



SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS

Seven essential keys
to start, grow & sustain
a small business

RAY PONS

Author, "Finding My Way – And How You Can Find Yours"

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DEDICATION

This book is a companion to my first book “Finding My Way” and like that book this one is dedicated to my heroes: business owners, entrepreneurs and all self-employed men and women who have ventured out onto the skinny branches and gone into business for themselves. This book is also dedicated to those people who are considering making the leap into self-employment and are looking for some guidance to reduce the risk.

It is my hope that this material will encourage you, support you and assist you in finding your way to greater levels of success in business and greater joy, happiness and freedom in life.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge all past and present clients.

One of my primary professional roles is helping business owners, entrepreneurs and self-employed men and women drive their business forward faster. This book was inspired and made possible by my coaching clients.

It is important to understand the difference between a business coach, which I am, and a business consultant, which I am not.

Business consultants believe they are experts. Consultants have developed skilled expertise of what to do and how to do it. Armed with this expertise they work mostly with large companies and consult with them to implement the consultant's way of doing things. The consultant's motto is: "Follow me. I know the way to achieve great success."

Business coaches believe their clients are the experts. Coaches help maximize the skilled expertise of the client's way of doing things. They work mostly with small business owners and entrepreneurs and coach them to do what they already know they need to do. The coach's motto is: "I'll go with you. You know the way to achieve great success."

I am a coach. It is my belief that small business owners don't need to be told what to do – but they usually don't mind being reminded.

Success in most businesses often comes down to the refined study of the obvious, good old-fashioned common sense. But frequently the entrepreneur may not be doing what she knows she needs to do because she gets stuck, overwhelmed, and has developed certain bad habits. As a business coach I help the small business owner tap into his own innate wisdom. I help him channel and maximize his own expertise and find and follow his own way that will lead to greater success and extreme happiness. I get them to do what they already know they need to do.

In return they teach me! Through coaching them, I facilitate what I myself need to learn and I acknowledge all my clients, past and present, for your input, your guidance and your wisdom. You taught me well, thank you.

I also acknowledge the work, diligence and creativity of my editor, designer and publisher Bonnie Dell of Millennium Dimensions Inc. You are so frickin' amazing! Thank you Bonnie.

PROLOGUE

SMALL BUSINESS...Webster's Dictionary provides the following definitions:

SMALL: having comparatively little size or slight dimensions; minor in influence, power, or rank; operating on a limited scale.

BUSINESS: commercial or mercantile activity engaged in as a means of livelihood; dealings or transactions especially of an economic nature.

So much for Webster!

I mean isn't that a detached, unfeeling, and intellectual explanation of small business? Where is the passion? Where is the zeal? Where is the excitement and exuberance?

For me, small business is the very heart and soul of free-enterprise economies. Small business is the powerhouse driving force of any and all financially thriving societies. It is hope in solid format, a dream given substance, fervent desire made real, and authenticated opportunity in tangible, real-world form.

Small business is the one-man band or one-gal conglomerate operating out of a desk in the basement or a bedroom converted into an office. Or their business space is their car or Tim Horton's or Starbucks, with a laptop, Blackberry, iPhone, HTC, cell phone and wireless internet. Sometimes it can be a bigger small business operating from a more formal, genuine office location, several hundred or even a few thousand square feet of simple or swanky office space located in the business section of town and employing two, three or four staff to as many as 20, 30, 40 or more employees and associates.

Small business is the mainstay of every successful economy.

A large percentage of the small business market is owner-operated and this book is written primarily for them; the select group of small business owners, self-employed men & women, entrepreneurs who are engaged in finding their way to success based upon their own initiative, effort and enterprise by not only owning the business but also working in the business.

This book is particularly directed to The Mastery Group. I wrote it for those entrepreneurs who want to take their small business to a significantly higher level of success and excellence. The Mastery Group desires more. These are the folks who want significant growth in revenue, profit and bottom line. They want to expand their achievements and grow in size, stature and success. They also want to grow in personal satisfaction, enjoyment and happiness. The Mastery Group is the group every entrepreneur should be striving to be a part of.

Why do I call them “The Mastery Group”? Three reasons:

1. It sounds impressive, has a nice ring to it.
2. Because I like to kiss up to the customer (those reading this book) and...
3. It’s my book and I can do whatever the heck I want!

OK, let’s return to serious.

It is my serious, deep-rooted intent to acknowledge and express my admiration for The Mastery Group and all self-employed men & women and to state my personal and professional high regard and support for you and the roads you have chosen to travel. More timid souls have not had your courage, or your tenacity, or your willingness to risk.

I salute you.

This book was written to acknowledge you, to serve you and to assist you to drive your business forward faster and have greater balance and buoyancy in life. Think of it as a synopsis, a brief overview of certain key elements that might help you in finding your way to dramatically increasing your business and creating more joy, freedom, happiness and fulfillment in life.

I also wrote this book for those people who would like to become self-employed but have not yet taken the step. Perhaps this material, in conjunction with my first book, “Finding My Way—And How You Can Find Yours”, will encourage you and maybe even empower you to venture out onto the skinny branches of self-employment and find out for yourself just how much those thin limbs can hold.

Finally, what is contained in this book may also be valid, might be relevant for employed men and women, those people working a job in larger businesses and giant organizations. But the validity, the relevance for you will demand that you bring the same entrepreneurial spirit and energy to your world of work as do the self-employed. If you run your department as if you own it, if you take pride in results achieved and gain a sense of professional and personal satisfaction that goes beyond the size of your paycheck, if you think, feel and act as if you own the company that you work for, then this book might help you too in finding your way.

In other words, this book is written for leaders – leaders in business and leaders in life.

To your success!



“A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him. But of a good leader who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: We did it ourselves.”

Lao-Tzu, Scholar and Philosopher

“Leadership is a function not a title.”

Ray Pons, Author “Finding My Way—And How You Can Find Yours”

“Leaders aren’t born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work. And that’s the price we’ll have to pay to achieve that goal, or any goal.”

*Vince Lombardi, Legendary Coach of the Green Bay Packers
Winners of the first two National Football League Super Bowl games*

INTRODUCTION

There seems to me to be two critical components that business leaders must fully understand, and fully commit to, in order to deserve induction into The Mastery Group: Change and Approach.

CHANGE

Change is running rampant!

Running any business enterprise in this world of overwhelming change – stressful, turbulent and volatile change – is more difficult and challenging and demanding than ever before.

The old successful patterns, the tools, tactics and strategies that effectively helped to start, grow and sustain a small business in the past, will generally not be effective today. Things that were essential for growing a business 20 years ago flat-out do not work in the current business climate. *'101 Ways to Boost the Bottom Line'* put forward as recently as 5 years ago has only minimal impact today, or worse still, it could even lead to a reduction of business, a reduction of revenue and this can happen more easily than you might ever anticipate.

Business is changing at a rapid, relentless pace ... fickle customers and reducing customer loyalty, a much more demanding workforce with an increased sense of entitlement, new product innovations, different distribution channels, internet marketing, global marketing, technology advances, and the list goes on. Change is indeed running rampant.

In times of change YOU must change.

The first item to change is to change your mind – HOW YOU THINK. We will look more closely at thinking patterns in Chapter 2 but it has such critical importance that it warrants at least a mention here.

Consider closely and carefully how you think and how you process information. Reflect often how your belief system functions and operates and how this belief system, this self-created system of paradigms, assists you or hurts you when making decisions.

One of the biggest contributors to a struggling business is far too frequently the limiting beliefs of the business owner and an unwillingness to address and change negative, outdated or inhibiting thinking. I call it stinkin' thinkin'.

Stinkin' thinkin' invariably manifests into inhibiting behaviours. Inhibiting behaviours bring about diminished results. Diminished results feed the stinkin' thinkin' and the cycle continues ... on and on and on.

In times of change, getting a new result generally requires a fundamental new way of thinking – a more strategic way of thinking. From this new way of thinking might more easily flow a new way of behaving. From this new way of behaving might more easily flow an increased measure of “resulting”.

Canadian born John Kenneth Galbraith, while living and working in America, was to become the most famous and revered economist of his time. He is quoted as saying:

“Among all the world’s races, some obscure Bedouin tribes possibly apart, Americans are the most prone to misinformation. This is not the consequence of any special preference for mendacity, although at the higher levels of their public administration that tendency is impressive. It is rather that so much of what they themselves believe is wrong.”

**Change is
running
rampant!**

Another pithy Galbraith quote:

“In the choice between changing one’s mind and proving there’s no need to do so, most people get busy on the proof.”

Yet another:

“It is a far, far better thing (for most people) to have a firm anchor in nonsense than to put on the troubled seas of thought.”

People don’t think much about HOW they think. They tend to think on automatic pilot. They think emotionally not strategically. They think reactively not responsively. They think the way that they think, thinking how they’ve always thought, whether that thinking is helping or hurting, powerful or weak, solid or shaky.

And when people think automatically, emotionally and reactively, when they think on automatic pilot their thinking can easily become stinkin’ thinkin’. The Mastery Group takes responsibility for their thinking and they control it, it does not control them.

In times of change YOU must change. The first item to change is to change your mindset – HOW YOU THINK.

“Of all the human freedoms that can be taken away the one that cannot be taken is the power to choose how we think.”

*Viktor Frankl, Author
“Man’s Search For Meaning”*

APPROACH

Customize your approach in complete harmony with the size of your business.

If you are an owner-operator, entrepreneur, small business owner, recognize and be proud of the reality that you are a *small* business.

Achieving excellence within a small business is one heck of a lot different than achieving growth in a multi-national. A sure-fire recipe for failure in a small business is to attempt to run it like Wal-Mart, Microsoft, FedEx, or any of the other high-profile giants. Leverage your lack of size and be quick to act, swift to decide, adjust strategically and often and embrace the great advantage of your dynamic, smaller stature and hands-on control.

If, however, you are part of a large conglomerate, leverage the opportunities that come with that circumstance. Take advantage of resources, people, training and support that is available to you. But when you do leverage the big-firm attributes always maintain

a solid awareness of the approach you are choosing and remain vigilant to avoid complacency, game playing, office politics and blaming that can often infect huge organizations.

Customize your approach in complete harmony with the size of your business.

That said, there are certain basic fundamentals of running any business. For example, one commonality in any business is this: **Success is simple but not easy.**

“What you have to do and the way you have to do it is incredibly simple. Whether you are willing to do it, that’s another matter.”

*Peter Drucker, Author
Widely regarded as the father of “Modern Management”*

In any business, large or small, success is simple but not easy. The Mastery Group recognizes the important distinction between the words ‘simple’ and ‘easy’. The strugglers do not.

Keep your approach to conducting your business and growing your business simple.

Extraordinary success often comes down to a few ordinary actions, a few common-sense simple disciplines, that are taken or not taken on a regular basis which lead to excellence or struggle.

As I have worked with, studied, observed, and examined the approach of a multitude of large and small businesses, it does seem to me that there are certain simple items that can propel any business toward bigger and better results. This book addresses the seven key essentials that I believe lead to extreme success and overwhelming happiness. Do them, and your business will grow. Do them well, and your business will grow quickly. Do them with innovation, and your business will grow exponentially. Simple.

“Innovation is the specific tool of entrepreneurs, the means by which they exploit change as an opportunity for a different business or a different service. It is capable of being presented as a discipline, capable of being learned, capable of being practiced. Entrepreneurs need to search purposefully for the sources of innovation, the changes and their symptoms that indicate opportunities for successful innovation. And they need to know and to apply the principles of successful innovation.”

Peter Drucker •

**In times of
change...
YOU must
change.**

1

VISION

Growing your business requires crystal-clear clarity of vision.

And vision is the sole responsibility of the business owner or the business leader. You can delegate every technical task. You can give away every functional assignment. You can give up all of the duties, work and processes and procedures. But you can never delegate, give away, or give up vision.

There is no such thing as vision by committee, consultation or consensus. It is created entirely by you, the founder or the leader. Vision is everything to the success of your business.

Vision is the driving force that separates businesses that make it and thrive, from those that struggle and fail. Vision provides purpose. Vision supplies meaning. Vision gives direction. This is such a critical key essential to grow any business that it is well worth restating: **VISION GIVES DIRECTION.**

Vision is the starting point. Everything cascades down from vision.

Tomorrow belongs to those who have vision today!

Author Unknown

Create a vision and never let the environment, other people's beliefs, or the limits of what has been done in the past shape your decisions.

Anthony Robbins, Motivational Expert

To come to be you must have a vision; a vision of being, a dream, a purpose, a principle. You will become what your vision is.

Peter Nivio Zarlenga, Author 'The Orator'

Regrettably many business owners are spending far too much time at the bottom end of the cascade without dedicating nearly enough emphasis on vision. Inadvertently they place too much emphasis on improving the 'How To' (tactics and strategies) while becoming detached and distanced from the 'Why To' (vision).

Brian Klemmer authored a terrific book "If How To's Were Enough, We Would All Be Skinny, Rich & Happy." I agree. It is my firm personal and professional belief that success in business today is less about 'How To' and much more about 'Why To'.

Give any business leader, man or woman, greater clarity of why to, greater clarity of vision, and I believe they will figure out how to.



The Growth Coach

Clarity of vision brings better results. Fuzzy vision gets fuzzy results.

Without vision, or without crystal-clear clarity of vision, it becomes difficult if not impossible to strategically plot out the precise methodology to get to the desired destination. Put another way: "If the boat is pointed in the wrong direction, rowing harder is not going to get you to where you want to go."

For me one of the best quotes on vision came from Jack Welch, legendary leader of General Electric:

"Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision and then relentlessly drive it to completion."

I love that quote. Let's briefly look at each component:

“... create a vision”

What was your original vision when starting out in business? What gave you the courage to go out onto the skinny branches and go into business for yourself? What were the driving forces that compelled you into self-employment? What were the four, five or six powerful, compelling reasons that prompted you to venture out as an entrepreneur?

Or ... if you are considering getting into your own business what are the top five reasons for wanting to do so? As an employee, what are you lacking that you believe might be provided by becoming your own boss?

Or ... what was it that gave you the drive to throw your hat into management consideration and place yourself on the leadership fast-track?

Your list might include some of the following:

Money, power, independence, happiness, freedom, control, unlimited potential, inspiration, (maybe desperation?) a desire so strong it wouldn't be denied, a passion to make a difference, an attempt to leave a legacy, to create a tangible asset.

What was your original vision for yourself and your business? What was the power, the driving force, the motivation? How clear was the vision then? And ... How clear is the vision now?

Your next consideration might be a gut-check assessment. Here is a very direct and for some people, very difficult question: How does your current reality match your original vision?

Think about it for a moment.

Think about the five things that you were hoping to achieve from self-employment or leadership and compare what you have with what you wanted to have. Are you living the life that you expected to live?

Many find that their original vision is very different than their real-world reality. For many they discover that they have become a prisoner of the very business that was supposed to set them free. Are you in control? Or does it control you? Do you own the business? Or does it own you? Do you have greater freedom or do you have less freedom?

Remain close to your vision and live your vision.

“Cherish your visions and your dreams as they are the children of your soul; the blueprints of your ultimate achievements.”

Napoleon Hill, Author “Think and Grow Rich”

“... articulate the vision”

How do you express your vision? In other words, when people ask “What do you do?” or “What business are you in?” do you trot out the same mantra that every one of your competitors trots out or do you have a unique and truly compelling statement of vision that sets you apart? Are you able to express your vision clearly, concisely, convincingly?

You must be able to articulate your vision with a captivating, competitive advantage that goes far beyond the routine.

“I noticed an almost universal trait among super achievers, and it was what I call Sensory Goal Vision. These people knew what they wanted out of life, and they could sense it multi-dimensionally before they ever had it. They could not only see it, but also taste it, smell it, and imagine the sounds and emotions associated with it. They pre-lived it before they had it. And the sharp, sensory vision became a powerful driving force in their lives.”

*Stephen Devore
Composer/Songwriter/Singer*

**Fuzzy vision
gets
fuzzy results.**

“... own the vision”

Do you have the vision printed on a plaque or captured in your heart?

It's not enough to write it down somewhere if it isn't imprinted on your soul. Do you live the vision in all that you do? Do you take total, unrelenting ownership of the vision and keep it front and centre perpetually? Do people see you “walking your talk” and being the living, breathing embodiment of your vision in words, beliefs, attitudes, actions and mindset?

You must own the vision. If you don't own your vision, someone else's vision might end up owning you.

“No vision and you perish; no ideal and you're lost. Your heart must ever cherish some vision at any cost. Some hope, some dream to cling to, some rainbow in the sky, some melody to sing to, some service that is high.”

Harriet du Autermont, Poet

“... drive it to completion.”

Finally, are you determined to see the vision fulfilled? Action is omnipotent. Determination is demanded. Persistence is mandatory. It isn't over until the vision becomes real. The game isn't over until you win.

No-one ever built a reputation based on what they were going to do. Action is essential.

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”

Joel A Barker, Scholar and Futurist

To sum up: Vision is everything to the success of your business.

It does seem to me that lack of vision is a guarantee for failure. You will never grow any business without vision. Lack of vision, or lack of clarity of vision, makes growing a business especially challenging. Lack of vision means the future is unclear, mindset is less resolute, obstacles appear bigger, focus is more fuzzy, and persistence less determined.

**Success
begins with
Vision.**

Remain close to your vision. Maintain a vision of purpose, a vision of excellence, a vision of possibility. See, with crystal clear clarity, your vision of overwhelming success and your vision of a better tomorrow.

Success begins with vision.

“Vision - It reaches beyond the thing that is, into the conception of what can be. Imagination gives you the picture. Vision gives you the impulse to make the picture your own.”

*Robert Collier, one of America's
First Success Authors*

“All successful people are big dreamers. They imagine what their future could be, ideal in every respect, and then they work every day toward their distant vision, that goal or purpose.”

*Brian Tracy
Author/Speaker*

“Create the highest, grandest vision possible for your life, because you become what you believe.”

Oprah Winfrey, Television Host ●

2

MINDSET

A powerful vision is more likely to become real when supported by a powerful mindset.

The power of the mind is not a new concept. Napoleon Hill wrote about it in “Think And Grow Rich”; Dr Norman Vincent Peale in “The Power of Positive Thinking”; James Allen in “As A Man Thinketh” and there are countless others.

In recent times there has been revived interest about the importance of a positive mindset with two sources perhaps most recognized. Dr Stephen Covey, author of “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, expressed it this way: “*For minor improvements a person works on attitudes and behaviours; for quantum leap improvements you work on mindset.*” Rhonda Byrne, producer and author of the super successful movie and book “The Secret”, described it as the law of attraction. You probably have certain favourites of your own.

“Our minds can work for us or against us at any given moment.”

Richard Carlson, Psychotherapist and Author “Don’t Sweat The Small Stuff”

“What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: Our life is the creation of our mind.”

*Buddha
Spiritual Teacher from ancient India
and the Founder of Buddhism*

“The empires of the futures are the empires of the mind.”

*Winston Churchill
British Prime Minister during World War II*

While I am very supportive of the whole notion of the power of the mind and the power of positive

thinking, I’m not sure I can completely grasp the notion that positive thinking and positive thinking alone will cause an irresistible law of attraction that brings positive results and success. I know a lot of very positive people who are not achieving even marginal success.

However, what I am fully convinced of is the power of the mind, the power of the intellect, and the power of thought when it becomes engaged in the opposite – negative thinking. I call it *stinkin’ thinkin’*

Stinkin’ thinkin’ will never grow your business!

“I don’t eat junk foods, and I don’t think junk thoughts.” Peace Pilgrim Advocate for World Peace

**Stinkin’
thinkin’
will crush
your vision!**

“Nurture your mind with great thoughts, for you will never go any higher than you think.”

*Benjamin Disraeli
British Prime Minister*

“Our life always expresses the result of our dominant thoughts.”

*Soren Kierkegaard
Existential Philosopher*

If you are indeed able to develop a powerful, positive state of mind, kudos! A positive mindset will never diminish the possibilities for positive results. If however, a powerful, positive state of mind should sometimes prove elusive – and it has been my experience that many folks find it very hard to remain positive when times are tough – I urge you to pay close attention to at least avoid stinkin’ thinkin’.

Pragmatic, real-world, facing reality can often lead to negative forecasting.

Negative forecasting can often lead to self-fulfilling prophecy.

Self-fulfilling prophecy can often lead to stinkin' thinkin'.

And stinkin' thinkin' never takes you down the path that leads to success.

Stinkin' thinkin' feeds upon itself, reinforcing its own negative doom and gloom mindset which can spread out in ever increasing circles of FUDS – fears, uncertainties, doubts, suspicions.

“Think success, don't think failure. At work, in your home, substitute success thinking for failure thinking. When you face a difficult situation think, “I'll win,” not “I'll probably lose.” When you compete with someone else think, “I'm equal to the best,” not “I'm out-classed.” When opportunity appears think “I can do it,” never “I can't. Let the master thought “I-will-succeed” dominate your thinking process.

Thinking success conditions your mind to create plans that produce success.

Thinking failure does the exact opposite. Failure thinking conditions the mind to think other thoughts that produce failure.”

*David J. Schwartz
Professor and prolific Author
on Motivation and Thinking*

**Growing your
business
DEMANDS
resilience of
mindset.**

Growing your business requires – demands – resilience of mindset.

Strength of will, persistent determination, and developing a courageous character, is always prefaced by strength of mindset.

In times of difficulty, times of pressure, those times when you cannot maintain a powerful, positive mindset, at least avoid wallowing in a mindset that is negative – stinkin' thinkin'.

“Rule your mind, or it will rule you.”

Horace, Roman Philosopher

A powerful vision is more likely to become real when supported by a powerful mindset. •

3

RESPONSIBILITY

If there is one truly distinguishing feature that separates leaders and followers it is this: responsibility.

We live in a world where most people have a multitude of reasons for mediocrity.

Ask most folks why they are not successful, or ask most folks why they are not happy, and they can immediately answer you. In fact you don't even have to ask! Miserable people, those achieving mediocre results, seem eager to share all the reasons for their misfortune and unhappiness without waiting for someone to ask.

“How we love to blame others for our misfortunes! Almost every individual who has lost money in stock speculation has on the tip of his tongue an explanation which he trots out to show that it wasn't his own fault at all. Hardly one loser has the manliness to say frankly, ‘I was wrong.’”

B.C. Forbes, Founder of Forbes Magazine

The Mastery Group accepts responsibility.

Successful strategic business owners (SBO's not SOB's) leave clues. One of the biggest clues that an SBO leaves is that she/he takes total responsibility for their success and happiness.

Successful people leave clues.

Others may blame a whole host of outside factors for their results: the economy, politicians, the government of the day, ruthless or unscrupulous competition, unfair taxes, circumstances, genetics, and a million other items.

The mere thought that the 'problem' is out there is the very problem.

The moment that someone is able to identify some outside person or some outside thing as the reason for

them achieving less than they desire, that thought in and of itself is a disempowering, disabling killer.

“I am responsible. Although I may not be able to prevent the worst from happening, I am responsible for my attitude toward the inevitable misfortunes that darken life. Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life.”

Walter Anderson, Artist

“Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is you who will get you where you want to go, no one else.”

Les Brown, Motivational Speaker

**Successful
people
leave clues.**

“Responsibility is the thing people dread most of all, yet it is the one thing in the world that develops us, giving us manhood or womanhood fibre.”

*Frank Crane
Presbyterian Minister,
Speaker and Columnist*

I mentioned in the introduction of this book the daunting and inspiring book “Man's Search For Meaning” by Viktor Frankl in which he describes his experiences in the most horrific of circumstances – life in a concentration camp. Even in this most awful and appalling situation he states: *“What alone remains is the last of human freedoms – the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances.”*

Now there's responsibility for you!

“The ability to accept responsibility is the measure of the man.”

Roy J. Hunt, Philanthropist

“Nothing strengthens the judgement and quickens the conscience like individual responsibility.” Elizabeth Cady Stanton
Social Activist/Author

“Responsibility walks hand in hand with capacity and power.”
Josiah Gilbert Holland
American Lecturer/Poet

Members of the Mastery Group do not waste time, energy or effort making excuses – they take responsibility. They remain focused on making a difference, making an impact and making money.

To give up responsibility is to give away your power. To grow your business you must retain your

power. Retain your power and grow. You can be stuck on reasons or take responsibility for results. The choice is yours. Choose wisely.

“What we say and what we do ultimately comes back to us so let us own our responsibility, place it in our hands, and carry it with dignity and strength.”

Gloria Evangelina Anzaldua
Internationally recognized
Cultural Theorist and Scholar

Accept responsibility, take total, complete ownership of responsibility and move ahead, empowered, determined and unstoppable. •

**Retain
your power
and grow.**

4

PLAN

There is a common saying: *“If you fail to plan you plan to fail.”*

Well, duh! I mean, isn't that so mind-numbingly obvious?

Every business person knows intellectually the importance and the value of having a plan in order to make his/her dream – vision – a feasible, achievable and attainable goal. You already recognize and know very well the merit, the critical usefulness, of having a plan. But failing to plan is a common killer mistake.

“Failure to prepare is preparing to fail.”

John Wooden
Legendary UCLA Basketball Coach

“If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.”

Jim Rohn, Motivational Speaker,
Philosopher, Entrepreneur

“Whatever failures I have known, whatever errors I have committed, whatever follies I have witnessed in private and public life, have been the consequence of action without thought.”

Bernard M Baruch
Wall Street Financier and
Financial Advisor to several
Presidents of the United States

Business owners and business leaders are a motivated group. They possess an energy others do not have. They have a work-ethic and determination which others lack. They tend to be action-oriented, driven individuals who derive great pleasure from rolling up their sleeves and getting to the task at hand. But working hard without a plan can prove damaging.

As a business coach and performance improvement specialist, primarily working with owner-operated businesses, I've discovered over the years that one of the most difficult things to accomplish when coaching self-employed men and women is getting them to stop working and start planning.

If a business leader plans at all it is often because she/he is forced to do so in order to gain approval for financing. The bank requires a business plan to approve a loan and so the business owner is compelled to come up with a plan. And many of these plans are terrific, well thought out documents that set a clear strategy for how the business will perform. Unfortunately, it frequently follows that the moment the loan is approved the business plan goes on the shelf and is neglected or even completely ignored.

If no financing is needed and the business leader is using his/her personal money as start-up capital – an especially prevalent trend these days in owner-operated businesses – business plans are even more rudimentary, often non-existent.

The owner is accountable to no-one and because a plan is not required she/he functions without any plan whatsoever and substitutes planning power for sweat-equity. Instead of planning, strategically planning, to start their business, lead their business and grow their business they instead throw themselves into all the day-to-day details of running the business. They get caught up in all of the technical tasks, work hard each and every day running every tactical component, every aspect of the business, every role, every problem, every challenge, every area and every detail.

They become the go-to-guy, go-to-gal for every

**Slow down.
Reflect.
Think.
Plan.**

problem, challenge, crisis or concern, and if this causes stress and tension they trot out the clichés: “It’s the price one must pay to achieve success”, “No pain no gain”, “If it’s to be it’s up to me”, “If you want a job done right you’ve just got to do it yourself.”

I suggest a new approach: Plan more – work less.

I am not suggesting that you can grow your business and achieve enormous success if you are lazy...not at all. You must have motivation, energy and an action-oriented drive and determination. I’m a great admirer and supporter of having a high work ethic and it is indeed necessary that you be appropriately involved in how things are being done in your business. But when you hit the ground each and every day running it without first strategically planning it, you will much more often than not become “*busy being busy*”.

Business owners and business leaders who are guilty of “*busy being busy*” will often be putting in more time and more effort and more energy but the results usually do not reflect the exertion. Running a business by the “*seat-of-your-pants spontaneity*” instead of having created a well-thought out plan or strategy can be extremely counter-productive. You can easily get caught up “*in the thick of thin things*” or become sidetracked “*majoring in minor items*”. Business owners who are “*busy being busy*” achieve far less than their true potential because, in a nutshell, the owner is working far too hard IN the business instead of strategically working ON the business.

For most small businesses it is critical that the owner becomes committed to plan more and work less.

“If you employed study, thinking, and planning time daily, you could develop and use the power that can change the course of your destiny.”

W. Clement Stone
Businessman and Philanthropist

“Planning is an unnatural process; it is much more fun to do something. The nicest thing about not planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise, rather than being preceded by a period of worry and depression. “

Sir John Harvey
Lieutenant Governor for Nova Scotia

“Always have a plan, and believe in it. Nothing happens by accident.” Chuck Knox
National Football League Coach

A leader with motivation, energy, action-oriented drive & determination – AND A PLAN – well that is a person to be reckoned with.

Vision, mindset, responsibility and a clear plan to make it happen is a force that can grow any enterprise in a predictable, repeatable and sustainable manner.

Create the plan, follow the plan and adjust the plan.

Planning is not a one-time event. It is a dynamic, fluid and adaptable process that is continually being adjusted according to current trends and experiences and present day business realities. The plan must be revisited and refined regularly with minor tweaking or major re-vamping. The

plan needs to allow for unexpected events that might otherwise slow you down or maybe even get you stuck. Face reality and make decisions boldly based on what is actually happening not what you would like to see happening.

“A man who does not think and plan long ahead will find trouble right at his door.”

Confucius, Philosopher/Sage

Take the time to slow down, reflect, think, and plan, plan perpetually.

“The method of the enterprising is to plan with audacity and execute with vigor. “

John Christian Bovee
American Lawyer/Author

And a great plan must be followed up by...next chapter. •

**Plan more.
Work less.**

5

ACTION

You have no doubt repeatedly heard the phrase: ‘*Knowledge is Power.*’ Not to be too blunt – bull! Knowledge is not power. Knowledge is merely potential power.

Action is power!

Action and action alone is omnipotent.

“The chief condition on which life, health and vigor depend, is action. It is by action that an organism develops its faculties, increases its energy, and attains the fulfillment of its destiny.”

*Pierre Joseph Proudhon
French Philosopher/Theorist*

“Action is a great restorer and builder of confidence. Inaction is not only the result but the cause of fear. Perhaps the action you take will be successful; perhaps different action or adjustments will have to follow. But any action is better than no action at all.”

*Dr Norman Vincent Peale
Author “The Power of Positive Thinking”*

“Just do it.” Nike Corporation

Now don’t get me wrong, knowledge is very much needed and I’m a firm believer that you cannot be a successful idiot.

Each and every one of us must take responsibility to gain all the education and training and knowledge that we are capable of absorbing and we will look at this more closely in Chapter 7.

Acquire the knowledge, but then, by God, do something!

I mean, do we not all know people who are failing miserably yet have a massive amount of knowledge about a whole lot of stuff? Knowledgeable derelicts are

as common as dandelions in springtime.

And is it not also true to say that many super achievers don’t seem to have any significant edge in knowledge but this hasn’t slowed them down from becoming super achievers anyway?

For me, genuine sustainable success is not so much about knowledge as it is about action.

If you ever want to witness great frustration in business or in life, you need look no further than the multitude of people who are hoping to achieve enormous success based upon excellent intentions and lots of knowledge.

The road to a very warm place is paved with good intentions.

Having an expectation that success will somehow find you because you’re smart without you needing to do much to make it happen, well that’s not a plan that you want to put much hope in. Charles Dickens’ book “Great Expectations” was a monster success in literature but it is a lousy strategy for success in business.

No one ever built a reputation based on what they were going to do.

It is worth re-stating: Action is power!

“Apply yourself. Get all the education you can, but then, by God, do something. Don’t just stand there, make it happen.”

*Lee Iacocca
Chairman Chrysler Corporation*

“Having the world’s best idea will do you no good unless you act on it. People who want milk shouldn’t sit on a stool in the middle of a field in hopes that a cow will back up to them.”

Curtis Grant, Writer/Author

**Action and
action alone
is
omnipotent.**

“Actions speak louder than words, but not nearly so often.”

Author Unknown

When you take action you gain a sense of involvement, a sense of engagement, a greater sense of hope and possibility. When you take action you are part of the solution.

When you do not take action you wallow, you feel sorry for yourself, you feel helpless, and hopeless. When you do not take action you are part of the problem.

Action rarely can cause you problems. Action imposed because of a plan can astonish you. Even if it’s the wrong action it doesn’t usually send you backwards, it just doesn’t move you forwards. You remain where you are but you generally don’t fall further back.

“I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”

*Helen Keller, Social Activist
inspiration for The Miracle Worker*

“What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing.”

Aristotle, Greek Philosopher

“Feel the fear and do it anyway.”

*Susan Jeffers, Author
“Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway”*

If you want to grow your business you have to take action. To get a new result do something!

Inertia is guaranteed to keep you stuck. Action is power! Read a book, send out a card, call a prospect, take an on-line training course, visit a customer, keep in touch with past customers, create an e-mail, talk to a fellow member of the Chamber of Commerce, make an appointment with a supplier, call another prospect, and another, and another, and another – do something!

“Our life is composed greatly from dreams, from the unconscious, and they must be brought into connection with action. They must be woven together.”

Anais Nin, Avante-Garde Novelist/Writer

Action is power. Now go do something! •

**Action is
power.
Now go do
something!**

6

FOCUS

What do you do?
How do you respond when people ask: “What do you do?”

How you answer the above question can be a key indicator of your level of focus or lack of focus.

We will look a little closer at that specific question later in this Chapter. Before we do, let us address two other components of focus.

The first is the danger of being distracted. We all know business owners who move like water spiders, flitting from one thing to the next without ever following through and completing what they start. These leaders take action, sure, but if it is unfocused action it brings unpredictable outcomes and adds stress, confusion and complexity to the life of the leader.

“No business ever grows great until the business owner is focused, dedicated and disciplined.”

*Ray Pons, Author
“Finding My Way –
And How You Can Find Yours”*

To grow your business it is critical that you finish what you start, remain focused on the task at hand, and complete what you begin. In other words do what you say you are going to do. Keep your promises. Focus and follow through. Do it and you will develop trust, build a professional reputation and establish solid leadership integrity. Fail to do it and your credibility will be lost, potentially forever.

Focus. Follow through. Finish what you start.

“The successful man or woman is the average man or woman, focused.” Author Unknown

A second component of focus is one that was

referenced in Chapter 5 where I recommended that you avoid “*majoring in minor things*”. Don’t get caught up in “*the thick of thin things*”. Many well-meaning hard working people will often work hard, often very hard, on low-value clutter activities and go from one minor item to another minor item, then another and another. They are putting in lots of hours, exerting plenty of effort to get done a whole host of things that collectively just don’t add up to much. Meanwhile, high-value items, high return tasks, those that can generate higher profits, are left neglected or even ignored.

The Mastery Group has a high-value focus, often referred to as the Pareto Principle. The title comes from groundbreaking research done in the early 1900’s by Vilfredo Pareto, an Italian economist, who discovered that 80% of the wealth was held by 20% of the people. He and others extrapolated his original research which has now become more commonly known as the 80/20 rule and is applicable and relevant over a vast array of varying items; you no doubt have

**Focus.
Follow-
through.
Finish what
you start.**

many examples.

Everyone knows the 80-20 rule. The Mastery Group lives it.

Focus your attention on the 20% of your activities that generate 80% of the results. Do not merely do things right, do the right things. Focus.

“How different our lives are when we really know what is deeply important to us, and keeping that picture in mind, we manage ourselves each day to be and to do what really matters most.”

*Dr Stephen Covey
Co-Founder and Chairman,
Franklin Covey Group*

I am now going to focus – pun intended – on helping you identify and clarify your absolute best possible client. This best prospective client is your 20 of the 80/20 rule, the 20% that has the potential to bring you 80% of your business.

Your best client is your competitor’s best prospect.

Your best prospect is also the best prospect of your fiercest or finest competitor.

Yikes!

You must create a significant and compelling competitive advantage that attracts the very finest customers to do business with you and only you. You must create an image, a perception in the mind of the pre-eminent buyer, your ideal client or customer, that is distinctly different from the other players in the market.

In other words, it is about creating a unique, powerful reason why choosing to do business with you would be a very smart decision whereas choosing to go somewhere else would be an egregious mistake.

Before your ideal client even asks it, you must be able to answer the question: *“Why should I do business with you?”*

So let me repeat the earlier question that opened this chapter. What do you say when people ask: *“What do you do?”*

How you respond to that question is a key determining factor of focus. How you and others in your business respond to the question, *“What do you do?”*, is a key essential that separates businesses that flourish and grow, from those that struggle and stagnate.

The Mastery Group have identified what represents an ideal, superlative client. They have looked closely at what constitutes a perfect customer, an “A” prospect, an ultimate purchaser of the products and services of their business. They then pursue that most exceptional customer with a laser like focus and are only rarely distracted by lesser opportunities.

Businesses that struggle are often trying to serve anyone who walks in the door, anyone with a pulse, anyone with a credit card – any business is better than no business.

Failure to focus is *“throw enough mud against the wall and some of it will stick”*. You end up trying to serve them all, and when you attempt to serve them all, you become *“busy being busy”*, rather than *“calmly being successful”*.

Focus.

“The great difference between those who succeed and those who fail does not consist in the amount of work done by each but in the amount of intelligent work. Many of those who fail most ignominiously do enough to achieve grand success but they labour haphazardly at whatever they are assigned, building up with one hand to tear down with the other.”

Og Mandino, Author, Speaker and Founder of Success Magazine

“The hyena chasing two gazelles at the same time will go to bed hungry.” African Proverb

“I don’t know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.”

Bill Cosby, Comedian

Educate the customer. Grow your business.

It is a killer mistake to not know what an ideal customer looks like.

If you cannot identify with pinpoint accuracy the very best potential client that you are looking to attract then you reduce your business to commodity status. You are seen as one of the herd, just one in the crowd with nothing special to set you and your business apart.

Let me ask you a question: when customers see your business product or service as a commodity, when the offerings of your business look the same as every other business, what is the key deciding factor they will use when deciding to buy? Price! The business of choice becomes the business with the lowest price.

Competing on price and price alone is a devastating way to try to grow a business. There is always someone, somewhere who can get it cheaper and get it to the consumer at a lower price.

In today’s global economy, a world of big box stores, outlet malls, on-line internet shopping and superstore conglomerates, competing on price is perilous, stressful, unreliable and unpredictable.

Strategically, growing a business demands that we distinguish our offering from the offering of others and differentiate our products and services in a meaningful and substantial manner. If you position yourself to compete as a value proposition, not a commodity, you are able to grow your revenues and boost the bottom line in a much more controlled manner – controlled by you and the expert professionalism that you project, rather than controlled by your pricing.

All of this value-driven differentiation begins by how you answer the question that opened this chapter: “What do you do?”

And yet it continues to astonish and amaze me, from working with hundreds of business owners, entrepreneurs, executives and managers over the last few years and training several thousand others over the last decade, how many business owners and companies do not know and cannot articulate their competitive advantage, their unique selling proposition, that clearly sets them apart from the multitude of competitors in the marketplace.

Let me be blunt. It is not the role of the client or the customer, to figure out what your company can do for them that no one else can! That is your job. It is the job of the business owner, the business leader.

Educate the customer. Grow your business.

Companies that do not fully understand their competitive advantage tend to say generalized platitudes. When asked about their business, the owners and staff say things like:

“We provide better customer service.”

“Our products are top-quality.”

“We are the best in the business.”

“We have friendly courteous staff.”

“We promise on time delivery.”

The problem with this wishy-washy approach is that it is exactly the same as what everybody else is saying about their business! We sound like, look like and seem like everybody else. And if we look like everybody else in the market the consumer buys based on price.

“What do you do?” I have an accounting business.

“What do you do?” I’m a financial planner.

“What do you do?” I’m a lawyer.

“What do you do?” I sell cars, (or computers, furniture, clothes, insurance).

Compare the above to the following:

“What do you do?” My name is Shirley Watson, I own Watson Accounting Services. We specialize in helping successful people with a family income of \$80,000 or more to take maximum advantage of every tax loophole and stay out of jail.

“What do you do?” I’m Patricia, the owner of Millionaires Made Easy. We create financial wealth and abundance for regular hard-working people for just pennies on the dollar, so they don’t lose lifestyle today and can retire in comfort tomorrow.

“What do you do?” My name is Peter Cooper, owner of Excellence Legal Services. We take care of all the legal details and complexities when opening or running a business, so that the business owner can concentrate on what they do best – making money.

“What do you do?” I’m Mary Johnson, owner of Cars R Us Dealership. With over 200 new car models being introduced in the last 3 years alone, we specialize in eliminating the confusion when looking for just the right vehicle. We’ve created a car buyer analysis that identifies in 15 minutes or less the best 3 models for any customer within any budget. And best of all we do it for free.

Your competitive advantage statement must be crisp, concise and compelling. It is often described as an elevator speech or 30 second sound bite, meaning that it can be delivered in minimum time to maximum impact.

“Experts say that small businesses lose at least twenty to forty minutes every day, for each staff member, because of junk e-mails that are a complete waste of time. We help businesses to eliminate junk mail while guaranteeing that all genuine e-mails never get blocked.”

The more that you can narrow your focus and articulate precisely and persuasively what you do, the better you can position your company as the expert in the market. You are much more likely to become the business of choice for that ideal customer and you can pursue and attract more business than you ever could get by attempting to out price the competition.

“My name is Marge, I own a company called Doctoring Made Easy. In today’s health care crisis doctors are pressured by governments, insurers and patients to reduce health care costs while overheads and expenses are going through the roof. We specialize in helping doctors spend more time with patients and reduce expenses, resulting in better quality care at a lower cost. It’s just what the doctor ordered.”

Narrow your focus. Don’t try to be all things to all people. Identify the ideal customer and then become the known expert and the business of choice in that focused field.

So let me ask you the question again, **“What do you do?”** •

**What do
you do?**

7

KAIZEN

Mac Davis, popular ‘pop’ singer of the 1970’s, ...good grief, Mac Davis? yup, that’s how old I am...had a hit way back when titled, “Oh Lord, it’s hard to be humble.” This is the chorus:

*“Oh Lord it’s hard to be humble
When you’re perfect in every way.
I can’t wait to look in the mirror
‘Cause I get better looking each day.
To know me is to love me
I must be a hell of a man.
Oh Lord it’s hard to be humble
But I’m doing the best that I can.”*

As you successfully achieve more, grow more, have more, and be more, remain humble.

As a business owner, a person who has ventured out onto the skinny branches of self-employment, or as a supervisor, manager or executive who has ventured into the world of management and leadership, it is critical that you possess plenty of confidence.

“With confidence you can reach truly amazing heights; without confidence even the simplest accomplishments are beyond your grasp.”

*Jim Loehr, Performance Psychologist and
Founder LGE Performance Systems*

A business owner, entrepreneur or business leader lacking confidence is never capable of growing a business in a predictable, sustained and consistent manner. So ya gotta have confidence and believe.

Ya gotta believe.

Believe in yourself.

Believe in your business, believe in your product, believe in your service. Believe in the competitive

advantage of your company, and believe in your staff, colleagues and co-workers.

More than anything, believe in yourself.

“You have to have faith and believe in yourself.”

*Gail Deavers
Five-time Olympic Athlete*

Believe.

Believe in your abilities and capabilities. Believe in your own personal power to weather any storm. Believe in your capacity to overcome any challenge and deal effectively with any problem.

Believe in your resourcefulness in finding your way to ever greater levels of success and greater levels of accomplishments no matter what obstacles you might encounter along the way.

Believe but remain humble. Believe in your greatness while remaining humble. Never believe so much that you consider yourself perfect.

Perfect inhibits growth. Perfect slows you down. Perfect people fail to follow kaizen. It’s a killer mistake.

‘Kaizen’ is a Japanese word that literally translates to ‘continuous improvement’.

“When you are through improving yourself, you are out of the game. You learn until your last breath.”

*Richard A. Nelson Bolles
Author, “What Color is Your Parachute”*

“Without continuous personal development, you are now all that you will ever become, and hell starts when the person you are meets the person you could have been.”

Eli Cohen, Israeli Intelligence Services

**Ya
gotta
believe!**

“Become addicted to constant and never-ending self-improvement.”

*Anthony J D’Angelo, Author
“Entrepreneur Educator”*

Kaizen is the brainchild of Dr. Edwards Deming, known as the father of the Japanese post-war industrial revival and regarded by many as the leading quality guru in the United States.

Invited by Japanese industrial leaders and engineers after World War II, Dr. Deming was asked how long it would take to shift the perception of the world away from the existing paradigm that Japan produced cheap, shoddy imitations to one of producing innovative, quality products. He suggested it could be done in as little as five years. Few of the business leaders in Japan believed him but were too ashamed to say so and too embarrassed to not follow his directions. As Dr. Deming told it, “They surprised me and did it in four years.”

The quality image of Japanese products continues to this day.

Deming’s philosophy is summarized in his “14 Points” and they are well worth reading, studying and implementing into any business today, large or small.

In this brief synopsis I will summarize my own understanding of Kaizen and link it to another learning concept, “Conscious Competence Model.” I encourage you to take both items deeper and further for yourself and ingrain them into your daily disciplines. Integrate these two items and they will undoubtedly help grow your business and better balance your life.

Kaizen, continuous improvement, has three key elements: Establish, Commit, Action.

Establish:

I first became involved in professional speaking and business coaching thinking that everyone wanted their lives, their businesses, and their results to improve. It has been discouraging to realize just how many people say they want to improve without truly meaning it.

You cannot get better and grow a business without initially establishing a fundamental desire to grow, expand and advance. Your very first step is to establish the concept of kaizen, continuous improvement.

Commit:

There is a huge difference between establish (desire) and commitment. How many people do you know who say they want to lose weight but keep eating junk food?

How many people say they want to quit smoking but keep on puffing? How many people claim they want to grow their business but they keep doing what they’ve always done hoping that somehow they will magically get a different outcome?

Make the commitment. Make it a 100%, no bull, complete commitment; whatever it takes, total and unrelenting commitment to make it happen.

That said...establish and commit are useless if not followed through with....

Action:

The importance of action was covered in Chapter Five and you might want to re-read and remind yourself of that segment. In that segment we eliminated the *knowledge is power* myth but this does not mean that

you can deliberately remain ignorant. To grow your business you must grow your knowledge.

The degree of your success in business and your success in life will undoubtedly be heavily influenced by your application of kaizen to expand your knowledge. There are four specific action items that demonstrate you have moved beyond the first two elements, Establish and Commit,

these are: the books you read, the CD’s you listen to, the seminars and educational training you attend, and the people that you hang around with on a regular basis.

How do you measure up?

Do you have an extensive library of heroic books, self-help books, leader biographies, and books that will expand and develop your mind?

When driving do you listen to pop music, rock radio or country music, “*I got tears in my ears from lying on my back, cryin’ in mah sleep over you ... baby*” or do you instead invest time to listen to inspirational CD’s, educational programs, and personal growth and development recordings?

Do you attend seminars and training that you yourself pay for, or do you only go if it’s free or someone else picks up the tab?

And finally, who do you hang around with on a regular basis? Don’t join an easy group, you won’t grow. The common saying has great validity: “*You cannot soar with the eagles if you spend all your time with turkeys*”. Go where the demands are high and spend time with people who are expanding, growing, and learning and will expect the same of you.

**KAIZEN:
Establish it.
Commit to it.
Take Action
on it.**

Are you fully, completely there in all areas of kaizen or did you come to certain key ‘Aha’ moments? Did you recognize some items where you might need to change? Remember from the introduction of this book, “In times of change YOU must change”. A critical change for you could very well involve elements of kaizen that will lead you to your greatness. Read great books; listen to great self-help or business-help CDs; attend great educational seminars and training; associate with great people, positive people, growing people. Go for greatness. Go for excellence.

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

*Aristotle
Greek Philosopher*

“Excellent firms don’t believe in excellence, only in constant improvement and constant change.”

*Tom Peters, Management Consultant
Author “In Search of Excellence”*

As a way of supporting you to actively engage in kaizen and change for the better, allow me to share with you the four primary stages of learning. Gordon Training International is popularly considered to be the originator of, “The Four Stages For Learning Any New Skill”, also called the “Conscious Competence Model.”

The theory suggests that there are four stages of learning, or, if you like, four types of people: Unconscious Incompetent, Conscious Incompetent, Unconscious Competent and Conscious Competent.

Unconscious Incompetent:

These people don’t know and don’t know that they don’t know. These are basically happy people! Because they don’t know and don’t know that they don’t know their ignorance goes unattended. **Pity these people.**

Conscious Incompetent:

These people don’t know and know that they don’t know. This awareness provides the stimulus to learn.

Teach these people.

Unconscious Competent:

These people know and don’t know that they know. They are indeed able to achieve levels of success, often significant success but it can be somewhat unpredictable and they often have more stress and tension in their approach to work. Because they do not know that they know they will often function in the manner referred to in the previous Chapter, “throw enough mud against the wall and some of it will stick.” They are undoubtedly working harder not smarter. They feel under pressure and have difficulty analyzing, planning, or predicting success. They ‘do it by default’ instead of ‘do it by design’.

Coach these people.

Conscious Competent:

These people know and know that they know. They are the real-deal, the genuine leaders. They continue to study, grow, and get better.

These are not learn-**ed** people, these are learn-**ing** people. These folks are strategic in their approach. They attain greater levels of predictability in their results and have more sustainable, consistent processes and procedures. They

forecast more accurately, adapt more easily and deal with change more comfortably. Conscious competent leaders innovate and are more receptive to ideas from others. They are flexible in their approach while grounded in unshakeable principles and core values.

Every day, in one way or another, they strive to improve, even if it should be by just a little bit. They are positive, charismatic men and women, great role models, fun people and terrific to be around.

Become one of these people!

Believe in yourself, be confident and practice kaizen.

“Don’t waste your time striving for perfection; instead, strive for excellence – doing your best.”

*Sir Laurence Olivier
Shakespearean and Hollywood Actor*

Kaizen! •

**Believe in yourself.
Be confident.
Practice Kaizen.**

Parting Thoughts

Growing a business can sometimes be overwhelming. Success is simple but not easy. Being a business owner or business leader is far from easy. There is no guarantee of success. FUDS – fears, uncertainties, doubts, suspicions – are common and occasionally make even the most determined person wonder whether it’s all worthwhile.

I suggest that it is.

To support the notion that being a leader in business today is truly worth the risk, the worries, setbacks and struggles, tensions and stress, and yes, even the failures and disappointments, I share with you the following: “*You Never Know*”.

It isn’t my creation. It is the product of that frequently quoted author – source unknown. I hope that you find it as encouraging as I do when your ‘oomph’ might be a little low.

You Never Know

*You never know when someone
Might catch a dream from you
Or something you say may open up
the windows of a mind that seeks the light
The way you live may not matter at all
But, you never know, it might
And just in case it could be
That another’s life through you
Might possibly change for the better
With a better or brighter view
It seems it might be worth a try
At pointing the way to the right
Of course it may not matter at all
But then again ... it might.*

Grow yourself.

Grow your business.

Grow your greatness.

You never know the impact that you just might have to make a lasting, meaningful difference in the world.

“In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love. Spread love everywhere you go, first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next-door neighbor. Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.”

Mother Teresa, Humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

“Success is not the place one arrives, but rather the spirit with which one undertakes and continues the journey.”

Alex Noble, Author

“As you go along your road in life, you will, if you aim high enough, also meet resistance. But no matter how tough the opposition may seem, have courage still and persevere.”

*Madeleine Albright
First Woman Secretary of State USA*

You never truly know the difference that you might be having on this world. In my book “Finding My Way – And How You Can Find Yours”, Chapter 20 is “Leave A Legacy” in which I describe the enduring memory that my dad left upon this world. He was a regular working guy who died too soon but lived enough to leave an enduring memory.

Never doubt your ability to leave a lasting impression, a permanent imprint.

My dad, Eric, always wanted to get into a business for himself and he never did. If he had it is my belief that he would have left an even bigger imprint, an even larger legacy.

If my dad were here today I would introduce him to these seven essential keys for small business success: Vision, Mindset, Responsibility, Plan, Action, Focus, Kaizen. I would then go with him and guide him as he put them into place.

If you are thinking of starting your own business make it happen; marshal your courage, make the leap and take the risk. Timidity today will often lead to regret tomorrow; regret not for things tried that failed, but for things desired and never attempted.

Do not be rash but do be bold. Start your business using these seven essential keys to mitigate the risk and maximize your chances for success.

If you are already in your own business grow it! Sustain it! Make it bigger, better, best!

Grow your business, balance your life and make a meaningful, lasting, positive difference. Find your greatness. Leave your legacy.

YOU CAN DO IT! •

RECOMMENDED READING

- ALBOM, Mitch, *For One More Day*. New York: Hyperion Books, 2006
- ALLEN, James, *As A Man Thinketh*. Filiquarian Publishing, LLC., 1902
- BOLLES, Richard A. Nelson, *What Colour Is Your Parachute 2008: A Practical Manual for Job-hunters and Career-Changers*. Canada: Ten Speed Press, 1970 (updated annually)
- BYRNE, Rhonda, *The Secret*. New York: Atria Books/Beyond Words, 2006.
- CARLSON, Richard, *Don't Sweat The Small Stuff...and it's all small stuff*. (Series). New York: Hyperion, 1997
- COVEY, Dr. Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Free Press, 1989.
- COVEY, Dr. Stephen R., *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*. New York: Free Press, 2004.
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- FULGHUM, Robert, *All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1989.
- FULGHUM, Robert, *Uh-Oh: Some Observations from Both Sides of the Refrigerator Door*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991
- GERBER, Michael E., *The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It*. New York: HarperCollins, 1988.
- GRAY, Bob, *So You Forgot The Rhubarb*. (Available September 2008)
- HILL, Napoleon, *Think and Grow Rich*. London England: Penguin Books, 1937.
- JEFFERS, Susan, *Feel The Fear and Do It Anyway*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1987.
- MANDINO, Og, *The Greatest Salesman in the World*. (And all of the "Greatest" series.) Hollywood Florida: Frederick Fell Publishers/Bantam Books, 1985
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- MURPHY, Daniel M., *Becoming a Strategic Business Owner*. Cincinnati Ohio: Daniel M. Murphy Publisher, 2004

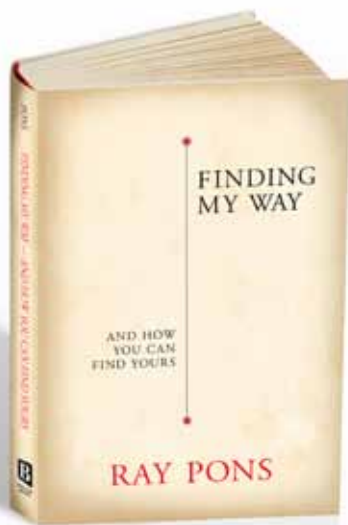
- PEALE, Dr. Norman Vincent, *The Power of Positive Thinking*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1956.
- PETERS, Thomas J., *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies*. New York: HarperCollins, 1980.
- PONS, Ray, *Finding My Way – And How You Can Find Yours*. Toronto Canada: BPS Books, 2008.**
- SCHWARTZ, David J., *The Magic of Thinking Big*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 1959
- SHARMA, Robin S., *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari: A Fable About Fulfilling Your Dreams & Reaching Your Destiny*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.
- SHARMA, Robin S., *The Greatness Guide: 101 Lessons for Making What's Good at Work and in Life Even Better*. New York: HarperCollins Business, 2006
- SHARMA, Robin S., *Greatness Guide Book 2: 101 More Insights to Get You to World Class*. New York: HarperCollins Business, 2007
- TRACY, Brian, *Eat That Frog: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time*. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2001
- The Bible.*

“FINDING MY WAY And How You Can Find Yours”

The true-life story of how one man moved from the trials of employment to the triumphs of self-employment.

“Finding My Way is a straight-to-the-heart, no-nonsense book with well-timed hits to the funny bone. Enjoyable and truly inspiring.”

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After a boyhood in northern England, Ray Pons winged his way to the Great White North (aka Canada) to pursue his dreams. Or were they fantasies?

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- Identify and get rid of baggage from the past
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- Trust your instincts
- Think, plan, act - strategically and positively
- Find balance, focus on what matters most to you
- Leave a legacy.

"I just completed your wonderfully written book on my flight home and really enjoyed it. Your business life-story was very real to those of us in business and very educational for me."

*Burt Goodwin, Owner
Canadian Tire Winnipeg*

"A terrific book written by a person who is obviously able to tell a story in a way that engages the reader."

Tom Stoyan, Canada's Sales Coach

"Ray's very candid journey of self-discovery gives the reader a valuable roadmap to find our way and the inspiration and tools to pursue it, to reach a richer and fuller life."

*Daniel M. Murphy,
President and Co-Founder, The Growth Coach®*

"This book will encourage you to keep going when business or life isn't going just the way you'd like."

Peri Shawn, Executive Performance Coach

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Alison Pons, Ray's Mum

Add this essential book to your motivational library!

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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... helping drive business forward faster.

If you are looking for an uplifting, no-nonsense and genuine speaker to kick off a meeting, convention or conference then Ray Pons might be what you want. Ray delivers inspiring messages of hope, delivered on the wings of laughter, to encourage organizations and people find their way to greatness; greatness in business and greatness in life.

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Ray's keynotes are humorous, thought-provoking presentations that will make you laugh, make you think and touch your heart. Authentic and believable, both onstage and off, Ray's straightforward style will engage those in attendance with inspiring, meaningful, moving stories about ordinary people achieving extraordinary things and encouraging us all to never give up on our pursuit of a better tomorrow; never settle for less than greatness and fulfillment of our greatness potential.

You were created to achieve excellence; there is greatness within you, waiting for you to find it!

Ray is a true professional whose original writing, imaginative communication and creative style of presenting will have a lasting impression long after the speech is delivered. His stories move us to overcome FUDS (fears, uncertainties, doubts, suspicions) that hold us back as he reminds us to trust our instincts and look within in order to unleash our untapped possibilities.

Trust in yourself, love others and pursue your passion.

*For more information about Ray and his services,
contact him via e-mail at ray@raypons.com
or visit*

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BUSINESS COACH

**Business owners, executives and
self-employed men and women don't need to be told
... but they usually don't mind being reminded.**

Business coaching - the right coach and the right client - can create a disciplined approach of focus and accountability to help successful people do what they know they should be doing to drive their businesses forward faster. It can take many different formats depending on the person being coached and the exact issues they are dealing with.

**The right business coach can help you dramatically build your
business. The wrong business coach can totally muck it up!**

To provide a no-risk way for potential clients to assess whether Ray might be the “right” coach he offers one complimentary Executive Coaching session, including a Professional Business Audit, before taking on any new coaching client. This complimentary coaching session can ensure a solid fit with the business owner, executive or entrepreneur and Ray’s no-bull style of coaching. E-mail Ray to request your appointment.

Only you can do it. You don't have to do it alone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RAY PONS

Ambassador of Excellence

Helping organizations and people find their greatness.

Ray Pons was born in Southport, a seaside town near Liverpool, England and now lives in Newmarket, Ontario, with his wife Marva Castillo (aka Queen Bee). They have a son Darien, a daughter Patricia who is married to Ruddy and grandson Isaac.

Ray is a lifelong fan of Liverpool FC, the “greatest football team of all time,” and he is an avid if not terribly talented golfer.

As a Keynote Speaker he talks on issues of Leadership, Business Growth, Life Balance and Buoyancy. As a Business Coach he specializes in helping Business Owners, Executives & Managers and Entrepreneurs drive their businesses forward faster.



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER
BUSINESS COACH**

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