

21 Power Principles
for New Breed 21st Century
Entrepreneurs to 10X their
Impact, Influence and Income.

The
WhiteHot
Center
Manifesto

THOMSON DAWSON

The WhiteHot Center Manifesto

whitehotcenter[®]
the power of brand

Specializing in what's next—
helping create a bigger future.
Inspiring startup and early stage
entrepreneurs to 10X their
understanding and application
of business transformation
strategy as the source code
driving a bigger future.



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**Dedicated to the new breed
of 21st century entrepreneur.**

An uncommon individual possessing unbridled strategic and creative thinking **(a master of creation)**, never following the herd **(independent, individuality)**, who creates unexpected value for people **(shaman leader)**, and embraces change as opportunities rather than obstacles **(renewal and growth)**.

Prologue

This book is about inspiring new breed 21st century entrepreneurs to “think in a certain way”. It’s a mindset manifesto that boldly declares an ideology that turns thinking into the things desired to live an extraordinary life through the venue of a thriving influential business.

Every entrepreneur I’ve encountered in my advisory practice, no matter their current level of success, desires more impact, influence, and income. They all want to experience more freedom of time, location, and lifestyle. It’s the trifecta and fundamental motivating reason many (perhaps you) made the bold and

courageous decision to become an entrepreneur in the first place. It certainly was for me starting my corporate communications and design business over four decades ago.

Throughout my business career, these ideas have always inspired, encouraged, and motivated me whenever I needed to lock myself into the right frame of mind to pursue and achieve my goals despite the challenges. Inspiration coupled with motivation becomes a discipline. In my experience you need all three to elevate current circumstances to higher ones. The principles outlined in this manifesto are a form of “spiritual software” that guides strategic and creative thinking and the decisions made on the tactical actions entrepreneurs will take to create a bigger future in their life and business.

This book is written and dedicated to the new breed 21st century entrepreneur who wants to stand out in their market and make a remarkable impact on the world through a business growing in its impact and influence in the marketplace. This is not a “how-to-run-your-business” manual. My only purpose is simply to inspire you to form and declare your own bold manifesto of what your business/brand stands for, to whom it matters, and how your desired image, your behavior and reputation will shape your future business success.

The disheartening reality is the 21st century marketplace is a slush pile of clutter and noise. Standing out from the herd of competitors and influencing the behavior of high value customers, clients, and markets is a tall order indeed, no matter the size of the enterprise, or the marketing budget. It takes more than a pot of investor

money and slick marketing to grow and scale a business customers love and can't live without. The source of any accomplishment in life and business requires the discipline and mastery of thinking in a certain way.

As my initial ideas for the book project took shape, I shared them with colleagues and clients asking for feedback. One randomly asked me, "why did you come up with 21 principles? Why not 5, 14 or an even dozen? Why 21? Maybe that's too many?" With a puzzled look on my face, I answered spontaneously, "Because we're living in the 21st century". I knew that was a lame contrived answer. Why 21 indeed? In thinking more about it, I began to wonder if 21 would be the right number of ideas to organize into a full book. On one late night of writing, amusing my curiosity, I Googled "the meaning behind the number 21."

Besides being the winning hand in Blackjack and the legal drinking age in most countries, I was surprised to discover many ancient cultures and esoteric belief systems down through the ages attached significant symbolism and reverence for number 21. For example, the number 21 represented:

the symbol for the Gods—the superiors with mastery for creation.

the symbolism related of individuality, independence, and responsibility; the notion of a chief or shaman leader

the essence of perfection and harmony of creation.

the inherent qualities to master change, renewal and growth.

This perfectly describes the character of the new breed of 21st century entrepreneur.

21 principles would be the perfect number. Each manifesto principle presents ideas on various aspects and issues and the head game necessary for growing a startup or early-stage business. In reading the book, you can start anywhere you like. There may be a growth issue you're currently facing where a particular principle will be most relevant to you. Start there. Each principle stands on its own. But when they operate as an integrated system in your strategic thinking, you will soon discover many remarkable opportunities will always be present for your advantage. After three decades advising startup and early-stage entrepreneurs developing their business transformation strategy, I've witnessed how adoption of these mindset principles as an operational discipline have proven to be the source code for visionary entrepreneurs creating a remarkable life experience through the venue of a thriving business.

There will always be times of change, challenge and uncertainty growing your business. My hope is you'll refer back to this manifesto time and again. My hope is you will use it as an anchoring reference point; continually inspiring you to think in a certain way so you can make quantum leaps in your progress taking your life experience as an entrepreneur to ever higher levels of joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

I wish you inspired success on your journey to your bigger future!

Thomson Dawson
Central Coast California
12/23





Introduction

A MANIFESTO FOR NEW BREED
21ST CENTURY ENTREPRENEURS.

A manifesto is a public declaration of policy, principals or point of view. The word comes from the Latin manifestus, which means to be clear, conspicuous, to make obvious or evident to the senses. It also implies a framework for transforming the formless into the formed—to manifest.

In our 21st century marketplace of more choice, clutter and noise, every entrepreneur can benefit from developing a manifesto to make a clear and bold declaration why their business matters and is the “one and only” choice of high value customers and clients.

Consider these questions:

What philosophy guides your thinking when making the big decisions to grow and transform your business and your life to its next level?

What do you stand for and are unwilling to compromise on for short-term gain?

How do you know which opportunities are right for you and which ones to pass on?

Do your customers and clients think of your business as the one and only choice for them?

What would happen to your employees, your customers, partners if your business ceased to exist?

How will you 10X your impact and influence with high value customers and clients in a hyper-connected and cluttered marketplace?

How you answer these fundamental questions will reveal a snapshot audit and assessment of how much impact and influence you currently enjoy. As an entrepreneur and leader of your own destiny, your business must represent an idea of value that is uncommon, unexpected, and remarkable. What idea of value will only you bring to the marketplace. An idea highly valued by your customers and clients and not in abundant supply from competitors? And more importantly, will have the power and velocity to transform your life and business exponentially?

The 21st century idea economy demands bold innovation, differentiation, and value creation—hallmarks of 21st century entrepreneurs whose value to the marketplace is constantly rewarded with higher value customer and client relationships.

The marketplace rewards those entrepreneurs who earn and deserve, never because they desire or need business. If you want more, you must become more.

Ideas are the currency of our hyper-networked age. Everything ever created by a human being, from the wheel to our most advanced technologies, was once a formless thought seed in the creative mind. Everything necessary to bring new ideas into form is always available. In your imagination, there's no shortage of supply. All that's required for your advancement is always present—it might not be in physical form yet—but available to you nonetheless. Innovation begins with a formless, creative idea seed. Ideas well planted become the things that transform markets and create a remarkable business.

Thinking in a certain way.

The disheartening reality is only one in five entrepreneurs will rise above and beyond the early-struggle phase of their business growth. The reason the odds of success are stacked against early-stage entrepreneurs is not due to circumstances of geography, economy, competition, talent, trend, timing, or investment capital. That's weather. There will always be weather. And you can't change the weather. You can, however, change your thinking.

The dominant factor determining which entrepreneurs ascend from early struggle to the higher level of sustainable success is their mindset—their ability to think in a certain way!

The discipline to maintain an open, optimistic, flexible, creative frame of mind consumed with generosity and gratitude, despite the presence of undesired circumstances, is Jedi Master stuff—an essential skill for new breed 21st century entrepreneurs to rise above and create more impact and influence in the marketplace.

You alone make the choice to base your life and business strategy on the creative plane or the competitive one.

An entrepreneur's sole purpose is centered in the creative act of bringing formless ideas into a form providing new value for the marketplace. It makes no sense to compete for the value already created by your competitors.

As Steve Jobs was known for saying "let's put a dent in the universe". Make no mistake—denting the universe is not an activity for the weak-minded and undisciplined. Creating impact and influence can never be attained by fearing competitors, driving hard bargains, selling me-too products at cheaper prices, or paying your employees as low a wage as you can get away with.

True enough, not every creative entrepreneur will become the next Steve Jobs. But you can make a disciplined practice of being all that you can be. The best and only method that I recommend for denting the universe is growing daily in your philosophy, knowledge, and capability to serve others through the venue of your growing business.

I've spent my entire professional life in deep curiosity to understand the first principles underpinning the mindset—the head game—that creates an extraordinary life experience and a beloved business. This has been my passion, my quest, my work, and my own journey as an entrepreneur. For over forty years, as a strategy advisor and creative consultant, in collaboration with dozens of entrepreneurs, business leaders and management teams, I've learned many lessons in the process of bringing new value to the marketplace and transforming a business to the next level.

The principles presented in this book were born from that diverse body of work. Over my long career, every entrepreneur and business leader I've collaborated with, regardless of the size of their business or the industry they're in, share one common and dominant goal—to have more impact, influence and income enabling them to experience more personal freedom, fulfillment, and prosperity. I'm confident you share this same aspiration for your own life and business.

I've organized these principles into a manifesto to inspire you to boldly declare to yourself, your team, your customers, and to the marketplace at large, what you stand for, the value you are known for, and why it matters to high value customers, employees and investment partners.

These 21 principles are the source elements that form four essential pillars that are the foundation for building an influential business customers love and can't live without.

WHY: Your Vision and Purpose.

Having a compelling vision and strategic plan for your total life/business experience based solely on what truly matters to you, leverages your unique talents to create value for customers and clients; and enables you to experience greater joy, fulfillment and deep satisfaction from your business far beyond money-making.

WHO: Your leadership.

Continuously expanding the quality of your presence and influence in the marketplace by elevating your thinking, clarifying your purpose, enhancing your effectiveness to innovate new value, lead a team of smart, talented, and committed employees, attract the right partners, and stakeholders who will support and magnify your efforts.

HOW: How you do things to create new value for people.

Relentlessly pursuing innovation and creativity to develop process, products, services, and experiences that are unexpected and highly valued by your customers and clients, and difficult for competitors to match.

WHAT: Your impact and influence in the marketplace.

Expand your impact, influence, and competitive advantage to build a valuable “brand power” through remarkable products, experiences, compelling storytelling narratives, and business development strategies that position your business/brand as the “one and only” choice in the minds of the best customers and clients’

A journey of plateaus.

As entrepreneurs, it’s a natural state to be goal driven. At every stage of business growth, you will face challenges that block progress. This is true for those at the early struggle phase of their business, and for those whose established business has reached a plateau.

Growth and expansion is a never-ending journey wherein success and accomplishment eventually becomes a plateau—a growth trap. Linger too long on a plateau and things begin a slow decline. Anything that stops growing starts dying. It’s a law of nature.

Unfortunately, Nature has equipped humans with the ability to “acclimate” to our surroundings. In the days of eat or be eaten, hunter-gathers needed to acclimate to their new surroundings quickly so they would know what was safe and familiar within their environment and what was not. Acclimating to surroundings was a useful survival skill. This is not so when it comes to growing your business—especially at the early stages.

This acclimation principle, the result of thousands of years of human evolution, will dull your mental state and keep you from getting to the next level. Everything eventually becomes a plateau. What was once a big customer or client win, will eventually become a routine client. Your excitement attracting talented employees can eventually become a heavy overhead burden. Your once innovative products and services can become commodities. You get the idea. Inevitably, you'll get acclimated to every level of accomplishment you experience. With every success, you can become more comfortable resisting the necessary calculated risks in pursuit of new opportunities. When fully acclimated to your accomplishments, it's easy to fall into the trap "if it ain't broke don't fix it". Eventually you'll find yourself lingering on a plateau stale as week-old bread. Plateaus are an early warning sign—indicators you've stopped growing. Sound familiar?

We can get stuck and often we do.

Plateaus are traps. In my own business life, I lingered on a plateau for well over a decade. Once fully acclimated to a level of success, it was very difficult for me to gather the will and courage to push myself off my own comfortable perch and move on and up to the next level of growth. Eventually the changing marketplace forced the issue for me—it was either change or be sent to the bone yard. The path to freedom and prosperity is a journey of plateaus. Each new level of success brings with it the satisfaction and fulfillment of reaching your goals but it's easy to stay comfortable and stop growing. Plateaus are good for brief periods of rest nothing more.

Just remember the key to maintaining momentum and growth is never allow yourself to linger too long in the comfort and safety of your accomplishments. If your success becomes a plateau, it will eventually evaporate under your feet.

But if you're moving on a steady climb, conforming to the natural Law of Increase, you'll always be looking up and out for new opportunity in what's next.

Venture out onto the wild frontier—far from the known comfort and safety of your current circumstances or accomplishments. Moving up from a plateau requires you break free from your familiar position and expand your capabilities into new territory where you can innovate unexpected value for customers that result in higher value relationships.

Just like a rocket breaking free of earth's gravity, tremendous focus and energy is required. Your dominant frame of mind—thinking in a certain way—is what determines your speed and trajectory. Higher value relationships are the basis for you to have more impact and influence in the marketplace.

As you bring more value to customers and clients, you become more to yourself and to all others important in your life. It's not about what you get, but what you become.

Whether you're in the early struggle phase of your business, or you're well-established making plans to take your business to the next level, the strategic principles outlined in this manifesto offers a reference point inspiring you to develop a more disciplined, creative frame of mind to go far beyond what you may now believe is possible for you to accomplish.

I'm reminded of the classic baby elephant trainer story. If I recollect it goes something like this:

Circus elephant trainers use a simple technique to manage the movement of baby elephants by binding a hind leg with a shackle and chain linked to a stake in the ground. The baby elephant can only walk around in an area controlled by the length of the chain, but they're not strong enough to break free of the chain.

In time, the baby elephant realizes its life experience is limited to the small circle around the stake in the ground. The baby elephant acclimates to the small circle, the boundaries of its known world defined by its circumference.

As the baby elephant grows into a massive, powerful creature completely capable of breaking the chain, trainers know the grown elephant would never try to escape. The reason is simple—the elephant had learned what the limits of its world had become and never imagined it could be so much more.

Entrepreneurs can be like the baby elephant, limiting their opportunities by the known circles of their current circumstances—never realizing they have the power and strength to break free at any moment. Your vision for a bigger future of freedom and prosperity begins in your formless imagination. Making it a reality requires you break free from the mental chains holding you back.

My hope is you'll find the The White Hot Center Manifesto a reference point to inspire and elevate your strategic and creative thinking enabling you to take quantum leaps to 10X your impact, influence, and income. More importantly, creating a remarkable life experience through the venue of your thriving business.

1

As you think so it becomes

Most people are aware of the commonly accepted principal that if you're going to create anything in the physical world you must first create it in your mind. It is a great self-evident fact and law of nature, which cannot be too often repeated –as you think, so it becomes. Every human being is their own designer, builder, creator. This is especially true for 21st entrepreneurs. And like a creator, your creations are made within before they can materialize on the outside.

As obvious as this principle may be, living in our chaotic, complex, cluttered world, is getting exponentially more difficult for human beings to think straight about anything. Look about you. Our modern 21st century world is not exactly a Zen Garden of blissful tranquility. In our social media obsessed culture there's way too much discord, nonsense and negativity capturing our attention embedding itself into our consciousness, clouding and interfering with our natural abilities to "think in a certain way" to elevate our circumstances. Thinking is the source of reality. It's cause and effect. This first principle is at the heart of the ideology of this manifesto.

This is a discipline of thinking in a certain way that creates the power to invent, change, transform and elevate our life experiences for the better. Because the mind is the governing factor and power in the quality of our life experiences, the progress of any individual is determined by the ruling state of mind. It is the quality of our thinking that determines our state of living. Thinking in a certain way takes Jedi-level-mind-trick discipline requiring vigilance to have all your highest mental faculties fully present and available in every moment.

If you don't agree with this ideology, nothing stated in this book past this sentence will be of much interest or value to you. You can put this book down now.

On the other hand, if you're an enlightened, open-minded human with wide and tolerant views coupled with wholesome convictions about building your bigger future, you're in the right place. Thank you for being here. Please read on.

The small mind, however, need not remain small and underdeveloped. It can grow and expand into higher expression and creative power. There's no high-minded formula involved. The practice of thinking in a certain way is simple and straight forward—as one improves their convictions, ideas, and mental pictures, they improve their experiences. Anyone can do it. This truth is governed by law. Like gravity, it is always operating. The law tells us the mind is no greater than its conceptions. As one aspires to realize this fundamental truth, one must inevitably grow in understanding and application. The greater the power of mind, the greater the competence to conduct the affairs of life for greater advantage. The ruling state of mind is the governing power of creativity, innovation, and abundance.

If you're breathing, it's impossible to stop thinking.

You can't stop thinking but you can control what you think about. Because thoughts become things, it's a really good idea to be aware of what you're thinking about. A person who dwells on thoughts of lack and limitation will naturally gravitate toward like conditions and draw in others who are like minded.

Prosperity and poverty in life are not opposites; they are merely two sides of one and the same thing. They are but one power rightly or wrongly used. The mind can only hold one thought at a time. We cannot think about plenty and fret about our lack at the same time. Our experiences are the result of the dominant frame of mind. Consequently, our dominant frame of mind must be directed to what we desire in order that the desire may be fulfilled.

Nature does not differentiate between the seed of a flower and that of a weed. She causes both to grow. The same creative energy is used for both. Nature takes no chances. There are no ifs, ands, or buts involved in her natural laws. So it is with the mind. Your thoughts determine what is planted and grows in your life experience. If you throw a rock into the air, it will fall back to the ground. Our thoughts and the results they produce are governed by law with the same precision and predictability.

As a 21st century entrepreneur, if you want to transform your life and business to higher levels of success, transform your thinking to higher levels of thought. It's as simple as that. In an unforgiving marketplace, you can't afford the luxury of limiting or negative thinking. If you fear your competitors, and believe their presence controls your success, they will. If you believe you don't have enough of what you need, you'll never have enough. On the other hand, if you

believe there is an abundance of opportunity always available, and your thinking is always in that inspired direction, opportunity will always be present for you. The power that creates your bigger future takes place in the fire of an inner forge—the white-hot center of the creative power of your intention, invention, intuition, inspiration, intensity, and innovation.

Intention is your desire to create products and services people love and can't live without.

Invention is your capability to bring your ideas from the formless into form.

Intuition is the inner voice that tells you where opportunities are to be found and what course of action is right to pursue.

Inspiration is what moves you to imagine and create ever more value for people.

Intensity is the measure of your grit and commitment to go “all in” on your ideas and plans.

Innovation is creating new value in the marketplace rather than compete for the value already created by others in your market category.

Taking advantage of these forces and putting them to use requires the discipline of maintaining a creative

frame of mind. These forces become the spiritual software necessary to build bigger futures for all concerned. For a very small segment of entrepreneurs, these powerful inner forces are forged and strengthened into mastery. These entrepreneurs are the ones who build remarkable companies. Some of them have become icons and legends we all read about. Much can be learned and applied by their example.

Every remarkable business that ever was, is now, or will ever be starts with a formless idea inside the head of an entrepreneur—that incredibly foolish, courageous, committed idealist with a passion, purpose, cause, to improve the condition of a customer’s life. Creating greater value for your customers requires you hold higher inspired thoughts on what is possible despite evidence of unfavorable circumstances.

If your business is to grow, scale, and thrive in the 21st century economy driven by ideas, you’ll have to choose between thinking and operating from the competitive plane or the creative plane.

When your business operates on the competitive plane:

It can only win when somebody else loses. You will only bring products to market that are based in incremental user needs, and abundantly available from other sources. You’ll be forced to compete at the lowest price. Crazy ideas that are without form and are

unproven will be discounted in favor of safer known concepts and the status quo. Your culture will be motivated by control, competition, and survival.

When your business operates on the creative plane:

There will be no shortage in the supply of opportunity. You'll innovate and design products that redefine the category, delighting customers with the unexpected, making competition irrelevant. Your customers will experience more use value than they pay in cash value—making price irrelevant. Your culture will be focused on turning possibilities into realities. You will not count transactions but create experiences people love and build trust that marketing and advertising money simply can't buy.

Make time away from your urgencies to think. Take in an honest assessment of your current circumstances. Benchmark your levels of satisfaction and fulfillment in every area of your life and business. Whatever you see around you now is the physical evidence of the quality of your past thinking. We attract only what we think and get whatever is our own. Thinking in a certain way is the first manifesto principle and discipline to master.

2

Know what you want, decide to pursue it, expect it will be delivered to you

Against an unforgiving marketplace, the journey from idea conception to business fruition is marked by numerous challenges and uncertainties. For startup and early-stage entrepreneurs, the key to navigating this complex terrain lies in the principle of knowing precisely what you want, deciding to pursue it, and expecting it will be delivered to you. This principle, while seemingly simple, encapsulates the power of focus, clarity, and faith as essential components for an entrepreneur to boldly and confidently venture into the realm of a startup business.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT, DECIDE TO PURSUE IT,
EXPECT IT WILL BE DELIVERED TO YOU

Defining your bigger future.

It's imperative your strategic thinking reflect three essential elements: knowing what you want, disciplined action toward its realization, and the unwavering faith that you will get there. The creative combination of these three elements powers an ever-evolving process increasing your value to customers. Where ever you are the entrepreneurial journey, it is paramount to define the primary purpose, vision, and mission of your business far beyond money-making right from day one.

What do you want to achieve in your life and business?

What is the specific problem you aim to solve for a specific customer?

What singular "idea of value" do you intend to represent in the mind of your customers, and what benefits will customers receive they simply can't get from alternatives in your business category?

Your answer to these fundamental questions forms the strategic foundation upon which your business will build its influence and competitive advantage with high value customers. However, a common pitfall for many early entrepreneurs, in an effort to capture every potential customer, is the temptation to cast a wide net, trying to appeal to as broad an audience as possible. Resist this temptation. Your success lies in specificity.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT, DECIDE TO PURSUE IT,
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Knowing precisely what you want to accomplish serving the needs of higher value customers in a well-defined niche enables you to strategically position your products and services with precision.

Airbnb, got started by precisely targeting a very specific market: attendees at a design conference in San Francisco who needed a place to stay. By understanding the needs of this niche and delivering a unique high value solution, Airbnb laid the groundwork for its eventual global success. This exemplifies the power of knowing precisely what you want and who you intend to serve.

99% is a bitch. 100% is a breeze.

Once you've defined your primary purpose, your desires and vision for success, and who you will serve, the next crucial step is making the unwavering decision to pursue it. This decision is not just about committing time and resources; it's about committing your full passion, energy, and unwavering dedication to seeing your vision come to life. Regardless of unfavorable circumstances you must be "all-in". You've heard the expression, "99 per cent is a bitch, 100 per cent is a breeze". Nothing less will do.

Entrepreneurship is not a journey for the weak minded and undisciplined. The all-in decision to pursue your desires becomes the anchor that keeps you grounded during turbulent times and propels you forward during moments of triumph. This commitment is not a mere

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verbal declaration; it is a daily choice and discipline to overcome inevitable challenges, learn from setbacks, and persist in the face of unfavorable circumstances.

Consider the story of Elon Musk, the visionary entrepreneur behind companies like SpaceX and Tesla. Love him or hate him, despite facing numerous obstacles, including financial setbacks and technical challenges, Musk's unwavering commitment to his vision of a sustainable future through electric vehicles and space exploration has been a driving force of every idea he pursues.

Rain dancing.

Regarding achievement, I'm reminded of the parable about a tribe of American Indians, who never failed to make it rain when they would do their rain dance. Every time, 100%, when they danced, it rained! The secret to their 100 percent success rate, when other tribes had far less success with the same dance, was simple—this tribe never stopped dancing! Think about that. They never stopped dancing until it rained! That's faith.

Faith strengthened their persistent action and expectation in knowing dancing is what creates rain. Rain is what they wanted—so they danced! Faith is vitally important to every result of being, doing and having. Believing is seeing. Faith is "knowing that you know" something you desire is going to happen even

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when the current circumstances seem unfavorable. It isn't a hunch, or an educated guess. It's knowing with absolute certainty, that no matter what it takes, it will happen. What does your rain look like? What are you dancing for?

It's just a matter of time.

Creating success in life and business is like rain dancing. It takes time and persistent action even when there are no clouds in the sky. This creation process, like everything else in nature, has a gestation or incubation period. The human pregnancy has a gestation period of 280 days. It's more or less set. A carrot is 11 weeks; an elephant is 15 months—each in their own time.

But unlike carrots, elephants, or humans, achieving desired success takes its own sweet time. Many entrepreneurs quit dancing before it is time, their faith and expectation of creating success expired. They give up too early not aware that the time necessary for manifestation simply hadn't past yet. Frequently, the gestation period for achievement takes much longer than the anticipated time most entrepreneurs are willing or able to invest in it.

Expectation, when rooted in faith and belief, is the transformative force in your entrepreneurial journey. It goes beyond mere optimism; it is a deep conviction that your efforts will yield the desired results.

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When you expect success, you are more likely to persevere through challenges, find creative solutions to problems, and attract opportunities aligned with your vision. This mindset has profound impact on your decision-making, actions, and the overall speed and trajectory elevating your business beyond the early struggle phase.

Consider the story of Sara Blakely, the founder of Spanx. Armed with a clear vision with unwavering faith and belief in her product, she faced numerous rejections from potential investors before eventually finding success. Her positive expectation and refusal to accept defeat were instrumental in her turning Spanx into a global brand phenomenon.

Never desire what you don't expect to experience, nor expect to experience what you don't desire.

Strategic focus, discipline and faith is the guiding light that illuminates the path forward for startup and early-stage entrepreneurs. In our digital social media driven world of unrelenting distractions, the entrepreneurial journey will always be rife with uncertainties. Knowing what you want, deciding to pursue it, and expecting it will be delivered to you is an essential principal in our Manifesto. The mental attitudes of desire and expectation represent lines of attractive force. Desire without expectation is little more than idle wishing and dreaming.

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This involves clarity and strategic focus – making intentional choices about where to allocate your time, resources, and energy. It requires saying no quickly to opportunities that don't align with your core objectives, resisting the allure of short-term gains that may compromise your long-term vision. Clarity is about having a crystal-clear understanding of the impact you intend to make. It involves communicating these aspects transparently to your team, investors, and customers, creating a cohesive narrative that resonates with all stakeholders.

Consider the example of Patagonia, an outdoor apparel company known not only for its high-quality products but also for its unwavering commitment to environmental sustainability. The clarity of Patagonia's mission has attracted a rabidly loyal customer base and positioned the brand as a champion of ethical business practices. Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia says, "we follow our beliefs, customers follow us". Elegantly simple.

The Intersection of Faith and Disciplined Action.

Faith, in the context of entrepreneurship, is a belief in the potential of your own vision and the disciplined actions you take to realize it. Faith becomes the bridge connecting to what you want, deciding to pursue it, and expecting it will be delivered to you. This intersection of faith and disciplined action involves taking the calculated risks, embracing uncertainty, and persisting

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EXPECT IT WILL BE DELIVERED TO YOU

in the face of challenges. It is the understanding that setbacks are opportunities for growth and learning. It is the recognition that your success requires continuous adaptation, iteration, and evolution.

For startup and early stage 21st century entrepreneurs, the principle of knowing what you want, deciding to pursue it, and expecting it will be delivered to you is a powerful guide on the path to achievement. As you navigate the challenges of an unforgiving marketplace, let this principle serve as your compass, guiding you toward the realization of your vision and the fulfillment of your entrepreneurial dreams.

3

Do what matters to you, and what matters must serve others

Being a 21st century entrepreneur, true magic happens when you intertwine your personal fulfillment with a purpose that serves the good of others. This foundational success principle stands strong: do what matters to you, and what matters must serve others. This principle declares the importance of creating a ripple effect that brings not only personal satisfaction and fulfillment, but also makes a significant, impactful contribution to the quality of life for customers, employees, partners, and your entire industry.

Meaning + Contribution = A life of significance.

I'm confident that you didn't start your business with a desire for control, power, financial success and building empires. I'm confident that you started your business as a profound quest for meaning, contribution and deep personal fulfillment. To create a life of significance. I'm confident your motivations were to align your passions with your professional endeavors, creating a life and business that resonates with your core values and serves higher value customers and clients. I'm confident you started your business to be a venue of self-discovery, mastery, and continuous advancement. Before you read on, take a moment to reflect on these proverbial questions:

What really matters to you in life?

What is the wrong you want to right in the world?

What type of people do you want to serve, employ, and partner with?

To advance, your business must reflect two essential elements: what matters to you, and what serves the good of customers, employees, and partners. One is no good without the other. They are two sides of a coin. The creative combination of these two elements powers an ever-evolving process for innovation and increasing your value to customers. This creates powerfully satisfying relationships, greater results for customers, greater loyalty to you, and sustainable

growth for your business. Trite as it may sound, it's essential to engage yourself in what you love—in what matters and brings meaning and joy to your life. Your business is a creative venue for this expression. When you're fully engaged in a passion, purpose, or cause, that holds great importance you realize there are no limits to your personal growth and business success. You delight in asking yourself, "how far can I go?"

Doing important work you love enhances enthusiasm, confidence, and unbridled creative energy for proposing creative ideas to grow your value and contribution to people. It's an attractive energy to be around. Who wants to do business with someone who only wants to close the sale?

Creative entrepreneurs are naturally drawn to engage in their deepest passion/purpose/cause through the venue of a viable growing business. There is no forced or contrived effort in creating new value for people. Creating value becomes a natural extension of purpose and mission. Their motivation is the catalyst for a profound connection between doing meaningful work with an unparalleled level of personal fulfillment. The world is full of clichés riddled with motivational platitudes on the idea of "love your work and you'll never work a day in your life" mantra. And while I wholeheartedly believe in this idea, the day-to-day reality for most entrepreneurs in the early struggle phase doesn't quite live up to that familiar trope. Many of the entrepreneurs I've advised at the beginning

didn't really seem to be having too much fun. Most were in the stress and pain of resistance to change. The day-to-day urgencies running their business had beaten the life out of their once lofty notions of passion and purpose. Grit and hard work is most definitely required to do what matters. However, after thinking in a certain way, soon they regain their strength and start to appreciate their growth challenges became the gravity drawing their focus and disciplined actions in closer to achieving what really matters. The strength of their conviction and purpose withstands the weather of unfavorable circumstances. With that clarity, they form their battle cry to organize people and money around their idea of value enduring the pain to make it so. As a business owner/leader you will always face the realities of uncertainty, risk, and the need for resilience. However, it's precisely in overcoming these challenges that the pursuit of personal fulfillment is realized. The antidote for uncertainty is your dominant frame of mind—thinking in a certain way—creatively rather than competitively.

Consider Richard Branson, the maverick entrepreneur behind the Virgin Group. Branson's ventures span diverse industries, from music, airlines to space travel. Branson's success is not measured in financial terms but in the joy he finds in exploring his many passions. Branson's disciplined pursuit of what matters to him, combined with a commitment to serve others through innovative and customer-centric businesses, amplified his celebrity as the poster boy for personal fulfillment through the venue of a successful business.

Your ripple effect.

Every influential business has a ripple effect that encapsulates a single powerful idea — your business can be a force for positive change, creating an expanding impact that extends far beyond your individual success and fulfillment. At the core of this notion is the understanding your business is not just a transactional entity exchanging goods and services, but a platform to touch and elevate the quality of life of customers, employees, and partners. Through your business, you create a ripple effect—its impact and value is beyond calculation. This begins with customers whose need or desire authentically aligns with your higher purpose (beyond money-making). Strengthening your focus on serving a specific customer segment that represents the most fervent users and advocates of your products and services is the essential first step.

All you need is love.

Customers are looking for the right match to provide the solution they seek that will have a positive impact on their life. Once they find their match, it's a love fest. Imagine what it would mean for you and your business if the customer relationship was built on a loving healthy foundation. No exploitation; no heavy selling, only a heart-to-heart connection. The exchange of money (rings) being a symbol of your mutual commitment. Brand power is measured in mutual love and devotion. Your business must be cherished.

Ripples through the ecosystem of the marketplace.

Another important element to your ripple effect in the marketplace is to consider how your idea of value is expressed through community. People like to form communities. To be part of a tribe. It's our nature. Consider how the idea of value that matters to you will support the customer's individual needs and desires as well as the need to belong to a healthy and vibrant community.

Your ripple effect extends to your employees as well. A workplace culture that prioritizes the well-being, growth, and fulfillment of its employees creates the attraction and retention of the best talent, higher job satisfaction, less turn-over, loyalty, and productivity. When people feel valued and connected to a larger purpose through their work, it resonates and radiates into their personal lives, creating another ripple of positive influence that extends into their community and far into the world. Your ripple effect will touch and expand your network of investment partners and collaborators. When your business operates from the creative plane, integrity, fairness, and a commitment to mutual success, it contributes to the overall health and sustainability of the entire ecosystem that surrounds your business and your industry. Positive and ethical business practices are the gold standard that inspires and encourages partners to invest in your vision and mission, fostering a relationships of trust, responsibility, and collaboration.

The transformative power of your ripple effect is exemplified when your passion, purpose, and cause aligns with a broader social or environmental purpose. 21st century entrepreneurs are increasingly recognizing their leadership role in contributing to the greater good. When sustainability, social impact, or philanthropy are woven into the idea of value your business represents, the ripple effect reaches further into communities and creates incalculable good will far beyond the immediate business purpose. This alignment of business goals with societal well-being is a hallmark of the new breed 21st century entrepreneurs.

The strategic principle “Do what matters to you, and what matters must serve others.” produces a transformative effect that underscores the profound impact your idea of value can have on the lives of customers, employees, partners, and the broader community. Your contribution to the increase of those you serve and lead is a prerequisite for the new breed of 21st century entrepreneur. The call to action is clear: do what matters to you and let what matters to you serve the good of others. Build a business that not only brings personal/professional satisfaction and fulfillment to you but also creates a positive ripple effect that touches customers, employees, partners, and your industry. The Beatles had it right, “Money can’t buy me love”. Your satisfaction and fulfillment as a business owner is not measured in money-making; rather it's measured in the meaningful and lasting impact you have on the world.

4

Begin now with what's at hand

Bringing new value to the marketplace is often hindered by levels of limitation and procrastination that accompany the prospect of acting on new ideas and innovative solutions. Gaining traction and momentum toward any accomplishment demands a mindset shift encapsulated in a simple yet potent principle: Begin now with what's at hand. In the realm of the unseen forces, there is no shortage of supply. Possibilities are boundless. When would NOW be a better time?

There is no shortage of supply.

There is a law in physics that states nothing can become something nor can something become nothing. Substance can be converted, transmuted, changed in millions of ways, but it can never be destroyed. For example, plant an acorn in the soil and a tree will grow. Each year the tree will bear leaves in the spring and shed them in the fall. The leaves drop to the ground, and in time, become soil again which forms other things. Eventually the tree will die, fall to earth and decay. The decomposed timber slowly is hardened into coal. The coal is mined and becomes energy to be used in a myriad of useful applications. Following this natural cycle, if it can be measured accurately, we would find that not one molecule of substance was wasted or lost in the process. There can never be a shortage of supply.

Using this simple logic, everything required to grow your business is abundantly available right now. The key to this principle is found in "what's at hand". This principle underscores the necessity that you have an understanding that what is required for your next big idea is always available. If you have a big vision to bring new value to the world, start now. Take the essential first step and begin to gain traction, momentum, growth, and the fulfillment that comes from turning your formless ideas into real life innovations for customers and clients.

In times of change and transformation, you must be drawn into acting now rather than worry and wait for more favorable, less risky circumstances to appear. Fretting and worrying about supply tends to restrict and limit creative thinking. Instead, educate and discipline the mind to a higher state of thinking. When we realize more abundance out of what we already have, we can draw in more supply in whatever form we may need. Entrepreneurs may often feel constrained by a sense of scarcity, believing they lack necessary resources or opportunities. Yet in reality, supply surrounds us always. There is no scarcity. Everything that is required is always available. It might not currently be in physical form, but supply is available, nonetheless. Where there is no demand there will be no evidence of supply. Only when people demanded a means to travel with more speed, comfort, and luxury, did necessity conceive the idea of the automobile. Once a need is realized, the supply is always forthcoming. Like the iPhone.

Consider the story of Airbnb co-founders Brian Chesky, Joe Gebbia, and Nathan Blecharczyk. In 2008, they faced financial challenges and sought a creative solution. The breakthrough came when they realized an unfulfilled need and decided to rent out air mattresses in their apartment during a design conference. This humble beginning, far from a perfect idea, or big market demand, set the stage for Airbnb's global success. Chesky and his team's ability to begin with what they had, iterate, and learn from their initial experiment became a testament to the power of embracing action in the face imperfection.

Small moves big results.

Perfectionism and overthinking are common foes of early-stage entrepreneurs. In the speed of the 21st century marketplace, waiting for the perfect time to act on your big product idea can lead to snooze you loose. Begin now and figure it out as you go. The myth of the entrepreneurial journey is often romanticized as a Silicon Valley adventure filled with one grand breakthrough moment that propels a startup to unimaginable heights. Many aspiring entrepreneurs yearn for that singular, big idea that will define their success and set them apart. Although it's possible, the reality for most is quite different. Success is more likely to be the outcome of small, consistent efforts with iterations unfettered by perfectionism and complexity.

While the idea of a groundbreaking moment is alluring, the myth of the overnight success can overshadow the reality of countless hours of hard work, perseverance, and strategic decision-making that may or may not lead to that eventual breakthrough. Like water carving rock, small, daily efforts compound over time, gradually building momentum and creating the speed and trajectory for long-term growth. Discipline of mind and consistency in action is a cornerstone of business success. Those who consistently begin with what's in hand from where they stand are more likely to overcome the inevitable challenges and emerge

successful. Consistency is about learning, adapting, and refining based on continuous feedback and experience. The process of building an influential business is inherently uncertain, and waiting for one grand breakthrough moment is akin to “putting it all on red” at the roulette wheel. Recognizing the value of small disciplined moves and incremental progress helps you and your team stay motivated and focused on learning. Embracing a mindset that values the lessons learned from setbacks and challenges will enhance your effectiveness to navigate future obstacles, pivot when necessary, and turn setbacks into opportunities for growth.

The story of WhatsApp, founded by Jan Koum and Brian Acton, exemplifies this principle. Koum and Acton started by creating a messaging app with a focus on simplicity and user experience. The breakthrough didn't come from a grand revelation but from addressing a real need and consistently refining their product based on user feedback. WhatsApp's success highlights the cumulative power of incremental steps and ongoing refinement.

The Power of Iteration and Adaptation

The principle of “begin now with what's at hand” represents a simple, pragmatic and action-oriented philosophy. It's an acknowledgment that waiting for perfect conditions or the ideal set of resources leads to missed opportunities. Entrepreneurs who embrace this mindset are willing to take the leap of faith,

recognizing the unseen forces cannot work to their advantage without first providing, through their action, the pattern to follow. The commitment to iteration and adaptation also aligns with familiar agile business concepts of design thinking and the minimum viable product. Rather than waiting to develop a fully featured product, agile entrepreneurs focus on a rigorous understanding of their customer creating a version with just enough features to meet the immediate needs of early adopters.

This allows for a quicker entry into new markets, facilitates rapid customer feedback, and accelerates the learning curve. Subsequent iterations are then informed by real-world usage and user feedback, ensuring product innovation evolves in tune with actual market demands.

Back in the early 80s, Seiko and Casio were driving incremental innovation in quartz watches—believing most people wanted technical precision. However, a small Swiss watchmaker recognized a fashion trend in the culture at large that people cared more about self-expression than geeky technical precision. From this insight, the Swatch watch was born and proved to be a radical innovation of meaning that created a radical business success.

No one was asking for a Swatch, iPhone, Uber or Amazon. Yet once these innovations were revealed, customers eagerly embraced the unexpected. Bring products to market that transform a known concept into something

remarkable. You won't scale a me-too product into an influential business and brand no matter how much money you spend on marketing. Adaptation is a dynamic process that responds to the evolving landscape of markets, consumer preferences, and technological advancements.

Be quick and get in early.

Entrepreneurs who are free to iterate and adapt demonstrate a keen understanding of their customer's needs and remain relevant to shifts in customer preferences. Agility is a competitive advantage. Pivot quickly to capitalize on emerging opportunities. There is power and advantage to "getting in early".

Begin now with what's at hand is a principle that encourages a mindset of freedom and experimentation. By understanding there is no shortage of supply, being open to experimentation, and not being paralyzed by imperfections and market acceptance, 21st century entrepreneurs create a culture in their business that fosters creativity and bold action. With this mindset, failures are celebrated as useful learning, pointing a path toward more innovations.

Begin Now.

"Begin now with what's at hand" emerges as a guiding principle for response-ability and innovation at the speed of the 21st century marketplace. Embrace the transformative power of starting with what is available now, having faith that what is required will be supplied. Seize the opportunity, take that essential first step, then begin to experience traction and momentum, and the fulfillment that comes from turning your formless ideas into real life innovations for customers and clients.

Carpe diem!

5

As you live in your days, you craft your future

It's easy to get tangled up in the whirlwind of future projections and the regret of past failures. The challenges of being an entrepreneur are endless.

However, let me share a timeless principle with you—one that might reshape the way you navigate your entrepreneurial journey: Your future is not tomorrow or next year – it's right now, in this very moment, waiting to be crafted by the decisions you make, the relationships you nurture, and the presence you bring to each second of your journey.

Forget the past, your future is now.

Imagine your entrepreneurial journey as a painting in progress. Each stroke of the brush contributes to the shaping of your masterpiece. And like the stroke of a brush, each decision, each relationship, each interaction plants the seed of your future. This concept might be obvious to you, but its implications are nevertheless profound in its effect. Consider the decisions you make daily—big and small. Consider the direction of your business, the products you design and develop, the team you assemble, what your business and brand stands for, to whom it matters, and how your desired image and reputation shapes your future business success. These decisions can only be made in the present.

It's easy to become fixated on the grand vision and your long-term goals, but it's the daily decisions that accumulate and shape the narrative of your life and business success. Your future isn't a point of arrival on a distant horizon; it's embedded in the choices you make now in the present—with what you have and from where you stand right now. Forget the past, your future is now. This is the mental discipline of a master entrepreneur.

The past is dead as Abraham Lincoln.

As an entrepreneur, it's tempting to dwell on past successes or failures, allowing them to dictate the narrative of what's the right decision to make or what's

to come. Here's the liberating truth: past success or failure does not determine future success or failure. They are not connected. If you will pardon yet another platitude, the past is water under the bridge – dead as Abraham Lincoln. The only way the past gets to the future is through the now. Now is all you have and all you will ever have. Indeed, the past can be a valuable teacher, offering experience to inform your decisions, but it has no power or influence to predict the outcome of your journey. That can only be accomplished in the present moment. This manifesto principle, and its kissing cousin “Begin now with what’s at hand”, declares a timeless truth about the essence of creativity and accomplishment—it can only flourish in the present moment.

Author and philosopher Eckhart Tolle, in his book, “The Power of Now”, encapsulates the idea that the transformative power of creativity can only be harnessed in the now. One of his pivotal insights is that the present moment is the only state where true transformation and mindful creativity can be experienced. His timeless wisdom resonates harmoniously with this manifesto principle, reinforcing the idea that creativity is an immediate, living force only accessible in the present. The good news is everything you will ever require to fulfill your desire can only be found in the moment. And in the moment, there is no shortage of supply. What ever is at hand is all you need to take your life and business to the next level.

Forget the future too.

As entrepreneurs it's easy to fixate on viewing the desired future as a distant destination—an endpoint to be reached. The philosophical point here is there is no future you can experience. You can only live in and experience your current state. Forget worrying about the future. Your future is not a destination you're striving to reach; it's a journey you're living right now. The quality of your presence in each moment holds the transformative power to shape not only your personal experience but also the very fabric of your enterprise, team relationships, and the overall influence and impact your business provides to customers and clients. Like a tapestry woven in real-time, each decision, interaction, and passing moment contributes to the intricate design and creation of your desired future. Your desired future is not a static or fixed point out there somewhere on the horizon—it's a nonstop reality crafted with each breath you take. One moment flowing into the next. Time marches on. Time is the only precious resource we humans have. None of us knows for certain just how much of it we have. Our limited resource of time is wasted regretting the past or worrying about the future. In the pursuit of entrepreneurial goals, a mindful presence on the value of time invites you to acknowledge and express gratitude for the successes thus far. It's gratitude that nurtures a positive creative mindset (thinking in a certain way) for you, but also fuels the motivation and enthusiasm of an appreciative workplace culture and the delight of your customers and clients.

Infuse every moment of your entrepreneurial journey with your purpose, passion or cause. Your purpose is woven into the daily fabric of your decisions and actions in real time. Your ability to stay present connected to the deeper meaning and purpose behind all your decisions and actions form the seeds of a bigger future. The idea being your desired future can only be realized by your full participation in the present moment. This principle emphasizes the power of mindfulness, authenticity, and the discipline required for creating a desired future. In crafting your future, embrace the uncertainty of the present moment. You can't control or predict every twist and turn of the marketplace, nor should you try. The juice and joy of entrepreneurship lies in the unknown possibilities that each day brings.

Rather than worrying about the past or obsessing over an uncertain future, focus on the canvas before you—on the decisions, relationships, and outcomes that you can shape right now. As you live in your days, remember you hold the brush painting your desired future. Paint boldly, decide intentionally. Nurture relationships authentically and be fully present to suck as much joy out of every moment you are blessed with.

6

Embrace simplicity

Complexities in creating value will abound. Follow the timeless wisdom in the principle of embracing simplicity. The notion of doing everything in life and business with an easy, relaxed manner is not just a philosophy; it's a strategic approach that reduces stress, friction, burnout, eases decision-making, and fosters disciplined action. This principle declares the transformative power of pursuing your accomplishments in a simple, easy and relaxed way.

Do everything in an easy and relaxed way

Entrepreneurs, driven by passion and ambition, can often find themselves entangled in the web of complexity, overthinking, and perfectionism. The belief that every decision must be flawless or that every idea must be proven before execution leads to a paralysis of action. Embracing simplicity as an operating discipline is the antidote in the face of unrelenting complexity in our 21st century world. Simplicity is purity. Simplicity is natural and elegant. Simplicity is honest and authentic. Simplicity is the enlightened path.

When passion and ambition fuel accomplishment, the mantra of "do everything in an easy and relaxed way" may seem counterintuitive. The entrepreneurial spirit is often synonymous with drive, ambition, and an unyielding intensity to succeed. However, the paradox lies in the realization that drive and ambition, unbridled and unchecked, can lead to overthinking, perfectionism, and procrastination. No need to make things harder than they already are. Entrepreneurs, propelled by their visions and dreams, may inadvertently succumb to the pressure of making every aspect of their business ideas proven and perfect before execution. The irony is in the relentless pursuit of perfection, the potential of the business is stunted. We're all familiar with the expression "things that stop growing start dying". Traction and momentum are quickly stalled in the friction of unnecessary complexity. The antidote to this stagnation is found in embracing simplicity as a guiding principle.

Simplicity is more than a minimalistic aesthetic or a reduction of complexity. Simplicity is a disciplined mindset (thinking in a certain way), an approach to strategic decision-making and execution grounded in the purity of thought and action, an acknowledgment that complexity is not synonymous with better. In our 21st-century world, where complexity often masquerades as a requirement for progress, simplicity becomes the great differentiator for competitive advantage.

The principle of Occam's Razor, also known as the law of parsimony, is a philosophical and scientific principle that suggests that, when faced with multiple competing explanations or hypotheses, the simplest one is often the most likely to be correct. The principle is attributed to William of Ockham, a medieval philosopher and theologian. The essence of Occam's Razor lies in the preference for simplicity and minimal assumptions when seeking an explanation for a phenomenon. The principle can be articulated as "Entities should not be multiplied without necessity" or "Among competing hypotheses, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected."

In other words, when making decisions and taking action, do everything in an easy and relaxed way. Simplicity is natural and elegant. It is a return to the creative essence of ideas and actions, stripping away unnecessary layers to reveal the purity within. This means focusing on your chief aim or desire without unnecessary complication or complexity. It involves prioritizing what truly matters to you and eliminating everything else not aligned to your mission.

Simple is honest.

In a marketplace saturated with marketing and slick branding, authenticity is a rare and valuable currency. Customers and clients are naturally drawn to businesses that are easy to do business with, exude ease, sincerity and transparency. Entrepreneurs who embrace simplicity in their communication and interactions quickly build a level of trust that forms the foundation for life-long mutually beneficial relationships.

The mantra "do everything in an easy and relaxed way" does not advocate for complacency, sloth, or a lack of ambition. Instead, it encourages a shift in mindset—an antidote from the conventional wisdom that states levels of stress and complexity over details are necessary ingredients for success. The pursuit of excellence can coexist with an easy, calm, and enlightened approach. In fact, the clarity that simplicity as a discipline brings often enhances the speed, ease and quality of decision-making and problem-solving.

Embracing simplicity is a deliberate choice to untangle oneself from the web of overthinking and perfectionism so easy for early-stage entrepreneurs to get caught up in. It's an acknowledgment that your path forward is a series of iterative steps. At the speed of the 21st century marketplace, waiting for every condition to be perfect is a luxury you cannot afford. Simplicity invites action, learning and adapting as you go, discovering the elegance in your imperfect progress.

The story of Dropbox founder, Drew Houston, is a great example of this principle. Instead of waiting for the perfect product, Houston released a minimal viable product that addressed a fundamental need for easy file sharing. The simplicity of the initial offering allowed for quick user feedback, iterative improvements, and accelerated growth in users. This approach of embracing imperfection and simplicity laid the foundation for Dropbox's success.

Overcoming Complexity Bias.

The inclination to believe that forward momentum requires complex strategies can really slow things down. Complexity bias, the tendency to favor complex solutions over simple ones, is a fog that can blind innovation and agility. Embracing simplicity involves challenging the biased assumption that more intricate and complex strategies are inherently better.

In scientific and philosophical inquiry, embracing simplicity is a rule of thumb or guideline that helps researchers and thinkers choose between competing explanations. The underlying idea is that simpler explanations are more elegant, easier to understand, and less prone to errors or complications. The razor part of the Occam principle metaphorically cuts away unnecessary elements, leaving behind a more streamlined and straightforward solution. Pardon the platitude, but keep it simple stupid comes to mind.

Simplicity can be a powerful differentiator. Customers are drawn to products and services that are easy to understand, use, and integrate into their lives. Entrepreneurs who can overcome complexity bias gain a competitive advantage by providing elegantly designed products that provide uncommon user-friendly experiences. Steve Jobs was a genius at applying this principle. The good news is Jobs didn't have any more of the same human mental faculties as you have. Simplicity is a discipline anyone can embrace.

The ultimate sophistication.

Embrace simplicity is a guiding first principle that weaves through your strategic and creative decision-making and builds an organizational culture that creates value in an easy and relaxed way. The enlightened path involves recognizing the beauty in imperfection, and challenging the trap of unnecessary complexity.

Dropbox's MVP approach, Steve Jobs passion for minimalist design, Amazon's two-pizza approach, Google's culture of simplicity, and Airbnb's straightforward platform – are all instructive examples on how extraordinary entrepreneurs transform the world through power of simplicity.

As an early-stage entrepreneur, the call to action is clear: embrace simplicity as a strategic imperative driving every aspect of your business. Whether in product development, go-to-market execution, or building a customer focused culture, doing everything in an easy relaxed way is your enlightened pathway to innovation, efficiency, and sustained success.

In the words of Leonardo da Vinci: "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." In a world that celebrates complexity, simplicity emerges as a beacon of clarity and authenticity. It's a call to action, urging entrepreneurs to embrace a mindset that values bold action over procrastination, authenticity over pretense, and progress over perfection. Simplicity becomes a fundamental philosophy that drives an extraordinary life experience though the venue of an influential business.

7

The best idea is the one you think is impossible

In a cluttered and noisy world saturated with conventional wisdom and status quo, true innovation lies in breaking free from the shackles of limited thinking and following what's commonly expected. Dare to imagine and achieve what seems impossible for you. The uncharted territory is where remarkable discoveries are made. As you invent new value for customers, embrace the strategic principle:
The best idea is the one
you think is impossible.

Don't be afraid to put your own "dent in the universe".

In a world inundated and satisfied with conformity, where the status quo prevails and accepted norms dictate the boundaries of thought, true innovation requires breaking free from the shackles of limited thinking and belief. This principle beckons 21st century entrepreneurs to defy the expected, to transcend the confines of known and commonly accepted ideals, and to dare to imagine what quite literally seems impossible.

I first heard this expression reading Walter Isaacson's fascinating biography of Steve Jobs. Amid clutter and noise in the marketplace, Jobs had a genius level of understanding that uncharted territory is the fertile ground where remarkable groundbreaking innovations are made. He pursued ideas that others would not or could not. Embracing the principle "the best idea is the one you think is impossible" becomes a mantra for those who (like Jobs) seek to redefine the boundaries of possibility and shape a bigger future.

It has always come down to one person who changes everything. History has given us thousands of examples of extraordinary human beings who were different and made a difference for human kind.

Here are a few of my favorite examples:

Richard Buckminster "Bucky" Fuller was an American architect, systems theorist, author, designer, and inventor. For most of his life, he was considered a kooky eccentric outsider shunned by the scientific establishment of his time. Regardless of conventional wisdom, Bucky never ceased to create and bring his ideas to the world. In his lifetime, Fuller published more than 30 books, popularized the concept of "Spaceship Earth" that changed how we view the planet we call home. He also developed numerous inventions, mainly architectural designs like widely known geodesic dome. Carbon molecules known as "fullerenes" were later named by scientists for their structural and mathematical resemblance to the fractal geometry of Bucky's geodesic spheres. For Bucky Fuller, there was no box.

The Wright Brothers were seen as a couple of crazy nut jobs tinkering in their bicycle shop late at night. Despite having no formal aeronautical engineering training, they designed the first airplane to fly- they succeeded in showing the doubting world that yes, people could fly. Like all innovators, they were outliers to conventional wisdom and their contributions forever changed life for everyone on planet earth. Amazing what a little bike shop tinkering can do.

Ben Franklin was a major dude! Unlike the other notable founders of America, Franklin was self-made. Beyond that distinction, ol' Ben is a remarkable example of the "enlightened entrepreneur" that we would all do well to study—especially in this hyper-digital, socially connected world we are currently living in. Ben's approach to innovation and service is a model we all can follow today. Not just for his writing, printing, and publishing innovations, but rather for his values and philosophy—which he masterfully embedded into his many astounding accomplishments as an admired entrepreneur and global statesman. Most, if not all, of Franklin's inventions were designed for the good of his community, not for his personal profit. And yet, his business success enabled him to "retire" from commerce in his mid-40s. His version of 18th century enlightened entrepreneurship – virtue, character, and service– was way ahead of his time and so desperately needed in the 21st century world of today. There's a reason ol' Ben's kisser is on the C-note.

Steve Jobs proved that surprising and delighting the market again & again with exciting, unexpected game changing products could change humanity. He achieved these outcomes despite increases in global competition, a roller coaster economy, quickening competition, and limited resources. Jobs created one of the most admired and innovative companies in the world, by having the guts to be different, think different, and act different. As a result, he transformed the world of technology, music and entertainment. In fact, it was Jobs who coined the phrase "put a dent in the universe" and made that mantra his life's work.

Conventional wisdom limits creativity and stifles innovation. Full stop. It represents the collective slush pile of accepted norms, creating a vibe that discourages deviation from an established path. However, as the heroes I've mentioned prove, true advancement always lies beyond the boundaries of the familiar. It requires a willingness to challenge the norm, question assumptions, and risk everything while doing so.

As a 21st century entrepreneur, you must develop your skill to color outside the lines of conformity. Breaking free from the constraints of conventional thinking, innovators open themselves to a world of limitless possibilities and supply. Innovators dare to imagine what's next. History is replete with examples of innovations that were initially dismissed as impossible or impractical. Embracing the belief that the best ideas reside in the realm of the "beyond your reach" fosters a mindset that embraces risk wittingly, encourages experimentation, and protects you from following the herd and crawling your way to middle.

Uncharted territory is where creativity meets uncertainty, and where true innovation thrives. Stepping into this unknown terrain requires the courage and willingness to embrace ambiguity. It demands a fearless departure from the comfort of the familiar and past accomplishments. It's within the realm of uncertainty that opportunities for discovery and transformation have historically emerged. The most remarkable and revolutionary ideas

lie hidden in these unexplored realms. For those who dare to imagine beyond the confines of the ordinary, there's no limit to what seems possible.

Moreover, this principle challenges the notion of perfection. Adherence to the pursuit of perfection is a real buzz kill to progress. The fixation on flawless execution will paralyze your creativity and your initiative. As we have discussed throughout this manifesto, your mindset is everything. An open expansive mind eliminates a closed future. It encourages experimentation, risk, learning from failures, and iterating and refining ideas over time. In the process, what was once deemed impossible becomes the stepping stone to unprecedented achievement. Breaking free from the limitations of conventional thinking and embracing the belief that "the best idea is the one you think is impossible" becomes the discipline for building an extraordinary life experience through the venue of your business.

For the 21st century entrepreneur, the immortal words of Steve Jobs resonate more profoundly: "Don't be afraid to put your own dent in the universe." Your business is not just about products, services and just making money; rather it's about leaving an indelible mark on the world, challenging what's normal, and shaping the world in a way that aligns with your highest aspirations.

Be a Pioneer of the Impossible.

As an early-stage entrepreneur, you will encounter moments when the path forward is obscured, and the resources needed for progress appear to be in short supply. However, don't let visible supply or circumstances limit your thinking and potential. Trust in the invisible supply. Your vision and resilience to pursue it are your guiding lights. Your desired outcomes are not preordained by the existing circumstances; they are shaped by your unwavering vision and the resilience to navigate your way through inevitable challenges.

Jeff Bezos started Amazon as an online bookstore, an impossible idea and success wasn't immediate. Bezos had an innovative, forward-thinking vision that extended far beyond selling books online. He envisioned a platform that could sell almost anything, driven by innovative technology and customer-centric values. His resilience weathering the impossible with all-in commitment to his long-term vision transformed a baby startup into a global e-commerce giant.

Innovations that dent the universe are a result of audacious thinking and belief. It's not an easy path to walk. That's why so few entrepreneurs will elevate beyond the early struggle phase of their business. By innovating around life experiences and higher meanings, by refusing to fear imposter syndrome, and by not limiting your thinking and potential to visible supply, you become a pioneer of the impossible. Let the legendary stories of Bucky Fuller, The Wright Brothers,

Ben Franklin and Steve Jobs inspire and guide you. They did it and you can too! They didn't have any more mental faculties bestowed upon them as you have been bestowed with. These icons weren't content with the status quo; they redefined it. They didn't limit their creative thinking; they expanded it.

They were pioneers of the impossible.

What's next for you?

Where will you go from here?

The world is waiting for your revolutionary ideas, and the universe is ready for the dent only you can make.

8

Be different make a difference

In every business category customers have an abundant choice of alternatives. Customers decide who leads the market and who follows. Those entrepreneurs who dominate their market category always represent an “idea of value” in the minds of customers and clients that’s simply not available from the slush pile of alternatives. An idea of value is a benefit received so important to customers they would never consider an alternative because it would not be in their interest to do so.

Standing out and making a difference far above the alternatives available to customers is not just an essential for your competitive advantage—it's necessary for your existence as an enterprise. And the bar is set ever higher in a crowded market. The principle of “be different, make a difference” answers the perennial question “why should I do business with you?”. Consider the most successful brands in the world, and you'll realize that their allure extends beyond the quality of their products or services. They have crafted an identity that goes beyond the transactional – it's about philosophy, shared values, culture, lifestyle. To stand out in a sea of sameness and earn the loyalty of high value customers, employees, and partners, start by answering these fundamental questions:

What is the passion/purpose/cause that matters to you?

What does your business stand for that customers desire?

What do you (your organization) do “better” than anyone else that customers care about and is not available from alternatives?

How does your “idea of value” differentiate and distinguish your business in ways that matter to customers and clients?

How does your difference command premium prices in a cluttered market?

Your answers will be found at the intersection of being different and making a difference. It's not just about offering and delivering quality products and services, that's table stakes. The world is full of good me-too products and services. Everything is good. Good is the slush pile, the discount rack, the middle.

Being different for its own sake, cool as it may be to be perceived as an outlier, is not enough to make a sustained difference to customers. Your difference is about making a lasting impact that enhances the lives of customers elevating them to a higher condition. Within this principle is the spiritual software that builds a remarkable, fulfilling and deeply satisfied life and influential business.

The Battle Cry: Defining Your Idea of Value.

In a marketplace crowded with alternatives, customers are not just seeking products or services that fulfill their functional needs; they're yearning and searching for a connection, a story, a reason to believe when choosing one option over another.

What do you stand for and are known for that is highly valued and not in abundant supply? Your idea of value represents a commitment, a declaration of what you stand for, what sets you apart, who you serve, what you will not compromise on as demonstrated by your consistent behavior in the marketplace.

To strategically position the idea of value you bring to the world it must meet these criteria:

- **Your idea of value must be simple, specific, motivating and of unquestionable relevance to the needs/desires of your customers and clients.**
- **Your idea of value must provide a unique and highly desired benefit/solution that is ownable, credible, sustainable, and extendable.**
- **Your idea of value must be emotionally compelling to customers and clients.**
- **Your idea of value must be distinctive and differentiated from alternatives.**

Consider the remarkable story of TOMS Shoes. Beyond offering stylish and comfortable footwear in a crowded category, TOMS idea of value stands for a one-for-one model: for every pair of shoes sold, another is donated to a child in need. This commitment to social responsibility became the heart beat of the brand, resonating with consumers who want their purchases to make a positive impact. TOMS didn't just sell shoes; they represented an idea of value distinctively different from alternatives which made a meaningful difference in the world.

Your idea of value reflects your purpose, passion, cause, values, mission, and the impact you aspire to make for customers, employees, and partners.

It's your battle cry. It's everything—the whole enchilada organizing the unseen forces to conspire for your advantage. When customers, employees, investor partners, align with the values your business represents, it creates a deeper connection that transcends transactional relationships. This can only be established through consistent behavior and customer experience. Marketing and advertising claims won't cut it.

Excellence is an experience.

Your idea of value must represent a highly desired customer experience. In a crowded market the attributes of “quality” and “low price” are a given and abundantly available. Not enough to distinguish your business from alternatives and create competitive advantage. All things being equal, customers tend to go where they are treated best. Being surprised, delighted and treated well is a desired experience that never goes out of style. People are more than happy to pay extra for an excellent experience.

Apple is an iconic example. Beyond its sleek design aesthetic and trend setting products, Apple's extends amazement, delight, and inspiration through every aspect of the customer experience. From the moment a customer walks into the inner sanctum of an Apple Store, opens the box to their new iPhone, and experiences with delight the seamless integration of hardware and software, there can be no comparison. To devoted customers, Apple stands alone.

Excellence is an experience that breeds trust and loyalty. When customers trust your business will consistently deliver desired outcomes of exceptional value, it establishes levels of trust essential in building long-term, financially beneficial relationships. Excellence is not a marketing claim but an experienced reality. In the iconic wisdom from the movie *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, "Be excellent to each other".

Move to the head of the line.

Being different is not about novelty. Your difference must be relevant. It's about offering a solution that addresses a need or desire in a way that no alternative can or will. When your business stands out as distinctly different and highly relevant to a need or desire, it enhances your position and consideration in the customer's sales/buying cycle. It can move you to the head of the line. Lest we forget, humans are naturally curious, drawn to uniqueness that captures attention, sparking interest and curiosity. Looking, acting, and selling products and services like everybody else will make your business invisible.

Dollar Shave Club, in a commodity category dominated by established players, disrupted the market with a subscription-based model that delivered high-quality razors and supplies at a fraction of the cost of those purchased in retail stores—but with an attitude. Their commitment to ease and simplicity coupled with irreverent marketing set them apart, ultimately leading to a billion-dollar acquisition by Unilever.

Being different and distinct from available alternatives provides a competitive edge during the crucial stages of awareness and consideration in the customer's journey to purchase. When customers are evaluating options, a distinctive presence coupled with a compelling "idea of value" becomes a determining factor. It's the reason new customers will choose to explore your offerings, giving you the opportunity to expand and build high value relationships with an expanding base of customers and clients.

Relevant Differentiation

If a sustainable competitive advantage is the key to a growing an influential business, relevant differentiation is its source. Being really good (delivering high value outcomes) and being really different (not many alternatives to your offer) is a strategic imperative for every startup and early growth business. The idea of value your business represents to customers who can't live without you is the dominant force behind your sustained competitive advantage. However, the reality is we live in a world that changes at warp speed where customer's needs, preferences and behaviors can turn on a dime. Relevant differentiation is not static. It requires continuous innovation and iteration. As cultural influences and customer preferences change so must your idea of value. Being constantly attuned to customer needs, societal trends, and technological advancements allows you to adapt and ensure your business remains relevant and ahead of the expected status quo.

A Difference That Matters.

As a new breed of 21st century entrepreneur, make your own bold proclamation and embrace the critical task of defining your unique promise—your idea of value to customers, employees, and investment partners. In the vast sea of choice and options available to customers and clients, your idea of value is the lighthouse that guides them to the your trusted shores. It's the beacon of what you stand for—an ideal highly valued and in short supply. Embracing the principle of be different make a difference is the only pathway to extraordinary success. This requires your unwavering commitment to making a difference that matters to you and to the world though the venue of your thriving business

9

Provide more use value than you receive in cash value

Within this principle lies the source code for building an extraordinary competition-proof business and the master key to sustained wealth. Providing your customers with more “use value” than they pay you in cash does not mean you provide more for less money. On the contrary! This is an abundance principle that simply proposes whatever the amount of cash value your customer pays is always reciprocated with an experience the customer perceives as being of far greater use value.

Value is always in the eye of the beholder.

When your offer/product/service is valuable to a customer, it will provide a high value solution to an affliction or help achieve a dream or desire. In other words, “use value”. Solve a specific problem or help a customer achieve a goal and the customer will have received good use of your offer. Your degree of value is determined by the degree of relevance to the customer’s need or desire. When you’re relevant to a customer need or desire, you command their attention. Attention is the currency of the marketplace. When your idea of value commands the attention of clients and customers, you will have positioned your value with distinction and razor-sharp precision. Whenever customers perceive greater value in the use of a product or service than what they paid in cash for it, they become raving, loyal, life time customers, if not outright non-paid word of mouth advocates of your business.

To successfully implement this principle in your business, you must believe that value is never created in the competitive realm (win/lose, hard bargains or lowest price), rather it comes from the creative realm (inspired creative thought, innovation, service). Provide your customers and clients with more use value than you take from them in cash value and you will be adding to the life of the world, not to mention making your price

and your competitors irrelevant. At the heart of this principle, you find the holy grail of competitive advantage – strategic positioning of your value that commands premium pricing.

The Essence of Use Value

Basically, use value is defined as the financial worth a customer places on a product/service/experience based on its utility and ability to fulfill their needs and desires. When use value is perceived to be more valuable than the cash value to obtain it, resistance to price evaporates. It's essential to recognize that the value a customer places on their desired outcomes often exceeds the monetary value of the buy/sell transaction involved. Value is deeply subjective and personal to the customer. Price resistance is only an issue in the absence of perceived value.

Consider the success of Slack, the team collaboration software platform. Slack didn't just offer a communication tool; but a deep understanding of how teams work in the digital age of remote work; and in the process transformed the way teams work together. By streamlining communication, enhancing collaboration, and providing a platform that genuinely improved people interaction and remote workflow, Slack delivered a high use value experience to a devoted user base willing to pay a premium for the productivity gains and seamless experience Slack provided.

The gold standard of strategic positioning.

Strategic positioning is the decisive move that separates the leaders in a business category from all the other players. Providing more use value than what is received in cash value embodies the gold standard of strategic positioning. Salt is common, diamonds are rare. Scarcity is fundamental to supply and demand. People tend to place more value on what is in short supply.

Consequently, in the mind of a customer or client, the idea of value that your business occupies in the mind can only be obtained from you. When you're the ONLY source in the marketplace where clients believe they can remove pain or achieve their desire, your competitive advantage is guaranteed. When your strategic positioning is centered in the principle of scarcity, (not many alternatives to the value you offer) you will also command premium pricing. It's not merely about competing with available alternatives; it's about positioning your value as the unequivocal one and only choice that goes beyond meeting functional needs and surpassing parity expectations.

The Deserted Island Theory.

The nexus of competitive advantage and premium pricing is where the super power of entrepreneurial alchemy occurs. Providing more use value than cash value received isn't just a customer service delivery

modality; it's the key that unlocks sustained competitive advantage. Customers are not just purchasing products or services; they're investing in high value outcomes and experiences. Products and services are simply the mechanisms to transform the customer's current condition to a better one. Customers are more concerned with achieving their desired outcomes (use value) than they are about the mechanism used to achieve it. Reminds me of a familiar story about the customer stranded on a deserted island. If I recall correctly, it goes like this:

Consider the customer stranded on a deserted island (Island 1). It's very small. There is no food, fresh water, little shelter, or shade. The conditions are unbearable. Now imagine that there is a second island within sight, yet out of reach. On this second island there's lots of food, fresh drinking water, comfortable shelter, shade, and family and friends who are anxiously waiting to welcome the stranded customer. The customer has a burning desire and is highly motivated to get off the deserted island. The sooner the better.

One day an entrepreneur comes along to Island 1 and offers the customer a boat to transport him to Island 2. Do you think the stranded customer cares if the boat is made of wood, fiberglass or inflated air? Does the stranded customer care if there is a fast motor, comfortable seats, or a shaded canopy for the journey over to Island 2? Of course not! The only thing the stranded customer cares about is will the boat successfully transport him from

Island 1 to Island 2 (In other words, achieving the desired transformation). And because there's not a lot of available alternatives, the customer is more than happy to pay the entrepreneur any price to achieve the desired transformation. (premium pricing)

The stranded man doesn't even care if it's a boat (the form of your products and services) that delivers the desired transformation. The mechanism that delivers the transformation could be anything— a rocket ship, a Star Trek transporter, or holding on to the dorsal fin of a dolphin. The stranded customer doesn't care. The mechanism to achieve the transformation doesn't matter. The stranded customer is seeking the most effective means to get from one state (stranded on Island 1) to a higher state (getting safely to Island 2).

The moral of the story is simple:

When you are creating value (the mechanism) for your customer, focus on creating a transformation (use value). You are creating the best and only way to help your customer get to their desired higher state.

The job of the entrepreneur is to facilitate a desired transformation at the highest price the market is willing to pay to use the mechanism (product or service) to achieve the desired outcome. The more motivated the customer is to achieve the desired transformation, and the few alternatives available to do so, the more valuable the mechanism is to the customer for achieving the transformation regardless of its form or method.

The rise of Spotify in the chaotic music streaming industry is the result of the application of this principle. Beyond providing access to an extensive library of songs (the mechanism), which all competitors provided as well, Spotify understood that users sought more than just music; they craved personalized experiences (the transformation). The use value extended beyond the songs themselves to curated playlists, personalized recommendations, and a seamless user interface. Spotify's commitment to providing exceptional use value allowed it to adapt and innovate its service offering transforming how we listen to music and elevating its position as the leader in the crowded streaming space.

More than a sales pitch.

In the 21st century marketplace, trends evolve, and markets transform seemingly overnight. Your products and services may undergo iterations as conditions require, but your commitment to delivering high value transformations to customers must remain unwavering. More than just a business development or sales strategy; the application of this principle becomes an oath of abundance demonstrated by the unlimited use value you are providing customers and clients who seek experiences only you deliver.

Look beyond the popular business culture narratives and recognize mastery of this core principle is not reserved for the industry titans we all read about. It's a principle within the grasp of every entrepreneur, regardless of the scale of their business. As a new breed 21st century entrepreneur, let the principle of providing more use value than you receive in cash value be your north star in creating scintillating, inspiring and transformative experiences for your customers and clients love and can't live without.

10

People are more important than money

Like a conductor of a symphony, you're the leader that organizes every instrument and voice within your business, so the customer hears your beautiful music. Every person plays an essential role critical to the harmony of your business.

For your business to grow and scale, there's a fundamental truth that echoes louder than the quest for sales and profits: People are more important than money. If you get this reversed, soon the music will stop.

Nurturing the heartbeat.

The most valuable asset of your business is your people. It's people who breathe life into your vision, carry the torch of your mission, and infuse their passion into creating transformative experiences for customers and clients. It's through the quality of your leadership that you attract and retain the right team, build a customer-focused culture, and foster an environment where the well-being of your people, not money, take center stage. The foundation of a thriving business is laid by talented and supremely capable people who join you on the journey to a bigger future. Attracting the right team goes beyond talent and skillsets; it's more about people who resonate and share your values and embrace your mission as if it were their own.

Building a customer-focused culture begins with instilling this mindset across all levels of the business. It involves fostering a shared understanding that the pursuit of customer delight is a collective effort. Recognizing and appreciating the value of every person within your organization is crucial for employee engagement and motivation. When people understand how their contributions are valued and directly influence desired outcomes, they are more likely to take pride in their contribution and go that extra mile. This unified sense of purpose becomes a driving force and commitment to create beloved customer experiences.

Take the example of Ritz-Carlton, a luxury hotel chain renowned for its exceptional customer service. Ritz-Carlton doesn't merely train its staff; it instills a customer-oriented philosophy. Every employee, regardless of their position, is empowered to make decisions that prioritize customer satisfaction. This commitment to its people has built a customer-focused culture that elevated Ritz-Carlton to legendary status in the hospitality industry.

Money as a Consequence.

Money is a consequence, not a focus of motivation. Money should be down the list of importance in the mutual decision for a prospective employee to join your enterprise. Generous compensation is only one factor in attracting and retaining the best talent to your business. This challenges the conventional perspective that places monetary compensation at the forefront of employee motivation and negotiation. This principle advocates for a shift in that mindset, urging employers to consider money as a consequential aspect of the employment relationship rather than the central focus in their hiring decisions. For many entrepreneurs, there exists a prevailing belief that financial incentives are the primary drivers of employee motivation. While competitive and fair compensation is undoubtedly crucial, this principle suggests that money should not be the sole or central focus during the hiring process or in ongoing employee engagement efforts. When the money is considered a consequence rather than the primary motivation, it signals a deeper understanding and appreciation of the purpose of your business shared by all.

Money isn't everything.

Beyond money, employees yearn for an environment where their contributions are acknowledged, their skills are utilized, and they feel a sense of personal value within the organizational framework. Generous compensation, in this context, is seen as a reflection of the respect and appreciation an organization has for its workforce. It is an acknowledgment of the time, effort, and skills employees invest in their roles serving customers. Compensation becomes a tangible manifestation of the business value placed on their contributions to the business. There's a ton of research and books on organizational psychology that highlight the importance of non-monetary factors in employee motivation. Suffice it to say, recognition, a positive and flexible work environment, opportunities for professional growth, and a sense of higher purpose are significant contributors to job satisfaction and performance. Recognizing these factors, creates a workplace culture in your business where employees are motivated by a combination of intrinsic rewards coupled with generous financial compensation. Adopting the idea that money is a consequence involves a comprehensive approach to employee engagement. It includes transparent communication about the organization's values, opportunities for skill and personal development, acknowledgment of individual and team achievements, and the rewards that come with that recognition.

Building a culture of appreciation and recognition ensures that people feel valued beyond their monetary compensation, contributing to a more fulfilling and motivating work experience.

Costco, the membership-based retail giant, exemplifies this principle. Costco compensates employees significantly higher than the industry average and provides benefits that include generous health insurance and retirement plans. The result is a dedicated and motivated workforce that views employment at Costco not just as a job but a means to a richer life experience. By prioritizing fair compensation as a consequence of employment rather than a motivator, Costco has created an environment where employees are fully invested in the success of the company simply because it's in their own interest.

Leadership: The quality of your presence.

While financial considerations are central to all business relationships, a leader's commitment to the well-being, growth, and fulfillment of their team members beyond money is what defines the character of the new breed 21st century entrepreneur. This commitment creates a culture where employees are valued, supported completely, and motivated to contribute their best efforts to the shared mission of the business. It goes beyond transactional employee relationships, fostering a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. This is essential for satisfying relationships and sustainable success of the business. Your ability to articulate, embody, and operationalize your purpose and values is an essential

leadership trait. In the early struggle phase, the leader serves as the living embodiment of the organization's core principles and strategic narrative. By consistently aligning your actions with your values, you set the standard for conduct and how your business will create value. This becomes a touch stone for decision-making on who is the right fit for your mission. Genuine care for the well-being of your team is a critical dimension of your leadership that shapes the quality of your presence in the marketplace.

At the early stages, you will often wear multiple hats. Consequently, it's critical for your effectiveness to cultivate a supportive, nurturing, high performance work team and a supporting environment to go with it. This requires you delegate authority and not micro-manage their decisions. When you appreciate the unique strengths and challenges of each team member, you can better provide mentorship, and foster a culture that prioritizes balance, respect and well-being. When employees feel cared for, they are more likely to be engaged, loyal, and motivated to contribute their best to the company's success.

Under the leadership style of Tony Hsieh, the late CEO of Zappos. Hsieh built a company culture centered on happiness and customer service. He emphasized the importance of employees enjoying their work and created an environment where individuality was celebrated. By prioritizing people and culture, Hsieh turned Zappos into a customer service powerhouse and a workplace renowned for its employee satisfaction.

The quality of your leadership impacts the morale, commitment, and overall productivity of your people. It creates a wake, influencing the interactions and relationships within and outside of your business. This is particularly crucial in the early stages when the organizational culture is still taking shape, and the influence of the leader is most pronounced. By prioritizing people over profits, embodying and articulating values, and genuinely caring for the well-being of the team, you set the battle cry for a culture that fosters a deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment.

People make the music.

A business that endures has leadership that understands people are the true assets of the business. People make the music and rhythm that propels the business forward. Attract the very best talent by aligning your values and mission to people who love doing what they are doing for you. Build a customer-focused culture where the well-being of every person and role matters to the quality and health of the whole. Compensate generously as a consequence of employee contribution with a focus on individual respect for their talent and capabilities. As the conductor your symphony, lead by your own example demonstrating your genuine commitment to the well-being and professional development of your team. Remember that the true health and wealth of your business lies in the hands, minds, and hearts of the people who breathe life into it every day. Your people make the music customers love to hear. Your people are more important than your money.

Create experiences people love

A new breed of 21st century entrepreneur is emerging driven by social change and doing good—in other words making a difference rather than just making money. As the marketplace grows in clutter and noise, customers are beginning to distrust marketing claims. They're beginning to realize an exploitive marketing driven consumerist culture might not be the most sustainable model for the well-being of their community and Mother Earth.

Doing good is good business.

In a free-market capitalist society, profit is essential to the central order of things. Don't get me wrong; there is nothing evil or sinister in the desire for a profitable business making lots of money. It's fun to make money and more fun to do good. Capitalism and altruism are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, doing good and doing good business are two sides of the coin. In the 21st century marketplace, both are required to build a brand people love and can't live without. Consequently, a new breed of entrepreneurship is rising all over the world. This new breed of entrepreneur is driven by creating experiences people love for the betterment of all concerned through social change and contribution. There are three attributes defining the new breed 21st century entrepreneurs:

They're driven by a Passion (a deep personal conviction based in a higher purpose beyond money).

They enjoy sustained Profits (creating massive economic value in their business by doing good things).

They care about Mother Earth (making a positive impact on the health of the environment and quality of life for all).

These are the types of entrepreneurs who go on to build a remarkable life and business. My hope is you have self-identified with those attributes and count yourself among them. That said, it's great to have a high calling

and purpose and all, but to act on it, to bring good to the world you must make a financially successful business out of it. That requires attracting and connecting with a growing segment of customers and clients who cares as much about what you / your business stands for as you do.

As the marketplace grows in clutter and noise, customers are beginning to distrust marketing claims. If they don't ignore them all together. Customers are beginning to realize an exploitive marketing driven consumerist culture might not be the most sustainable model for the well-being of the community and Mother Earth. More customers today only support a business that is making impactful good on the culture, their community and the planet; or at the very least doing no harm. These enlightened customers are often more than happy to pay a premium price as well- their loyalty drives the profitability of these social enterprises so they can do ever more good. Pardon the platitude, but I say let the circle be unbroken.

For the new breed 21st century entrepreneur growing a social change business, marketing gets baked into the value they create by their behavior not their claims. These entrepreneurs know they can't brand and market their way to the trust social good earns. The authenticity and integrity of these businesses is the currency of trust and goodwill with their customers and clients.

The rise of social entrepreneurship is a paradigm shift and a hallmark of the new breed of 21st century entrepreneur. Many thousands of purpose-based businesses are forming each day all around the world. And the numbers are growing each year. This reality presents a serious challenge to the entrepreneur focused solely on counting transactions rather than creating experiences people love. Sustainable success is measured by the lasting impact created by doing good things for people. "Create experiences people love." is a principle that transcends product quality, customer service and sales transactions. It's about building rewarding long term relationships, fostering contribution, and adding to the quality of life for people through their experience of doing business with you. At every touch point and interaction, creating experiences people love is an imperative business strategy every 21st century entrepreneur must master.

Goodwill to do more good.

Doing good creates goodwill. Goodwill is the magnetic force that powers enduring and more rewarding relationships; not to mention its contribution as a quantifiable business asset supporting many multiples of dollar value in a future exit. Your goodwill is calculated by your wisdom, knowledge, trust, contributions, and respect of all who interact with your business. The essence of creating experiences people love begins in surprising and delighting customers—at every touchpoint and interaction with your business.

Goodwill is earned through innovative products and services customers love and can't live without. Creating experiences people love by exceeding their expectations, delighting their senses, elevating their condition through products and solutions they weren't asking for, didn't know they needed, yet once revealed, become indispensable. No one was asking for an iPhone. Before the iPhone, smartphones were functional devices, and the concept of a device seamlessly integrating communication, entertainment, and utility was unprecedented. Apple's innovation went beyond meeting the known functional needs of customers; it anticipated unspoken desires and created a transformative experience. Most of us can't live without our iPhone. I know I can't.

Creating experiences people love isn't confined to customer satisfaction, it extends to the advancement of your employees, suppliers, strategic partners, and your entire industry. Sharing your insight, knowledge, wisdom, and contributing to the collective growth of your industry is an embodiment of the earned goodwill of an influential and beloved business. Doing good in all aspects of your business earns levels of goodwill and trust marketing and advertising money simply can't buy.

My favorite do more good example is Patagonia. Not only does Patagonia design and produce sustainable products, but also engages in environmental stewardship and activism. Patagonia's commitment to environmental causes,

including taking back used apparel and donating a significant percentage of its profits to grassroots organizations, goes well beyond the corporate responsibility practiced by competitors in their category. Patagonia creates a brand experience for customers who align with the company's values and appreciate the broader impact their purchases have on the planet.

Creating experiences people love ripples into the lives of those in the surrounding community. Doing good for your community is not just expressed as acts of philanthropy or community service; rather it's an act of your gratitude. Giving back from the cup of your success to the collective well-being is the hallmark of the new breed of 21st century entrepreneur.

Doing good and doing good business is woven into the tapestry of this manifesto principle. As an operating philosophy, it goes far beyond the daily threads of selling products and services; it's about weaving new connections, delivering meaningful innovation, advancing industries, fostering employee well-being, and advancing the quality of life for all touched by your business. In the symphony of your business, you're the conductor determining where each voice and note will contribute to the harmonious melody of the music you're creating. Let your bold manifesto refrain be one of doing good things for people. For, in doing so, you not only build a successful enterprise, but create a legacy that transcends transactions—a legacy cherished not just for what you sold but for the good you did.

12

Serve more, sell less

The essence of sustainable sales success is not found in manipulative sales tactics but in the actual elevation of your customer's condition for the better. A service-oriented approach to your sales and business development initiatives, grounded in genuine care and value creation, is the white-hot center of enduring relationships and long-term business success. There is a fundamental principle that must be engraved into the DNA of your business:
Serve more, sell less.

In service to the customer's advancement, not yours.

People love to buy, but few of us love to be sold. And fewer of us like to sell. As critical as it has been to my own business success, I never liked the process of selling all that much. For me, and many entrepreneurs like me, selling tends to put the focus on persuasion in a state of neediness rather than real connection in a state of service. To me, selling felt like a tacky activity attempting to persuade a prospective client to buy from me. No matter how many books I read or the seminars I attended I always felt resistance to selling. Reminds me of how I felt when selling newspaper subscriptions door-to-door back in high school. I got a lot of doors slammed in my face. I took it as personal rejection. As a 14 year old kid, I just didn't know any better. Consequently, later in life, that experience negatively framed my thinking about selling when I started my business. I hated selling even while knowing its fundamental importance to my survival. Fortunately for me, early on in my business I hired a mentor/guide who I respected and had achieved what I was hoping to accomplish. Like Obi-Wan and Luke Skywalker, teaching me the ways of the force, I learned to demonstrate to a prospective client how I can help by genuinely helping them—right from the very first conversation. My focus was on building new relationships not selling services to strangers. From that moment on, as word got out, clients came to us. There was no pitching, persuading, or selling involved. And best of all, no competition either.

In all my years collaborating with startup and early-stage entrepreneurs, I've only met a handful who honestly enjoyed the hustle and grind of prospecting, cold-calling, networking, and the hustle of early stage selling or lead generation. Like me, most would rather focus more on the fun stuff, plus most aren't very good at that stuff anyway. For me, I can't think of anything more distasteful than cold-calling or sending troves of spammy emails to strangers. A common reply to my outreach (if I even got a reply) would often go something like this, "I don't know you. I've never heard of your firm. You're interrupting me. Are things so bad you need to call a stranger and ask for business?" The door slammed in my face feeling like that kid who sold newspaper subscriptions way back when. To survive, I had to change my thinking and the mental distortions I held in my mind about selling. I learned the lesson early on that the marketplace rewards those who earn and deserve rather than those who desire and need. Without that understanding, early-stage business development was worse than passing a kidney stone.

On the other hand, perhaps like you, I love to serve people—helping them get closer to the better outcomes they desire through the value I provide. I want to add value whether a prospective client buys from me or not. Helping your prospective customer or client gain just a little bit more clarity and traction toward a desired outcome goes a long way in them moving you to the head of the line when it comes time to buy. Eventually the good karma of serving another's interest and desire

with no strings attached will always come back around in the form of new customers. Sharing the love operating on the creative plane rather than the competitive one. The purpose of a business development and sales process is to advance and elevate the customers condition. Not sell them something. Not surprisingly, over the years, I've received many new business referrals from prospective clients who had never hired me simply based on how I helped them in some way take the next step.

21st century entrepreneurs are value creators.

In your business development efforts, the big question is are you selling to or serving your customers and clients? Do you know their needs, pains, frustration, challenges? Do you know what keeps them up at night banging their head against the ceiling? How can you move them a little closer to achieving their desired outcome? Having this insight could mark the turning point in growing your startup and early-stage business to the next level. Simply put, serve more, sell less. In your business development and sales efforts, adopt a "we exist to serve you" mindset and embed it throughout your entire organization. Be a value creator not an order taker.

The cornerstone of a serve first mindset is set in mutual trust and respect. You cannot serve first if you're not first trusted and respected. Customers and clients must reach out to you not the other way around. When a customer or client reaches out, the power in the sales

conversation now reverts to you the seller. This principle empowers you to invest as little of your time and resources as possible in the sales process. You will know quickly which clients are a good fit for you and those who are not. Your power is in saying “no”. Remember not every client will be worthy of your service first mindset whether paid or otherwise. When your idea of value resonates with a growing segment of high value customers, and that is coupled with a serve first customer focused sales culture, sales grow naturally, organically, authentically in an easy and relaxed way.

This principle can be applied to every type of business—from product categories to professional services. There are many ways for every product or service business to adopt a “we exist to serve you” business development mindset. But whatever path you take, that mindset starts at the top. As the leader of your enterprise, your mission is to increase your impact and influence with higher value customers through your behavior baking the “selling” into the very experience of doing business with you.

Unlike order takers, value creators are not in abundant supply. Order takers are salt. Value creators are diamonds. Value creators offer new ideas, insights, solutions customers may not even be aware of. And once revealed to them becomes the very thing they’ve been waiting for – just not asking for. The mindset of a value creator is grounded in deep understanding of the clients current condition, where order takers are merely

focused on selling more products or services. Consequently, value creators enjoy the holy grail of unparalleled competitive advantage and premium pricing.

Tell me where it hurts.

Being a value creator requires the skill of careful listening. If you want to forge new and enduring relationships and create lots of opportunity, listen twice as much as you speak. Listening is a far more important business development, marketing, and sales skill than copywriting a verbose, ill-timed, irrelevant, intrusive sales pitch to a complete stranger.

When having a sales conversation with a prospective client, do you find yourself formulating your responses in your head while the prospective client is still speaking? Hoping to make a sale, do you ramble on about the features, benefits and quality of your products or services? Do you experience pressure to volunteer price discounts as incentives to resistant buyers? If you want to kick up your game for greater sales effectiveness, start by being a good listener. Listen as the customer or client tells you where it hurts so you can help them. When you listen to someone—really listen, you honor them. Listening is a form of respect. When you listen intently, you demonstrate you care about their desires and concerns. In thoughtful listening, you prove you are a person who can be confided in and trusted. Serving begins with listening. This skill alone is the X factor for building enduring relationships

with higher value customers. The compass guiding your entrepreneurial journey is your genuine desire to elevate the well-being of your customers, and for that matter, everyone else who interacts with your business. The principle of serve more sell less mandates your service is never a sales transaction but an opportunity to listen and contribute positively to the customers desired transformation.

Jeff Bezos built an online powerhouse completely on the principle of “here to serve you” as a customer obsession. Amazon’s relentless focus on enhancing the customer experience through innovations like one-click shopping, personalized recommendations, easy returns, and fast shipping has elevated the well-being of millions of customers worldwide. This service-first-customer-driven discipline is what has established Amazon as a global giant with a trusted reputation second to none. Too bad for iconic Sears, once a leader in the mail order retail business, Sears couldn’t leverage and transfer that equity into the digital age. Customers bestowed that honor to Amazon.

A short-term gain, a long-term loss.

While clever marketing and promotional sales tactics might yield short-term gains, the heart of a servant philosophy builds ever higher value relationships over the life of your business. A serve-don’t-sell-philosophy transcends the one-off transactional nature of an order-taker business, creating a foundation where customers feel understood, valued, and genuinely cared for. Customers love that!

When business is slow, the allure of manipulative sales tactics might seem tempting for short-term gains. However, it's crucial to recognize the long-term consequences of such approaches. Customers today are smart, savvy, discerning, and seek authenticity in their interactions with businesses. I recall the example of the timeshare industry, criticized for their high-pressure sales tactics. While such tactics might result in some immediate sales, they often lead to buyer's remorse, damaged reputation, and a lack of repeat business. This approach is the kiss of death for an early-stage business. A value creator approach to business development focuses on a deep understanding the customer's needs, providing value, and building trust, attracting customers who become advocates of your business not once or twice, but for life.

Value beyond transactions.

An integral aspect of serving more and selling less is the recognition that education and knowledge sharing is a powerful tool for value creation. Rather than pushing your products, focus on empowering customers with knowledge, helping them make informed decisions. This is a level of service and contribution beyond transactions. Don't forget in any given market at any given time less than 3% of customers are in active buying mode. That leaves a large percentage of future opportunities in your market with prospects who are in research mode, evaluating, not ready to buy or don't yet know they even

have a need for what you are selling. That's where knowledge sharing cast into your marketplace becomes the seeds of a bigger future. Jim Rohn, fabled business sales coach, teaches when casting your seed (knowledge), realize some seeds the birds will eat. It's just the way it goes. Customer needs evolve. Markets shift. There's no one-and-done. Things change and the birds will eat some of your seed. Understanding this, value creators are proactive in sharing their insight, knowledge, understanding, and expertise in a changing landscape impacting the future success of customers or clients. Only then do they align their highly relevant offerings to help customers meet those challenges when the time is right to do business together.

Service-oriented entrepreneurship.

Remember the true legacy of your value lies not just in the number of sales transactions but in the positive transformative impact you make on the lives of your customers. Serve more, sell less, is the first principle to master for turning transactions into trusted relationships, and customers into life-long unpaid sales advocates of your business. Every thread within your business contributes to the story of what you stand for and why it matters. Let the thread of service and contribution be woven with care, authenticity, and a genuine commitment to elevating the well-being of those you serve whether they buy from you or not.

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Intuition over conventional wisdom

Where decisions shape destinies, there exists a compass that often points you in unconventional directions: your intuition. When it comes to making crucial decisions about life and business strategy, hands down, trust the immense power in following your heart over conventional wisdom. Embracing your intuition is a pathway to greater innovation, value creation, and a level of brand power revered by customers, employees, and growth partners alike.

Follow your heart, there is no better alternative.

Our world is full of data, information, and experts with opinions on every conceivable business issue you might be facing right now. Indeed, it's a wonderful thing for all of us to be living in a time where such instant access to anything we want to learn more about is instantly available. However, there's one critical aspect to your knowledge base not available online: your intuition.

Conventional wisdom provides a well-trodden path, a route familiar to many. Conventional wisdom is a powerful force especially when it parades itself as common sense. No business owner wants to intentionally make a bad decision. However, the true magic of taking advantage of opportunity often lies in the uncharted territories, the spaces where intuition acts as a precision GPS system. Intuition, that gut feeling or inner knowing without knowing, possesses a higher level of knowledge to navigate the unknown and illuminate opportunities hidden from the conventional eye of the masses. As a 21st century entrepreneur, what do you trust more: what they say or what you feel is right for you? If you want to elevate your early-stage business to the next level, your intuition is the primary mental faculty you must depend on. Your intuition is the voice of your true nature. It operates on feelings rather than logic. Intuition is the voice that tells you to trust your instincts about what's right for you despite what common sense will tell you. To thrive in life and business, one cannot go against their higher nature.

Intuitive innovation.

Intuition is a catalyst for radical innovation. Many transformative products and services that changed the world emerged not from market research or following trends but from the intuitive understanding of what customers were waiting for, even if they can't articulate it, and most of the time they can't. Create new value rather than compete for the value created by others. Innovation brings to people just what they've been waiting for, but not asking for. Your intuition knows just what customers are waiting for. Give it to them.

When Howard Schultz envisioned Starbucks as more than just a coffee shop. His intuition told him that people craved a social space, a community hub, a "third place" long before anyone else believed it. His intuitive understanding of just what people were waiting for was the catalyst that transformed Starbucks into a global brand.

A beacon in uncharted territory.

Metrics and data have their rightful place in important decision-making. I'm not advocating for making critical decisions without the benefit of good information. Sometimes there are moments when, despite the available good information, numbers and metrics, things just don't add up. Trusting your instincts is not a blind rejection of data; it's an acknowledgment that there are dimensions to the process of value creation that transcend known quantitative metrics. There are times when what makes logical sense just doesn't feel right.

Navigating uncertainty.

Entrepreneurship is an unpredictable journey characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty. In these moments of indecision and unpredictability, your intuition emerges as a powerful and indispensable tool. It becomes a superpower, serving as a beacon that guides you through uncharted waters, aids in your decision-making when the path forward is unclear, and allows you to seize opportunities that might elude those tethered to conventional wisdom and the status quo.

Entrepreneurs bringing new value to the marketplace will always find themselves in uncharted waters, facing challenges without clear roadmaps. Intuition is the ability to understand something instinctively, without the need for a map or conscious reasoning. As an early-stage entrepreneur, you will often be faced with making critical decisions with incomplete or inaccurate information. The ability to tap into your gut feelings is your secret sauce. It's your white hot center. Your Intuition allows you to bridge gaps in knowledge and make decisions that feel right for you, especially in the absence of supporting evidence that it's the right call.

The 21st century marketplace is in a state of change and evolution at light speed. If you're paying attention, your Intuition serves as a dynamic and adaptive tool to sense shifts in the market, emerging cultural trends, and changing consumer preferences long before they become evident through market research or traditional

channels. By then it's too late. This foresight enables you to stay ahead of the common knowledge, position your value strategically, and get in early on what's next.

Intuition also plays a crucial role in risk-taking. When faced with uncertain outcomes, often, all you'll have to go on is your intuition to assess the risks and make the bold decisions. All calculated risks involve a rational evaluation of potential outcomes, but intuition adds a layer of instinctive understanding that goes beyond the rational and the numbers. Your intuition empowers you to take leaps of faith when all the smart people around you say don't do it. Intuition opens doors to innovative solutions and transformative ventures. Entrepreneurs who trust their intuition see potential where others only see challenges. Intuition allows them to recognize hidden patterns, connect disparate pieces of information, and envision through their powerful imagination possibilities that may elude those who rely solely on empirical evidence.

While intuition is a powerful ally, it's essential to acknowledge that it's not a substitute for informed decision-making. Successful entrepreneurs strike a delicate balance between intuitive and rational analysis, recognizing when to rely on gut feelings and when to seek the support of data-driven insights. Intuition serves as a complement to strategic thinking, providing a nuanced understanding of complex situations.

In the case of Netflix and its evolution from a DVD rental-by-mail service to a global streaming giant. Reed Hastings, the co-founder, followed his intuition and made some big bets about the future of entertainment delivery, even when faced with skepticism and resistance. Today, Netflix stands as a testament to the power of intuitive decision-making shaping the video streaming landscape.

Trust your inner voice.

Don't underestimate the power of your intuition. It's a voice you can trust more than facts, logic, and popular opinion. Let your intuition be the entrepreneurial compass within you. Trusting your instincts, following your heart, and embracing intuition as a guide leading to the kind of innovation and value creation that customers love and can't live without. There will always be challenges and opportunities requiring big decisions. Let the power of the unseen forces inherent in your intuition be the driver of courage, creativity, and the unwavering belief that there's magic in the unconventional. Listen to and trust your inner voice to follow the muse to innovate products and services that elevates the customers condition for the better.

Say no often and mean it. More importantly for you, experience and appreciate the joy, fulfillment, and deep satisfaction that comes from simply following your heart.

Daydream often

Here's to the art of playful daydreaming, a celebration of the boundless potential that lies within the realms of your unlimited creative mind. Discipline yourself to daydream often, playing aimlessly in your creative imagination.

This where the seeds of innovation, possibilities, and potential are sown. Sit back. Kick your feet up. Look out your window and imagine "what if".

Play aimlessly in your imagination.

The human imagination, that ethereal realm where unformed ideas swirl in the aimless winds of possibility. Of all our mental faculties, our imagination is the most potent. Only within our imagination can we tap into the power of the unseen forces and vividly “see” the bigger future we desire. Within our imagination there is no shortage of supply. Everything required to form a bigger, better mental picture is instantly available. Tapping into your imagination is a required skill and discipline for 21st century entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs who are transactional and performance driven have a difficult time daydreaming. It’s too messy, impractical, wasteful, and unpredictable. These entrepreneurs are more comfortable operating within the boundaries of known protocols and their own experience. Their channels are blocked and so are their futures.

Let that not be you!

Enlightened entrepreneurs are daydreaming and inventing new value around life experiences and higher meanings rather than competitive or functional features and benefits of their products and services. Innovation in the 21st century marketplace is more about proposing new meanings rather than new things. This requires you wander outside of what you know and look within your imagination for the spark of inspiration that can change the entire game for your business.

Daydreaming is messy.

Our imagination doesn't work in strict linear patterns of cause and effect. Our ideas are formless thought seeds. The best ones are often the result of unfocused attention and idle or random daydreaming. Like when you're singing in the shower. We've all heard someone say "that idea came to me on a walk, or driving to pick my kids up from school" There's no predictability involved when your imagination spits out random good ideas to your conscious mind.

An over reliance on performance-driven-metrics, obsessed tangibility and predictable results is not where transformative business ideas are conceived. When we are daydreaming up new ideas, we are playing in the realm of the formless. A messy goo of possibility. Those entrepreneurs that master the art of daydreaming and change the world are quite comfortable and skilled at working with the unformed and the unknown – the messy business of creating transformative value for customers.

Pixar Animation Studios, a creative powerhouse renowned for its ability to transport audiences to imaginative worlds. The inception of beloved stories with characters like Woody and Buzz Lightyear didn't begin with data, focus groups or industry trends. It started in the fertile unlimited grounds of the animators' imaginations. Playfulness and daydreaming became the very hallmark of Pixar's messy creative process and storied success.

Curiosity ignites imagination.

An active imagination needs curiosity to ignite the boiler of its creative flame. The insatiable desire to explore, ask what-if questions, and wonder is the fuel that propels you to open your creative mind and wander into uncharted territories of your creative imagination. Your curiosity on how best to bring more value to the world is the compass that guides your creative thinking.

What if we did it this way?

What if we made it just a little bit better?

What if people could have (your idea) right now?

The vision of colonizing Mars, a goal that once seemed like science fiction, is rooted in Elon Musk's insatiable curiosity. No one can deny his daring to dream and imagine beyond the constraints of conventional thinking about rocket science. Musk has propelled humanity one step closer the possibility of interplanetary exploration.

Formless ideas to physical reality.

The playground of the imagination is where formless ideas take shape and transform into physical reality. From the sketchpad of the mind to a product on the shelf, the alchemy of the imagination is where creative entrepreneurs transform known solutions into something completely different and ever more useful. You don't have to look too far for stunning examples of this principle in action.

Gutenberg is said to have developed the idea of the printing press from watching farmers extract the juice from grapes. He realized in his imagination the same process and mechanisms could be utilized to press ink to paper. From his imagination, humanity was forever transformed into the knowledge age.

George de Mestral got the idea for Velcro when he observed how burrs stuck in his dog's fur when they walked in the woods.

University of Oregon track coach Bill Bowerman studied his wife's waffle iron and adapted the pattern of little spikes produced by the appliance to create Nike's original waffle-tread running shoe. The rest is history.

For as long as there have been garages, people have been selling stuff out of them. That gave a young software engineer the idea to take something that was established in the real world and transport it to the emerging online world. Ebay was the result.

Walt Disney was the great imagineer. He built his entire empire completely out of his imagination. There has never been another like him. From his first creation of Mickey Mouse to the development of Disneyland, Disney's imaginative wellspring seemed boundless. Walt Disney recognized the magic of creation was always available to him. It was his super power. Today the legacy of the Disney brand continues to innovate, introducing new characters, theme parks, and entertainment experiences that have captivated audiences globally for nearly a century and made it one of the most valuable brands in the world.

Imagination is a creative space without limits—a playground of endless possibility. It's where constraints are discarded, and the mind is free to explore the fantastical. Your imagination is a well that never runs dry, a reservoir of inspired ideas waiting to be tapped. As early-stage entrepreneurs, understanding that the well of creativity is infinite and liberates you from the constraints and tyranny of scarcity thinking.

Remember daydream often. Play aimlessly in your creative imagination. Don't allow yourself to get so wrapped up in your urgencies that you fail to leave room in your day to kick your feet up on your desk and just look out the window. Nurture your curiosity, embrace the boundless potential of your creative mind, and venture courageously into the uncharted frontier of your bigger future.

Focus on the important, handle the urgent

When tasks multiply and time is a precious commodity, there exists a guiding principle that can bring you transformative results: Focus on the important, handle the urgent.

This principle points your way to the nexus of efficiency and effectiveness.

The key lies in discovering the joy in your unique genius, focusing your creative energy only the important and delegating everything else to a genius team as a force multiplier that propels you toward transformative outcomes.

Your genius unleashed.

In the 21st century marketplace, the archetype of the rugged, go it alone, do it all, self-made Marlboro-cowboy-entrepreneur is a myth. The world moves too fast. 21st century entrepreneurs recognize success is a collaborative effort. These enlightened entrepreneurs focus on their unique genius to discern what is most important to their personal effectiveness and success then delegate everything else to others who work at genius levels within their area of expertise. Spreading yourself thin, trying to do everything by yourself, micro managing, putting out daily fires, lost in the weeds, being a victim of your distractions, and making every critical decision in the vacuum of one cluttered mind is the short road to the bone yard.

Instead, this principle mandates a laser focus on the important things that bring you endless joy, energy, fulfillment, and growth. These are the elements that comprise your unique genius—your secret sauce in the value you bring to customers, employees, partners, and your industry. Whether you realize it or not, you're a genius! You have within you a unique blend of talents, skills, and capabilities with the inherent wisdom to use your unique gifts to serve others, create value and competitive advantage in your business. Trouble is, your unique genius feels so natural to you, you hardly give it any attention at all. You are so good at it; you don't even sense its power in your life— and you have never been without it. Your genius is like breathing. It operates automatically underneath your awareness. This principle becomes more powerful

when you place your focused attention on the things you do that provide you with endless joy, energy, fulfillment, and desired results—while attracting others who are at genius levels of capability in the areas where you are weakest. And in delegating to them, they get to experience endless joy, energy, fulfillment in doing what they are genius art. Everyone benefits, especially your customers and clients.

Consider the example of Oprah Winfrey. Her journey to success wasn't built on doing everything herself; it was about discovering and focusing on her unique genius—her genius is empathy connecting with people through heartfelt conversations. By aligning her energy with what brought her joy, and organizing a brilliant genius level team, Oprah not only built a media empire but also became an influential figure whose impact has changed the culture at large.

Right people, right seats.

Jim Collins, in his seminal book "Good to Great," introduces a compelling concept that serves as the cornerstone for building effective teams and organizational success: "the right people in the right seats." This powerful idea encapsulates the essence of strategic team building, emphasizing the critical importance of aligning individual strengths with specific roles within an organization. The concept is not merely about assembling a group of talented individuals; rather, it underscores the strategic imperative of placing those individuals in positions where their unique skills can be most effectively utilized. This concept recognizes that every individual possesses a set

of unique skills and talents, their "areas of genius." By identifying and understanding these areas, leaders can create a team that operates synergistically, with each member contributing at their highest level of proficiency. The goal is to ensure that each person's capabilities are not only acknowledged but also strategically leveraged to enhance the overall performance of the team. Please pardon yet another platitude—where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Visionary or Implementor.

A business growing beyond its early struggle phase requires the talents and capabilities of two distinct types of leaders: the Visionary and the Implementor. The Visionary Leader is primarily focused on strategy and the big picture vision and mission, while the Implementor Leader is focused on efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. It's a rare occurrence to find these two essential leadership types successfully operating in the body of one person. If you're at a stage in your business growth where you're playing both roles, it's likely, that in time you'll flame out, or at best, find yourself clawing your way to the middle. The visionary/implementor relationship is essential for the important and urgent work of creating a bigger future to get done. Within your business, what leadership role best suits your genius level talent and capabilities? You cannot be both. Once your clear on that, it doesn't stop there— you need an implementor leader and a genius team. What are the characteristics and attributes that best describe these roles relative to your weakness?

The relationship between Mark Zuckerberg (Visionary Leader) and Sheryl Sandberg (Implementor Leader) is a perfect example of this important management principle. Zuckerberg, co-founder and CEO of Facebook, has been a visionary in the social media space, driving the company's mission to connect people globally and innovate in areas such as virtual reality. Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, has been instrumental in scaling the company's operations and implementing strategic initiatives. Her focus on business operations and partnerships has contributed to Facebook's growth.

Force multipliers.

The principle of focusing on the important and handling the urgent is more than just a personal time management strategy; it serves as a force multiplier that can enhance your ability to deliver transformative outcomes to your customers and clients. This concept emphasizes the strategic alignment of your focus with your unique genius. At its essence, the principle mandates an astute awareness of the inherent difference between tasks that are urgent and those that are truly important. Urgent tasks often demand immediate attention and are reactive in nature, driven by external pressures or deadlines.

On the other hand, important tasks are those that align with long-term vision, strategic objectives, and the effectiveness of individuals within an organization. The force multiplier effect lies in the deliberate prioritization of completing the important tasks that leverage one's unique genius. As you consistently channel your focus

on your genius-level work, you create traction and momentum that propels your team and business forward. Clients and customers on the receiving end recognize and appreciate the depth and quality of your products and services and become life-long advocates. The impact on your reputation and brand equity becomes evident as your business becomes synonymous with transformative experiences people love and can't live without.

Genius magnets.

The magnetic force of focusing on your unique genius transforms your business into a vibrant ecosystem where passion, fulfillment, and collaborative synergy converge with the desires of high value customers. This principle underscores the profound importance of aligning your energies with what brings you joy and fulfillment so you don't get trapped in the weeds and burn out. Attract like-minded team members operating at their genius levels to propel your entire organization into a state of collective excellence.

Like you, each member of your team possesses their own unique genius—the intersection of their passions, skills, and innate strengths. When individuals consciously channel their energies toward activities that resonate with their genius, the effectiveness of your business magnifies. The alignment of creative energy with joy and fulfillment is the white-hot center of your transformative power and growth. When your team finds joy in what

they do, they naturally become more engaged, creative, and committed to delivering their best work. This intrinsic motivation becomes a beacon that attracts top talent who seek an environment where their contributions are not just recognized but celebrated and generously compensated. The collaborative synergy becomes the motivation and passion for doing things right and doing the right things. Customers and clients love this.

Growth partners, and stakeholders are naturally drawn to enterprises where individuals exude joy and passion for what they do. Partners are not just engaging in a financial transaction; they are investing in a compelling idea of value crafted by a team operating at the peak levels of their collective genius. Private equity investors heavily weight their investment decisions on the capabilities and effectiveness of the people in the business.

In moments of change and challenging circumstance, remember to focus your genius on the important long-term vision and strategy for your bigger future and trust other genius level team members to handle the short-term operational urgencies. Delegation is liberation. Mastery of this principle is your pathway to effectiveness, fulfillment, and transformative life and business success. Let your unique genius be the resonant chord that reverberates with joy, productivity, and the satisfaction and fulfillment of doing what you are a genius at doing.

Forget what you know

Change and market forces are accelerating at an unprecedented pace. There's simply too much going on for one mind to fully grasp, comprehend, and make sound strategic business decisions. There's a pivotal principle that will propel you and your business to new heights: Forget what you know. This principle declares the transformative power of collaborators, and why strategic partnerships are not just beneficial but essential in enhancing capabilities and accelerating your progress.

The 21st century moves too fast for one mind.

We are well into the third decade of the 21st century. The accelerating pace of change driven by technological advancements, global connectivity, and dynamic shifts in many industries has exacerbated the challenges facing early-stage entrepreneurs. In this whirlwind of uncertainty, the notion that one mind can keep pace and keep up is increasingly an impractical fantasy.

To say we live in a world of exponential speed and growth of information is an understatement. Our social media driven digital age has ushered in an era where the amount of information generated globally increases at light speed. From the explosion of online content to the vast datasets produced by scientific research and technological innovations, the sheer volume of information is overwhelming and paralyzing for many entrepreneurs. The paradox is we have immediate access to every bit of information available but lose our way trying to find and apply what we need to move forward. We are limited by the physics of our biology giving us just one brain. Advancements in artificial intelligence, automation, and machine learning are transforming industries at an unprecedented rate. In fields like biotechnology, nanotechnology, and quantum computing, breakthroughs occur with such frequency that staying abreast of the latest developments requires a herculean collective effort. And the same is true for you as you grow your early-stage business. No matter how skilled and capable

you are as an entrepreneur, you will require the collaborative efforts of other disciplines to grow and scale your business. From building your internal team, to outside suppliers, to investment partners, collaboration is the mindset *modus operandi* for the 21st century entrepreneur.

Seek collaborators.

The digital interconnectedness of the modern world intensifies the pace of change characterized by a seamless and immediate flow of ideas and innovations across platforms and borders. Events in one part of the world have immediate and profound economic impacts globally.

As a result, 21st century entrepreneurs operating in global markets must contend with a constant influx of diverse perspectives, cultural influences, and market dynamics, making it challenging to grasp what is required to thrive in the multifaceted nature of this interconnected reality.

At the same time, traditional models of organizational structure and decision-making, which were often hierarchical, control based, and linear, are being replaced by more agile and collaborative approaches. Post Covid pandemic, the very nature of how people work and how a business operates has irrevocably changed. Businesses and individuals alike have had to pivot quickly in response to the changing market trends, technological disruptions, and societal shifts. Those entrepreneurs who have resisted the necessary pivot are now paying a heavy price. Navigating this dynamic environment requires a collective intelligence and collaborative problem-solving mindset

that extends far beyond the capabilities of a lone mind or even one team. The call to action against relentless change: seek collaborators. The world moves too fast for one mind. The most groundbreaking solutions often emerge from the intersection of diverse fields, where specialists from various disciplines come together to tackle complex challenges. From interdisciplinary research projects to cross-industry collaborations, the nature of innovation in the 21st century demands the synergy of multiple minds and disciplines working in tandem.

While Larry Page and Sergey Brin are celebrated as visionary founders, the true power of Google emerged from collaboration and strategic partnerships. Early on, Google actively sought out brilliant minds in various fields, forming partnerships that amplified its capabilities and accelerated progress. Google's culture of collaboration with academics, researchers, and engineers has been a driving force behind its transformative impact on how the world's information is organized and made available for use worldwide.

Strategic collaborations as an exponential multiplier.

Strategic collaborations and partnerships act as a force multiplier, expanding the impact of your ventures beyond individual capacities and capabilities. By joining forces with partners who bring complementary knowledge, strengths, you amplify your reach, your impact, and ability to influence customers and clients. Strategic collaborations drive the transformative power to elevate ventures to new and unprecedented heights. Agility, innovation, and expansive

reach are paramount to strategic alliances, partners, and collaborators building an influential business. 21st century entrepreneurs have a collaborative mindset that breaks down silos and fosters cross-disciplinary innovation. Capabilities are no longer isolated islands; instead, different disciplines are free to intersect and overlap to produce extraordinary results and outcomes for customers. For instance, the partnership between a tech giant and a healthcare provider may yield groundbreaking health-tech solutions that can revolutionize patient care.

By joining forces with partners who bring strengths, diverse perspectives, and experiences, you can reach new markets, demographics, and geographies. This expanded reach enhances the overall influence and relevance (brand power) of your business to higher value customers and clients. Breaking free from the limitations of a singular perspective, strategic partnerships foster a collaborative mindset (thinking in a certain way) that is essential in the interconnected world of 21st century business.

Look at the collaboration between IBM and The Weather Company. By combining data analytics from IBM with the weather forecasting expertise of The Weather Company, the partnership created solutions that impact diverse industries ranging from agriculture to transportation. The strategic collaboration showcases the power of seeking partners outside your immediate field of expertise to create outcomes not possible individually.

A collaborative odyssey.

This manifesto principle proclaims that 21st century entrepreneurs must transcend the confines of their individual knowledge, skill, resources, and seek out diverse strategic partners. It advocates for a mindset that values the collective over the individual, recognizing that the true power of innovation and progress lies in strategic collaboration. As your early-stage businesses navigates an unpredictable marketplace changing at the speed of light, the collaborative odyssey of strategic partnerships becomes not just a growth imperative but a foundational principle for enduring success.

Beware of comfort

Everybody wants to be comfortable.

It's only natural to want to live in comfort knowing all is well around you.

For many entrepreneurs the idea of growing their business to a level where they can chill is a compelling one indeed. A word of caution: Beware of comfort—it will put you to sleep. It's a paradoxical truth that if you find too much comfort in your life and business, you might be inadvertently stalling your growth.

Comfort, as desirable as it is, has a silent companion—complacency—that can stealthily erode the foundations of your success. In this principle, let's unravel the nuances of this silent warning, exploring why leading a thriving business requires discomfort to fuel progress. No doubt about it, growing an early-stage business can be a very stressful, worrisome, and anxiety-ridden experience. It's compelling to yearn for the day when everything will be, at long last, more fun, more comfortable, all your issues handled in cruise-control mode. That's an illusion. Comfort is the eye of the storm ready to lunge out with ferocity and bite you in the ass. It's the sweet spot where routines become familiar, and the challenges pursuing new opportunities fade into the background. However, beneath the surface of this perfect tranquility, lies a lurking danger—stagnation. The moment you settle comfortably into your accomplishments, a subtle stagnation sets in, and the innovative spirit that fueled your initial journey starts to wane. If you're comfortable in your business (and in your life) chances are you're not growing. Chances are, right underneath your awareness, things might be sliding back in the wrong direction. Comfort breeds complacency.

There is no there, there.

Every success-minded entrepreneur sets desired goals and then eagerly goes about the business of accomplishing them. However, in that place of accomplishment, one can get too comfortable with the idea of being – accomplished. After a while your accomplishment becomes the status quo. The hunger for improvement

diminishes, and the willingness to take risks fades away. Then there's trouble in paradise! I vividly recall my own early years of building my marketing communications agency. In the beginning, I was relentless in my passion about growing my business, learning how to sell, adding more and better clients, building a team, creating a respected reputation. Over a period of about a decade, after working my ass off, I finally reached the level of success that I had been visualizing in my mind from the beginning. I had finally "made it"! At long last, time to kick back and chill!

After another period, I became comfortable with that level of accomplishment. I believed that my business would continue as it was—established and solid. I was operating with a mindset that "if it ain't broke don't fix it". Everything seemed to be humming right along just as I had planned. I was confident and comfortable in my belief that all was well and the machine I had created would keep running on and on. What I didn't realize in the comfort and complacency of my success was I had become stale as week old bread!

Not good! What was once a sharp edge of learning, growth and expansion had become dull, routine, and predictable. My work was no longer exciting or challenging but the money was good. Oh yeah, I got very comfortable with the money too! I had comfortably snared myself in my own trap. The business owned me now. Eventually my enthusiasm began to erode and finally the flame burned out.

Whatever stops growing starts dying.

Don't allow yourself to become too comfortable in your success. When you stop growing and expanding your knowledge, skill and capability, the process of decay begins. You might not realize it, but it's happening. Personal growth and expansion involves constantly being out on the frontier of your experience. Sooner or later, you acknowledge that elevating your circumstances resides outside the realms of lounging around in the cushy zone.

Like an adventurer on the frontier, you wander out and leave your known experience behind. To keep yourself sharp and alive, you punch at the edges, sharpening your capabilities. The friction of rubbing up against the wall of complexity is where the real juice of creativity and innovation is experienced. Some level of friction should always be present. The friction is akin to the resistance a seed faces before sprouting into a mighty tree. Your discomfort resisting the forces of gravity is the catalyst for innovation, adaptation, and resilience. It's the force that propels you to get off your ass and question the status quo, explore uncharted territories, and remain agile in the face of resistance.

Discomfort is how you will know everything is moving in the right direction. Continued growth is the natural order of things. All creation busts out of the nothingness of the unknown. The same is true for you and the on-going growth of your business. Indeed, being satisfied with

your accomplishments is necessary to enjoy them. Enjoy and celebrate them! Just don't let your comfort stop you from contributing more, creating more. Comfort is a silent adversary. Embrace the friction and discomfort that comes with growth. Challenge the status quo. Remain vigilant against the lure of complacency. The most vibrant and resilient businesses we all read about are those that thrive in discomfort, constantly evolving and innovating.

The very nature of the process of creating value is a non-stop-life-long experience of bringing new ideas that serve people. This will involve continuously risking aspects of your comfort. Only through continued discomfort and friction will you sustain your creative edge bringing value to the world and experiencing the fulfillment of knowing your presence makes a difference.

Play on the edges

This important principle echoes through every business success story: Play on the Edges. It's a philosophy that beckons you to embrace with passion levels of risk as an indispensable component of advancing your life and business to next level. Playing on the edges is a delicate dance with uncertainty that requires an understanding and application of the law of sacrifice—risking something of value for the potential of receiving something in return of greater value.

Dancing with uncertainty.

Uncertainty is the heartbeat of entrepreneurship. It's the pulsating rhythm that underscores every decision, every pivot, and every innovation. Instead of shying away from it, 21st century entrepreneurs have learned to dance with uncertainty, moving in harmony with its twists and turns. Playing on the edges is an acknowledgment that the most significant opportunities often reside in the realms of the unknown.

Playing on the edges is a necessary mindset for attaining one's ambitions. A courageous plunge into the unknown where there are no sure bets, and no guarantees. Much has been written on the psychology of risk. I'm certainly no expert on "risk management", but I know from personal experience growing my own business there was a fine line between gambling and investing. There were times when I didn't know which was which. To play on the edges is to embrace calculated risks. And depending on the level of risk involved, there will be a corresponding level of excitement coupled with anxiety and discomfort. Playing on the edges requires you accept risk willingly if not enthusiastically. It's a decision to step away from the known and wade into the waters of the unknown, where the currents of risk and reward can produce transformative results. The principle of "playing on the edges" is a requirement for success in the unforgiving 21st century marketplace.

The Law of Sacrifice in action.

Let's note an inescapable truth: Something always must be sacrificed for something else. This is a Law. Everything in life has its own price and is ever up for sale. We purchase it at the price it demands. Daily we all go up to life's counter and say, "I'll give you this if you'll give me that." That horse trading banter has a more familiar name; it's called sacrifice. We are sacrificing everyday of our lives whether we know it or not. No matter what we want of life we must give up something to get it. Something always must be paid for something else. In other words, to experience greater circumstances and conditions, we must risk our safety and comfort and play on the edges.

Our human evolution demands we take risks to move beyond the confines of our current circumstances. Hunter-gathers while venturing out in search of food risked being eaten themselves. Whether in entrepreneurship, relationships, or personal development, playing on the edges involves embracing uncertainty and venturing into uncharted territories. It's a recognition that the most significant rewards often lie beyond the reach of the known territory. Please excuse yet another platitude here—nothing ventured, nothing gained. There are many examples of the visionary leaders who have reshaped industries and societies playing on the edges.

The law of sacrifice is an integral component of playing on the edges. It's the acknowledgment that growth requires letting go of the familiar and risking something of value for the potential of a greater return. The law of sacrifice is not just financial; it extends to your time, relationships, even your personal well-being. Successful entrepreneurs understand that playing on the edges demands a willingness to sacrifice the known for the chance to achieve the extraordinary.

Although it may be a bit tiresome to mention Steve Jobs once again, but no other entrepreneur played on the edges more or better than Steve Jobs. Jobs once stated, "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward." Jobs understood the inherent risk in forging new paths, and his willingness to play on the edges resulted in transformative product innovations. Jobs challenged the status quo of the computer industry, the music and entertainment industry, and the mobile phone industry, risking Apple's reputation, and financial standing in the process. Jobs understood completely and cooperated fully with the Law of Sacrifice.

Playing on the edges requires a strategic mindset (thinking in a certain way) that propels you beyond the realms of the ordinary. At the edges are where innovation thrives, where transformative breakthroughs are made, and where extraordinary outcomes becomes attainable. It requires an understanding that insightfully and intuitively evaluates risks and rewards, recognizing that not all risks are created equal, and sometimes, even with supporting data, things might not work out.

In the world of investments, playing on the edges is the name of the game for those seeking substantial returns. Warren Buffett, one of the most successful investors of all time, is known for his willingness to play on the edges. He once said, "Risk comes from not knowing what you're doing." Buffett's legendary ability to calculate risks, where thorough understanding and astute analysis precede any investment decision allowed Buffet to navigate and thrive in the unpredictable reality of global markets.

Remember that playing on the edges is the willingness to risk something of value for the potential of receiving something greater while accepting there are never any guarantees. Embrace and acknowledge the law of sacrifice in your decisions, and enjoy the dance with uncertainty. The edges are where your bigger future awaits.

*To thine own self be true,
no exceptions, no excuses*

In the affairs of life and commerce, the principle: "To thine own self be true, no exceptions, no excuses." is a beacon that guides the journey towards an extraordinary life and influential business. The wisdom embedded in this ageless principle declares why operating from your values and convictions without compromise is the cornerstone determining the quality of your presence in the marketplace.

We're all familiar with the famous quote from William Shakespeare's play "Hamlet." It's spoken by the character Polonius to his son Laertes as a piece of advice. The full passage is:

"This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

And like Polonius, I'm sharing this priceless advice with you. The essence of this expression emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, authenticity, and staying true to one's principles and values. In essence, by being true to oneself, a person is more likely to act with integrity and sincerity in their relationships and interactions with others. The quote suggests that personal authenticity is a foundation for moral conduct and genuine relationships.

The idea behind this principle requires an understanding of the Law of Obedience. We must without compromise, obey our values, convictions, and standards of behavior. The seed of obedience to our convictions brings forth self-respect and unselfish thought. Like life itself, your business must obey the laws of nature. The marketplace is founded upon obedience as each business obeys the laws of commerce. Only when one transgresses the law by over-speculation, inflated claims, and a lack of cooperative agency does one bring about unfavorable results. The imperative to stay true to oneself without excuse or exception is obeying the Law which, in turn, produces desired results and favorable circumstance.

Your values and convictions are the compass that directs your decisions, shapes your actions, and defines your character in the marketplace. To build an extraordinary life and influential business, it is essential to operate from a foundation grounded in your values and beliefs. Your values are the bedrock of your identity, the principles that define what you stand for and what you are known for. They serve as a filter through which you evaluate opportunities, partnerships, and decisions, ensuring alignment with your purpose, passion, or cause to serve higher value customers and clients.

Ben & Jerry's, the ice cream company, is known not only for its delicious ice cream but also for its dedication to its core values of social responsibility and fair-trade practices. The company actively engages in social and environmental initiatives, advocating for issues like climate justice and fair wages for farmers. Ben & Jerry's commitment to its core values is embedded in its business practices, and it consistently communicates these values through their behavior to customers and stakeholders without compromise.

Say no often and mean it.

In growing your early-stage business, distractions abound in the form of tempting shortcuts, ambiguous deals, and opportunities that may lead you astray from one's core principles. The call of "to thine own self be true" is a call to discernment, a call to evaluate each opportunity through the lens of your values. Saying no, and meaning it, becomes a strategic skill for 21st century entrepreneurs.

Your values, beliefs and convictions are timeless guiding principles. They define who you are as a leader and as an organization. They define how you do things to create value and what impact you make on the condition of the customer. Your values attract talented people and build the culture of your organization. Your values, convictions and behavior determine the quality of your presence. They are non-negotiable.

What are your core values?

What are the fundamental beliefs that set the tone for your organization and define your enterprise in the marketplace?

What would you choose to go out of business over rather that violate?

Where have you made compromises? What practices or policies do you and your employees ignore?

What is sacred? Consider this from many perspectives: innovation, product design, quality, human resources, and customer touch points.

What are the holy of holies in your business?

Who are your Heroes? What traits do they share with your business? What characteristics should you emulate?

Who are your Allies? What traits do they share with your business? What characteristics should you emulate? How does your alliances influence customers?

Warren Buffett, the legendary investor, exemplifies this principle in the world of finance. His investment decisions are guided by a set of principles that he has adhered throughout his decades long career. Buffett famously remarked, "The difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say 'no' to almost everything." Buffett's success is not just measured in financial terms but in the legacy of ethical and principled investing he is famous for.

Operating with integrity from a foundation of values is not just about saying no, but also about saying yes to which opportunities are right for you to pursue. Authenticity breeds trust, and trust is the currency of an influential business. When customers, employees, and partners perceive an alignment between your actions and your values, profound connections are forged. Connection that leads to more satisfying relationships and better circumstances. The timeless principle of "To thine own self be true, no exceptions no excuses." is a bedrock commitment and obedience to your personal values and philosophy. Living in obedience to what you stand for and what you will never compromise on determines the quality of your life and the success of your business. It's the essential operating principle upon which extraordinary lives and influential businesses are built. Embrace the discernment to evaluate opportunities through the lens of your values, beliefs, and convictions, say no when needed, and forge an authentic path forward that aligns with what truly matters to you and the marketplace richly rewards.

Leadership is service in disguise

Where connections and collaborations shape a shared mission, one profound success principle lights the way forward:

Leadership is service in disguise.

This is the art of elevating everyone you encounter, a commitment to a higher purpose that transcends the traditional notions of command and control.

In this principle, the essence of leadership is an act of service and the transformative power of leading through values, knowledge, inspiration, and the quality of your presence.

The quality of your presence.

As a 21st century entrepreneur, you already know how vitally important it is to be an effective and well-respected leader—one who is recognized for your mastery. Leadership is a subject ubiquitous in our cultural experience. There's millions of books and seminars out there on teaching and preaching about how to be a great leader. For the purposes of our discussion here, I've boiled it down to a simple definition: Leadership is always displayed through the quality of your presence—the quality of how you show up in the world.

The power that drives the how, and in what form you “show up” begins within you; deeply anchored in subconscious beliefs about who you are, what matters, and what you believe you are capable of. We can all get stuck at a certain level of “leadership quality” in our personal and professional life. Stop doubting yourself. Start by thinking much better of your ideas and visions, your capability to create value, trust your good instincts and be confident in the direction of your future.

Leadership begins with you leading you. You must honestly believe, see, and trust in the unlimited potential that lies within you as a leader and in those you lead. As you follow your own aspirations, others are moved and inspired by your example to follow their own. When you embrace this belief, you've automatically elevated yourself into a leadership role—lighting your own way forward! No one can truly lead who can't lead themselves.

People who believe they're destined for greater life experiences, more than likely, achieve their desires. These people have a point of view that's always positive and future-based, yet they're entirely present and effective in gathering resources to face current challenges. These people build trust and respect—the gold standard in human relationships. They only take from the past that which will serve them (and others) in the new future they are creating. They demonstrate their personal leadership by the quality of their own thoughts, which in turn, manifests into the quality of their actions and behaviors. These people lead by elevating the life experience of all they encounter. These leaders light the way for others by their own example. These leaders inspire others to believe more in their own capability and promise than in the evidence of their current limitations. For these types of people, their leadership is disguised as service and never based in their status, power, or ability to control others.

If you want to lead your life/business/marketplace by quality of your presence, you must be engaged in ideas and activities that inspire and truly matter to you. To lead the marketplace, not only must you do what matters to you, but what matters to you must serve the good of others. In serving the good of others, you lead by the quality of your presence—what you stand for, what you're known for and why it matters. As you think about your own leadership style and quality, take a moment to self-assess where you're at right now.

Start with your physical presence, do you display health, vitality, and well-being?

In your business affairs, are your methods, products and services beloved by employees and customers alike?

Do your clients or customers value your reputation/brand to such an extent they gladly pay a premium to do business with you?

In all your relationships, are you trusted and respected?

Are you adding to the world by contributing your talent and gifts with authenticity, integrity, and humility?

Leadership is a choice you make about the quality of your own life, not a role you play in the lives of others. At its core, leadership is not a title or a position of command and control; rather, it's a quality of presence that permeates every facet of your life. Your leadership becomes an inspiring force in the lives of those you touch. Your leadership is an invisible thread weaving through your interactions and transactions that make things better than they were before. Elevating all you come into contact with.

The servant leader.

You're most likely aware of the concept of the "servant leader," a paradigm that flips the traditional hierarchy on its head. Imagine a leader who doesn't wield authority as a tool for dominance but, instead, sees

leadership as a sacred trust to serve others. This is the essence of the servant leader—a person who places the needs of others at the forefront, seeks to understand before being understood, and views leadership as a responsibility to uplift the collective spirit. In the words of author Robert K. Greenleaf, the modern proponent of servant leadership:

"The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first."

Leading your team is about infusing your values, knowledge, and unique perspective into the culture of your early-stage business. Through your service, you inspire cooperation and team work. Which reduces friction and accelerates momentum. Your leadership inspires a shared vision that transcends individual aspirations and fosters a collective sense of purpose. As the leader of your business, you wave the flag of your battle cry gathering the powers of the unseen forces to your advantage.

A great example of a servant leader is Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft, known for his inclusive and empathetic leadership style. He emphasizes the importance of fostering a growth mindset, empowering employees, and creating a culture of continuous learning. In leading a giant, global organization, Nadella has consistently demonstrated empathy, understanding the diverse needs and challenges of Microsoft's global workforce. He has championed initiatives to make Microsoft more inclusive, encouraging diversity and above all, recognizing the value of different perspectives.

Entrepreneurs who view leadership as service are not driven solely by profit, but by a profound desire to meet the needs of their community at large— to make life better for all through the venue of their business. Leadership as service permeates the culture of an organization and defines the quality of all relationships. It's not about barking orders and control mandates from on high but instilling a sense of inspiration, a shared vision that kindles the flame of collective excellence. As a leader, your role is to inspire trust, foster collaboration, and create an environment where everyone will thrive.

Authenticity is the hallmark of trusted leadership.

The idea of leadership as service also underscores the importance of authenticity. In a world inundated with superficial leadership models, authenticity becomes the currency of trust. When leaders are genuine in their intentions, transparent in their actions, and guided by a sincere desire to serve, a culture of trust flourishes. Employees, partners, and customers gravitate towards leaders who are not afraid to be vulnerable and lead with authenticity.

Mary Barra, the CEO of General Motors. whose leadership style is characterized by authenticity and a commitment to transparency. In moments of crisis, such as the ignition switch recall, she did not shy away from taking responsibility and addressing difficult issues head-on. This authenticity not only bolstered trust within the her leadership team and organization but also enhanced GM's reputation in the eyes of GM customers and the public at large.

The servant leader is a catalyst for positive change, a force that transcends personal agendas in favor of the greater good. As a leader, you are not judged solely by your accomplishments but by the collective impact made by those you inspire and serve. Leadership is your service in disguise—a profound alchemy where the act of elevating others becomes the guiding principle that leaves an enduring legacy of trust and respect.

Give thanks, give back

The Law of Giving and Receiving is encapsulated in a simple yet transformative principle: Give thanks, give back. In our affairs, we receive only in proportion to what we give.

That's how the Law works.

Applying this principle as your dominant frame of mind puts you on the path of increase, fulfillment, and enduring success.

Appreciation + Generosity = Abundance.

The Law of Giving and Receiving is not a conceptual abstraction; it is the fundamental force in nature that governs the quality of our life experience. The essence of this law lies in the recognition that appreciation and gratitude for what is present now paves the way for an abundant future. In both personal and business affairs, the principle is simple yet profound—whatever you give, you receive in kind. The currency is the gift of your interest, energy, thoughts, abilities, love, appreciation, and helpfulness.

Think of your life experience as a garden that flourishes in direct correlation to the care and attention you lavish upon it. Gratitude is the nourishing soil, and generosity is the water that quenches the thirst of growth. The Law of Giving and Receiving beckons you to cultivate a spirit of appreciation for the resources at your disposal, be they financial, intellectual, or human capital. The entrepreneur who makes full use of whatever they have through steady appreciation and service sets in motion a reciprocal flow that culminates in joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment in equal measure.

Give thanks.

The first facet of the law of giving and receiving is rooted in the simple practice of giving thanks. Gratitude, an attitude of praise and thankfulness, emerges as a powerful force that serves as a magnet for positive and creative energy. For entrepreneurs navigating an

unforgiving marketplace, cultivating a mindset of gratitude becomes a cornerstone for success. The practice of giving thanks involves a conscious effort to recognize, appreciate, and praise what is currently present and visible. Gratitude becomes a lens through which one views their entire world, shifting the focus from what's missing to what's possible because of what we have now. Optimism and gratitude magnify the other. The more thankful you are for what's present the more optimism you have for future opportunity. Please pardon this one last platitude: you can't pour from an empty cup.

When the dominant frame of mind (thinking in a certain way) is gratitude, it reframes challenges as opportunities for growth, setbacks as lessons, and achievements as collective victories. Although this may sound a bit woo-woo to some, this shift in perspective is a recognition that as you give thanks for everything in your life, you open the channels of the unseen forces for more positive energy and opportunities to flow your way.

Oprah Winfrey, a media mogul whose success is deeply intertwined with her practice of gratitude. Oprah attributes much of her success to the habit of maintaining a gratitude journal, where she regularly reflects on all the things she is thankful for. This practice not only shaped her personal life but also influenced the content and mission of her media empire, creating a platform that has uplifted and inspired millions all over the world.

Give Back.

The second facet of the law of giving and receiving is giving back. Contributing generously to the advancement of others. Gratitude naturally flows into acts of giving, be it through sharing knowledge, offering mentorship, providing financial support, or engaging in simple acts of everyday kindness. For the 21st-century entrepreneur, giving back is not just a philanthropic gesture; it emerges as a strategic business imperative to contribute generously to the ecosystem supporting growth and the collective success of customers, employees, partners, and the broader community. Generosity becomes a deliberate and strategic investment in the ecosystem that elevates your life, your business and everything around it.

Consider the example of Bill and Melinda Gates, whose philanthropic efforts through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have transformed countless lives. Their commitment to giving back generously stems from a profound sense of responsibility and gratitude for the opportunities they've been afforded. The Gates Foundation's initiatives span global health, education, and poverty alleviation, reflecting a holistic approach to making to improve the quality of life for the whole of humanity.

One big aspect of giving back is the sharing of knowledge. In an era where knowledge is a valuable currency, the act of freely sharing your insights, expertise, and life lessons learned contributes not only to your well-being but adds to collective intelligence of the ecosystem that

surrounds your business. Your mentorship holds particular significance. Providing guidance and support to your team and all that surround you creates a collaborative and supportive culture where individuals share their gifts freely and are equipped to overcome challenges more effectively. This cyclical exchange of experiences fosters a sense of community and interconnectedness, reinforcing the idea that your success is not a solo journey but a collective endeavor all will benefit from.

Lest we forget, your generosity and contribution are expressed through simple acts of everyday kindness. As a leader, you're the inspirational motivating force in your business. Promoting a positive work culture, recognizing, appreciating, and generously compensating the efforts of employees, contribute to a positive and supportive environment that cultivates a sense of trust and loyalty among all stakeholders.

For 21st century entrepreneurs, giving back is an ongoing commitment to nurturing the ecosystem that enables and supports their success. It is a recognition your business success is intertwined with the well-being of the community. In return, your gratitude and generosity enhances a sense of abundance for you and the growing brand power of your business.

Your contributions to the world are realized by creating new value for customers, supporting the personal growth and well-being of your team, and contributing to the well-being of the communities you operate in.

21st century entrepreneurs are a force for positive change in every interaction and transaction. As an early-stage entrepreneur, embrace the path of increase through your gratitude and generosity. Start by acknowledging and praising the resources and opportunities that surround you right now. Be ever grateful recognizing the contributions of those who support your journey. Cultivate a daily practice adhering to this manifesto principle: Give thanks, give back.

The principle is simple: appreciation + generosity=abundance.



Epilogue

Developing the discipline for thinking in a certain way and the action required to implement these principles is a daily practice. In time you may be astonished at how fast breakthroughs will occur. It will be in quantum leaps rather than incremental spikes. Indeed, the lasting reward, far beyond money-making, is the satisfaction and fulfillment knowing you make a real difference for the good of others. True, genuine, and unlimited success of the largest kind lies in results obtained, harvests reaped and distributed, so that our fellow humans at large are benefited, and the world enriched.

If you're facing challenges in determining what's next for you and your business, I'm here to help. I offer advisory consulting and coaching to help you and your team gain more clarity, confidence, traction, and momentum towards achieving your desired outcomes.

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