

What a pleasure to read this wonderful mini-book. It is a clear, concise distillation of the top revolutionary business, leadership and marketing movements of our time. This book will certainly facilitate navigation of the challenges of running your own business. Beautifully done! — Connie Herman

Your Effortless Business

Frances Schagen

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To Triibes and the International Online Book Club because being part of a group is essential and this book wouldn't be here without you.

For my family: Don, Joe, Scott, Mark and Valerie – my why.

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INTRODUCTION

You picked up this book because you are, or plan to be, a business owner and you like the idea of having Your Effortless Business. I want you to, I believe in you and I believe this book can help you. I'm an avid, some would say, compulsive reader, so I can't fathom people who don't devour a book as soon as they get it. The studies tell us, though, that most people don't read a book all the way through. Here is the essence of the book for those who crave a summary, or who like to start with the big view, or who just want the facts.

Business doesn't have to be hard

To make Your Effortless Business you need 4 cornerstones:

- Predictability
- A conducive environment
- A robust team
- A decent profit

There are 4 Keys that must be in place:

- Sell what people want
- Create time and space to think
- Belong to a mastermind group
- Communicate

It all starts with you. Your business grows from and with you. That means in order for your business to grow, you need to grow.

The 4 Cornerstones are the essential pieces of your business you need to put in place. We will discuss them further here and show you how they apply to you and your business.

The 4 Keys are practices you need to do continually. These are things you can learn and, with practice, you will improve. We will

check in with these 4 Keys as we go along.

Those are the crucial points. Knowing them is only the start. Now to understand them and how to make them work in your business, read on.

What is an Effortless Business?

Business is really pretty simple: It's what your business does, and the story you tell. Everything else is about making that happen. Resources, human and otherwise, inside your business or out, are how you make those things happen. Your financial information tells you how you are doing and what you can do to make things better. You know, the old standbys of Production, Marketing, HR and Accounting.

An Effortless Business is one where those factors happen in a predictable way that allows you to put forward your best effort.

I like to use a basketball analogy.

Let's say you like basketball (it can be any sport or hobby). You get together with some friends once or twice a week. You get access to a good court, you make sure you have sneakers that feel good and make you happy. You have comfy shorts that don't fall down, a shirt that's not so big your arms get caught in the billows and not so small you are constantly adjusting it. Over time, your group evolves to one where you all play well together. It's a group that brings out the best in each other so you are continually improving and you all have fun together.

Then you play your heart out.

That's what I mean about an Effortless Business. Not a sitting-on-the-couch-guzzling-beer-and-hoovering-chips-watching-basketball kind of effortless. I mean the kind of effortless where friction is minimized, where you are free to give it your all, where you can continually get better, where the people around you help you and

bring out the best in you. It's the kind of effortless where you throw yourself onto the bench spent and happy at the end of each day.

Sure, stuff happens, but look around you. You'll see plenty of businesses that are not putting out fires all the time. Look at your own life and you'll see many areas that flow predictably. If they can flow and you can flow in other parts of your life, then you can in your business as well. Try to take an outside view over the next few days at the fires that come your way, you will see that many are predictable and therefore can be avoided.

As for your story, that's easy. That comes back to your *why*. The more compelling your story and the closer it comes to the reality of what you do every day, the farther and deeper it will go.

Go slow to go fast

This is the essence of Zen.

Read this section slowly, one thought at a time.

Reasons why slow is how you go

1. When you go slowly you do it right the first time
2. When you go slowly you do it right the first time—bears repeating
3. Enjoy now; get to the place you are working towards right now by enjoying now
4. Go deeper and get more out of what you are doing
5. Serendipity is always there—we miss her when we are rushing
6. Slow means mindfully, not painfully slow

The days where I slow down my pace are often the days I get the most done. I make mindful decisions about how to spend my time and I focus more deeply. The day ends with me feeling calm and content, and I can see the progress I made.

Principles of Your Effortless Business

- Stop doing things that don't need doing
- Spend your time doing the things you love and at which you are good

- Let others do what they love and at which they are good
- Business should be fun and an opportunity for continual growth
- Busyness ≠ business
- Help enough people get what they want (charging appropriately) and you win

This book will help you to apply all those ideas to your business and tell you stories about others who have applied them to great success.

Effortless Business

Most of us start our business because of a passion. We have a vision of how it will all work out. We will create a great offering, people will line up to buy and we will make them all ecstatic enough to become raving fans. We will be in the zone, doing our art, making people happy, working within a team of happy, engaged, inspired others who are all working from the same place, And we will all be doing what we love best.

Then real life intrudes. Customers need to be found, courted, and convinced. They don't always want what we offer, how we offer it, for the price we are offering. People on our team aren't always thrilled. What happened between the dream and the reality?

I started my bookkeeping business when I was pregnant with my second son. I needed to make some money, quickly and easily. It worked. For the next eight years, and with the addition of two more children, I worked as a self-employed bookkeeper.

It was perfect. I got to work from home, be with the kids and take care of the household. I even home-schooled the kids for a few years. Those last few sentences make it seem like it was smooth sailing all the way. It wasn't. It was a balance. Bookkeeping isn't something you can dip in and out of. You have to be able to shut everything else out and become immersed. Kids need attention—and when you have four kids, they need attention often.

Off to school went the kids. A friend moved away and gave me her clients and her staff person. What a great leg up. The new person

and I shared a computer in my home office. Clients came to our house, navigating the drying laundry, toys and talkative kids. Yes, the separation between home and business was tricky, but I think it was the time a client came over late on a Friday afternoon catching me lounging on the deck that pushed me to the decision to get an away-from-home office.

I got a beautiful office in an historic building in downtown Kentville—a 20-minute walk away (this was important to me). The ceilings are tall, and the windows are huge. Everyone who steps in stops and looks around. My office is the kind of place you just like to hang out in.

It is expensive—too expensive for a single bookkeeper or even a couple. If I were my own client, I would suggest I find a more modestly priced place. This environment inspires me, and it gives me a sense of great opportunities and that is very important to me.

I spent the next few years building my practice, hiring staff, buying equipment, creating process and procedures. All this to find out that commodity bookkeeping has too low a margin to be profitable enough. The recent recession slapped us in the face with that fact.

That's okay, because it was never really about the bookkeeping. My passion has been to help business owners not feel so overwhelmed, not work so hard for so little money, not feel so alone.

We spent some time looking deep at our core *why*. We articulated our competencies and strengths. We talked to our client business owners and scoured the Internet for answers to that great question: "*Why is business so freaking hard?*"

Part of this quest brought us to the question of MBAs and the roles of education and experience in business. Would a clear understanding of the theory of business make things work better? There are some very cool International MBA programs available that appeal to my need/love of learning. But, ultimately we recognized that while there are tools and processes that are helpful, one doesn't need years of schooling to access them.

In short, we went back to our why and did a pivot.

We went looking for what works. We found business owners working hard, and they weren't frustrated, they were happy and excited. It wasn't because they were just young and unjaded. They had a vision of business that was stripped down to the essentials. They had a clear vision of the most important thing in their business. That most important thing wasn't always the same, but they had one overriding thing. Everything in their business worked to that. Customer Service, Innovation, Process, Emotion. One Thing.

Business has become too complicated. That's so manufacturing-era thinking. Most businesses are service-based and, using today's tools, can be very lean. You don't need staff, a place, inventory, shotgun advertising or expensive equipment. You need an idea and a tribe of people who are happy to buy your idea.

In this new economy, business is more about ideas than products. It's about telling your compelling story to people who care. It's about coming together with others, building something (to share your ideas) and moving on. Business changes at the speed of pixels. If you stay still too long, you will be left behind. That's not a maybe. That changes everything in traditional business: operations, marketing, HR and accounting. It's all up in the air.

In this book we will explore this new leaner business and what it takes to craft Your Effortless Business. Get ready to craft your predictable, profitable, business with an environment that supports you and a happy team who all work together for you.

Section 1

IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU

The 4 cornerstones of Your Effortless Business create a framework that makes your business easy to run. But it all starts with you. Just as the Peter Principle states that in a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence, the Peter Principle of business states *"Every business will grow to the level of the owner's incompetence."*

No wonder we always feel like we are in over our heads!

We are. Know that and own it. Continually strive to improve yourself so you can improve your business.

As I was figuring the framework all out, I had to draw it (I can't think without drawing it out). The cornerstones are easy. But what does the central pillar—that is, you around which the whole thing is built—look like? In one of my former lives I was a Building Technologist. I designed and built buildings, so I understand structure. The central pillar of you comes first, but it must rest on the cornerstones. See the problem? If I think of the business owner as a monument, the cornerstones are built to take the pillar. The bigger the pillar, the bigger the cornerstones have to be to hold it and the stronger your company will be. That's why it all starts with you.

Your business starts with you, your strength of character and your ability to withstand the challenges you have taken on.

Your business will grow to the level of your incompetence, so the more you improve your competence, the bigger and better your business will be able to grow.

The bigger the risks you take, the bigger the reward will be. It's inevitable that growth will involve mistakes and failure. You need the maturity to take them in stride, and to grow and learn from them.

Our schools teach us that to win, you must make the fewest mistakes. To be an A student, which is the mark of success in school, students must do the work the way the curriculum sets it out. My daughter's teacher marked down her poem because Valerie made up some words. The words made sense and they suited the tone of the poem, but because they weren't real words, she couldn't use them. Schools teach conformity and risk avoidance, but that gives the same results as everyone gets.

To succeed in a big way in business, you need to do things in a different way than everyone else. When you are doing things differently, you are headed into uncharted territory and you may fail.

Failure is not only the way forward and therefore desirable, it is inevitable. If you aren't failing, you aren't trying enough new things to be able to find the breakthroughs that will bring big success.

Passion

If your why isn't making you sit up straighter and your eyes shine, then it's not going to sustain you as you build this business. It certainly isn't going to excite anyone else.

Now do you see why we start with your why? Everything else flows from that—who you work with, how, how you communicate with them, even the little things like the paper you use (or don't), where you are located, the media you use to tell your story. When you understand your why and you use that as a measuring stick to make your decisions, all these decisions become easy.

Business is simple, but it's not easy. Your passion sustains you through the hard parts.

Optimism

Entrepreneurs are optimists. If we weren't we would close up shop and get a job. Starting, running and owning a business is hard and every day brings new challenges. Many people say that if they knew

ahead of time what they were getting into, they would not have started.

Mel Fisher (<http://www.melfisher.com/default.html>) searched for 16 years before he and his team found the Spanish galleon *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, which sunk off the Florida Keys in 1622. Every day of those 16 years he insisted, "*Today is the day!*" Finally on 20 July, 1985 it *was* the day. During those 16 years he used modern technology and historical information to make a realistic and considered search. He also made his way through the legal system so that he would have legal rights to whatever he found.

Talk about a Dip! Next time you are not sure if you should carry on, take a page from Mel's book and ask yourself if you are doing everything you can to continue moving forward. If you are, then you, too can say, "*Today is the day,*" until it is.

Capacity

Capacity is the ability you have to absorb shocks. When you feel like you are at the end of your rope, you have used up your capacity. You build your capacity by nurturing yourself, guarding your health and building room in your business.

You'll find more business books addressing exercise, healthy eating and getting enough sleep. These simple life-enhancing practices are essential, not just for your long life and enjoyment, but for you to have capacity to be there for your business when your business needs you most. Look after yourself; it is your duty.

Change

Nothing happens unless you make a change. Change is scary. We are hardwired to notice and respond to change. It's what saved our lives when living on the savannah. Now change is happening at the speed of life and kicking up all kinds of brain chemical and hormonal reactions. We are expected to embrace it, while our body is screaming at us to run away or stand and fight

Handling change gets easier with practice. You develop some immunity to the stress of change and you develop coping skills to make it easier.

Growth

In order for your business to grow, you have to grow. You have to grow as a person. Growth occurs as you learn more about how people in general think, work and do, and how you in particular act, react and make choices.

Awareness

In order to grow as a person, you need to develop a sense of separate self-awareness. You need to be able to look at your self and your actions objectively. Only then, can you be able to name it, own it and/or change that self and those actions. For instance, if you don't like confrontation, it will manifest in many ways: you may give in, walk away, shout the other person down or manipulate situations so it doesn't happen. None of these is particularly helpful. It takes an awareness of yourself to see that the reason you walk away is that you are overwhelmed. Once you have named it, you can choose to walk away, fully aware that you are choosing to avoid this confrontation; you can learn some tools that will help you handle the emotion; you can learn some tools to help you lean into the confrontation because, this time it's worth it and you are willing to work through the pain to fix the situation.

Seeing your business as separate from you is a big step in making that transition from self-employment to building a business.

Your business is very much about you: your vision, your values and your culture, but as with a child, you need to set it free for it to grow into the place it will become. And as with a child, you need to trust that the work you put into setting the foundations of character will enable your business to grow and weather all coming challenges.

Health

As part of the safety presentation when you get on a plane, they tell you to put your own oxygen mask on first. You can't help others if you are gasping for breath or passing out. They give this demonstration every time. Partly for first-time fliers, but just as much for seasoned travelers, because it's against our nature to help ourselves first. That means we have to practice, practice, practice so that in the heat of the moment that thought will push its way to the fore.

That brings up two important points: look after yourself or you are no good to anyone, and practice before you need it so that when you do you will have it.

Look after yourself

There is a difference between being disease-free and being optimally healthy. We know what the minimum daily requirements are for various vitamins and minerals are, but that just tells us the minimum we need not to suffer ill effects. Eat food, but not too much, and mostly vegetables, as Michael Pollan (<http://michaelpollan.com/>) tells us. Get a moderate amount of exercise. Have fun. How hard is that?

If you are tired during the day, if you think twice before getting up to walk across the room, if your brain is in a fog, you are not optimally healthy. If your computer or car is sluggish and not running well, you get them fixed. Why not yourself, too?

Practice

In *The Karate Kid*, Mr. Miyagi has Daniel repeatedly do tasks. These not only teach him patience and some humility, they create muscle memory. I played volleyball at a competitive level (our team won the Provincial Championship). Even now, decades later, my muscles remember how to volley, dig and place the ball where I want it. Practice and repetition means that when you need it, it will be there.

Habits

Pick one habit at a time. Do it for 30 days. Decide if you want to keep doing it, then keep it or scrap it. Start another habit. Leo Babauta of the Zen Habits blog (<http://zenhabits.net/>) has written his story of losing weight, quitting smoking, building an online business and quitting his job, one habit at a time. He has six kids. What's your excuse?

If it has taken someone seven years to rack up a big debt, they can't expect to change and clear it up in a couple of months. Make the necessary changes one habit at a time, one month at a time. Recognize you aren't perfect and will stumble once in a while. Shake it off and keep going. Just keep going.

Time passes whether you do something or not. After all, when she was asked what would happen after she got her doctorate, the woman replied, *"I'll be 70 and a doctor. If I don't do it, I'll still be 70, only not a doctor."*

Business Philosophy

I've become a huge fan of writing about business philosophy, especially since I read my friend's book, *The 7 Virtues of the Philosopher Queen*. The author, Barb Steggman (<http://www.the7virtues.com>), then went on to start a wildly successful perfume business using flower crops from war-torn areas. She started in Afghanistan, buying the legal rose crops in order to give farmers an option other than poppy farming. She buys at fair market value from her supplier.

You may have seen how she wowed the dragon on *Dragon's Den* (Canada's *Shark Tank*) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7K9TugGLRg&feature=player_embedded). She is still working with Brett Wilson (<http://www.wbrettwilson.ca/>), the business investor with a philanthropic bent from the show. He continues to invest in the local Afghanistan suppliers to help them rebuild their communities and boost those economies. This is not charity, it is business development.

What a lovely, lucrative business. How can you bring some of that spirit and intention into your business?

If anyone tells you virtues don't belong in business, you can point to Barb's story as proof that they do.

Let's break this worldview down into my favorite virtues, because, well they are my favorite virtues and it's my book. You can't go wrong using the virtues to guide you; check them out here and learn more about the ones that speak to you. Hold them close and pull them out like a touchstone whenever you need them. They will help.

Truth

You can't know the truth unless you can see the way things really are. So this one is a double: awareness and truth. To see the truth of a situation you have to step back and look. You may have to do some investigation—ask others, research, check facts. Once you are sure you see the situation as it really is, you can uncover the truth.

Telling the truth means saying some difficult things sometimes. It means having that hard conversation. It means risking that people won't like you. The irony here is, of course that people admire truth and almost every time they will appreciate that you were willing and able to share the truth with them. Most people know the truth when they hear it.

Which brings us to that: most people know the truth when they hear it. Speak truthfully and be authentic. These days it's nearly impossible to present something you aren't. You will be found out. You cannot say one thing and act in another way.

Your brand is longer what you want it to be; it is what people say about you. The only influence you have on this is to be the way you want your brand to be. You can't extol the wonders of your customer service if you measure and reward speed over satisfaction, or you treat your employees badly (they are the ones extending your customer service and if they aren't happy, your customers aren't).

In his book *Six Pixels of Separation* and his blog of the same name (<http://www.twistimage.com/blog/>), Mitch Joel discusses how the world of social media means we are all connected and we are all seen as never before. Your brand is who you are because that's what people see of you. You can't hide who you are. That is both scary and freeing. If we can't hide, neither can anyone else. We are becoming more tolerant of other's foibles, because we live in glass houses so it doesn't make sense for us to throw stones.

Someday "*radical transparency*" will just be transparency. Tell the world your true reason for being in business, show the world your employee handbook, and share your triumphs, stumbles and lessons. It makes you a business others feel they can trust.

In truth, you are absolutely responsible for your business. The state your business is in is your doing. This is incredibly empowering once you get to own that concept and build on it. The power is in your hands to make your business outstanding.

Courage

I think this is the most important trait an entrepreneur must have. It is what separates an entrepreneur from a business owner. It's the ability to strike out boldly where no one has gone before. I don't mean to get all Trekkie on you, but considering Star Trek as a model is a great way to look at it. Think about it. They had a team, they built an environment that gave them everything they needed, they knew their mission and they knew what the payoff was going to be. In their case, knowledge acquisition.

Think of yourself as the James T. Kirk of your industry. When Scottie is telling you the transporter can't pull you out, you've tried to talk your way out of the situation, what would Kirk do? He'd fight. That's what you have to do. Fight for your life or the life of your business. That takes courage.

Every entrepreneur experiences a lack of confidence at one time or another. We can be confident and courageous most of the time, but

every once in a while.... This means that fear can sneak up on you. You may not recognize your reluctance to move forward as fear.

Lack of courage shows up in a number of ways. It usually involves not moving forward or "*hitting the wall*." The "*lizard brain*" is usually involved. Seth Godin (<http://sethgodin.typepad.com/>) and Steven Pressfield (<http://www.stevenpressfield.com/>) (he calls it the Resistance) both write about its power to control our actions. It's that ancient part of the brain that reacts to the emotional view of any situation. Our "*lizard brain*" wants us to be safe and to conform so we can remain as members of our tribe.

Given that we live in a pretty safe time, our "*lizard brain*" is only concerned with not rocking the boat and getting us kicked out. Ostracism was fatal way back when. Belonging is a very powerful need and not to be dismissed lightly. Understand that your reluctance to hit the send button on your carefully-worded email is because you are afraid you will be rejected and made to be alone. Rejection isn't fatal anymore, it just feels yucky. So hit send, make the ask. What have you got to lose? Really. What have you got to lose? More importantly, what have you got to gain?

Your success is directly proportional to the risk you are willing to take. No risk, no success. Little risk, little reward. Courage is not just desirable, then, it is an essential trait.

Julien Smith (<http://inoveryourhead.net/about-julien/>) talks about the *Flinch* (<http://www.amazon.com/The-Flinch-ebook/dp/B0062Q7S3S>). We experience flinches when a situation makes us draw back. Courageous people acknowledge the flinch and carry on anyway. We've made our society so safe right now people aren't used to taking risks. We are not in danger of being eaten, we have medicines, people don't lose limbs from infection.

There are kids who have never used a hammer, a saw or a knife, because, you know, it's not safe. In a TED talk, Gever Tulley speaks about the five dangerous things we should let kids do. If you haven't done these things, then what are you waiting for? Play with fire, own

a pocketknife, throw a spear, deconstruct appliances, drive a car (break the law—it's a way to think about the societal pact, and have a discussion about why and how laws are made). See

http://www.ted.com/talks/gever_tulley_on_5_dangerous_things_for_kids.html.

Every time you are courageous you are exercising that muscle and making yourself stronger for the next time.

Courage is necessary to carry yourself through the Dip (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/the_dip/). There will be Dips, many of them, some so low you can't imagine getting out of them. As long as you are making some progress, however minute, you should keep at it.

There is much pain when you are in a dip. Our instinct is to stop the pain. It takes tremendous courage to carry on through that uncertainty to the place of success. If there is anyone who has built a very successful enterprise of any sort without that pain, I would love to hear their story. For the rest of us.

"Courage is the art of being the only one who knows you're scared to death."

— Harold Wilson,

Baron of Rievaulx

Wisdom

There's knowledge which is the knowing of information, there's intelligence which is the ability to assimilate information and use it in new ways, and there is wisdom which is knowing how to take that knowledge, use it in new ways and apply it with accumulated experience into something that solves a problem.

Wisdom comes from experience; further, it comes from learning from experience.

Knowledge is somnolent and pedantic, intelligence is sharp and pointed, wisdom is inscrutable and benevolent. When we are

surrounded with people who have a lot of knowledge we can become frustrated, or bored with their lack of discourse that moves ideas ahead. When you have a lot of knowledge about your subject, recognize that others don't and share that knowledge. That's the quickest way to more and happier clients.

People who are intelligent can make others around them feel stupid. No one likes to feel stupid. Recognize that everyone has their thing; everyone has value to bring and everyone has their talents.

Wise people share their knowledge by letting us make our own mistakes, but we can feel safe in knowing they won't let us fall all the way.

Wisdom comes from gathering information, taking the time to think, applying that thought in many ways, making mistakes, and learning from them.

Beauty

Beauty in your environment:

Working in a beautiful space brings you a measure of comfort that underlies your day. In his book, *The Little BIG Things: 163 Ways to Pursue EXCELLENCE* (<http://www.tompeters.com/books/little-big-things/>), Tom Peters has a whole section on the importance of making your space beautiful. One of his 163 suggestions is to always have flowers in a vase in your office. The ecologist in me prefers flowering plants.

Rock bands that have a clause in their contract about the number of red M&Ms in the dressing room are testing the venue's attention to detail. When you have cars suspended above the stage, pyrotechnics and complicated ramps and staging, you want to know it's safe. If the production company can't get something as simple as red M&Ms right, how can the band trust the cranes, the local crews and the existing staging? A workspace that is carefully arranged shows you care.

Beauty in answers:

"When I am working on a problem, I never think about beauty, but when I have finished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it is wrong."

– Buckminster Fuller

(via Brainy Quote)

I love working with numbers because of the beauty and symmetry they have. One of my strongest values is ecology and ecological thinking demands the elegant solution. I get agitated if I feel the group I am working with is headed to an answer that is not beautiful, because I know if we just look harder, there has to be a better answer.

Section 2

4 ESSENTIAL CORNERSTONES

Your Effortless Business is predictable; your environment works for you; you work with a great team and you make a decent profit. We are going to explore these four cornerstones you need to build into your business in greater depth here.

PREDICTABLE

You know where you are and where you are going. You know how to do what you want to do. You know when to ask for help and from whom.

You know your why. Your business model is clear. You have policies and procedures in place that everyone follows. You have an effective financial system (mostly automated) giving you the feedback you need to keep you moving forward.

Most surprises are good ones.

ENVIRONMENT

Your business can run without your direct input for the day-to-day running. Everything is in place so you can give it your all.

Your information is stored appropriately and in a way that makes retrieval easy. All repetitive tasks are automated.

TEAM

The people around you support you and the work you do. Your team can articulate the common goal; they understand how they fit into the big picture, everyone shares similar values. Everyone brings their own unique value and everyone appreciates the value others bring. The team is compatible and able to work independently. You practice

effective delegation. You coach your team to communicate, collaborate and cooperate.

WELL PAID

You offer true value. You can do the work efficiently and cost-effectively. You bill appropriately and you make it easy for others to pay you.

You have a marketing system in place that attracts the right customers and makes what you offer clear. People feel they are getting a great deal when they work with you.

PREDICTABILITY

Predictability means most surprises are good ones.

Do you Know Your Why?

Everything in business starts with your why. So much, that I think every business book should start with that premise in the same way that every accounting book starts with, "*The purpose of a Corporation is to increase shareholder value.*" (I think every accounting book should not start that way, but that's another discussion.)

Every small business owner needs to start with their why. Why are you in business? What do you need from your business? Who do you help? What do you do to help them?

Simon Sinek says, "*People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.*"

(http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.html)

How do you communicate your why with staff? With customers? With partners? With everyone on your team?

Values and Virtues

Your values are the rules you use to make your decisions. You develop your values early and they are based on experiences. They come from your society, your family, your environment and your life. In the nature vs nurture debate, they are all nurture.

There are societal values we all have (based on our particular society) like family, honesty and generosity. We all have personal values that are important especially to us. If you find yourself resisting acting on a decision you made, it could be that it contravenes a value you hold. For instance, as a society, we hold family to be a high value, but as an individual we may hold freedom, adventure, or exploration to be a high value. These are not mutually exclusive, but if they are not recognized, you can make decisions that you feel are right for your family, but they will make you feel constrained. See how one family melded these values at AlmostFearless.com.

Virtues are the moral and ethical principles we hold. They develop the same way as values—through norms and through personal experience. They are the foundation of your character and therefore the character of your business. These don't tend to trip you up as much as values will. They show up in the way you form your guarantee: whether or not you have one, your customer service policy, your dealings with staff, suppliers and partners.

You will find that you hold to some more closely than others. None are wrong. Whenever you have a sticky decision to make, you will not go wrong by using the virtues as a touchstone.

Strengths

We are working from our strengths when we feel energized at the end of the day. It's when we are playing our hearts out, being in the flow, producing art, creating something that makes us proud. We all have our own strengths and Your Effortless Business has you working to yours while your team works to theirs so that everything gets done. It's how my business, Crystal Clear Bookkeeping was built

—we help business owners follow their passion and we do the parts they don't like. The best part? We love doing it.

More on strengths in the Team section.

Business Model

Your business model is how your business interacts with the world: who your customers are, what they need, how you deliver it, how much they are willing/able to pay, how you communicate with them and with potential customers, and what you need to do this. Here is my favorite resource for business models:

<http://www.businessmodelgeneration.com/canvas>.

Who are your favorite customers? Who makes you smile when you see their number on your phone? Who thanks you as they pay you? Who makes progress when they work with you or use your product? How can you reach more like them?

What is the best way to help them? What do they need? Why do they come to you? How can you measure their results?

How do they like to work with you? When do they want what you offer? Can they clearly articulate the value you offer to others?

What's their budget? What is the ROI you offer? Do you have a path of products or services they can follow? Which of your offerings is the most profitable for you?

Your team needs to understand your unique business model. They need to be aware of the answers to all these questions. They need to be able to tell others why they work with you.

Systems

Systems are the building blocks of business. String enough of them together and you have a smoothly functioning business. Every action within your business can be part of a system.

Systems are the way you do things. They are the procedures, the policies that give you a map and continuity to create a predictable result. Rather than stifle people, systems free people from worrying about the little things so they can focus on providing superior service.

Let's say you are ringing in a sale in a clothing shop. There is a procedure in place for entering the sale in the system, for accepting the payment. There is a procedure for wrapping the dress in paper with a pretty sticker and a way to put it in the handled bag and hand it to the customer with a full, direct smile.

There is a form for each customer with fields for data. You are requested to gather at least two pieces of data at each visit. At a glance you have access to the data she has given at previous visits and you can weave that into the conversation. You are also told to invite certain customers to a private fashion show reception. Within that encounter, there is ample opportunity for conversation, making that customer feel pampered, understood, and welcomed.

Each of these pieces is important for different reasons. The way the sale is entered and the payment accepted is the start of managing the flow of financial information. The careful wrapping increases the perceived value for the customer and anyone else who sees her by the time she unwraps it. The overwhelming reason people stop doing business is because they feel underappreciated—not price, quality, selection or anything else. A full smile makes someone feel appreciated. A smile will flood the smiler's brain with serotonin. Even if you are feeling less than overtly joyful, smiling at someone else and having them return your smile will make both of you feel happy.

Stores collect data about their customers so they can do a better job at getting the right products in. A private fashion show is a way to get even deeper information. It's a very effective selling tool, too.

Systems work because you only have to think about them once; then when you and your staff follow them, you get the same outcome every time. People like predictability—it makes them

comfortable. This works for staff and customers (and business owners).

If you find yourself putting out the same fires over and over, you have found an area ripe for a system. If you find you are making similar decisions regularly, it's time for a policy. For instance, if every time one of your staff wants to take a vacation, you have to sift through the schedule and decide if you can spare them at that time, perhaps you can map out ahead of time which weeks are available for staff to take.

Automate

Areas ripe for automation are information management, repetitive work and anything that is already in electronic form.

Information should be aggregated and put where it is needed in a way it can be found easily. Phone numbers in your phone, and the address for that appointment should be in your date book at the right date. If information is to be shared, it should be put in a place accessible to everyone.

From a survey of 2,600 executives by Esselte, maker of Pendaflex and Dymo:

Executives waste six weeks per year searching for lost documents.

Fast Company Magazine, 8/2004

When it's already done in one form or place, transfer it where you need it. Bank and credit card information is a prime example. Most banks have a data download feature. If someone is trying to hand you a piece of paper, ask for the electronic version if you really need that information and file it in the appropriate place.

When you do it over and over, think it through thoroughly, do it really well once and have it ready for the next time. Signature files come to mind, as well as email templates—any templates, and

checklists. Checklists are great for making sure you have what you need when you need it.

KEYS:

Communication

Predictability comes when everyone knows what is expected and can move confidently forward.

Tell people what you want. If they don't know, they can't help you. When you are excited about what you are doing, you talk about it. In the course of a week, you will talk with enough people that at least one of them will have a way to help you move forward. When you are really excited, you reach out to people who can help you. These are the principles that make *The Secret* work.

Sell what people want to buy

Part of the unpredictability of business is not knowing what people really want. Test, measure and study so that you are very clear that the offer you are making is well received by your customers.

Predictability breaks down when people are expecting one product or service and you deliver another.

In *The Lean Start Up* (<http://theleanstartup.com/>), Eric Ries suggests releasing beta products early so you can get feedback sooner rather than later. There are many stories about teams that spent way too much time developing products only to find that no one cared or they only liked one small bit and asked "*Can you make that little part work better for us, please?*"

Belong to a group

Everyone in a group has different experiences to share. They can tell you what you can expect in situations that are new to you.

Take time to think

Creating systems, policies and procedures only happens if you take the time to think about the way it is and the way it can be.

ENVIRONMENT

Everything starts in your mind. Every building, every invention, every business started in someone's mind. Your Effortless Business can only happen if you give yourself the time to think and let those thoughts grow and develop. Nurture your mind; it is the most intimate of your environments. Guard what you feed your mind. Beware the people around you who fill your mind with poison. Treat your mind with respect. Everything you are, everything your business is, comes from your mind.

Space

Where should you work?

The options for work space are, home, outbuilding, public space such as a coffee shop or library, shared office space, or renting an office.

Many small business owners wonder when they should make that transition from working at home to getting a real office. The best answer is, when you feel you will get more done. The second answer is when you find yourself renting space for short-term use. This can be because of eliminating distractions at home, the ability to meet more effectively with clients or when visibility is a factor (I got two big clients the first few months in my very visible office).

Physical Requirements – How much space do you need for you, your staff/contractors and your clients? Do you hold meetings and for how many?

Soul Requirements – What is important to you about the space you are in? For me it is light and graciousness. My too-big office is filled with light and it is graciously beautiful, being the former manager's office in a high-end hotel built around 1910 (for those interested, an interesting meld of Victorian with early Art Deco influences).

There are rules of thumb for the percentage of income that should be spent on rent (in the 5–8% range) If you're in a great location, you can recognize the marketing value of your space and go a little higher.

I mentioned earlier that my office is more expensive right now than I can really afford. I chose it because it makes me feel wonderful to go there every day. My clients like the space and are more comfortable here than when they were coming to my house. I have a sink and a little kitchen here so I can make tea-time. I like to host events and my office is big enough to hold 55 people—I know, we've done it.

Almost everyone stops just inside the door the first time and says, "Wow."

My office is a 20-minute walk from my home and that's the perfect walking distance for me to start and end my days. This was one of the most important considerations when I was looking. That walk is an important part of my mental and physical self-care.

Time

We get creative fatigue—we just plain get fatigued. People are not meant to sit and work for extended periods of time. The optimum seems to be somewhere between 60–90 minutes. Then it's time to get up, do something different, eat, drink, stretch.

The more you make your environment work for you, the less you have to do. Business people spend weeks of time every year looking for things. I asked a wise woman how she managed a household of 8 kids while going to school full time. Her answer: "*A place for everything and everything in its place.*" I just looked at her—could it really be that simple? She nodded knowingly. That was 11 years ago. I went home that night and declared a spot for the car keys. Since then we have "*lost*" the keys maybe 10 times, and they have always been found within minutes.

When you say that you don't have time for something, it's really that you don't consider it a priority. How you spend your time is a clear indication of your priorities. When you do what's in front of you, you are letting others or happenstance choose your priorities. Be conscious and deliberate in the way you use your time.

Productivity is not the issue, commitment is. Until you make the commitment to Do the Work, you will dither, you will while away time being busy, but not doing business. Once you make the commitment, all the productivity tips in the world won't matter—you will be so busy doing the work.

Interruptions

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

(http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow.html)

talks about the mental state of *Flow* where a person is immersed in their task. Their concentration is fully directed to that one activity. Interruptions bump us out of that state. Continually being bumped out of that state is very frustrating.

Our business is for our customers. Serving them is the work we do. If we are asking staff to do other tasks "*in between times*," we should be aware we are setting up a situation where the customer may be perceived as an interruption. The more concentration the "*in between times*" task takes, the deeper the frustration your staff will feel when customers come in. Design your environment so that you can have uninterrupted time for Flow work. Make it clear to your staff what is the work and what is the interruption.

Comfort

The more comfortable you are the more productive you will be. Temperature plays a big role. Consider lighting, the physical comfort in chairs and floors when standing for long periods. How and where you stand. Heights of tables, counters, keyboards etc. Uniforms, hats, hair, safety gear. Noise, visual clutter and unnecessary interruptions all increase stress.

Improving ergonomics of chairs and other office equipment improves productivity by an average of 17%.

Journal of Safety Research, 2008

Capacity

Your business needs capacity to absorb shocks. They can be great shocks like a big new contract, little shocks like a new partnership opportunity, mild shocks like a bounced check or big awful shocks like disaster, death, or criminal acts.

If your team is working to capacity at all times, you will not have room to jump on an opportunity. Many companies now are cutting staff and asking the remaining employees to fill in. It's possible, for a while, but morale goes down, illness and injury go up and ultimately the business suffers. Build your team with enough extra so they can be resilient when you need them.

If your cash flow is thin, you will not be able to handle a bounced check or be able to take advantage of a great sale, or even a great marketing opportunity. Growth is a major stress on cash flow, and as entrepreneurs we are naturally looking to maximize our resources. Due to that and our innate optimism, you won't find too much money lying around. Money is a tool.

Put in place some credit capacity when you don't need it and it will be there when you do. A quick word on credit: use it to increase your ability to make money, only. Not for buying stuff. You can use credit to cover an emergency (bounced check, late payment), but work to pay it back immediately.

Conduciveness

Is your workspace conducive to the work you do? Are you comfortable? Do you have all the tools you need? Is it clean, warm, non-distracting, bright, and attractive? Do you have food, restrooms nearby? Does your team respect quiet work time?

When asked what people do at work, work was not in the top 3. When asked where they work, they mentioned places other than work. Huh? If people don't work at work, why not? It turns out that we have too many interruptions. Every time our attention is taken away from what we are doing, it can take up to 15 minutes to get back to the original level of focus.

Mike Michalowicz suggests you should have designated library times where everyone unplugs and works quietly at their desks.

(<http://www.toiletpaperentrepreneur.com/human-resources/get-productive-with-library-hour-time>) That's something we've done at Crystal Clear Bookkeeping. People walk in sometimes to find a group of people working. They say things like, "*It's so quiet and peaceful here.*" We just smile.

Eliminate Clutter

The amount of information is exploding. We cannot marshal it all, so let's just recognize that and act accordingly. There is a wonderful expression that captures it for me: just-in-case information instead of just-in-time. Don't hoard information that you may use; rather, trust that when you need it, you will be able to find it again. A good filing system is essential here. Appropriate folders, a system for bookmarks or a program like Evernote will help.

Leo Babauta and *Zen Habits* has everything you need to develop habits to eliminate physical clutter. A clear desk goes a long way to reducing stress and leaving space for what's most important.

Trust

Trust that when you need the information you will be able to find it again—like you just did. If you need to, buy access to appropriate databases. Or get to know your local librarians. They have access to many databases and can find you amazing information. Or if it is very specialized knowledge, hire a researcher when you need one.

Fifteen percent of all paper in business is lost. Do not print off information and hope to store it in a way that you will be able to retrieve it. Use the power of technology to store it in a way that makes it easier to find again.

More than 40% of printouts are discarded within 24 hours.

Daniel Lyons, "The Paper Chasers," Newsweek 12/01/09

Statistics, Xerox Research

Store the thoughts rattling around your head in a more appropriate place. Notebooks, notepads on and off computers, agenda, project folders, in your wallet, with your keys in your coat pocket, or glove compartment. Where ever you are going to need that information. Again, trust. When you truly need to remember, that thought will be there.

Culture

The culture of your business is transferred to and propagated by your team, because it is part of your environment. Your culture is reflected by your surroundings. We aim for a culture of comfort and caring because our business owners are often feeling very uncomfortable talking about money in their business. We have comfy chairs arranged in an intimate setting, we have a beautiful hand-made teapot, and we have a stash of herbal teas.

Little Big Things

In his book of this name, Tom Peters lists 163 little things that make a big difference in business. Things like flowers, an attractive setting and beautiful artwork. Enter your workspace with the eyes of your customers and really see the details. You may not register that your doorsill is grimy, but it enters the subconscious and adds to the impression customers have of your business.

KEYS:

Communication

What does your environment communicate to you, to your staff and to your customers?

Sell what people want to buy

People don't want the same old, same old. They want art, they want something new and different. You can't do that if your environment doesn't support you.

Belong to a group

Your most important environment is in your mind. The right group will feed your mind with exactly what you need most: positive thoughts and proof about how great you are.

Take time to think

Your environment includes space to think. Make sure you have time and a place for quiet reflection and the ability to take a thought all the way.

TEAM

No one can do it alone. No one has.

Group

Belonging to a group is essential. Some of the things a group can do for you are:

- Accountability – it's so much easier to not do the work that having a group checking in with you is essential for you to keep making progress.
- Inspiration – it is inevitable that you will get bogged down. There will always be someone within the group who will be "*on a high*" to share inspiration.
- Mentoring – someone within the group will have experience with your latest issue and they will be able to guide you through as you will for others in your group.
- Best Practices – across industries, across clients/customers, across company cultures, across experiences.

- Discussion – information is not enough. Discussion is an efficient way of figuring out how to apply these ideas to your business.
- Connection – we work for and with humans, not ideas or concepts.
- Cheerleading - those that can appreciate and celebrate not only your successes, but applaud you on when challenges arise.
- Networking - we all know people. And it's fun to connect with others.

Where and how do you find a group? Think about the people you wish you had more time to sit and chat with. Think about people you know who should meet each other. Think about who can help each other. The very cool thing about this time in the world is that the technology is available for us to meet virtually. I belong to a mastermind group with people from all over the world. We meet on a Google+ Hangout with video.

Your group doesn't have to be called a mastermind group. I belong to an online bookclub that meets every Friday afternoon. We mostly read business books and use them as a base from which we can talk about everything and anything. One really cool aspect of this is that we have invited the authors to join us. Daniel Pink, Seth Godin, Mitch Joel and Jonathan Fields have all joined us to talk about their books. We live in a very interesting time.

Where else can you really talk about your business? Our partners love us and want to fix things for us. Our non-business-owning family and friends don't understand. You will experience a delicious release when you talk to others who understand.

Being part of a group who get you, whom you trust and who will give you honest feedback is essential to your growth as a person and a leader.

Talking about your business aids in developing that awareness of your business. The first step in making changes is to be aware that the way it is isn't the best it can be, that a new way could yield better results and that changes can be made. When others in your group ask you about your business, it makes you look at it with new eyes, seeing what works and what doesn't. It's like when someone

visits your home and that's when you see the dust balls in the corner.

Others can share their experiences of better ways it could be. Within the group you will see others making changes successfully, offering you the inspiration and the impetus to make those changes yourself.

It's much easier to break promises to ourselves than to others. A group helps us stick to what we say we will do. When the group meets and you say you haven't done the work, you will feel bad enough that you won't let that happen again.

We all have tough times. Knowing the members of your group are behind you helps you handle difficult situations. You can square your shoulders, lift your chin and face it with confidence.

Most of the time we know what we need to do in business; it's the courage to pull it off that may be in short supply. Having a group to cheer you on fills you with courage.

Sometimes we just don't know what words to use when having a difficult conversation. Talking it out with your group will allow you to test the words to find the most effective ones. You will find out how people react to the different words you use.

Everyone is good with some things; together, a group will have all the competencies. You will find that with each challenge brought to the group, you will all turn to the appropriate person for advice.

Synergies develop. When you work with a group long enough, you will find projects to do together. As you begin to understand each other's strengths and interests, you are able to weave the members into your new ideas. You will collaborate on marketing initiatives, educational opportunities, and product development.

Your group gets to know you and they can recognize when you are falling into old patterns or when you are hiding the truth from yourself. They will listen to you vent, sharing knowing glances with each other and tell you that, *"this is just like that time you"* Then you'll know what to do and you'll do it, because you did it before.

Team

Your team is everyone who touches your business. It includes all the standard people you would think of including staff, customers, vendors and advisors. It also includes your family, letter carrier, coffeeshop barista, auto mechanic, printer, banker, yoga instructor, IT, VA, the person you call to find out about the latest great thing, Mayor and Councilors, mentor, Chamber president, etc, etc, etc.

We brainstormed who is on our team and we filled a page. All of these kinds of people can make a difference in your business.

Every one of them should know what you do, why you do it and what your goals are.

Communication, collaboration and cooperation are the catchwords of business today. You will not succeed without them.

Community

Your business is not a separate entity lost in the vacuum of space—it is nestled firmly within community. There is the community of your industry; your geographical community, whether they are your customers or not; your customer community and the web of businesses that you interact with.

Drink that in. You are not alone. There are others who have a vested interest in your success. Therefore, you have a support system.

In some cultures, small businesses are explicitly part of their community. This means the people around you want you to succeed and they are rooting for you. It means you have a safety net, if you need it. It also creates a responsibility to do well. If you fail, it truly is your fault because you had the resources around you to help.

In our North American society, we still believe in the myth of the entrepreneur as a heroic figure taking on the world. Our community doesn't want to take on responsibility for local businesses. We don't think that way. We *can* do that for each other. Go. Now. We'll wait. Do something for one of your local business owners. In fact, next

small business week, let's all organize a "*Appreciate Your Local Small Businesses Day*."

Family

Your family loves you and wants only the best for you. For most people, the stresses of entrepreneurship are too severe. When your Mom asks you when you are going to get a real job, she isn't telling you you aren't good enough, she is trying to take away the pain she believes you are feeling.

Your family can be part of your capacity. They can be where you go to heal after a particularly tough time. They can feed you and keep you, if needed. They can cover for you when you are stretched too thin.

Your family may not be the best ones when you need to vent. They may need reassurance that even in the darkest times, you are having fun and wouldn't want it any other way. They need to know that while you feel stress, it's mostly the good kind. Share the good with your family as well as the bad.

Innovators

The Innovators are the ones who are on the bleeding edge. They are the ones who get stuff before anyone else, because they are looking for it. They know who is working on the latest great thing. You'll have different innovative friends in different fields.

They are essential if you want to start something. If you are ahead of the curve (and what entrepreneur isn't?), you need to cultivate your own group of Innovators who are eager for your next best thing and are excited to talk about it.

These people pay a price to be at the edge. Nurture and appreciate these people.

Support Service

These are the people in your neighborhood who support you. The barista who makes you look good when you are with a client. The owner of the stationery store who brings in five different folders for you to pick. Your banker who calls when there's a problem. Your mail deliverer who manages to get you the letter even when the address is wrong. These are the people who smooth the edges, who ward off problems and who deserve our respect and appreciation.

Personal Service

It's hard to give your all at your business if you are dealing with problems in your life.

If you are ill, you go to a doctor, if your car needs a tune-up, you take it to a mechanic, if you are having trouble coping, see a professional. That's just common sense. We all need it once in a while. You need to be working at your optimum, so if you need help, get it.

The smoother you make your life; the better you can do your job. Don't spend your weekends catching up on household chores if you don't enjoy that. Hire someone. That goes for everything in your life: if you don't enjoy it, hire a professional. Recognize that most business people love what they do and want to help you. Let them, and share with them how they can help you. Don't feel bad about getting someone else to clean your house, or car, or garden. Ask for what you want: when you do, you get it.

Tribe

There's been a lot of talk about building your tribe. These are the people who follow you, who like what you say/do/stand for, who want to hear more from you. They care about you and your success. A tribe has a common language, and a common framework of thinking.

Your tribe will let you know how you are doing. They'll let you know if you are headed down a wrong path or if you are right on target.

Your tribe will cheer you on when your lizard brain is screaming at you. Your tribe will help and support you in ways you can't even imagine – if you let them know what you need.

Your tribe deserves and, in fact demands, your honesty and authenticity. If you can't or won't give that, they will disappear or won't show up in the first place. You build a tribe by telling your story, by sharing who you are and by being generous.

Hives

Jonathan Fields (<http://www.jonathanfields.com/blog/>) talks about Hives in his book, *Uncertainty*. Hives are where groups of people get together to share ideas and work. A community workshop is a Hive, as is a Shared Office. A Hive is a place where sharing and collaboration are encouraged. From the book: *"A dynamic that fosters transparency, creative risk and a willingness to lean into uncertainty and even welcome judgment in the name of accelerated growth."*

There should be a delicious trade-off of the security of creating without being judged and the kind of feedback that pushes you to step out even farther. It helps if there are people involved with all levels of experience and ability. It helps if there are people from many different disciplines.

Strengths

Share work according to people's strengths. You can't expect a big-picture, ideas person to be good at filling in their expense reports. That work will suck the very life out of them.

Think about the strengths you need on your working teams as you invite people to join you. Resist the urge to fill the team with minims. You need a wide range of skills to create robust projects.

Recognize that with different skill sets often come different personalities. I worked with one team that was full of fast-thinking, innovative, ideas people. They deliberately brought in one process

person who loved the thrill of figuring out how things could be done. It drove everyone nuts. They resented it when she continually stopped the flow to ask how. She hated that they threw half-baked ideas at her and expected her to figure it all out. They didn't appreciate the strengths everyone brought to the table and the team crumbled.

Delegation

Business owners are not the best at delegating. Luckily, this is a skill that can, and should, be learned. Everything I learned about delegation I learned from my kids.

I put what I learned into practice in volunteer work. Learning how to motivate and direct a group of volunteers is great practice for people you need to work for you. With volunteers, the focus is on the vision for the project and on motivating people to carry it forward. These are two very important concepts that need to be a part of every team, paid or otherwise.

If your team understands your desired outcome, and they are motivated, there is no need for a whip or a carrot. Daniel Pink (<http://www.danpink.com/>) shows us this, backed by great research in his book *Drive*. He says first you have to take money off the table. Pay your team well. After that, give them the 1) autonomy; we desire to direct our own lives, 2) mastery; we desire to continually improve at something that matters, and 3) purpose; we desire to do things in service of something larger than ourselves.

Delegation 101:

1. Choose the right people
2. Choose the right task for them
3. Make the expected outcome clear
4. Give them the tools they need
5. Get out of the way
6. Check back early

7. Get out of the way, again

KEYS:

Communication

When Marten Mickos was CEO of MySQL, he was known for his Friday afternoon all-hands emails. He was wildly transparent about how the company was doing. It meant that every person on staff knew exactly why the company was doing what it was doing, what the company was doing, how the company was doing and how they fit into the whole. He helped his people understand how they were part of something bigger.

Sell what people want to buy

Ask. They will tell you. People want to see you succeed. I went with a friend to a store to buy beads for my daughter. The woman there engaged me in a conversation about what I wanted, she steered me to some very interesting beads and made me a great offer. As I was leaving with my purchase, my friend said, *"Wow, she really wanted to sell you something."* She said it as though that were a bad thing. I replied, *"That's great because I really wanted to buy something."* In this case, the saleswoman and I were working together as a team to reach that one outcome: a happy and satisfied customer.

Belong to a group

Covered here. Let me reiterate how incredibly important this is. It is key to succeeding. No one—no one—succeeds on their own.

Take time to think

People think and develop thoughts in very different ways. Conversation is one of those.

I chose to write out my thoughts as I developed this concept of Your Effortless Business. I was well into the process when Joel D Canfield

from one of my tribes put out the call for near-completed manuscripts to be the first in a series for a new publishing experiment. I sent this along and his team liked it enough to work with me to complete it, polish it and put it into your hands. It all started because I took the time and care to think it through by writing it out. It happened because I belong to a tribe of people I respect and trust.

A DECENT PROFIT

Sell what people want to buy

The best buggywhip maker will still not be wildly successful.

This may seem self-evident, but most people start businesses because of passion. They aren't thinking about sales or pricing or market positioning. They are thinking about making the best darn pies ever. You would think that a business making the best darn pies ever would be a shoe-in for most successful business, but maybe not. If they are the best mango pies in an area where people don't know and love mangos, or if you set up shop in a town where everyone takes pride in the pies they make, you won't be a success. Following your passion is only one part of the tri-part success formula. The other two are that you actually have to be really good at it—more than just you and your family believe that they are the best pies ever. The final piece is that people have to want to buy it.

The best way to find out what people want is to listen. What are they asking you? When they ask, "*How do I...*" you know you are on to something.

When people get it and they ask you more questions you'll know you have a winner. Then you aren't selling so much as providing a solution for a price.

Pricing

Coming up with the perfect price, like any other perfectionist idea, is a fallacy. Come up with the best you can, test relentlessly and adjust as required.

Your price will be based on

- your costs plus overhead and profit
- what your competitors are charging
- the value you offer
- how you want to be perceived

Price is one of the first ways others gauge the value of what you offer.

The higher the price, the more you can offer. Give yourself room to be amazing by making sure you have enough money in your system. Don't be the lowest price; offer the best value.

People who come to you for your low price will leave you for someone else's low price. Competing on price is a race to the bottom.

Money is not a good way to connect with people. Providing them with a solution they can use is.

Seth Godin says you cannot sell what you won't buy. You must believe in what you are offering or you will never be able to sell it while looking people in the eye. You must feel in your heart that what you are offering is valuable enough to charge well for it.

Usually, when a business is in trouble, it is because the price is too low. The owner feels that they need to be the low-price option until they establish themselves in the marketplace, then they will be able to raise their prices. What happens is that they attract people who are looking for the lowest-price option. These people resist any attempts to raise the price. The very people with whom they would like to work see them as the bargain-basement option and don't want to work with them.

Chris Anderson wrote the book *Free* that explains free as a business model. (You can get it free [here](#))

(http://www.longtail.com/the_long_tail/2009/07/free-for-free-first-ebook-and-audiobook-versions-released.html)). Freemium is having a free component that most people use and a paid version that offers much more. The incremental cost of the free aspect is next to zero; adding another 1000 users costs pennies, so it is a great way to have people try your service. Converting even a small percentage of users to paid is worthwhile.

Margin

Your margin is the difference between what you sell something for and what you pay to sell it. In retail, it is your markup; in service it is the difference between what you pay your people and what you bill for them. The actual amount has to be an aggregate because there is always slippage. For instance, I pay my staff for holidays, admin time and more. I calculate my margin on a monthly basis: total billing, minus payroll. Your gross profit goes towards overhead, loan payments, and taxes. Whatever is left is for you, the owner(s). If what is left isn't enough, the first place to look is your margin, which should lead you to your pricing. If your pricing is as high as you can go, then you need to add value either in your core offerings or by adding other products/services.

Marketing

One of the unexpected challenges of the Industrial Revolution was that as production increased, the market to sell these goods had to be developed. We are really only one or two generations from a time when people had one pair of shoes and several changes of clothes. Older homes don't have closet space, because people didn't need it; they hung their other clothes, the set of clothes they weren't wearing, on hooks.

Marketing and advertising was consciously begun to develop a market for the goods that could now be produced. The desire for more things had to be instilled in people. A whole industry was built

around the ability to make people want things they had never wanted before.

Pull vs. push

Push marketing is the old-style interruption marketing that pushed a message in front of people. It worked by interrupting people and making them listen to what you were selling. It worked until there were so many marketing messages that they all faded into the background.

Pull marketing is making your message so interesting and attractive that people come to you to hear it. Generosity is the word here. Be generous with your offerings. People begin to trust you and you can prove your expertise. You can think about the blogger model here. People give away their best content in their posts and back it with a way for interested people to pay for a deeper engagement.

I ran a free Lunch & Learn series for years. Small business owners could meet me before opening the conversation about us doing their bookkeeping.

Plan

Whether you call it a marketing funnel or a garden or a flipped funnel, it's important to have a path in place for guiding lookers to becoming customers.

I think that if we have something to offer the world, it is our duty to create a clear route for people to take so they can benefit from what we offer. It's all well and good to give away our content, but unless we create clearly defined follow-up steps we are abandoning the very people we can be helping. If you had an ice cream shop and offered samples of a new flavor, you would have a tub at the ready to sell them a cone with that flavor.

Marketing is telling your story. The good news these days is that the platforms are easily accessible to tell your story. They are so accessible, in fact, that it is difficult to hide your story. That's why

authenticity is the word. If you are trying to tell a story that isn't yours, you will fail. It doesn't matter how many spin doctors and advertising agencies you have working for you spreading your money around, your story will out. In this way, small business is on a level playing field with big business.

In order to tell your story, you have to know what it is. Ask yourself why you do what you do; who you help, what problem you solve and how. Ask your customers. Ask your friends. Ask your mastermind group.

When deciding your marketing strategy, concentrate on your story and who cares about it, before you think about what channels you use to tell it. How and where you tell your story flows once you are clear on what your story is.

KEYS:

Communication

Most customers leave because they feel unappreciated. Not because of service, price or offering. Communicate with your customers. Every time I send out a note to all my customers, I'll have one or two get in touch. It was just the reminder they needed.

Social media is a tactic. It's a tool. An important one these days. Social media is a way to connect and communicate with others. It's a way to put a human face on your business. It's a way to find out about what's going on (there are real and false rumors, so check before spreading). Spending time on social media is a way to explore new ideas with other people and to test the waters with your new products.

Sell what people want to buy

This bears repeating: everything else in Your Effortless Business breaks down if you don't have this right.

Belong to a group

Your mastermind group can help you bring an objective eye to your pricing, your offerings and your potential. These are all decisions you cannot make in a vacuum.

Take time to think

If you don't believe in your price and your value, you will never be able to sell it to anyone. You need to feel deeply that you are worthy to receive the price you are asking for the value you are offering. Some people get this and are wondering why I'm writing it here. There are enough people who are not comfortable with this that I am emphasizing it here. Mark Silver has done some wonderful work in this area of Heart-Centered Business (<http://www.heartofbusiness.com/>).

Section 3

HOW

Steps to Your Effortless Business

1. See that it does happen
2. Believe that it can for you, too
3. Awareness of yourself and your business
4. Different—you must spend your time differently than you do now
5. Eliminate what you don't need
6. Start with the easiest—but just start
7. Do, fail, do, win, celebrate and do some more

Business is a journey, not a destination. It's a process, not an outcome. The more you make your business effortless, the more you and your teams are able to accomplish. Your business will always need a guiding hand, whether that's another tweak to a system, or a pivot as the industry or economy changes.

Your objective should be to make your business so effortless that you and your team can take on bigger and better projects outside of your business, like spending time with your family, pursuing hobbies or building a new library in your town.

How

See That it Does Happen

What part of your life have you worked on and made effortless? We all have parts of our lives that we have taken the time to make work really well. Think back to some of the things you did to make those changes.

First of all you were motivated. You had an idea about how it could be better than it was. You implemented systems that you likely learned from others, then you tweaked them to work for you. You

made changes in your environment to make it easy. You enlisted the help of your team. You reaped the benefits of setting it up so it works. It might be at work or at home. It can be anything from meal planning and preparation to car management to health and wellness management. What do you have working well for you already?

Who else do you know who seems to have a part of their lives or business working effortlessly?

This technique is called Appreciative Inquiry (<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>). You look around for what's working somewhere else and you bring those concepts, ideas, tools or processes into what you want to change. You know it will work and you know the results you can get ahead of time, because you can see it working already.

Believe it Can Work For You, too

Trust that what's really important will get done, that no one else is judging you, that it's not about "*perfect*."

Trust yourself; the days I live to my beat are my best days. When I try to rush that beat, I fumble, I miss important bits, I am anxious.

Some things matter more than others: grabbing the wrong cereal is not the end of the world, but not engaging deeply enough in a question from a client in order to make sure I understand does matter.

When you are clear about your why, all the other answers become clear, too.

Do you need an MBA to run a successful business? Do you need one to know how to grow a business into a fine-tuned machine? Will an MBA (yourself or hired-in) get you there faster? Can you build a Ferrari business if you are a back-yard mechanic?

Be free to try new things. As you do, measure, so you know what's working and what isn't.

Aware of Yourself and Your Business

Once you start looking around at other businesses, you will see your business differently. You will begin to see how things work, don't work and how they can work better. You will see that you are not your business.

Michael Gerber (<http://www.e-myth.com/>) talks about the three hats that business owners wear: Technician, doing the work of the business; Manager, making sure it all gets done; Entrepreneur, holder of the vision for growth and expansion.

People who live in Technician mode tend to be self-employed. I was a self-employed bookkeeper for 10 years. They own a job—one with freedom and one that can pay more than a similar job.

People who are Managers love buying franchises and existing businesses because the systems are there and they can improve them and manage them to their heart's delight.

Entrepreneurs start things. They don't always run them well—they like to hire for that. And they recognize that slipping into Technician mode is not the best use of their time, so they hire for that too.

What's your mode of work? Can you wear all three hats at times?

If you want to build a business, you need all three roles fulfilled. You need a plan for that.

Do Things Differently

Focus on what's in front of you. Multitasking does not work; doing the job thoroughly and well the first time does.

Be in the now. Listen deeply to the conversation, engage in what you are doing and use your whole mind and body.

There's what we are doing—and then there is what's running in the background. We all have thoughts running in the background. Know when to clear them out so you can focus fully and know when to use them to think through ideas that will move you forward.

Leave space for inevitable distractions and delays; for serendipity; for sanity. Leave space in your schedule, in your workspace, in your mind. Leave space in your budget. This space gives you tremendous freedom. Decisions can come from a place of plenty rather than a place of lack.

Create time to think. We are so productivity-minded that sitting staring out the window feels like slacking.

It's not!

It can be meditative, a way to clear the mind and to still the monkey brain so we can focus on the one thing we need to do.

Sometimes you need to think a thought through to its end.

Staring out the window allows us to unplug from what we are doing in preparation for the next thing. Think of it as a palate cleanser. Staring out the window is just like sorbet.

While we are at it, some people swear by meditation. I haven't had great success with traditional meditation, but I can see the value in it.

Exercise is an opportunity to think. It can be very meditative, as well. There is a form of meditation called walking meditation. Yoga was designed as a way to prepare the body for meditation. Sometimes our best ideas come to us when we are doing other things like exercise or playing sports.

Science shows us that we work in 90-minute bursts, then we need 15 to 30 minutes to recharge. In the category of, "*a change is as good as a rest*," do something else—something that doesn't engage you at as deep a level as the original work. Perfect time for social networking, running errands, eating, watching a TED talk (<http://www.ted.com/>), or staring out the window and thinking.

Experiment! There's a lot about business that is known, but you are the one who knows your business best. There are models, templates and ready-made systems. There are textbooks, pundits and best-

selling business books telling you what to do. How else do you sift through this to find what's right for your business?

Eliminate

Making an effortless business doesn't mean you will be working yourself out of a job. It means you will be able to do your job better. Your job is making your business better. Your job is offering the best service, making it a great place for employees, and creating opportunities to do more and better work.

Most people actually use 60% or less of available work time. When more than 38,000 people in 200 countries were queried about individual productivity, the data showed that even though they were physically at work five days a week, they were only productively using three days.

Microsoft Survey, March 15, 2005

The first time I read Tim Ferriss's *4-hour Work Week* (<http://www.fourhourworkweek.com/blog/>), I decided to read it over a weekend while making quilts for two of my sons. I would read a bit, then sew a bit while I thought about what I had just read. It spilled a little into the next week, but I finished the book and the two quilts. The section on elimination really resonated with me. Over the next week I put some of his suggestions into place and a couple of times I found myself drumming my fingers, wondering what to do next.

We spend way too much time doing things that don't really need to be done at all, or should be done by someone else.

It didn't take too long before I was slipping into old habits again and I had to reread the book. My problem was that I didn't have a plan for the saved time. But you do

Start With the Easiest

The first five steps were just preparation. This is where the rubber meets the road, where you put your nose to the grindstone and where you ship or get off the pot. And every other cliché you have heard.

The most important and the hardest part, is just to start.

Start the path without a map. The more comfortable you are with moving forward in the face of uncertainty, the more forward you will move. If you are following the same old path, you will get the same old results.

Take a look around you. What's the one thing that bugs you most? Fix it. Fix it in a way that means it can't happen again. The way to do that is to look at the root cause and make changes there. For instance, every time a new employee or intern started at Crystal Clear Bookkeeping, I scrambled to welcome them, make sure I told them everything they needed, and wondered about how to instill a great culture. I took the time once to think about everything I needed to say and I created a "*New Hire Induction Checklist*". Now I print that, with the accompanying pages, and I go through it with the new people in about two hours. At the end of that time, they feel important, welcomed and expectations are pretty clear on both sides.

Your team will make your life. It is your team who will make your life and business smooth and easy. Receive their help. Make it easy for them to help you. Be clear about what you want and the best way they can help you. Let them. Receiving their help will be the hardest part for you. If you are like most entrepreneurs, you are used to doing it all. Learning how to accept help is the first and most important step in building a team.

Do, Fail, Do, Win, Celebrate, Do Some More

Celebrate your successes. If you aim high, you will feel like a failure when you don't reach that goal, but you will have reached

something! It will be more than most because they don't aim as high.

You are in business. Rah, rah! Go, you! You did it! You did it! You are miles ahead (if I may be so bold) of others who are just thinking about it—or who won't even entertain the idea. You put yourself out there—you jumped.

Let go. In order for anything new to enter, you have to let go of what's already there. New people can't come into your life if you are hanging around with the same people. You will never write your book if you don't give up TV, or games or whatever is distracting you.

Guy Kawasaki (<http://blog.guykawasaki.com/#axzz1lQc7ueCF>) says entrepreneurship is a process, not an event.

This is not a quick fix. Like a good diet, it is a lifestyle and thinking change. It's taken me years to come to this place and I hope this book will help you get there faster.

It's time to craft Your Effortless Business.

ABOUT

I've worked with 100s of business owners and read 100s of business (and other) books. I see what works and what doesn't. Your Effortless Business grew out of investigating, questioning and thinking about what makes business work and not work.

I believe that small business can save the world. We are the ones who support local sports, arts and culture; we make sure the power is on and the water flowing. We live in our communities and we care what happens here.

Helping you to make your business work effortlessly is my way to save the world.

For more information, support and resources go to www.YourEffortlessBusiness.com.

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