



"Small businesses are exhausted. This book gives them the plan to change that."

-Jack Canfield



A guide for building your business foundation to leave the hustle and grind for passion and FUN!

The FUNdamentals of Business Success

AARON MONTGOMERY



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Welcome to the FUNdamentals

I am a very fortunate person. I didn't grow up broke. I didn't have parents who created massive amounts of trauma. In fact, my parents are amazing, and I am so grateful for all of the knowledge I gained from them. I played it pretty safe, had many opportunities, and didn't have to hit rock bottom. There is no typical inspirational story of a person that got crushed by some significant event, and despite all of their challenges, they rose to success. Like everyone, I had my fair share of challenges, mistakes, and a fair share of lost opportunities. As I said, I played it pretty safe, so many times when the going got tough, I got going the other way. You're probably saying, "why the heck should I listen to this guy? I have massive challenges and I want to know how to achieve my idea of success." The discovery I made was playing it safe, being a chameleon, blending in, and staying under the radar is exactly why I was not on the road to achieving my idea of success. Even when you have every opportunity, you can still languish in negativity. The blaming, complaining, and constant commiserating will keep you from reaching your full potential. That is where I was for most of my career. While I had success here and there, I ended up building businesses for others and wasting most of my success away on drinking or other excesses that were just not necessary. But I was never fulfilled and never felt like I was accomplishing much. It was only when I realized that I could help deserving people. The micro-businesses, mom and pop shops, small businesses, solo entrepreneurs, network marketers, and gig economy workers make up the economy's backbone and work the hardest yet get the least support. When I realized I could help them, everything changed. I realized I had a purpose that required me to stop playing it safe and get outside my comfort zone. Then I had to answer the question - what is my unique value? How can I help those people that I felt deserved the support? What do I bring to the table? Basically, what is my superpower?

Because the reality is that everyone has a superpower, whether you choose to share it with the world or not. It is in EVERYONE. PERIOD! So after some soul searching and much support from one of the Mastermind Groups I am a part of, I came up with this. (Thanks, Ulrike!) My unique value is seeing the big picture to determine the significant challenges and find answers.





I have spent most of my life always on high alert. It is easier to play it safe when you know everything that is going on around you. I still play out many scenarios in my head, even in the most mundane situations. I'm not a military or a first responder, yet I spot all the exits and check out all the people going into a restaurant. I'm a good judge of character and make decisions quickly. I can see big concepts and feel the path through them but have never been able to articulate them. I always had a plan, even when it looked crazy and messy to other people. Until I found the success principles, I thought I was a worrywart with high blood pressure. Now I can help people grow a tree to their liking and allow the creation to be messy, play in the dirt, and end up with a robust bountiful tree. In this case, the tree happens to be a small business.

For the first 43 years of my life, I had many learning experiences but never put those experiences into action. After moving to St. Louis in 2010 to work in the industry I love, I chased and chased that fulfilled feeling. I worked for an industry distributor, and with my sales and marketing leadership, the management team at the time was able to turn that company into one of the big 4 in sublimation. I felt like I was finally helping businesses, including the one I worked for, and they were the most profitable the company had ever been in its history. At the same time, the hard work my colleagues and I implemented to get there was rubbing up against the owner's values. In 2016, I thought that helping some friends build a company where it seemed like we were there to support small businesses grow was my path to fulfillment. But it became clear that while I was blessed with plenty of input, a lack of personal risk, and plenty of autonomy, without a guiding mission as to what we were genuinely building, I just never felt like I was fulfilling my purpose. That is when it hit me. I had no idea what my purpose was, and in 2018, things were changing in my life.

Both my wife and I were in that similar place. She was stuck in her career as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. She loved what she got to do, but like me, she played it safe, didn't rock the boat, and the politics of working at a government agency was crushing her usual joyful and happy disposition. So now I had a partner not only in life but in discovering our true purpose. We started watching documentaries and other educational shows before running into one called "The Secret." The movie opened our eyes to all the people who seemed to have figured it out. One stood out to us, though, Jack Canfield. Mr. Canfield is the co-author of the New York Times best-selling book series called "Chicken Soup for the Soul."

As a birthday present in 2019, my wife got us VIP tickets to Jack Canfield's live seminar in Chicago called "One Day to Greatness." At this event, I realized I could finally find true success in giving up the blaming, complaining, excess commiserating, and excuse-making. I needed to put my efforts toward bringing value to others. I have discovered that bringing value to others equates to value for myself, and I try to live the saying, "A rising Tide Lifts ALL Boats." We were hooked, and my purpose started to become apparent at the event. The purpose coming into focus led me to sign up to become a certified success principles trainer. My wife, Kylene, also became a certified success principles trainer, and together with the support of an industry friend, Todd Downing, we started the company, Our Success Group.

A gentleman that I met through some networking in the St Louis area, Dale Furtwengler, once said to me, "you cannot outgive the universe." That stuck with me, and it was around the time I got into the success principles work. The success principles and this saying from Dale have led me to my mission or purpose in life - To provide ACTIONABLE resources that empower business owners to achieve their idea of success.

As of the writing of this book, Our Success Group has been supporting businesses in the garment and personalized product industry since January 2020. I have worked with over 200 small businesses and have 100 current members and 15 mastermind members. We have also created the industry standard for building a small business foundation with the 5 Keys Online Training Programs. I still have big goals ahead of us, but I had never experienced this feeling of success in my prior careers since going all in and pushing outside of my comfort zone. With this book as a guide and





the support of my wife, Kylene, I will help thousands more small businesses achieve their idea of success. The big goal is to have provided resources to over 10,000 small business owners through the OSG Squad Membership experience by **Tuesday, December 31st, 2025, at 1:13 PM CST**. Check out the membership at <https://oursuccessgroup.com/tryosg/>.

All of this is not to brag, but instead to show you that anyone can be influential in other people's lives, no matter their story. As a business person, that is what you are doing - influencing other people. Discovering and defining how you precisely do that is what this roadmap you are about to dive into will show you. Are you ready for the FUNdamentals?

FUNdamentals – why FUN?

Principles, guiding values, guardrails, philosophies, beliefs, and standards are excellent. But a fundamental includes the word - Fun. Think back on all of your most significant memories of when you felt successful. There was an element of fun in it. So I think we can all agree that gaining success, having won, and celebrating achievements are fun. But I believe the flow of that energy is the opposite way. When we have more fun when we love what we do, that leads to more success. In his book "The Virgin Way: Everything I Know About Leadership," Sir Richard Branson said, "Fun is one of the most important — and underrated — ingredients in any successful venture."

But fun can be hard to come by, especially in business. It's business, not pleasure, after all. Is it fun to put your nose to the grindstone? It's serious, it's our livelihood, but can it be fun? George Bernard Shaw said, "We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing."

Fun has been scientifically proven to create more success, and therefore I want to make sure that I center this book around FUN. Fun reduces stress¹ and that reduced stress leads to improved memory and concentration. Fun activities also open up our minds and "activate the brain's dopamine reward system, stimulating goal-oriented motivation and long-term memory." according to Edutopia, part of the George Lucas Educational Foundation.² And the other thing about fun, it inspires action. 99% of the challenges I have faced and 99% of the difficulties I have supported others in overcoming are created by a lack of effort. The challenges occurred because we didn't take enough action. Therefore there was not enough feedback to learn what we needed to do next. But when we are having fun, we are attracted to the fun, and the only way to have more fun is to take action. Reminding yourself that what you are doing is fun, what you are doing is worthwhile, and what you are doing will lead to your idea of success will make you happier, and you will do better work.

This book aims to create a mindset shift in micro-business owners, solopreneurs, network marketers, and gig workers so they can believe in their ability to have success. You will have fun doing, creating, and living when your business, enterprise, or side gig (business) is grown with sound FUNdamentals. When you take 100% responsibility and own your empowerment, then add in positivity/joy/fun and your life goals, you are fulfilling what you are meant to do. You live fully and put energy towards your business that brings you value and provides value to the world and universe. And when you don't have fun doing something, you end up compartmentalizing your life. Many people go back and get a JOB (Just Over Broke). Then you end up being unfulfilled by sitting in traffic or coming out of a zoom call while someone drones on about something you could care less about. Then, in your free time, you don't get fulfillment from watching countless hours of mind-numbing Netflix, all while scrolling social media and pretending to celebrate your #Blessedlife. You are not fulfilling what you are meant to do, therefore providing no value and not getting any value in return.

¹ Kuiper, N., & Martin, R. (1998). Laughter and stress in daily life: Relation to positive and negative affect. *Motivation and Emotion*, 22(2), 133-153.

² [Laughter and Learning: Humor Boosts Retention by Sarah Henderson](#) March 31, 2015





Then there is the flip side of the coin—the HUSTLE movement. You work yourself silly, forsaking everything else in your life to become a success. I'm not a fan of the whole Hustle thing. We have to find a balance in life to be truly successful, and while I know success is about working in the cycles needed to get where you want to go, hustle isn't fun to me. The dictionary definition is "forcing someone to move hurriedly or unceremoniously in a specified direction." Another is "a fraud or swindle." To me, hustle is something I do when I'm doing something I have to do but dislike. I want to have passion and that feeling of not working a day in my life.

Therefore I decided the middle ground between mind-numbing aimless wandering and excessive hustle was FUN. The FUNdamentals are what we all need to put in place as a foundation for our business so we have a fulfilling and successful life. These same FUNdamentals work in our personal lives, community, family and friends, and even our creative and spiritual life.

Mindset / Prerequisites

When becoming an entrepreneur, you get the ability to make as much money as you want, work the hours you want, and make the rules. That ability also comes with the responsibility to work the hours needed, do the required things outside your comfort zone, and be willing to take risks and accept failures as a learning experience, then get back up and do it again. But this time, you get back up with more knowledge and a different perspective due to what you learned from the failure. You are also responsible for rallying your network of resources (everything and everyone) to support you and see your vision. Then once you have the vision shared, processes implemented, reviewable metrics set and measured, and the machine that is your business working, you have earned the privileges of reaping the fruits of money, time, and influence.

Regarding mindset, I would like to give credit to my mentor, Jack Canfield. Through his book "The Success Principles" and the subsequent training programs I have been through, I have learned that success is about mindset. It is so simple that it is hard to wrap our brains around because it all seems counterintuitive. We think, "there is no way that success is this simple." But the reality is even though it is simple, it is not easy. It requires all of these 13 FUNdamentals with consistent and persistent action to get there. Then even when you get there, you might realize there is more. But once you flip the process from being about the destination and understand it is really about the process, you will find your idea of success. Mr. Canfield has taught me that the destination is only a reference point and that a successful life, and in the case of this book, the business has more to do about the journey. When the journey becomes second nature, when the path is more accessible and clear of obstacles, is when you find your money tree.

As you will discover in this book, your mindset plays a significant role in your business success. But to have this successful mindset, we must get over our limiting beliefs and all of the ways we've been programmed throughout our life. We must be willing to play full out, be open to things that some people might consider woo-woo, and be ready to look at our challenges and successes from a new perspective. Without that willingness, business success is not possible. That is prerequisite number one. Are you ready to play full out, be open to a new way of thinking, and let go of old limiting beliefs? If so, continue on. If not, you may want to put down this book and explore those limiting beliefs more before proceeding. Reach out to me at aaron@oursuccessgroup.com, and I'm happy to share resources on ways to explore those limiting beliefs and see if this is something you can get beyond.

Another concept that is a prerequisite to being a successful business owner is being true to yourself. You have all the responsibilities, so don't give your power away and try to be something for someone else and only be saddled with their burden. You should enjoy the freedom that comes along with being a business owner. This book is an example of





that. My translations of The Success Principles and other core foundations of a successful business have been compiled into these 13 core FUNdamentals. They spoke to me and made up the foundation. I was born on Friday the 13th, and unlike some, 13 is my "lucky" number. I initially thought that maybe I should make 12 or 15 principles to appease the masses who think 13 is an unlucky number. But my wife reminded me that I was not being true to myself. How can you be more true to yourself?

Finally, with that idea of being true to yourself, you must understand the difference between holding onto a belief or way of being and a core value. Business owners often get stuck moving to the next level because a belief keeps them from showing up as their best selves. For example, excessive cursing. Cursing is just for effect, and saying "I curse" is a value is false. Your value is being able to say what you want and speak your mind effectively. But is cursing required in all circumstances? No, so it is not a value. Same with the way we dress, act, and more. Those are not values. They may be effects or ways to express some values, but your values always serve you in all cases, and we need to lead with those, NOT outdated beliefs.

So before you begin digesting and implementing this book, do we have an agreement? You are willing to play full out. You are eager to be true to yourself and your core values but leave behind outdated beliefs. AGREED! Awesome, let's dive in!

Your Very Own Money Tree

As this process of developing a business was being built, I tried many ways to describe the process, like flywheels, fires, and more. But a fruit tree always showed up as the best way to visualize how a healthy, sustainable business grows. There are many ways to grow a business, but a healthy, sustainable business follows a precise process. And the best part about the process is that it mirrors the process for a healthy, sustainable life, community, and relationship, as we previously mentioned. Other over hustle methods, magic bullet formulas, and overnight success formulas are not sustainable. They are not healthy for you or the business long term. Like the tree metaphor we will be using throughout, if you jam a seed in the ground, dump a bunch of fertilizer on it and grind it to a pulp, it will not become a tree. You have to nurture your business into a beautiful and bountiful tree intentionally. But what gets many people is they only see the success part of the supposed overnight success and therefore only see the leaves and fruit of that business's success. The leaves are shiny objects, like; the 10x your growth funnel hack. The new equipment that is revolutionizing the industry. The get-rich-quick scheme that is only getting the person you are paying rich.

Focusing on the foundation doesn't mean that we don't have to work on the leaves or the strategies. It could be Facebook Ads, live printing events, or email drip campaigns, but too many people only focus on the strategies. The foundation guides successful companies' strategies. You can not form a pile of leaves into a healthy tree. The leaves become easy to figure out once you have a solid structure for your tree. And the leaves are going to come and go. I am old enough to remember when I worked on our latest fax marketing campaign to drive new business. Recently I had to explain to my 11-year-old what a fax machine is, indicating that the leaves will come and go. And those leaves come and go faster and faster in today's super-connected and fast-paced world. The only constant in the leaves is the change, so focus your most valuable effort on the structure - roots, trunk, and branches.

The FUNdamentals of business success are all about the structure of your tree. To have a healthy and sustainable business, you must plant and nurture the business and care for and plan the foundation. Then you must start branching out by taking actions to encourage feedback. Then making slight, easy-to-accomplish improvements, your tree growth cycle will, before you know it, provide you with your money tree.





What are the 3 P's

Plant, plan and perform are the main sections you will read in this book as we move forward. When building our money tree, we must tackle each stage with a different perspective and determination. Each stage has FUNdamentals, which will be explained in detail in the following chapters. But each section is going to be unique. It will have a nice flow just like other 3 word combinations, like Ready, Aim, and Fire. Get Ready, Get Set and Go, where each focus will be different. Each area will have a different rhythm, and as you build your business, you will continuously go back through each cycle. You will need to check up and tend to the root system regularly. To check on the roots, you get clarity on why your business exists, have even more belief in yourself and your company by surviving risks and celebrating wins, and remind yourself to take 100% responsibility for your results. Then you will need to come back and work to make your trunk healthier. Reassess your goals, check in on the relationships, pinpoint your ideal customers' needs, track your numbers, improve the efficiencies of your workflow and redesign any policies and procedures that may or may not be serving you still. As you continue to care for your tree, you will look after the branches and the areas shooting out from your tree to be able to continue taking action. Evaluating and fear that comes up to determine if it is just a sign of something worth doing, monitoring whom you surround yourself with so you stay in the groove, attracting and managing the feedback, and just continuing to make constant, never-ending improvements to your routines.

With a fruit tree or, in the case of a business, a money tree, we are all looking for the fruit and see the shiny leaves. But we forget that the more we tend to the roots, trunk, and branches, the more abundant those leaves will be and the better yield we will receive for the fruit harvest. Businesses that fail tear the fruit off the tree and only focus on the leaves. The leaves are all the shiny objects we are attracted to daily. The new marketing strategy from the latest bro marketer on the scene, or the new miracle piece of technology that will solve all of our problems. The Facebook posts, the email subject line, and figuring out which social media platform you need to improve your dance skills (looking at you, TikTok). Those are the leaves, and if you only focus on that, you will never know what you need to do for your specific business. You won't have a foundation to make those decisions based on, and you will constantly try things, hoping that some of them will work for you, but ultimately wasting money and, more importantly, precious time. When you have a foundation, a solid root system, and a healthy tree trunk, then which shiny object to tackle becomes an easy decision. You do what your core tells you is correct. You can confidently listen to your gut or ask easier yes or no questions like "does this serve my ideal customers?" You also have a mindset and system for moving forward, crushing through anything holding you back because you went from pretender to contender. You have the framework to be in the small percentage of people who are successful as a small business.

Plant

The Plant section is about developing and improving the mindset required to own a successful business. Being a business owner comes with all sorts of perks that attract people to become an entrepreneur. Perks like setting your hours, making the decisions, and building wealth and status for yourself, not someone else. But those perks come with responsibilities, as you learned in the Mindset / Prerequisites section. While setting your hours, you will also discover you just gave yourself the right to work every hour of every day for no additional accolades.

When making your own decisions, you will discover that no one is there to hold you accountable for making any decisions. You can procrastinate as long as you would like, and it is only you that will ever know that you are still stuck and unable to launch. When building wealth and status for yourself, you will also learn that you could just as quickly be creating yourself a trip to bankruptcy court. And because of these responsibilities, we have to totally change our mindset and leave the J.O.B. (just over broke) mindset behind. You have to embrace this responsibility and be grateful





for the empowerment it represents. You must clarify why you are doing this to stay focused and overcome bad days, weeks, or months. And you have to believe in yourself. You have to reignite self-trust where the years of negative self-talk have eroded it away. Success is just outside your comfort zone; we need self-trust to push those boundaries and expand our comfort zone. The plant section is going to be the cycle of your business that is very introspective. Some might even call it woo-woo. But I'm calling it required, so get comfortable being uncomfortable.

Plan

The plan section is all about the first creation of our business. The first creation is what Dr. Stephen R. Covey describes in his book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* as the mental creation. He says, "All things are created twice. There's a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation." In this first creation, we get to play in the dirt. You get to create, be messy, and still have a structure that will allow this first creation to be your guide.

While thinking through your business, you have the luxury of dreaming big and not letting reality hold you back. So the planning cycle is the trunk or the foundation built on top. With a solid foundation/trunk, the leaves of your business are easy to figure out if you have spent quality time planning. This section is going to bring clarity to the vision of your business. With that vision, it is just a matter of filling in minor details along the way instead of trying to create on the fly all the time with little or no direction. Planning for when your business is at its peak ideal of success brings so much clarity that your trunk is nice and strong no matter what happens. It cannot be knocked over. In the plan phase, you implement core values so your brand message will be clear. You are also setting clear goals to know what your target is.

The plan also includes identifying the relationships with different stakeholders, including understanding your ideal customer. And then determining what your unique value is and the problem you solve for your ideal customers. The plan will also include having a process and structure for the numbers on our business. Costs, pricing, production timing, and more, and the workflow. That flow will also allow you to create in your mind first the policies and procedures that will benefit your ideal customers, and that flow then grows up to enable the branches to start coming out of it—those actions needed for success.

Perform

The Perform section is where the rubber meets the road. Perform is the action stage. The more action you take, the more feedback you get and the further and faster you get to your idea of success. No matter how good of a job you did in the planning phase, a tree that is only a trunk will not grow any fruit. You have to have branches grow off it, and then leaves bear fruit. We must go away from the straight solid foundation of the trunk and jut out and take action. In the action, we get the feedback we need, the adjustments or new branches to make the top of our tree even more robust. The perform stage is about pushing outside of your comfort zone, taking actions that will get you closer to your goal, and then making adjustments. Then we must show up daily and grow the branches by surrounding ourselves with success. The perform stage has a much different rhythm than the prior two stages.

The Plant and Plan stages are much slower and more deliberate. But in perform, it is about how many actions you can take. It is like a pitstop crew. Go as fast as possible but get it right. Don't miss a lug nut. Take actions, follow the art of success (FUNDamental 10) and take the following action. The action is also the last part of the cycle before we go back down to check on the roots (Mindset), strengthen the trunk (foundation) and then come back to once again grow the branches (actions).

And the more we cycle through these phases, the easier it gets. You will open your eyes one day to discover a big strong, healthy tree providing you with what you and your community need. You will still need to tend to it, but nothing





like what is required at the beginning of growing your tree - business. So get yourself set to develop your own money tree, starting with the #1 mindset key in section one. Here we go!

Section #1 - The Plant Cycle

It's time to get your seed into the ground. If you are a new business, this should be the beginning. If you are an established business, you should come back here and nurture this part of your business. Putting all 3 phases together is crucial, but if you neglect the plant cycle, you will not have the strong roots needed to weather the storm and be able to grow strong and mighty.

FUNDamental #1 - Empower Yourself - It's your life, don't give away your power.

Empower yourself and your business to succeed. Welcome to the start of the FUNdamentals you need to employ to have a successful business. By mastering this first FUNdamental, you will have empowered yourself. The best part is that this FUNdamental is extremely simple. The challenge is overcoming years of programming from society, our inner voice, and our need as humans to find a scapegoat. This FUNdamental is based on the success principle by Jack Canfield and his book of the same name, 'The Success Principles.' Principle #1 - take 100% responsibility. The principle means that for everything in your business (and your life), you are 100% responsible for creating and determining the outcome. The economy didn't cause financial hardships. It wasn't your vendor's fault for the mix-up in the shipment that caused you to lose the customer. Your excuse for not completing the project because you didn't have enough time is invalid. That is scary, right? You are responsible for 100% of your business. That is a lot... The reality of this is not a negative but, in fact, a huge positive. You have empowered yourself to own your result by committing to this FUNdamental and not giving your power away.

I will give you a formula and a resource to best manage this newfound power in a moment. First, let's look at the alternative to blaming, complaining, excessive commiserating, and excuse-making. When you empower yourself and take 100% responsibility for your business, the economy plays no role in your success. You recognize the shift, get closer to your core customers, and figure out the best way to support them. You pivot, and by helping your customers, you have empowered yourself to weather the down economy. We saw this repeatedly during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Company after company took responsibility for their success and determined the right pivot for them. Many reported 2020 as their best year because they shifted to decorating masks, providing fundraisers, or supporting their customers through PPE and signage. Their best year to date didn't mean they had no hardships or challenges. Instead of sitting on their hands, they empowered themselves and were willing to do the hard things needed to move forward. How about the situation with the vendor's mistake? Instead of just complaining about the vendor on social media, what if you pushed the vendor to a win-win resolution? What if you honestly discussed the situation with your customer letting them know you care about their well-being and plan to take responsibility for the issue? Maybe that requires you to find a new vendor or alternative, and that alternative is a better end product for your customer.

Taking 100% responsibility doesn't mean letting the vendor off the hook; you should encourage them to take 100% responsibility for their error. Still, it is not the vendor's error and immediate reaction but your response and how you face the challenge that will determine the outcome for your business. Finally, when making excuses for not completing the project, a business owner who lives by the "empower yourself" FUNdamental takes a different tact. Instead of blaming circumstances, the family emergency, the request from others, or the influx of business your company "needs," you can choose to recognize you have the same 24 hours in a day as everyone else.





You have the same hours as Bill Gates, J.K. Rowling, Oprah Winfrey, Jack Canfield, or anyone else you might hold up as a success. Drop the excuses. Learn to say "no" more often.

“Learn to say ‘no’ to the good so you can say ‘yes’ to the best.” John C Maxwell

It is time to stop worrying about time management, stop overthinking things, and focus on YOUR priorities. When you empower yourself by taking 100% responsibility, you will find the need for excuses melting away and the suitable projects getting done at the right time. By taking 100% responsibility for the success of your business, you are now empowered never to fail. It is a pretty clear choice, but it is hard for most to take on that burden. Jack Canfield shares a formula to put this into action -> E+R=O

I have adapted his formula from his best-selling book, "The Success Principles," to mirror the FUNdamentals of Success.

E+A=S

Experience + YOUR Action = Success

This formula tells us we must be on the lookout for whatever experience or event that occurs that you have no direct control over. The poor economy, a vendor mess-up, or missing the project deadline are experiences that you have no control over. "Experiences" or things that happen to you or your business, and the outcome or potential success, we do not have direct control over. By understanding and using this formula, you can ultimately have control over your significant successes. You have to be willing to take 100% responsibility, have perseverance, and continue to take action. The way to do that is through the remainder of the formula, "+A." A= your actions, and that is what we have complete control over.

It is our thoughts, the visual image we play in our minds, and the actions we take based on the event. That is our area of power, and no one can force us to respond differently. You always have a choice. Having the choice doesn't mean there will not be challenges, things that feel unfair, or times when you feel helpless. But if you can remember the formula and then focus on the +. The plus is the key to empowering yourself as it is the moment immediately after the experience or event occurs. It is the time when consciously or unconsciously, you choose your response. Viktor E. Frankl said, "Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

The goal here is not to suppress feelings or emotions or instincts triggered by the experience but instead to accept those "monkey brain" reactions for what they are. They are a warning sign that we should pause and assess the situation more carefully. And to make the best decisions possible in an instant, we have to step back from the experience, move into our conscious brain, have our desired success in mind, and then choose an action. When we look at it this way, the formula E+A=S should not be looked at linearly, but instead, a formula we are solving for A.

E (experience) + $\frac{\quad}{\quad}$ = S (success)
A (action)

Now with this powerful formula and a proper viewpoint to look at it, we have most of the tools to create success in our business. Using the same examples, plug it into the formula when the experience is the economy going down and business slowing down. Have your ultimate success in mind, whether that is a financial goal, supporting your customers in a certain way, or providing for your family and community. With that successful outcome in mind, you can





solve for A. What action could you take in response to the economic downturn which might bring the desired success? Each company and situation will be different, and whatever choice you make at that moment will be the best possible action based on your knowledge, skill, and abilities. Then you take in the feedback from your effort and improve your knowledge, skill, and abilities for the following action.

At this point, you have built yourself a robust structure to create the business you deserve. You are taking 100% responsibility, focusing on the plus as a moment of pause, and utilizing the formula to solve for A (the action you take). The last resource you need to empower yourself is a way to feel more confident in your actions as a response to experiences. Our outcome will ultimately be the sum total of all our actions over time, and a few failed efforts do not drastically change your success. Just like a few positive steps don't catapult you to success. The goal is to get a few more right than we got wrong. There is another addition to the formula to create this total sum win for us. That addition is to wrap a heart around the plus in the formula. Remembering to lead with compassion and choosing to make choices about our actions with empathy will drastically change your success. We have been conditioned to react immediately to all the distractions, fast-paced world, and interruptions. That comes from our amygdala or animal brain. Your only goal with that immediate unconscious response is self-preservation and fight or flight. But 99.99% of the time, most of us are not in a life or death situation, yet we respond to the experience that way. The economy is poor, and sales are way off. The amygdala says, "This is scary; let's sit on our hands and hope it goes away."

As we know, it takes time for the economy to recover, and that action can lead to an outcome of going out of business. The vendor messed up, and the amygdala, the unconscious response, is to get mad, yell at their customer service representative and then complain on forums. The outcome would be a vendor who will never help you again, a burned bridge, and a reputation as a complainer. The project didn't get done, and the amygdala response is to be embarrassed and start blaming others. The outcome would be a hit to your business reputation as a company that doesn't do what they say they will do. You are also labeled as someone who is not to be trusted because you don't have control over your own time or situation.

But what happens when 99.99% of the time, we don't need our amygdala to rush us away from the mouth of a saber tooth tiger or imminent REAL danger? What if we used the + - the small moments right after the experience and led with our heart, cerebral cortex, or conscious brain? We need to pause, put ourselves in others' shoes, and take in the big picture. The blinders from the amygdala do us no good if we want our future to be a success, not just survival. You take the fear from a down economy and look around at the people most important to your business; your customers and employees. Then choose actions starting from a pause that leads you to empathy. You look for ways to support them, respond by taking action, and your outcome becomes your best year yet with a stronger relationship with the vendor. Make sure your business is more substantial by finding alternative sources or new policies and procedures you need for success.

You use the opportunity of being called out for missing the deadline to regroup. Realize you are doing the best you can and need to work on saying "no" more and not overestimating how quickly you can get things done. You also use the moment of pause, the +, to ask whoever is calling you out for missing the deadline to discuss how you can rectify the situation together. You can ask for help, renegotiate the terms and work together to find a win-win. Your outcome then becomes having better time management skills and less to do because you are better at saying "no" to unimportant projects. The best result is a stronger partnership with the person or people the project was due to a greater understanding of what you do and how much value you bring.

As small businesses, we must empower ourselves and maintain control over our success. Your business is part of your identity, so don't give away your control by blaming, complaining, making excuses, or spending too much time





commiserating with your fellow humans. Control your desired outcome by putting E+A=S to work for you. Maintain control by focusing on your actions, inactions, thoughts, and visual images.

By taking 100% responsibility, we empower our business to succeed.

Closing out the most critical FUNdamental, you should be able to see the pitfalls of blaming, complaining, excessive commiserating, and excuse-making. These 'defense' mechanisms have been programmed into us since we were kids to deal with challenging situations and protect us from negative feelings. It came from a good place, but it serves you no purpose in adult life. It only helps to give your power away, and as a small business owner, you must control the outcome you desire, or you will not achieve your idea of success. Use the pause between the experience and your actions to design your desired success. Here is the truth, every success or failure that has occurred in your business to date was a direct result of something you created, inspired, or allowed to happen. I'm asking you, as someone who will empower yourself to succeed, don't give away your control.

Once you take the first step to commit to giving up blaming, complaining, excuse-making, and excessive commiserating, you are now ready to empower yourself and your business to your idea of success. You currently have the awareness, and once you add new choices or actions, you will have growth AND more success. The most amazing thing that happened to me once I made this commitment was that I realized the warning signs, the gut instincts, and the support of others had always been there, and I didn't see it at the time. The default protection mechanism was clouding the signs, better responses, and vision of the overall picture.

You must start trusting your instincts, looking for input and feedback from others, and looking for the telltale sign for which actions will best suit you. By skipping the blaming, complaining, excessive commiserating, and excuse-making response, you will notice you are responding to experiences more quickly or, at times, even before they become something you are forced to deal with as a near catastrophe. You will sense that the challenges coming in the economy are starting to get closer to your ideal customers. You will see the signs of your vendor struggling and work with them to ensure your needs are covered. Maybe you can start securing alternative sources, "just in case." Perhaps you can start saying no to projects you know you will not get done on time and leave room for the projects that are more important to your business success.

To bring this FUNdamental home and ensure you are empowering yourself and your business, here are two resources: The first is to help you overcome a significant challenge and find actions that will help you get to the desired outcome. Complete the following worksheet. You can use this worksheet for things in your business and life, big or small. To download a PDF copy where you can print it whenever you need it, go to <https://osg.link/dtworksheet>. Also, if you need help working through this, we have a support service available at <https://oursuccessgroup.com/speaking-and-consulting-services/>.





Difficult Situation Worksheet

Answer the questions listed below in the order they appear. Just a rough draft, put distinct answers. The goal will be to change, update or react to anything.

1. What is a difficult or troubling situation in your life/business?
2. How are you creating it or allowing it to happen?
3. What are you pretending not to know?
4. What is the payoff for keeping it like it is?
5. What is the cost for not changing it?
6. What would you rather be experiencing?
7. What actions will you take and what requests will you make to get it?
8. By when will you take that action?
9. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest probability), will you follow through on this action?

My commitment to action is (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Sound)

@OurSuccessGroupPro

The second resource is a daily activity. As you are just starting, you might look back towards some outcomes you desire to change, and then as this becomes part of your daily routine, it should be just a quick review you do daily. Let's start with past results and review them:

- List an outcome that was not what you wanted.
- List the experience that got the ball rolling.
- List the action(s) you took in response to the experience.
- What could an alternative action be if I were to take 5% more responsibility for the success I desire?
- What were the thoughts and visual images I would change next time a similar situation arises?
- How can I take 1 action immediately to begin altering the outcome to be more what I desire?

Go through the above list of questions and create your answers. As you write down answers, don't be satisfied with them until you can claim deep down that you are taking at least 5% more responsibility.

Lastly, put these four questions into your daily routine:

1. What was the main "Experience" that happened today?
2. What actions did I take in response to the experience? (Describe)
3. Rate your action on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being taking 100% responsibility and 1 being blaming, complaining, excessive commiserating, and excuse-making.
4. If it was not a 10, what would have been a different action that would have made it a 10?

FUNDamental #2 - Clarify Your Reason - Live in your significance.

To be unstoppable, you have to clearly know why you are doing something. A clear purpose or vision shines a light on the path and success leaves clues. With clarity of purpose and living in your significance or greatness zone you will have the map showing you those clues. To clearly define our purpose we will look at your core values, passions, and talents, as the clues. We need to identify those because those are the times when you are happy, excited, and lose track of time because you love what you are doing so much. That is a success! So by having that clarity and feeling of success you can then create the rest of your business based on a plan where you are fulfilled and the path to success seems a lot less daunting. Purpose, mission, vision, dream, calling, or your "Why" is the inspiration you need to get you out of the valleys or over the hurdles that small business ownership throws at you.

You must find your purpose. And regardless of what you think about yourself at this moment, I guarantee you that you have a purpose. In fact, when you are aligned with that purpose is when you are most successful so it is imperative to





success that you clearly define why you are in business. And also define your core values and realize that success is actually having FUN, loving what you are doing and not feeling like you have worked a day in your life.

“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead” Nelson Mandela

I know some of you might be thinking this whole concept is a little too woo-woo for a business book. But without clarity of purpose, you have no guiding light, principles, and values to fall back on. Your purpose or reason gives you the ability to dig yourself out of the potential deep pits ahead you will have to overcome in your business life. If you think this is too out there for you, then I would suggest you are not quite ready to be a business owner and your better bet is to go get a J.O.B. (Just Over Broke).

When we have clarity of our reasons, that solves a lot of problems that seem tough to overcome. How do you decide what to do when faced with a decision we need to make in a hurry? Napoleon Hill, the author of Think and Grow Rich says, “Successful people make decisions quickly (as soon as all the facts are available) and firmly. Unsuccessful people make decisions slowly, and they change them often.” Without a clear reason for being in business, making decisions quickly feels almost impossible to get right or to have any level of confidence.

With a clear reason for being in business, though, you can make decisions quickly and confidently. Decisions like; Who are my ideal customers? What products and services should I be offering? What should my marketing message be? With a clear reason it gives you a quick and easy “yes or no” formula for making those decisions. Does it fit my reason for being in business? If the answer is yes, then do it. If the answer is no then back to the drawing board.

Who are my ideal customers? - Those that are attracted to my values and reason. They will have a similar purpose in life.

What products and services should I be offering? - They match my core values and highlight my reason for being in business.

What should my marketing message be? - Reiteration of your “why” and how that solved the problems that your ideal customers have.

But for many new business owners, they don't take the time to plant their roots by really understanding why your reason is, and how that matches up to you as a person. Your “why” in business is your same purpose you have as a person, but you have to dig for it. One of the first things I do with new OSG Squad members is to ask them why they are in business. And 9 times out of 10 the answer is something along the line of “to make money to support my family.” And my reply is always “Awesome, but why did you start this business”. Typically the confused look I get back is followed by “I just told you why.” We have to go deeper than just money and even family. Because our reasons have to be more impactful than any potential excuses we might have for not doing the work needed to be a successful business owner. When we get to the ‘perform’ section, if you didn't grow these roots strong enough, your tree is going to collapse as you will find excuses for not taking action and fall into the trap of chasing shiny objects. And running yourself out of time and money.

To go deeper, I use a process first introduced by Sakichi Toyoda, the founder of Toyota Industries, in the 1930s. It is called the 5 Whys technique and Toyota still uses it today. It is extremely simple and it just involves you repeating the question “why” for every answer you come up with a minimum of 5 times. The first 1 to 3 times it comes out pretty quickly, but once you get to the 4th and the 5th why you are having to dig pretty deep. So let's look at our example from above:





Root Question or Problem You Are Trying to Solve: Why did you start this business?

Answer: To make money to support my family.

#1 Why: Why do you need to start this business to make money to support your family?

Answer #1:

#2 Why: Why

Answer #2:

#3 Why: Why

Answer #3

#4 Why: Why

Answer #4

#5 Why: Why

Answer #5

As you can see, answer #5 is a long way away from the original answer to the question and gives you a much better starting point to begin clearing defining your reasons. You need to keep going though so you can articulate your reason and communicate it to others. Clarifying your reason is not a 'sit down and write for 30 minutes' process. For some it may come easier than others but this could take some soul searching, polling others and overcoming limiting beliefs. You will know when you have it because you can clearly share it, you feel joy and happiness when thinking about it and when you are working towards it you lose all track of time. Don't be discouraged if your reason doesn't leap out at you. My goal is to give you a framework to get the roots growing and then you cultivate it as you go. As you practice sharing it you will learn from the feedback you get and each time get better and better at communicating your reason to other people. Then once you start doing that and it makes sense to them, you will start attracting the resources you need to thrive. Having a well-defined reason you can share with others gives a connection point or even a magnet to find your ideal customers and other resources that will be needed along the way.

Whether you thought about it or not when you started your business or as you are starting, deep down your reason is to solve a problem for your ideal customer. The basis of the process is to define your business in such a way that it inspires you and your customers. The things you end up doing in your business might seem like a long way away from "changing the world" but are not as far removed from our purpose as we think. We tend to look at purpose and passion as a big woo woo thing, and the daily things we do as small and insignificant, but they need to be closely aligned. When we make that gift mug that shows the Dad who received it their kids really do care about them and want to spend time with him, it changes his world. When we share with someone a toxin free beauty product when they didn't even know what they were putting on their skin, it changes their world. When we provide great service with a smile and empathy, regardless of how our day is going, it changes their world. And that change will affect someone else and the ripple effect can make what you might think is a small thing like selling a mug actually become a really big thing.

"WHY does your company exist? WHY do you get out of bed every morning? And WHY should anyone care? People don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it." Simon Sinek

To get to that deeper reason you need to get clarity as to why you are in business, what values drive you, and what things also drive us a little crazy. Your reason will be at the intersection of those things. You need to be able to easily articulate your reason. And I'll share some exercises you can do and the patterns in those exercises will lead to your purpose.





The first area to get clear on is; What are the values that are important to you and your business. Is quality work and getting things right a value for you, or are speed and service more important? It could be anything that you hold as a core value to you. Merriam-Webster's unabridged dictionary has some definitions of core and value that help us understand what we are trying to find:

Core:³ a basic, essential, or enduring part (as of an individual, a class, or an entity) AND the essential meaning.

Value:⁴ something (such as a principle or quality) intrinsically valuable or desirable

Combining them together you can see what it is and to me it equates to an essential quality that is valuable to you or your business (individual, or an entity). These are what you and your company stand for and they direct you to your reason because your reason or purpose will never rub against your values negatively. And what makes these core values even more valuable to define, is these are not something that you hope you or your company does. These are things that drive you each day and do not change over time.

For me my journey to find my reason was a long one as I really thought I was just insignificant. I had no massive struggles that I overcame or extreme public successes to share. But I came to realize that after 18 months of actual searching (let alone the 40+ years of not searching) that my reason actually flowed out of my values. And the amazing part for me was that my thought of being insignificant was actually there showing me my reason and that it was the opposite. My number one core value is significance and making an impact. Rising the tide together with others through raising the bar and not letting those that want to keep us down, out work us.

So the first process to get you headed in the right direction is to take a look at the list of core value words. I have a list you can find at <https://osg.link/corevalue>. On the first tab, [Core Value Word Groups] print off this list and read through all of them first without making any judgments. After reading each one go back through the list again in any order you want and mark with a + to the left side of any words that make you perk up, bring you joy or you truly identify with those words. After getting + signs next to all those words, you want to narrow down the list to just 10 words that really stand out for you. Once you have those 10 words, transfer them to the next tab, [Top 10 / 5] in the top 10 column. With those 10 see if there are similar values you can combine or determine ones that might not be as strong for you to narrow the list down further to a top 5 list. Once you have the top 5 list, take the top 5 and rank them by value to you. Which one resonates the most? If you get stuck between two that seem close in value, do this exercise. In your head, look at each word and say "If I could have one, but never the other, which one would I choose?" The one you choose should come first and then you still get to keep the other.

With the top 5 core value words, now you have a great basis to develop your reason, purpose, 'why' or mission. As I said your reason will never rub abrasively against your core value, so now you know which direction to head.

If you really want to supercharge and speed up this process, I suggest taking the CliftonStrengths Assessment that you can find at <https://osg.link/cliftonstrengths>. As of the writing of this your top 5 strengths which are basically your core value cost \$19.99 and to get the full 34, the cost is \$49.99. I'd suggest getting the full 34 as there is a great deal of value in understanding your lesser strengths so you can be aware of the blind spots, not necessarily work on improving them.

The reason I suggest this process is I had a chance meeting at a coworking location with a gentleman named [Dan Vincent](#)⁵ and he is a CliftonStrengths Coach. This was at about the 16 month mark of me searching for my reason.

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/core>

⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/value>

⁵ <https://www.kaleocoaching.com/>





Before meeting Dan I was beginning to think I just was one of the rare few people who did have a purpose worth noting. After taking the assessment and getting the coaching from Dan I was able to turn the corner. I also realized at that time, everyone, and I mean EVERYONE, does have a reason. So this tool can be very valuable to jump start your core values search and you also get a great deal of clarity on what those core values might mean for you and your reason.

For those of you that are curious, here are my 5 top strengths:

1. Significance - People exceptionally talented in the Significance theme want to make a big impact. They are independent and prioritize projects based on how much influence they will have on their organization or people around them.
2. Restorative - People exceptionally talented in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.
3. Competition - People exceptionally talented in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.
4. Achiever - People exceptionally talented in the Achiever theme work hard and possess a great deal of stamina. They take immense satisfaction in being busy and productive.
5. Focus - People exceptionally talented in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.

So as you see this gave me a great starting point. Another major idea I learned in this process was that language matters. Once I had these core values and an understanding of what they meant to me, I went to a thesaurus. And in that process I discovered that the values that really resonated with me all were in the same family of meaning, but different words leap out at me and made me feel a sense of purpose. You have to be able to share these values with others and really feel comfortable that you are those. So my core value words evolved to become:

1. Significance
2. Solution Oriented
3. Motivated
4. Productive
5. Efficient

“Values are like fingerprints. Nobody’s are the same, but you leave them all over everything you do.”
Elvis Presley

Again, these are not goals. These are your core values that guide you daily and you don’t get to choose the ones that sound best to you and try to make them values. An example: If one of your core values is hard work and you get lost in the doing. But all the doing is causing others around you to suggest that you not work so hard. With all that pressure you decide you are going to make recreation a core value. It just won’t work. You will not be happy. You are really making a goal to have more recreation. This is not to say that those two core values can not co-exist (work hard, play hard), but if you are only trying to make it a value it wont work. Maybe your hard working value pushes you to do more so you have more to give and you won't be able to stop giving. No core value is right or wrong and they have nothing to do with what others think, they are who you are at your core.

Now that you have the nouns, the things that you and your business are in the form of core values, it's time to add in the verb. These are the actions you are passionate about. Typically your passions or actions are born out of your values and or typically aligned, but these are the actions. Your passions are the things that you find yourself doing with





such passion that two things happen. A) You have a hard time even thinking about charging for it because it is so easy for you, and b) you lose track of time when you are engaged in this activity.

You now have the nouns and the verbs in your core values and passions, the last root to describe are the adjectives of your reason. These adjectives can be found from two separate areas of reviewing your pasts. First, what are some memorable moments you have had in your past. It could be memories of your childhood all the way up to memorable moments you have had recently working on your business. The key to these moments are the times where you felt joy, satisfaction and/or success.

The second side of this are those memories you have of times where you were frustrated, upset and angry. The things that “rub you the wrong way. We can use our frustrations as a marker to help us better describe our reason. The things that frustrate us the most are the things that cause friction with our core values and therefore the opposite description of these memorable events are the adjectives you can use to describe your reason. Document some stories where situations drove you a little nuts. What are you opposed to and what situations raise your blood pressure a little when you think about it. This is not a person or a thing, but instead the action or a trait that you find annoying. Again, the opposite of the annoyance is a value or trait that is important to you.

We are honestly pretty terrible at remembering specific details of things. Our brain when we sleep spends a good deal of that time “erasing” the memories that don’t seem significant to us. What memories we do “keep” are inspired by our core values - either for or against.

Write out some stories from your life that you can remember in the most vivid details. Leave no details off. Anything you can remember should go onto a page. Any feeling or emotion that pops up as you think about the story should be documented. Think about it as if you are going to be sharing the story with your best friend and they don’t want you to leave out a single thing.

As business owners we want to think that we make decisions based on logic and all the feelings and emotions are left for other areas of our life, but the truth is, emotions rule everything, so this is why it is so crucial to get to the bottom of our reason. Once you have done that go back and look at these three areas.

You now not only have the nouns, verbs and adjectives to clarify your reason, but you have three distinct points that allow you to pinpoint your reason. The intersection of these three areas is what drives you, it is what connects you to others, and vice-versa. It is your purpose for doing what you do and having the business that you have. If what you are trying to do with your business is out of alignment with your reason, it will be difficult and unfulfilling.

At this stage you might just have a lot of feelings, emotions, values and other stuff on a page that might not make much sense yet. That is OK. The good news is your subconscious knows exactly what your reason is, it just can’t articulate it without your help. It shows you what it is as we have talked about when you are happy, joyful and in the zone. That state of flow is your indicator you are working inside of your purpose. So with everything you have to this point you want to look for patterns. And just keep asking different questions until it becomes abundantly clear.

Einstein famously said, “If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask. For once I know the proper question, I can solve any problem in less than five minutes.” Think of other questions besides the ones listed above that resonate with you. Also ask for feedback from others that know you, get feedback from other stakeholders in





your business and if you are brave enough, even ask your customers or potential customers. What do they see in you?

To download the different questions put together in order as well as a tool to help convert it into your clear reason, go to [{Create tool / link}. {Passion test/20 Questions/Find Your Why}](#)

The pondering section is the 'plant' cycle of developing your successful business. It is the asking question cycle, but we also have to take those answers we find and make them something useful for you and your business. As I said, your subconscious mind knows exactly your reason, but it is your job to articulate it and make sure others around you know about it. It has to attract and inspire others to buy products from you, join your company, or support you somehow. And many times, we make this difficult on ourselves because we spend all of our time thinking about the 'how' and 'what.' How will we get there? How will we make the item, secure the sale, create the website, etc? What do I need to do to get there? What is on my to-do list? What products should I sell and more?

Author Simon Sinek popularized the idea of starting with 'why.' And that is what we need to articulate before we can ask and answer the 'how' and 'what.' Mr. Sinek says, "People don't buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it." Not only does it help us better connect to our potential customers and make better decisions, but it also helps us persevere. But it has to be memorable, shareable, and light us up with joy and passion when we think about it. To get to that point, it is time to start summarizing what you have. It's like going shoe shopping. You must try some on and see how they feel before finding the perfect pair. In just a moment, I will share a formula that I learned from Mr. Simon Sinek in his second book, "Finding Your Why." Before I do, I want to warn you, don't be frustrated if it does leap right out at you. Don't make the mistake I made of printing up my reason all over the place only to find out it still wasn't complete. In fact, I still review my reason each year just to check in to make sure it still lights me up. And this was after working through nearly 3 typed pages of my "why" statement.

Here is the formula:

TO (the contribution you make) (to the lives of others), SO THAT (the impact your contribution will make).

To break it down, you will end up with 3 parts as you see in the formula:

The contribution you make - What is it that you do at the core? And like we discussed it is deeper than selling a product or making money or even supporting your family

To the lives of others - Who are those 'others'? Try to pinpoint the group or other narrow descriptors. These are the people that align with your values.

The impact your contribution will make - For those others you just described, what does the future look like for them once you have been able to support them through your business? Do they stand out in a crowd, can they support the community they need to support, and have they found their idea of success?

The clarity of reason must also be simple and clear, actionable, focused on how you'll contribute to others, and expressed in affirmative language that resonates with you. It must feel like a story. Once you have this statement, you can now easily make future decisions needed in your business, from large decisions to day-to-day choices. Will that decision bring value to your reason, and if so, do it.

Lastly, we need to make your reason stick. It's one thing to do the work, but the real value comes from making it an integral part of your day-to-day business and life. You must commit to living that reason daily, so you can get started on FUNdamental #3. When we say one thing and do another, we lose that self-trust, so make sure you have the clarity to recite your reason without hesitation. Read it, reflect on it, share it, and encourage feedback. I'd suggest taking your





latest draft and writing it on 5 sticky notes. Start with just some sticky notes on your computer monitor, in the bathroom mirror, in your purse or wallet, near the kitchen table, or wherever you spend most of your time. Somewhere you can see it and think about it. As it refines, maybe it changes from sticky notes to printed pages taped up until you feel comfortable and have some wall decals made, or print it on your promotional materials. Through the evolution, discuss it with your friends, and get their feedback. Come join Our Success Group and discuss it with like-minded members of our Volley community at <https://osg.link/volley>. Share it with me and get feedback. Put it out there because the more you do, the more good will come to you.

Your reason is something to be proud of, not ashamed of. Most people have told me they don't share because of fear. Fear it is not complete, it is not right, or it is not big enough. Fear your reasons are too big, and fear it seems too materialistic. None of those fears are real. The fears are just made up in your head; if you don't share your reasons, you will never be able to get where you are going.

If you are serious about your business, this is the minimum requirement for success, and this will show me the action takers. From there, it's up to you as to how much success you want. The more you share your reason, the more success you will have.

FUNDamental #3 - Reignite Self-Trust - Make it possible by first believing in yourself.

The final FUNDamental in the plant section is crucial to our ultimate success. This is the fertilizer for the seed and the part that will nourish and grow your business. The best part about it this FUNDamental is when we tie this back to FUNDamental #1 and realize we truly are empowered to create the business we want, your eyes are open to how and why this gives us all the nutrients we need.

Like many of our FUNDamentals, they might seem counterintuitive at first glance. The person chasing the quick fix and instant gratification could miss it. Before we discuss reigniting self-trust, we first have to realize, as Jack Canfield says in his book, the Success Principles, that we have to "release the brakes." His analogy is profound because if you have ever driven a car, you will know it will not move very well with the emergency brake engaged. I'm sure even if you briefly attempted to get your car to move with the emergency brake on, you very quickly realized the effort to push down the gas pedal harder was a bad idea because all you have to do is simply disengage the emergency brake. If you consciously just keep pushing down on the gas harder and harder, you burn the emergency brake out and damage the car. As soon as we realized the emergency brake is on, we simply released the brake, and the car could move with a slight push of the accelerator.

This is the way that many people try to go about creating their business. They have their physiological emergency brake on in the form of blaming, complaining, excessive commiserating, and not believing in their own abilities. The negative images and thoughts created through powerful experiences or unconscious beliefs keep those people in a comfort zone and mindset that business owners can not afford to hold onto. Even guilt keeps us stuck like our emergency brake is on.

But what I know is true based on the success I have had in my life is I can't forget to release the emergency brake. I was not successful when I tried to rely on sheer willpower and hustling and grinding. You have to let go of the limiting beliefs. This is challenging because the beliefs are like a deeply rooted weed inside and take some soul searching and uncomfortable work. You start changing your self-image by letting go of and replacing your limiting beliefs.

The first part of this process is identifying the root cause of your limiting belief. No one ever thinks that your business can be controlled by an event that happened when you were a kid, but that is the reality. We are emotionally driven





creatures, and our businesses are no different. There are many ways to find the root, for example, going back to strong childhood memories and just writing down your thoughts and feelings. Look for the patterns and see how you can turn those around or utilize them as strengths instead of holding onto them as weaknesses.

The second method, which released the brake for me personally, is to participate in a guided meditation that can help transport you back to those defining moments and recreate new beliefs. This method is so powerful to me that my wife and I created a monthly workshop leading others through this powerful exercise. We call it Unlocking Your Potential, and as an owner of this book, you can join us for free any month you choose. Go to oursuccessgroup.com/unlock and use the coupon code VIP at checkout to register for free.

Another power method I found myself gravitating towards the deeper I was able to get into my limiting belief is working with a counselor trained to guide you through releasing your limiting beliefs. My wife, Kylene, is one of those counselors, and her certification in a technique called regenerating images in memory has been massively powerful for many people. I have not worked with her directly as it does work as well with family, but after working with other counselors, I was able to go much deeper than I was ever able to go before. As uncomfortable as it has been, it has opened me up to create the business of my dreams. I would not be here writing this book, starting Our Success Group, or building other actionable resources without “releasing the brakes.”

I know all this sounds pretty out there for many and much too woo-woo to be in a business book. I was one of those people who thought that for many, many years. In hindsight, I wish I had been open to exploring more of this much earlier in my business life. It makes sense now, but I was not open to this growth, and I lost years and years of time because of it. Give it a chance and allow it to work for you like I finally allowed it to work for me.

Now that you are on the path to reignite self-trust, this is where our tree's real fertilization starts. As we put the method in this section to work, the growth you will find that correlates back to this will be surprising. It is not overnight growth, yet without this foundation, creating a successful longer-term business is difficult. Creating new and stronger self-trust will allow you to have a better relationship with the person you spend the most time in the world with - you. Think about some of the things you say to yourself when a mistake in your business happens, when you feel embarrassed at a networking event or when the business is not coming in. Those statements we make to ourselves would never be something we say to someone else. But this didn't happen to you overnight either. It is a combination of all of the things that happened over the course of your life. And each time we don't keep a commitment to ourselves because we are trying to please everyone else, our inner dialog becomes more negative. This relationship with yourself is crucial to your business success because it allows you to expand your comfort zone. Have you ever taken a risk worth taking when you were not feeling good about yourself? Likely no.

Another cause of lack of self-trust is all of our participation in the complaint department. We used to believe that information came into the brain, and then we acted on it. But scientists are continuing to prove that our brains are prediction machines. We combine current information with our past experiences to quickly make decisions, and those past experiences create the framework of our reality. So that view of ourselves is created by what we experience. When we live in the world of blaming, complaining, excuse-making, and, my least favorite, commiserating. When you live in the space, you get the results of those thoughts and emotions. You blame some negative experiences. You get more negative experiences. You complain about a certain situation, and you get more of that situation. You make an excuse for why you cannot do something and continue to be unable to do that. You commiserate with others in a negative mindset and stay in that space because misery loves company.





Much of our human nature is not built for us to thrive in our current modern-day times. It is made to keep us alive and conserve energy. Commiserating is a tool humans use to build community and show each other sympathy to remind us we are not alone. It is part of our amazing gifts as humans, but we must change our mindset to thrive in modern times. After expressing and feeling the feeling that comes from commiserating, you need to switch to the conscious part of your brain to create solutions.

I have had this disagreement with my friend who supported me in starting Our Success Group about commiserating and how it is counterintuitive. While it is natural for us to commiserate, the one-upmanship becomes a competition to see who wins the most significant challenge award. Especially on social media platforms and other places where the communication is asynchronous. That just pushes everyone involved down deeper into a feeling of insurmountable odds. Let me give you an example from a real-life post on a Facebook group where someone shared the challenge they faced with ordering from multiple warehouses to get the garments needed to fulfill one order. The comments on that post went like this:

- I raise your challenge and share that I can't find stock and don't have any time to deal with it in my day.
- I raise you the lack of stock, lack of time, and also lack of profit because prices are going up.
- I raise you the lack of stock, lack of time, lack of profit, and the extra time it takes for shipping.
- I raise you the lack of stock, lack of time, lack of profit, extra shipping time, and extra shipping cost.
- I raise you the lack of stock, lack of time, lack of profit, extra shipping time, extra shipping cost, and the pending holiday shipping time extension.
- I raise you the lack of stock, lack of time, lack of profit, extra shipping time, extra shipping cost, pending holiday shipping time extension, and the reduced stock quality.
- I raise you the lack of stock, lack of time, lack of profit, extra shipping time, extra shipping cost, pending holiday shipping time extension, reduced quality, and getting customers to believe the issues are real.

And it continues until we all just want to hide under a rock because the outlook is so grim. But is this working? Outside of the initial "at least I am not in this alone," what is the value of all of this commiserating without finding solutions? The good news is the scarcity mindset, the need to one-up each other is a programmed limiting belief from our past. It takes a solution mindset to overcome challenges and ensure you do not participate in or allow blaming, complaining, excuse-making and commiserating. We must be the leaders and snuff out commiserating immediately. As business leaders, we need to change the focus to how we have or can overcome the challenges and encourage people to one-up us in solutions. That mindset will bring new ideas. The reality is people are overcoming challenges daily, and while it might not be our favorite part of business ownership, it is a requirement. And when you change this mindset and add in a complete belief that what you want to do is possible, you can create anything you want if you are willing to work to achieve success.

Here is the other side of all this blaming, complaining, excuse-making, and commiserating that is so counterintuitive. We think the excuses or complaints are out of our control. But as we learned in FUNdamental #1, we have full control over it. We are not willing to make the necessary changes to relieve the complaint's source. At a personal level, we complain about the weather because we know there is better weather elsewhere, yet we are unwilling to move. Or complaining about how bad our bodies feel or being overweight. Yet we are unwilling to move our bodies, eat better, and care for ourselves. We know it is possible because others have it; when we were young, we did too. The same is true of our business complaints. Can't sell your product for the price you need in your area? Someone in your town has a pair of expensive shoes or a designer handbag. So they were willing to pay a premium price for that product. Why haven't you changed the perceived value of your product to meet the pricing you need to be successful? I know you just haven't done the hard work to figure that out because you have to ask people, do testing and focus on being the best at that niche.





When you remove those limiting beliefs and unlock your potential by getting above the commiserating, complaining, and excuses, you have a clear path to reigniting your self-trust. It will be much easier to believe in your future success, allowing you to visualize it. That visualization creates the roadmap you will follow to reach your idea of success. The plan you will put into action in the third section. Many of you have heard someone say (or maybe you say it yourself), "I'll believe it when I see it." The opposite is actually true. Strike that statement from your vocabulary and replace it with "I'll see it once I believe it!"

We know that reaching a goal requires effort and action. Your subconscious is constantly evaluating if your actions are worth the energy expenditure. When our brain doesn't believe we can do it, it will derail us because it doesn't feel it is worth the effort. If we doubt our success, we take half-hearted minimum actions, which leads to poor results. These poor results justify your disbelief and outcomes allowing the subconscious brain to become the internal critic. Your subconscious starts sharing thoughts like, "See, why waste your time? Let's just go Netflix and chill." This is why we need to train ourselves through understanding our reasons, affirmations, and an unwavering belief in ourselves to be an inner coach, not an inner critic. If you are willing to take action towards a specific goal, that indicates belief. The more action you take toward your goal, the more belief you build up until it becomes unwavering.

Look at every successful person you know. They have that "it" factor, simply a deep belief that they have what it takes to make it happen. The resources, knowledge, and abilities will show up for them at the right time. But they have those resources and abilities not because it has already happened. They believed it first and proved themselves right. They didn't let set-back push them two steps back but instead took giant leaps forward when the path was clear and used obstacles as stepping stones to new heights. And they also have a belief that the universe is there to support them. Even those successful people with that "me against the world" aura accept all of the outside help. The "world" they are against is the people trying to hold them back, the haters and the naysayers.

Most people have created a belief that the world is out to get them, but when you realize your brain is a prediction machine, you see how counterproductive conventional wisdom is. You realize it was "placed" in our path by those trying to keep us down, and we have to change to expect the world to support us in the ways we need it, exactly when we need it, not any sooner. We are so worried about the "how" we make the mistake of not letting the universe conspire FOR us. We think we know when we "need" the support, the big customer, or the situation to turn our way, yet every time you force the issue, you realize in hindsight you were not ready. Honestly, think back to some of the big successes in your life. If you can be honest, you will admit it didn't go exactly as you thought, and the timing was different than expected.

We are nearing the end of the 3rd FUNDamental. You have your layers to work through. Removing limiting beliefs. Unlocking your potential by moving above the complaining and other negative habits. Then be aware that you must fully believe it before seeing the results you are looking for. I want to walk you through some techniques where you can start rebuilding your self-trust, so you have that stock of fertilizer you need. I truly believe that everyone deserves small business success; anyone can have it if they are willing to do the work. That work includes holding up the proverbial mirror and asking ourselves the tricky questions that lead to, "Am I doing EVERYTHING I need to do?" Here is what I see separating the contenders from the pretenders.

Check your emails - Like it or not, email is an essential business tool. Many people are wearing the "10,000 unread email notifications" as a badge of honor and are missing tremendous opportunities. You need to learn how to utilize email. Start by figuring out what is going to your spam folder. Then figure out how to safelist what you need for your





business success and unsubscribe from everything else. You will find gold in your email only once you embrace it and use it how it is designed.

Use a calendar - I can't tell you how many times a day I hear, oh, yeah, I forgot about that. You are a business owner, a single mom, or perhaps you have a day job. You have many other responsibilities, so use a calendar to keep track of your life. Be religious about getting appointments, training, standing events, family time, work time, and other things in your calendar. Then review the whole schedule weekly and daily to ensure you are prepared for what's to come. For a business owner to be a contender, you need to be proficient in using a calendar, email, and spreadsheets.

Uphold your commitments - Business is about building trust. And not only the trust of your customers but the other people involved with your business, your support team, your mastermind group, your mentors, and your vendors. Do what you say you are going to do. Start with delivering orders on time. Then look at all the other commitments you are making. Look in the mirror and figure out what things are serving you and what are just done to be a people pleaser. Once you discern the two, learn to say no gracefully and keep your commitments.

Get active in the communities that matter - I see many people who will post a funny picture, share some random quiz, or even jump into the fray when it comes to politics or religion on social media. Awesome! You do you! But what makes you a pretender is that you don't share nearly enough about your business in those same spaces. And if sharing your business there doesn't seem appropriate, should you be spending that time in that space? Look at the communities online or otherwise that you are active in. Are those groups overly moderated about the latest copyright art someone stole, or honestly, more for chit-chat? Spend your valuable time having helpful conversations, not just consuming algorithm feeds. Get engaged in the discussions if it serves all parties involved.

Know your numbers - What does it cost you to open your doors? Don't know with a level of certainty? If not, stop what you are doing and go figure it out. Once you know that number, then what is your average order size? Then on average, what is your profit margin? When you know those numbers, you can reverse engineer what you need to do to reach your idea of success. I overheard someone complaining about her Etsy store and that she gets excellent reviews. Still, FedEx, UPS, and PostOffice are why her store is not more successful. Knowing her numbers, she could determine how many orders would have an issue with the shipping company. Then she could try to fix those shipping issues and add the needed profit to the pricing to cover those issues. Her excuses would instead become the reason she has the best reviews.

Charge What You are Worth - Once you know your numbers, it is almost laughable how easy it becomes to charge what you are worth. As graphics professionals, we are in a pretty unique space. We take something manufactured by others (a consumable) and add value to it. Even the low-price leaders have to add value, which is why we lose so many small businesses each year. They don't have enough confidence to ask for what they are worth, yet they will buy the latest and greatest toy, scratch and claw, and do everything else but charge what they are worth.

STOP Creating Excuses - If there is some reason that you are not successful, which is anything but looking directly in the mirror, then someone else will always be in control of your success. I know this is hard to hear, and many of you have faced some complex challenges. But I'm here to tell you that you deserve to stay in business if you stop blaming someone or something else. Take your power back and look at every situation from "How could I respond differently to get to the outcome I desire eventually?" Then you can see the same things I see of why these excuses are not valid.

My town won't pay that price - If this is true, can you move? It's like the weather. We complain about it because we know there is better weather elsewhere. Can't move? Why? Maybe you love your town or family or some other potential excuse. If you change your viewpoint from finding an excuse to finding a solution, you will find a





way to get enough people in your town (or online) to pay what you need to charge. Someone in your town owns a designer handbag or a pair of Nike shoes. Therefore, someone in your town is willing to pay a premium for a product they perceive as worth that price. Your job becomes solving the perceived value issue or finding a new market.

Not enough resources - What are the resources that you need? Then make an effort to figure out how to get those resources. Can you start charging more, ask for help, write a business plan and money, get a partner, or find some creative solution to gain the needed resources? It is not a lack of resources you are struggling with but rather a lack of belief in yourself and understanding that there is plenty to go around. You have to go get it, embrace it, grab the opportunities and create the resources you need.

Not enough support - Like resources, what support do you need? Have you asked more than one person for it? Have you asked more than 100 people for the help you need? Maybe your spouse is not supporting you as you would like. Do they know the reality of what that is doing to you? How important is their support? How important is your business to you and them? Are you supporting yourself enough? Do you get up in the morning and affirm that you will reach your goals? Do you look at yourself in the mirror and let your soul know you believe in yourself? Does it all sound a bit "out there?" What if it worked, and you were too focused on your excuses, leaving you behind in the contender camp? According to Wikipedia, Warren Buffet (The 3rd richest person in the world) said, "I always knew I was going to be rich. I don't think I ever doubted it for a minute."

When you no longer have excuses and instead take 100% responsibility for your business, start taking action, ask for help and invest in yourself is the day you "deserve" to be successful. Are you willing to look hard enough in the mirror to make that happen?

And while you are gazing into the mirror, let's close out with an uplifting exercise that will supercharge your self-trust and fully nurture the roots of your business success. It's time to manufacture positive, affirming ideas and self-talk. As you know, we are bombarded with all types of negative messages. These negative messages come through the media, through social interactions, and through our surroundings in general. The negative messages can cause stress, anxiety, or mood swings. Positivity attracts more positive outcomes and experiences, while negativity attracts more of the contrary.

Affirmations are one of the most powerful ways to create the successful business you deserve. Affirmations help change the neural pathways in our brains by purposely replacing limiting ideas, negative beliefs, and self-talk you have taken on and internalized over the years. These new positive statements assert what your business will be and allow you to believe it so you can see it deeply. Once you fully believe it is possible, you will stretch your comfort zone. In your mind, all of your goals are already complete, so now it is just a matter of filling in the details to release the friction between when your mind believes and what is currently true.

Here are the key elements to create affirmations powerful enough to get you to your idea of success.

- The words "I am" are the two most powerful words in the language. The subconscious takes any sentence that starts with the words I am and interprets it as a command - a directive to make it happen. Always start your affirmations with that command to your subconscious.
- While creating your affirmation, remember to describe what you want as though you already have it. The friction between something already accomplished and when your current situation might require your subconscious and what it attracts from the outside world to fill in the details to make it happen. Vision boards are also very powerful tools, and carrying representative items with you also does wonders.





- Affirm what you want, not what you don't want. The unconscious does not hear "no" or "not." For example, you read, "Don't think about a hippopotamus and Christmas.." What are you thinking about right now? Singing any songs? You could affirm - My business is cash rich instead of trying to affirm that your business doesn't have any debt.
- Your affirmation should be specific, short, and memorable. We know vague instructions produce vague actions. You can get right to the actions needed for success when you are specific. By making it short, you cut out the chance for excess wasted motion, making it easier to remember. If your affirmations are as strong of a memory as those annoying earworms some song creates, you will believe it is possible to achieve your results faster.
- Your affirmations should include an action word and a dynamic emotion or feeling word. That -ing word signifies to our subconscious that it is time to get to the action. When adding the feeling or emotionally charged word, the action becomes greater than any alternative excuses we could make. Make sure the feeling word is positive, like enjoying, joyfully, happily, celebrating, proudly, calmly, peacefully, delighted, enthusiastic, lovingly, secure, serenely, and triumphant.
- As you craft your affirmations, it is crucial they speak only to you, not to the behaviors of others. For example, an affirmation that affirms - I am enjoying my employees following instructions each time they are asked will not work as you can't change them. Instead, you should affirm that I am happily explaining the details of the instructions to my employees.
- As we discussed earlier, our idea of success doesn't always show up exactly as we thought it would or on the timeline we expect it to arrive. Adding to your affirmation "something better" allows room for growth or more than you expected.

To get a list of example affirmations and a quick and easy formula to create your own if you are in a time crunch, go to [{Insert link}](#).

Once you have a group of affirmations that can replace limiting beliefs, you help visualize your goals already being achieved. I suggest you repeat your affirmations 3 times per day. The best times are first thing in the morning, middle of the day for course correction, and around bedtime.

I have also found that it is much more powerful and effective to work consistently and in-depth with a few affirmations than to repeat a lot of them occasionally. Also, when possible, for example, when you are in a private place, read each affirmation aloud so your subconscious can hear it, and it will think it is coming from an outside source. After reading each one, close your eyes and visualize yourself experiencing what the affirmation describes. See the scene as you would see it if you were looking out at it through your eyes—as if it were happening around you. As you are experiencing this scene, "hear" any sounds you might hear when you successfully achieve what your affirmation describes. Ensure the scene includes other important people in your life congratulating you and telling you how pleased they are with your success. You also want to make sure you feel the feelings you will feel when achieving this success. The stronger the feelings, the more powerful the process becomes.

I want to acknowledge that it will feel weird at the beginning, and you might be challenged to experience the feelings and scenes I just mentioned. In this case, try adding the affirmation "I am enjoying creating powerful feelings in my effective work with affirmations." At the end of this process, say your affirmation again to set it in. Then repeat this process with the next affirmation. This process can be very quick and is another reason it is important to only work on a small number of goals and affirmations simultaneously. You want to be able to commit to affirming your new beliefs, so you don't create more reasons for your subconscious to doubt you.





Section #2 - The Plan Cycle

Now it is time to move from the 'plant' phase to the 'plan' phase of business success. You can also look at this transition from 'Why' to 'What.' The 'Why' is your purpose, core values, and genius, what you were meant to do. In that phase, you clarified everything as we went through it. The 'What' phase is clearly defining your goal. It is creating the strategies for what you are going to do with your purpose, passion, and genius. The map to a fulfilling and successful business. The 'How' comes in the next section and are the actions you take. More on that in the 'perform' cycle.

FUNDamental #4 - Be a Goal Getter - Help the law of attraction work for you.

This FUNDamental is called "Be a Goal GETTER," not SETTER, for a reason. Many people have goals or what they think a goal is but never seem to achieve them. That is because, like most things in this book, the process is counterintuitive. A specific formula in a specific order changes the goal setters to goal getters. Many people think goals are about setting a target to aim at, and while that is a great first step, the real power of goal setting is to enact the law of attraction to lead success our way. When done correctly, you are activating your conscious and subconscious mind to bring you the resources needed to achieve your goal. With the foundation we set in section one, "plant," it will feel almost like the universe is conspiring with you, indicating you are doing it right.

Curious about the law of attraction? You can find it on Netflix and other places, but watch the movie "The Secret," which discusses the concept written in the book of the same name by Rhonda Byrne. The idea of the law of attraction is the things we focus on end up coming into our lives. So if you focus on negativity, the world is against you, and scarcity, guess what shows up? But if you focus on gratitude, the universe supporting you, and abundance, those things will show up. Have you ever had the experience of talking to a friend about a certain type of car, and then it seems like every other car you see on the road is that car? That is the law of attraction.

Experts on the science of success know the brain is a goal-seeking organism. Whatever goal you give to your subconscious mind will work night and day to achieve.

But the reality for most people is they don't set goals. And those that do set goals, many of them don't do it correctly. But the research shows high achievers people set goals—and they proactively pursue them. We know setting goals is a powerful way to take 100% responsibility for your business, so why don't people set goals?

- Their parents or teachers never modeled how to set goals.
- They were injected with a feeling of demoralization by others who were jealous.
- Believed that setting goals only lead to failure due to not reaching a goal in the past.
- Fear that their goals will be looked down upon as either too lofty or too small by others.

By circling back to FUNDamental #1 - Empower Yourself, we now know that all those excuses are just that. By taking 100% responsibility for your own success, you can set goals and allow the law of attraction to work for you. I will share with you exactly how to set goals, but first, let's back up a little as there are still some of our childhood we need to unlock.

Setting goals is about determining what you want and then gaining that result. It's what YOU want. Society has told us that wanting is greedy and negative. The reality is the opposite. Those desires are the markers telling us we are on the right path, and when we are on the right path, we provide value for others by sharing our unique abilities. Our desires allow us to share our purpose with others while also setting the target for what success is for us and our businesses. After building clarity or finding your purpose, your business becomes the vehicle for fulfilling that purpose. And as you fulfill your purpose, you will start obtaining the desired things. Those desires don't come from a place of greed or materialism when you are focused on your purpose. They are just markers and guideposts. And while striving for





desires is what we think we are doing with our businesses, have you ever really spent enough time getting clarity on what you desire? Sure, you might want to make money, give back, or even build something to pass on, but what are the specifics of those desires? Most people simply don't spend enough time and effort clarifying their desires.

We all start our lives with a clear understanding of our desires and know how to ask for them even before we learn to talk. You are hungry, you cry. You need a clean outfit and diaper, you cry. You want to be held, you cry. You had no inhibitions holding you back when asking for what you specifically desired. Even as you got older, you, as an instinct, moved in whatever way you could towards the desired things. It wasn't until the adults in your life said, "Don't touch that!", "No," "You don't want that," "Stop crying." Stop asking for what you want. For many people, this "protection" from our desires evolved beyond protection to a request to pursue someone else's desires. How many Americans get into massive debt going off to college to pursue a career their parents want? How about those who choose to hold onto a relationship that isn't working to deliver grandkids to their parents someday? We are told to stop being selfish and put everyone else first. But those very people are being selfish, and by pleasing them, you too are becoming selfish. You are taking the easy road by just bending to what everyone else wants, so you don't have to take responsibility for your own results. We all know that at our core, we can not give from an empty place, and success is designed for those who follow their desires first, as they will be able to make the biggest impact on others. If you have even been on an airplane, as they make the safety announcements, one of the key statements is if a sudden change in cabin pressure occurs, masks will drop from the ceiling. Adults are instructed to secure their masks before helping a child. This is counterintuitive to our human nature as we want first to protect the children and those that need more help. But securing your mask first is so important that the flight attendant makes sure to directly talk to all the adults sitting with children as they secure the cabin to remind them not to go with their gut and instead put on their mask first. This is because adults, if they don't put on their masks first, will not be conscious to help others, including their own kids. As a parent, it is a horrifying thought but one I know I must make to save my child's life. The same thing goes for our desires. We must clarify what we want and set in motion to achieve those things before we can truly help others. Otherwise, our unique talents will go to waste following someone else's desire, and your business will suffer because it is just a job.

But what if we all had the purpose and passion to fulfill our desires, build businesses that match up, and gain the resources to change our environment and the world around us? I believe that is the kind of change we need as a society to solve many of the issues we face, and the best part about it is we don't have to change the entire planet, just our small part of it, and this will cause a ripple effect. You make your business great, fulfill the purpose through going after your desires and watch the world around you change. The first thing we have to do before setting a goal is to get clear on what we desire.

This simple process can be more challenging than you might imagine. It is as straightforward as making a list of 101 desires you have for your life. Why 101? This exercise aims to dig into your deepest desires and get beyond the materialistic and surface desires we all have. So just getting to 100 is going to be harder than you think, but the magic might be in that 101st desire that comes from your deep purpose. Honestly, the number of desires that are right for you is completely up to you. Get a sheet of paper and start writing out what you want in all aspects of your life, including your business. The first 20 to 30 will likely be surface level, which is completely fine. There is no right or wrong, and this is not something for you to compare to others. As you are working through writing as many desires as you can, you might find it getting harder and harder to come up with things. This is important... POWER THROUGH. Don't stop because once you fight beyond the ego and limiting beliefs of what others say you should "want," you will finally be open to the deep desires to guide you to your reasons. For example, it is a legitimate desire to have a financial want from your business. Still, I guess you will also find a deeper desire beyond that money, like to support your community in a certain way, travel to destinations to take in the culture, or be able to give back to a cause that is





near and dear to you. Once you have as many desires as possible on a sheet of paper, nearing 101, the next step is to prioritize and make sure it is a balanced list. Take your 101 list and pair it down to 30 desires that are the most important to your purpose. An important part of the balance is ensuring your desires encompass the key areas. a) things you want to have, b) things you want to do, and c) things you want to be. The goal is to have 10 desires on the list from all 3 segments.

And don't shy away from the things you want to do. These should be things you love. Often people think the things they love to do are not something they can make a living doing, but there is proof all over the world proving that belief wrong. Oprah Winfrey loves to hang out and talk to people; she has done that well and makes a very good living doing it. I love to look at the big picture and solve complex problems. Resources like this book prove that you can turn something you love into a business. Many successful product decorators have an area of the business they love, which is not always the making or creating. For some, it is interaction with people. For others, it is supporting their community and more. But they have all turned the thing they love to do into a business.

Go to [{coming soon}](#) to download the "desires" worksheet. Here is a cross-section of my desires to give you an example of what this might look like for you:

[{My Desires}](#)

Armed with these goals, you have an incredible foundation to quickly and efficiently become a full-on goal-getter. But before becoming a goal-getter, we must first clarify what a goal is and why it is so important to define your goals. First, setting goals so we become goal-getters provides the guardrails for decision-making. You can measure all your decisions like this "Does this "task/decision" help me get closer to my goal? Yes or no? Goals also foster better planning. Your subconscious brain starts sorting out the "how" even if consciously you have no idea how to achieve the goal. A good goal identifies the metrics by which to evaluate your business success. It's kind of a course correction tool. "The yellow pages ad didn't get me closer to the goal, so stop that." And most importantly, a goal motivates and empowers others to help and support you. You just have to share your goal, and people will start showing up saying, "Here is a source of knowledge, I know a person, I'll buy from you, etc."

The other thing about a goal that is important to know is what many people think are goals are just wishes or dreams. And while those are nice, our brains and the others around us have no ability to help us achieve a wish. For example, non-goal getters might believe that "I'd like to increase my income" is a goal, but we know it is a wish. A goal reads more like, "I will earn \$100,000 by 8pm, December 31st, 2023." An acronym widely used is a SMART goal. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. That is a great model, but I have found an even simpler breakdown that gives us our desired goal, not just a wish:

All goals MUST Include How Much and By When

Your goal must include how much and by when the goal has to be easily measurable by a 3rd party. When someone who is not you can ask, "What is your goal?" and then come back at the date and time you specified and know right away if you achieved it, that is a goal you can go get. Not only will outside sources conspire to help you, but your subconscious brain will also act as a 3rd party. That part of your brain will be working to solve the obstacles in the way of your goal. You will be attracting the resources you need. The ah-ha moments that happen when you wake up or while in the shower will be the solutions to things standing in the way of your goal. Also, this easily measurable goal provides much-needed clarity for all involved. The more clarity you have, the easier the path towards your goal will be. Obstacles are put in the way due to lack of clarity and to ensure you are going after what you desire.





Due to the need to have clarity of our goal to go from a goal setter to a goal getter, here are several tips I have learned when setting goals.

1. Goals should be singular. Example - One business owner I worked with told me the goal was to "Have the business be more organized including orders, garments, billing and have a turn around time of no more than 2 weeks on clothing and no more than 3 weeks on larger orders." This statement is a wonderful wish, but as it is, it is just too much for you to process at one time. You will not be able to focus on the actions needed. As this business owner and I worked on her goals, we decided that the priority was to get the turnaround time in order. The goal she focused on first was "Have a turnaround time of no more than 2 weeks on clothing and no more than 3 weeks on larger orders by June 15, 2022, at 5 PM."
2. Prioritize ONLY the number of goals you can take action on daily. We often bundle because we want to get more than one thing done. Like the example from number one above, there are multiple things we need to work on in our businesses. But as much as we think we can multitask, we can only task switch. Task switching takes from the momentum you gain, and your subconscious struggles to know what to focus on instead attempting to conserve energy. I suggest a minimum of 5 actions a day towards each goal you have. Outside of the daily fires you must put out and the other distractions and responsibilities, how many actions can you complete in a day towards your goal? If the number is 25, work on 5 goals simultaneously. If that number is 5, just focus on the most important goal first. If less than 5, you will have to prioritize things in your life to reach the goal. Not that you won't get it with less than 5 actions a day, but it is exponentially more difficult.
3. Share your Goals with others - OFTEN! Goals worth achieving are going to require some sort of outside help. One of the ways we achieve our goals is to share those goals with others. You need to be able to share your goal without much explanation. Once it gets complicated, people tune out, and the same goes for your subconscious mind. It will spend its effort trying to figure out the goal. Your subconscious might even start throwing many shiny objects at you until you get clear on the goal. If you can not easily share your goal with others, it is time to go back to the drawing board.
4. M.T.O. M = Minimum, T = Target, and O = Outrageous. As you look at your goals, allowing yourself some room to grow into them is OK. The more confident you are, the more likely you are to reach your goals. Set your goals with 3 levels- M.T.O. The minimum is a "how much" that you are extremely confident you can achieve in a short time. This version gets you into action and starts the momentum rolling. The target is something you believe is within your capabilities but is pushing you outside of your comfort zone. This target should be what you need to gain more self-confidence and is something you can build from. Sometimes, people consider the target more of a 1 to 2-year goal. Finally, you have your outrageous goal. The outrageous goal is the "how much" that would be the turning point for you. I have heard this goal is called a B.H.A.G. (Big Hairy Audacious Goal), and in the Canfield world, they call them breakthrough goals. That goal is a goal that might seem hard to reach, and they scare you a little because you know the massive action needed and the transformation that must occur. It is important to have this as it keeps our brain engaged. Our brain can see the potential and allow all the energy needed to achieve it.

I call these goals Turning Point Goals because they symbolize a turning point in your success that tells you that you are on the downhill side of the mountain. Once we reach a significant goal, I know we don't just stop and do nothing. Every day successful people work to improve, grow and become more enlightened. One of my favorite authors, Rory Vaden, said: "Success is never owned, it is rented, and the rent is due every day." As we continue to move forward, after hitting this turning point goal, it lets us know we can fulfill our purpose and gives us the freedom and space to keep moving forward. Being on the downhill side of the cycle means things move easier, successes come faster, and joy and happiness define the majority.





The M.T.O. system works so well that you might have even seen it in action in your own life as you go to clean something. Have you had that experience walking into your kitchen to clean off a counter? You start cleaning and get the counter space cleaned off, but the momentum leads you to see another area you could clean quickly while you have the cleaning items out. The next thing you know, you have waxed the floor, cleaned the stove, and vacuumed under the refrigerators. The entire kitchen is cleaned. The counter was the minimum, the floors were the target, and the whole kitchen was the outrageous target or turning point goal.

With some goal-setting tips, the next part of being a goal-getter is what you do once you have set the goals. And this is the real separation between a goal setter and a goal getter. It's the action that happens with your goals.

1. Review your goals often. I have seen some people put them on a notecard and carry that note card around, pulling it out constantly. I like to have them posted in many places where I will see them each day. Big clear writing of large clear fonts printed out above your computer and next to an area where you do most of the vital work for your business. Also, most importantly, have them available to read first thing when you wake up, once during the day as a course correction, and then again right before you go to sleep.
2. Share your goals with others. When people ask what you are working on, slip in a goal or two. Getting your goals out to the universe will allow others to "conspire" with you. When people have told me their goals, it often sticks with me. Then when I am talking to someone that might be able to help them achieve their goal, a little reminder goes off in my head. I take the time to make the connection and allow them to work on the goal together. The more people that are clear on your goal, the more people you will have on your team, whether they know it or not.
3. Take action each day, as many days a week as you can. For the successful people out there, I see them taking action 5 or 6 days a week minimum. We will go into more detail in the "perform" section as to the actions that will move you forward and how. As we discussed, make a list of 5 actions towards each goal to complete daily. These actions should not be massive projects but small steps. Call 1 lead, post one social media post, meet with a local school, sign up for O.S.G. Membership, etc. Make these the **HAVE TO GET DONE BEFORE YOU GO TO SLEEP TASKS**, and try to tackle them as soon as possible.
4. Each night before going to bed, review your goals as an affirmation. Affirmations are essential to push your subconscious into action as the juxtapositions between what might be your current reality and you telling yourself you have already achieved the goal forces friction. Your subconscious wants to solve that friction, and therefore you will wake up with new ideas and new clarity about how you will achieve your goal. For example, if your goal is "I will achieve \$75,000 in sales by December 31, 2023 at 5 PM," your affirmation might be, "I am so happy and grateful to have earned more than \$75,000."
5. Celebrate every little step towards your goal. Each failure is a learning opportunity, and each baby step is a step closer. The more you celebrate, the more your brain will want to find new ways to get more dopamine hits you get when celebrating. It's like a drug to your subconscious, that feeling of success, so the more you celebrate, the harder your brain will work to get its next H.I.T.!

If you have been doing the work we have laid out so far in our goal setter FUNdamental, you should now have much more clarity on your goals. Now we take it to the next level and allow the rest of the universe, source energy, God, or whatever your belief system holds, to start conspiring in our favor. We must amplify our goals and ensure you stay solid in the self-trust you built in the last FUNdamental. This might seem unnecessary and even a waste of time to some people. In fact, I was one of those people who thought that. But without these steps, you will stay firmly planted in the goal setter category and never move into the goal-getter category. Any big goal you have requires significant energy and commitment, so we need all the extra parts and pieces.





The next step in the process is to get so much clarity that you can visualize your goals in vivid detail. Our brain does not hold data bits or process things in binary or black and white. These words are our goals, but the word data themselves don't do much for us. Our memories, ideas, and creative processing happen from a combination of senses and the perceptions those senses bring us. For example, as you read the word "thanksgiving" on this page, you very quickly go from seeing the letter to thinking about the word and then to your memories of what Thanksgiving means to you. You might see the feast on the table, hear your family members laughing, smell the aroma of a turkey cooking and think about the feelings you get by being surrounded by your family. Knowing our brain's process is also why this step is crucial to becoming a goal-getter. Take the goal you have set and then describe it in those details I just shared. And to help us remember this, it has been broken down into a simple acronym - V.A.S.T.

Visual - What precisely will you see in detail when you have reached this goal?

Auditory - What are the sounds you hear that you associate with that goal being achieved? Cash registers, equipment running, ocean waves, song playing, or other potential auditory queues.

Smell - What smell might you associate with that moment or sensation of achieving your goal? Smell is our most memory-inducing sensation and gives us the most clarity. You are transported right to that place when you recognize a smell. Describe it!

Touch - What are the tactile and emotional things you can touch and feel around you?

With the V.A.S.T. details for your turning point goal and the main goals you want to work on each year, you now have all the makings for a great story. The most memorable moments in your brain are part of a story, so your task here is to write the story as if you are the star of a script about you achieving this goal. Get all the details available to you on paper and read this story as often as possible.

The next step in the process is to schedule future review dates. Earlier, we discussed how some people use the S.M.A.R.T. acronym for their goals. Even with the simplification of "How Much and By When," we still have a S.M.A.R.T. goal, but we want to make our goals smartER. The E stands for evaluate, and the R stands for review. Like all of the processes in this book, you should not focus much attention or energy on the outcome or the results. Those are just measuring devices used to provide feedback. With feedback, we have to evaluate it. To determine what it is telling us to change, we have to review it to set into motion new actions that will get us to our goals. This process is so crucial to your success that you don't want to leave the E&R to chance. You need to set up a schedule for it right now. Grab your calendar, to-do list, or planner, and get the first review date set. I have a quarterly recurring task to evaluate and review my main goals, including the turning point goal. Here are a series of questions you should be asking;

- What worked for me and got me closer to my goals?
- What was holding me back from achieving my goals that I needed to eliminate?
- What am I pretending not to know, or what limiting belief is holding me back?
- Am I properly prioritizing my goals in my daily activities?
- What daily margin habit (more on those in FUNdamental #13) do I need to install to reach my goal on time?

Once you have answered those questions for each of your annual goals and a turning point goal, the review or adjustment phase happens. Hopefully, after evaluation, you will feel on track and ready to keep going after your goals. But if you are not on track, it is OK to adjust. These are your goals, so you can change them. If you are modifying, be careful not to let fear make those decisions for you. The answer to your evaluation questions should help you see that. Just because you are not currently on track doesn't mean you should make changes. The changes you should make might be to the effort, the focus, and changing things up, not reducing your goal. Only reduce your goal if it is no longer essential or you were going after something you thought someone else would want you to achieve. Spending more time in the review phase is best when your goal seems too low. A goal that feels too small could indicate you





need to set the bar higher, to begin with, but I suggest pushing yourself. Reach a little higher and see what it is like to shoot for something further outside your comfort zone. With all of the adjustments you make during the review, another important part is to set some new milestones. These are some shorter-term points you can see and work towards. It is like running a marathon. Find a pole 300 yards up and run to that, then the next one, and so on. It is OK not to know all of the steps, just the next single thing you are going to do, then the next action you are going to take. As we go along the path, we learn. Make sure you are evaluating and reviewing, so you can set new milestones to keep moving forward.

This process does not require much time, but you must be clear, focused, and honest with yourself. As I said, I do this quarterly, so I have enough time to see progress. Some people might do this annually, but be careful that you are not pushing forward on a goal that is not for you and is instead a goal you think someone else wants you to accomplish. Success is about progress, improvement, adapting, and moving forward, so make sure your path forward is the right one for you.

With your goals clearly defined and a plan and process to evaluate and review, you have all but two resources needed to be a goal-getter, not just a goal-setter. It is time to bridge the gap from your goals to your current state. To do that, you need to place milestones in front of you that you believe you can reach. For example, if I was starting my first day of the new business and told myself, "my goal is to have 10,000 customers", that might be a little hard to believe on day one. Being a goal-getter is setting those high goals with extremely high intentions for the outcomes but applying them so you can also see at least some steps on the path. On day one, I am not focusing my actions directly on the 10,000 customer goal in 3 to 5 years. The milestone step I might take on days one and two is making 10 calls to prospective customers, then building up to having 150 customers at month number one and continuing extrapolating from there. To be a goal-getter, you have to believe it is possible, so the real value is in the milestones you set along the way. The milestones will serve as feedback tools and measuring sticks, not as wins or losses. Did you reach the milestone? Yes, then do more of that. No, then regroup and try the next idea. You must leave all the milestones and, at times, your goals with extremely low attachment to the results. The value is in the journey and learning that, no matter what, it can never be taken away.

To set milestones, we need to think through some of the possible events or markers that indicate you are on track to reach your goal. As in our example above, it can be smaller steps like making 10 prospecting calls and milestones like the breakdown of averages you need per year or month to reach the ultimate goal. But don't get stuck in a linear trap of focusing on the end goal. For example, the number of customers might not show up as an equal average of 150 new customers per month, and you might start smaller and then go from averaging 50 new customers a month to 300 new customers per month. I can not stress enough how important it is to only use the milestones as feedback tools, not as an indicator of your overall success or failure.

As I was writing this chapter, I happened to watch a show on the Discovery Channel called the "Hoffman Family Gold," about a gold mining family who went up north of Nome, Alaska, to help a mine reach a season goal of 600 ounces (at the time equivalent to \$1,000,000 in gold.) As the show started, they arrived, and the miners before them had only done 300 ounces in the first 5 months of a 7-month season. So that meant in the time they had left to do 300 more ounces, they had to average 37.5 ounces per week. In week one, they only did 25 ounces of gold, so the average per week increased to nearly 40 ounces per week. The following week on the show, they missed the milestone, and it escalated to the final week, where they needed 57 ounces of gold to reach their goal. Throughout the process, they didn't consider the missed targets a failure. They looked at them as fuel to innovate, try new things and work harder. At the show's end, their last week's total ended up being 60.95 ounces of goal, pushing them past their 600 oz goal by





over 3 ounces. We need to use that same process to build up to our goal and let our milestone be feedback, not an indicator.

Also, when it comes to milestones, you want to look outside the line of your goal for supporting elements. That means all our milestones can not be directly tied to our goal. Using the same 10,000 customer example, some other milestones might be expanding your marketing efforts, so you have more people in your Facebook Group. Or you are adding people to your email list. Maybe it is revamping your website, making it easier for potential leads to submit quote requests. Or, using myself as an example, my turning point goal is to support over 10,000 businesses through Our Success Group mastermind programs by December 31, 2025, at 11:13 AM Central Time. It might seem from the outside that this book has nothing to do with that goal, but it has become a milestone for me to get all my thoughts, knowledge, and resources into one comprehensive tool to work from and build a mastermind program based on this book. The more hands I can get this book into, the more likely I will reach my turning point goal.

So think outside the box and determine some milestones you can set along the way. I would even go so far as to map them out, and I have a template you can download from <https://osg.link/milestonemap>. You don't have to know all the steps. We want to put some things out there so it doesn't seem like such a massive leap of faith. We want to give our subconscious brain a little food for thought to allow the effort needed to reach those big goals. The sooner you let go of the excessive worry about the "how," the faster you will reach your goal. Reviewing, evaluating, and milestones are just a tool to help make sure you are not climbing a ladder to the top and then finding out it is leaning against the wrong wall.

The goal-getter puzzle's final piece is celebrating all of the wins along the way. The celebration was a crucial piece I had been missing for many years. I always felt like if I celebrated along the way, I would lose steam for the bigger goal. I thought the celebration was reserved for the finish line, but as I learned more about success and saw the cycle emerge, I finally understood it was about the process or journey. Trees do not grow constantly. They grow through a cycle of seasons. Our businesses are the same way, which helped me realize the need to celebrate along the way. The counterintuitive nature of success makes it so hard for many people to achieve. As humans, we want a clear path, and one that we think makes logical sense. So we don't celebrate until the task is complete. But what I know is true is that the celebration is the real catalyst for growth. When we celebrate, we want more of that, and we want it to be bigger each time, so the celebration is the build-up to the goal.

Most people who have been brave enough to give small business ownership a go fail, not because they could never make it, but because they couldn't hold out long enough to make it. They attempted to make it on sheer willpower, hustle and grinding. But we know that is just not possible. We need to utilize the resources available to us in our human nature to achieve our idea of success. As I said in step 5 in the tips, we need to activate that dopamine reward system to reach our goals. When you push and strive for the success you deserve, you forget to enjoy it. You are making incredible strides and doing what 91.1% of Americans are unwilling to do⁶. Become business owners. CELEBRATE! It is the glue that sticks us to our goals and gives us the push to reach that turning point.

The way I have implemented celebration into my own business is that each month, my business partner (and wife) get together to review the previous month. We look at the business as a whole through financial metrics, and the different sections to rate how well we held to our core values. The central part of the meeting is to celebrate all that we accomplished that previous month. We both bring at least 25 "wins" to the meeting, and then we take turns sharing them out loud. After each share, we let that accomplishment sink in and encourage each other. Then after significant

⁶ According to statista.com the established business ownership rate in America is 8.9%
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/315556/established-business-ownership-rate-in-north-america/>





accomplishments, we go out for a nice dinner, take a break and have a fun family activity, and even go on trips when we feel the achievement is worth it. How you celebrate will be unique to you but make sure that celebration becomes a regular part of your company's process.

To master this goal-getter mentality, you must set concrete goals with how much and assume it is possible. BELIEVE it is possible even if you don't know precisely how. Focusing on what you can control, acknowledging what you are grateful for, and affirming you CAN do it!

FUNDamental #5 - The Relationships - Business is all about people.

When I was much younger, helping my Dad at his C.P.A. firm, I vividly remember something he told me. He said, "If it were not for employees and customers, business would be fun." At the time, I was late in my high school career and wondered what I wanted to be when I grew up. Since he was an entrepreneur, I thought I might follow in his footsteps and start my own business someday. But his comment startled me because I was a bit horrified by it. Shortly after, I realized I caught him after he was dealing with a challenging employee issue in the middle of tax season. Still, the horror came to me because I noticed that business was mainly about the relationships you have with key stakeholders. Business is not some spreadsheet talking to another or the storefront interacting with a car driving by. Business owners' relationships with their partners, employees, vendors, and other people make a business successful or challenging. But as I got older, I managed employees and worked with different business stakeholders. I learned that relationships are much like all the relationships we navigate as we age. For those of you who have children, you will recognize this. The relationships are much like that of raising a child. It is the most challenging and complex endeavor you could take on, but at the same time, the most rewarding and fulfilling.

As we plan for our future success, we must make sure that we are clear about the relationships that our business has or will need with all the stakeholders involved.

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is a process, and working together is success." Henry Ford

Some of you might be reading this and thinking, "I can skip this FUNDamental. I'm a solopreneur and have no plans of having employees." Please don't make that mistake. Even if you never plan to have employees, I know that success is a team sport. No one gets to their idea of success without other people in the corner, so clearly defining those roles will make it easier for you to be part of this great business (money tree) you are growing. Let's discuss some of the potential relationships you might need to define.

- **Advisors** - They might show up in a lot of different varieties. It could be similar businesses in other areas or markets with which you discuss challenges. It could be key people who are part of your vendor group with the experience you need. It could be an outside business owner from a different industry that can bring unique perspectives and a different mindset to challenges. Maybe they are part of the mastermind you are in or another organization.
- **Mentors** - These are specific people you connect with who have done what you are trying to do. They might be retired or further down the road in their career. You can often find these mentors in professional organizations, local community colleges, or small business administration.
- **Consultants** - Consultants are many times a very underutilized resource for small businesses. The thought is that consultants are just for large companies, but small businesses need them even more. You can't be an expert in all areas of your business, and trying to do it all will only lead to being average. Working with a consultant can save time and money as you tackle different challenges. For example, I have consulted for various companies in my expertise areas and spent a couple of days developing the systems they need for success. The small investment in me gave them considerable advances in their systems and processes much quicker than going it alone.





- **Virtual Assistant** - With the power of the internet, and the growth of the gig economy, even small businesses who are not ready or can't afford to hire someone yet, can still get much-needed help. You can find assistants with many talents and might never meet them in person. Yet they can be extremely valuable. From projects like social media scheduling and management, email management, or even customer service. My favorite virtual assistant group is workers, and they can be found at [OSG.link/iworker](https://www.osg.link/iworker)
- **Accounting** - Unless you are an accountant, many business owner tell me that accounting and bookkeeping is their least favorite part of running their business. Because those folks dislike it, stacks of receipts, paperwork, and accounting tasks pile up until it feels overwhelming. Having a bookkeeper that is a virtual assistant or part-time support is one of the best investments you can make. Also, having an accountant, you can get advice from can be worth their weight in gold.
- **Key Vendors** - Most businesses look at their vendors like the whipping post screaming the phrase "the customer is always right" as a way to take out their frustration from challenging customers they work with. But think about this: you will be out of business without your key vendors to support your needs. Defining what you need in a key vendor is essential, and the lowest price should not be at the top of the list. When push comes to shove, as we have seen in these supply chain-challenged years, having a partner is a must.
- **Managers** - Small business owners like the rush of wearing all of the hats, but how long is that realistic? Think about how your company might grow when you have a right-hand person you can trust, allowing you to focus on your core genius. Managing people is not a skill everyone has, so define what you might be looking for in this role. As a bonus tip, hiring someone to be a manager that also does the work rarely works. Those are two separate skills; a manager will bring way more value managing, not "doing." Yes, you can expect them to jump in and help when times call for it, but expecting them to serve dual roles will come back to bite you.
- **Sales** - You are either a salesperson, or you are not. Yes, you can learn to be better as a salesperson, and there are different techniques for different personality types, but a natural is just that, a natural. If this is not you, this could be your company's first need to get past the friends and family level of customers you have. The nice part about natural salespeople is that they have a certain confidence in themselves, so they are willing to bet a little on their skills. You might be able to find someone willing to sell your products for commission only. This means that you only pay them after they make a sale and collect the money. This requires giving a higher percentage of the sale as a commission. This is not a bad deal as it is business you would not have, so just make sure there is enough profit to cover the commission. Or better yet, work out the arrangement so they make a percentage of the profit and allow them to determine the best price as it comes out of their pocket.
- **Customer Service** - Like sales, a specific type of person excels at customer service. Unfortunately, people make customer service an entry-level position and then force them to uphold policies that do your customers no favors. Finding someone who can take a challenge (i.e., a problem) and turn that around into a win-win while at the same time building a more loyal customer is like finding a diamond in the rough. As business owners, we can sometimes not make very good customer service agents for our company because we are too close to it and take it personally. If you often fight with your customers, it is probably time to hire a customer service person immediately. The nice part about how customer service is done these days, you might be able to get a part-time remote worker or virtual assistant to help with this. They would manage your chat, email box, and even a phone remotely during certain hours to allow you to focus on running the business.
- **Marketing** - This is an ever-changing skill. Remember I am old enough to remember my latest fax (facsimile) marketing campaign? I promise it was really not that long ago. Or look at this the other way, if you were a marketer in 2017, you probably had little idea or plans to work on your TikTok strategies. That was about 5 years ago only. Staying on top of the trends, strategies, and evolving algorithms that make the marketing world turn takes passion and dedication, which is hard for most business owners to support. You have your own passions you are pursuing. As small businesses, we will be driving the marketing, but just think what would happen if you had a marketing expert moving things forward. You are providing the marketing groundwork as





we will get into in the next chapter. You steer the brand, but the marketing is in someone else's hands. You could start with a service or part-time person that you connect with.

- **Production** - The making of the goods and providing the service is a finite resource when it is only you. You can get more and more efficient, but at some point, the only solution will be to lose even more sleep. Hiring part-time or seasonal help is a great first step, and then plan to find people to do the working "in" your business tasks as much as possible. The nice part about hiring production help is that, as a business, we only expand as far as possible with the available resources. Once you bring on help, you will find your business growing quickly to fill that available resource. Businesses that get good at this cycle are the ones where the sky is the limit.
- **Shipping** - A bit like production, if your business has to ship any products, this is an area where you can only go so fast. And if you have enough shipping that you are thinking about help, realize this is a particular skill. Attention to detail during what can become a daily tedious process is crucial. Plus, there are nuances to shipping, so if you have someone dedicated to that, they can work with the carriers, build relationships with the representatives and make your shipping needs much easier.

And while this list is not exhaustive, it was meant to show you that getting help could very well be what's holding you back. Yes, bringing someone into your business can be scary, and we feel like we have to make a certain amount before we can hire or ask for help. But many times, the need for that help stops you from making a certain amount. It's a leap of faith, but business after business has proved the jump worthwhile. The ones who are challenged after burning in help are the ones who didn't have a plan and were looking for help from a place of desperation.

Even without the expectations of hiring, you can see how there are plenty of other relationships you might need to define clearly. Thinking about and planning out how they might fit your business, your expectations, and your success metrics makes adding those people as your tree grows easier. You can find the right people, and once you have this clarity, those people will start showing up around you if you keep your options open. As we discussed in FUNdamental #1, with more clarity comes more trust, and your gut and intuition will better serve you. It is the same for relationships.

Before you get too deep into these other successful team members, we have two other significant relationships to have clarity and confidence about so the above people fill the holes. Let's discuss those first, and then we can come back to fill in the gaps with an action plan to clarify all the potential relationships in your business.

