerberg |
| Seasoned Depth      | The type of founder who has tremendous depth across multiple disciplines and seems to “understand the game”, but is also humble and self-assured.   | Jensen Huang    |
| Casual Confidence   | The type of founder who would be very stressed if they were not succeeding, yet they are not stressed most of the time, which instills reassurance, and also is not unabashedly egotistical.          | Jeff Bezos      |
| Cool Maturity       | The type of founder who always seems stressed, is quiet but intense in demeanor, extremely no-bullshit decision-making, and willing to get hands dirty, often Eastern European.                       | Larry Page      |
| Intense Focus       | The type of founder who authentically doesn’t care about anything else other than their mission, is completely obsessed, and thus is green or naive in some topics, which somehow adds to their aura. | Elon Musk       |
| Killer Instinct     | The type of founder who is high agency, knows what to do and knows how to do it, has that drive in them and they know it, dogged determination plus sharp as a shark.                                 | Bill Gates      |
| Natural Charisma    | The type of founder who has a “reality distortion field” effect on people and rooms, somehow wills their environment into existence, while being effortless and authentic.                            | Steve Jobs      |

## Guide

The way to use this guidebook is not as an investment rubric, but as loose mental models that act as approximations to the truths. With our current library of founder verbalizations, we can follow a founder underwriting process:

1. Gauge if there are any signs of out-of-distribution on first impression.
2. Score [dimensions of out-of-distribution](#) and verbalize [founder psychology](#).
3. Pattern match to any existing successful [founder profile archetypes](#) and evaluate aptitude.
4. Assess aptitude on different flavors and verbalize which flashes of aptitude are present.
5. Follow founder read [best practices](#) during discovery to ensure we gather all data points.

As a venture capital firm, verbalization is IP. This is meant to help us concretize our intuitive reads and gut feelings on founders and force clarity of verbalized thought.