

# BABSON COLLEGE 2025

## Entrepreneurship Research Conference

### **Mastering Uncertainty: A New Way to Make Better Decisions**

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#### **The Price of Uncertainty**

Uncertainty is the everyday reality of entrepreneurs. It clouds judgment, slows down action, and causes even experienced founders to second-guess themselves. According to CB Insights, up to 90% of startups fail – and poor decision-making under uncertainty is among the top reasons<sup>1</sup>. But what if you could train your ability to make decisions under uncertainty?

#### **From Uncertainty to Mastery**

Despite growing awareness of the risks uncertainty poses, structured methods for managing it during decisions remain rare. SREL fills this gap. It's a research-based, practical approach to navigating complexity and building decision-making confidence.

#### **What is Self-Regulated Entrepreneurial Learning (SREL)?**

SREL enables you to guide your thinking, learning, and motivation in real time – especially when facing complex, ambiguous situations. It helps you prepare before you act, stay focused while acting, and learn after the fact.

It follows a three-phase cycle:

- Forethought – You analyze the situation, set goals, assess what you know, and identify what's missing.
- Performance – You stay focused, monitor your progress, and regulate your effort.
- Reflection – After the decision, you review not just the result but the entire process. What worked? What would you improve?

SREL turns uncertainty from a threat into a growth opportunity.

#### **Real-World Impact: How SREL Works in Practice**

We interviewed over 300 entrepreneurs and asked them one key question: How do you make decisions when the path ahead is uncertain? We didn't just listen to their stories – we analyzed how they thought, what they felt, and how they learned along the way. What we found was striking:

The entrepreneurs with strong SREL capabilities made better decisions. They didn't panic when the unknown hit. They spotted knowledge gaps quickly, gathered the right insights, and stayed calm under pressure. They also learned from each decision and used that learning to make the next one better. They could motivate themselves when things got tough and recover from setbacks with clarity and purpose.

These insights formed the foundation for a practical intervention designed to train these capabilities.

Since then, over 800 entrepreneurs from four continents have joined this training, and the results are remarkable:

- 95% showed a significant improvement in their SREL capabilities.
- They made decisions with greater clarity, purpose, and adaptability – knowing what mattered, acting decisively, and adjusting as needed.
- They made decisions with greater confidence, not just gut feeling, but grounded in structured thinking.

But it didn't stop there. In follow-up studies, we saw two exciting ripple effects:

1. Entrepreneurs who trained SREL were also more innovative – they generated new ideas, took smarter risks, and drove change in their organizations.
2. They used tools like ChatGPT and other AI assistants more effectively – asking better questions, interpreting responses more wisely, and making the technology work for them, not instead of them.

In short: SREL doesn't just help you decide. It helps you evolve.

### **A Real Case: From Overwhelm to Clarity**

One entrepreneur in the Workshop ran a fast-growing services startup. Before the training, uncertainty made her freeze. She waited too long to decide, or relied on gut feeling and hoped for the best. After learning SREL, something shifted.

She began to treat uncertainty as a signal, not a threat. She paused and asked herself: What do I need to decide? What do I know already? What's missing? She mapped her knowledge, identified gaps, and collected high-quality information. Even during challenging research phases, like reading legal documents, she applied focus strategies to stay sharp. She also learned how to reignite her motivation when she felt drained. However, the biggest shift occurred after these decisions. Before, she reflected only when things went wrong – and only on the outcome. Now, she reviews the whole process: Where did I lose focus? What helped me stay on track?

That's when she told us: *"Before, uncertainty slowed me down. Now, it sharpens my thinking."*

### **The Future Belongs to the Adaptable**

Whether you're a startup founder, an executive, or a team leader – SREL helps you master the moments that matter most: the tough calls in uncertain environments.

The best part? You can start now:

- 👉 Take the free SREL Self-Assessment – discover your current strengths and blind spots:  
[www.srel.org/test-yourself/](http://www.srel.org/test-yourself/)
- 👉 Download the SREL Canvas – your structured tool for forethought, performance, and reflection:  
[www.srel.org/srelcanvas/](http://www.srel.org/srelcanvas/)

Uncertainty is here to stay. But how you deal with it – that's up to you.

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<sup>1</sup> CB Insights (2021). The Top 12 Reasons Startups Fail.

<https://www.cbinsights.com/research/startup-failure-reasons-top/>