



**Get Your
Business**

UnSTUCK for Good!

The **SIMPLE** Five-Step Solution

“Every CEO, business owner, entrepreneur, or executive can profit from this book’s exceptional insights into how to get their business moving forward again, with practical solutions you can profit from immediately and for years to come.”

— GREGG DARISH, Founder and Executive Chairman, Motus, LLC

HENRY MITTELMAN

Additional Praise for *UnSTUCK for Good!*

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“This book is direct, to the point, and quickly focuses you on the most important pillars that will lead to your success. Smart business owners will study this short book carefully, and smarter ones will revisit it every few months to course-correct back to a more effective future.”

—Danny Iny, Founder/CEO of Mirasee; best-selling author of *Teach and Grow Rich*

“*UnSTUCK for Good!* provides a simple, but highly detailed roadmap to dramatically improve your effectiveness. It will help Founders transition from a *doer mindset* to a *CEO strategic mindset*. The book is essential for anyone who wants to lead an organization in a way that will foster long-term success.”

—David Rosenberg, CEO, Prime Motor Group

“*UnSTUCK for Good!* is a must read for entrepreneurs and business owners who like me, are constantly looking to improve their business and bottom line. Although many of today’s tools and technologies can be sexier, the Simple Five Step Solutions presented in this book are the real linchpins to success. The powerful, perceptive and practical advice will change the trajectory of your business.”

—Jillian Vorce, CEO, The Jillian Group

“There is no CEO—or rookie entrepreneur—who will not benefit from reading Henry Mittelman’s *UnSTUCK for Good!* It is compact, clear and compelling, yes. But don’t be blinded by its simplicity. Written by a successful business leader and executive coach, it will help you face the hidden habits hindering effective leadership and business success and provide you with smart, concrete remedies. Buy it, study it, use it—and get your business moving again.”

—Bruce Frankel, best-selling author of *What Should I Do with the Rest of My Life? True Stories of Finding Success, Passion and New Meaning in the Second Half of Life*

“Henry is a true business builder who is more qualified than most to teach all entrepreneurs how to get *UnSTUCK for Good!* I highly recommend you follow his Five Pillars Of Success carefully: Pay close attention to how he debunks the myths to what many think are the keys to being a world class entrepreneur—while he cuts to the chase on the realities. Henry has nailed it.”

—Brian Kurtz, Business Builder of Boardroom Inc., Founder of Titans Marketing LLC, and serial direct marketer

“Here is a helpful and easy-to-read resource that is profound in its simplicity, scope and clarity. It’s loaded with intelligent insights you can start to use and profit from immediately. It provides a blueprint for every CEO, business owner and entrepreneur seeking to propel their company to the next level. Through a combination of real world business savvy and no-nonsense pragmatism, *UnSTUCK for Good!* demystifies what it takes to succeed. It’s a paradigm changer!”

—Linda Goodman, Principal of LG Associates; Author, *Why Customers Really Buy: Uncovering the Emotional Triggers that Drive Sales*

“Whether you’ve been in business for years or just started a company, Henry Mittelman’s *UnSTUCK for Good!* is a POWERFUL read. Using a wealth of experience and a track record of success, this book goes directly to the heart of why CEOs, business owners, entrepreneurs, and executives often fail to make the progress they want. The one book to read if you run a business and feel like it’s running you. Take advantage of it now.”

—Steve Snyder, Entrepreneur-in-Residence, Gesmer Updegrave, LLP

This book is a terrific resource for any CEO, business owner, entrepreneur, or executive who wants to quickly rise to a whole new level of business success. A must read.”

—Zain Raj, Chief Executive Officer, Shapiro+Raj and best-selling author of *Brand Rituals* and *Marketing For Tomorrow, Not Yesterday*

“*UnSTUCK for Good!* is essential for any small business owner who wants to stay relevant and profitable. Henry breaks down what it takes to succeed into simple steps to implement into your daily routine. A practical book to reread year after year.”

—Nathaniel Tiplady, Needham Chiropractic Associates

“*UnSTUCK for Good!* is a wonderful and insightful read that addresses the most important qualities for personal leadership success. Being Accountable is often discussed as an intangible concept, but Henry Mittelman recognizes that personal accountability is the essence of leadership and the driving behavior that leads to UnStuck success . . . This book clearly addresses a component of leadership and personal satisfaction that is mandatory.”

—Ward Mooney, CEO, Crystal Financial LLC

“Mittelman’s straightforward blueprint confronts CEOs with the obvious that we aren’t doing, but should be.”

—Linda O’Koniewski, CEO, RE/MAX Leading Edge

“*UnSTUCK for Good!* forced me to take an honest look at my own habits and assumptions while offering simple action steps to transform my business. Get ready to be challenged in the best way possible—this book forces you to think differently about how to run your business, and start improving it immediately.”

—Jessica Oman, Planner-in-Chief, Renegade Planner

“In *UnSTUCK for Good!* Henry expertly illustrates what high performance leaders and business coaches have known for years—that performance is largely driven from within, and is based on the individual’s ability to focus on what’s most important and eliminate distractions. This book is a great guide for getting out of your own way and reaching your full potential. It’s loaded with intelligent insights you can start to use and profit from immediately.”

—Robert Glazer, Founder & Managing Director, Acceleration Partners

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The **SIMPLE** Five-Step Solution

HENRY MITTELMAN

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AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Throughout this book I have drawn upon situations, past clients, and business leaders I have known over the course of my career; however, to protect their privacy, names, industries, details, and case studies have been altered and disguised, and some stories used have been fictionalized.

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Before reading this book, please read the “Disclosures and Disclaimer Statement” at the end of this book.

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*This book is dedicated to my wife, Carole.
You have always been there for me
with unwavering love and support.
I love you to infinity and beyond.*



*To my family and good friends (especially Jason),
and all the business professionals
I have worked with throughout my career,
I want to say "Thank You"
for what you have taught me about life and success.*

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A Note to the Reader of This Book

You are a *serious and enterprising* CEO, business owner, entrepreneur, senior executive, or self-employed professional, and you have this nagging sense that your business or career could be doing so much better.

- › You've got a proven product or service that's been accepted by the marketplace.
- › Your business isn't a hobby—it's your primary source of income.
- › You're working long hours, but when you consider how hard you're working, the results are unsatisfying.
- › Considering how much you are doing, you're now asking yourself, “**Is it really supposed to be this difficult?**”

As much as you hate to admit it—and all of us do—you're a little bit stuck, and you're not sure why. If only you knew the answer. Good news—I'm here to get you UnSTUCK. That's what this book is all about.

Why Read This Book?

We both know that operating a successful business is no easy task. That being said, I have taken my thirty-plus years of business experience and distilled down the *skillsets and management traits* I have found in all successful business leaders—the few SIMPLE tools and strategies that, when put to good use, will dramatically affect your chance of succeeding in this competitive business environment.

Don't Let the Simplicity of This Book Fool You

I want to challenge you, to force you to *think about and question* how you presently function as the leader of your business. I want to give you power. The power to actually make things happen... *really happen!*

If you're like most successful people, you have been trained from childhood, and through your education and prior business experiences, to be accountable to others. Parents, teachers, and bosses all gave you indications of what they expected from you, and you tried your best to live up to *their* standards. But now, you're running your own business (or possibly someone else's business), and if you're struggling, there's a good chance you're not sure why.

From my thirty years of business experience, I can tell you it's probably not from a lack of knowledge—you're an educated businessperson. But, over the years, I've learned that the most successful people were not always the smartest. They were not always the most knowledgeable, nor did they always possess the most resources. More often than not, they were the people who

had the rare ability to maintain a razor-sharp focus on their goals and do the *right* things—the most important things—day after day after day.

Don't get me wrong: They may have also had knowledge and the capital resources, both of which can help kick-start things. Knowledge is clearly a prerequisite to getting into the world of business. But I found that more importantly, it was focus, consistency, and, above all, the ability to hold *themselves* 100 percent accountable that would eventually make their vision and goals a reality. As a professional business coach, my experiences with getting stuck—and getting unstuck—aren't just anecdotal. I've listened to hundreds of stories, and I've experienced it firsthand.

I grew up in Levittown, New York, the child of a hard-working, middle-class family. I started working in 1963 when I was fifteen years old. I worked in a shoe store, a jewelry store, a bowling alley, and a luncheonette by the time I graduated from high school. I attended New York University and was on an educational path to become a theatrical Broadway lighting designer. Unfortunately, the Vietnam War caused me to take a different path. Because of my electronics background, I spent four years in the United States Air Force in a most amazing position—helping to make sure our country was prepared to win in a possible all-out *atomic war* with the Soviet Union (sorry, I can't go into the details).

When my term in the Air Force was over, going back to school to finish my education as a theatrical lighting designer was really no longer an option. I had to figure out how to reinvent myself. Since I was almost out of money, whatever I was going to do, I

needed to do it fast. I remember driving around in my car on a really hot afternoon and thinking, *I'm seriously stuck. What do I do now?* After exploring a number of alternatives, it finally hit me. *I like people. I'm friendly, and always enjoyed working in retail while I was in high school.*

I started interviewing with a number of local and national retailers and ultimately landed a position with a small regional retail firm—and never looked back. For the next twenty-three years, I helped develop and ultimately operated what eventually became a \$400 million national clothing chain (Loehmann's). During that time, I finished my education and eventually earned my MBA.

All of these experiences led me to KPMG, one of the world's largest consulting firms, where I was managing director for four years. At the end of my stint at KPMG, I joined a group of serious entrepreneurs and helped develop and operate three successful professional services firms. Throughout my journey, I've had the opportunity to be an advisor and coach to hundreds of executives and business owners.

The Biggest Thing I've Learned

Most CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs who struggle with underperforming businesses have never learned how to be accountable to *themselves*. Unfortunately, most business books ignore the crucial issue of personal accountability, focusing instead on loading up readers with cookie-cutter academic or technical knowledge: people skills, productivity, finance, operations, sales, you name it.

There are *literally* thousands of books that outline the many essential steps to becoming a successful CEO, business owner, or entrepreneur. There are even more books about time management, marketing, leadership, and motivation. I'd guess you've read your fair share (or at least *bought* your fair share).

Luckily for book publishers and authors, people have an unquenchable thirst for more knowledge. People continue to buy books thinking the concepts, or step-by-step instructions of how to do this or that, will be the “magic bullet” to success. We've been trained from our early years that the more knowledge we acquire, the better chance we have at becoming successful. Don't get me wrong—that's true. But it's more than that.

Assuming you have the proper knowledge to succeed in business—and if you don't, you never should have entered the race—the only thing really holding you back is not *using* that knowledge effectively day after day after day.

I am going to share with you the key to a process that no one else is talking about: personal accountability. In this book, I'll not only focus your attention on the importance of personal accountability, but I'll also show you how to achieve it. What is it? Why you lack it? Why is it so important? What can it do for you? How can personal accountability make the difference between success and failure? And how can you attain it?

The concept of personal accountability dictates every choice you make: how you spend your time; how you spend your money or someone else's money; whether you effectively delegate or compulsively over-control; whether you blame others, make excuses or take responsibility; and how you plan your workday versus what

you actually do all day. Even down to how often you check your email—it all comes down to personal accountability.

As of this publishing, I'm the only person I know of who has written a book, shining a spotlight on the topic of personal accountability in business. So, I encourage you to read it and take action on the vital issues you find in this book—or risk staying *STUCK* where you are right now. The choice is indeed that stark.

This Is NOT a “How To” Book

It's a “tell it like it is” book. No sugar-coating; no selling you some new marketing, people, or leadership skills; no CRM software or training program; no promises to “get one hundred new clients in the next thirty days,” or “become a millionaire in six months.” I'm not going to fix all your challenges, or reveal the one simple secret to turn your business around. There is no such book (although some may purport to be). This book *will* give you a number of things to think about. And if your business is not as successful as you want it to be, I ask you to *look in the mirror*.

Focus and consistent action is where the rubber meets the road. It's also where most businesses get *STUCK*. I realize I'm making it sound simple, and we both realize it's not. Can you really take all of that theoretical, academic, and technical “stuff” you've *read or learned* and actually make it useful? For most of us, the answer is “NO.” That's why I decided to write this *easy-to-understand* and *actionable* book in which I expose the detrimental success myths stagnating your growth.

After running a hugely successful national business platform for over twenty years—and mentoring and coaching hundreds of CEOs, serious entrepreneurs, and managers for even longer—I know the FIVE KEY PILLARS that enable the leader of a business to be highly effective.

Pillar #1: Focus

Pillar #2: Time Management

Pillar #3: Taking Consistent Action

Pillar #4: Self-Talk

Pillar #5: Accountability

There are literally hundreds of major and minor things that need to be done for your business to succeed over the long term. With that being said, operating a successful business will be next to impossible unless you master *these few basic business and personal strategies, tactics, and behaviors*. They are the very same methods I used to catapult my company from \$24 million to \$400 million. When you put them to use (and I stress *use*), they will not only dramatically and positively affect your bottom line, but help to reduce the levels of stress you experience on a day-in, day-out basis.

In order to do so, you need a strategy and a system—and, if you're like most people who want to “up their game,” you need a coach. That's what this book is. I'm here to coach you—not only to offer you the additional knowledge you seek, but also show you how to use the knowledge you already have, and empower you

into taking the kind of action that grows businesses and aligns goals with results.

The barriers blocking your growth exist in businesses and companies of all sizes, so whether you're a small-business owner or the CEO of a multimillion-dollar corporation, these personal strategies will work for you, and make you dramatically more effective. Whether your empire is your business, creative venture, or career, the same rules, processes, and structures apply. It's the same road for all, and I'll show you how to successfully navigate down that road.

It's very easy to become a prisoner to old bad habits and behaviors, and default to what you know best, which is typically your technical expertise. You may have bought into the myth that business ownership requires exceptionally long hours, lots of hard work, and sacrifice. While this is clearly true during the early stages of a business life cycle, owning a business should not be viewed as a life sentence of hard time.

Some business owners are convinced that they are "experts"—they know it all, and they're not willing to challenge old assumptions or consider new ideas that could substantially improve their business and life. They're so busy defending their position (even though they are miserable) that it's almost impossible to help them.

I understand the frustration and powerlessness you sometimes feel. More importantly, I understand what's sabotaging your success and how you can change it, so you can get off the business-owner's hamster wheel. I'm not saying that you should never read another business book after you've read this one, but

you might not need to. If you're like most, you already have what it takes to be a successful business owner or operator. All that's required is a simple and effective shift in approach—a shift in mindset—a better way to manage YOU!

Imagine if you could take your biggest business challenges and learn how to manage them more effectively. What would that be worth to you? What would it be worth to start every morning knowing that you were able to accomplish what you set out to accomplish? What would it be worth to feel good about your business again?

I'm here to teach you how to *do* the success game differently. So, if you're ready, I invite you to take a deep breath and turn the page. Let's get started.

1

Got Focus?

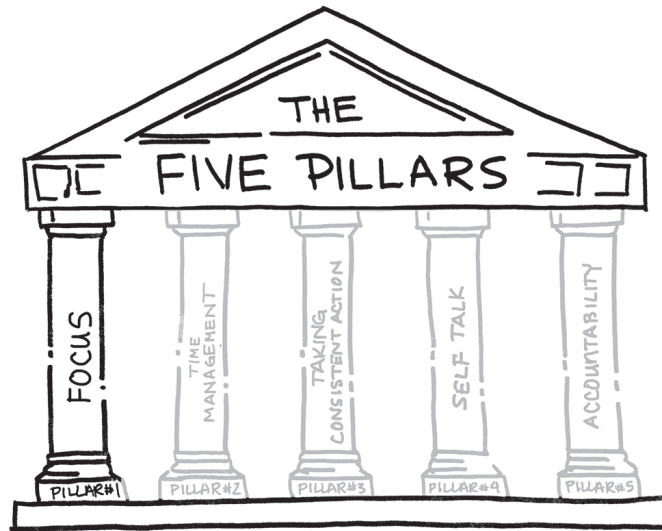
I WOULDN'T BE surprised if you expected Chapter 1 to be about goal setting. Let's face it, if you're not clear on what you want to achieve, it's pretty hard to achieve it. If you recall however, in the beginning of the book I stated that "your business isn't a hobby, it's your primary source of income." That means you have already developed your goals, and have been implementing them for some time now, which is why I chose *Focus* as the first chapter.

You see, athletes and their coaches have known for decades that winning is dependent on mint condition of *both* the body and mind. The athlete who possesses the sharpest mental clarity crosses the finish line first.

The same rule applies to business. You need to have a positive belief system that's reinforced by your thoughts (and we'll talk more about that later). You also need to stick to beliefs that *don't* limit you, even though internal and external forces are trying to

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do just that. Thankfully, there's a way to battle these obstacles. You can stay on track with the *First Pillar of Success*: **FOCUS**.



MYTH: Focus comes naturally.

FACT: You have to learn focus.

Focus is actually a *learned* skill—and, like all other skills, it needs to be nurtured and cultivated. Odds are, you haven't had many opportunities to actually do that.

Think about what you learned during the first twenty-plus years of your life. Neither school nor your first jobs promoted focus. You were probably told that multitasking makes you efficient and highly effective, but that is another MYTH! In fact, praising you for your ability to multitask only reinforced *the exact opposite* of what you actually need to succeed: *focused activity*.

Here's the hard truth: being *efficient* and being *effective* are two very different things. According to the American Psychological

Association, the brain is just not set up to multitask.¹ When you're doing all that mental juggling, you are switching between lots of activities at once, and you're probably not performing any of them very well. What's worse, you're probably not finishing all of them anyway.²

If you're like most people, you have a to-do list. And like most people, your list is made up of things that are really important, and lots of other things I like to call "stuff." The \$64,000 question for you is: Are you spending all of your time checking off really important things, or just the "stuff?" Are the things you are doing each day moving you closer to your long-term vision? If not, then why are you wasting your time on them?

*"Most people fail because
they major in minor things."*

TONY ROBBINS

A Stanford University study has shown that bombarding your brain with all this different "stuff" not only reduces your productivity, but also may actually *harm* your brain.³ And it may lower your IQ.⁴

1 <http://www.apa.org/research/action/multitask.aspx>

2 Westbrook, J. et al. The impact of interruptions on clinical task completion. *Qual Saf Health Care* 2010;19:284-289 doi:10.1136/qshc.2009.039255. Accessed online 10/4/15 <http://qualitysafety.bmj.com/content/19/4/284.short>

3 <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/244376>

4 <http://www.forbes.com/sites/travisbradberry/2014/10/08/multitasking-damages-your-brain-and-career-new-studies-suggest/>

Effective work requires focus. And it's not easy. It doesn't come naturally. It takes training, and lots of repetition (repetition is the mother of change). But as your coach, I'll show you what you need to do to achieve that razor-sharp focus to help you accomplish your goals.

Some of the people who are reading this book may have a business that has turned out to be exactly what they envisioned, or possibly even better. If that's the case, they should be congratulated. But those of you who are wondering "how did I get myself into this mess?" may feel trapped, frustrated, and overwhelmed by your business, or have an uneasy feeling in the pit of your stomach. You may be working too many hours and be involved in way too many things. The excitement you once had for your business seems to have faded, and now you feel STUCK.

Mirror, Mirror, On The Wall

Facing reality can sometimes be very uncomfortable, but the first step in recognizing your need to change is to admit there is a problem. The questions below are tough, and they're intended to push you out of your comfort zone. Take a few minutes to think about them, and be honest with your answers.

1. Do I face frequent interruptions? Am I forever chained to my phone or computer?
2. Am I just busy, or am I really accomplishing important strategic objectives?
3. Do I often ask, "Why do I have to do so many things myself?"

4. Do I find myself working “in” my business instead of “on” my business?
5. Do I ever wonder if what I am doing is truly worth the time, headaches, and sacrifices?
6. Do I go home many nights feeling mentally and physically drained?
7. Do I dread the drudgery of dealing with the same issues and problems every day?
8. Am I anxious about drowning in projects, problems, deadlines, crises, meetings, employee issues, unanswered voicemails and/or emails, customer complaints, administrative trivia, etc.?
9. Do I feel like a master juggler with too many balls in the air?
10. Am I still working too much and making too little?
11. Am I fed up with missing family events and making other personal sacrifices?
12. Do I crave more free time to do the things that matter most to me?
13. Do I feel that my business is just not growing fast enough?
14. Do I feel like I am on the proverbial “treadmill?”

If you have answered YES to more than three of these questions, it's time for you to look in the mirror, step back, and ask one final question: *WHY?*

I don't want you to feel embarrassed, because quite frankly, you're in good company. Many business owners find themselves in this position. In many cases, these problems are created because business owners narrowly focus themselves on the day-to-day trivial issues of their business rather than on the important strategic issues. The good news is you might find the solution much less complicated than you might have imagined.

Don't Let The Past Dictate The Future

Most people like being in their *comfort zone*. They're not willing to put up with short-term sacrifices for long-term benefits. The avoidance of short-term pain is more motivating than the desire for long-term pleasure and benefits. That's why so many people struggle with exercising, weight loss, and trying to stop smoking.

But when the day is over, what keeps most CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs from moving forward is the fact that they seldom take the time to slow down, reflect, and ask, "What's working and what's not working in my business, and *WHY?*" As a result, they are constantly putting out fires. It's an overused metaphor, but the truth is they are so blinded by being in the forest, that they don't see the trees. They wander around, spending their time on low-priority tasks instead of focusing on the high value activities that will drive their business forward.

The True Enemy Of Success

When CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs are feeling stuck, their immediate assumption is they're in need of something more—more money, more time, better software, or more knowledge about this or that. Outside sources may agree, but more often than not, none of these factors are the real culprits that keep success at bay. In fact, what you need to get ahead and remain ahead is not something you can learn. In fact, it's what you need to *unlearn*...there's a good chance the culprit is the bad *habit of distraction*.

The Immediate Fix

If you traced your challenge with focus to its origins, you might be surprised to find the main issue isn't actually lurking in the dazzle of *outside* distractions but within your own mind. While most business leaders wish to blame outside sources for their troubles with focus—and I can understand why, to a certain extent—the largest struggle tends to be an internal one.

As humans, we're extremely distractible. With smartphones, tablets, and Google at our fingertips, distractions from these technological wonders is the new addiction *du jour*. It's a major cause of failed dreams, ideas, and businesses; it's an epidemic—and it pervades all areas of life. No one is immune to its allure.

Focus is an endangered species. With technology advances, we now have the ability to carry mini supercomputers in our pockets, everywhere we go. Our personal space is no longer just ours; it's

interwoven into the digital web that connects us to everything and everyone. We're always tapped in and turned on, even when it's in our best interest not to be.

Many business leaders are unwittingly in love with their devices. If their phone stops working or is lost or stolen, they put their entire day on hold until it is either fixed or replaced. The long lines outside of Apple Stores before the release of a new iPhone model show the depth of this obsession. Customers literally camp out overnight in store parking lots, sometimes for days, to get the latest phone model as soon as it's released.

When most of us sit at our desks, our devices devilishly whisper, "Come over here. I'm your BFF. Come play with me." We reason, *I'll do it just for a little bit.* We check sports statistics, fashion sites, our email, log into Facebook, or surf the web—the ultimate black hole. Before we know it, an entire hour has passed. *Wow, how did that happen?* we ask.



The addiction to technology and all of its offerings makes aimless web surfing and other online habits difficult to break. Even worse, today's technocentric world has trained our minds to hunger for instant gratification. We're constantly seeking the thrill of a new email landing in our inbox or getting a shout-out on Twitter. That thrill we feel is actually thanks to a rush of the

body's naturally occurring chemical *dopamine*, which can be highly addictive in its own right.

The flip side of the focus dilemma is that while instant gratification plays a major role in the problem, it operates strictly on the surface level. Even if you decided to toss your smartphone, tablet, or laptop into the river, you would not rid yourself of the maladies of a distracted mind. Its roots run deeper due to limiting beliefs (which we will talk about later in the book).

In a business context, focus and looking beyond the gilded allure of instant gratification is paramount to sustainability and success. Long- and short-term planning isn't just a desirable tool; it's the screws that will hold your business in place.

Want Growth? Focus On Emotionally Connecting With Your Customer

The truth of the matter is (and this is something you should really take to heart) *people make buying decisions based upon emotion*. Then they use facts to support that decision. They are actually more focused on the emotional side of what a product or service does for them than on anything else.

Think about this example: You spend a good amount of time doing research on the car you want. You go to an automobile dealership known for offering the lowest prices in town to buy this new car, and it takes about thirty minutes for the salesperson to approach you. Then, when they aggressively try to sell you *a car you don't want*, but a more expensive car, you're totally turned off. When you discuss it with the manager, he really isn't interested in

what you have to say, and that makes you angry. Even though the dealership has the lowest prices, would you still buy a car there? I think not. Your *emotion* drives your decision.

So whether you are in retail, manufacturing, technology, professional services, or any other industry, the most important question of all for you is: “Will the product, service, or solution I am providing stir a positive emotion in my customer?”

Apple is a great example of a company that truly understands customer psychology. There are other companies that offer faster laptops and more impressive technology than the MacBook, iPad, and iPhone, yet Apple is a tour de force in the technological market. Why? The company has figured out how to make an emotional connection with consumers. Their customer base feels good about their purchases, so they continue to choose Apple again and again.

Remember, these are the same customers that are lining up overnight to be the first to get their hands on new products. But they don't do that for Apple competitors like Microsoft and Dell because they haven't made this same kind of emotional connection. In the average consumer's eye, these other companies just produce commodities and nothing more.

What Business Are You In?

Dan Kennedy, probably the most highly recognized marketing expert in the world, teaches that marketing is the cornerstone of any successful business, and he's right. Let's face it, it really doesn't matter what product or service you are selling unless you

have a buyer. If your mindset doesn't embrace that fact, you will probably spend a whole lot of time doing things that really don't matter. Marketing is about communicating with and educating your customers, prospects, and referral sources why it's in their best interest to do business with your company. It is about educating the right target audience on the advantages, benefits, value, and results you can provide.

To drive home a point, one of the first questions I ask a new client is, "What business are you in?" The usual answer I receive is something like, "I'm in the printing business," or "I'm in the chemical business," or "I'm in the retail business." The funny thing is that no matter what answer I get, I say to this prospective new client, "You're wrong." From a mindset standpoint, there's only one right answer, and that is, "I'm in the marketing business."

If you don't have a marketing process for your business, your goal should be to develop one, right away.

There are basically five ways to grow your business:

1. Keep the customers you have.
2. Bring in more customers.
3. Increase the average transaction size (unit sale).
4. Increase the frequency of purchases.
5. Say "no" to bad customers/prospects.

To sum it up, you want to keep the customers you have while bringing in more, and sell larger amounts more often. Do one of

these and your business grows; do two or more of these well and your business will grow exponentially.

Keep What You Have, Grow What You Have

Don't underestimate the need to satisfy and retain customers. Most businesses put too much money, time, and effort into chasing new customers/prospects and far too few resources trying to keep their current ones. Real profits and stable revenue streams come from long-term relationships and repeat business with your current, loyal, profitable customers. Some experts believe that up to 80 percent of a company's future growth can come from existing clients. Customer satisfaction and retention should be a major marketing priority. If all of this resonates with you, do something about it starting tomorrow: *develop a more balanced strategy.*

Focus On The Long Term: Invest In Lifetime Value

Apple's success illustrates the importance of focusing on your customer. When building a business, connecting with your customers and listening to their needs is paramount. It's an investment in lifetime value, which ensures longevity and competitiveness in your given market.

It amazes me how many business leaders fail to focus on their customer or client, and instead divert their attention to less important details. Customer feedback, especially on what you're doing right and what could be improved, is one of your most immediate barometers of overall success. While it shouldn't be taken for granted, many business owners let the customer's voice fall through the cracks. See the following example:



CASE STUDY:
THE MILLION-DOLLAR BOWL OF PASTA

Several years back, my wife and I used to frequent a small Italian restaurant on a weekly basis (yes, weekly). It was our ritual. One week, I decided I wanted a small side dish of pasta, instead of the large entrée portion, along with eggplant parmesan. When I asked the server for a small bowl of pasta on the side, she informed me that it didn't come in side order portions.

"My wife and I aren't one-time diners," I explained. "We love this place. We come here every week. Can you please check to see if the chef [who was the owner] can make an exception?"

Moments later she came back to our table apologetically shaking her head. "He said we couldn't do a side order of pasta. It's not on the menu."

I politely smiled. "That's a shame. Please tell him if he isn't able to pour a small amount of pasta into a bowl, he's going to lose two long-time customers that give the restaurant regular business." The server nodded and left for the kitchen.

While my wife and I were awaiting the verdict, we discussed how much money the restaurant had made off our business and how much we loved the food. We prided ourselves on being loyal customers. Surely the restaurant valued our patronage as well? The server finally returned, shaking her head. "I'm so sorry. We can't accommodate your request."

Needless to say, my wife and I were extremely surprised and disappointed. We never visited that little Italian restaurant again.

Viewing this situation from a long-term perspective, our weekly visits amounted to thousands of dollars of revenue each year that this small restaurant subsequently lost. Unfortunately, the owner's focus was narrow and rigid. He wasn't taking into account the long-term benefit of pleasing the customer and creating a positive emotional experience.

A year later, I wasn't terribly surprised to see the restaurant's windows boarded up and its sign removed from the parking lot. Clearly, the owner had a major problem with his strategic focus. He'd not only shut off the communication line between his business and his customers, but obviously had other business problems that were not being addressed. ■

When you treat a customer in a manner that creates a negative emotion, when you *don't really listen*, they're probably not coming back, and they're almost sure to tell their story to everyone they know. Many small-business owners have difficulty seeing the enormity of loss in such a scenario because they're only focused on the short term.

Losing a customer over a small bowl of pasta, not accepting the return of a sweater without the receipt, or software that "has too many bugs in it" is an expensive loss when viewed through a long-term lens. This customer may have otherwise continued buying from you for the next fifteen years. That's thousands of dollars your business is losing over a relatively small amount of money or inconvenience.

Here are twenty independent research studies that provide some startling facts that should give you a new appreciation of focusing on your customer.⁵

Facts About Customer Experiences And Referrals

1. 96% of unhappy customers don't complain, however 91% of those will simply leave and never come back.
—1st Financial Training Services
2. A dissatisfied customer will tell between 9-15 people about their experience. Around 13% of dissatisfied customers tell more than 20 people.
—White House Office of Consumer Affairs
3. Happy customers who get their issue resolved tell about 4-6 people about their experience.
—White House Office of Consumer Affairs
4. 70% of buying experiences are based on how the customer feels they are being treated. —McKinsey
5. 55% of customers would pay extra to guarantee better service. —Defaqto Research
6. Price is not the main reason for customer churn, it is actually due to the overall poor quality of customer service.
—Accenture Global Customer Satisfaction Report

⁵ <http://returnonbehavior.com/2010/10/50-facts-about-customer-experience-for-2011/>

7. 94% of customers do not want to be transferred to another representative more than once. —Mobius Poll
8. Customers who rate you 5 on a scale from 1 to 5 are six times more likely to buy from you again.
—TeleFaction Data Research
9. It takes 12 positive experiences to make up for one unresolved negative experience.
—“Understanding Customers” by Ruby Newell-Legner

Customer Retention And Churn Rate

10. A 5% reduction in the customer defection rate can increase profits by 5% – 95%. —Bain & Company
11. It costs 6–7 times more to acquire a new customer than retain an existing one. —Bain & Company
12. An average company loses between 10%–30% of its customers annually. —McKinsey
13. A customer is 4 times more likely to defect to a competitor if the problem is service-related than price- or product-related. —Bain & Company
14. 68% of customers leave because they were upset with the treatment they received when speaking to customer service. —U.S. Chamber of Commerce
15. Dissatisfied customers whose complaints are taken

care of are more likely to remain loyal, and even become advocates, as those that are “just” customers.

—Strauss & Seidel

16. The probability of selling to an existing customer is 60%–70%. The probability of selling to a new prospect is 5%-20%. —Marketing Metrics
17. For every customer complaint, there are 26 other unhappy customers who have remained silent.
—Lee Resource
18. A 2% increase in customer retention has the same effect as decreasing costs by 10%.
—Leading on the Edge of Chaos, Emmet Murphy & Mark Murphy
19. Customer profitability tends to increase over the life of a retained customer.
—Leading on the Edge of Chaos, Emmet Murphy & Mark Murphy
20. 80% of your future sales come from 20% of your customers. —The Gartner Group

“Statistics suggest that when customers complain, business owners and managers ought to get excited about it. The complaining customer represents a huge opportunity for more business.”

ZIG ZIGLAR

Acquisition Marketing Versus Retention Marketing

Every business needs new customers, and must have a solid marketing strategy to attract and sell to them. With that being said, all too often, attracting new customers is the primary marketing strategy. While it's true a business can't grow without new customers, it's not always the most effective or efficient strategy.

Your present customer base can be a gold mine for you if you manage and nurture them effectively. Don't pass up a golden opportunity to grow your business.

If you want to ensure longevity and grow your business effectively, a sharp focus must be consistently centered on lifetime value. This is a simple concept that will pay you huge dividends over the life of your business.

NEXT STEPS

1. Slow down, reflect, and make a list of what's working well in your business, and what's not. Commit more time and resources to the things that are working well. Of the things that are not working well, determine why, then change or adjust your strategy and tactics accordingly.
2. Determine the high-value tasks and activities that support your long- and short-term vision—tasks and activities that will take your business to the next level.
3. If you are multi-tasking—STOP IT!
4. If you are spending your day doing a lot of “insignificant stuff” that just keeps you busy—STOP IT!
5. Are you putting off making changes that will really move your business forward? If so, are your reasons really good ones?
6. Are you focused on your customer/client? When was the last time you were personally involved with them? Make a plan to get involved with a few each week.
7. How much effort is being put into marketing? What is being done strategically to ensure that your business is growing?

8. Make certain you have a balanced marketing strategy that includes not only acquisition, but also retention.
9. Do you know the lifetime value of your customer/client? If not, figure it out.
10. Make sure all your employees understand and appreciate what it means to lose a customer/client.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Pillar of Focus can really be applied to all of the other Pillars of Success. *Focusing* helps you avoid distractions, set goals, manage your time, establish accountability, and create a positive mindset that manifests in good habits that are practiced consistently. In fact, all of the Five Pillars work together so perfectly, you need *all five* of them. They are inextricably linked, so let's continue.

2

Follow the Yellow Brick Road

MANY BUSINESS OWNERS excel at developing short-term goals, yet they lack the solid structure and security a long-term vision affords. This is a problem. If you're only focused on your next sale, but you're not thinking about where you want to end up, you're eventually going to get stuck.

The truth of the matter is, it's impossible to achieve high levels of success if you don't have a clear vision of what success looks like for your business and for you personally. You need to create a roadmap—a concrete image to strive for.

Goals are the first manifestation of focus. They're aspirational and inspirational. They fuel your drive, passion, and determination. Most importantly, they are a roadmap to your vision of success. You can't start your journey unless you know where you're going. Goals direct your focus to your priorities, and outline the steps pivotal to turning your ambitions into reality.

Start Stupidly Small

In my coaching career, I see people on a quest to find the secret to success as though it's some buried treasure—"the lost Ark of the Covenant." They're reading business book after business book, attending seminars, events, and workshops, and trying all the latest technology and whatever novel approaches are being sold to them. What they don't understand is: It's not magic. Tonics and potions won't help them achieve the success that they see in others. But there is one tool they can use to ensure success, and it's one thing that's been with them all along: *perseverance*.

Once you focus and create a plan, you have to be able to follow through on it. No matter how talented, intelligent, creative, or strategic you are, you've got to actually execute your plan—*and stick with it*.

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that test subjects who worked "strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress" were more likely to reach their long-term goals than those of equal intelligence who didn't stick with it.¹ Isn't that just common sense? As Penn Professor of Psychology, Martin E. P. Seligman aptly put it, "Unless you're a genius, I don't think you can ever out-achieve your competitors without a quality like perseverance."

The little secret that all of these goal management books aren't telling you is that goal achievement doesn't need anything more than *razor sharp consistent focus*. Can you focus and follow through

1 <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf>

with the roadmap in front of you? That's the million-dollar question, and in my experience, without some training, or handholding, the answer is NO.

Many business leaders try a specific process to reach a goal, quit in the middle of it, and then say, "Well, that strategy didn't work. Better look for something else." In reality, if they had stuck with the strategy all the way through, their goals would have been realized in the end. The process wasn't the problem. Their saboteur was their inability to follow through.

A good plan might get you into the race, but sticking with it gets you past the finish line.

Writer Earl Nightingale wonderfully illustrated this principle: "A ship captain is sitting in a restaurant in a harbor, having dinner. You can approach him and ask him how he's going to get to a distant port he's never seen before, and he knows that as long as he does the same simple things every day he will get there, even though he will not see land for 98 percent of the journey."

"In the absence of clearly defined goals, we become strangely loyal to performing daily trivia until ultimately we become enslaved by it."

ROBERT HEINLEIN

Just Give Me The FACTS!

Incorporate these simple concepts into your daily routine to fast-track your growth and overall success.

MYTH: You need to focus on big outcomes.

FACT: Keep it simple. Celebrate the small victories.

Actually, the key to steadily progressing toward your goal's completion is to keep your actions small and simple, so they can be repeated regularly without causing burnout. Trying to complete a large goal right off the bat will only lead to frustration and poor results. If your goal was to build a house, you wouldn't expect the entire structure to be completed in one day. You'd approach the project with the knowledge that the house would be built brick-by-brick.

Your long-term goals are just like a house. They rely on consistently laying action step on top of action step—day-in and day-out. Breaking down the long-term goal into the various small achievable goals and tasks allows you to plot out and tackle what must be accomplished daily, weekly, and monthly.

For example, if you never provide your sales team with weekly, monthly, and quarterly benchmarks to measure against, there's a good chance your business won't hit its annual goal. Without a short-term accountability system in place, the sales team has no way of knowing if or when adjustments should be made to the sales plan. The business's progress *should* be monitored throughout the year and measured against short term goals. If its numbers were off at any point, you, as the business owner, should be asking, "How far off are we? What do we actually have to do in the next month or next quarter to get back on track?"

MYTH: Once you set a goal, you have to stick to it, no matter what.

FACT: Goals need to evolve.

Goals must be flexible enough to change as the business and circumstances change. If you don't hit your projections this month, you have to make adjustments for future months. A healthy, successful business makes adjustments regularly.

I'm a big proponent of breaking annual goals down into ninety-day increments. There's a natural rhythm of change associated with the ninety-day time frame because it falls in line with the change of the seasons. It's long enough to achieve something impactful in your business and short enough to keep you motivated enough to get it completed.

When I instruct my clients to organize their annual goals into ninety-day windows, they experience a new sense of ease and confidence because their aspirations are no longer wishy-washy thoughts they hope to accomplish. Instead, they are manageable action plans with milestones that they are able to hit. With a sense of accomplishment, they stay on course and remain accountable for their growth as they measure their progress against weekly and monthly timelines.

MYTH: All you need is to know what you want to accomplish.

FACT: If you don't write it down, it probably won't happen.

Many business leaders fail to practice one of the most basic and fundamental steps of goal-setting: committing goals to paper. I always ask my clients to pull out their list of goals when they first visit my office. The number of CEOs, small-business owners, and serious entrepreneurs who apologetically shake their heads and respond, “I haven’t written them out,” still amazes me. I say, “Talk is cheap.”

The truth of the matter is if you don’t write your goals down, you’re probably not going to accomplish them (or possibly forget they even exist). Committing your goals to paper gives you an anchor—a place you can revisit and ask whether your daily actions are feeding your long-term ambitions. Writing your goals down gives them a permanence and tangibility.

When you write your goals down, you are offering a strong statement to yourself and the world. You are saying, “I have the willingness and dedication to take responsibility for these aspirations and projects.” This, in turn, deepens your commitment to follow through with them.

I encourage my clients to use the SMART goal setting system. It’s one of the simplest to implement, and it works. It’s an acronym that spells out the tenets of effective goal management. See the next page for the acronym.

Goals need to be:

1. **S**pecific
2. **M**easurable
3. **A**ttainable
4. **R**elevant
5. **T**ime-Bound

Using the SMART system is straightforward and easy. When writing goals, begin with an action word, make sure each goal is appropriate to your present circumstance, and create a time frame in which all projects are to be completed. This offers a strong accountability system on which you and your business can prosper.

MYTH: Writing down your goals is enough.

FACT: If they're not highly visible all the time, they're not on your mind.

Allowing your goals to collect dust in a desk drawer is a fundamental goal-management mistake. In order for goals to be accomplished, they must be revisited regularly. Your goals need to be somewhere in front of you, so they remain in the forefront of your mind. You're bombarded daily with issues and problems—large and small—that need attention. When your goals aren't visible, it's far too easy to give all of your time and attention to tasks that may appear important in the moment, but don't feed your ultimate ambitions.

I once worked with a client named Susan who was suffering from declining sales in her manufacturing business. When I asked



to see her goals for the year, she responded, “Oh, I’ve written my goals out, but I don’t have the list on me.”

“Where is it?” I asked. “Do you review your goal list every day?”

“I review at it every once in a while,” she responded. “I think it’s in my desk somewhere.”

It’s no wonder she was hitting a wall in her business. She wasn’t directing her focus to goals—to growth—daily. When you don’t take ownership over your focus, outside distractions will. Distraction never leads to success.

A visible *goal list* functions like a GPS system. A GPS system in your car will loudly chirp, “Recalculating route,” when the car is veering away from your desired destination. It demands that you consistently move toward your destination. Like a GPS, a visible *goal list* helps you recalculate your actions when you veer off course. When you review your goals every morning, while planning your day (much more about this later), you remain focused on the tasks that really count.

I challenge my clients to be thorough with their goal management process by tracking their progress in a goal journal. Maintaining a consistent record of the actions you take each week allows you to strategically assess your decisions at the end of the year. You can then answer questions like: *What actions this week supported my growth? What did I spend my time on this week that was meaningful? What held me back this week? Where did I waste my time this week?*

If you fail to record your actions, you have no way to objectively

analyze your performance at the end of the week, month, quarter, and year. You may be able to say, “I didn’t accomplish my goal,” but you won’t necessarily know why. As a result, you’ll approach the following year’s goals with the same lack of awareness. You’ll fall into the very same productivity holes again and again, because you weren’t able to make the appropriate behavioral adjustments.

Stepping back from your business and looking at it through an analytical lens cultivates a mindset that encourages the growth and evolution of your practices. It equips you with greater self-awareness and knowledge, enhancing your efficacy and expediting the realization of your goals.

MYTH: Make big lists.

FACT: Size doesn’t matter.

Some clients hand me lists with twenty-five or more goals on them. “It’s great you’ve written your goals down,” I always tell them. “Sadly, you’re not going to meet the majority of them.”

“What do you mean?” they ask in shock.

“Your list is just too ambitious,” I respond. “It’s also unreasonable. Some of these aspirations just aren’t going to be achieved. Why don’t you pick the goals most critical to your business’s success and focus all of your efforts on those?”

I recommend that your current goal list should have a *maximum* of ten items on it. Sometimes even ten is too many. Juggling multiple goals requires multitasking, and since multitasking isn’t conducive to accomplishing projects and tasks at a high level, it

needs to be avoided as much as possible. It's far more strategic to brainstorm a handful of high-leverage goals than to make yourself feel good by creating a big list of goals that never get accomplished.

My Promise To You

Goal setting is a simple strategy that offers tremendous rewards. There are many good methods and systems available to help you develop your goals, so pick one that works for you, and stick with it. When you create goals and a solid accountability framework to keep you *focused* on them, you will achieve greater balance in your business and personal life. The productivity blocks and limiting mindsets that were holding you back for years will slowly dissipate as your continual growth and success feeds your self-worth and belief.

NEXT STEPS

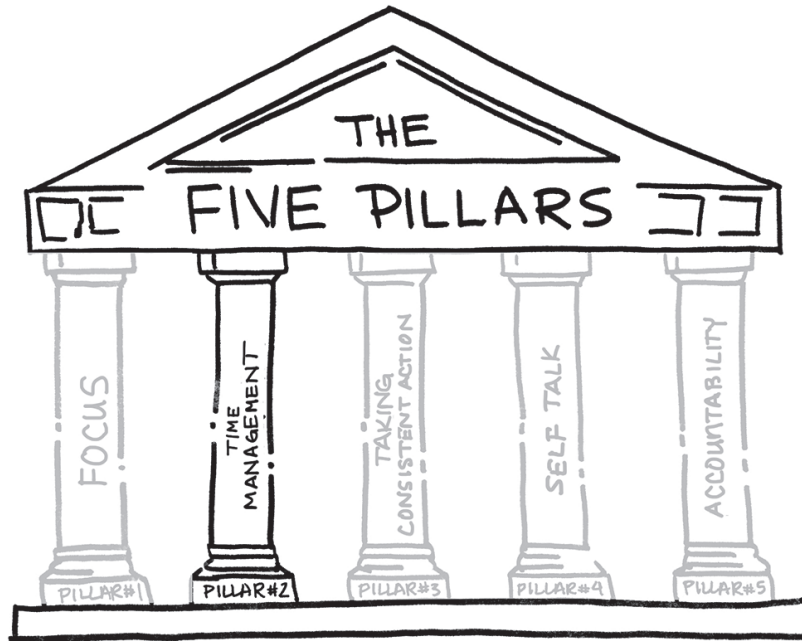
1. Write down your goals for the next 30 days, the next 90 days, 6 months, 1 year.
2. Are they SMART Goals? If not, rewrite them.
3. Break down the goals into the small steps necessary to achieve them.
4. Develop a way to keep those goals in front of you daily to ensure they stay at the forefront of your mind.
5. At the end of each week, keep a record of how effective you were at accomplishing your objectives.
6. If your to-do list has more than ten items on it, prune it.

3

You'd Better Make Time to Read This Chapter

IS YOUR BUSINESS SLUGGISH? Does it feel more like a tugboat than the jet boat it's supposed be? The challenge serious business owners and entrepreneurs face is that there are so many things they can do in the course of a day ... that they frequently fail to do what's most important. Many business leaders seek out my services strictly because they don't know how to organize their time each day. They even fail to identify what the best use of their time might be.

Effectively managing your relationship with time plays an integral role in your experience of success, and in your ability to lead a fulfilling life. It's what separates the achievers from the dreamers and wannabes, and that's why **TIME MANAGEMENT** is the *Second Pillar of Success*.



MYTH: The more I get done, the more productive I am.

FACT: Success is about doing the right things, not doing many things.

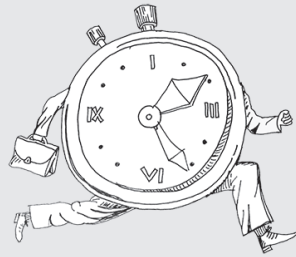
If you believe this myth, you'll always feel like nothing is getting accomplished, even if you work twelve-hour days. In fact, the key to productivity and success is adopting an *effective* focus that integrates the big picture with the daily operating of your business. When you commit to performing high-leverage activities, and to creating positive emotional experiences for your clients, your focus is sharp and on-point; your strategy is directly linked toward your goals of success and growth.

Money can buy you a lot of things, but it can't buy you time. We're all allotted 525,600 minutes a year and an equally finite number of hours each day. Whether you're a billionaire or unemployed and crashing on a friend's couch, you get twenty-four hours to your day—no exceptions. So the big question is: How do you use them effectively?

If you don't control your time, how can you possibly control the results of your day?

As the leader of your business, you should be focusing on tasks *only you* can do. I always ask my clients, “Don't tell me what you enjoy doing. Which items on your list can only be accomplished by you? Give me a comprehensive list of the activities that play to your strengths—the activities that will help drive your business.”

When faced with a decision of whether to spend your day doing bookkeeping or recruiting clients, ask yourself: *What activity offers more value? What activity drives my business? Can one of these activities be outsourced?* Send the bookkeeping to someone else. Go out and get those clients, find a JV partner, develop a strategic alliance, develop a new product or service, review your metrics to see why you're coming up short, and develop a plan to fix it.



CASE STUDY:
**THERE'S NEVER ENOUGH TIME TO DO EVERYTHING
(AND THERE NEVER WILL BE)**

Anthony, a middle-aged CEO, was visiting with me for the first time. As we began discussing his business, in a very frustrated tone he said, “There’s just never enough time. There aren’t enough hours in the day to get everything done.”

Anthony couldn’t add more hours to his day—that was impossible. What he needed was a new approach to managing the hours already at his disposal.

“I just want to look back on my day when I get home and be able to tell myself that I got everything done,” he continued. “I want to achieve that level of efficiency.”

I then reminded him of the difference between being efficient and effective. Working *efficiently* means you’re accomplishing many things in a defined period of time, regardless of the significance of those accomplishments; working *effectively* means you’re completing tasks that are high-value and help you achieve your goals.

Anthony looked at me in shock. “What’s ineffective about getting everything done?”

“When you act on whatever happens to be in front of you, you fail to discern whether the activity is of high or low value,” I responded. “It’s not the smartest strategy.”

“But if I put something on a list, that means it needs to get done. Doesn’t that make everything in front of me a high-value activity?” he argued.

“No,” I corrected. “You really need to follow the 80/20 rule.”

Again, Anthony looked at me like I was speaking another language.

“As a rule, out of all of the activities you have to do on a given day,” I continued, “there’s a very good chance that only 20 percent of them truly matter and can be performed by you alone. That 20 percent should be your priority. The rest aren’t pivotal to your business’s growth, so they can most likely be completed by others, or at least put off until the high-priority tasks are completed.”

He’d never prioritized items on a to-do list that way, and that’s why he felt so stressed about time. He was focusing on being efficient instead of being effective. But to be effective, you must be *selective*.

When you’re efficient, you’re getting a lot of things done, but you’re probably spending twice as long at the office because these *to-do list items* aren’t high-value actions. They’re not leveraging your time or talents to your advantage. When you’re effective, you’re getting the *right things done*.

Pulling up a list of notes on his phone, Anthony pointed to the screen. He had fifteen tasks on there, and he knew he didn’t have the time to get to all of them that day. “So what should I do right now?”

“The 80/20 rule,” I responded.

He studied the notes on the phone. “Choose the two to three items on the list that have the greatest value to the success of my business? I don’t know . . .” he sighed.

“Which two to three activities are integral to moving your business forward?” I asked. “Which of them can be completed by only you?” “Client meetings and the marketing campaign,” he responded.

“Move them to the top. They need to come first.” ■

If you recall, I told you in the beginning of this book that it's not going to be filled with a lot of mumbo jumbo academic philosophical strategies. My promise to you was this book would give you simple ways to make sure you don't stay stuck. If I'm going to tell you *what* you need to do, I'm going to also explain how to do it. I'm not just going to throw strategies out there for you to figure out what to do with them. These tools and methodologies aren't meant to just sit in your knowledge bank, never seeing the light of day. They're here to be implemented so you can actually make a change.

Strategy #1—Run A Strict Calendar

An important factor that separates moderately effective business leaders from highly effective business leaders is an airtight calendar. Business leaders who operate under the discipline of a strict calendar avoid getting tossed into the endless loop of emails, phone calls, and impromptu visits because they have a structured timeline keeping them on course throughout the day.

One of the busiest and most effective people in the country is the President of the United States. Every moment of the president's day is scheduled because there's no other option—the president would never meet the demands of running a country otherwise. You need to treat your business and career like a country, and you're the president. If you want to achieve a high level of effectiveness that rivals or exceeds that of your competitors, you must control your time. Using fifteen-minute increments, your day needs to be structured and disciplined. *Scheduling out*

your entire day gives you the control and power to keep you from getting STUCK.

Your first order of business each morning after arriving at work should be closing your office door and creating a game plan for the day. Write the high-leverage activities into your schedule first. Don't tell yourself, *I'll get to making the calls or writing the newsletter when the time becomes available*. Schedule a specific amount of time for each task on your daily calendar. This is a fairly simple step, but it holds considerable implications for the degree of success and ease you experience in business and in life.

Strategy #2—Employ The 80/20 Rule

As I suggested to my client, Anthony, the 80/20 rule is an extremely important piece of the productivity puzzle—perhaps the most important. It is a go-to strategy that works in all areas of life.

Remember, effectiveness isn't defined by how much work you complete. You can *do* a lot during the day, but *achieve* very little if you're not focusing your efforts where they matter. Invest in the 20 percent of your to-do list that offers the highest value and that can only be completed by you. These activities are the engine of your business—they're fundamental to growth and moving forward. Like cream, they always rise to the top.

Strategy #3—Delegate Or Outsource Everything Else

Understanding the importance of delegation within your business operation is crucial to your effectiveness and success. You will never have time to finish everything, so hand off tasks to others who

can do them (they may even be able to do them better). If you're a one-person show, don't be afraid of outsourcing.

Many business leaders resist delegation because the act feels threatening. They don't want to give up the power and control inherent in completing everything themselves. This is a dangerous mistake. If you're uncomfortable with delegating, you will be in a constant state of overwhelm. More importantly, you won't be achieving your goals. If you refuse to pass off low-leverage activities, you're either putting the high-value actions on the backburner or you're completing them haphazardly. Neither scenario offers a desirable outcome. Meanwhile, you're running around stressed and frazzled, like Anthony, moaning, "There isn't enough time to do it all!"

You're right. There isn't. Be smart with your time and delegate.

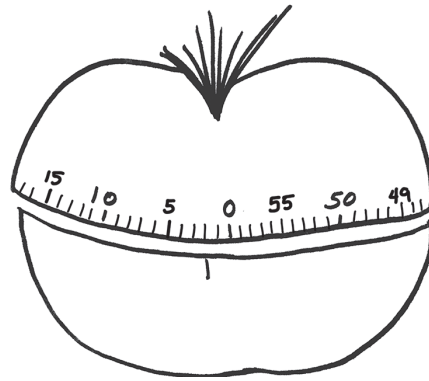
Strategy #4—Take Regular Breaks

Spending two hours on a high-level thinking task without taking adequate breaks leaves your mind dull, unfocused, and fatigued. The outcome of your work suffers.

Taking regular breaks provides your mind a chance to relax and avoid tiring out. Stepping away periodically throughout the day enhances your critical thinking skills, mood, and ability to approach problems from a new angle. Your work then becomes sharp, skillful, and effective.

Research shows taking breaks every fifty minutes during the workday is critical to productivity. I like to suggest taking more frequent breaks, as with *The Pomodoro Technique*, named for the

little kitchen timer shaped like a tomato (*pomodoro* in Italian) that author Francesco Cirillo used when he developed this method.



In Cirillo's method, a "pomodoro" is twenty-five minutes of focused work plus a five-minute break interval. The main idea is to break a bigger task into those small bits and pieces we talked about, and then tackle that task in a highly focused time frame. The Pomodoro Technique is based on four main principles¹:

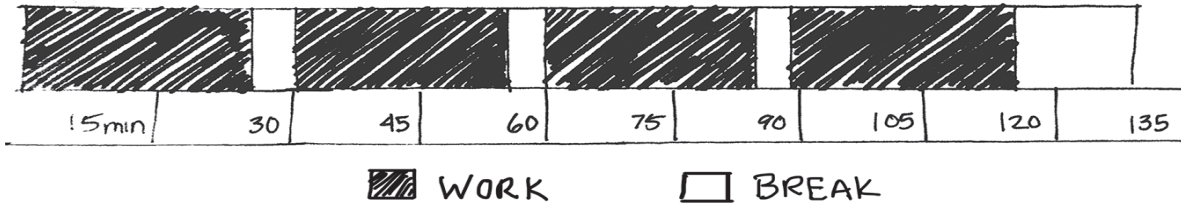
1. Work with Time—Not Against It
2. Eliminate Burnout
3. Manage Distractions
4. Create a Better Work/Life Balance

To start using the technique you will have to:

1. Decide on the task and focus.
2. Set a timer for twenty-five minutes.
3. Work on the task (*and absolutely nothing else*) until the alarm sounds.
4. Take a short five-minute break and then go back to your task.
5. Take a twenty- to thirty-minute break after completing four cycles of twenty-five minutes each.

¹ Cirillo, Francesco. *The Pomodoro Technique*. FC Garage, 2013. <http://pomodorotechnique.com/>

Believe me, twenty-five minutes of uninterrupted, focused time is huge. If you don't think so, sit in a chair, close your eyes, and don't open them until you think five minutes has passed. If you're like most people, it will feel like forever. Eliminate those



“short” interruptions, such as emails, phone calls, etc., and you can get an amazing amount of high-quality work done in twenty-five minutes.

The five-minute break gives you just enough time to clear your head so you start again fresh. It keeps you from burning out. I also highly suggest that you schedule on your calendar a few 15-minute breaks during the course of the day ... and go to an area that does not have a computer screen. *Screen elimination time* can help clear your head, help you to think more creatively, and recharge your energy level.

Strategy #5—Track Your Week The Old-Fashioned Way

When I ask new clients what they accomplished during the previous week, they generally take out their phones and scroll through their calendars, rattling off their meetings and other scheduled events.

“I didn't ask what you *did*. I asked what you *accomplished*.”

The drawback of using technology to track your activities

is that online calendars don't make it easy for you to record and track daily activities with the same ease or *expanded detail* offered by a pen and notebook.

While it may be somewhat cumbersome at first, I encourage my clients to track their accomplishments throughout the week with a journal that serves as an *activity tracker*. Yes, on paper! This journal will provide you with effective metrics that will instantly communicate whether you're on track to meeting your goals or if adjustments need to be made. Reviewing your activity tracker at the end of each week, month, and quarter, focusing on the specific results, helps you recognize high-leverage tasks, as well as those depleting your time, energy, and money. It creates a very powerful ritual that cultivates awareness. The journal (activity tracker) helps you evaluate your strategies, actions, and decisions. I'm not saying that you should keep up this activity journal forever. I am saying that as a tool, if used for a year or two, it can help you change your habits and behaviors so you can *up your game* and ultimately operate at peak effectiveness.

Strategy #6—Step Away From The Emails

Email may be the biggest productivity trap today—the *black hole of time management*. It wreaks havoc on everyone and *sucks the wind out of your sails*. If you haven't created solid email habits that are highly structured, email will take over your life. Can you relate? If you're honest, you'll say yes.

Managing time spent in that alluring inbox can be a challenge, especially when new message alerts chirp on your phone

every few minutes. Disentangling yourself from bad email habits requires a systemized routine and perseverance. There are literally hundreds of books that provide methods for controlling email. Why hundreds? I guess people are always looking for the newest, the best. Which one you choose is up to you. What matters most is that you pick one method and stick with it.

Here's a simple method I use with my clients: schedule, sort, and unsubscribe. The first step is to *schedule* (yes, on your calendar) three specific blocks of time throughout the day to review incoming messages. Many business leaders shrink back in horror at the idea of only visiting their inboxes three times per day. They believe their businesses will go up in flames if they aren't always in touch with their inboxes. They're afraid if they don't send an immediate email response, they will be left out of the loop or will upset others—but these are both *limiting beliefs* that keep their victims emotionally anchored to their inboxes.

If these business leaders actually were to make an inventory of the messages they received over the course of a given day, they'd discover that there's a good probability that only 15 to 25 percent of the emails would be actually important. The remaining would be junk—well, maybe not *junk*, but certainly time-wasters and brain-drainers.

Since the majority of email is not overly important, set up a filtering system that automatically sorts messages into proper folders, and keep them from even hitting your inbox or phone. Out of two hundred emails that land in your inbox daily, you probably only need to read thirty to fifty of them. The rest can wait, so get them out of the way.

Finally, unsubscribe from email lists that only serve as distractions. Pouring over meaningless messages, and then deciding where they should go after being read, is a tremendous waste of your time. Think of your inbox as a bonsai tree that must be pruned constantly so that your business can continue to grow. Another quick tip: If you have hundreds or thousands of emails in your inbox that are more than a month old, move them all to a folder called Archive. If you haven't looked at them after thirty days, there's a good chance you don't need to look at them at all. Cleaning out your inbox like this can provide as much stress relief as a full body massage.

*“A meeting is an event at which the minutes
are kept and the hours are lost.”*

UNKNOWN

Strategy #7—Invest In Meetings Only If They Advance Your Goals

Because they're so commonplace, meetings are one of the more difficult productivity holes to recognize. They can be an immense waste of time and money, so they must be streamlined and run efficiently if they are to add value to your business.

Are your meetings materially benefiting your business by *producing actionable results*, or are they just transmitting information? If they're only functioning as a broadcast, you should eliminate them, period. You're wasting your time, and the time

of your staff. There are much more cost-effective ways to communicate information.

Are you meeting out of habit or out of necessity? Running a meeting every Monday morning because that's what you've always done isn't a good enough reason to keep doing so. To drive home this point, I often ask my clients to calculate how much a meeting is costing them. Who attends these meetings? How much are those employees paid per hour? Do they convene regularly?

Is it really worth \$8,000 a week or more—nearly a *half million dollars per year*—just to get everyone in a room and share information they could have received in an email blast or in a report, for free? Every meeting you conduct needs to return the value you're investing in it *by offering actionable results* that propel your company forward. If meetings aren't achieving this benchmark, they're not worth your time.

Strategy #8—Be Selfish With Your Time

On a daily basis, reserve the vast bulk of the day to tackle only your top three priorities. Selfishly guard your time and focus. Don't allow your employees to disrupt your CEO-oriented priorities and actions with countless "Got a minute?" interruptions. Allowing such conduct creates an environment whereby your time is not valued and respected. It also creates unproductive days, a reactive business mindset, and employees who depend on you for everything. Stop these interruptions.

You're 100 Percent Responsible For Everything. Period!

Your business has a responsibility to help employees understand the true nature of effectiveness. As the leader of your business, it's your job to equip your employees with the tools necessary for effective work habits. If you adopt highly productive work habits, but the rest of your business is stuck in the grind of low-value busywork, you'll constantly be taking one step forward followed by two steps back.

It's up to you to ensure employees are focusing their efforts on activities that move the business forward. Employees may be getting a lot done during the workday, but if they aren't accomplishing tasks leveraging their talents and the business's resources, they're wasting their time and yours. Ask yourself if their decisions are smart and strategic. Employ the strategies espoused in this book, and then teach them to your team.

When The Day Is Over ...

Time management is a source of frustration and anxiety for almost every business leader. Everyone wants in on the secret to walking step-in-step with time instead of racing to keep up with the clock. Unfortunately, reading time-management books and undergoing time-management training sessions aren't going to have a tremendous impact on your effectiveness, and they're going to take up a lot of time. Yes, the new information gleaned from a seminar or book may endow you with more knowledge,

but that doesn't mean you'll be able to implement it into your life in a tangible way.

Improving your relationship with time requires you to do some things we will talk about in the upcoming chapters—a willingness to prioritize, delegate, and release limiting beliefs. You need to *change*, and change is difficult for most people. However, when you make these changes in your approach to business and life, you start each day from an empowered vantage point that leads to less frustration and more effectiveness and growth.

NEXT STEPS

1. Review your list of the high-value activities that you need to do to support your short- and long-term goals.
2. Highlight any activities or tasks on that list that DO NOT support your short- and long-term goals (remember the 80/20 Rule). Determine how you can either eliminate, delegate, or outsource all those activities or tasks.
3. Evaluate your meetings to see which ones can be eliminated.
4. Set up a strict calendar and schedule your entire day.
5. Schedule the tasks and activities you need to do each day to complete your short- and long-term goals (and preferably do them first thing in the morning).
6. Schedule “me time” to work on your to-do list and other activities.

7. Schedule specific time periods throughout the day to review emails.
8. Schedule regular breaks into your day.
9. Keep written track of what you accomplished each day.
10. Develop a program to assist your employees to manage their time more effectively.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There are many methods out there about how best to structure your day and manage your time. No one method works best for everyone. Find one that works for you, and stick with it. Focusing on the high-leverage activities that make a difference in your business today ensures your business will be better tomorrow—and each tomorrow thereafter.

4

Habits and Rituals— Your Silent Support System

WE'VE ALREADY AGREED that each of us is given a finite amount of time during the course of the day. If you're squandering it on low-value activities that could be delegated elsewhere, you're moving toward your goals at a snail's pace.

Look around your business. Whatever you like and dislike about your business is because of you. Whatever your business has become or failed to become is because of you. As the business owner, whether you like it or not, you are the de facto leader. Your business is what it is, where it is, and how it is because of you. Period. You are 100 percent responsible whether you are a company of one, one hundred, or one thousand. You are responsible for the good, the bad, and the ugly results and conditions of your business.

If you are having problems, it's not because the wrong person is in the White House, the economy is flat, interest rates are too high, technology is moving too fast, your employees don't measure

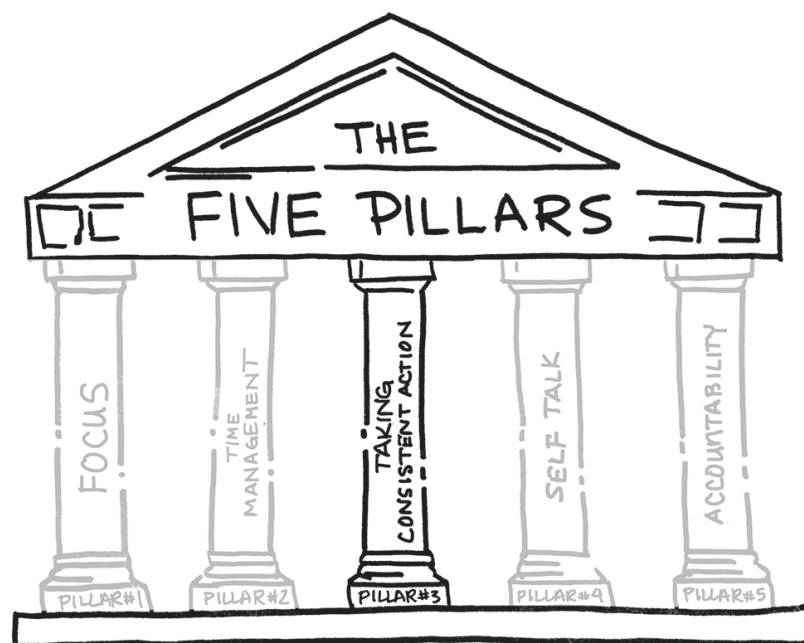
up, or there are too many competitors in your segment. That's just nonsense.

As the CEO or owner, you are the solution to most everything that ails your company. It's up to you to set the direction and goals of the company and hold your team (and yourself) accountable for executing your plan.

And while focus is critically important, it's not enough. Setting goals is necessary, but it's useless unless you know how to manage your time in order to accomplish them. Even if you're working effectively, what if you're still stuck?

It might be that your habits are sabotaging you, without you even knowing it.

The *Third Pillar of Success* is **TAKING CONSISTENT ACTION ON HIGH-VALUE ACTIVITIES**. This pillar involves transforming bad habits into good habits, sticking with them, and ultimately creating rituals.



MYTH: We are always in control of our actions.

FACT: People are creatures of habit.

In truth, the majority of our behaviors are actually knee-jerk reactions: *habits*. It's a remarkable FACT with even more impressive implications. Between 40 and 70 percent of what we do every day is habitual. This means that more than half of our day is conducted on autopilot—a tremendous portion of our time and effort devoted to activities that may not even be in support of our motives.¹ If your habits and thinking patterns are positive and productive, your days are carrying you toward success. If your habits are limiting and disempowering, on the other hand, each day is digging you farther and farther into a rut.

“How can that be?” clients often ask me. “I strive very hard to meet my goals.”

“But *40 to 70 percent* of your actions and thoughts can potentially be holding you back,” I respond. “With that kind of percentage hanging over your head, how could the reality be any different?”

“It's no wonder you feel constricted and frustrated. A huge portion of your day and the way you operate has been capsized by a tsunami of habits you can't control—habits of which you are probably unaware.”

But, now knowing this, you can leverage it to your advantage. You can make habits work for you. Remember that there are two kinds of habits: those that work against you and those that work

¹ <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/08/140808111931.htm>

<http://psp.sagepub.com/content/37/11/1428>

for you. We're going to talk about how to identify and get rid of the bad habits, and how to identify and nurture the good habits that will ensure your success.

Habit Is More Than You Think

MYTH: Habits are just behaviors.

FACT: Habits are both behaviors and mindsets.

In reality, the definition of habit is far broader than most assume. The term “habit” can *also* encompass mental habits and internal belief systems, which can be extremely destructive if you are habituated to negative thought patterns.

CASE STUDY:

GROWTH ALMOST ALWAYS REQUIRES CHANGE

I'd like to tell you a story about a brilliant designer named Linda who started a firm with two other designers. While none of the team had any formal training in business or management, they decided to divide the responsibilities among themselves. Linda, a wiz in design, handled the vision and the strategy; another partner took over the finance area; and the other managed operations.

Their design talent was exceptional. Almost immediately after opening their doors, they landed a Fortune 100 client, which launched their business and solidified their reputation. Their firm flourished—for about four years.

Then the market crashed. Business suffered. They lost two of their five biggest clients. They were able to come out of their slump,

but suddenly, due to costs and employee overhead, their margin wasn't carrying the day. They were no longer making a profit, which left them in a state of shock.

As Linda relayed this story in my office on a rainy morning, she confided, "We had no idea this was coming."

I sat back in my seat. "How is that possible? You don't go from being a profitable business to a sinking ship overnight. There had to have been warnings along the way—signs and metrics."

She shook her head. "I really don't know."

I rested my elbows on my desk and looked at her thoughtfully. "Who's your CFO?"

"One of my partners."

"But I thought all of your partners were designers."

"He *is* a designer," she said.

"So what are you telling me?"

"He's a designer, but he also manages the finance side of the business," she replied.

"So he's not really a CFO," I corrected.

"Well, he fills the role," she replied with a shrug.

I nodded. "Perhaps it wasn't a bad idea to have him fill the role when you were a \$2 million business. But with a \$9 million business, that kind of decision sets you up for failure.

"He clearly missed the boat. There had to have been red flags a year ago, and he was blind to all of them."

"We've really never measured anything," she admitted.

"Then how did you expect to know if something was wrong?" I asked.

This question left her speechless. "I ... I don't know."

"Why didn't you hire outside experienced financial managers?" I asked.

“My partners believe they are really smart. We never saw a need to bring outside people into the business. We assumed we were doing fine.”

“They obviously weren’t smart enough,” I replied. “I’m seeing a habit arise here: a habit of not wanting to face reality, a refusal to keep your eye on the ball, and maybe even a case of *I’m The Smartest Person in the Room Syndrome*.”

“That can be a habit?” she asked.

“Oh, yes,” I replied. “Habits aren’t just behaviors. They’re mind-sets as well.” ■

Strong Managerial Habits Are Rare In Entrepreneurland

MYTH: If you can perform your task well, you can run your business well.

FACT: Managing a business takes more than technical skills.

Many serious entrepreneurs who start businesses are experts in a specific niche like retail, technology, manufacturing, etc.—*they’re technicians*, if you will—but they typically don’t have extensive business management skillsets or expertise. In his classic book *The E-Myth Revisited*, small-business expert Michael Gerber gives the example of a woman who is complimented so often on the quality of the pies she bakes that she decides to open a pie shop. She has bought into the myth that just because she is a good *technician* (she bakes delicious pies) she also has the entrepreneurial skills to make her business a success. But when she tries to do anything

other than what she's really good at—baking pies—it's not as easy as she thinks, and she has a total meltdown.²

A good pie-baker does not necessarily make a good pie shop owner. Likewise, a genius designer does not make a qualified CFO. Linda and her team of designers had strong creative habits surrounding their *craft*, which is why their work reached such a heightened level of success. But did they have strong *managerial* habits? Were they operating within a business mindset aligned for success? No.

Both women eventually realized that you can't just open up a business, assuming you'll figure out the managerial nuances as you move along. As in Linda's case, by the time a poor habit reveals its blemishes, a lot of damage has already been enacted.

The Eight Habits Of Highly Disorganized People

The most debilitating mental habits often manifest as forms of self-sabotage, and they operate largely under the radar. The business owner who believes that raising product prices will drive away customers is a great example. (I will go into this in greater depth in Chapter 5). So is a writer who procrastinates on starting her potential bestseller for fear of facing a blank page with nothing to say. In both cases, these fear-based belief systems have halted all movement forward. Despite (probably) not being based on any concrete evidence, they will create a lot of self-inflicted misery.

Since many poor habits operate outside of a business leader's consciousness, an essential step toward success is recognizing their

² Gerber, Michael E. *The E-Myth Revisited*. Harper-Collins, 1995.

presence. This requires self-awareness and honesty. In my experience, the eight most common negative habits holding business leaders back are:

1. You allow yourself to get distracted
2. You feel the need to do everything yourself
3. You won't do anything unless it can be perfect
4. You make lists but don't take action
5. You don't plan out your entire day
6. You fail to measure your business metrics
7. No consistent action to move you forward
8. You're just not organized

I've described them in detail below. As you go through the list, try to be as honest with yourself as possible. Are any of these habits keeping you stuck in a repetitive loop of frustration? How would your business and life change if these behaviors and mindsets were replaced with positive habits?

You might be pleasantly surprised when you try something new.

Bad Habit #1—You Allow Yourself To Get Distracted

Earlier in this book, we discussed the destruction caused by distraction. It's truly one of the most debilitating habits plaguing many CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs, partly

because they don't recognize it as a habit. If you don't understand the inner mechanism of an obstacle, you don't know how to successfully move around it.

Many clients try to justify grabbing their phones whenever they hear a beep or ring, regardless of the important task in front of them. "I have a spouse, kids, and ailing parents," they insistently exclaim. "I can't ignore my phone or email when I'm working. What if it's an emergency?"

When I hear this explanation, I look clients squarely in the eye and say, "Let's be serious: If someone really needs to get in touch with you, they will. They will find a way. There's no doubt about it. There's no logic to thinking you need to answer every text, call, and email right away."

The danger of checking an email or text every time an alert sounds on your phone is that it becomes a habit difficult to break. You're now Pavlov's dog, salivating every time you hear the habit trigger of your phone beeping. You can't help but reach for the reward of opening that email or text. If there's no method to stop you from partaking in this kind of behavior, you'll end up digging yourself into a very deep hole. It's in our DNA. No one is immune to it.

Bad Habit #2—You Feel the Need To Do Everything Yourself

Can you say "control freak"? Many CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs who approach me with the phrase "I'm stuck," are infected with the control-freak virus, which I sometimes

call the ICDIB (I Can Do It Better) syndrome. They harbor the false belief that if they don't *personally* complete a task, a project, or quite frankly anything—no matter how big or small—it won't be done correctly. It keeps them from delegating. And it keeps them from succeeding.

It's not about doing things perfectly. It's about focus and consistency ... you need to be doing the right things day after day, week after week, and month after month.

Bad Habit #3—You Won't Do Anything Unless It Can Be Perfect

While we will expand on this in a later chapter, the “Avoider-Perfectionist” mindset leaves business leaders in a state of paralysis. It's a thought habit that feeds them the same old false story again and again: “You are unprepared to take action.”

Insistence that all actions and activities result in perfection is unrealistic and leaves many unrealized dreams and ventures scattered in its wake. The action habit, then, becomes *doing nothing*. In reality, some action is better than no action at all. You need to find a way to make your habit *doing* something rather than constantly *not doing* out of fear.

Bad Habit #4—Lists With No Action

A lot of people are in the habit of making lists, and it is great to write things down. As we discussed in Chapter 2, when handled

properly, I highly subscribe to it. However, the problem arises when these pro list-makers spend all of their time composing agendas, to the sacrifice of actually taking action.

Let me be very clear: *making the list is not the action*. What's the point of making a list if nothing is done to check off the items on the page? Many business leaders write up detailed lists simply because it feels good—it feels like they're doing something. It endows them with a false sense of accomplishment, while in reality, nothing about their present situation has changed.

Bad Habit #5—Not Planning Your Day

Many business leaders don't plan because they've never been trained to do so. When they walk into the office, they immediately start working. Having a list doesn't mean you have a plan. Instead, before diving right in without prioritizing high-value activities, they should strategically map out a course of action that will best support an effective day that's focused on goal achievement.

When you don't plan out your day, you become a very reactive person to all outside stimuli. You are distraction's prey. Before you know it, the day is gone, and you haven't gotten anything meaningful accomplished. Planning can be one of the most significant changes you can make to help you get *UnSTUCK*.

I usually suggest that my clients relate their workload to the concept of the four seasons. We've been conditioned to break down the year into four quadrants of ninety days: spring, summer, fall, and winter. Using that time frame—and those intermittent deadlines at each shift in the season—allows us enough time to

implement goals that are meaningful, but not so long that we lose interest. It's also a habit that we're used to, and it's a good one. Because it's hard to think meaningfully about what we're going to accomplish over the next twelve months, breaking the year up into ninety day increments makes it more manageable and is something we're comfortable with (for most people to do spring cleaning, summer landscaping, or cold weather winterizing).

With the seasons, we set certain deadlines for ourselves, and we tend to stick to them. We should be able to do the same with our businesses.

Bad Habit #6—You Fail To Measure Your Business Metrics

When you fail to measure your activities, you have no way to gauge the effectiveness of your initiatives and activities. You're running your businesses wearing blindfolds. As exemplified in Linda's story, this habit can be fatal if you fail to identify serious red flags before disaster strikes.

The metrics necessary for measuring success usually fall under certain Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), regardless of what type of business you're trying to run or what industry you're in:

- Gross Revenue
- Expenditures (Fixed Costs vs. Variable Costs)
- Net Revenue
- Cash Flow

- › Margin
- › Pipeline
- › New Business Percent Rate of Growth
- › Customer / Client Loyalty / Retention
- › Lifetime Value of the Consumer / Client

Remember, *you* don't have to be the one to actually do the measuring yourself. Just make sure someone who's a metrics wiz is the one measuring these important metrics, and that you look at and understand them. And make yourself accountable to whatever those measurements end up being. It is, after all, your company.

Bad Habit #7—No Consistent Action To Move You Forward

Success is all about doing the most important things every day that will drive your business forward. It's about repetition and consistency. All too often people start working on a project and don't quickly get the results they anticipated. Success is not about instant gratification or instant success in everything you do. Success is about ... trying, doing again, and again, and again. It's about consistency.

Bad Habit #8—You're Just Not Organized

We've already established that it's important to organize your priorities, but it's important to organize more than just your thoughts

and your plan. You'd be surprised at how much your physical environment can impact your effectiveness and mental state. Disorganization is an extreme energy leak. Whether you work from



home or out of an office, warehouse, factory, or shop, a disorganized space creates chaos in work routines and in the mind. It's extremely difficult to move through tasks efficiently if you don't know where files or important documents are located because they're buried under mounds of papers and other forms of clutter.

Besides, those piles give a negative impression to any clients or employees who enter your workspace. How can others trust you to handle their important matters when it appears you can't handle your own?

The same applies to disorganized digital storage. Those ten thousand emails in your inbox aren't going to sort themselves into folders. How will you find anything, when bits and bytes of information are scattered in various storage locations on phones, tablets, laptops, and who knows what else?

Keeping organized is not “busy work.” It’s a good habit that will make you more successful in your ventures.

MYTH: You can change your habits in 21 days.

FACT: Changing habits takes longer than 21 days—a heck of a lot longer.

Most people think they must do a 180-degree turn in their *habit transformation* overnight, but that just sets them up for failure.

Business leaders must work to replace negative habits with empowering ones if they are to reach their ultimate visions of success. Whether we want to admit it or not, we are creatures of habit and routine. Habits and behaviors we developed during the first twenty years of our lives are destined to stay with us forever, unless we make a conscious decision to change those that don’t serve us well.

Changing a behavior or habit is not a simple process and it’s not done overnight. If something took 20+ years to learn, there’s a good chance it will take a significant amount of time to “unlearn” or to change that habit or behavior. It’s a process. You’re not going to wake up one morning, snap your fingers and all of a sudden do everything differently.

Habit building is an extremely difficult and misunderstood process. There are no quick fixes and, contrary to popular belief, it takes much more than twenty-one days.³ In fact, there is research

³ Selk, Jason. “Habit Formation: The 21-Day Myth.” *Forbes* April 15, 2013. Accessed online 9/28/15
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonselk/2013/04/15/habit-formation-the-21-day-myth/>

A

You start out with passion and a strong desire to change. You do all the right things to create a new habit (day 1-7).

B

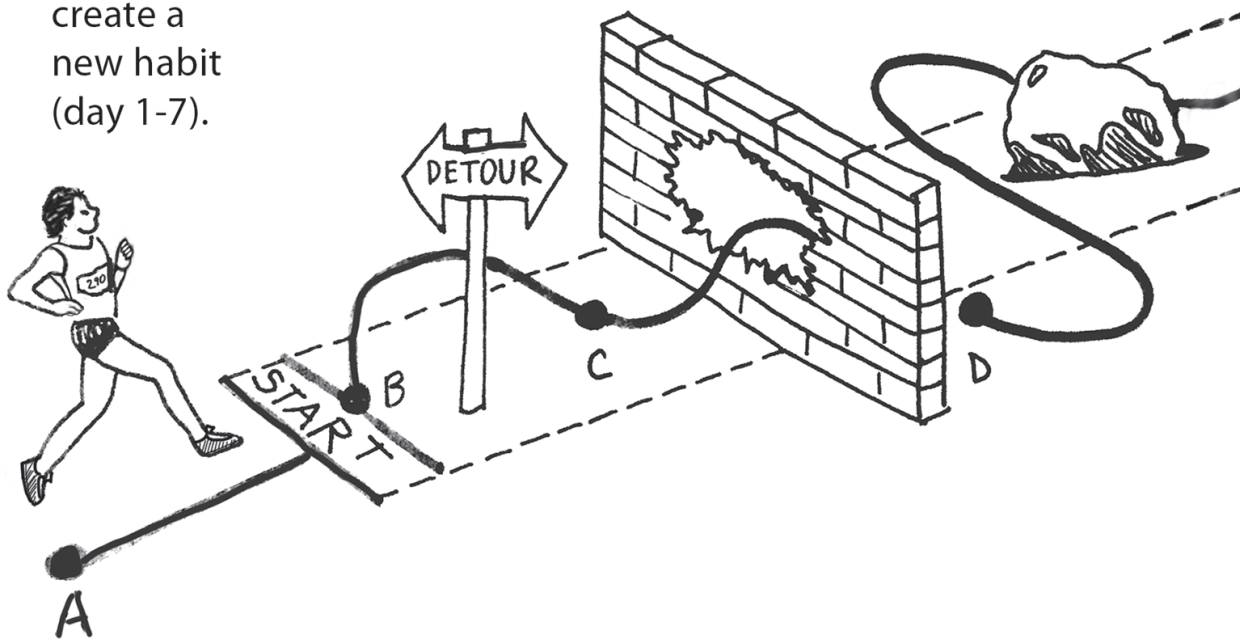
Your "Old Ways" of doing things pull you off course. This is the pivotal make or break point. You begin to stop implementing the new habit (day 8-15).

C

If you have enough motivation and willpower, or have some external accountability, you can break through the "wall" that's trying to keep you from moving forward on your journey (day 16-23).

D

You begin to really grasp the benefits of the new habit. It's "almost set in stone." Unfortunately, once again your "Old Ways" of doing things pull you back off course.



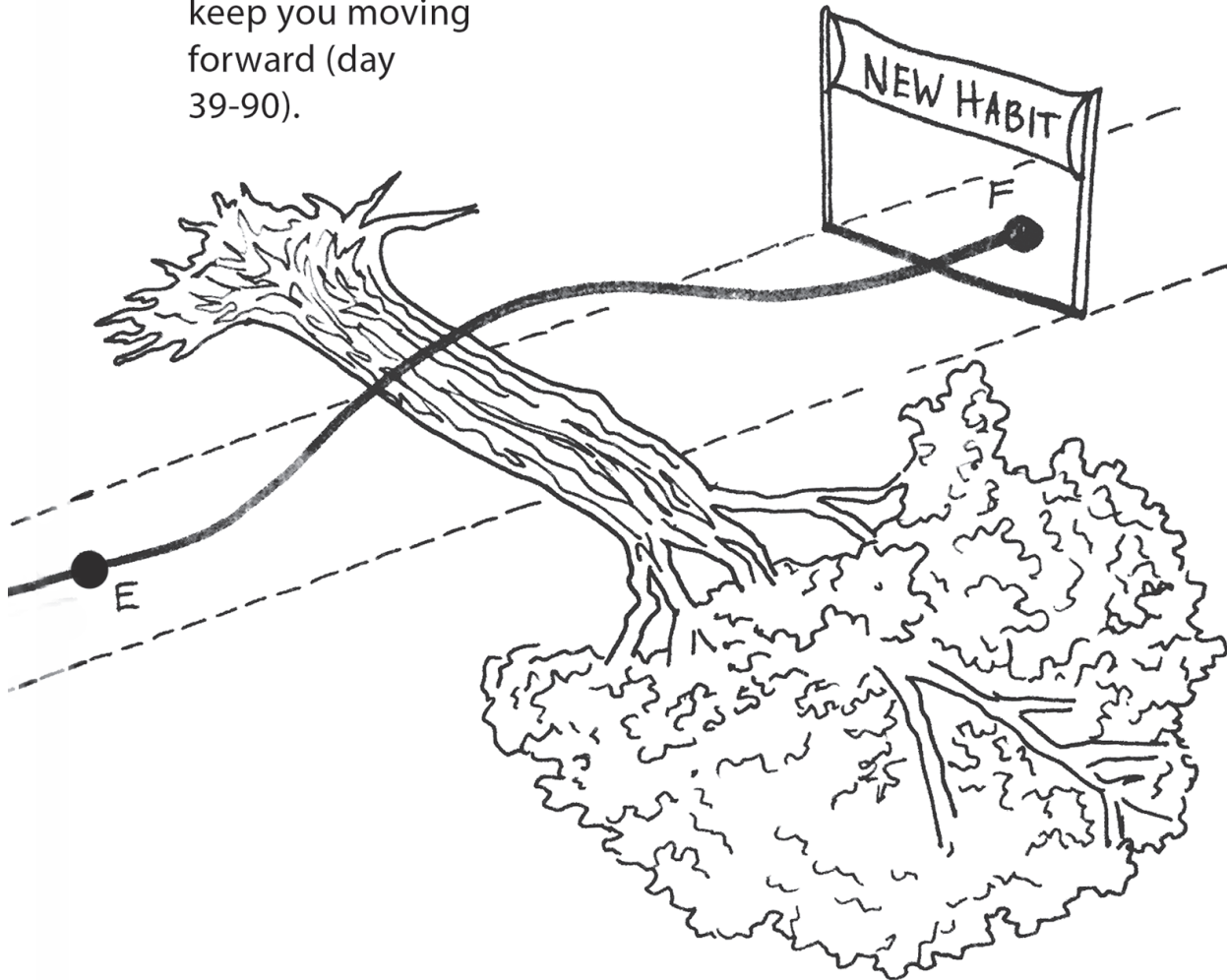
E

If you can muster up enough motivation and willpower again, or have some external accountability, you can get past any obstacles in your way. This time you have the wind at your back to keep you moving forward (day 39-90).

F

If you stick with it for the next few months, there's a good chance you will have created a new habit (day 91-180).

CONGRATULATIONS!



THE HABIT ROADMAP

to support the fact that in most cases it's more like sixty-six days. Imagine trying to go it alone to create a new habit, and do it consistently for sixty-six days in a row. You almost need the willpower of a super human. It's no wonder most people fail to create new habits without some outside assistance.

If changing our habits was easy, we would all be eating the right nutritious foods, exercising every day, going to sleep early, flossing after each meal, checking email only three times a day, and not letting clutter and interruptions keep us from doing all the important things we know we should be doing to make our business successful. Unfortunately, habit building *isn't easy*—but it *is necessary* if you want to move beyond your present limitations. Self-awareness and accountability are the fundamental tools to creating such a change. With a strong accountability system at your disposal, your business can grow and expand in ways that will leave others asking for your secret.

There are three key steps necessary to successfully implement a new habit.

Step #1—Take Baby Steps, And Keep Repeating Them

The most successful road to habit change is a process I like to call “The B & P Method.” This is exactly the same process I described in setting your goals—start stupidly simple. If you want to successfully build positive habits, you must break the process down into repeatable, small, achievable baby steps, or what I like to call “**Bits and Pieces.**”

CASE STUDY:
BITS & PIECES MAKE CHANGE EASIER TO ACCOMPLISH

I once had a client named Cliff who was the vice president of a large regional enterprise. Cliff wanted to incorporate the habit of reading back into his life. He used to be an avid reader during childhood, but he woke up one morning and realized he was no longer reading. He'd tossed that habit aside to make room for a demanding career and life. He just didn't have the time.

As I said earlier, we all are given the same amount of time each day, so, whether Cliff realized this or not, edging reading out of his daily activities was actually a choice he made. Deciding to rebuild his reading habit was a choice as well.

I gave him simple instructions: "For the next week, no matter what time you get into bed, I want you to open the book you want to read, and read two pages. Close it. That's it. And I want you to do this every night for the next week. No skipping."

That was the entirety of his goal. He left my office feeling emboldened because he knew he could succeed. The execution was easy and painless.

The following week, Cliff walked into my office with a new bounce in his step.

"How'd it go?" I asked.

"Fabulous!" he exclaimed, smiling from ear-to-ear. "It really worked. I didn't go a day without reading. I feel great."

"That's fantastic," I replied. "I'd like you to follow the same protocol this week, but change the page count from two to four."

He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Okay, I know I can do that."

The following week, he met his goal with flying colors again. I then gave him the homework of reading eight pages a night, which

he achieved as well. When I gave him the homework of reading sixteen pages a night, guess what? That's right, he was in the groove. Mission accomplished.

After he hit the four-week marker, Cliff took complete ownership of reading. Through breaking his goal into bits and pieces, he was able to form a habit that could now operate on its own. He no longer needed outside support.

If I had instructed Cliff to read sixteen pages every night right off the bat, the odds of him meeting this goal and maintaining the habit would have been extremely slim. Expecting him to make such a big leap would have set him up for failure. It also would have robbed him of the necessary confidence and morale to make the shift a reality. ■

Building a habit is like building a home, brick-by-brick. You lay one brick at a time—one small behavioral change at a time—and eventually, there's a strong, sustainable structure in front of you.

Step #2—Go Public

If you want to successfully build new habits, one way to ensure your success is to have an accountability partner. Use your surrounding community—friends, family, and coworkers—to help you create the changes you wish to make in your life. Asking friends, family, and colleagues to check in with you and to hold you accountable to your goals creates a fertile foundation for change and growth. Announcing your goals publicly creates that ever-critical outside accountability structure to support your pursuit. You can also join

business groups that will provide you not only with the accountability we've discussed, but also the satisfaction of knowing that you're not the only CEO, business owner, or entrepreneur facing the issues in this book!

Step #3—Set Up Reminders

You can also create triggers for the formation of new habits. Part of the reason many business leaders find it difficult to enact change is that they don't have a mechanism to implement the change consistently. They're stuck in old, outdated habits that no longer serve them, which often distracts them from the new habits they need to build.

Habit triggers are a mechanism that helps to reinforce positive behavior on a regular basis. As the saying goes, "*Repetition is the mother of change.*" For example, if you want to incorporate the good habit of planning into your daily routine, plant a trigger in your office that reminds you to invest in the habit of planning every morning. Leave a note on your computer monitor that reminds you to spend fifteen minutes planning out your day. Eventually, you will have ingrained the habit, and the note will no longer be necessary. Scheduling your day every morning when you walk into your office will become an automatic ritual.

You are not powerless, but you do need a little help. You need a roadmap and the right materials and tools to make your habits "stick." It will take some effort at first, but eventually, everything you need to be doing will come naturally to you. You won't even have to think about it—and that is the autopilot you want to rely on.

The Power Of Consistency

Imagine for a moment that you are the CEO of a business that has two hundred customers (or even two thousand or twenty thousand).

Consider for a moment that every day, you took just five to ten minutes to make one phone call to one customer to tell them how much you appreciate their business. This might not seem like much. However, communicating with one a day, five days a week, for fifty-two weeks a year means you're solidifying a relationship with two hundred-plus customers over the course of the year, and you're potentially learning what's working with your business—and what's not.

Imagine how connecting personally with a thousand of your customers over the course of five years might change your business, might improve the lifetime value of each of these customers? Do you think that you might gather unique insights and ideas from these conversations that would help improve your business? Sure you would. In fact, I bet it could potentially change your business in a dramatic way and possibly even give you a competitive advantage—all by committing yourself to doing something consistently, five to ten minutes per day.

Initially this process may seem like a low-value activity. In fact, over the first month or two you might not even get much value. However, slowly but surely as the process builds upon itself, you might have an “aha moment” where a big idea rears its head. How great would that be?

NEXT STEPS

1. It takes more than technical skills to be the CEO of a business. Do you have the appropriate management skills? If not, develop a plan or seek outside assistance.
2. Assess your staff. Are the right people in the right jobs?
3. These are some of the stumbling blocks and bad habits that can lead to your downfall. Work to change these ineffective habits. It's a process so don't expect the changes to "stick" overnight.
 - a. You allow yourself to get distracted.
 - b. You feel the need to do everything (or far too much) yourself.
 - c. You won't do anything unless it can be perfect.
 - d. You make big lists, but don't complete a large portion of what's on them.
 - e. You don't strategically plan your day, week, month.
 - f. You don't measure what you or your business set out to accomplish.
 - g. You're not organized.
4. Go public with your goals.
5. Set up reminders or triggers to help you change your bad habits.

6. Understand your company's financial numbers.
7. Learn about basic accounting concepts and financial reports.
8. When appropriate, hire a proactive and top-notch chief financial officer, controller, or accounting manager who can gather, interpret, and explain financial results and trends.
9. Have your bookkeeper, accountant, or CPA create a simple "dashboard of metrics" that you review together regularly so that you are never, ever caught by surprise.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The power of consistency over a period of many months and years can provide you with enormous benefits in all areas of your business. Apply this same technique for your product development department, your operations department, finance, marketing, and your goals. Start this process now, and you will look back years from now and be amazed at the progress you have made.

5

Knowing Makes You Smart, But *Doing* Makes You Successful

We Carry Our History With Us

WE ALL TOTE AROUND internal programming dating back ten or twenty years or maybe even more. Some of our past conditioning and beliefs are beneficial. Many are not.

Limiting beliefs wear invisibility cloaks, and can go undetected for years—or even a lifetime—because they are so hardwired to their host. They can be the source of self-sabotage and other destructive behaviors blocking your success, so it's imperative that you expose them if you want to get *UnSTUCK* and move forward with your goals and ambitions.

Limiting beliefs can also be tremendous blocks that keep you from realizing your potential, preventing you from taking the right action consistently, thinking creatively, or even intellectualizing your self-worth or that of your business.

Unless an external source facilitates awareness of a negative belief, along with a change of mindset for you, limiting beliefs are almost impossible to uproot. If they could be changed automatically, we'd all be going to the gym every day and fast-food restaurants would be out of business. It's that simple.

CASE STUDY:

DON'T LET YOUR PAST CONTROL YOUR BUSINESS'S FUTURE

I once worked with a client named Kathy, who was the founder and CEO of a large, robust company. She was smart and gregarious, and she had a great sense of humor. She had all the makings of a true leader.

Kathy walked into my office for one of our meetings with slumped shoulders. She looked stressed and uneasy.

"How are things, Kathy?" I asked. "How are the changes coming along?" A few weeks prior, we had talked over a few important and long overdue strategic changes Kathy wanted to implement in her company.

Her expression grew long. "They aren't."

I was shocked. "What happened?"

"Oh, nothing bad," she said with a shrug and an uncomfortable forced laugh. "We just decided that right now wasn't a good time to implement them."

Alarm bells began going off in my head. "Who's 'we'?"

"The team," she promptly replied.

I shook my head. "But the last time we met, you told me these specific changes really needed to take place to move the company forward."

"Well, they do," she admitted. "But maybe right now isn't a good time to implement them."

“Why?” I asked.

“I got a lot of negative feedback and resistance from the team,” she said with a grimace.

“What flaws are they bringing up?”

“It’s not a matter of flaws. A lot of them are just resistant to change. You have to understand that most of the team members have been with the company a long time, so they are pretty set in their ways. Change can be difficult.”

“That doesn’t mean you avoid making changes when they’re necessary,” I told her.

“Oh, I know. I still plan on implementing the new ideas. I’m just going to have to do it in a more gradual fashion—and later. I really don’t want to step on anyone’s toes.”

“Kathy,” I said, leaning forward, “You’re essentially telling me that you’re allowing your team to call the shots for your company. *You’re* the CEO. You’re responsible for the company’s health and growth. It’s you who’s on the line—not them.

“You need to be deciding what strategic initiatives your company implements.”

She grimaced. “I know. I just don’t want to be ‘the boss who doesn’t listen to her team.’”

You see, Kathy’s first job right out of college was working in retail for an autocratic boss who had a habit of shooting down ideas from his employees. Nobody respected him—especially Kathy. On one memorable occasion, he dramatically humiliated her in front of the entire management team for offering a suggestion. She left the job soon thereafter, vowing never to be a leader who doesn’t respect her team.

I could appreciate her logic. It’s good to have strategies like

that at your disposal, but that can't be your only strategy. Business throws you a variety of problems, so you need a toolkit filled with a variety of strategies to fix them. You can't let your past experiences—good or bad—dictate how you run your business, especially not at the sacrifice of the business's success.

“You're the CEO for a reason,” I told her. “Bottom line: It's your money, it's your company, and you're responsible for its success or failure. There are going to be times when you have to follow your instincts and act on what you think is right. You don't always need to get the consensus of your team before you act. Sometimes, you need to count the votes of the team; other times, you need to simply *weigh* the votes.”

What Kathy didn't realize when she walked away from her first job out of college was that she was taking a very toxic piece of her experience with her. She left that company believing that CEOs must get consensus when implementing new initiatives; otherwise they won't be well-liked or respected. As brilliant and business-savvy as Kathy was, this falsehood was prohibiting her from being effective in her role as CEO. ■

Is Your Past Conditioning Holding You Back?

The three most common limiting-belief patterns that I've encountered that afflict struggling business leaders are:

1. *I Can Do It Better (ICDIB) Syndrome*
2. *I'm Not Worth \$\$\$\$*
3. *I'm Not Worthy of Success*

These most common limiting beliefs hold potentially successful professionals back by turning them into one of two types of people who get stuck: “The Smartest Person in the Room” and the “Avoider-Perfectionist.” If you don’t look in the mirror and address these limiting beliefs, you won’t just be stuck—you’ll be sunk.

Limiting Belief #1—“I Can Do It Better” Syndrome

Since your school days, you may have been told that you are smart enough to do anything you set your mind to. So maybe now you think that you already know the best course of action and already have all necessary knowledge and skillsets to tackle any issue at hand—you believe that you can do it better than anybody else. Being plagued by such a narrow vision prohibits you from recognizing new solutions, and keeps you from seeking expert guidance when it’s clearly appropriate.

This usually creates a case of doing too much of the wrong thing—an endless array of action steps that aren’t necessarily the most strategic or purposeful activities for the present situation. You waste a lot of energy, effort, money and time. You continually circle and re-circle your situation, *eyes to the ground* searching for an answer instead of *looking up* for a more appropriate solution.

Any entrepreneur with this limiting belief not only needs to *do less*, but in order to successfully do so, they need to *think differently*.

It’s impossible to know *everything*. When you’re not open to external guidance, or other’s opinions, you’re potentially oblivious to the obstacles blocking your path. *You don’t know what you don’t know*. To be unaware of the knowledge you’re lacking, and

unwilling to listen to outside guidance embodying this knowledge, is a form of insanity. In fact, believing you have nothing to learn from those around you is the greatest detriment to your growth and success.

To quote billionaire Michael Dell (of Dell computers), “Try never to be the smartest person in the room. And if you are, I suggest you invite smarter people ... or find a different room.”¹ He clearly understands the disadvantage of being the smartest person in his circle: it dulls the edge needed to achieve great things. A rule of thumb for serious entrepreneurs is if you’re *always* The Smartest Person in the Room, you’re not using your time and resources effectively.

One major advantage public companies have over small, privately-held businesses is the presence of a reliable outside “sounding board”—the board of directors. Boards like this consist of business leaders possessing a wide variety of backgrounds who all offer diverse perspectives and expertise. Small-business owners need this kind of committee of advisors as well. If it isn’t already built into your business structure, conscious effort must be made to create it.

Expand your business circle to allow room for experts to offer new solutions and viewpoints in areas in which you may be struggling. Give yourself as much support and advantage as possible. Surround yourself with knowledgeable people who embody the kind of success you wish to obtain. They are the mentors who will support and empower your growth the most.

¹ <http://www.forbes.com/pictures/fljl45lkm/michael-dell-never-be-the-smartest-person-in-the-room/>

Limiting Belief #2—I'm Not Worth \$\$\$\$

This is a classic problem for many solo practitioners—“solopreneurs,” if you will. Almost every independent consultant I’ve ever coached undervalued and underpriced what they delivered. When I would suggest that they increase their prices, their limiting belief was, “I can’t charge that.”

But when I ask them if there was a time when they quoted that amount and a customer said it was too high, I always get the same answer: “No, I’ve never tried to charge that much.”

I often counter with: “How do you know this assumption is true, then?”

If this limiting belief resonates with you, I want you to stop thinking about what companies are paying you per hour. That’s insignificant. Instead, ask yourself what benefits and solutions you are providing your clients. You should hone in on the solution’s value to the business. If what you provide solves a problem that will either save or make lots of money for your potential client, they will shell out the cost.

Do you believe in your value? Do your actions and words convey your worth?

Limiting Belief #3—I'm Not Worthy Of Success

I’ll never forget the time I met Pat, the CEO of a midsize manufacturing firm. One of the first words out of his mouth was, “I never went to college” (and I didn’t even ask him). I looked him directly in the eye and said, “You’re the CEO of this company. You didn’t get here by magic. *You worked hard to get to the top.* No one

did it for you. I certainly don't care whether you went to college or not. And let me tell you something: nobody else cares either."

The situation was very upsetting, because it was clear how disruptive the thought pattern was to Pat's happiness, sense of self-worth, and well-being.

"A degree does not define you. Bill Gates, the Chairman of Microsoft, got kicked out of Harvard—and he did pretty well. You need to get over this," I continued. "Dwelling on such a matter adds no value to your life. Secretly thinking you're unworthy of your success or that you're some kind of pretender to the throne is an extremely unhealthy mindset. It's a falsehood. It also drains the satisfaction, joy, and fulfillment out of everything you do and accomplish."

Disbelief in your worth is pointless baggage that needs to be dropped if you want to truly enjoy your work, achievements, and overall life.

CASE STUDY:

KNOWLEDGE + CONSISTENT ACTION = SUCCESS

I'd like to tell you a story about an entrepreneur named Don. Unlike Pat, he had a great education as well as strong expertise in his industry, and, like many successful business owners, a clear vision of the success he wanted to achieve.

Don was a go-getter, and he wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty. He was willing to put in the extra effort to make his goals a reality. Yet after several years of being in the entrepreneurial world, putting in long work hours, and acquiring more knowledge than he knew what to do with, his experience of success was still coming up

short. His business was *somewhat* successful, but it wasn't great. It certainly wasn't reflecting the time, effort, and money he'd invested in growing it, and that irritated him.

When Don came into my office on a beautiful fall afternoon, his face was long. "What's missing?" he wearily asked. "I went back to school to get my MBA. I've read every business book I can get my hands on. I have purchased every online marketing course and attended more seminars, webinars, live events, workshops, and networking events than I'd like to admit to." He threw his hands up in the air. "What else do I need to learn?"

As a well-seasoned business coach, I'd heard these questions many times before. I have seen hundreds of Dons walk through my office door. He was a classic "Avoider-Perfectionist"—the type of entrepreneur who feels chronically unprepared to make decisions and take action. One who consistently becomes obsessed with gaining more knowledge and skillsets.

The solution was simpler than he realized. I sat back in my seat, and in an empathetic voice said, "Don, you don't need to *learn* anything new. No more training is necessary to get ahead in the game."

Don looked at me in surprise.

I smiled. "You just need to *think and act* more strategically."

He shifted uncomfortably in his seat. "*Act?* I told you! I earned my MBA. I'm an avid reader of the *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, and *The Wall Street Journal!*"

"It's not a matter of amassing more knowledge or making bigger and better plans," I explained. "Business isn't like the game show *Jeopardy!*, where all you need is a huge knowledge base and a fast hand on the trigger."

I explained to him that most business leaders make the mistake of thinking that more knowledge will get them better results, when

in many cases, they already have all the knowledge they need. Success comes from leveraging your existing skillsets to your advantage. It's not about continually adding *more* knowledge to your mental database. It's about being smart with what you already have right here right now. ■

The greatest threat to the Avoider-Perfectionist's success is not action that failed, but *lack* of action. They're so busy searching for the missing puzzle piece they believe will take their business to the next level that they completely fail to focus on the few really important tasks at hand. They aren't consistently performing the tasks that will really make a difference and drive their business forward.

A good number of my clients suffer from this malady: they're toting around impressive knowledge and expertise, but they fail to *Focus*. Unfortunately, people like this are blind to this reality. They believe only after completing another business course, a training program, reading another book, or attending a seminar will they be ready for whatever task is demanding all of their attention. Yet, after the final page of the book has been read, and the umpteenth seminar has been completed, they still feel a sense of insecurity and incompetence—as if something *even more* is needed before any action can be taken.

“I need to figure out the next step,” they urgently tell me. They're paralyzed—like there are two heavy weights strapped to their ankles, holding them back.

“The next step?” I reply. “But you haven’t mastered *this* step—the *current* step you’re on! Your mind is *stuck* in the future,” I explain. “That’s not where you want to be looking if what you’re *presently* doing is not working well. You need to be focused on the here and now. Stop obsessing over the new knowledge you need, or the new things you need to do. Start focusing on the actions required at this very moment that will really make a difference.”

If you’re like millions of hardworking CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs with a dream of building a successful business, you relate to Don’s struggles. Perhaps you find yourself exactly in his shoes right now. A myriad of ominous “What ifs?” clouds any semblance of logic. Instead of seeing mistakes and criticism as necessary experiences to build expertise and grow a business, the Avoider-Perfectionist fears them like the Grim Reaper. A misstep is very rarely a fatal leap off of a cliff.

*It doesn’t matter what you know or plan on doing ...
What matters is what you do!*

The antidote to this crippling belief system is *action*. Whether right or wrong, *any* action will make you more skilled and savvy. Massive action is even better. An action-oriented approach can quickly flush out what does and doesn’t work—and both of those things will help grow the business. Making mistakes in your business can be a good thing. You learn what not to do again.

If you're paralyzed by fear of making the wrong move, you're missing the point. This is the rhythm you want to follow: Success requires the willingness to fail and learn, and fail and learn again.

Avoidance At Its Worst

MYTH: I can't raise prices even though my expenses have gone up because I'll lose customers.

FACT: The majority of customers are NOT making their buying decision based upon price.

I can't tell you how many small-business owners can't give me a good solid explanation of why they charge what they charge for their product or service. Many believe they need to be a low-cost provider, but don't have a clue as to whether they are the cheapest.

When you compete on price, you are entering a black hole. You're either the lowest price in town, or you're not. If you aren't the cheapest, it makes no sense to be *one* of the cheapest. The customer who is looking for the best price will pass you by.

Most business owners check to see what their competitors are charging and then set their prices accordingly—not very scientific. Take my advice and find something other than price that you can use to leverage your business.

Deciding what you are going to charge for your product or service should take into account a number of important factors:

- › Who is your customer?
- › How do you market to them?
- › How much customer service do you provide?
- › How is your product packaged?
- › What's your return policy or guarantee, the venue, and the real and perceived value of your product or service?

These small, subtle differences can enable you to set a higher price.

Customers who are looking for the lowest price, not the best value, will leave as soon as they find a lower price. Never apologize for your price! If a “price discussion” takes place, it's your responsibility to move the focus of the conversation to *value*. Value and price are two very different things.

When I first started my coaching business many years ago, I just charged \$150 per hour, and a lot of people were willing to pay me that rate. The years went by, and my business and experience increased. I began charging much more. As the value I was delivering increased, it was only appropriate that I should be compensated accordingly. Interestingly, the clients who paid my lower fees tended to be more difficult to work with and more demanding. The clients who were paying my higher fees never challenged the price of my services, and were less stressful to work with. They valued me and my service. They understood the value proposition.

Just look at Starbucks. Hello ... it's coffee! McDonalds is charging 99 cents, and Starbucks is charging \$2.50 plus. It's all about value. Starbucks is selling a *lifestyle and cultural experience* with their brew—customers pay a premium price to be part of that (emotional experience, venue, customer service, etc.). While the cost of their ingredients may or may not be any more than those of McDonald's, Starbucks provides access to an elite *lifestyle and cultural experience* that people are willing to open their wallets for.

The truth of the matter is, if you have a solid relationship with your customers, and have a good product or service to stand behind, you're probably not going to lose customers if you raise your prices. You must believe in the value of what you provide. If you don't, and fear keeps you from making difficult business decisions and necessary adjustments, it's avoidance at its worst.

If you have all your ducks in a row—meaning you're making products or offering services that fulfill customers' needs, you have a positive relationship with your clientele, and you offer a logical explanation for a price hike—the majority of your customer base won't go anywhere.

Sometimes you have to raise prices because it just makes good business sense. A story in *The New York Times* talked about how Starbucks raised the price on their cup of coffee by twenty cents.²

² Sommer, Jeff. "Why Starbucks Prices Went Up as Coffee Beans Got Cheaper." *The New York Times*. Aug 15, 2015. Retrieved online 9/26/15 <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/16/your-money/why-starbucks-prices-went-up-as-coffee-beans-got-cheaper.html>

They initially received backlash from the media because the price of coffee beans had actually gone down. Howard Schultz, the CEO of Starbucks, responded to media criticism with a sound explanation that enhanced company image as well: The cost of employee benefits had gone up, and Starbucks believes in a company culture that fully supports its employees.

Did Starbucks suffer from its decision to raise the price on a cup of coffee? No. When debating the decision, did its top executives worry about losing customers to competitors like Dunkin' Donuts? I wasn't in the conference room when the call was made, but I highly doubt it.

Rather than wasting time, feeding the fear that they *might* lose customers, Starbucks decided to *trust* the worth and quality of its brand. All business owners need to equip themselves with this kind of self-trust and business logic. Of course, difficult decisions are impossible to avoid as the market changes and your business evolves, but putting them on the back burner won't make them go away. They'll only weigh you down.

NEXT STEPS

1. Surround yourself with lots of smart, experienced people (if possible, smarter and more experienced than you), and allow them to mentor you.
2. If you are worried that you might not have enough formal education to be a success, get over it. A degree does not define you.

3. Success is about doing, failing, learning from the mistake, and doing again. Success is about taking action, not about waiting for the perfect time, or perfect solution.
4. Believe in the value of your product or service and don't be afraid to charge what's necessary for you to run a profitable business.
5. Just make certain you have done a good job at communicating the value of your product or service, and that your customer/client understands and appreciates the value of the solution you are providing.
6. Remember that your customers/clients do business with you based upon much more than price. If you think the relationship you have with your customers/clients could be better, do something about it **NOW!**

AUTHOR'S NOTE

You can't keep waiting for the perfect product, the perfect service, or the perfect opportunity. You can't keep looking to learn or buy more of this and more of that. Don't get caught in an entrepreneurial quagmire. Go out there and *make something happen!*

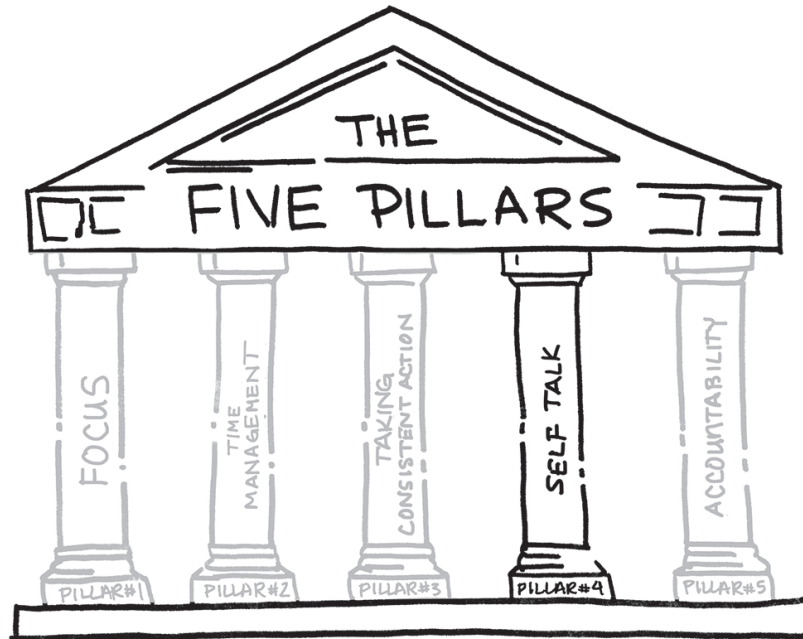
If you have been trying to make something happen, but still find yourself STUCK, you may want to take the *UnStuck Solution Audit™*. See pages 138-140 for further details. It could be a defining moment for you and your business.

6

Reprogram Your Brain, Reprogram Your Life

MANY LIMITING BELIEFS manifest themselves as thought patterns you think of again and again. The thought pattern is practiced to such an extent that it actually paves neural pathways to support it, creating the permanency of a belief. The most powerful way to change your *beliefs* is to whittle away at their core. You must change your *thoughts*.

One of the most effective avenues to thought change, and the *Fourth Pillar of Success*, is through a tool known as **SELF-TALK**. Self-Talk can help to reprogram your thought patterns by helping the brain shift gears from the *negative* thoughts holding you back to the type of *positive* thinking that can transform the trajectory of your business and life.



Dr. Shad Helmstetter is a pioneer in the self-growth field, master of Self-Talk¹, and author of *What to Say When You Talk to Yourself*, *The Power of Neuroplasticity*, and *365 Days of Positive Self-Talk*. In Dr. Helmstetter's program, you listen to positive statements that function like a coach—they reposition your mindset, so it's poised for achievement and growth. I've been listening to his audio recordings for over twenty years, and they've fundamentally enhanced my experience of success.

*It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief.
And once that belief becomes a deep conviction,
things begin to happen.*

MUHAMMAD ALI

¹ <http://shadhelmstetter.com/>

The key to successfully using *Self-Talk* is listening to the messaging consistently. You create and reinforce neural pathways through the thoughts you think everyday. If you consistently hear a powerful message, it changes the way you think in the very same way consistently performing an action ultimately changes what you do. It creates a *thinking habit*.

Imagine if you could start every day with these thoughts at the forefront of your mind:

- My success is up to me. I know it, and I create it.
- I know that success is a choice, and I choose to achieve.
- I know that my achievement is up to me. I take charge of my success.
- My success is up to me NOW. I am in control of my present, and I am creating my future.
- Right now, this moment, for this day and for every day hereafter, I give myself permission to succeed.
- I enjoy knowing I can get my most important business activities accomplished.
- Making my business work in the best possible way is something I do every day.
- I know the three highest value things that I want to accomplish today. Right now, I see them in my mind and I choose to make sure I get them done today.

- I turn my goals into action. I know what needs to be done, and I do it. I take action.
- I always expect and anticipate the most positive outcome of anything that I do.
- I choose to keep a positive outlook about my business every day.
- I take the time to succeed. I do what it takes to accomplish my goals and objectives.
- Right now, I choose to do the one thing that will help my business the most.

For more information on *Self-Talk* tools, and to hear an interview I conducted with Dr. Shad Helmstetter on the topic, visit this link:

www.unstuckforgood.com/resources

It's Your Job To Motivate Everyone—including Yourself

When you're a CEO or a business owner, you're responsible for the morale of your entire company, as well as your own mindset. Your management team and employees are watching your every move. They're closely listening to everything you do and say, and assessing your attitude toward the business and customers. Whatever you embody spreads throughout your operation like wildfire. You are the captain. The crew is going to follow your lead.

You want a team that's motivated, and that believes in success and winning. You need people who work with passion and enthusiasm because they believe in you and your vision. It's up to you to create and spread this motivation and enthusiasm consistently.

As a leader of your business, if you don't cheer the team on, no one else will. Running a demoralized business that doesn't believe it can make the sales numbers, or achieve other company goals, is a self-fulfilling prophecy to failure.

Most people don't have the ability to keep themselves positively *pumped-up* on a daily basis. *Self-Talk* is the mental coaching tool that can help you offset the many challenges that drain the positive energy out of you and drag you down. *Self-Talk* can endow you with the enthusiasm and motivation you need to help you stay positively focused. Like a golf coach telling you to move your hand a quarter of an inch to the left, or a nutrition coach keeping you from eating that cream-filled chocolate donut, *Self-Talk* repositions your thoughts and actions, so you consistently do what you know you *should do*. Like a coach, it's a great tool to get you back on track when you feel defeated or pessimistic about the course ahead. (More on coaching in a later chapter.)

Your beliefs about yourself and your work need to be supportive and empowering. Your experience of success and fulfillment can only flourish if planted in healthy, fertile soil. Change your soil, and you'll change the trajectory of your success.

The freedom and confidence that accompany this shift will unlock newfound creativity and brilliance that can help your

business skyrocket. It will create growth to heights you would have never fathomed.

NEXT STEPS

1. Create a list of suggestions that support your success, help you to stay positive, motivated, focused on the important things that will drive your business, and help you accomplish your daily activities.
2. Develop a way to record these suggestions (or buy a Self-Talk audio), and play them each morning before you begin your day (as well as possibly during lunch and before bed) in order to reset your mindset and keep yourself focused.
3. Listening to statements that fuel how you want to function for the day is a powerful way to start the day; it cultivates a mindset focused on activities that offer value and protects against distraction. When you take ownership of your mornings, you take ownership of your entire day, so use your morning hours wisely.
4. As the business leader, it's your responsibility to develop methods to motivate your team. Everyone on your team is watching everything you say and do. Don't be naive. You are under a microscope. Say and do things that will help to keep your team stay pumped up, motivated, and passionate about your business.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

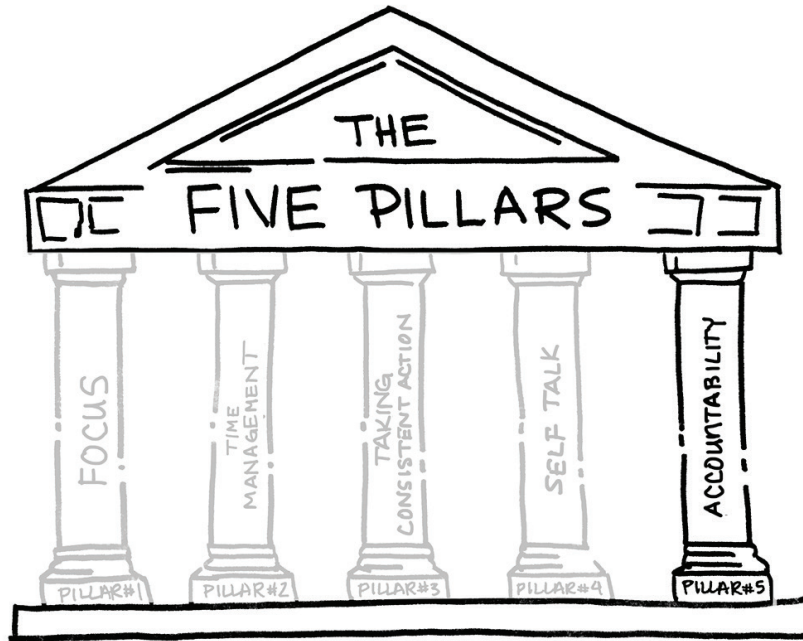
When you change your thought patterns, you change your beliefs.
When you change your beliefs, you change your life. It's that
powerful and simple.

7

The Hidden Reason Many Businesses Fail

FROM EARLY LIFE ONWARD, we've been socialized and trained to be accountable to someone or something *outside* of ourselves. We've been trained to answer to parents, teachers, bosses, and other outside authority figures. But The American Dream has shifted from owning *homes* to owning *businesses*—which means becoming your own boss.

So, the *Fifth Pillar of Success*—the most critical foundation that no one else is talking about—is **THE ACCOUNTABILITY FACTOR**.



Enough with the **striving**—it's time to **thrive**. Stop struggling. Push through distraction to get to your destination: true success. All of that begins with a new level of accountability—not just to your customers, team members, suppliers, friends, and family. It means being accountable to *you*.

According to Gallup, 50 percent of entrepreneurs who start businesses fail within the first five years—a whopping one out of every two.¹ I personally find that a very upsetting statistic, and I wouldn't be surprised if a large percentage of these failings can be traced back to a lack of accountability.

Once you're the owner of a business, you're entirely responsible for *everything* ... PERIOD! Now stop and ask yourself when in your life have you ever been 100 percent responsible for *everything* in front of you—the resources, time, and goals of the company, and everybody who works for you.

¹ <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/178787/why-new-companies-fail-during-first-five-years.aspx>

Here's the truth: Most people don't have the training or skills to effectively manage this kind of responsibility. They've never had to operate from a self-accountability mindset before. If a problem arises, their automatic reaction is to blame an outside source instead of looking at the person in the mirror.

If sales are stagnating, for example, many CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs are quick to find targets to blame. The sales team is lazy. The sales manager isn't good enough. The marketing stinks. In an economy like this, no one can succeed. The excuses range from here to the horizon. The mistake they make is that they are holding everyone and everything else, inside and outside the company, accountable for perceived failures and shortcomings.

Unfortunately, the only people they are not holding accountable are themselves.

"But I'm not in charge of sales!" they might complain. "Joe's the sales manager!"

No. If it's your company, you are in charge of everything. And without beating yourself up or collapsing into self-hatred or despair, you must be accountable for everything.

Of course, it's up to Joe in sales and Sue in marketing to accomplish their goals. But it's up to you to make sure those goals are SMART, as described earlier in this book.

To Thine Own Self Be Accountable

It's far easier to place blame on others for company problems than to look in the mirror, but blaming others will take you nowhere

fast. When you shift to a self-accountability mindset and take control of your goal management process, no longer is your success dependent on outside factors. You alone hold the keys to your success, and the success of your business. This change of perspective is a powerful foundation for consistent achievement. Use it, and the rewards you reap as a result will surprise and impress even you.

Shakespeare wrote, “To thine own self be true.” To business owners and serious entrepreneurs, I would say, “To thine own self be *accountable*.” Without the ability to hold yourself accountable, your business will find it extremely difficult to succeed, to grow, to thrive.

CASE STUDY:

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO 3 LETTERS ... YOU!

I once had a client named Justin. He was ambitious, intelligent, and talented. All throughout his life he always seemed to come out a winner. Growing up, he was the high school track star, the lead in school musicals, and valedictorian of his class. He attended an Ivy League school and graduated with honors, winning many awards along the way.

He went on to work in a high-level sales position and easily scaled the corporate ladder, receiving promotion after promotion. Justin was used to accomplishing anything he set his mind to achieving.

When he finally left the corporate world to start his own business, he anticipated the same experience of overwhelming success. After a few years of struggling as an entrepreneur, Justin came into my office, angry and bewildered.

“I don’t know what’s happened to me,” he said with irritation.

“Sales are barely moving. I’ve had to fire two marketing directors because none of their strategies seem to have worked. It doesn’t make any sense. Just look at my track record.”

I understood Justin’s frustration. On paper, he met all of the requirements for being an extraordinarily successful owner and CEO. From a young age, mentors and teachers told him that he would go on to do great things—and every award he’d won in his academic and corporate careers had validated this praise.

His speech became more rapid. “I spent a large portion of the budget on an advertising campaign, which turned out to be a complete bust. We don’t have great reviews on Amazon—”

“Let me stop you there,” I said. “Reviews on Amazon reflect a customer’s experience with your product. Have you ever considered that it’s the product—not your marketing efforts—that might be to blame for dwindling sales?”

Justin jutted his head back in shock. “Well, it’s not the product. I designed it myself. I’m very thorough.”

He went on to explain that despite working twelve-hour days, his long-term goals just weren’t getting met anymore. Every time he started to work on something important, he would get interrupted by a new truckload of issues that he felt had to be dealt with right away—an unhappy client, a manufacturing glitch, or a question from pretty much anyone in the office. He’d be lucky if he accomplished one meaningful objective by the end of the day.

“I think I understand what’s going on,” I said. “Believe it or not, your problem isn’t your marketing strategy, employees, or ad campaign.”

He crossed his arms, waiting for the diagnosis.

“The main issue isn’t an external factor. It lies in how you, as the CEO, are operating.”

His mouth dropped open. This was clearly the last thing Justin expected to hear. “*Me?*” he asked with indignation.

“This isn’t entirely your fault, of course,” I reassured. “You just haven’t been properly prepared for the CEO role.”

“Of course I’m prepared. I’ve learned and worked with the best. I’m a very hard worker. Bosses, teachers, professors ... they knew I would always deliver at the highest level of performance. My standard is always to go above and beyond.”

“For *them*, though,” I suggested. “You went above and beyond *for them*.”

“Of course, that was my job.”

I leaned forward in my seat. “When was the last time you went above and beyond for yourself? When was the last time you put the completion of *your goals* above a client email or an employee’s question? Most importantly, when was the last time you asked yourself if you might be the *problem* or the *solution*?”

He stared at me, speechless.

Justin is a classic example of a businessperson who has been poised to succeed since day one. He made sure he got a first-rate education and worked with the best in his field. He even made a game plan for every foreseeable hurdle he might have to jump as business owner, but he didn’t anticipate this particular challenge. What the first twenty-four years of his life didn’t teach him is the cornerstone of personal accountability. ■

From childhood to young adult life, we’ve been socialized to be accountable to authorities outside of ourselves. Why do young children make their beds or eat their vegetables? Because their parents created a disciplinary structure that reinforces such behavior.

Why do students write tediously long term papers? Because that's what their teachers have asked for.

Why are serious entrepreneurs and solopreneurs so reticent to delegate and outsource everything related to their businesses *except* their own accountability? The downside of outsourcing accountability—to parents, teachers, law enforcement, bosses, and other authority figures—is that we never learn how to be accountable to ourselves. And, in this case, being accountable to yourself is a thing that *only you can do* in order to move the business forward. It is the *only* type of accountability that will ensure success.

When seasoned executives turn into serious entrepreneurs and business owners by leaving traditional hierarchies behind and starting their own business, they suddenly find themselves sitting behind a desk with no one to answer to. Most of them simply don't know what to do. Justin told me he felt like he was treading water, but most new business owners and serious entrepreneurs aren't even *in* the water. Like fish out of water, they've been tossed out of their cozy habitat, and now they're flopping about on a foreign landscape with an entirely new set of rules.

They have two options: Evolve and learn how to live on land, or give up their dreams and go back into the water.

I'm here to help you learn how to live on land.

Who Owns Your Time?

Incorporating personal accountability into your work ethic isn't easy, especially since our whole lives have been training courses to do the exact opposite. We're extremely poor at keeping ourselves

on task. If someone were to unexpectedly pop into your office and ask, “May I speak with you for a minute?” your immediate response would probably be, “Sure,”—unless you’ve been trained otherwise. Any other response would be perceived as impolite, and, sad to say, most of us would rather be liked than be effective.

Blaming outside sources for business failures is far easier than assessing yourself, but if you want to grow and thrive, you must reflect and hold yourself accountable for your business’s success. Whether you’re the CEO of a large corporation or a small-business owner, you *must* master the art of accountability. There’s no alternative road (and certainly no shortcut) to success.

Are you equipped to be *your own* authority figure? Sure, it sounds good, but most individuals are ill prepared to take this leap because they don’t know how to effectively incorporate focus and self-accountability into their daily framework. Your success depends on your ability to learn and master these skillsets.

How do you shift so dramatically, after a lifetime of being trained otherwise? You’re not going to wake up one morning and suddenly be able to cross everything off your to-do list if you haven’t been able to do so for the last three years. Life doesn’t work that way. Reading more books or attending more seminars on success, productivity, and goal setting isn’t going to get you there either. They simply aren’t enough.

You Need A Daily Framework

Everyone needs an external framework to hold their feet to the fire when focus and accountability become uncomfortable. If you didn’t learn these skills in school, and you have no teacher in

place to help you integrate them now, you're already predisposed to walking in the wrong direction. That's why establishing a daily framework is so essential for your business, career, and life to evolve.

Unless you put a new daily framework in place, you'll find yourself accountable to everyone and everything *but* yourself. You'll be accountable to the whims of whichever phone calls, emails, or unscheduled office visits you receive. This is an extremely vulnerable and disempowered position that could cost you your dream business or career.

Strategy #1—Forget How You Used To Do It

Many business owners fall into these traps because they're looking through a lens that's been clouded by twenty or more years of outsourced accountability. They have no idea what personal accountability looks like, so they aren't even aware of the source of their problem. They only know they're not as successful as they'd like to be, but they have no idea how to fix it.

You can't tell them, "You need to think outside of the box," and then stare at them for a moment before asking, "Okay, what'd you come up with?" You see, the problem is, *they are the box*. If they could think *outside* of the box, you wouldn't have had to tell them to do so.

An entirely new paradigm must be constructed. A new lens must be built. Instead of relying on the cliché of "thinking outside the box," we need to create an entirely new box!

There needs to be a shift from accountability to others (and

likewise, blaming others when something goes wrong) to personal accountability. Personal accountability means taking full responsibility for *everything* that happens in your business—the successes *and* the failures.

How can you make such a fundamental shift? What makes it possible is yet another cliché: coloring outside the lines. Forget the lines that are already there. Draw new lines, and operate within an entirely new framework. This is a radical leap. It requires a lot of work, and it isn't going to just happen naturally (or magically).

Strategy #2—Build A Framework

Actually, most people can't make the shift from a mindset of external accountability to a mindset of personal accountability on their own. But that's just human nature. To successfully hold yourself accountable, you might need a little help from an outside source. Don't confuse this with being accountable *to* the outside source.

For example, how many people do you know who have gym memberships that they never use? Perhaps you're even one of them. Unless there is an accountability framework in place—a personal trainer or a coach—it's far too easy to make excuses for not working out. *I'm too tired. I was up too late. I don't want to get up that early. I have something else more important to do.* Without a framework, you become your own worst enemy, and you simply won't show up.

The problem is perpetuated because gyms don't charge you a penalty if you don't show up. Their business models actually depend on you not showing up. They anticipate that 95 percent

of their members will not work out regularly. Why do their predictions hold up? Because the majority of people don't operate from a personal accountability mindset.

But if you want a lean body, you need to establish a framework that supports this goal, and make it a habit. Personal accountability on its own isn't enough to make you successful. You can't declare that you're now accountable to yourself, and then go back to your old ways. You need to exercise personal accountability like you would a muscle: consistently. How many other aspects of your life come up short because there is a lack of personal accountability? Eating nutritiously, getting more sleep, or telling your partner, spouse, or kids that you love them? You get the point.

Strategy #3—Make Personal Accountability A Cornerstone

There are many people who form new businesses, or take over existing businesses carrying remarkable track records of success, like my client Justin, who eventually find themselves struggling, unable to move forward. This sudden change rattles them. They're completely mystified by the foreign-looking roadblock in front of them. They don't understand it or how it came to be.

There is no teacher sitting beside them in the passenger seat. They're alone, behind the steering wheel of their businesses never having learned how to navigate on their own. Quite simply, without outside accountability structures to guide them, many of their movements seem to be outside of their control and they end up stuck.

Did some outside force take over? No, it was an *internal* force that took over momentarily: one of those pesky habits. They settled back into their old ways. And if they're not accountable to themselves when something like that happens, they can't recognize the old, tiresome patterns that are running them off course.

Once you remain consistent with personal accountability, you begin moving in a precise direction, getting closer to accomplishing your goals with each passing day. You won't get lost in the forceful currents of other peoples' needs and desires. Your business will stay on course, steadily moving toward the realization of your goals and vision. This is the true way of success. Once accountability is mastered, you give all other details in your business and life a chance to fall into place. I'm not going to sugarcoat the matter and tell you the process is easy, but I will show you how to make it happen.

NEXT STEPS

1. You are responsible for everything. If the goals for your business are not SMART and realistic, it's time to restate them.
2. If your business is struggling, take the time to step back and develop a plan with your team and other experts to turn things around.
3. Evaluate the goals of your direct reports.

4. Are their goals SMART? If not, sit down with them and have them restate their goals, and help them to develop the steps necessary so they can complete them effectively.
5. Are there people on your team that are just ineffective in their jobs? If so, develop a strategy to help them succeed or counsel them out.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Learning to be personally accountable for yourself, and everything in your business is one of the most challenging changes for most people. Who you are, how you think, how you react, and how you operate throughout the day has been “set in stone” over many years. If you want to make the changes outlined in this book, but think you need external help and guidance getting there, you may want to consider taking the *UnStuck Solution Audit*[™]. See pages 138-140 for further details.

8

You've Got to Have a System (Actually, A Lot of Systems)

I'VE HEARD THE SAME harrowing tale time and time again from clients—small-business owners and CEOs of \$100 million dollar companies alike—who enter my office frustrated with their levels of effectiveness. They confess to long, tiring workdays during which very little on their to-do list gets crossed off because of the constant intrusion of phone calls, client emails, employee questions, and other unexpected demands on their time.

I always ask my flustered clients the same question. “Why do you give everyone else control over *your* time?”

Their faces usually light up at this “aha moment.”

My clients aren't stupid or lazy. Many of them are some of the most ambitious and successful people in their field. On the cusp of success, they're just stuck. Their dilemma is a universal pitfall everyone experiences, and a problem you probably encounter regularly as well. You will continue to fall in this trap day after

day, unless there is a structure in place to safeguard you against it. This structure doesn't come naturally. It needs to be built, and I'm here to help do just that.

Why Systems Spell Success

If you want to grow, change, and achieve your goals consistently, there is a very good chance that you will need to invest in an outside accountability structure until all your habits of focus, time management, and consistent action have been developed and are set in stone. Each day needs to be directed by a system that supports maximum effectiveness. It's far too easy to be distracted from the proper course of action otherwise.

Strategy #1—Perform Your Rituals

This may be one of the most important changes you can make to improve your business, and your personal effectiveness. A smart approach to systemizing your day is using the art of ritual. When you break up your hours using high-leverage rituals, your time is automatically organized around your priorities.

The most important ritual of your workday is your morning ritual.

What you do in the morning directly affects what you accomplish in the afternoon and evening. You need a sound framework that ensures the accomplishment of tasks paramount to your success.

Your morning routine is a good indicator of how effective you will be through the balance of the day. By building a simple and meaningful routine, you will dramatically improve your effectiveness. Take time every morning to close your office door and

map out the day ahead, using the 80/20 rule. You have eight to twelve hours ahead of you. Either you're going to manage them, or they're going to manage you. Before you start your day, take fifteen to thirty minutes and give some serious thought as to what you want to accomplish. Ask yourself, "What can I do today that will have a major impact on my business?" Then schedule the time to do it—**before you do anything else.**

When I say schedule, I mean block out the time on your calendar, and keep the screen and sound on your computer off. Put your phone on vibrate, and put it in a drawer so you can't feel it. Shut your door and/or hang a sign that says "Do Not Disturb," and, if you have an assistant, tell them that you are off limits for whatever time you've allocated for this task.

Changing Your Morning Will Change Your Life—What I've just outlined for you is what turns average CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs into superstars. If you can turn this ritual into a habit, it will change the trajectory of your business.

Just imagine if, for the next six months, you were so focused that every morning you did the most important thing you needed to do that day to build your business. Whether it's a task, an activity, or just planning time ... if it's really important, you need to make sure it gets done. Do you think your business would benefit?

Can you see how this can make a difference? It's a *WOW!* moment. It's one of the first things I work on with new clients.

Some of you will read this and follow through. If you're in this group, I'm giving you a "pat on the back" in advance, and six months from now, you'll have some great success stories to share.

Others will not follow through and will just continue to complain that their business is STUCK. They'll make excuses like "I have to always be available to my people or clients," or "Something urgent came up," or any other reason except the real one.

I hope you are in the first group. Change is uncomfortable, but it's also good. Do it, and I promise it will make you feel very satisfied. If you need help, let me know. I have ways to assist you.

Strategy #2—Respect Your Priorities, And Others Will Do The Same

I recently conducted a call with a client named Mark, who is struggling with effectiveness issues and maintaining high energy levels throughout the day. He has a habit of checking his email as soon as he walks into his office. His primary work responsibility doesn't revolve around email management, though. It is technical in nature. Consequently, Mark is experiencing a sizable loss in his ability to be effective because he isn't focusing on his priorities until later in the day. By the time he finishes reading and replying to messages, a large portion of his morning has passed leaving him fatigued and with diminished brainpower and focusing abilities.

This is an extremely ineffective approach to time management, but Mark isn't alone in this misstep. A large portion of business leaders check their email as soon as they wake up or sit down at their desks. For most, this is simply a habit: wake up, pour cup of coffee, open the laptop or smartphone, and check the inbox.

The problem with starting the workday with an email ritual is that you're automatically thrown into other people's priorities, needs, and demands on your time and energy, while your own priorities get edged into the corner—not a strategic precedent with which to begin the day. In addition, we hardly notice the fact that each email can trigger one or more emotions ranging from excitement to upset and even rage. Our nervous systems are not built to process so many different emotions in such a short space of time. The emotional cost of scanning dozens of emails before we've "gotten our heads on straight" is likely much higher than we realize.

When I suggested that Mark restructure his morning, he became nervous.

"Not check my email right away?" he asked, panic in his voice. "What if an important message is waiting for me? I don't want to offend my contacts or let anyone down."

"I understand," I said. "Most messages you respond to come from people who know you, right?"

"Well, sure," he replied.

"Why not inform your contacts that you won't be checking your email until 11:00 a.m.?¹ You can then eliminate the expectation of receiving a morning email response from you. If it's an emergency, they'll find another way to reach you."

A few moments of silence passed. "I've never thought about setting up that kind of a system," he finally said.

¹ Think about adjusting your start time for planning and checking emails if your day begins earlier than 9 a.m.

“Let’s just try it for three days and see what happens,” I suggested.

“It sounds reasonable,” he replied hesitantly. “It’s a big change though.”

“Yes, it is,” I said. “You’re establishing a framework that respects your time and priorities. Creating a new system around your email habits is training others to respect your time and priorities as well.”

“You’re right,” he said thoughtfully.

“It’s a big shift, and an important one at that,” I added.

With this change, Mark has basically two undisturbed hours in the morning—when he’s fresh and focused—to devote to high-leverage activities. Of equal importance, he is learning a key principle of effectiveness: He must train others to adapt to his needs or he’s always going to be at the mercy of everyone and everything around him. When you create and enforce systems that respect your time, you train others to do the same.

Strategy #3—Document How You Want The Company To Be Run

A major key to growth and sustainability for small businesses and corporations alike, is systemization.

Many business owners don’t take the time to write down policies, procedures, and job descriptions within their businesses, because they look upon this process as a luxury. Instead, they rely on word-of-mouth to pass on such information. If a new hire

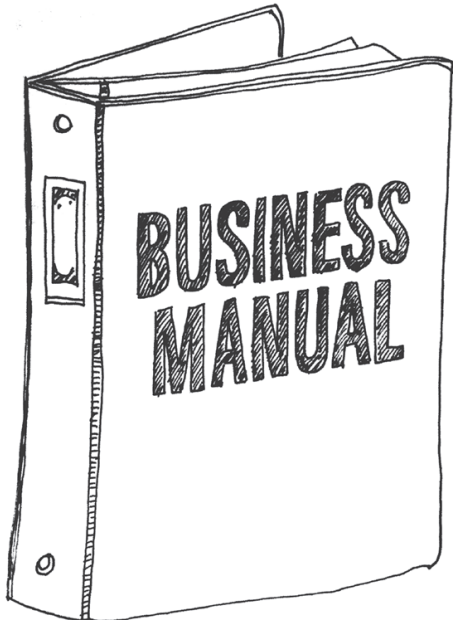
begins training, for example, he sits next to a seasoned employee, who is trusted to teach him the ropes. This is a poor approach to developing and running a business.

If you don't have a manual outlining operational details in your company, *you are* the manual. Employees will come to you whenever a question or problem arises, since they have no outside reference to turn to. While some business owners love the feeling of being indispensable, that mindset doesn't serve them or their goals whatsoever. If your business completely revolves around you, it's in a dangerous situation.

One of the smartest actions a business owner can take is systemizing the business. A healthy business is a systemized one. All ventures and businesses need to have a book or manual that outlines job positions and their corresponding responsibilities, operational functions, and time frames in which functions are to be completed.

Since manuals convey how to run your business in your absence, they are instrumental to selling your business as well. No interested buyer is going to purchase your venture if it requires *you* to manage it. A manual communicates what exactly is being purchased, and therefore, offers tremendous value.

Creating a business manual is a considerable undertaking. You don't need to put your business or life on hold to do it, but you do have to design and follow a timeline leading to the project's completion. Such a process could take anywhere from three months to a year to finish.



If you don't have the time, patience, or aptitude to do it yourself, don't be afraid to outsource the task. There are many human resources companies that can do part, or all, of the systemization process for you. Whether the project is done internally or outsourced, systemizing your business is a sound financial investment. It's a pivotal step

toward long-term sustainability and growth.

The two most important components of your business manual are *Job Descriptions and Functions*, and *Policies and Procedures*.

Your business manual should list all positions within your company. Each job description needs to encompass responsibilities, goals, and all relevant deadlines. Outlining each position's role within your business is a fundamental component to effective employee management. This simple step creates an anchor that enables you to hold your employees accountable. (Remember, *they* are accountable to *you*.) It's extremely difficult to tell an employee that their work is ineffective if there is nothing in writing detailing the results they are expected to achieve. When job responsibilities are written clearly in a business manual, you have a metric to which you can point and say, "It's right here. We went over this when you were hired. You said you understood. It's very clear that you're responsible for A, B, and C."

I always encourage my clients to have their employees sign and date that they “have read and understand” their job descriptions, as well as the business policies and procedures outlined in the manual. This step legally puts the business in a position of strength if the need to terminate an employee arises. The comprehensive manual serves as a “go-to reference” for employees when they have questions about performing their jobs, and supports them in running the business effectively.

All of your business functions, policies and procedures need to be documented in a manual as well. If your business does billing every month, for example, how is the process handled? What is step one, step two, step three, and so forth?

This aspect of the systemization process is especially important for small businesses. In a small business, everyone is important. If you lose an employee who's out sick for a month, you may be losing half of your staff. When a temporary worker comes in to your business to fill a position, how will they be brought up to speed quickly and thoroughly on their responsibilities and how to carry them out effectively? All procedures, functions, and job descriptions need to be documented, so you and your business aren't left scrambling when unforeseen emergencies occur.

Strategy #4—Build A Business That Can Run Without You

Many business owners cling to doing things “by the seat of their pants” because it worked in the early stages of building their businesses. This can be a fatal flaw as the business matures. In order

for your business to continue to grow successfully, routine and consistency need to be incorporated into your approach. Designing systems for yourself, your employees, and your business is essential.

A very large percentage of small businesses fail within the first five years while almost all franchises succeed. Why the large difference? Franchises follow a proven system that can be replicated.

Heightened levels of effectiveness require a work routine that is self-managing—they need to be on autopilot. Systemizing your business creates the consistency necessary for long-term success. It ensures the right actions are being done day after day, and can be replicated, no matter what situation arises.

Strategy #5—Actually Let The Business Run Without You (For A While)

I've worked with many clients who run self-sustaining businesses, but are psychologically tied to their work through limiting beliefs. CEOs who believe they are The Smartest Person in the Room may harbor a need to feel indispensable and believe that their value is inherently linked to the amount of work they perform.

CLIENT STUDY:

YOU DESERVE YOUR REWARD

My client Jim is a perfect example. He's the CEO of a half-billion dollar company that he spent many years building, but even with his company's success, he still works sixty plus hours a week.

"Jim, why are you at the office every day?" I asked during one of our sessions. "You've built a huge, fabulous company. It's time

to enjoy yourself. Go spend some time with your kids. Fly off to your daughter's college and surprise her with a visit."

"But I need to be here," he replied. "I can't just take time off like that."

"Hmm," I said. "If you were in the hospital for a month, would your company be in jeopardy? Would anything really change?"

"Well, no," he admitted with a smile.

"You could take six months off," I said. "You have a half-billion dollar company, over three thousand employees, and a solid management team. It's a systemized, well-oiled machine at this point. Nothing material will change if you're not there sixty hours *every week*."

Of course, Jim's problem is purely psychological. By now, he should be able to reap the benefits of what's been built. But he grew up with a father who worked *one hundred* hours a week. He thinks working only sixty hours a week *is* progress.

"Here's what we're going to do," I told him. "Starting next week, you're going to take every Wednesday off."

"Not go into the office?" he asked in shock.

"Yes, you're not to step foot into the office. But if you need to answer an email or take a phone call, go ahead."

Relief settled on his face. "That feels more doable," he replied. ■

The key to disentangling from a limiting belief system like Jim's is to do so using those baby steps we talked about in Chapter 4. He must slowly create a new time management system from the ground up. The key to walking away from a workaholic mindset like Jim's is implementing small changes that lead to a more balanced lifestyle.

Creating effective systems for yourself, your employees, and your business as a whole is rooted in breaking through the limiting beliefs blocking growth and progress.

NEXT STEPS

1. You are responsible for 100% of the good, bad, and ugly in your business. If things are not going well, look in the mirror.
2. Develop job descriptions for all positions in your business, and a *Policies and Procedures* manual.
3. Find an accountability partner who will give you unbiased feedback and guidance about what's not working in your business, and why.
4. If you ultimately plan on selling your business, it will be worth more if it is systemized, has written job descriptions, and policies and procedures.

9

Who Can Tell You That You're Full of \$^#&?

YOU'VE MADE IT to the top, so now what? Where do you go from here?

All positions leading up to the top job are defined with clear expectations, agendas, and objectives established by others, but this structure falls away when you make it to the corner office. You may receive outside direction from a board—if your company has one—but generally, if you're running a small- to medium-size business, you're left with no external framework to support you.

I've given you the power to get your business UnSTUCK. With that being said, we have now come full circle back to the most critical key to success: *personal accountability*. Accountability is something that can be learned. It can eventually become a habit—something that comes from within. The big question is: how do you get there? Unless they figure that out, many CEOs and business owners remain in a vicious cycle of feeling overwhelmed,

fatigued, and stuck. The risk of a burnout and creativity drought is high.

Luckily, there are solutions on the table; you just have to take advantage of them.

Mastermind Your Business

When you are the head of the company, you have no peers. Those you worked with prior to becoming CEO may still offer you feedback and support, but their advice can be biased to a certain extent. There may even be some old friends gunning for your position. Even paid advisors can potentially have their own agendas when broached with questions.

Who can you trust to openly discuss your problems? There is no safe haven in which to turn. This is a tremendous struggle for serious entrepreneurs, small-business owners, and CEOs alike.

A practical solution is joining a Mastermind Group. These groups offer a collective of like-minded professionals at your experience level who encounter daily the same problems as you. It's a confidential brain trust in which you can rely, grow, and contribute. Members hail from diverse industries and each offer unique value to the group. The circle is essentially your own personal board of directors.

The concept of the Mastermind was formally introduced by Napoleon Hill in his timeless classic, *Think And Grow Rich*, though mastermind groups have been around since the beginning of time. Napoleon Hill wrote about the mastermind group principle as: *“The coordination of knowledge and effort of two*

or more people, who work toward a definite purpose, in the spirit of harmony. No two minds ever come together without thereby creating a third, invisible intangible force, which may be likened to a third mind [the master mind].”

While it's well known that Andrew Carnegie changed the course of history in America through his steel empire, it's a lesser-known fact that he himself actually knew very little about the manufacturing of steel. The secret to his success was not his expertise and knowledge but his understanding of people. He surrounded himself with the right individuals. The wealthiest man in the world at the time, he developed a secret group of about fifty industry leaders. The million-dollar ideas that came out of that collective—and that made him one of the most successful men in American history—are enough proof of the Mastermind Group concept for me to keep recommending it.

When you bring a problem to the Mastermind table, it's extremely likely that another member has already experienced the issue, and can give you objective, unbiased, and valuable counsel that simply can't come from colleagues or outside friends. These groups help you to think bigger, and they have the power to dramatically broaden your horizon and potential.

The meetings also provide an incubator for new and fresh ideas. When you are surrounded by other successful people who come from other business sectors and are there to support you, ideas you'd never have thought of on your own rise to the surface. New ways of marketing, operating, motivating people, managing finances, raising capital—the list goes on. Business partnerships

and joint ventures develop that could easily be the missing link between you and unimaginable success. It's a very powerful formula and format for CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs who are looking for a place to connect with like minds and grow their business, as well as develop new personal relationships. For more information about Mastermind groups run by my company, visit www.ceoadvisorypartners.com

What If You Need More?

A Mastermind Group offers a wealth of support and guidance, yet many business leaders want more than that. They want ongoing external accountability to help them consistently focus on the high-value actions necessary to move their business forward *right now*. They want a relationship with someone who can be there for them all the time. They need a coach.

While business coaching has been around for quite a while, it's still not become "mainstream" and is often confused with the role advisors or consultants play. While advisors and consultants are experts on certain subjects and offer specific advice, a coach's role is to provide you with an intimate sounding board, and to help you achieve results you typically would not be able to achieve on your own. When a consultant delivers a service or product, for example, it's the business's responsibility to implement it. A coach provides the CEO or business owner support and guidance through the implementation process and holds them accountable to do what needs to be achieved daily, weekly, and monthly, in order for the process to be a success.

Amp Up Your Strategy

A coach's primary function is to help business professionals think and act strategically, and to stay focused on the high-value activities that will drive their business. The first two questions I ask new clients are, "What's your number one challenge?" and "How do you fix it?"

More often than not, my clients know the answer to these questions. But as mentioned before, knowing the solution and having the ability to break it down and implement it are totally different. This is where a coach is indispensable. A coach takes business professionals by the hand, and puts them through a *process* that helps them accomplish, in many cases, what they already know they need to do, while offering guidance and an extra layer of accountability.

If you come from a technical background and have not yet honed your interpersonal skills, or may not be overly comfortable in social settings, you may find it difficult to connect with your clients on a regular basis. A coach will help you get comfortable to make sure you allocate a sufficient amount of "client time" each week.

I used to send a weekly email to one of my clients that had a caricature of me holding up a big sign that read, "Connect with two clients." When he received that email, he'd schedule time on his calendar to call two clients.

"I never would have made time to do this consistently on my own," he told me after several months of working together. "But wow, it's made such a difference, and it's now become a habit in my weekly routine."

You may have a customer service department that does this, but trust me; it's not the same. When a client gets a call directly from the owner or CEO, it means a whole lot more. It shows the client that you really value them. Consistently reaching out to your clients to find out how they view your product or service costs you nothing, and it makes you a strong leader. You just have to *remember* to do it. That's the hard part. That's also where a coach comes in handy.

Eric Schmidt, the Executive Chairman of Google, has been quoted as saying that “everyone should have a coach.” From 2001 to 2011, Eric served as Google's chief executive officer, overseeing the company's technical and business strategy alongside founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page. Under his leadership, Google dramatically scaled its infrastructure and diversified its product offerings while maintaining a strong culture of innovation. There is a YouTube video of Eric talking about the power of a coach. If you have an opportunity, you should Google “*Eric Schmidt, best advice I ever got.*”

Ultimately, coaching is a process. It can be a stimulating and thought-provoking method that can help any business leader to get *UnSTUCK*, and move to the next level, personal accountability.

It's Now YOUR TIME To Get UnSTUCK

In the book *The Talent Code*, author Daniel Coyle asks, “What does greatness require? What does talent really mean?”¹

¹ Coyle, Daniel. *The Talent Code*. Bantam/Random House, 2009.

He comes to the conclusion that individuals need a capacity for deep learning and practice. They need to learn how to implement new habits and behaviors that will support sustained business growth and long-term success. And yet, most people don't have the self-discipline to learn a new skill, change an old skill, or change ineffective habits and behaviors on their own. Those who wish to grow beyond their present limitations and push the boundaries of success need an external voice to set fire to their willpower and inspire and fuel their evolution. In short, in order to achieve great things, they need a coach—their “igniter.”

If you conducted interviews with extraordinarily successful individuals and asked how they became masters in their fields, most would say, “I had someone who believed in me,” or “I had someone who encouraged me.” Others may say, “I had someone who taught me how to not get bogged down on minutiae.”

Whether they received outside motivation, guidance, or other forms of support, the majority of successful people had some form of *external accountability* that taught them how ultimately to be accountable to themselves. They had someone else initially cheering them on, challenging them to grow, and pushing them to succeed. Everyone needs such a champion.

During your early years in school, there are plenty of outside forms of accountability to ensure you implement the actions necessary to move you forward in life. Parents, teachers, coaches, and even older siblings serve as sources of accountability as you grow. They cheer your accomplishments and sometimes help you lick your wounds when you fall short.

When you're a CEO, business owner, or serious entrepreneur, those external accountability figures and cheerleaders are no longer present. Left to your own volition, you'll continue to do what you've always been doing. It's human nature to take the path of least resistance. Doing laborious tasks day after day isn't something we are naturally inclined to do—or enjoy.

Entering a coaching partnership is the most powerful step you can take toward growing your talents, pushing through blocks that have been holding you hostage for years, and getting your business and life UnSTUCK. It's the straightest route toward change and progress.

A coach helps you focus your attention where it counts, and holds you accountable to the steps essential for your growth and success. A coach helps you take high-leverage action consistently—the kind of action that reaps REAL results.

A coaching partnership is the ultimate success tool—an investment that provides for a huge return on investment (ROI), and yields prosperity and fulfillment that expands beyond business into all areas of life.

You Have To Want It

Needless to say, in order to be coachable, you must be willing to both accept outside guidance and do the hard work that goes along with change. Most importantly, you must be passionate about your vision of success and achievement.

Having a mediocre business is easy. Having a great business—a *successful* business—requires effort. You have to invest the time,

work, and resources necessary to effect growth and achievement. There's no way around it. In business, as in sports, the most successful people are the ones who are willing to "pay the price."

Business coaches work with people who are willing to do what's necessary to achieve greatness. Are you willing to change your habits, push beyond your comfort zone, and invest in the necessary tools to help you do so?

How passionate are you about taking your business—and your life—to the next level? How motivated are you to succeed? Is success something you really desire?

There are countless "miracle-drug" versions of software, accounting, training, coaching, and consulting packages being sold for dirt-cheap in today's market. Yes, it's always *easier* to take the cheap route when investing in things to improve your business, but it's rarely the *best* route. There are no magic bullets. In order to *receive value*, you need to *invest* in it. If someone or something promises you the world, or they seem too good to be true, buyer beware—they probably are.

If you now understand the value and importance of external accountability in helping you master the *Five Pillars* of business success, you may want to explore working with a business coach. Business coaches are trained professionals who serve CEOs, business owners, and serious entrepreneurs. I hope that you will consider bringing a coach into your world. In addition to self-coaching, having a professional coach is one of the most effective avenues to thought-change and high-level, high-quality results. It can make all the difference.

NEXT STEPS

1. Who is your confidant? Who can you talk to about the challenges you are experiencing in your business? Where do you go for unbiased guidance? If you don't have a good answer to these questions, you may want to explore joining a peer group or professionally facilitated Mastermind group.
2. If you want to really take your personal effectiveness to new heights, you may want to explore working with a professional business coach. While it will require you to push the boundaries of how you presently manage your business and your daily activities, the benefits can change the trajectory of your business and career.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

If you would like additional information about my live Mastermind Programs, please contact me directly at:

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The Finish Line

Putting The Five Pillars To Work

HUMAN BEINGS ARE creatures of habit. If you want to operate more effectively, you'll have to change some of your long-standing habits and behaviors. All the strategies, tactics, and suggestions in this book can be implemented by anyone. You won't need any special skills, tools, or training. What you do need is the willpower and stick-to-itiveness to follow through and change the way you presently manage yourself.

Since it's not easy, there's a good chance some of you may decide to reach out to professionals who can help, and there are many goods ones out there.

At CEO Advisory Partners, we don't offer coaching programs that promise to fix you and your company's problems in ninety days (although that is a good starting timeframe). Over many years, we've developed coaching programs, frameworks, and systems that deliver short-term and more importantly, sustained long-term results.

The new habits and rituals you'll learn and implement could very well propel your business—and possibly your life—beyond what you could have ever imagined. We're offering to share these with you, but you'll need to make an investment in time and money, and most important, an investment in yourself.

Is it worth it to you? And by that I mean, are you worth it?

Those are two big important questions that only you can answer.

A year from now you may wish you had started today.

—KAREN LAMB

Trust Matters Most

If you decide to reach out for assistance, there is something you should remember. Working with a personal business coach or advisor is not like working with a teacher or trainer. In order to serve you well and deliver great value, a coach or advisor must develop an intimate, trusting relationship with you and your business. Change and growth will make you uncomfortable, and you won't be willing to get “uncomfortable” without trust.

Choosing a personal business coach/advisor is like choosing an attorney. There's a lot at stake, so it should be a thorough process. After all, a certain law degree doesn't guarantee that the attorney has the people skills or the experience necessary to solve your particular legal challenges.

When seeking out a coach, it's critical that you align yourself with someone you like, and with whom you want to spend time.

You need someone you trust and respect, and who has the business acumen to serve you well. If they're right for you, they won't have to sell you on the benefits of hiring them. You'll know it.

Even so, take your time. This is not a decision you want to rush into. Since the future success of your business is potentially hanging in the balance, it's not something you should take lightly.

From my own work with clients including executives, small-business owners, and multi-million dollar companies, I have come to recognize that there are some important qualities you need to have before you embark on this journey.

You must be passionate about your business, you must be open to change, and you must be driven to succeed. What's possible when those qualities are present?

There are no guarantees, of course, but from my own experience it is not surprising to see improvement gains in the millions of dollars. Again, that doesn't happen for everyone, but it's certainly possible.

If you feel you should be getting results far in excess of your current situation, if you're trying to figure out what to do first, second, and third, and how to keep yourself focused on the most important activities that will drive your business, then you'll need to embrace an important rule of business:

You should never try to solve a problem unless you really understand the problem!

The first step is to get clear on the current reality in which you find yourself. Until that happens, it's difficult to know what the next step should look like.

That's why I created the *UnStuck Solution Audit*[™]. It's a brief but powerful assessment tool designed to quickly highlight the major obstacles keeping your business (and you) stuck. It's available to you right now, without cost, obligation, or fine print of any kind.

You can take the assessment and usually have your results delivered to you via email in one day. It's quick and highly effective in helping identify next steps.

I have to warn you, however, this isn't for the faint of heart. Why? One of the most powerful steps to getting "unstuck" is your willingness to take a good look at yourself in the mirror. That's what this is designed to do.

The problem is, you don't always like what you see! But there's enormous benefit to be gained from having a clear, honest, unbiased picture of your current situation. Only then are you able to make forward progress.

You'll find the *UnStuck Solution Audit*[™] on the webpage I've listed here:

<http://unstucksolutionaudit.com>

Along with your results, you'll also receive recommendations from me on how to use that information to move forward...and get UnStuck for Good!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The author, Henry Mittelman, is available for speaking engagements, as well as workshops, seminars and break-out sessions for groups and associations, public seminars, events, and industry-specific training. Henry is also available for a limited number of private advisory/coaching assignments. For more information or booking inquiries, please send an e-mail to Henry at: **henry@unstucksolution.com** or visit our company website at: **www.ceoadvisorypartners.com**

Appendix

Ninety-Day Goal Action Blueprint

The Ninety-Day Goal Action Blueprint has eight key steps. If you already have a *Goal Process*, and you're satisfied that it's working well, stick with it. If you think it could be improved, then give this one a try. There's no perfect process. The one that works best for you, is the one you should use.

1. Decide what you want to accomplish. Make sure it satisfies the 80/20 Rule. It should be a goal that will materially affect the success of your business.
2. Initially do not pick more than two goals, and make sure that these are important to the success of your business. Consider picking a goal that you have not been able to accomplish heretofore. (You may want to initially pick only one goal until you have acquired a new level of self-accountability.)
3. Break down the goal into the various tasks needed to accomplish the goal within the next ninety days.
4. Break down the tasks into *weekly bits and pieces* that are attainable and measurable.
5. Break down the weekly tasks into as many *bits and pieces* as are needed.

6. Schedule the *daily bits and pieces* on your calendar, and allocate the time necessary within each week to accomplish the *weekly bits and pieces*.
7. Build these goals into your daily self-talk to help you create a major shift in your mindset—a mindset that moves you from old habits of distraction to new habits of positive focus and scheduled action.
8. Go public with your goal to an accountability partner of your choice (spouse, a partner, a friend, an employee, or a coach) in order to help you develop a level of self-accountability. Have your accountability partner ask you for an update on your progress at the end of each week. Do this for at least the first seven weeks. Once you feel you have taken control of the goal and developed your new habit, your accountability partner should still ask for updates every two weeks.

At the end of ninety days, if you follow the steps, you should be able to congratulate yourself not only for attaining the goal, but also for your new level of self-accountability.

Twenty Critical Questions You Should Be Asking Yourself

1. What's the #1 challenge you are facing in your business? Do you have a plan to solve it?
2. In a typical day, how much do you work "in" your business versus "on" your business?
3. What do you love about your current business? What would you change?
4. What are the biggest frustrations you face on a daily basis?
5. If you could change one thing about your business and personal life, what would it be?
6. What parts of the business do you not enjoy?
7. Which two critical projects have stalled? Why? What can you do to get them started again?
8. Where would you like to be in one year with your business? In two years?
9. What are your greatest opportunities?
10. What do you want to accomplish in the next ninety days?
11. Which issues are consuming most of your days?

12. If you had greater focus and effectiveness, what would that mean to you?
13. Do you have a set of written goals?
14. On average (honestly), how often do you review your goals?
15. What percentage of your written business goals do you usually achieve? Personal goals?
16. What aspects of being effective do you find the most challenging? (Select all that apply.)
 - a. Staying motivated.
 - b. Overcoming obstacles, distractions, and interruptions.
 - c. Holding myself accountable.
17. Once you have a written goal, how do you usually go about trying to achieve it?
18. What's your #1 distraction? What's your #2 distraction?
19. Do you have a system (that really works) to keep you organized every day and that helps you get the most important things done?
20. At the end of the week, how effective are you (be honest) at getting done what you wanted to get done?

Your Daily Routine

If you already have a *Daily Routine*, and you're satisfied that it's working well, stick with it. If you think it could be improved, then give this one a try. There's no perfect routine. The one that works best for you is the one you should use.

1. At the end of each day, write down the three most important things you need to accomplish tomorrow. Do not write down more than three.
2. Prioritize the three tasks.
3. In the morning when you arrive at work, concentrate only on the first task. Work until the first task is finished before moving on to the second task, and then the third.
4. Do not do or work on anything until you complete those three tasks.
5. Repeat this process every working day.

This method utilizes many of the concepts outlined in my book. It's simple, so it actually works. Follow this basic formula and you will be ahead of most business owners. Emergencies, distractions, and "life" will try to take you off course first thing every morning. Ignore them as much as possible. Stay focused on those three most important tasks of the day. Chances are, your business will still be there when you have finished your tasks, and the world will not have come to an end.

There's something magical about knowing that you can start every day completing the three most important tasks you need to get done to keep your business moving forward. The biggest challenge to finishing most tasks is actually starting them. This morning ritual forces you to pre-determine how you will start your day tomorrow. It puts you in charge. It's simple, it works, and it gives you power.

Do the three *most important things* first each day and you will dramatically improve your business and life.

Six Ways To Energize Meetings

Most people I work with have a love-hate relationship with meetings. This got me thinking about why meetings are so unproductive. Is it because many of us focus meetings on the burning operational issues of the day, or on reviewing the same old issue for the third, fourth, or fifth time?

If we agree that the CEO, business owner, or entrepreneur is the visionary, wouldn't it benefit the organization if we shifted the focus of meetings from the "here and now" to the question of "where are we going?" Our functional leaders should be empowered and accountable for running the business: our strength as a leadership team is ensuring long-term viability, which is the result of growth.

Here are six questions you can use to energize your next staff meetings. I suggest putting one on each agenda for your next six meetings and discussing the topic for a half hour. These questions can help you clarify your strategic direction and evaluate your execution.

Meeting 1—Why do we lose business? Have participants write down their top three reasons and then share. Do you and your staff agree on the top reason?

Meeting 2—What can we do to gain business? Have participants write down their top three reasons, then share. Do you and your staff agree on the top reason?

Meeting 3—Who are our most profitable/important customers? What do they have in common? Are there more of them out there? How do we attract them? Are they pleased with our product or service? Do we regularly exceed their expectations? What other problems do they have that we could solve?

Meeting 4—What is our value proposition? What is our unique value and are we communicating it clearly?

Meeting 5—Should we be offering more or less choice in what we provide customers? Why? How would our demand and overhead change if we eliminated the bottom 20 percent of our offering?

Meeting 6—What potential partnerships and alliances should we be planning for in our future? Are there strategic partners that could take us into new markets? Are there technology partners that could help us expand without a significant investment?

We often assume people on our teams are thinking about these questions. The reality is that these questions are often put on the back burner due to the pressures of daily business. Asking these questions at your staff meetings has the potential not only to change the trajectory of your organization, but also to make your meetings more engaging and productive.

Nine Books All Business Leaders Should Read

You're probably thinking to yourself, "I thought this book started out by telling me I probably had all the knowledge I needed to be successful." You're right, it did. However, while I still believe that's true, these eight books are unique. If you don't have them in your library, go out and buy them. READ THEM, and IMPLEMENT the lessons learned. The insight they provide will help you to be a much better business leader, and a better person.

1. *What Got You Here, Won't Get You There*, by Marshall Goldsmith. This book discusses the small "transactional flaws" that lead to negative perceptions, which can hold an executive back.
2. *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, by Patrick Lencioni. This book reveals the five dysfunctions that go to the very heart of why teams often struggle. Lencioni outlines a powerful model and actionable steps that can be used to overcome these common hurdles and build a cohesive, effective team.
3. *Death by Meeting*, by Patrick Lencioni. This book is centered on a cure for the most painful (yet underestimated) problem of modern business: bad meetings. Lencioni suggests simple and revolutionary ways to cure this common problem.

4. *Winning*, by Jack Welch. This is a “big picture” book written by the CEO of one of the world’s largest corporations. While it might not be your typical read for a small-business owner, it’s worth getting an understanding of what it takes to be considered one of the best CEOs of all time. Welch spent forty years at General Electric, leading the company to year-after-year success around the globe, in multiple markets, and against brutal competition. This book is his frank and honest story of how his “be-the-best” style of management became the gold standard in business, with his relentless focus on people, teamwork, and profits.
5. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, by Daniel H. Pink. This book examines the three elements of true motivation: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Daniel Pink offers surprising techniques for putting these into action in a unique book that will change how you think and transform how you view your employees.
6. *Awesomely Simple*, by John Spence. This management book gives the business owner a clear and easy roadmap to follow. It’s a good guide for you to develop solid management practices for your business.
7. *Start With Why*, by Simon Sinek. In studying the leaders who’ve had the greatest influence in the

world, Sinek discovered that they all think, act, and communicate in the exact same way—and it's the complete opposite of what everyone else does. Drawing on a wide range of real-life stories, Sinek weaves together a clear vision of what it truly takes to lead and inspire.

8. *The Young Professional's Guide to Managing: Building, Guiding and Motivating Your Team to Achieve Awesome Results*, by Aaron McDaniel. This is a wonderful primer for the new small business owner. Aaron has taken the leadership qualities required to succeed and presents them in an easy to read format.
9. *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, by Dale Carnegie. Hands down, this is the best motivational book in history. Since it was written in 1936, it has sold over fifteen million copies. This book is timeless and appeals equally to business audiences, self-help audiences, and general readers alike. Carnegie believed that most successes come from an ability to communicate effectively rather than from brilliant insights. His book teaches these skills by showing readers how to value others and make them feel appreciated rather than manipulated. I recommend you buy copies of this book for everyone who reports to you. Even better, buy a copy for anyone who deals with your customers or prospects!

Put It All Together And It Spells UnSTUCK!

Chapter 1

1. Slow down, reflect, and make a list of what's working well in your business, and what's not. Commit more time and resources to the things that are working well. Of the things that are not working well, determine why, then change or adjust your strategy and tactics accordingly.
2. Determine the high-value tasks and activities that support your long- and short-term vision—tasks and activities that will take your business to the next level.
3. If you are multi-tasking—STOP IT!
4. If you are spending your day doing a lot of “insignificant stuff” that just keeps you busy—STOP IT!
5. Are you putting off making changes that will really move your business forward? If you are, do you have really good reasons?
6. Are you focused on your customer/client? When was the last time you were personally involved with them? Make a plan to get involved with a few each week.

7. How much effort is being put into marketing? What is being done strategically to ensure that your business is growing?
8. Make certain you have a balanced marketing strategy that includes not only acquisition, but also retention.
9. Do you know the lifetime value of your customer/client? If not, figure it out.
10. Make sure all your employees understand and appreciate what it means to lose a customer/client.

Chapter 2

1. Write down your goals for the next 30 days, the next 90 days, 6 months, 1 year.
2. Are they SMART Goals? If not, re-write them.
3. Break down the goals into the small steps necessary to achieve them.
4. Develop a way to keep those goals in front of you daily to ensure they stay at the forefront of your mind.
5. At the end of each week, keep a record of how effective you were at accomplishing your objectives.
6. If your To Do List has more than ten items on it, it's time to prune it.

Chapter 3

1. Review your list of the high-value activities that you need to do to support your short- and long-term goals.
2. Highlight any activities or tasks on that list that DO NOT support your short- and long-term goals (remember the 80/20 Rule). Determine how you can either eliminate, delegate, or outsource all those activities or tasks.
3. Evaluate your meetings to see which ones can be eliminated.
4. Set up a strict calendar and schedule your entire day.
5. Schedule the tasks and activities you need to do each day to complete your short- and long-term goals (and preferably do them first thing in the morning).
6. Schedule “me time” to work on your to-do list and other activities.
7. Schedule specific time periods throughout the day to review e-mails.
8. Schedule regular breaks into your day.
9. Keep written track of what you accomplished each day.
10. Develop a program to assist your employees to manage their time more effectively.

Chapter 4

1. It takes more than technical skills to be the CEO of a business. Do you have the appropriate management skills? If not, develop a plan or seek outside assistance.
2. Assess your staff. Are the right people in the right jobs?
3. These are some of the stumbling blocks and bad habits that can lead to your downfall. Work to change these ineffective habits. It's a process so don't expect changes to "stick" overnight.
 - a. You allow yourself to get distracted.
 - b. You feel the need to do everything (or far too much) yourself.
 - c. You won't do anything unless it can be perfect.
 - d. You make big lists, but don't complete a large portion of what's on them.
 - e. You don't strategically plan your day, week, month.
 - f. You don't measure what you or your business set out to accomplish.
 - g. You're not organized.
4. Go public with your goals.

5. Set up reminders or triggers to help you change your bad habits.
6. Understand your company's financial numbers.
7. Learn about basic accounting concepts and financial reports.
8. When appropriate, hire a proactive and top-notch chief financial officer, controller, or accounting manager who can gather, interpret, and explain financial results and trends.
9. Have your bookkeeper, accountant, or CPA create a simple “dashboard of metrics” that you review together regularly so that you are never, ever caught by surprise.

Chapter 5

1. Surround yourself with lots of smart, experienced people (if possible, smarter and more experienced than you), and allow them to mentor you.
2. If you are worried that you might not have enough formal education to be a success, get over it. A degree does not define you.
3. Success is about doing, failing, learning from the mistake, and doing again. Success is about taking action, not about waiting for the perfect time or perfect solution.

4. Believe in the value of your product or service, and don't be afraid to charge what's necessary for you to run a profitable business.
5. Just make certain you have done a good job at communicating the value of your product or service, and that your customer/client understands and appreciates the value of the solution you are providing.
6. Remember that your customers/clients do business with you based upon much more than price. If you think the relationship you have with your customers/clients could be better, do something about it **NOW!**

Chapter 6

1. Create a list of suggestions that support your success, help you to stay positive, motivated, and focused on the important things that will drive your business, and help you accomplish your daily activities.
2. Develop a way to record these suggestions (or buy a Self-Talk audio), and play them each morning before you begin your day (as well as possibly during lunch and before bed) in order to reset your mind and keep yourself focused.
3. Listening to statements that fuel how you want to function for the day is a powerful way to start the day; it cultivates a mindset focused on activities that offer

value and protects against distraction. When you take ownership of your mornings, you take ownership of your entire day, so use your morning hours wisely.

4. As the business leader, it's your responsibility to develop methods to motivate your team. Everyone on your team is watching everything you say and do. Don't be naïve. You are under a microscope. Say and do things that will help to keep your team stay pumped up, motivated, and passionate about your business.

Chapter 7

1. You are responsible for everything. If the goals for your business are not SMART and realistic, it's time to restate them.
2. If your business is struggling, take the time to step back and develop a plan with your team and other experts to turn things around.
3. Evaluate the goals of your direct reports.
4. Are their goals SMART? If not, sit down with them and have them restate their goals, and help them to develop the steps necessary so they can complete them effectively.
5. Are there people on your team who are just ineffective in their jobs? If so, develop a strategy to help them succeed or counsel them out.

Chapter 8

1. You are responsible for 100% of the good, bad, and ugly in your business. If things are not going well, look in the mirror.
2. Develop job descriptions for all positions in your business, and create a *Policies and Procedures* manual.
3. Find an accountability partner who will give you unbiased feedback and guidance about what's not working in your business, and why.
4. If you ultimately plan on selling your business, it will be worth more if it is systematized, has written job descriptions, and policies and procedures.

Chapter 9

1. Who is your confidant? Who can you talk to about the challenges you are experiencing in your business? Where do you go for unbiased guidance? If you don't have a good answer to these questions, you may want to explore joining a peer group or a professionally facilitated Mastermind group.
2. If you want to really take your personal effectiveness to new heights, you may want to explore working with a professional business coach. While it will require you to push the boundaries of how you presently manage your business and your daily activities, the benefits can change the trajectory of your business and career.

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Henry Mittelman is a professional business advisor/coach, and founder of CEO Advisory Partners and CEO Mastermind Alliance located in Boston, MA. He works exclusively with business leaders looking to achieve greater results in their business. Henry's broad based expertise and no-nonsense approach helps his clients take their business to the next level of growth, profitability, and success. For more information visit: www.ceoadvisorypartners.com

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