ENTREPRENEUR SUCCESS FORMULA

HOW THRIVING BUSINESS OWNERS ACTUALLY DO IT

By Damian Mark Smyth
(The Entrepreneurs Circle’s Mindset Coach)
“A great read and a person worth following, he will help you master yourself” - Dave Stickland, Retail Expert, CEO & Founder at Store Guru Ltd

“The principles, ideas and case studies in this book are inspiring” - AJB

“Every entrepreneur who realises the importance of working on their own thinking to become successful will value this book” - Cheryl Salmon, The French Translation Company

“This is an excellent book for helping you to get the correct mindset for establishing a really successful business. Highly recommended” - Amazon Reader

“Plenty of practical information which can easily be implemented, leading to great results!” - Emre Gurler, Office Hut Ltd

“What a great read this is. One of those where your partner asks you to ‘Put the iPad down and go to sleep!’”
- Mat Butler, Director at Business Video Experts
“I read a lot of books and often they give you the topline details of ‘success’ but not the practical tips and help and the ‘how’. As well as encouraging you to start with your own ‘why’ (why are you in business, what difference will you make?), this book gives you how other people have done it - in enough detail that you can actually do the stuff in it” - Amazon Reader

“If you want to get on and need help to see the bones of what you need to do to succeed, then ‘The Entrepreneur Success Formula’ is a book with implementable strategies, practical advice... all supported with real life examples and should be at the top of your reading list” - Paul Field, Owner of WFP Fire & Security

“There are many great books that business owners can study in order to improve their chances of success. This book goes a step further by clearly explaining options to overcoming the main barriers. It’s one for the bookshelf that you’ll want to keep referring back to” - Jan Long, Southampton Tuition Centre

“A great read for anyone whether just starting a business or been in business for years” - David Logan
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Damian Mark Smyth is the author of: How to be Stress Free in 24 Hours, Anger Gone and Do Nothing! and is the Mindset Coach for the Entrepreneurs Circle. He lives in Berkshire with his partner, Victoria, their daughter Annie-Rose, Wellington the Labrador with a little boy on the way!

For all of my Family, but especially Alannah, Aoife and Annie-Rose
## THE ELEMENTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>PREFACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>START WITH WHY: Your Business Rocket Fuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>GOAL SETTING: Why Clarity Through Planning Really Matters, But Plans Hardly Matter At All!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>HARNESSING FEAR: The Entrepreneur Mindset And Effective Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>LAUNCH: Why You Don’t Even Need A Business To Be In Business And How To Get Customers Fast!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>NUMBER CRUNCHING: The Awesome Power Of Pricing Right, Measurement And How To Scale Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>SYSTEMS: Making It All Work Smoothly, Some Time Management And The Power Of Compounding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Entrepreneur Success Formula

200 AMPLIFICATION: Getting Social And The Power Of Amazon!

226 YOU CAN’T DO IT ALONE: How To Hire And Keep Superstars

253 SUCCESS CATALYST: Being Remarkable, Positivity And Why Your Health Really Matters

267 HELP!: How We Can Support You On Your Journey

268 RESOURCES & LINKS
PREFACE

“If your ‘secret’ is so great, where’s my Ferrari...?!”

I have a question for you. Why don’t self-help books work for the majority of their readers? The answer is actually quite simple. The ‘method’, which worked for the writer of the book, works for them... so they expect it will work for everyone else as well. But of course, everyone is different, which is why this book you are reading is also very different from other books because it contains a formula for success accumulated from thousands upon thousands of successful business owners... and not just one!

There are systems and processes in everything we do. The very act of you reading this book involves a series of intricate systems to make it happen successfully. But everyone will be reading this sentence ever so slightly differently to everyone else, despite using the same system. You’ll all be in a different
location with different lighting. You will all have different histories and expectations and different thoughts currently in your heads. But the system to make the reading itself successful is sound and explainable and is a superb method to get the ideas across... how you apply the knowledge your gain from the system is entirely down to you.

This book is therefore not just an opinion. It’s a distillation of years of experience in helping entrepreneurs become more successful in their own businesses. It’s a formula which has been accumulated by looking at systems and processes and by applying the stand out successful patterns of behaviours and actions to a multitude of different businesses in a multitude of different industries and sectors and seeing the results time and time again.

The business owners who’ve been a part of this process, who’ve found out what does and doesn’t work, are the guinea pigs in this particular laboratory. You get to reap the benefit of the lessons they’ve already learned on your behalf. From one man band start-ups to multi-million pound franchises, the Entrepreneurs Circle
Entrepreneur Success Formula

(correct, no apostrophe) has helped them all, with every aspect of business from getting the right staff, to marketing to the right customers, from creating audacious goals, to actually achieving them by having the right mindset and of course, implementing and testing the results.

As a business coach with decades of experience in helping business owners achieve success, and as the Mindset Coach within the Entrepreneurs Circle, I will be the ‘scientist’ delivering the data in the form of a research paper (in this case called ‘a book’) with real life case studies to back it up as evidence. As the entrepreneur, or would-be entrepreneur, it is up to you to apply the success formula to your own business or idea for one, and see the results for yourself.

Damian Mark Smyth,
January 2016
INTRODUCTION

“If we did all the things we are capable of, we would literally astound ourselves.” - Thomas A. Edison

From this precise moment onwards, your life can be very different. But only if you choose it to be. You see, everything you have in your life around you right now, all the possessions you own, the relationships you have, the career and life purpose which you are fulfilling, and the success or otherwise of all of these ventures, is a result of one thing and one thing only... the choices you have made up until now. No one else has had this power over your destiny, only you. Even when events have been out of your hands, such as being involved in a car crash caused by someone else, the way you react to this event is still a choice and is therefore still your own.

Choice is the gift we have all been given to navigate our own vessels (body and mind) through the sea of life. It’s a powerful and devious little
tool all at the same time, but it’s yours, and you need to fully realise and understand that if you don’t make the choices in your life, someone else will make them for you.

This book is all about choices. It’s a formula for success, which thousands of entrepreneurs have followed and you can choose to follow too. But it’s also a book about character, because who you need to become to succeed, is just as, if not more important than what you have to do to get there. You’ll need to think very hard about why you chose to become an Entrepreneur - at least that is why I am assuming you’re reading a book with a title such as this.

Why did you choose to become someone who takes extraordinary risks, and disregard the safety of a full-time permanent position, with all its camaraderie, perks and fun, for the incessant 4.00am hikes into a mental torture wilderness of anxiety and stress over lost shipments, 20+ hour days, stagnated cash flow, under-performing staff and untrustworthy suppliers?

If you’ve already taken the entrepreneurial plunge, I bet you ask yourself this question
frequently. If you’re about to make the leap into the unknown, you may be unaware of this torment, but then you’re also probably hoping this book will help you solve some, or most of these issues. Either way, you’ll be looking for a process to make your business successful and I have some really good news for you - this book will do more than just that. It’ll give you a tried and tested, step by step formula to apply to your business, along with essential elements to ensure business success. But it will also tell you a great deal... about you - who you need to become to achieve the steps laid out on the following pages.

A ‘formula’ according to the Dictionary, is “A set form of words used for stating or declaring something definitely or authoritatively, for indicating the procedure to be followed, or is any fixed or conventional method for doing something.” Not that what you are about to read is ‘conventional’ by any means, as you’ll soon see.

Bearing in mind that, according to Bloomberg, 8 out of 10 entrepreneurs who start businesses fail within the first 18 months - that’s a whopping 80% who will crash and burn - it takes a certain type of
person, one with guts and determination to want to become an entrepreneur. So for the sake of the next few hours in my company, I’ll assume that the reason you picked up this book is because you’re one of those wonderful individuals who sees opportunity, rather than problems in life. Someone who looks at events through rather different lenses, those of… ‘positive change’ - because if you’re in business, you’re in the business of change and unless you’re a wheel clamper (apologies if you actually are a wheel clamper - I’m sure educating the general public on parking restrictions through extortion has its uses) then you are in the business of change for the positive and that is why you have a business at all or are thinking of starting one.

Unless you make a positive change in someone else’s life, there is no ‘value exchange’ and if there is no value exchange, there is no business. You find someone else’s problem and you make it go away. It really is that simple. You’ll require customers who pay you something to have your solution and the value of this solution and the positive change it brings, is down to the ‘positioning’ of your product or service and the ‘perception’ of your clients. This
Entrepreneur Success Formula

book will formulate how to execute both of these in a way that will make entrepreneurial success easier to come by.

Although there are many great books on entrepreneurship and many ‘must-reads’ for the wannabe entrepreneur, such as *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber (see the links at back) there is no clear formula for entrepreneurial success, laid out step-by-step for the reader to follow, and specifically one that has the ‘being’ part as well as the ‘doing’ part - because who you are is just as, if not more, important than what you do. Mainly because one drives the other, but also because you will encounter difficulties along the way (yes, even with a formula) and who you are will determine your reaction to these bumps in the road. In fact, it will be the most crucial element that decides whether you are in the 20% who succeed or the 80% who crash and burn.

How do I know this? Well, as a coach, author, and speaker, I coach entrepreneurs. Just entrepreneurs, no one else. I write about entrepreneurship - nothing else. And I speak daily to entrepreneurs (and pretty much no one
else apart from the postman and occasional supermarket cashier) about entrepreneurship. I used to coach other folk before, but entrepreneurs are far more challenging and way more fun and you are all doing it for the same reason whether you know it or not. And I’m here to help you make more positive changes for more of your customers, by helping you to make your business really fly.

Through years of helping thousands of business owners just like you to grow and succeed and in my current role as Business Growth Expert for the UK’s largest entrepreneur support network - I ultimately help entrepreneurs become more effective at positive change. Over the years, I’ve noticed many similar behaviours, attitudes and values in my clients. Some useful, some less so. Yes, other people see problems… but you, with your special ‘opportunity X-Ray vision’, see a chance to change for the better. However, until you can successfully effect that change and make it into a sustainable and profitable business model, it is about as useful as a handbrake on a canoe. Although I’m aware that the reason some of you went into business was because “If you want
something doing, you might as well do it yourself,” if that means 20+ hour days and your children forgetting your name, then it’s not working very well!

What if you could reclaim your entrepreneurial mojo and remember why it was you started this epic journey into madness? What if you could snuggle up in the cozy warmth of the following pages, safe in the knowledge that within, lies the required knowledge to show you how to get back on track and become part of that tiny percentage of businesses who actually make a go of it, succeed and even thrive, first or second time around? How would that feel?

You see, on a daily basis as part of my role at the Entrepreneurs Circle, I get to work with all sorts of entrepreneurial businesses, from start-ups to multi-million pound franchises. We have literally thousands of successful clients and are cultivating more daily and it’s why I’ve chosen to take the knowledge I’ve gained from working with these businesses and business owners over the years and decided to make the lessons available to a wider audience. All the case studies in this book have
been written by members of the Entrepreneurs Circle.

The systems you will be hearing about in this book have worked for thousands of successful businesses, but don’t get fooled by thinking it’s all about the system. It’s not. It’s not even about the formula. It’s about who you have to become, to succeed at using the formula that will make it work, which is why this particular book has been written specifically to change you, from the inside out. Who you become as a result of following the steps outlined within these pages will ensure your success.

I should know, as I’ve had more than my own fair share of challenges along the way to my own success, but you’ll hear snippets of my own story, (especially the bit about emerging from someone with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, OCD - to speaking on stage in front of 1,200 people, sharing a stage with Apple Co-founder Steve Wozniak) as we go through the book. For now though, let’s go right back to the beginning and start with probably the most important question you need to answer for yourself to make your business succeed: Why
did you do it?

Now if you’re looking for a magic bullet to make your business thrive, I’ve got some bad news for you... there isn’t one. It’ll take a great deal of hard work and some wrong turns along the way, and unless you have a very good reason for taking this leap into the unknown, then you’ll probably give up before you get the chance to learn how to even survive, let alone thrive.

We live in a world where we expect fast results. The reason so many online marketers do so well with their info-products is because they play to an audience who demands a ‘quick-fix’; an immediate ‘one stop shop’ to solve their problems and cure their ills. We’d all love to think there’s an easy way to do it. We look at other businesses and wonder how they manage to make it all look so simple and effortless. But that’s the problem. They didn’t find it easy at all, it just looks as if they did.

I’ve never met anyone who’s had an ‘easy ride’ to success, not even multi-millionaires who’ve been cash rich since day one. Money (in particular cash flow) is definitely part of the problem and the solution. However, it’s by no means the only
player in the game. I’ve heard too many stories of well-funded individuals who’ve still managed to screw their business up to prove my point. There are a number of elements within the formula, which need to be applied to make a business succeed and there is never a quick fix or a simple solution. However, if you have enough of these elements in place and consistently apply them in the right order, success will surely follow.

Just because we see businesses who are succeeding, doesn’t mean they found these elements first time around and implemented them straight away. Theirs was also a long hard journey into long, hard nights to make the discoveries required to find the ones which worked, to then implement them on more long, hard days, to then test and recalibrate, before success was even a glimpse on the distant horizon. So don’t ever judge a book by its cover when it comes to coveting another’s seemingly easy ride. What you see is not the reality behind the story.

Just look at the recent Hollywood blockbuster ‘The Imitation Game’, where Alan Turing was depicted as the outcast homosexual genius who
altered the course of the Second World War after overhearing a story in a bar about a German spy. It certainly didn’t happen in the way depicted. Bill Tutte was the man whose discovery changed the course of the War, and it happened when he was alone, not in a bar. What’s more, the machine code Bill deciphered was the more advanced Lorenz, not the Enigma device. Alan Turing did not even break the code of Enigma as the film suggests, a Polish scientist called Marian Rejewski can lay claim to that. But even the way this profound insight occurred whilst out on the town, was inaccurate. Turing helped break the Enigma code through sheer grit and determination and solid hard work. But then a story of hard work and continuous slog doesn’t sell popcorn. Artistic license, definitely. Truth, no.

Conversely, the advice and stories laid out within these pages are more akin to the reality of the story of the teams of code breakers at Bletchley Park. They have been aggregated from years of support to business owners through my own coaching and now working with the Entrepreneurs Circle, with their own stories of success and
failure - a much-maligned word and crucial part of the process by the way - and the subsequent learnings gained, which have nurtured and grown successful businesses as a result. These are the real systems, processes and truths that will catapult you to your own entrepreneurial success. After all, why reinvent the wheel when you can benefit from other people’s mistakes and subsequent lessons learned?

There is, however, one element that made both the code breaking of Enigma and Lorenz possible: Applied mathematics. It was a constant underlying the success in solving a supposedly unsolvable puzzle. In this regard, there is also one crucial element that I would ask you to decipher as you read the pages in this book. I call it the ‘Entrepreneurial Base Element’ and although it’s the mainstay of most successful endeavours, it’s also hardly ever discussed. But every successful entrepreneur and new venture business that I have ever met, has it. Funnily enough, it’s not what you may be thinking. It’s not your ‘why’, which we’ll address next. But see if you can spot it in the coming pages as you delve into the elements of the
Entrepreneur Success Formula and begin your own journey to entrepreneurial success.
ELEMENT ONE: START WITH WHY: YOUR BUSINESS ROCKET FUEL

“He who has a strong enough why, can bear almost any how” - Friedrich Nietzsche

Launching a business is actually very simple. Anyone can come up with a name, start a limited company and create a brand. Just go to ClickBank.com or JVZoo.com, set up an account and pick a white label product to resell. Then go to LeadPages.net and set up a holding page and PeoplePerHour.co.uk or Elance.com to find a designer to create a fancy design. Create a payment account with PayPal.com, rustle up a ‘Buy Now’ button, add some code to your squeeze page on Leadpages, sign up for some list capture activity with MailChimp, bung in some autoresponders, and that’s about it really. You have a product to sell and somewhere to sell it and a process to capture and nurture leads. Of course, you now need to find customers to buy your
product, but even that bit’s easy - there’s a chapter that deals with that, later on. So on the basis that ‘this business lark’ is a complete doddle, why isn’t everyone smashing it all the way to a beach in the Bahamas?

Life, and especially business, is never that simple. For a start, some businesses begin their entrepreneurial journey with the wrong product, but most start with entirely the wrong business model. They start with the premise that people buy predominantly on price. Some do. Some don’t, and for the sake and ease of your own journey, unless you’re absolutely rolling in cash, I suggest you think about the latter type of customer first, because if you’re contemplating the price conscious option and someone else wants to copy your business model and nab your customers, they’ll only have to offer your product or service at a lower price, and you lose your customer and your sale. What’s more, your competitor loses profitability and you’re both in a downward spiral of cost cutting and margin slashing, which is simply not sustainable.

Then there’s the biggest problem of all... You.
Yes, you’ll start with a spring in your step for sure, but that spring will soon turn to a lull and then a lollipop as you begin to procrastinate on the simplest tasks and get sidetracked by other ventures with cash flow dwindling. In fact, the biggest problem I see when I speak to my clients is staring me in the face, literally.

I mentioned previously that *who you are* is more important than what you’ll be doing. And in that regard, your ‘why’ is the element that will get you through the hard times and push you to do what is necessary to succeed and thrive. You see, there is only one reason why anyone is in business in the first place... as I already mentioned in the introduction, your product or service makes a positive change in someone else’s life. To whatever degree you make a positive difference in your customers’ lives and how much that change is worth to them, will determine the success or otherwise of your business.

Now ‘value’ and ‘worth’ are very different from ‘price’. Think about some of the brands you trust personally. Why do you *trust* them? What is it about that brand that makes you come back time
and again for more and know they will deliver? Is it the price? I doubt it. In fact, we tend to trust the brands that cost us more, not less.

We talk a great deal in the Entrepreneurs Circle about Simon Sinek, an author and speaker whose books and programmes delve into what inspires customers to buy. His TEDx talk can be found here: http://bit.ly/TEDxSimonSinek. In this short presentation he shows that ‘People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it’, using Apple as an example. Effectively, we are more likely to buy from people we know, like and trust who have the same values and beliefs as us. Therefore, it’s important that we know what those values are and make sure others are able to identify with them.

There will no doubt be a very good reason ‘why’ you do what you do, or are about to do. It may well be that you decided to start your business because you care passionately about the positive change you wish to make for others. You may have seen an opportunity to make a real difference in the world, whilst at the same time creating a viable business, which could give value to your family and community. You may have seen others provide
the same product or service and decided you could deliver it better. Or you might just be doing it for a change of scenery, or maybe even because you *have* to do it. Whatever reason you have for taking the plunge, you’ll definitely want to be making enough money to make it worthwhile.

I want to make something clear first though, ‘to get rich’ is *not* a reason why you do what you do - even if you think it is. Receiving monetary reward is a *result* of what you do, not a reason for doing it. You might want to have financial freedom and security for yourself and your family, (that’s a pretty good ‘why’) but just saying you want to be rich, is not enough. I’ve seen too many unhappy millionaires to realise that money is not the key to happiness, it’s simply a tool to assist us to do the ‘stuff’ we love - and in the case of those with a terminal illness and a bulging bank balance - sometimes it’s not even very good at that.

“*I wanted my kids to know me, I wasn’t always there for them, and I wanted them to know why and to understand what I did.*” - Steve Jobs on his deathbed
No one actually really wants to ‘be rich’ - even the flash cars and bling and rolling around in wads of cash, which we see all over music videos, is actually pointing to a much deeper desire. The freedom which an abundance of money could bring... the precious time spent with a loved one... the tiny momentary fragments where time stands still and life just rocks... the imagined perfect sunset... the touch of someone who connects with our soul... our own child’s loving smile... we can even imagine it as if it were a reality that lasts forever, believing that money could somehow buy it... but you’re looking in the wrong direction for that particular treasure. Your imaginations are possible and money may well be required to facilitate some of them - but there is a more important driving force beyond this ‘standard of deferred payment’ that needs to be recognised first.

Richard Bach, author of ‘Jonathan Livingston Seagull’ said: “Here is the test to find whether your mission on Earth is finished: if you’re alive, it isn’t.” I’m assuming, as you are reading this that you’re alive, so you have a purpose and are hopefully willing to find out what it might be...?
[My recent TED talk goes into discovering your purpose on a deeper level: bit.ly/damiantedtalk].

Is there something keeping you awake at night? I’m not talking about the next-door neighbours arguing over the school run, or the alley-cat singing late into the night. I’m talking about that little voice inside your head that’s been trying to tell you something. It’s the same one that drove you to read this book and the same one that’s been telling you ‘you’re onto something’ when you first had the idea to set up in business. But whether you are already in business or not, the Apple founder Steve Jobs referred to it as ‘Making your dent on the Universe’. The fact is, everything that has ever happened in the history of the entire Universe up until this very point in existence, has led to you reading these words, right now... What are you here on earth to do? Are you going to leave this mortal coil a slightly better place than it was when you were born? And if so, what are you planning to do, to make a positive difference in the world? The value will not be in the sales you make... the value will be in the difference you make.

Your ‘reason’ therefore, for taking a leap into the
unknown will need to be strong enough to survive some pretty jarring bumps in the road. The times when you wondered why on earth you started this journey in the first place. The times when you take a sideways glance at the jobs section in the paper, just to see ‘what’s out there’. The times when your cash flow doesn’t quite cover the wages and you wonder what the hell you’re going to do to stop a full blown riot. The times you might not have experienced yet and hopefully, with the help of this book, you won’t have to - but there are plenty of other tricky situations that might well happen in the coming months and years ahead - and it’s your ‘why’ that will pull you through them. The end result may well be those imagined dreams and a life of freedom, but by then you’ll be someone entirely different. You’ll have become *who you need to be* in order to achieve your dreams. And that, is far more powerful than the dreams themselves...

Whatever your reason for deciding to take the entrepreneurial plunge, I would like you to start to think about *why* you do what *you* do by answering the following questions. Take a few moments
somewhere quiet and think about them before writing down your answers:

1. Why does (or will) your business exist - what is its purpose?
2. Why do you and your staff get out of bed in the morning?
3. Why would your market and the world be a poorer place if your business simply ceased to exist?
4. What do you generate, beyond profit, and what impact do your activities have on your people, your communities and the larger world?
5. What is your own mission (purpose)?

The questions above are meant to get your thought processes started in the right direction, because what I’ve seen over the years is that the business owners who do really well, have a lot more right thinking than the ones who don’t. What do I mean by ‘right thinking’? As I mentioned earlier, everything you see in your life around you right now - all the possessions you own, the career you’ve carved out for yourself, the relationships
you have - are the results of the *choices* you’ve made up until now. And all of those choices were as a result of the thinking you had prior to making that choice. If you didn’t have the thought “I’ll set up a business...,” you wouldn’t have made the choice to become an entrepreneur. Same applies for your relationships and all the things you possess. Prior to deciding to either commit to buy or commit to commit, you made a choice, which involved *thinking* first.

As we go deeper into the book, you’ll start to see a pattern emerging. ‘Right thinking’ is really just another way of saying ‘clarity’, and when you have clarity on anything, it’s easier to make a decision about it... and when it’s easy to make a decision on something, that’s when you take decisive action.

What I’ve noticed time and time again over the years is that the entrepreneurs who take clear decisive action are the ones who succeed. The ones who overthink things are the ones who stagnate, stall and ultimately fail.

The longest journey starts with a single step and the best thing you can do to succeed, is to start.
I’ve run many training courses for entrepreneurs at the Entrepreneurs Circle’s National Support Centre in Birmingham, including one particular course on book writing, and the number of wannabe authors who’ve come to the day and promised to do the actions necessary - 500 words a day for three months - but still fail... is staggering! With the best intentions, they promised to deliver, but couldn’t do it. And the reason is simple. They got stuck in their thinking. They over-thought the book, so they ended up writing half a book instead, or they procrastinated and ended up writing no book at all, along with the trillions of other brilliant, yet unsuccessful and unwritten books throughout history.

Once you have a clear idea of why you do what you do and where you want to go with it, it’s like someone putting rocket fuel into your tank. You’ve decided to make the journey. You know why you want to make it and you’re feeling inspired to take that first step, and your ‘why’ is going to get you off the launch pad. It’s going to give you the necessary thrust and momentum to get past the initial stages, beyond the atmosphere.
and into orbit.

But here’s the real kicker: your ‘why’, can change! That’s correct, your ‘why’ can develop as your company grows. Your initial reason for starting the business will always remain the same, but why you continue and why you decide to grow can, and probably will, change. This is, therefore, more akin to the direction your business is headed, which is why the next element is so crucial in the Entrepreneur Success Formula. You’ll need clarity on your destination before you start the journey, but not for the reasons you may be thinking.

I once heard that if a Jumbo-Jet is sitting on the tarmac at London Heathrow and the nose of the aircraft is one millimeter out from its intended target of JFK airport in New York, it would land hundreds of miles away (if it flew in a straight line). Likewise, if your destination is unclear, then you may land somewhere different to your intended target. The Jumbo-Jet happens to have a self-correcting mechanism on board and in many ways, that’s how entrepreneurs should think of business coaches, someone to recalibrate them when they fly off-course.
So often I’ve started to work with entrepreneurs who feel ‘lost’, and when I ask them where they’re going and where they are right now, they can’t tell me. “It’s no wonder you feel lost then isn’t it?!” Like ships bobbing around on the ocean with nowhere to go and no idea where they came from... yes, you might feel a little lost!

The degree of clarity you have at start-up will not therefore necessarily define your destination so much as it defines your thinking and the subsequent choices and habits you adopt in the weeks and months ahead. And this is where it gets really interesting, because so many businesses focus too heavily on the goal as the most important element, but how many times have you met people who’ve actually achieved exactly what they set out to achieve in the first place? Rarely? Never...?!

Of course, you’ll need to adjust as you go along, why wouldn’t you? Unexpected events will always knock you off balance. That’s called life. Of course, you’ll be willing to recalibrate and get yourself back on track and if your ‘why’ is strong enough to start with, it will always set you back on the right path, which is why goal setting per se, is
at the same time crucial and also a complete waste of time. The *clarity you get whilst doing it*, is the most important element in the formula here.

So now’s the time to get some of that clarity on your destination, as we delve into the next chapter on ‘Goal Setting’.

**CASE STUDY: GRAHAM HILL AT VERBATIM**

Verbatim, The Telephone Answering Service, was launched on 15th April 1997, but Graham’s journey as an entrepreneur started on August 2nd, 1990 when Sadam Hussain invaded Kuwait. This event prevented his first attempt at owning a successful business, but seven years later he launched his fourth business after two more failures and one ‘reasonable’ success. Why did Graham continue his journey in becoming an entrepreneur?

“Apart from three children and my lovely wife Juliet to support, there are four reasons that were and still are my driving force. I didn’t want to return to corporate life and be a wage slave with all the politics which that entailed. I wanted
to develop a business model with recurring revenue - the venture before Verbatim comprised publishing over twenty local advertising directories in the Thames Valley - and if I didn’t sell space every week, I couldn’t afford to put food on the table. I also wanted to create a business that could make a real difference to our clients and one my staff would be proud to represent. And finally, I wanted a business that would hold my passion by delivering outstanding customer service and real returns for my clients for many years, and I am as excited and passionate about what we do now as I was back in 1997.

For any budding entrepreneur starting out or needing a change in direction, my advice would be to never, ever give up, because the harder you try, the luckier you will get and it’s all too easy to fall at the first hurdle and not recover.

Aside from the earlier failures, we frequently hit the buffers in the first stages of Verbatim too. Our initial business plans revolved around pre-selling 40 contracts to an existing client base of 600-800 regular advertising customers, most of whom were quality local trade businesses serving
the property market. This meant we should have revenue of around £1,500 per month in place to pay the wages for our first receptionist and to rent a tiny office. We agreed a contract with British Telecom to install 40 ISDN and Dial Direct Lines on January 1st 1997 and to save some cash, I was going to do the book-keeping and VAT returns myself.

But we didn’t sell 40 contracts, or even 30 and not even anywhere near 20! We only sold a paltry 4 contracts and there I was thinking I was a great salesman! I simply hadn’t factored in the negative attitude of sole-traders working for immediate wages, versus those who were expanding their businesses and looking at call answering as a potential solution. They simply didn’t grasp the concept that the Entrepreneurs Circle screams about today... “Answer the b****y phones, because if you don’t, your competitors will and you’ll lose the business!”

With just a few days until the launch of January 1st and with only four clients to pay us, BT was late installing our lines. We didn’t end up going live until April 15th, some 100 days later than
planned. Picture this - no market - no income, start-up loans for capital equipment installed at £150,000 - rent and wages to pay, without any essential infrastructure to service our customers - and not even many of them, for that matter. Can you imagine what would have happened to our reputation if I had managed to pre-sell those other 36 contracts? Which is where we had a double dose of Lady Luck.

In those days, BT paid out £25 per day, per line, in compensation for late installation. We ended up receiving a cheque in May for £18,000. This kept us afloat and gave us some time whilst we changed our strategy (BT have since changed their T&C’s as a result of our claim). Not one to give up and with my overriding passionate belief that the business would actually work, we tried a new tack by writing to over 40 business we knew in the professional services sector - accountants, solicitors and management training consultants. Our objective this time was not to sell to them but to ask for help to introduce us to business owners who they knew and might benefit from our services. We got a bite from a London-based
franchisee of a Canadian training company saying that this was just what they were looking for. Nearly 20 years later and we still service them as a client.

The unplanned delay gave us the time to change direction from our original target market to the professional service sector, who were more attuned to the concept of a personal reception service, delivering an enhanced experience to their customers. They also understood that one missed call could result in lost sales and profits.

Twenty years later, and after answering over five million calls and delivering well over one million new sales inquiries to small business owners and entrepreneurs, we are about to launch a new global telephone answering software product. None of this would have happened if we had fallen at the first hurdle and given up. My ‘why’ has kept me going and my passion has never wavered to deliver outstanding customer service whilst improving my clients bottom line.”
ELEMENT TWO: GOAL SETTING: WHY CLARITY THROUGH PLANNING REALLY MATTERS, BUT PLANS HARDLY MATTER AT ALL!

“What stands in the way, becomes the way”  
- Marcus Aurelius

What is a goal? A goal is something to aim for. It gives you a purpose or a sense of direction toward which you can point your energies and efforts. Goals are also the targets toward which you point your daily habits, whether in small, simple ways, like knowing you need food and thinking how to get it, by imagining yourself jumping in the car and driving to the shops, or more audacious goals such as writing a best-selling book, getting married or starting a new business.

Whatever size and time scale you have in mind, goal setting is a very useful and powerful tool, but not for the reasons you may have been told. Its real strengths lie in being able to assist you
in accomplishing your life’s visions and creating good habits. As I’ve already suggested, it’s the clarity you get whilst planning and the subsequent habits and behaviours you adopt as a result of goal setting that really matters here. *Who you become by achieving your goal* is way more important than the goal will ever be.

In this chapter, you’ll learn how to set goals that do just that, but then you’ll also learn how to break them down into achievable chunks to digest and action.

Firstly though, I want to ask you to picture something in your mind: imagine an architect, a structural engineer and a builder discussing the construction of your dream home on a large plot of land, a house you’ve designed personally. The builder thinks he knows what you want from what he thought he heard from the structural engineer, but the architect isn’t sure and there’s an argument ensuing. You’d probably be quite concerned if this scenario was playing out in reality. And rightly so!

Trying to build a house without a blueprint would be crazy, especially if you weren’t doing all of the work yourself, (but even then it would be
hard). How would your ideas come across using only the spoken word and Chinese whispers? Yes, it’s still possible without a plan, but it’s so much easier with one. But something even more important happens when ideas are put into writing. Clarity emerges. Having ideas written down in a language that everyone can speak is one thing, but putting them on paper in your own language brings up challenges and issues which may not have crossed your mind, until they were staring you in the face... on paper.

Imagine also that there were no fixed time limits for the build. Calendars hadn’t been invented yet and there was no way of synchronising all of the parts of the project. No one knows who will be doing what and by when. Total chaos! Which is why writing things down on a calendar or in a diary also brings clarity. You see, humans have an incredible talent to be able to transport themselves into a future which isn’t happening, or hasn’t happened yet. They can envisage something that doesn’t exist and make plans to make it into reality, or see it as real in the present moment.

I asked you to do that just now by imagining
your house build. You were able to imagine a builder, an architect, a structural engineer and a plot of land... perhaps even a dream home and an argument as well! Now it’s absolutely impossible that you will have had the same thoughts as anyone else reading this book, so this is where written goals and clarity come in handy.

Look at everything around you now. Everything you see started off as a thought in someone’s mind first. And to make that thought into the tables, chairs, cars, seats, or wherever you happen to be and whatever is there, these ideas had to be written down first and clarified. It had to be imagined to be achieved first, and then it had to be clarified to be made real.

The same applies in your business. It needs to be imagined first and then put into writing to get the clarity you require to start making it into a reality. The extent to which you envisage the future and get clear on your goals will then determine the habits that you maintain to make this happen. We’ll be discussing habits in more detail a bit later on.

Without a clear plan and clear goals, you can
end up going around and around in circles living an unproductive and hectic life (sound familiar?). This is usually the first point of call when dealing with someone who procrastinates. I use the example in training courses, that if your mobile phone buzzed an emergency tone and it was from a loved one who’d been rushed to hospital, would you procrastinate before you got up and left? Clear goals (get to hospital) clear plan (get in car and drive - fast).

We spend so much time doing unproductive ‘stuff’ simply because there isn’t enough clarity on why we’re doing anything in the first place. There are other reasons that we procrastinate of course, such as fear of failure or even success, but these will be addressed in the next chapter.

Goals are not written in concrete or unchangeable terms, in fact, as you’ll see later on, they should change as your business evolves. But they do give you a starting point and a destination to calibrate to. I always liken having no goals, to turning up at the airport to go on holiday and jumping on the first plane out of there. You might end up in an Icelandic winter with your beach
clothes and a fistful of dollars. For some of you, that might sound quite exciting, but if your family suffered as a result, it wouldn’t be so much fun.

With this in mind, to achieve your goals, you will have to make some sacrifices in the form of time and energy. This means time otherwise spent with family and the energy to commit to being able to complete them. This is the part that really matters, because it takes a certain type of character to be able to make the choices and sacrifices required, day in and day out, consistently. You’ll need to become committed to your plan, be prepared to overcome challenges and work to a strategy, never forgetting that you are ultimately the only one responsible for achieving your outcome. That’s right, it’s all your fault. Good news and bad news, it’s all down to you. As a client said to me recently: “I might be swimming in sh*t, but at least it’s my sh*t!”

So start by being as precise as you can with your goals. By setting precise goals; putting in the dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement and already have imagined what it feels like to complete the goal, you’ll know
Entrepreneur Success Formula

exactly when you have achieved them and can take complete satisfaction from having done so. More importantly, it’ll be easier to recalibrate your progress as you move forward, which is ultimately far more effective for your long-term success, as we’ll discuss in detail later.

Let’s use an example. Say I wanted to lose some weight. A simple goal statement like, “I want to lose some weight” is an ambiguous and indefinite statement. It would be more useful if I detailed the amount of weight I wanted to lose and by a specific date. Then I can envisage myself as that person in my mind’s eye and what I will look like after reaching my desired outcome. I’ve suddenly got some clarity on what I need to do and what the end result feels like and by doing this, it will not only inspire me to lose the weight in the first place, but will also set in motion the necessary habits and sacrifices I’ll need to make and give me a real feeling of who I need to become to achieve it.

When we imagine something in detail in our minds, our bodies can’t tell the difference between the imagined experience and the real one. The same physiological responses occur in both cases.
If you imagine something in detailed Technicolor, your body is literally fooled into thinking it’s real. I had a dream recently where I sat on a wasp and it started to chase me. I woke myself up as I tried swatting the wasp away and hit the bedside table. It really looked and felt real - real enough to wake me up. And the bedside table definitely felt real at 3am in the morning! This is because your mind has its very own CGI special effects department to make your imagination and your thinking come to life. How cool is that? Having said that, it’s important to set goals that you can realistically achieve - so don’t imagine losing 10 kilos in a day for instance - it doesn’t matter how much you imagine that really happening, it’s unlikely unless you cut a limb off!

It’s also possible to set goals that are too difficult because you might not fully appreciate the obstacles which will be coming your way - such as temptations to do other things, or to not do anything at all (which is still a choice). You’ll also need to appreciate the skills needed to develop and achieve a particular level of ‘performance’, because ultimately, how you perform in achieving
Entrepreneur Success Formula

...your goals will determine your success in attaining them. Remember, the importance of this exercise is not in the goals themselves, but in the process of planning and the clarity this brings. As Dwight D. Eisenhower said: “In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

Perhaps you may begin to see why 80% of businesses struggle. Many of them start in the wrong place when it comes to goal setting - and that’s if they even do this bit at all. No doubt the majority of them start their business with a plan, yet most still fail and it’s because of this simple misunderstanding. They spend too much time on the focus of the plans and not enough time appreciating the planning process itself. They set their sights firmly on the goals, whilst missing the most important part of the process, the clarity and habits this exercise brings. If they fail to achieve the specific goal, they feel like a failure, but of course they’re missing the point because ultimately, it will be the daily habits and choices you make that will determine your success and these come as a result of getting more clarity on
your purpose and really embodying the feeling of success.

Bearing in mind what I’ve just highlighted, another way to turbo charge this part of the process, is to set ‘performance goals’. You will then be using the power of compounding (more later) to create a much bigger, but still achievable goal. What is a ‘performance goal’? Well, performance goals can be controlled by the person who sets the goal, as opposed to outcome goals, which are controlled by others or circumstances outside of our influence.

It’s best to set performance goals wherever possible in your business, as you are the one in control. Performance goals focus on your personal performance, while outcome goals focus instead on the results you get. So outcome goals do not take into account how well a person performed and are vulnerable to failure from exterior factors.

A team may have an outstanding performance and not win a contest (such as a pitch for a job) because other teams have performed better. Conversely, they may perform poorly and still win, if all other teams perform at a lower level.
Outcome goals (results) therefore do not tell the whole story, whereas performance goals are track-able and controllable.

For instance, if your goal is to do one month of worthwhile 90 minute sessions (more on these later) working on your marketing every day, you have far greater control in achieving this than stating that the end result will be ‘a new marketing campaign’. You have even greater control of success if it’s done using the correct procedures or habits. In the case of ‘worthwhile marketing’, turning off all distractions such as email and phones and not being disturbed, would assist you greatly. This simple and track-able performance goal gives you more control over your outcome.

There is nothing more discouraging than failing to achieve a goal for reasons beyond your control. Bad business environments, poor weather, supplier problems, bad luck, bad debt... but at least if you base your goals on personal performance (habits) you can keep control over the achievement of your own targets and the factors that got you there. Who you become from achieving your goal is contained within your performance, and this is all
under your control.

Examples:

*Performance Goal*: Create an inspiring 15 min pitch
*Outcome Goal*: Win the pitch

*Performance Goal*: Do 90 minutes of marketing every day for a month
*Outcome Goal*: New marketing campaign

*Performance Goal*: Make 20 prospecting calls every day for a month
*Outcome Goal*: Get 100 new customers

Of course, the beauty in this process lies in knowing what is required to achieve the bigger goals. If you know from experience, or from others, that making 20 calls a day for a month will result in around 100 new customers, it’s more likely (if you achieve your controllable performance goal) that the outcome goal will also be achieved. By starting the smaller, more achievable performance goal or daily habit, you will start to make inroads into your bigger goal - which, as you might begin to see by now, is
actually more of a Trojan horse.

Now that we’ve gone over some of the basics, we’ll get started and create some real life goals, but first, let’s do a ‘Stock take’.

“Could you tell me the way to Balbriggan, please?”

“You know, if I was going to Balbriggan I wouldn’t be starting from here at all...”

- Famous ‘Irish Joke’

It’s OK, I can include this, as I’m half Irish. A bit tongue in cheek but quite timely for what you’re about to create. If you want to know the best pathway between two points, it’s all very well knowing where you want to get to, but it’s also very useful to know where you are now. I said earlier that I’ve worked with some businesses who don’t know where they are. Well, I exaggerated. Most of the businesses I start working with don’t know where they are! So if that’s you, you’re in good company.

The starting point for everyone I begin coaching is to get this stock take done, pronto. Let’s really
see where you are on the map before we start getting ideas about where you want to travel and let’s begin with some basic questions to find out where you are, by looking first at what you’ve achieved in the past twelve months:

1. What are you most proud of in the past year?
2. If there were a broadsheet newspaper headline describing this past twelve months for you, what would it say?
3. When were you most excited about life, what were you doing and who were you with?
4. Looking back, what (if anything) would you have done differently?
5. What new dream did you achieve for yourself?
6. Where did you let fear hold you back from a dream or a goal you had?
7. What new and inspiring people did you meet in the past year?
8. Who do you want to influence you in the year to come?

The reason I’m asking about other people in these last questions is quite simple: research has
shown that statistically, you are the ‘average’ of the five people you spend most time with. Your income will be the average of their incomes. Your values will be the average of their values. Your tastes will be the average of their tastes. So choose wisely who you hang around with! I love this analogy from millionaire entrepreneur Peter Voogd, which sums this up nicely: “If you hang around five confident people, you will be the sixth. If you hang around five intelligent people, you will be the sixth. If you hang around five millionaires, you will be the sixth. If you hang around five idiots, you will be the sixth. If you hang around five broke people, you will be the sixth. It’s inevitable.”

This is an important part of rethinking your thinking. To be successful, you’ll need some more ‘success thinking’, and hanging around with people who are negative and have defeatest thinking is not going to help you or your business succeed. It’s why we are so passionate at the Entrepreneurs Circle about finding the right type of entrepreneurs to have as members within the Circle. Entrepreneurs who believe achieving is inevitable. Those who have the right ‘why’ to get
them motivated. Those who are passionate about making a positive change in the lives of others, because ‘Who you hang around with matters, a lot!’ (Botty Rule #2: from the book ‘Botty’s Rules by The Entrepreneurs Circle’s founder and owner, Nigel Botterill).

Next up, we’ll look at specific focus areas in your life, which go to make up who you are. As an entrepreneur, your entire life, from your business and personal relationships to your own physical and mental health are just as (if not more) important than any business acumen or skills, because everything you do in life affects everything else, so if you’re trying to run a business whilst going through a messy divorce or tackling cancer, it’s going to be a lot tougher than if you’re living in mental bliss and ultimate health. Put simply, when you feel better, you’ll perform better. So how can you go about feeling better on a daily basis?

We’ll talk about how you can improve your thinking later by understanding how the process works, but for now, make a list below of the core areas of your life where you want to get
better results and set performance goals: Health, continued learning, helping others, relationships, family, business. These are just some examples, but the more creative you can get, the better. You could say for instance: ‘Expand my financial mind by attending a Rich Dad conference’ instead of simply ‘Continued learning’… or ‘I want to bring 1000 children out of poverty in the UK by this time next year’. Anything goes but try not to list any more than five at this point. Although this bit can become quite exciting (and I suggest you do this with your partner and/or family) there is a risk of becoming overwhelmed further down the line if you’re too ambitious here.

The idea is to nail the areas in your life that really matter to your business and life success and what that will look like. A really good place to start is to think about your life in precisely a year from now. This time next year, what would your life look like if you had achieved exactly what you set out to achieve? How would you feel? What would you be doing? Who would you need to become? Sit and imagine your life as if it has already happened and then write down your areas
of attention below:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Now let’s take a look at something that is so important to your success that it deserves some real thinking time. We’ve touched upon it already but it’s really the most vital part of this whole section. Without the right ones, your chances of success are slim to zilch. With the right ones, practised daily, your chances go through the roof. What are we talking about? Your habits, of course!

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” - Aristotle

Start thinking about daily improvements or changes you would like to habitualise in your life. Goals are outcomes you eventually accomplish or can check off your list, whereas habits are
behaviours you adopt as a part of your life going forward from here on in. They glue together and compound to make you into the person you need to become to get what you want.

Some examples to focus on might be: being early instead of late, scheduling less instead of trying to cram too much in or procrastinating; slowing down and being mindful of situations; spending less time on email or social media (unless it’s a part of your marketing strategy of course); simplifying and de-cluttering; eating more healthily; drinking less alcohol or caffeine; exercising more; writing a regular blog or getting a minimum of 8 hours sleep a night; or spending less money on trivial things.

Basically everything you do in life on a regular basis, from your attitude when you get up, to everything you eat and drink, the amount of exercise you choose to do, the way you work, the way you learn... absolutely every behaviour is a result of consistent, continued choices and decisions made over and over again and pieced together to make your life as it is right now.

Everything you see around you in your life is
a result of the habits you’ve chosen on a daily basis. No one else has decided your life for you, no matter how much you want to blame others. The results in your life right now are the results of the choices, which you and you alone have made. If you want to change your life, you’ll need to change your habits. It’s really very simple in this regard, but then again, changing the habits of a lifetime can be tricky. But it all starts with one word: choice. If you choose to do so, starting right now, then you have a good chance of making this shift happen. As long as the choices you make become consistent, you’ll start to build up momentum and make the changes necessary to change your life forever.

The website: ‘Zen Habits’ has a really effective and simple approach to changing habits - it’s best to focus on a maximum of one new habit or resolution at a time (ideally no more than one a month). If you do, or stop doing, this one thing for a month straight, it will likely become a part of your routine. The good news is that for the super ambitious, this allows for 12 new habits in a year!

Here are some simple, easy to implement
Entrepreneur Success Formula

tips you can make into daily habits, which will transform the way you feel and ultimately lead to peak performance and super high productivity:

• Drink a minimum of 3 litres of water every day
• Go for a short walk daily or a jog, three or four times a week
• Listen to audio books instead of the radio in the car - I cannot tell you how significant this one choice has been in my own life - it’s incredible!
• Stop procrastinating by doing focused work in 20 minute chunks instead of getting overwhelmed by big projects and putting them off to the last minute (OneFocus App works well for this)
• Make a list of tomorrow’s tasks every night before you go to sleep, so the next day is already pre-planned
• Write a daily journal including successes and learned lessons from the day’s events
• Say “I love you” to your spouse and children every day
• Stop eating junk food - there’s nothing more energy sapping than eating a quick fix of
processed food or sugar, only to suffer from a massive drop-off soon after

• Stop watching the news - they only seem to cover the cr*p stuff

• Check your Google analytics weekly to know what’s really happening on your website and speak with your accountant regularly to know what’s happening to the important numbers in your business - you’ll be able to make smarter decisions when you know all the facts

• Only drink coffee before 12pm. Coffee is a great anti-oxidant, but drinking too much of it, especially after midday will lead to sleep deficiency

• And lastly, speaking of which, get to bed by 10pm every night for a minimum of 8 hours’ sleep. It’s been shown in numerous scientific studies that the main cause of stress, poor performance, and even car accidents is tiredness. Drink less (or zero) alcohol and get to bed early and the next day becomes a breeze

OK, I admit it, these are mine! There are more of these tips in the chapter towards the end of the
book about health and life hacks, but I thought it would give you a head start here... so now over to you:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

Don’t forget, everything you do as an entrepreneur is part of who you are and therefore part of your business success going forward., so now it’s time to get specific. It’s not enough to just say, “I want to be healthier” or “I want to lose weight.” Performance goals should be quantifiable and measurable. You can’t control whether you actually lose 10 kilos, but you can control what you eat and how often you exercise, which usually leads to losing the weight, so define precisely what you want.
If you want to write a book, then how many words in a day can you commit to (500 is usually do-able)? List the ‘Quantifiable Outcomes and the Specifics’ of each goal. This is the part where you’ll start to put some ‘meat on the bone’ as far as how the finished picture will look and more importantly, what you’ll feel like when you’ve achieved them. Remember, whatever you imagine needs to feel real, then your body won’t be able to tell the difference between the imagined reality and actual reality, and will start to believe it’s already happened. Get creative on this part and start to feel like it’s already in your life and you’ll already be making headway into achieving it:

Goal 1: Quantifiable Outcomes and Specifics:
Goal 2: Quantifiable Outcomes and Specifics:
Goal 3: Quantifiable Outcomes and Specifics:

To make sure these goals really happen, you’ll need to get some leverage, like the father who couldn’t stop smoking until his six-year-old daughter walked into his home office one morning and said, “Daddy, I don’t want you to die before
I’m 10.” He never smoked again!

What vitally important reason can you find for making your goal an absolute must and doing what is necessary to become the person to achieve it? It could be fitting into a dress for your wedding or being sure you’re alive to teach your grandchildren their homework. It’s your call but just be sure there is real emotion and meaning behind it.

This part of the process helps to clarify your ‘why’. We’ve already discussed the importance of this earlier on, suffice to say that it’s the driving force behind all of your behaviours, which become your habits, which are your choices, which make your successes. So list one ‘why’ for each goal.

Example:
Goal 1: I want to stop smoking.
Your ‘Why’: So that I can live to see my daughter get married.
Goal 2: I want to create 10k net profit per month.
Your ‘Why’: So I have the freedom to spend time watching my children grow up instead of working to make someone else’s dreams a reality.
We’ve already mentioned getting together with friends and family to come up with ideas and plans. One thing that works really well is getting out of your normal environment with your significant others and really getting clear on your future. Do this regularly and you’ll find that the clarity coming from this process really drives you on with your daily habits and success. Victoria and I regularly get together to create vision boards based on the future we want to create. You can use a Pinterest account and keep a board private, but both put together images to inspire you into action. One of our members, James Welsh from My Coaching, even has his vision board as framed pictures, and every time he succeeds in one of the areas, he replaces the old image with the real one. The other reason vision boards are so effective is that they are always on display and a good way to remind you why you’re putting in the hard work to make them happen. Don’t forget, it’s the daily habits you undertake and who you become from achieving them that determines your success.

“Great things are not done by impulse, but by a
“series of small things brought together.” - Vincent Van Gogh

So now it’s time to fill in the minor details, or ‘Baby Steps’ to take next on your journey to entrepreneurial success. As we’ve already discussed, thinking of a long-term goal as a single item to accomplish can be massively overwhelming. But every goal has all kinds of small tasks leading up to it. Let’s say that I want to lose that 10 kilos. My first step would be to go the kitchen and throw away all the sugary snacks in the cupboard. My second step would be to write down a shopping list of healthy items to get from the stores. My third step would be to go to the shop and buy them, along with a recipe book for healthy eating. This way I am setting myself up for success.

Take each big goal and break it down into 3 to 5 baby steps. You may need more (or fewer) steps depending on the size of your goal.

So for each goal on your list (example):

Big goal: Write a book on my expertise, to amplify
my business brand

Step 1: Wake at 6am every day to write a minimum of 500 words
Step 2: Carry a dictaphone everywhere to add comments and additional resources
Step 3: Post a brief on PeoplePerHour.co.uk to find someone to transcribe my voice notes
Step 4: Go to 99Designs.com to start a cover design process
Step 5: Speak with a book midwife to help with accountability and give me deadlines to reach

This last point is really important. Think about someone who can help you make each goal into a reality. No one does anything entirely on their own and behind every success is a support team who makes it possible. It’s precisely why we’re here at the EC!

For each of your goals, list one person who could help you achieve it. Ideally they will have experience and expertise on the topic, but this could be someone close to you, a colleague, a friend or even someone you’ve never met before,
but who you’d love to get advice from. List one name for each goal.

Lastly in this section, it’s time to get your goals scheduled. Everything we do takes up physical time in our lives. Without putting things on the calendar, it’s easy to plan too much or to fill your time with other things. Let’s face it, this is going to happen anyway, so you might as well fill it with the steps in your formula.

Look at the goals, habits and resolutions you’ve created. Begin to place each of them into the weeks and months ahead, ideally on a large wall chart (having them in front of you daily will really help). Be conscious of the time in your life. If you know you’ll be traveling throughout November, don’t expect huge results that month. If some of your goals will take the whole year to complete, then fill in your minor tasks in the months where you will definitely be able to take action. Just putting this all down on paper will have a huge impact on your chances of making them happen - remember the builder/plan analogy and the clarity this will bring?

If you can get accountable by telling other
people about your goals, your chances of success more than treble. We tend to keep our word much better with others than with ourselves. Pick at least three people close to you to tell about your goals and deadlines. They’ll be your ‘accountability allies’. Walk them through your process. Explain why it’s important to you and give them a copy of your goals and plans. Write down who your accountability ally will be and what they can do to keep you accountable. Perhaps suggest the process you went through with them too and get them to create some goals of their own so you can help each other.

To see progress, you should keep your plans front of mind by creating a routine that allows you to review your tasks on a weekly basis. Dreams become reality when you *consistently* address them and make small gradual progress. The compound effect will ensure that within a year, your achievements can become a reality, but more importantly, you will become the person you need to become to achieve them.

Now that you have your goals and steps written down, I want you to do one last thing which
will turbo-charge your success: Do something... RIGHT NOW!!

“Never leave the site of setting a goal without first taking some form of positive action toward its attainment” - Tony Robbins

It could be the tiniest thing in the world. Maybe send a short email or make a quick list, make a post of your intention on social media or call a friend to let them know. Pick something that only takes 5 minutes or less, but do it NOW! I regularly do Goal Setting workshops at the Entrepreneurs Circle’s National Support Centre in Birmingham and getting attendees to do this one last step is often the exercise that really makes the difference. Just by starting, you’ll set the wheels in motion which will get you motoring towards your self-created future, and as every journey starts with a single step, now’s the time to take yours.

Well done! The fact that you’ve finished this process means you are almost guaranteed to experience your dreams - as long as you do one thing… Work at it! We constantly stress the
importance of the word ‘implementation’ within the Entrepreneurs Circle, because unless you actually do it, nothing will happen. Dreams don’t become reality simply by dreaming about them. The magic happens when a consistent process of dedicated action is applied to the things that matter most in your life, and make no mistake, hard work IS required.

“A dream doesn’t become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work”
- Colin Powell

When you get committed on the level we’ve just gone to, the sky (or your imagination) is the limit. This is what has turned the impossible into the possible for me and many other entrepreneurs and is what makes the difference between a life of mediocrity and a super successful one. We all have a lot more power than we often give ourselves credit for. All we have to do is want it badly enough, start the journey and be consistent. That part is up to you, but here’s to a year of doing what actually matters - to you and your super-success
in achieving your goals for your business, your family and your life.

CASE STUDY: BARRY ALLAWAY, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT WORLDWIDE MAGAZINE DISTRIBUTION (WWMD)

This year I’ve launched three information products, created a global magazine consultancy service, supported my private clients, as well as doing all the day-to-day stuff that’s allowed WWMD to buck the trend and continue to grow in a market that’s declining. In addition, I’m heavily involved in charity work, I help my teenage boys run their craft stall at the weekends, and I run a number of business projects in my own time.

I don’t have any more time than the average person, in fact you could say that I’m more challenged than most! My wife, Hazel calls me a ‘restless visionary’. I’m continually looking at what I can do next and as such, I needed to create a system that would allow me to implement as quickly as my imagination conjures up new ideas.

‘Setting’ a goal is far too much about
the intention and less about the actual implementation. After all a ‘set’ goal makes no impact on your business or your life until it’s a tangible reality. And that’s why I’m a huge advocate for goal ‘getting’.

I always start the process from a positive perspective. This positive focus is a great method of helping me to cut through any self doubt and to think big. I make a list of my achievements (both personally and professionally) and keep topping up the tally.

With this positive mindset in place, my next step is to think about the next 90 days and what is most important to me. I usually take a day out of the business to do this and get clear on what needs my urgent attention. For example: Is there a threat I must overcome or a need to respond to market pressures? Is there a large project I want to deliver that I feel is going to make a big wave in my business? My secret here is to focus on the pressing priorities of the here and now - not what I thought would matter when I crafted a five year plan three years ago!

Times change fast and this cutting edge focus
means I’m always pushing forward with the most relevant plans and projects - and realising the benefits of their implementation with optimal timing.

Then I break each objective down into bite size chunks. Once I’ve identified the three or four key projects that are going to get my focus over the following 90 days, my next step is to break them down into easy to implement tasks.

Then I schedule time in my diary where I’ll attack each task. This day-to-day progress keeps me tightly focused and on track and drives the momentum needed to make the delivery of a big project less daunting.

I’ve found that the best way to implement the tasks is to aim for 90 minutes of focused activity each day. I protect this time religiously and schedule it into my diary. People know not to disturb me and it works. I get loads done, but more importantly I still have plenty of time for all the day-to-day stuff and my core business is not compromised by the extra activity. In fact, it’s hugely enhanced.

When I come to the end of the 90 days, I review
what’s worked and what hasn’t - in preparation to start the cycle again. The review is so valuable because you discover very quickly if an idea will have the impact you anticipated. If it has, then brilliant, but if not, the time wasted was minimal. What’s more, I’ve always learnt something valuable that allows me to attack the next set of 90 day priorities with fresh insight. This system works brilliantly for me (and for others) because it helps me deliver the projects that build success.

wwmd.co.uk

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”
- Viktor E. Frankl
ELEMENT THREE: OVERCOMING FEAR: THE ENTREPRENEUR MINDSET AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

“People who don’t take step number one, never ever take step number two” - Zig Zigler

It’s at this point that many other books or courses might leave you to your own devices. After all, you’ve got your ‘why’ and some clarity on your goals, and even read case studies from business owners who’ve achieved excellent results by breaking these down into smaller chunks and consistently implementing the necessary habits. So what else do you need to get started? Well, quite a lot as it goes. You see, most budding entrepreneurs get a boost from defining their ‘why’, goals and habits, but falter somewhere further down the line due to procrastination, being overwhelmed, or having a crippling fear of failure. Whether it’s direct fear of failing or a fear of success, fears passed down from your peers or even learned fears
- this chapter is all about how you can overcome them and clear your path to entrepreneurial success. This chapter is actually all about YOU!

Everyone at one stage or another has had a fear of something. Although we’re born with only two innate fears, the fear of falling and loud noises, we *inherit* all of the others, which is great news, because that means we can un-inherit them too!

In your life up to this point, what have you given up or missed out on due to having a fear of one form or another? What have you stopped doing or perhaps not even started doing due to fearful thinking? Notice I’m pinpointing ‘thinking’ here as the culprit early on, because it’s your *thinking* that prescribes your daily actions and habits, and in this chapter we’re going to delve into what you can do with your thinking to create the ‘Entrepreneur Success Mindset’.

The most successful entrepreneurs throughout history, from Andrew Carnegie to Thomas Edison, Henry Ford to Ray Kroc, Steve Jobs to Bill Gates, and Jeff Bezos to Sir Richard Branson, all had (and some still do of course) a way of *thinking* that allowed them to ‘get things done’.
In his superb book ‘The 7 Day Start-up’, Dan Norris develops this mindset through having to launch a business out of necessity in just seven days. There was simply no time to sit and think, it just had to happen. And the results were incredible. He made more money in those seven days than in any of his other launch ventures combined. He wasn’t allowed to ruminate and cogitate, he just had to do it.

OK, it’s unlikely you will ever be in a position where you have no alternative but to bypass your self-sabotaging thinking, so how can you, as an entrepreneur, tap into the ‘success thinking’ of some of the greatest business people who’ve ever lived? Well, this chapter is not about how to use visualisation or self-hypnosis. Nor is it about relaxation techniques or self-esteem boosting strategies. While these approaches can give you temporary relief from fear, anxiety and self-doubt in the short term, they rarely give you genuine confidence in the long term. This chapter is also not going to be about strategies, tips or tricks to get you thinking straight. Why not? Because they are based on the wrong rules of the game.
“You have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else” - Albert Einstein

So what are the rules of the game? What is it that these successful business owners knew that we don’t? Put simply, they did what was necessary without their thinking sabotaging their behaviours. I’m going to repeat this because it’s very, very important. They did what was necessary without their thinking sabotaging their behaviours.

They were able to action what was necessary for success, without fear taking over and charting a different course. If you spend time reading about these visionaries, you’ll begin to spot the patterns. They definitely took risks. They definitely made mistakes, but it didn’t deter them. In fact it seemed to spur them onto more action, not less. They realised that ‘failure’ was actually part of the process and a requirement, rather than something to be avoided. They actually embraced it!

We’re living in a society today where danger is supposedly everywhere. If you watch the news, all you see is horror stories and fear inducing
nonsense. Our own parents tried to protect us from an early age and did everything they could to keep us from harm. But as soon as we were exposed to anything remotely dangerous, they interjected without allowing us to experience it for ourselves. And yet we did fall over when we started to walk. Sometimes it hurt. But we never gave up. It was this ‘learning’ that sparked the alterations and adjustments required to make walking possible. We had no choice but to carry on, so we did. Do you see where this and Dan Norris’s ‘Seven Day Start-up’ example match up? When we have no choice, we do, regardless. When we somehow manage to utilise this fearful thinking, actions become easier. But not just any actions, we’re talking inspired, insightful actions here. When we connect to clarity thinking, rather than our own fearful thinking, we are destined for success. So how can we do that on a regular basis?

Well, as with most things in life, when we understand how it works, it’s easier to use. Think of the last time you conquered some complicated software. The same applies to our own thinking. When we understand how it actually works,
instead of how we believe it works, we get to play the game better than anyone else. So what you are about to hear might sound rather counter-intuitive, but I assure you it’s going to make a huge difference in your life and in your business. It’s actually the reason why I can now walk on stage in front of thousands of people and deliver talks and training, when only a few years ago I suffered from crippling OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder).

Only five years ago, I believed that if I didn’t touch certain objects in a certain way before I left any room, my entire family would die! I also had a nervous squint, which was rather embarrassing, but in both cases, I was being fooled by my own thinking. Nothing else, just my thinking. How do I know? Well, many years later and there are now thousands of times when I haven’t gone through the same routine, and my family are still alive and well. I now realise that these perceived consequences of my fearful thinking were coming from me, and not from outside of me. This is very similar in fact to any sort of fearful thinking, worry, anxiety and concerns about life. Although
this seems obvious upon reflection, it is actually pointing to a deeper truth, which affects everyone and will help you in your entrepreneurial journey. When I learned the rules of the game, it made the game so much easier to play, and put quite simply, the rules of the game are as follows:

We all create our own version of life (our reality), via the gift of thought - from the ‘inside-out’ and not from the ‘outside-in’. To have any reality whatsoever, it has to come via a thought and can only come ‘through us’. This very simple understanding will help you to deal with all sorts of problems in your entrepreneurial journey, because when you see where your feelings are actually coming from - your own thinking - you have the ability to respond to them (responsibility) in infinite ways instead of just one.

That’s it. Told you it was simple. All fearful thinking is self-created, and as such is within your own control. You might well be thinking right now that this can’t be true. After all, if I dropped a tarantula in your lap, surely the fear you feel
would have been created by my actions. Well, yes... and no. You see, although my actions have led to a circumstance in which I have put your life in apparent danger, and you’d be sensible to fear for your life, the feelings you are immersed in are still being created by *you* and not by the spider, or indeed me. How can this be true?

Well if I gave the same furry arachnid to my one year old daughter Annie-Rose for instance, she’d try and hug it! It’s only *your own thinking* that makes it into a fearful situation. Sometimes it’s very useful to have a fight, flight or freeze response. It might be more useful for Annie-Rose to retreat or freeze than to hug it, but she’s just such a huggy little baby and simply adores pets (not that I would ever give her a venomous spider as a pet, I should just add!).

This one simple rule of the game allowed me to see that it was me, sabotaging myself through my own thinking, and as soon as I woke up to this truth, I stopped doing it. Kind of like having a throbbing headache and then realising you’ve been hitting yourself on the head with a large frying pan. As soon as you see this as the source of
your pain, you don’t have to try alternative hitting techniques... you just stop! Now even this example requires further analysis, because some people might not regard this pain as unpleasant. Some people might even pay for it!

Whatever type of thinking we have about anything, results in a corresponding feeling. What we think, is what we feel - but we’re doing it to ourselves, because it’s coming from us. When we see that we are the ones creating our reality via our thinking, we also get to see that fearful thinking preventing us from doing what it takes to be successful (ie: by making mistakes and learning from them) is not useful. We get to see how the rules work and we get to play by different rules. We see that it’s not useful, so we stop doing it. Seeing that we are the creators of our reality via our thinking allows us to step back and wait for more insightful thoughts to emerge - the sort of thinking that gave us the inkling to take the risk of entrepreneurship in the first place and felt right. The clarity thinking that has been urging you to make your “Dent on the Universe” as Steve Jobs puts it.
We’re not talking about ‘changing your thinking’ here. That’s something that often comes up from participants in my training workshops. That’s akin to altering the way you hit yourself on the head with the frying pan. When you see that it’s your thinking doing the damage, there’s less need to do anything... it’s just a thought, after all.

I love the analogy that Andy McNab, the former SAS soldier writes in his book ‘The Good Psychopath’s Guide to Success’, when he describes our lives as a movie and our feelings as the accompanying soundtrack. Without the music, no matter what we see on screen, there is less feeling involved when we turn down or delete the sound. But the movie always carries on regardless. The same is true in life. It’s going to carry on regardless of the feelings you are having about it. And your feelings are being created by your thinking, every time.

When you see the power your thinking has held over you in the past and you have the realisation that this is only thought, something marvellous happens. Like dressing a shadow, you see the pointless nature of getting fooled by it again.
You see it for what it is. Just a thought. Another thought then replaces the old one. Like clouds in the sky, new thinking is always going to replace old thinking so long as we don’t get involved in the process. The system is designed to clear away the old thinking and replace it with fresh, new thinking. If you let the system do the heavy lifting, it takes a lot less energy than trying to change the thinking yourself.

I hope this is starting to make some sense? It’s a very different way of approaching this subject, but it’s proving incredibly useful for many successful business owners who’ve been introduced to this new path to understanding their own thought processes. One client in particular, who’d been crippled by fear for years and had a stagnated business as a result, managed to achieve more in the space of a few weeks after realising that her own thinking was the cause of the sabotage preventing her from taking the inspired action required for success. Just seeing how the system worked allowed her to notice what was true and what was her own fearful thoughts. This realisation gave her the opportunity to ignore the
fearful thinking and take action on the insightful thinking instead.

When we see how the system is actually working, it makes it so much easier to embrace failure, like our super successful entrepreneurs, because we know that the feelings we are getting are as a result of our thinking and not the external event. The lessons learned by failure are not only useful, but need to be allowed in and embraced, and without our thinking sabotaging us, we can get on with the journey, using our new found knowledge to adjust our course.

For instance, if you were able to ignore fearful thinking, what sort of things would you do and what sort of person would you be?

- How would you behave differently?
- How would you walk and talk differently?
- How would you play, work and perform differently?
- How would you treat others differently: your friends, relatives, partner, parents, children and work colleagues?
- How would you treat yourself differently?
• How would your character change?
• What would you stop doing?
• What goals would you set and work towards?

Failure is a necessary part of life and fundamental to the process in learning how to succeed. It’s part of how we became to be the most successful living creatures in the entire Universe (as far as we know). Our whole evolutionary process is based on failure. Failure of genetic mutations leads to the success of others. Without failure, we actually cease to grow.

Thomas Edison is famously quoted as saying: ‘I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.’ He also said: ‘Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.’ There is immense power in these words, not least because they come from a man who changed the world with his inventions: the electric light bulb, the phonograph and motion picture camera. This was a man who, when his entire factory was burning to the ground (which set him back years and cost him millions of dollars) told his eldest son to “Go
get your mother and all her friends. They’ll never see a fire like this again”! He used this incredible failure as the impetus to start all over again.

We can’t change the fact that bad things will sometimes happen to us. We can however change how we react to them. It’s not how many times you fall over that matters; it’s how many times you get up! In the book, ‘The Obstacle Is the Way: The Timeless Art of Turning Trials into Triumph,’ author Ryan Holiday says that Edison could have wept, yelled in anger, or locked himself in his house in a state of depression. But instead, he put on a smile and told his son to enjoy the spectacle. “To do great things, we need to be able to endure tragedy and setbacks,” Holiday writes. “We’ve got to love what we do and all that it entails, good and bad. We have to learn to find joy in every single thing that happens.”

We should therefore all be treating failure as one of the most, if not the most important and essential elements in the success formula and actually be trying to fail more often, not less. There are so many more examples of failure from super successful entrepreneurs, so let’s list a few now:
• Walt Disney’s first animation studio, ‘Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists’, went bust after just one month.
• Oprah Winfrey lost her job as news anchor on WJZ-TV in Baltimore when they told her that she ‘wasn’t fit for television’.
• Albert Einstein wanted to attend the prestigious Swiss Polytechnic Institute, but he did not even pass the entrance examination!
• Steven Spielberg applied to the University of Southern California School of Theater, Film and Television on three separate occasions - but each time he was unsuccessful because of his C grade average.
• The first business venture of Microsoft co-founders Bill Gates and Paul Allen was called ‘Traf-O-Data’ and it flopped miserably.
• Abraham Lincoln was defeated in his first bid for a seat in the Illinois House of Representatives. So he opened a general store but within a few months, it went bust.
• Ernest Hemingway, one of the greatest
writers of the twentieth century said: ‘The first draft of anything… is sh*t.’

- Thomas Watson, president of IBM, when asked, ‘What is the formula for success?’ replied: ‘Double your rate of failure.’

- The best basketball player who’s ever lived, Michael Jordan, failed to even make it into his high school basketball team! Speaking about his incredible career, he said: ‘I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot… and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed.’

In other words, in learning to do anything well, we’re going to make plenty of mistakes and have to overcome some pretty big challenges along the way. And the further we venture into uncharted waters, the more likely we are going to screw up. Accept and embrace failure as an essential part of your journey, you’ll be much better off than if you fight against it.
‘Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.’ - Sir Winston Churchill


Our thoughts play the most important role in creating, maintaining and exacerbating fears, and the best way to deal with these is through understanding the process and how these manifest into the feelings of fear.

So what exactly are thoughts? Put simply, thoughts are the words and pictures inside your head. We don’t notice all of our thoughts and many are sub, or unconscious, such as the thought to make your body sweat, cuts heal, your heartbeat, or your lungs inflate. Memories, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, values, dreams, desires and judgments are all conscious thoughts... but they are all constructed from two basic building blocks: words and images.
If you close your eyes right now and notice what your mind is doing, you may notice words - which you may hear like a voice or see written images - or pictures, or even a combination of both. If your mind goes blank, just wait… it won’t take long before it says something like ‘I’m not having any thoughts’ - which is, of course, a thought.

If you only noticed feelings in your body and no words or pictures inside your head, these feelings also came from a thought. It’s actually not possible to have a feeling without having a thought first. In my book: *Do Nothing!* I discuss a condition called Congenital Insensitivity to Pain or Congenital Analgesia, where the sufferers cannot feel pain due to a malfunction of the SCN9A gene. There is no thought telling them that their hand is immersed in boiling water, so they cannot feel their own skin melting. No thought, no feeling.

Consider for a moment how many thoughts your mind creates in the course of a day. On average, and according to experiments - it’s around 70-80 thousand. The mind will always give you something to say, or something to show you.

You’ve probably also noticed that your mind
can be a bit negative sometimes. This is perfectly natural and normal. Although the human mind is quick to judge and criticise (you may know someone personally who always points out what’s not good enough) the fact is this that the human mind has evolved to think negatively and to fully understand why this is, we need to look at our primitive ancestors.

A hundred thousand years ago, we had four basic needs: food, water, shelter and to continue our own gene survival, none of which is very important... if you’re dead! Back then, the number one job that your thinking had to deal with (more than any other) was to not get killed. How does a mind do that then? Well it looks around for danger, constantly scanning the environment and trying to spot or anticipate anything that can possibly hurt you.

A hundred thousand years ago, if your mind was not very good at doing just this bit, then you didn’t live very long and your genes stopped. There was no shortage of violent ways to die, not least the seismic shifts in the earth and the resulting earthquakes and volcanoes, let alone the risk of
disease or getting eaten by wild beasts! So if there ever was an early human who went through life in a fearless and carefree manner, only noticing all the wonderful things around them, thinking positively that nothing would ever go wrong, they would have been eaten, burned or murdered pretty quickly - long before they had a chance to reproduce.

We evolved from the ancestors who were always on the lookout for danger and always had to be prepared for the worst, so our modern brains are always trying to anticipate what could hurt or harm us; always trying to predict what might go wrong. It’s no wonder we all have so many doubts, worries, concerns and fears. This is not a sign of a weak or defective mind; it’s a perfectly natural by-product of evolution and that is why, even if we diligently practice positive thinking every single day of our lives, we can’t stop our minds from generating negative thoughts from time to time. Thoughts are like the clouds in the sky, another one will be along in a minute, and try as we might to change the weather, we simply can’t - it’s pointless, a waste of good energy. Nature will
always win that battle!

Although our minds are perfectly enabled for us to make incredible leaps forward in technology, to walk on the moon and discover new vaccines, they are also hard-wired to criticise and judge - to conjure up scary stories about the future, and dredge up painful memories from the past. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this. These functions are the ordinary processes of a normal, healthy human mind.

As soon as we even think about stepping out of our comfort zones, our minds will start telling us the same old stories we’ve been hearing since we were young (and may still be hearing from family and friends now!). ‘You’ll mess this up’, ‘You’re not good enough’, or ‘It’s way too hard, get a job’. We can either believe these thoughts as truth and tell ourselves: ‘I can’t do it’, or we can challenge the thoughts, and look for evidence that they’re not true. We can replace them with more positive thoughts or distract ourselves from the thoughts. You may like to try these things out if you’ve never done so before. However, if you have tried them already, you might have recognised that they
require a lot of *effort* and *energy*: even if they do give you temporary relief from the negative thoughts. Your mind just keeps on coming up with new ones: and when you leave your comfort zone to enter a genuinely challenging situation, these techniques don’t help you at all.

Instead, re-read the chapter from the beginning and ask yourself the following question: Are negative thoughts really a problem? They are, after all... just thoughts. As someone who had OCD, I know that sufferers have recurrent negative thoughts many times a day. They imagine or worry that all sorts of really bad things will happen - ‘My house will burn down’, or ‘My children will die’ - if I don’t do this thing. They get very distressed by these thoughts and are often totally convinced that they will come true. But they start to recover when they realise that these thoughts are not actually real. Sufferers have typically had these negative thoughts many thousands of times - totally and utterly believing them - and yet they have never manifested in reality.

Another common belief is that negative thoughts are problematic because ‘our thoughts control our
actions’. If this were true, the human race would be in serious trouble. After all, how often have you been so mad at somebody you care about, that you thought about hurting them in some way - yelling at them, shaking them, leaving them or ‘getting your own back’? Be honest with yourself; we’ve all have these thoughts at times. Now just imagine if those thoughts had actually controlled you; if you had actually gone and done all those hurtful things. What would have happened to your closest relationships? Would you still have any friends left?! Have you ever thought about quitting, yet persisted? Have you ever thought of running away, but stayed and stuck it out? Clearly our thoughts don’t control our actions. They certainly influence what we do, but they do not control what we do.

We’re not going to reduce, challenge, eliminate or change negative thoughts because we’re going to start from the assumption that negative thoughts are not inherently problematic, they are after-all... just thought! It’s not about whether our thoughts are true or false, it’s about whether they’re helpful or not. If we allow these thoughts to guide our actions, will they help us to achieve the results
Entrepreneur Success Formula

we want? Will they help us to make decisions, to be the person we want to be? Will they help us to create the life we want to live?

There will be two ways that our own fearful thinking is currently dealt with. When we run away, withdraw or hide from our challenges, this is called being on ‘autopilot’ mode. We are essentially at the mercy of our emotions, which control our every move. This fear of fear itself, creates the illusion that our strong emotions are somehow dangerous, which in turn feeds the myth that we can’t act the way we want to, unless we can control the way we feel.

Our second method of dealing with fear is when we slip into ‘avoidance’ mode. OK, I admit it, we like to feel good and none of us enjoy really unpleasant feelings. Let’s face it, under most circumstances, fear is an unpleasant feeling. I say ‘most circumstances’ because it’s not unknown for people to spend good money on being scared out of their wits. I took a ride on the Tower of Terror once in Disneyland, Paris. I’d do it again in an instant! Loved it. But given that fear usually feels unpleasant, it’s only natural we should try to
avoid or get rid of it entirely. In avoidance mode, we distract ourselves by doing anything other than the task at hand. We read books, go to the movies, surf the internet, chat with friends, clean the house, over-eat, drink too much. The more we invest our time and energy in anything else to distract us from ‘those feelings’, the less time and energy we invest in the things that really matter and to avoid uncomfortable feelings, we opt out of challenging situations entirely. We withdraw, procrastinate, stay away from people, places and events, or activities, and the more we use this as a strategy for avoiding fear, the smaller our lives become.

But here’s the real kicker. Fear *cannot* exist in the present. It only exists in our imaginations of a future, which has not happened yet. When we avoid taking risks or we avoid stepping out of our comfort zone, or facing our challenges, we are actually missing out on life itself. It’s been shown that 96% of our thinking is in either the past or the future... not in the present! How amazing is that; all we have is the present and we spend so little time actually here!

One much talked about ‘technique’ of opting
out, is procrastination - putting it off until later to avoid the pain in the present moment or facing a possibility that we are unable to live up to the task. If we procrastinate too much, important issues will not get dealt with, problems will not get resolved, and our ‘to-do’ list will grow bigger and bigger (generating extra anxious thinking).

And then there’s substance abuse! From time to time, we all put substances into our bodies in an attempt to get rid of unpleasant feelings and/or replace them with more pleasant ones. Tea or coffee, herbal or naturopathic remedies, prescription medications, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other illicit drugs, chocolate, pizza, ice cream, hamburgers or chips… If we over-rely on any substance use, the costs to our physical health varies from addiction to lung cancer to obesity.

But the biggest cost of all of these strategies and tactics is that the more we avoid our own fear, the bigger it grows as something that is not real and the more influence it has over our actions. We get stuck in a fear trap and the greater our efforts to get rid of fear, the greater our fear becomes, and
the more negatively it affects our lives.

So what is the alternative to the fear trap? Should we just grit our teeth, put up with the feelings and force ourselves to go through it? Well, we could do that, but I wouldn’t recommend it. There is another way of responding to fearful thinking that is radically different from almost everything our society encourages us to do. We don’t put up with it or tolerate it. We don’t suppress it or deny its existence. We don’t distract ourselves from it. We don’t try to talk ourselves out of it. We don’t try to reduce it or eliminate it with self-hypnosis or any other techniques. We don’t try to make it go away with medications, herbal remedies, food or alcohol. And even though we know it’s just thought, we don’t even try to pretend it’s not there…we harness it!!

Despite me knowing that fearful thoughts are coming from me and are just thought, they still arise in certain circumstances. And instead of trying to block them out or change them, it’s so much more useful to engage with the power of this awesome system and utilise them. Let’s take public speaking, for example.
When I went on stage at the National conference at the ICC in Birmingham in 2014, in front of 1,500 people, it looked as if I was taking a stroll in the park. At least that’s what members told me afterwards. Of course, what they didn’t see was that backstage, just prior to walking on calmly, I was jumping up and down like an over excited Tigger from Winnie the Pooh! No matter how good my understanding of how thought works, it’s not going to stop thought from continuing to come through me. So yes, I had thoughts of ‘what if I forget something’ and ‘what if my slides fail’, but I know not to pay attention to them. Instead, it occurred to me that the feelings I had were those of excitement about how much I was looking forward to sharing my knowledge with so many wonderful people. I harnessed those excited feelings and channelled them through me, which made me want to jump up and down in excitement. Fear is excitement without the breath.

Suppose you could defuse from all those thoughts about how bad or unpleasant your fear is around public speaking, and how much you dislike the thought of it (if you do that is - I happen to
love it). Instead of trying to make the thoughts go away, you non-judgmentally notice the physical sensations attached to them. As we’ve already seen, trying to get rid of your fearful thoughts takes up a lot of energy and is very distracting - it’s hard to engage fully in your life while you’re busy struggling with this.

A study in 1988 by psychologists AR Rich and DK Woolever showed that students sitting academic tests, who could engage fully in the exam, instead of getting distracted by their own thoughts and feelings, performed well no matter how anxious they were prior to taking the exam.

When you unhook from ‘changing your thoughts’ but instead make space for the unpleasant feelings and then engage fully in the task you are doing, knowing that thoughts are harmless - you will perform well, regardless of how anxious you feel at the time. Furthermore, the energy that you once spent on struggling with fear and trying to do something about it, can now be invested in taking effective action.

If we know how to harness this powerful energy, we can use it to our advantage, but if we don’t
know how to handle it, we’re in trouble. Imagine approaching a wild stallion without some good horse handling skills: you’d get kicked, bitten or trampled, and waste a lot of time and energy in the process. On the other hand, if you’re a skilled horse-whisperer, then you know how to approach it safely. Over time, if you treat it well, you can build a good relationship and ride it.

When fear shows up, you know it’s there as the feelings inside you will tell you, but this is being generated by your own thinking, remember that. So instead, feel those strong emotions and intense swirling feelings inside and become more aware of them and how they are moving around. Imagine that wild stallion racing around. If you ever want to make use of its awesome strength, speed and stamina, you first have to allow it to stay on your land. The same goes for fear.

There is incredible energy in fear, which has evolved over hundreds of millions of years to prepare our bodies for action. The heightened awareness and greater strength it gives us is like rocket fuel and we have to learn how to use it to our advantage. When you feel adrenaline flowing
through your body, ask yourself ‘How can I make use of all this powerful energy?’

In any new situation, regardless of whether or not we feel confident, we will always feel some amount of fear. It’s basic human biology, so when we’re facing a new and genuine challenge, we’re going to have some sort of fight-or-flight response. It’s our minds way of deciding to stay, or get the hell out of there. No matter how confident we are at doing something new or difficult - if the situation is challenging - we’ll feel fear. Fearlessness is therefore not the absence of fear; it is our transformed relationship with fearful thinking.

Make room for the fear, notice it, allow it, channel it… and now take a deep breath, and say to yourself, ‘Okay! Here we go! Let’s put this incredible energy into action!’ The fear is still there, but your relationship with it has transformed. You can then do the same thing in all aspects of your life.

The key then to peak performance is being able to totally engage in the task. I’ve worked with athletes who call it ‘being in the zone’. My partner
Victoria calls it ‘allowing flow’ - total absorption in the task at hand. Time seems to stop dead. There is no internal commentary and nothing distracts us, as our bodies and minds work in perfect harmony together. It is in this state that peak performance happens. We have allowed our personal thinking to come through us with no blockages. Because we’ve not interfered with the natural process, we’ve made space for clarity and insightful thinking to emerge.

What we have touched upon here is a totally different approach to the fearful thinking which prevents us from taking inspired action. This is an approach that is in harmony with the system itself, rather than one which needs changing, altering, adjusting or stopping entirely. And the best thing about this new way of approaching fearful thought is that, because it is totally in harmony with the way the system is designed to work, it allows the most incredible and powerful part of the whole process; the space to really work its magic. What part is this? Our own built in connection to the answers we already need:

“It is always with excitement that I wake up
in the morning wondering what my intuition will toss up to me, like gifts from the sea. I work with it and rely on it. It’s my partner.” Jonas Salk was the discoverer and developer of the Polio vaccine. In 1957, polio was considered one of the most frightening public health problems in the world. Epidemics were on the increase in America in particular and apart from the atomic bomb, their greatest fear was polio. Jonas Salk worked tirelessly to discover a vaccine that would rid the world of this paralysing plague. “Intuition will tell the thinking mind where to look next” he said as he edged closer and closer to finding a cure. He imagined himself as the virus and what it would feel like to be healthy, and with this imagination and trust in his own intuition, on July 2, 1952, Salk injected 43 children with a ‘killed-virus’ vaccine. A few weeks later at a conference in New York, he announced that his wife and three sons had been among the first volunteers to be inoculated with his vaccine. Thousands upon thousands of successful field trials followed and on April 12, 1955, Dr. Thomas Francis of the University of Michigan “Declared the vaccine to be safe and effective.”
By the time Dr Francis stepped down from the podium, church bells were ringing across the country, synagogues and churches were holding prayer meetings, and parents and teachers were weeping, as if a war had ended.

There will almost certainly be times in your own journey when there will be big decisions to make, and although all the evidence is pointing towards you taking one option, your intuition may be telling you otherwise, which option do you take in these scenarios? Well, what I can tell you from years and years of experience working with business owners, is that your intuition is rarely wrong. It’s just that we don’t often listen to it. In fact, it’s always there telling us the way to go, if only we listen carefully enough.

One of the courses I run for the Entrepreneurs Circle is called ‘The Will 2 Act’ and involves in-depth discussions into where intuition, wisdom and clarity of thought come from. One business owner who attended the day wasn’t totally sure what we were pointing to during the course, but sent me an email the following day describing a situation that occurred on his way home. As he
was driving down the motorway at 80mph, he had a sense that there was something wrong. He pulled into the next services and looked over his car thoroughly but couldn’t find anything wrong. But he’d taken on board the discussions during the day and decided to trust his intuition and drive carefully on the much longer country roads home instead of the motorway. As he drove around a long bend on a B-road, the bottom end of his car collapsed. Had he been driving full-pelt down the motorway, he would almost certainly have been a gonner.

I’ve had circumstances where my own little voice of wisdom has told me to do something out of the ordinary, like taking a longer route somewhere, only to find when I arrive that there was a pile-up on the other route just at the time I was going to be there.

It’s the same little voice that tells you where your car keys are when you’ve exhausted going to the same drawer for the 19th time, expecting them to suddenly appear out of nowhere. It’s the same little voice that tells you not to send that fiercely written email response; the one telling you to go
home and get some sleep, instead of staying for one more drink. We’re always connected to it, because it’s part of our very nature. To say we’re disconnected from it, would be like saying a water droplet is not part of the ocean. And we can access it whenever we wish. Even in the darkest of times.

Which may perhaps sound strange. After all, I’m reckoning that some of you might have read that last paragraph and thoughts of meditation or a still, quiet mind may have popped into your head. Although it’s certainly easier to make decisions when our heads are clear and free from distraction, this isn’t essential. In fact, I’ve worked with people who’ve told me how they’ve accessed this clarity of thought, insight and wisdom at precisely the time that they should be panicking. Like the basketball player who had to make a winning three point throw with two seconds on the clock and 28,000 spectators cheering in his ears, only to describe how it felt like the entire stadium went silent and he was completely ‘at one’ with the court and ball. Being in ‘the zone’ doesn’t take sitting lotus position in a quiet room to be able to access it.
Another graphic example of this permanent connection to wisdom happened in the Nairobi shopping hijack where a group of terrorists took siege of a shopping centre in the city and started indiscriminately killing families. We can’t even begin to imagine what sort of insane thoughts were going through the heads of the perpetrators of this act at the time, but whatever they were, they must have made sense to them to carry out these atrocities. And yet, when a four year old British boy, Elliot Prior confronted one of the attackers, who’d just shot his Mother who lay bleeding, and told him “Stop shooting, you’re a very bad man,” this terrorist, even in the midst of his own utterly insane thinking, was able to reconnect to his own wisdom and told the boy: “Forgive us, we are not monsters.” He then gave the boy some chocolate and set his family free. There’s nothing we need to do to access this clarity of thought. It’s always with us, hiding in plain sight. Of course, we do tend to pay attention to it when we have less on our minds.

When asked where they got their problem solving thinking from, a recent survey of leading
company executives came up with some strikingly similar answers: “In the shower,” “On the golf course,” “When I’m taking the dog for a walk,” “Whilst shaving,” “Driving the car.” In fact, just about everywhere apart from in the office, staring at the problem itself! It’s no wonder that Friedrich Nietzsche said: “All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking” and Albert Einstein added: “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” When we’re looking towards techniques to make better decisions, we’re overlooking the most powerful and easily accessible resource available to us all. Our own wisdom and insight is always there, always working and always free but for our own personal thinking blocking it.

I hope this chapter has been helpful in pointing you towards a new approach to fearful thinking and decision-making. In the next chapter, we’re going to destroy some other unhelpful thinking about what it takes to set up a business in the first place and how to get a stack full of customers beating a path to your door in the process.
CASE STUDY: EUGENIE VERNEY, BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIST

Procrastination and fear of failure — yes, they’ve been pretty much constant companions for as long as I can remember.

With the benefit of 20|20 hindsight, I can see now how both procrastinating and being fearful of failing have impeded my progress from childhood on — academically, in the corporate media world, and as a business owner. Exams not passed, promotions self-sabotaged, opportunities I’ve let slip out of my grasp.

And they are of course still with me. The difference now is that I understand they’re a product of my own thinking and as a result they’ve lost a great deal of their power. Not all their power — not yet — but they are significantly less disabling than they were.

I understand now that they are — as Damian says here and in his book Do Nothing! — inescapable, part of the human condition, and once you get your head around that, you’re able to spend a lot less time beating yourself up when
they cross your path. You can stand back, take a deep breath, and wait for the thought and the accompanying emotions to subside to the point where you can get past the obstacle you’ve put in your own way.

For sure, this doesn’t always work first time and knowing how the parts move doesn’t guarantee you can instantly quell that internal dialogue. The one that might go: “You should be doing that, not this”, “yes, but looking for this on Amazon is so much easier and so much more instantly gratifying than calling that prospect”, “yes, this is taking you down a time-hoovering and unproductive rabbit hole, but as soon as I’ve checked this out I really will get back to what I should be doing”...

I still have these moments, but far fewer of them, and once I do feel an Amazon moment — as it were — coming on, I stop, walk away from the screen, and just let the thought loosen its grip and float out of my consciousness. Visualising thoughts as fluffy clouds in a blue sky may not work for everyone, but it works for me!

Also a part of my toolkit now is regular
meditation — or mindfulness practice — at the start of the day. It really amplifies the whole process because it’s taught me how to step right back from all my thoughts and emotions and just be for 10 or 20 minutes at a time. I always emerge feeling re-energised, with heightened confidence and greater clarity.

And I also follow my intuition 100%. If it feels right, it is right. If it feels wrong, it is unerringly wrong. Your intuition, your innate ability to filter out what is and isn’t good for you, really is your best friend and you override at your peril. I’ve only gone against my gut instinct twice in business — and obviously not recently! — and on both occasions I ended up with significant bad debts despite travelling the County Court Judgement route.

How does all this benefit my business? On a practical level, my time is spent much more productively, and at a strategic level I am more assured of my ability to make sound and sometimes bold decisions because I fully recognise that the only thing that can stop me staying headed in the right direction is my own
unhelpful thinking.

For my clients, this means that they’re now getting a far superior version of me — more confident, more decisive, more focused, and better able to serve them at a really high level.

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