



# The Business Roadmap

30 Essential  
Steps for  
Business  
Owners

*About the Author.*

*Richard Moss is a Certified Business Coach and has held Directorships/Management positions in both global and UK based companies for over 30 years.*

*Richard has worked in Purchasing, Sales, Product Management, Marketing, was the Founder of SaaS (Software as a Service) company 3fifteen and held Managing Director positions for two organisations.*

*<https://www.linkedin.com/in/richard-moss-rmbcs/>*

*Richard grew up in Watford and is an avid follower of Watford football club. He now lives in a small village just outside Milton Keynes, with his wife of 20 years and their son Joshua (16).*

*For more information about the author, to read testimonials from other businesses that have benefitted from Richard's coaching, and to learn more about RMBCS (Richard Moss Business Coaching Services) and what it can do for your business, visit [www.rmbcs.co.uk](http://www.rmbcs.co.uk).*

June 2024

# Contents

5	Introduction
---	--------------

## **Before We Start**

8	Day 0 - Do you have a Business?
---	---------------------------------

## **The Business Owner**

12	Day 1 - Mindset and Attitude
14	Day 2 - Environment
16	Day 3 - Health
18	Day 4 - Personal Goal Setting
22	Day 5 - Time Bandits
25	Day 6 - Time Management

## **Business Planning and Strategies**

29	Day 7 - Elevator Pitch
31	Day 8 - Value Proposition
34	Day 9 - Accept Change
36	Day 10 - Price
39	Day 11 - Planning
43	Day 12 - Action Setting

## **Business Health Check**

48	Day 13 - Health Wealth and Relationships
50	Day 14 - Your Assets
53	Day 15 - Risk Assessment
57	Day 16 - Cash in the Bank
61	Day 17 - Systems, Tools and Processes in the Business

- 64 Day 18 - Business Values
- 67 Day 19 - Your Team
- 69 Day 20 - Performance Reviews
- 72 Day 21 - Training and Development

### **Sales and Marketing**

- 75 Day 22 - Target Customers
- 78 Day 23 - Customer Experience
- 82 Day 24 - On-line Presence
- 86 Day 25 - Marketing
- 89 Day 26 - Sales Cycle, Managing Leads and CRM
- 92 Day 27 - Networking
- 95 Day 28 - Sales

### **Management and Leadership**

- 99 Day 29 - You, The Business Owner
- 103 Day 30 - Take Action

In "**The Business Roadmap**," we delve into the core principles that underpin every successful business venture. From the importance of managing yourself (the business owner) to understanding the absolute business essentials like cash flow forecasts, marketing principles and sales techniques.

Presented in thirty concise, 5-minute chapters, this guide is designed for you to read one chapter per day at a leisurely pace. A successful business is not just one lap around the racetrack; it is about getting into the driver's seat, knowing what you are doing, and winning.

So, take your time to get it right.

**Day 0:** For those entrepreneurs who have a Formula 1 racing car of an idea, but currently lack the experience of how to drive it.

**Day 1 -6:** For entrepreneurs who know how to drive their F1 racing car, but not to its full potential.

**Day 7 – 30:** For more experienced drivers who want to learn how far and how fast their F1 racing car can go!

# Introduction

## Why 30 steps?

There are actually hundreds of steps to make a business successful because it is always changing. But for this guide, we group some of the key essential steps together and focus them into 30 key steps. This way, it allows you to dedicate just one month to evaluate the health of your idea or business and assess if you have what it takes or if your business is on the right path.

If you believe your business is already successful, congratulations! However, if you start feeling like every day is the same and your business is not growing, it might be a sign that you are not focusing on all the essential steps outlined in this guide. It is important to regularly reassess what you are doing, why you are doing it and be sure you are covering all bases, as outlined in this guide.

And that is what this is. This is a guide, like a handbook, similar to the Cub Scouts handbook. It will highlight the importance of choosing the right camping spot and comment on what to look out for. However, it will not tell you how to set up your tent. That is down to you, because you know your business better than anyone. This guide will put you on the path and show you what to consider along the way.

So, to be clear, this guide is not a shortcut to instant wealth. Rather, it is designed to highlight the key tasks and challenges involved in achieving business success. While it provides valuable insights and strategies, it cannot guarantee success on its own.

To make this guide an easy read, the steps covered are structured into five distinct chapters. This approach aims to make it easier for

business owners to understand, apply, and reinforce learned behaviours over time.

- **The Business Owner** – You
- **Business Planning & Strategies** - Business Futures
- **Business Health Check** - Business Present
- **Sales and Marketing** – Business Growth
- **Management and Leadership** – You (again)

To help you picture your unique business roadmap and the journey ahead, this guide will draw parallels between running your business and taking a ride in a taxi:

- **You (The Business Owner) / The Passenger:** As the business owner, you are comparable to the passenger. It is crucial to know if you are ready for your taxi to arrive, and if not, then get ready before you start your journey.
- **Business Futures / Your Destination:** As in a taxi ride, you need to have a clear destination in mind for your business. Without a defined objective/destination it is impossible to know how you will get there, or if you have arrived.
- **Business Present / Your Vehicle:** Your business's current condition mirrors the taxi condition that will take you on your journey. Is it capable of taking you as far as you want to go? Are you equipped to navigate the challenges and bumps in the road ahead.
- **Business Growth / The Route You Take:** Your sales and marketing strategy determines the manner in which you will travel. Without a well-defined strategy, you might find your taxi ride was more expensive than you had planned, it might only take you half the way, or it might get you to your final destination freewheeling downhill with great momentum but out of control.

- **The Business Leader / The Taxi Driver:** As the business leader, you are both the passenger and the taxi driver. You are responsible for steering the business, making decisions, and ensuring a safe successful journey. Accountability rests squarely on your shoulders.

By understanding this analogy and embracing your role as both passenger and driver, this guide can steer you and your business towards success.

However, before we start planning our journey too deeply, if you are a Sole Trader or just starting a business, we need to consider if running a business is right for you.

What does it take to be a successful entrepreneur?



# Before we Start

## Day 0 - Do you have a Business?

Before we enter the 30 essential steps for a successful business, we need to assess whether you actually have a viable business. You might have a product or service concept that you would buy, but would others? And if not, do you have the energy, the passion, and the techniques to convince them?

Later in this guide we will cover techniques and skills necessary to get customers to convert from being aware of your product or service, to being a customer of it. But before that, do you have “a great idea” and do you have the determination, that when faced with failure, you see it as a lesson and a step closer to getting it right?

**Motivation** - I think it is a fair assumption, that your decision to download this guide indicates an initial motivation and interest in learning more about entrepreneurship. Your next goal is through the course of reading this guide, to build on that motivation and gain valuable insights, strategies, and tools to help you succeed in your entrepreneurial journey.

**Growth Mindset** - Having the right mindset is absolutely necessary to success in any endeavour, from running a race to running a business. While motivation is important, that alone is not enough to ensure success. Further in the guide, we will delve into what it means to develop a growth mindset for success.

**Idea - Product / Service** – Only when you know you have the right mindset and the motivation, can you move to the next step of determining whether you truly have a business. Here, we assess if you have a product or service that offers real value to potential customers.

To help gauge customer value, your offering can fall into four key categories:

- **Solve a Problem:** Your product or service addresses a specific pain point or problem that your target customers are facing. By providing a solution, you offer value and convenience, making it more likely for customers to pay for your offering.
- **Fulfil a Need:** Your product or service fulfils a need or desire that your target customers have. This could be anything from a basic necessity to a luxury item, as long as there is demand for it in the market.
- **Create a Desire:** Sometimes, your offering might not directly solve a problem or fulfil a need but instead creates a desire or aspiration in your target audience. This could be through special features, unique experiences, or exclusive benefits that make your product or service desirable and worth paying for.
- **Me too** – The "Me Too" business model is indeed the most common but comes with significant risks. Take, for example, a coffee shop. While you could argue that it solves a problem by providing a beverage to quench thirst or fulfils a desire for a quality coffee experience, the reality is that it often encompasses both aspects and this opens the door to multiple businesses in this space; a busy market where numerous competitors offer comparable products or services which presents many challenges. In a crowded space, standing out and attracting customers becomes increasingly

difficult. Many businesses fail because they struggle to differentiate themselves in a sea of similar offerings.

To succeed as a “Me too” in a crowded competitive market, it is crucial to focus on making your product or service a more compelling solution. This could involve various strategies, such as:

- **Unique Selling Proposition (USP):** Clearly identify what sets your offering apart from competitors. Whether it is the location, the quality of your product, exceptional customer service, or a unique experience. Know and highlight what makes you different and better than the rest.
- **Targeted Marketing:** Understand your target audience's needs, preferences, and pain points, and tailor your marketing messages to really resonate with them. By addressing specific needs or desires, you can attract customers who are more likely to choose your business over others.
- **Innovation and Quality:** Continuously innovate and commit to superiority in your product or service. Whether it is introducing new flavours, improving the customer experience, or enhancing the quality of your offerings, aim to exceed customer expectations and keep them coming back for more.

As you are still reading, it is assumed you have a product or service that you believe will resonate with customers, but is your "something" a physical product like trousers, a refreshing pint of beer, or intangible services like consultancy or window cleaning, or maybe an experience like a theatrical production? In this guide, for simplicity's sake, we will refer to them all as a "product".

In essence, a product may take any form—tangible or intangible—but the fundamental principles of business apply to both. Therefore, we will treat all offerings under the unified term "product."

Yet, before delving into business operations, there is one paramount consideration: You.

The business owner is the driving force behind success. So, it is vital that you take care of yourself with equal attention and focus, as you apply to your business. This is why we start here. If you collapse, your business is likely to collapse, so please take this section with significance, as it cannot be under stated how important you are to your business.

# The Business Owner

## Day 1 - Mindset and Attitude

It is true, having an amazing product or service is a huge part of building a successful business. But even if you have nailed down the essentials like understanding your customers, generating demand, and keeping your prices competitive, there is still a critical factor that can make or break your success: you. Whether you are the owner, manager, or leader of the business, your mindset plays a pivotal role in its trajectory.

You could have every other aspect of your business brilliantly planned and executed, but without the right mindset, your efforts may fall short of their potential. Fortunately, breaking through mindset barriers is entirely achievable! Before you delve into the rest of this guide, take a moment to ask yourself these three pivotal questions:

**Do I have unwavering confidence in my abilities to drive change and achieve my goals?** Confidence in yourself and your abilities is the cornerstone of entrepreneurial success. Believing in your capacity to make things happen, even in the face of challenges, sets the stage for remarkable achievements.

**Am I fully dedicated to ensuring the success and growth of my business?** Building a profitable business requires dedication and utter commitment. Are you prepared to go above and beyond, investing the time, effort, and resources necessary to propel your business forward?

**Am I willing to embrace failure as a steppingstone to success, learning from setbacks and emerging stronger each time?** Failure is an inevitable part of the entrepreneurial journey. What sets successful entrepreneurs apart is their ability to view failure not as a defeat, but as an opportunity for growth and learning. Are you open to learning from your mistakes, ready to embrace change, and capable of bouncing back every time with renewed vigour?

If you can confidently answer YES to these questions, then you are poised to embark on the path of entrepreneurship or business ownership with a high likelihood of success. Your mindset is the driving force behind your journey, shaping your decisions, actions, and ultimately, the future of your business.

## Day 2 - Environment

Ensuring you are in a suitable working environment goes beyond where you are going to sit when you work—it encompasses both emotional and physical factors.

Emotionally, embarking on a business endeavour involves more than just a shift in mindset. There are financial risks to consider, and these can have ripple effects on your personal life. How will your family and friends be impacted by your decision to pursue entrepreneurship? Will there be financial strains or time commitments that could affect your relationships? It is crucial to assess the potential impact on your loved ones and ensure you are comfortable with the investment required, both financially and in terms of time.

Moreover, there is the physical aspect of your work environment to consider. If your business is a side hustle, you may need to manage your time and attention between your primary job and your entrepreneurial pursuits. This requires careful planning and organisation to ensure you remain focused and productive in both areas.

But do also think about where you will be working on your business tasks. Are you trying to concentrate at the kitchen table amongst the hustle and bustle of family life? Or do you have a dedicated workspace where you can focus without distractions? It is really important to establish a clear physical environment that supports your productivity and concentration.

Consider enlisting the support of your family and friends to help create boundaries and manage interruptions while you work. Communicate your needs and establish clear expectations to ensure you have the time and space to focus on your business.

Ultimately, creating a clean, stable, and consistent working environment is paramount to your success. By setting yourself up in an emotional and physical place, which supports productivity and minimises distractions, you will be better equipped to perform at your best and achieve your business goals.



## Day 3 – Health

It is easy to get caught up in the turmoil of running a business, but within the chaos, it is crucial not to forget about your own well-being. While this guide is dedicated to helping your business thrive, it is equally important to prioritise self-care and ensure your home life is as fulfilling as your work life. It is all about finding that balance between your professional and personal pursuits.

**Take Time to Make Time** - If you find yourself caught up in the whirlwind of work, it is crucial to consciously carve out personal time in your schedule. Same as you plan business meetings and tasks, prioritise personal activities and commitments with equal importance.

Running a business can be incredibly demanding, both mentally and physically. Just like an athlete needs to balance training, rest, and recovery to perform at their peak, you need to take care of yourself to excel in your entrepreneurial endeavours. Remember, you are the most valuable asset your business has.

**Relax** - Make it a priority to carve out time for relaxation. Whether it is spending quality time with loved ones, engaging in hobbies you enjoy, or simply taking a moment to unwind, nurturing your mental and emotional well-being is really important.

**Health** - Don't neglect your physical health either. Pay attention to how you are feeling physically and make time for activities that promote your overall health and vitality. Whether it is getting regular exercise, eating nutritious meals, or practicing mindfulness and meditation, taking care of your body is crucial for sustained success in business.

**Friends and Family** - Spending quality time with family, enjoying the company of friends, attending social events, or taking a weekend away are all integral parts of a fulfilling life outside of work. While dedication and hard work are commendable, they should not come at the expense of the things you love and cherish.

Remember, your family, friends, and the experiences you enjoy outside of work are the foundation of a balanced and fulfilling life. By maintaining these aspects of your life alongside your professional ambitions, you will not only thrive personally but also enhance your overall success and happiness.

In essence, prioritise yourself just as much as you prioritise your business. By maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life, you will not only perform better professionally but also lead a more fulfilling and enjoyable life overall.

## Day 4 – Personal Goal Setting

Having a clear goal or objective is key for success. It serves as a guiding light, providing direction and purpose. Without a defined goal or objective, it is like the taxi ride previously mentioned, but without a destination. Beyond the destination, setting a goal also enables you to track your progress and stay motivated along the way.

If it is understood that it is important to have clear goals to keep focused and motivated, we can for now park the process of setting business goals and objectives to later in this guide, and for now, we focus on you, the business owner.

Setting your goals:

**Ambition:** It is important to dream big! Be ambitious, but also keep your feet on the ground. Set goals that are both achievable and inspiring. Aim high, but make sure your objectives are realistic. And do not forget to make them measurable. That means including numbers and a timeline. For example, if you sell pencils, instead of saying you want to be known as an influencer in the stationery market, a better suggestion would be, that you will sell one million pencils over the next three years and in this time be recognised for your work in this market by picking up at least one industry award. That way, you have two distinct targets and a target date.

And your ambitions do not just need to be business related. Maybe you will commit to spending quality time with your family by having at least one evening a week watching movies. By year 2 once the business is achieving certain profits you will plan two family holidays where work will not be a priority, allowing you to fully relax. And by year 3, perhaps commit to all weekends off work where you will not

check your emails and have 3 holidays in the year, with one being a life-time dream holiday somewhere exotic.

These goals are not set in stone but serve as markers to monitor your progress and adjust your path if needed. Remember, finding the right balance between work and personal life is crucial for your well-being and happiness. Work hard, but also make time to enjoy the pleasures of life outside of work.

**Clarity:** When setting money-related goals, like wanting to be a millionaire, it is necessary to define what "millionaire" means to you. Consider what achieving that status entails:

- Having at least one million in the bank within the business that you own?
- Having one million in your own personal bank account.
- Having an annual salary of one million from the business in 3 years from now.
- Running a business with a turnover of more than one million, or with profits above one million.
- Getting a business valuation of at least one million, after achieving a repeatable sustainable 200k annual profit.

Having clarity about what being a millionaire means to you, will help you set more specific and achievable goals. Similar with the non-work-related ambitions. A family holiday where work is not a priority, what does that mean? Can you commit to leaving your laptop and phone at home?

**Visualise** what this means: Take some time to create a picture of what achieving these goals mean to you. Imagine the life you will have when you have reached this milestone. Picture the benefits and

rewards you will enjoy as a result of achieving this goal. Think about how it will positively impact not just your life, but the lives of your family and friends. Visualising your success in detail can help you stay motivated and focused on reaching your goals. It is like painting a picture of your future, and the clearer the picture, the more determined you will be to make it a reality.

To further enhance your visualisation, consider these aspects:

- **Health:** Do you have any health ambitions. Do you want to achieve a specific weight goal or complete a fitness challenge like running a marathon? Are there any habits you want to change? Imagine how achieving these health goals will make you feel physically and mentally, and how it will positively impact your overall well-being.
- **Wealth:** Reflect on your current personal wealth and how it makes you feel. Consider what achieving your financial goals will mean for you. Envisage the lifestyle upgrades you can afford with this new status. Visualise the freedom and security that financial success will bring into your life, and how it will allow you to pursue your passions and enjoy the things that truly matter to you.
- **Relationships:** Think about where you want to be with your family, friends, and even people you have not met yet. Imagine the quality of your relationships and the time you will spend with loved ones. Imagine having whole weekends without checking emails, going on holidays without thinking about work, and enjoying nights with your family.

Now write it down. Define your goals (no more than 3), and include a few simple paragraphs:

- Set your ambitions. Make sure that are clear and measurable.

- State what achieving these goals will mean to you.
- Write what your life will look like, your health and wealth, and relationships with your loved ones.

Once you have a physical goals document, it is really important to keep it close. Consider framing it and placing it somewhere visible, like on your desk or a wall in your home. Use it as a daily reminder of what you are working towards and why it matters.

By keeping your goals document prominently displayed, you reaffirm your dedication to personal growth, success, and the well-being of those you care about. Let it serve as a constant reminder of the life you are striving to create and the person you want to become.

## Day 5 - Time Bandits

In the initial stages of your business, your time is your most valuable asset. You are the driving force behind every decision and action, and your commitment is what keeps the company moving forward. As you begin to build teams and systems, the business gains other assets like key staff, loyal customers, or innovative products/services. However, until the business can operate smoothly without your constant presence, your time remains its greatest asset.

So, every minute you invest in your business counts. Whether it is developing your product, building relationships with customers, or refining your business strategy, make sure you are using your time wisely. Focus on tasks that directly contribute to the growth and success of your business, and delegate or outsource tasks that can be performed by others.

Below are the top three reasons why a business owner often works more hours than others. They are all Time Bandits (they steal time from you) and cascade from one to the other. However, tomorrow we will cover two simple steps that can be taken to avoid these simple mistakes.

**Multitasking**—It is tempting to think we can juggle multiple tasks simultaneously but in reality, it is not possible. Trying to do too much at once only leads to inefficiency and decreased productivity. Instead, stay laser focused on completing one task at a time before moving on to the next.

Multitasking is not just ineffective; it also leads to wasted time. Transitioning between tasks takes time and mental energy, resulting in productivity losses.

**Transition time** between tasks is often underestimated but can significantly impact productivity. Even for routine tasks that seem quick, it takes vital minutes to get into the right mindset to perform them.

For example, if you are drafting an email that typically takes 5 minutes to complete and you are interrupted by something and then return to the email. You will most likely spend extra time re-reading what you have written before continuing. Suddenly, what was once a 5-minute task becomes a 7-minute one, costing you valuable time.

While 2 minutes might not seem like much on its own, it adds up quickly, especially in a busy workday. If you are responding to thirty emails in a day, each with a 2-minute transition time, that is an hour of wasted time. In a 10-hour workday, 10% of your time could be lost to unnecessary transitions.

To minimise transition time and maximise productivity, it is crucial to stay focused on the task at hand and transition between tasks as infrequently as possible. This can be achieved by minimising distractions in the workplace.

**Remove distractions** – To reduce the unpredictability of your workday and increase focus, consider removing distractions. While your business day may be dynamic, there are strategies to minimise too much change and stay on track.



First, cancel phone and email notifications. Pop-ups alerting you to new messages can disrupt your workflow and lead to unnecessary interruptions. Remember, most communications, except for phone calls, are non-real-time and can wait. Consider setting specific times during the day to review emails and messages, allowing you to maintain focus on your current tasks.

If phone communication is crucial for your business, consider options like turning on voicemail or outsourcing your calls. A virtual assistant can manage incoming calls professionally and provide you with a summary of messages to action later at a designated time.

## Day 6 - Time Management

Yesterday, we referenced the 3 core time bandits in business and the importance of time management. Today, we will uncover additional tips on how to manage your time more effectively when planning regular routine tasks or strategic objectives.

**Plan your day/week/month** - To maximise productivity and ensure important tasks are completed, it is vital to plan your day, week and month effectively. Here is how you can do it:

- **Daily Planning:** Start by outlining your short-term tasks for the day. I recommend this becomes a routine for you as the last thing you do, the day before. Identify the most critical tasks that need to be completed and allocate specific time slots in your diary to focus solely on those tasks. Treat these time slots as if they were meetings with a colleague—no distractions, no interruptions.
- **Weekly Planning:** Move on to planning your week, and again I recommend doing this last thing on Friday before you close the laptop lid. Focus on those urgent medium-term tasks. Identify tasks that need to be completed within the week and allocate time blocks in your diary accordingly. These time blocks should align with your priorities and allow you to tackle important tasks throughout the week. Include essential but non-time-critical tasks like sales calls and lead follow-ups by blocking out regular time slots in your diary. Knowing these tasks are scheduled helps remove those mental distractions and ensures they will not be overlooked.
- **Monthly Planning:** Finally, plan out your month in the first week of each new month. Consider both less urgent

medium-term tasks and urgent long-term tasks. Identify projects or goals that need attention in that coming month and book time in your diary to work on them.

By planning your day, week and month in advance, and allocating dedicated time slots for each task, you can effectively manage your workload, stay organised, and ensure important tasks are completed in a timely manner.

**Time Capping** - If traditional time planning feels too restrictive for your business, consider setting a time cap strategy instead.

- **Set Time Caps for Tasks:** Determine the total amount of time you want to allocate to specific tasks or activities each week. For example, if you need to spend 5 hours a week calling prospects, break it down into manageable time blocks. Set one hour to work on emails (30 mins before lunch and at the end of the day). What is not replied to in that time is left unanswered until the next time. If you leave too many emails unanswered, then focus on those priority emails. You will find that you have more emails than you first thought, that do not require a response, ever.
- **Stick to Scheduled Times:** Commit to sticking to the allocated time slots for each task. Treat these time blocks as non-negotiable appointments with yourself and avoid letting other distractions or tasks interfere during these times.
- **Create Urgent/Not-Urgent Lists:** Differentiate between urgent and non-urgent tasks to help you prioritise your time. Focus on completing urgent tasks within the allocated time caps, and if there is any remaining time, you can address less critical tasks from the not-urgent list.

By implementing a time cap strategy, you can maintain flexibility in your schedule while still ensuring that crucial tasks are completed.

**Personal Time** - As covered already, but cannot be understated, taking breaks and prioritising personal time is vital for maintaining overall well-being and sustained productivity. Below is how you can incorporate downtime into your time planning:

- **Include Weekends and Evenings:** When planning your schedule, make sure to include weekends and evenings as part of your time allocation. Designate specific evenings for quality time with family and friends and prioritise these commitments just like you would a customer meeting.
- **Set Boundaries for Work:** If you find yourself needing to work on weekends or evenings, establish clear start and finish times for your work sessions. This allows you to maintain a healthy work-life balance and ensures that you are not constantly on call. Remember, just like athletes need rest to perform at their best, you need time to recharge and rejuvenate.
- **Switch Off Mentally:** It is not just about physically stepping away from work; it is also crucial to mentally switch off. Engage in activities that help you relax and unwind, whether it is spending time outdoors, pursuing hobbies, or simply enjoying moments of quiet reflection.
- **Prioritise Sleep:** Adequate sleep is vital for overall health and cognitive function. Aim for 7+ hours of quality sleep each night to ensure you are well-rested and ready to tackle the day ahead.

By incorporating downtime into your time planning and setting boundaries for work, you are taking positive steps in taking care of your well-being while still effectively managing your business

responsibilities. Remember, a healthy work-life balance is key to long-term success and fulfilment.

# Business Planning and Strategies

## Day 7 - Elevator Pitch

While it may never happen to you, there is always that outside chance that one day you have the opportunity to talk to the perfect customer without the chance to plan for it. For example, you run a window cleaning business and you just happen to step into a lift/elevator with the Head of Operations for a local hotel. This is your once in a lifetime opportunity to pitch to him to get that contract, but you only have the length of time it takes for the elevator to reach his floor. This is your 'Elevator Pitch' moment. It is about having the perfect concise message, of "why you" on the tip of your tongue – always.

Firstly, identify which of the four market categories your product falls into: solves a problem, there is a need, create a desire, me too. Understanding why it fits into that category and what motivates customers to purchase is step two. Just having an excellent product is not going to be enough to be attractive to buyers. You need to stand in the customers shoes, to be able to get a real perspective of what your product does and/or offers and be confident about why they should choose to buy from you instead of someone else.

For products that solve a problem, consider what pain points, or challenges your target audience faces and how your product addresses those issues effectively. Highlighting the practical benefits and outcomes of using your product can encourage customers to buy

into a solution that improves their lives, more than just solving their problem.

In the case of products fulfilling a need, delve deeper into the specific needs or requirements your typical customer has and how your product fulfils those needs better than alternatives. Emphasise the functionality, and/or convenience of your product to show its value and appeal to customers seeking simple solutions to their need.

For products that cater to desires, focus on the emotional and aspirational aspects that drive consumer behaviours. Consider how your product fulfils desires, enhances lifestyles, and/or provides unique experiences that your target audience will understand. Creating a sense of excitement or exclusivity around your product can make it irresistible to customers seeking indulgence or luxury.

In the "Me Too" category, where competition is fierce, differentiate your product by highlighting its unique selling points, whether it is superior quality, innovative features, or exceptional value. Communicate why your product stands out from the crowd and why customers should choose it over alternatives.

Your elevator pitch is your compelling statement that you use if you are ever challenged with "Why you?" Now you know the reasons and can articulate them to a prospective customer anytime, in a simple, clear, and concise statement.

One final comment – Only reference the strengths of *your* products, never say anything negative about the competition.

## Day 8 - Value Proposition

Yesterday we covered why a customer should buy from you, packaged into a short compelling sales pitch designed to quickly grab attention of a potential customer and gain their interest in your business or product.

In this section we will expand on that and look into the Value Proposition of your business. This is a detailed statement that explains the specific benefits and unique value of both your business and your products combined. While your short sales pitch is used to make a quick, memorable impression in situations with limited time, the value proposition should provide a more comprehensive explanation.

But beyond that, your Value Proposition also sets as a compass for you, your brand, and everything that your business stands for.

Drafting a compelling value proposition should cover both your brand/business and your products. It is necessary to understand the distinction between the two and ensure you can clearly communicate the unique benefits and advantages of both.

For your brand/business, your Value Proposition serves as your identity and should set you apart from competitors. It encompasses what makes your business different, unique, and appealing to potential customers. This could include aspects such as convenience, quality, customer experience, or value for money. Essentially, it is about defining what makes you stand out in a crowded marketplace and gains the interest of your potential customers.



Once you have established your brand's value proposition, it is important to add in the value propositions for your products or services. You may offer multiple products, each with its own unique features and benefits, but ideally try and focus on a blend of all your products values and benefits.

Example, if you have a mobile coffee hut, your coffee's value proposition might be its rich texture and premium ingredients, while your tea's focus is its unique flavour and health benefits. If your business value proposition is convenience, location, and customer service, you may produce a combined statement of *“With a rich variety of coffees to awaken and teas to soothe, together with the convenient location, we provide a welcoming start to any day and a delightful experience every time.”*

Your value proposition serves as guiding principles for your marketing messages and provides a clear outline for the value of your business and products to your target audience. Whether your product is positioned as a luxury item with premium features or a commodity product focused on affordability and volume, having tailored value propositions helps ensure consistency in messaging and reinforces the reasons why customers should buy from you.

Actual Value Propositions (as of 2024), to help you to consider why your business exists and what value you bring to your customers.

Waitrose - A belief in quality. Our reputation has been built, above all, on the quality and freshness of our food. It is what our customers want, and it is what gives us our edge over other supermarkets.

EasyJet - We are a low-cost European point-to-point airline. We use our cost advantage, operational efficiency, and leading positions in primary airports to deliver low fares, seamlessly connecting Europe with the warmest welcome in the sky.

## Day 9 – Accept Change

Never become complacent with the current status of your products or services. Always operate under the assumption that your competitors are constantly working to develop something superior; whether it is more innovative, cost-effective, or offers greater value to customers.

**Innovate** - As a business owner, it is crucial to stay vigilant to the markets you serve and the trends and behaviours of your customers. Numerous factors can significantly impact the trajectory of your business, including shifts in customer habits, seasonal variations, changes in regulatory or environmental conditions, product enhancements from competitors, and various governmental policies. It is imperative that you remain proactive in monitoring these influences and react when necessary.

However, innovation does not only apply to your products. It is important to embrace a culture of reinvention within your business, constantly working to deliver more value to customers while maintaining or reducing costs. Successful businesses are those that are agile, adaptable, and capable of change.

**Complementary Products** – If it is not possible to improve your product, think about products or services that naturally pair well with your main offerings. I previously referred to a coffee hut example, they could start offering cakes and sandwiches alongside their beverages to enhance the overall customer experience.

However, it is really important to ensure that your complementary products truly complement your main offering. There is no point in selling high-end coffee if your accompanying cakes are of inferior quality or do not align with your brand's image. Consistency in quality and messaging across all products is key to maintaining customer loyalty and trust.

Remember to stay true to your brand's identity. Define your brand—whether it is offering low value commodity items, high-quality products, or exceptional customer service—but stick to that. If our coffee hut example is known for its affordability and efficiency, to offer expensive, time-consuming speciality coffee may not align with the brand's value proposition and the customers you already have.

**Legacy Products** - Regularly reviewing the products you offer is required for maintaining business efficiency and will ensure that you are offering what your customers want. While strategically using a portfolio can be beneficial, it is important to ensure that each product appeals to your target customers. If you find that certain products are consistently underperforming or not resonating with customers, it is likely that it is time to remove them.

With an 'Innovate' mindset, you will be better prepared to anticipate industry developments and adapt swiftly. Instead of merely reacting to competitive advancements, strive to stay ahead of the curve by continuously innovating and introducing new and improved products or services.

## Day 10 - Price

Correctly pricing your product is key for attracting your target customers effectively. The decision to set your price high or low can significantly impact your customers perception of your business, both positively and negatively.

**Align Pricing with your Brand and Value Propositions:** Take the example of petrol, a common product. Some petrol stations may choose to sell petrol at a lower price, aiming to attract high-volume sales. However, this approach can have drawbacks, such as the need for larger forecourts to accommodate increased demand, potentially leading to higher overheads and lower overall profits.

On the other hand, a petrol station that prices its petrol at a premium may attract fewer but different customers—typically those with more disposable income. These customers may be more inclined to purchase additional high-margin products, such as gourmet snacks or premium drinks, resulting in potentially higher profits despite lower sales volume.

By strategically pricing your product to target specific customer markets, you can define your value proposition, brand identity, and attract the right audience.

**Align Pricing with your Business Financials:** Once you have determined the price point to target your desired customers, it is crucial to ensure that this price also aligns with your business's profit objectives. This means not just any profit, but the profit needed to cover all expenses, including future reinvestment and the additional mark-up margins that will make your business profitable.

Understanding your business's cost model is vital here. You must know the profitability required to meet your business's profit targets. This involves assessing your costs, forecasting profits based on several factors like market conditions, competition, expected orders, and average order value, and always factor in a margin of error, typically around 10% to 20%.

By understanding your costs and forecasted profits, you can assess whether the price point you have set aligns with your business plans and financials. Be sure that your pricing strategy supports your financial objectives and helps sustain profitability over the long term.

**Discount with Caution:** Discounting can be a powerful tool in driving sales, but it is not always the best strategy, even if the discount seems attractive. While low-value commodity items are often prime for discounts, it is important to approach discounting with caution.

Discounts can erode your profit margins if not used strategically. Instead of offering discounts across the board, it is advisable to focus them on increasing volume while minimising the impact on margins. For example, implementing "buy one, get one at half price" deals or bundling products together can encourage customers to perceive there is a discount, purchase more items, but without significantly reducing your margins.

Bundling products is particularly effective because it allows you to offer a free or discounted item that has a lower production cost, thereby preserving your margins. For instance, offering a free drink with the purchase of fries with a burger, not only incentivises customers to spend more, but your free offer has a low cost to you and the profit on the fries eclipses the loss made on the drink.

Ultimately, the key to successful discounting lies in balancing the need to drive sales with the need to maintain healthy profit margins.

By employing strategic discounting tactics, you can boost sales while safeguarding your bottom line.

To conclude, when determining the price of your product, it is crucial to take your target customer into account. Consider their preferences, purchasing power, and perception of value. However, pricing decisions should not be based solely on customer behaviours; you also need to factor in business's costs, profit margins, and overall financial goals.

## Day 11 - Planning

Drawing on the taxi ride analogy for running your business, it is time to set a clear destination and an expected time of arrival. To assess our progress along the way, we need to set checkpoints to judge whether we are still on track. This begins with defining your 3-year vision and developing your 3-year business strategy.

Your **Vision** is a broad aspirational statement which should be ambitious yet realistic. Your vision should have at least one target in there, even if it is not financial.

Example 3-Year Vision - "The vision is to become the leading window cleaning brand in the Rochdale area, with a reach across the complete town through a profitable franchise model. Within three years, we aim to have 10 franchised window cleaners operating under our brand, making a positive difference and a clearer outlook for the homes of the Rochdale community".

Once you have your vision, and depending on the size of your business, set goals for as many aspects of the business as you can, enabling that vision to become a reality. Noting goals from revenue figures, profitability, and cash reserves; to the number of customers, customer reviews and staff; these goals form part of your 3-year business strategy. Ensure that these goals are given a numeric target so that they can be measured, are not only ambitious but also realistic, are aligned with both your vision and the current state of your business.

With your three-year goals and targets in place, work backward to define target values, for your goals in two years from now and then for 12 months away. This approach breaks down long-term goals and



targets into smaller, actionable steps, making them more achievable and measurable.

Throughout this process, it is important to assess the alignment between your personal and business goals, particularly in terms of health, wealth, and relationships.

As you establish each set of goals, carefully evaluate the rationale behind them, ensuring that they are grounded in logic and align with each other (no point having a target that contradicts another). Justify each target from year to year, showing how each achieved target will contribute to the realisation of your vision.

By following this approach, you can create a comprehensive roadmap for your business's growth and success, one that is not only ambitious and aspirational but also based on sound logic and good reason. This disciplined approach to goal setting ensures alignment, direction, and momentum.

While delivering your 3-year strategy, challenges may tempt you to adjust targets to align with what seems achievable. When this happens, it is often more effective to reassess and refine your strategy instead of change targets. Changing targets midway through a plan is acceptable, but it must be a considered decision and ensure that all targets are realigned due to any change and adjust your vision expectations accordingly.

To support you in writing targets to support your vision, consider the following aspects of your business and set your own targets to track progress effectively:

- **Target Revenue** (overall sales number): This represents the total amount of revenue you aim to generate within a specific period, typically a fiscal year. It reflects the sales targets set for your products or services and serves as a key indicator of business growth and success.
- **Net Profit £**: Net profit, also known as the bottom line, is the amount of money left over after deducting all expenses from total revenue. It indicates the profitability of your business and reflects how efficiently you manage costs and generate income.
- **Net Profit %**: Net profit margin is the percentage of revenue that translates into profit after all expenses are deducted. It is calculated by dividing net profit by total revenue and multiplying by one hundred. A higher net profit margin indicates better profitability and cost management.
- **Marketing Spend**: This represents the amount of money allocated to marketing activities aimed at promoting your products, attracting customers, and increasing brand awareness. It includes expenses related to advertising, promotions, social media, and other marketing initiatives.
- **Capital Spend**: Capital expenditure (Capex) refers to investments in long-term assets or infrastructure that provide future benefits to your business. It includes expenditures on property, equipment, machinery, technology upgrades, and other capital assets.
- **Staffing Numbers and Costs**: This includes the total number of employees in your business and the associated costs, including salaries, bonuses, benefits, and payroll taxes.

Staffing costs are a significant component of operating expenses and directly impact your business's finances.

- **Other Major Expenses:** These are additional significant expenses incurred in running your business, such as rent or lease payments, utilities, insurance premiums, maintenance costs, legal fees, and administrative expenses.
- **Total Outgoings:** This represents the total amount of money spent by your business, including all expenses and costs incurred during a specific period. It encompasses both operating expenses (OPEX) and capital expenditures (Capex) and provides a comprehensive overview of your business's financial outflows.
- **Reinvestment Back into the Business:** This refers to the amount of money allocated for reinvestment into your business, which will support growth, expansion, or improvement initiatives. It includes funds earmarked for research and development, new product launches, marketing campaigns, infrastructure upgrades, and other strategic investments.
- **Anticipated Dividends Payout £:** The anticipated dividends payout represents the amount of money you plan to take out of the business for shareholders based on profitability.

## Day 12 - Action setting

Now that you have set your three-year strategy, incorporating financial targets and essential business objectives, and broken them down into two-year and one-year increments, it is time to dive deeper into those one-year objectives and break them down further, into quarterly targets.

These quarterly targets can be based on specific quarters if you have particular marketing activities planned, or they can be cumulative throughout the year to achieve the overall target. Be mindful of any seasonal influences that might affect your sales, such as increased demand during Christmas or summer.

For each target, create a dedicated action plan. Start by assessing your one-year objectives and identify the quarterly targets needed to reach your annual goals. Work backward from 12 months to today and determine the actions you need to take, to get from today to the 12-month target. Ideally, some actions will contribute to achieving more than one target.

For example, if your 12-month revenue goal is to grow this year to £500k, you might break it down into quarterly targets: Q1 - £100k, Q2 - £100k, Q3 - £125k, Q4 - £175k. You need to consider what changes need to happen in your business to reach these targets. This could involve strategies like find more customers, increase sales to existing customers, or re-engaging with past customers.

After outlining your top-level actions, it is time to delve deeper and break each one down into more detailed potential actions. Keep breaking them down further until you have explored every possibility. At this stage, do not dismiss any idea—include everything, even if it seems far-fetched or unconventional.

Expanding on the above example with the "Find more Customers" action, here are some potential next-level actions:

#### Find More Customers

- Increase capacity in sales:
  - Recruit:
    - Headhunt an experienced salesperson from the industry.
    - Recruit and train a new starter.
  - Reduce all non-revenue-generating tasks for a period of time.
  - Consider outsourcing some sales activities:
    - Explore retail/resale opportunities and establish business partnerships.
- Expand into new markets or customer interests:
  - Increase product portfolio:
    - Innovate new products to attract a new customer base.
    - Explore modifications to existing products to broaden the range.
  - Marketing focus to new markets:
    - Collaborate with complementary partners already active in new markets.
    - Network at events previously unattended.
- Take market share from the markets you are already successful in:
  - Increase marketing activities to reach new customers:
    - Implement traditional advertising methods, enhance brand awareness, and engage in press activities.

- Consider reducing prices to stimulate sales:
  - Evaluate the impact of reducing profit margins to increase revenue.
- Incentivise the sales team (if you have one) with bonuses to motivate them to sell more.
- Invest in training to enhance your skills or the skill sets within a sales team.

After determining your actions, it is crucial to assess the required investment. Remember, investments can come in various forms, including time, energy, and financial resources.

Next, review whether all your action plans complement each other. For instance, if you are reducing prices to increase revenue, it would not align with goals to increase profit margins. Ensure that every goal and agreed-upon action plans are aligned and collectively contribute to advancing the business, not only towards your 1-year target but also within the broader 3-year vision.

The decisive step involves breaking down these agreed actions into specific tasks, setting who is going to take which task (if you have a team or maybe family or friends can support), and most importantly, setting defined deadlines for each action. This provides clarity on who is responsible for what and when it is expected.

If you are managing all the actions on your own without a team, it can be challenging to set ambitious targets and hold yourself accountable. Without external accountability, it is easy to accept missed targets or slipped timelines without consequences. This can lead to complacency and further slippage, as the impact of these setbacks may not be immediately apparent.

One suggested remedy for lack of accountability is to share your actions with someone else and ask them to check in on your progress. Taking it a step further, you could inform this person that you will accept a forfeit if you fail to deliver. The forfeit could be something related to your personal health goal, such as participating in a 5k fun run or something you do not want to do like wearing a rival football team's shirt out for an evening. This external accountability can help keep you motivated and focused on achieving your goals, even when you are working solo.

# Business Health Check

## Day 13 - Health Wealth and Relationships

On Day 4, “Personal Goal Setting,” we outlined the importance of setting personal goals to provide a clear vision of where you want to go and what matters most to you and your loved ones. Now, it is time to apply the same principle to your business and define your objectives in alignment with your personal goals.

While personal goals may require periodic assessment, the need for regular health checks in business is even more critical. Conducting a thorough evaluation of your business's performance and progress should be a quarterly practice. This allows you to stay agile, responsive to market changes, and aligned with your long-term vision.

During these quarterly reviews, revisit your established goals for the year, as well as your projections for the next one, two, and three years. Evaluate whether you are on track to meet these targets and assess any deviations from your initial plans. Consider changes in the market, a shift in customer behaviours, and any new industry trends that may impact achieving your business goals.

Ensure your goals are still aligned with your vision and values. Consider if external factors or internal developments require changes to your strategies, priorities, or resources. As a last resort, recalibrate your targets, timelines, or strategies to keep realistic expectations and to maintain momentum towards your adjusted targets.

In addition to common measurables, such as financial and sales performance, pay attention to those elements that are less common,



indicators of health and vitality within your business. Assess employee morale, customer satisfaction and staff turnover levels to ensure that your business is achieving well-being targets.

By conducting regular quarterly health checks and proactively addressing any areas of concern or opportunity, you can build on your business's resilience, agility, and long-term future.

Your business health check should include:

- **Health:** Your business's health is crucial for its long-term success. This encompasses various aspects, including financial stability, operational achievements and overall business well-being. When setting health-related goals, consider factors such as maintaining a positive cash flow, achieving sustainable profitability and optimising resources. Additionally, focus on creating a supportive work environment that promotes employee well-being and a culture of collaboration and innovation.
- **Wealth:** Building wealth through your business involves not only financial growth but also value creation and asset accumulation. Set specific targets for revenue generation, profit margins and overall financial performance. Consider your long-term wealth objectives, such as increasing the business value, creating new revenue streams, and building a strong brand presence in the market. Additionally, explore opportunities for strategic partnerships with other businesses, to jointly strengthen your Value Propositions.
- **Relationships:** Strong relationships are the cornerstone of business success, impacting customer loyalty, employee engagement, and overall brand reputation. Set goals related

to customer satisfaction metrics, such as Net Promoter Score (NPS) (see Day 23) or customer retention rates. Focus on building meaningful connections with key allies, including suppliers, partners, and industry influencers. Additionally, prioritise employee satisfaction and retention by creating a team culture focused on collective success.

Aligning your business goals with your personal values is crucial for creating a balanced entrepreneurial journey. Combined with setting clear and actionable objectives across the Health, Wealth, and Relationships elements of your business, you have a framework of measurable targets to guide you and your business towards your desired outcomes.

## Day 14 - Your Assets

As a business owner, your assets hold immense value, second only to the most valued asset, your time. Yet these assets extend far beyond material possessions or capital equipment. Your assets include a vast array of elements, ranging from tangible resources to intangible qualities.

An asset can take the form of a skilled individual within your organisation possessing unique talents and expertise crucial for driving innovation and productivity. These individuals are not merely employees but valuable assets to your team and business.

Equally, every customer who interacts with your business is a valuable asset. They represent not just revenue streams but also sources of valuable feedback, insights into customer behaviours and market trends. Their experiences, expressed through testimonials and references, act as powerful endorsements that can influence others and help to form your brand's reputation.

Financial assets, such as cash reserves, property, and equipment, are undeniably significant assets. Owning property or well-maintained equipment are assets that can deliver more than their traditional benefits.

In essence, your assets extend far beyond conventional measures of wealth or ownership.

After identifying what your assets are, dedicate time to thoroughly assess each one. Determine if you are maximising their potential, explore avenues for improvement, consider alternative uses that could enhance their contribution to your business, and whether any of these assets offer opportunities for you if sold or rented out.

While certain assets may not be marketable, the skills and expertise of your workforce present avenues for generating additional revenue beyond their primary roles. By leveraging their talents in innovative ways, you can unlock new streams of income within your business operations.

For instance, suppose you have a highly skilled draftsman in your business whose workload fluctuates due to sales variations and seasonal influences. This situation might lead to periods where they have idle time, potentially lasting for weeks, during which you are still paying their salary without fully utilising their skills. In such cases, it is crucial to reassess this asset—the employee's skills—and explore innovative ways to leverage them more effectively.

Consider another scenario where your business owns substantial capital equipment vital for its operations. While this equipment is undoubtedly an asset, it also represents a significant amount of capital tied up in machinery. In times of financial need, it is worth exploring innovative solutions to get access to cash quickly.

One option to consider is selling the equipment to a machinery rental company and then entering into a leasing arrangement to regain access to it. While this approach may entail higher costs in the long term due to leasing fees, it does offer a swift injection of cash when required. This move allows the business to meet immediate financial needs or obligations, without reducing its cash reserves. It is a proactive measure that leverages the value of existing assets when needed, to bolster cash reserves and support business continuity.

The process of reviewing your assets does not necessarily mean immediate action needs to be taken every time. However, it is crucial to stay vigilant and continuously monitor what your business possesses. This vigilance can uncover opportunities to reduce costs, bring new funds into the business, or boost revenue streams.

Additional examples of assets and potential courses of action:

- **Customers:** Interview and embrace their feedback to enhance your business operations. Genuine customer input serves as a valuable asset, empowering you to adapt and improve in the future. (Refer to Customer Experience Day 23 for insights on leveraging feedback effectively.)
- **Cash Reserves:** Recognise that cash flow is the lifeblood of your enterprise. Assess your current cash situation and consider reinvestment back into the business in areas like marketing, product development or training.
- **Industry Expert relationships:** Use the expertise of your Professional Network (see Day 27) to learn about customer behaviours and assess your responsiveness to changes in the market. Have discussions among knowledgeable experts to stay up to date of industry trends and refine your business strategies accordingly.
- **Customer References/Testimonials:** Capitalise on the power of customer testimonials, recognising their increasing significance in shaping future prospects buying decisions. Ensure proactive management of public reviews, including prompt responses to negative feedback and leveraging positive testimonials as potent marketing tools.
- **Well defined Processes:** Assess potential cost reductions through outsourcing. Identify tasks within the business that external, non-skilled personnel can perform by following your process steps, ensuring no drop in quality and productivity.

## Day 15 - Risk Assessment

For businesses operating prior to 2020, the concept of risk assessment is likely to be painfully familiar. With lockdowns and the COVID-19 pandemic, every business faced unprecedented challenges and had to assess very quickly how to operate under new and difficult conditions.

Regrettably, many businesses did not survive the two years following COVID, falling victim to the pandemic's impact. Factors such as losing major clients, running out of cash, losing key employees, and the closure of critical suppliers all contributed to their demise. Regardless of the specific circumstances, the pandemic exposed pre-existing vulnerabilities within these businesses.

The purpose of this guide is precisely to address this issue by enabling Business owners to examine key elements of their business operation and uncover potential risks lurking within, together with the actions necessary to address such risks. Alternatively, if risks are deemed minimal, a proactive stance can be adopted to monitor the risks regularly. This approach ensures readiness to respond effectively should the need arise, thereby enhancing the business's resilience in the face of unwelcome challenges.

Coming back to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and how it exposed vulnerabilities that even well-prepared businesses had not fully accounted for, we have the benefit of hindsight allowing us to look at what the core factors were, so that lessons learnt are now lessons shared. Factors contributing to these downfalls included:

- The absence of the business owner or another essential employee for an extended period.
  - Ensure that all critical tasks have more than one person trained and capable of performing them.

- Overreliance on external parties crucial to achieving business objectives:
  - Dependency on a small number of customers for a significant portion of revenue. Too much reliance on a few customers can lead to a substantial revenue decline even if only one key customer is lost, posing a critical impact on the business.
  - Dependency on key suppliers remaining in operation. Avoid being overly reliant on suppliers who have significant control over pricing or whose downturn could disrupt your supply chain. Ensuring alternative sourcing options or contingency plans is vital.
  - Business partnerships built solely on personal relationships without formal documentation. Agreements based on handshakes or verbal assurances can be fragile and prone to breakdowns. Formalise partnerships with documented agreements to avoid potential conflicts or misunderstandings.
- Reliance on continued supply of critical components or materials.
  - Shortages in supply often result in increased prices. Assess whether your business can withstand a price war or if you would become uncompetitive.
  - Similarly, sudden spikes in energy or fuel prices can escalate costs for many businesses. Those with robust risk management strategies may remain competitive, while others might struggle to absorb increased expenses, impacting their competitiveness.
- Adaptability of operations to changes in the working environment:
  - Forced relocation from your current premises. Consider whether your business can seamlessly

transition to a new location without significant disruptions to operations.

- **Increased demand for flexible work arrangements.** Assess the feasibility of implementing work-from-home practices. Ensure tasks that were previously performed only in the office can now be efficiently carried out remotely.

Managing a crisis in the heat of the moment can lead to impulsive decisions and increased risk-taking. By proactively considering various scenarios and their potential impacts, business owners can develop contingency plans to address a crisis before it arises.

Risk management is not solely about addressing negative occurrences; it is also about navigating the challenges that come with success. Businesses can also falter when they experience rapid growth, and managing this growth effectively is essential.

Here are some key aspects to consider in managing the risks associated with rapid success:

- **Managing Customer Expectations:** Ensuring that the quality of products or services meets or exceeds customer expectations, even during periods of high demand, is vital for maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- **Managing Suppliers:** Establishing strong relationships with reliable suppliers and ensuring a steady supply chain is key to meet increasing demand without compromising quality or delivery times.
- **Maintaining a Healthy Cash Flow:** Balancing the outflow of funds with incoming revenue is critical to sustain operations and support growth initiatives. Managing expenses,



collecting receivables promptly, and strategic financial planning are key components of maintaining a healthy cash flow.

- **Investment in People:** As demand grows, investing in hiring and training skilled employees becomes key to meet customer needs effectively. Building a capable and motivated team is really important for sustaining business success in the long run.
- **Infrastructure and Equipment:** Scaling up operations to accommodate increased demand requires adequate infrastructure and equipment. Ensuring that your business has the necessary tools and resources to keep up with growing demand is essential for maintaining efficiency and productivity.

## Day 16 - Cash in the Bank

Cash is the lifeblood of your business! It cannot be overstated how crucial this is. The single, standalone reason why 99% of businesses fail is because they run out of cash. Consider this:

- No customers? With cash in the bank, the business can still survive.
- No employees? The business can still continue.
- No products to sell? Again, as long as there's cash in the bank, the business can weather the storm.

Let us define 'cash in the bank.' It is the amount of cash accessible immediately in your bank account. Money owed by customers does not count as cash in the bank. Neither does money tied up in capital investments that could be sold if needed. Cash in the bank is what keeps your business afloat.

**Cash Flow Forecast** - A commonly cited rule of thumb is that a business should have enough cash reserves to survive for at least 13 weeks, keeping operations running smoothly even if no customer payments are received during that time. This ensures that regular expenses such as staffing costs and supplier payments can still be made, with a positive cash flow balance by the end of a 13-week period.

There are accounting software tools to assist with cash flow forecasting, but in the absence of such software, it is crucial to monitor your current and projected cash flow regularly. Ideally, this should be done on a weekly basis to ensure the financial health and continuity of your business. Regular monitoring allows you to stay

proactive in managing your cash flow, identifying potential issues early.

Performing a cash flow check at the end of each week should become a routine practice, ensuring it is not challenging to execute. Here is a simplified outline to follow:

- Account Balance at the close of play on Friday: Note down the current balance in your business account.
- Debts/Invoices you are due to pay in the next 3 months: List all invoices that you have and anticipate receiving, that require payment in the next three months.
- Projected Monthly Salary/Wage Bill multiplied by 3.
- Closing Cash Balance: Calculate your projected closing cash balance by subtracting the sum of active and projected debts and projected salary/wage bill, from the opening account balance.

To effectively report on your cash flow and maintain a handle on operational costs, it is really important to have basic financial models like this in place. Without a firm control to track both money coming into and going out of your business, your Cash Flow forecast is likely to be inaccurate and you have therefore introduced potentially the biggest risk that your business can have.

**Improving Cash Flow** – If you find your business is running low on cash, simply to stop spending may not always be a feasible solution. However, there are steps you can take to manage your cash flow more effectively:

- Decrease Expenses:
  - Negotiate lower prices with suppliers to reduce the cost of goods.

- Cut general overhead and administrative expenses where possible.
- Temporarily reduce marketing expenditure while focusing on low-cost or free promotional strategies.
- Increase Revenue:
  - Consider raising prices if feasible without negatively impacting sales.
  - Encourage higher spending from customers by upselling additional products or services.
  - Expand your customer base through targeted marketing efforts or referrals.
  - Cross-sell complementary products to existing customers to increase overall sales.
- Reduce Accounts Receivable Days:
  - Encourage customers to pay upfront or provide discounts for early payments.
  - Shorten payment terms to 7 days or less to accelerate cash inflow.
  - Proactively follow up with customers to request earlier payment dates.
  - Consider increasing costs for customers who consistently fail to pay on time.
- Reduce Inventory Costs:
  - Maintain smaller inventory levels to minimise capital tied up in stock.
  - Seek out suppliers who offer better terms or discounts for bulk purchases.
  - Establish partnerships with suppliers who can hold inventory on your behalf.

- Negotiate favourable terms, including reduced shipping and handling charges.
- Increase Accounts Payable Days:
  - Delay payment until the last day the invoice is due to maximise cash flow.
  - Negotiate longer or more favourable payment terms with vendors.
  - Avoid late payment penalties by adhering to payment deadlines.

**Financial Forecasts and Budgeting** – Financial forecasting encompasses more than just cash flow projections; it also involves budgeting to support various aspects of business operations. While it is crucial to have a solid cash flow forecast to ensure access to cash, financial forecasting provides a broader perspective on the overall financial health of the business.

Once solid financial forecasts are in place and profitability can be projected, businesses can shift focus to longer-term growth initiatives by budgeting for future investments that align with their projections. However, maintaining tight cost control is paramount in this process.

## Day 17 – Systems, Tools, and Business Processes

Efficiency is crucial for businesses of all sizes to thrive and grow. One of the most cost-effective ways to achieve growth is by identifying and reducing inefficiencies in the workplace.

This can involve various aspects, including automating repetitive tasks, streamlining communication both internally and externally, minimising the number of individuals involved in processes, and optimising the physical layout of the company.

Example: Delegating authority to appropriate personnel can help streamline processes by eliminating unnecessary steps requiring approvals from senior staff members. It is necessary to assess whether these approval steps are truly beneficial or merely a historical practice. By evaluating how often requests are denied and whether they align with current business needs, managers can determine whether delegation is warranted.

To begin your assessment, focus on the most frequently performed tasks within the business. Identify who performs these tasks and visualise the current process. Then, document and analyse the steps involved, envisioning what the ideal process should look like. The aim is to eliminate unnecessary steps and personnel without compromising the end result.

Furthermore, businesses should explore opportunities to digitise and automate process steps wherever feasible. This can significantly reduce manual labour and human error while improving overall efficiency. While implementing process efficiencies may require initial investment, conducting a return on investment (ROI) analysis can help quantify the benefits versus the costs.

Once process steps are documented and optimised, they should be made readily available as a reference for current and future employees. These documented processes serve not only as a record of what needs to be done but also as valuable training tools for new hires, ensuring consistency and continuity.

**Outsourcing** can be a valuable strategy for delegating routine tasks, especially those that are business critical but time-consuming. For instance, if your business frequently receives phone calls from customers or clients, outsourcing to a remote assistant can free up your time and prevent distractions from critical tasks.

Similar tasks such as managing social media, debt collection, inventory management, and cold calling, can be effectively outsourced to individuals who can follow predefined scripts or processes. By handing over these tasks to remote assistants or specialised service providers, you can ensure they are handled professionally and efficiently while allowing you to focus on responsibilities that require your expertise.

**Applications** – They say there is an App for everything, and they are probably right. Applications have revolutionised the way businesses operate, offering solutions for various tasks and processes. In the world of finance, banking apps now offer comprehensive functionalities to manage business finances, handle payroll, debt collection, payments, and even tax returns. These applications are cost-effective and can streamline financial management tasks efficiently.

Beyond finance, customer relationship management (CRM) tools (see Day 26) are key for successful sales teams. CRM tools help businesses manage customer interactions, track sales activities, and streamline

communication, ultimately improving customer relationships and driving sales growth.

The availability of such applications underscores the importance of leveraging technology to enhance business operations and efficiency. By integrating these tools into daily processes, businesses can improve productivity, remove unnecessary process steps, and stay competitive.

**E-commerce** platforms and online order management applications offer highly efficient solutions for reducing costs and saving time. While commonly associated with Business-to-Consumer (B2C) markets, these solutions are equally applicable in Business-to-Business (B2B) contexts. Many systems now feature open links, known as APIs, enabling seamless data exchange between companies, enabling direct handling of orders, invoices, payments, and due date information without manual intervention.

Implementing such connections may entail initial setup costs, but the time and money saved through streamlined operations make these investments highly worthwhile. By leveraging technology in this way, businesses can significantly enhance efficiency and productivity while reducing overheads.

In conclusion, managing costs effectively requires openness towards embracing technology. Evaluating established processes to determine if there are more efficient alternatives, particularly using technology for repeatable tasks, can lead to cost savings, faster operations, and improved outcomes.



## Day 18 - Business Values.

Your business values are internal drivers that influence your business culture and relationships. They are your guiding principles under which you operate.

**Brand** – Your brand represents the overall identity, reputation, and perception of your business in the marketplace. It encompasses tangible elements such as logos, colours, and slogans, as well as intangible elements like values, and messaging. Your brand communicates what your business stands for, its unique selling points, and the promises it makes to customers.

On the other hand, your business values are the guiding principles and ethical standards that shape your business culture and behaviour. Both are essential components of a successful business, with one shaping external perception and the other shaping internal culture and behaviour.

- Brand:
  - A brand is the overall identity, perception, and reputation of a business.
  - Branding aims to create a distinct and recognisable image for the business, creating a difference from competitors, and establish emotional connections with customers.
  - A strong brand effectively communicates what the business stands for, its unique selling points, and the promises it makes to customers.

- Values:
  - Values refer to the guiding principles, beliefs, and ethical standards that shape the culture and behaviour of a business.
  - Values often reflect the company's mission, vision, and long-term objectives, providing a moral compass for employees and leadership.
  - Examples of values include integrity, transparency, respect, diversity, innovation, and social responsibility.

**Customers** – Aligning your business values with your customers is crucial for building trust, loyalty, and long-term relationships. If your business sells environmental products and services, your values should reflect a commitment to sustainability, eco-friendliness, and responsible stewardship of the planet. This alignment demonstrates authenticity and integrity to your customers, showing that your business truly believes in itself.

Your customers would likely be conscious of the environmental and social impact of the businesses they support. So, in this example, they are more likely to partner with companies that share their values and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and ethical business practices. Therefore, your business values should not only reflect your products and services but also resonate with the values and priorities of your target customers.

**Your Team** – Ensuring alignment between your team's values and your business values is crucial for creating a positive working environment, supporting employee engagement, and minimising turnover. When employees share similar values with the company, they are more likely to feel motivated, and committed to their work.

To attract like-minded individuals and ensure a good fit with your business culture, it is important to clearly communicate your business values in job advertisements, interviews, and onboarding processes. This transparency helps set expectations and ensures that potential hires understand the company culture and what is expected of them.

In addition to hiring for cultural fit, businesses can reinforce their values through various initiatives, such as offering flexible working arrangements, providing opportunities for volunteering, or creating a fun and inclusive workplace environment.

In conclusion, define and make public your business values, as this often attracts the right customers and employees who resonate with the same values. Customers are more likely to support businesses that share their values. Likewise, job applicants are drawn to companies whose values align with their own beliefs and principles, leading to higher levels of employee retention.

## Day 19 - Your Team

Regardless of your business's stage, whether you are a startup or already well-established, if there are people you employ, outsource work to, or have friends and family that support you from time to time, this is your team. And the role they play is pivotal to the success of your business.

**Company goals** set the foundation. A team is more than just a group of individuals; it is a collective unit working towards common goals. However, knowing what the goals are, is not always shared. Ensuring that your team understands the company's short-term and long-term objectives creates engagement and ownership. When team members understand how their contributions fit into the vision, they feel a sense of purpose and direction in their work. This purpose frequently turns into higher motivation and productivity and greater loyalty.

**Roles and responsibilities** – As stated above, a team works better when individuals can identify their contributions. Therefore, it is vital that each team member fully grasps their unique role and responsibilities. Consider the scenario where a team member is absent. Does it disrupt operations? Can tasks be postponed without any consequences? If so, imagine the sense of insignificance that an individual may experience. Conversely, when individuals are given clear responsibilities, they feel a sense of ownership and accountability. Even in their absence, they maintain a vested interest in ensuring tasks are completed timely and effectively. This accountability nurtures a culture of ownership, motivating team members to take pride in their work.

**Culture** – The environment in which your team works is key, even in a fully remote-worker setting, beyond physically where they sit.

Do your team members have opportunities to contribute ideas and suggest improvements? Supporting a culture of innovation and collaboration can be incredibly motivating. As a business owner, it is easy to become tunnel-visioned on your own tasks, potentially missing efficiency gains or overlooked talents within your team. Encouraging employee feedback, creates a culture of continuous improvement and ensures you stay informed about what is happening in your business. After all, they are the ones who often know their tasks better than you.

In summary, it is crucial to engage your team, aligning them with the business's objectives through clear short and long-term goals. Empower them with accountability and create a virtual environment that generates further investment in the company. By doing so, you nurture their motivation to consistently deliver their best performance.

## Day 20 - Performance Reviews

*Note: Not all aspects of this chapter are relevant to Sole Traders or Start-Ups*

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** are a widely recognised method for evaluating the performance of both teams and individuals. It is a principle based on ‘what cannot be measured, cannot be effectively improved upon.’

However, I passionately believe that a surveillance-style approach, similar to Big Brother, creates an environment of intimidation and unease. Simply assigning metrics to measure performance, while seemingly straightforward, can inadvertently demoralise team members. Furthermore, relying solely on KPI results, can paint an incomplete picture. Consider this scenario: an employee goes on a two-week vacation, and their replacement is on sick leave. The KPIs may indicate that targets were missed, leading to the assumption of underperformance. However, this fails to consider the circumstances. Such rigid metrics can unfairly impact motivation and morale, without allowing individuals the opportunity to provide context or explanation.

Given these concerns, I encourage an alternative KPI model: Keeping People Informed (KPI). This model allows for a more general assessment of performance, taking into account any broader context and individual circumstances. This approach also prioritises transparency and communication over strict performance metrics. Most individuals thrive when they feel trusted and accountable for their tasks, so nurture this sense of ownership, and create a culture

of transparency and engagement. This not only keeps you, the business owner, informed but also encourages active participation in the performance evaluation process.

In cases of underperformance, this approach enables individuals to provide insights into the root causes and suggest actionable steps for improvement. This accountability helps them to reflect on their performance, find areas for improvement, and take proactive measures to prevent future setbacks.

Maintaining open lines of communication within the business not only encourages transparency but also encourages more frequent input from the teams. Often, team members possess insights into the operational side of the business that the business owner may not be fully aware of, as highlighted in the previous chapter. By setting up relaxed, regular review sessions where communication flows freely, business owners can tap into this wealth of knowledge and experience within their teams.

**Business KPIs** extend beyond just teams and individual performance. They also encompass the alignment of business vision and strategies, as outlined in Day 11 and Day 12. Regular reviews of these aspects are crucial to ensure that the company remains on track to achieve its long-term objectives. Keeping People Informed involves ensuring that teams understand the trajectory of the business and whether it is still aligned with its vision. This transparency enables team members to see the bigger picture and understand how their contributions fit into the broader strategy, fostering a sense of purpose and commitment to shared objectives.

In conclusion, establishing and reporting on metrics for processes, team performance, and overall business success cultivates a cohesive bond among all team members. They not only highlight individual and collective contributions to success but also provide valuable insights into areas for improvement. Running a successful business is a collective effort, therefore it is essential to share achievements and celebrate successes together.



## Day 21 - Training and Development

*Note: Not all aspects of this chapter are relevant to Sole Traders or Start-Ups*

Business markets, competition, and customer preferences are constantly evolving, forcing every successful business to continually change. To keep pace with this dynamic situation, it is crucial to ensure that the teams within your organisation are also evolving. This does not necessarily mean replacing team members periodically; indeed, long-standing, loyal employees can be invaluable assets. However, it is really important to invest in ongoing training and development to equip your team with the latest skills, knowledge, and perspectives. This ensures that your business remains agile and responsive to change.

Before anything else, it is imperative to assess whether your team possesses the required skills to effectively fulfil their duties. This foundational question serves as the starting point for ensuring that your team is equipped to meet the demands of their roles and contribute to the success of the business.

Having an under-skilled team member can indeed have detrimental effects on your business, depending on their role. It not only impacts their individual performance but can also hinder the company's overall progress towards its full potential. It is crucial to recognise that underperformance does not necessarily reflect a lack of capability; often, it may simply indicate a gap in skills or knowledge. Prioritising training and upskilling for your teams, as well as for yourself, is therefore essential.

**Business Continuity** is paramount, especially in the face of unexpected departures or prolonged absences. What happens if a key member of your team leaves suddenly? Or if you, the business owner, need to take an extended leave of absence? Can your business continue to operate smoothly? These are critical questions to consider. Regularly reviewing your team's skills and addressing any weaknesses through upskilling is a vital business continuity practice. You can never predict what the future holds, and relying on the skills of only one individual within your team poses significant risks to your business. Maintaining a level of cross-functional competency ensures that every role can be performed, to some extent, by another member of the team if needed. This not only provides robust business continuity protection but also fosters a culture of support and collaboration within the team. No single person should bear the sole responsibility for any aspect of the business.

**Product Innovation** is crucial for staying competitive in a rapidly evolving market landscape (Day 9). With changing market conditions and increasing pressures from competition, it is important to continuously innovate your product portfolio. This could involve introducing the latest version of your product to leverage technological advancements, enhancing customer service offerings, or optimising production processes to reduce costs and increase profitability.

Achieving these innovations often requires unique skills and expertise. Whether it is developing cutting-edge technology, refining customer experiences, or streamlining manufacturing processes, having the right skills within your team is critical for driving product innovation. Investing in training and upskilling initiatives, can help ensure that your team possesses the capabilities needed to innovate and refresh your product portfolio effectively.

**Continuous Learning** - Bringing new skills into the business can be very worthwhile for enhancing capabilities and driving growth. We cover Sales strategies cross-selling and up-selling in Day 28, effectively executing these strategies often requires a different skill set than the one needed to initially win over customers. It is necessary to assess whether your sales team possesses these specialised skills and, if not, consider investing in your sales teams to gain the necessary expertise.

Similarly, marketing skills needed to reach new audiences using the latest social media platforms, or to maximize the potential of existing ones, require continuous development. A marketing manager with years of experience but without ongoing training may struggle to adapt to these evolving tools and strategies.

By embracing a culture of continuous learning and skill development, businesses can equip their teams with the capabilities needed to navigate challenges, take educated risks, maximise opportunities, and stay ahead of the competition.

# Sales and Marketing

## Day 22 - Target Customers

Many people might find it unusual to have a section dedicated to customers but, surprisingly, many business owners do not actually know who their future customers will be. It is often believed that customers remain unknown until they reach out and introduce themselves.

While this is partially true, it is important to anticipate and identify your potential customers before they identify themselves.

Take, for instance, a business that sells placemats and matching tableware. Technically, anyone who eats at a table could be a customer. However, it is crucial to determine whether your customer is a single mother of three who rents her home, juggles three jobs, and works tirelessly for her family, or a high-flying female executive without children who frequently hosts elegant dinner parties.

By visualising these two hardworking individuals and considering the example of tableware, you can see how different their needs and preferences might be. This affects not only the design and material of the tableware products but also the retail price, how they are presented (packaging) and the most effective way to market to each target customer.

The fact is, that until you know exactly who your target customer is, it is extremely challenging to:

- Define in detail what your product is.
- Determine the appropriate quality and design.

- Decide on the packaging, whether it comes in a bag, or luxury retail packaging.
- Craft effective marketing messages.
- Choose the best sales channels (e.g., Amazon, luxury boutiques, pop-up craft fairs).
- Select the most suitable marketing channels to reach your audience.
- Ensure your entire brand resonates with this type of customer.

So do not underestimate the importance of knowing who your customer is. Everything your business does revolves around this customer, and alignment is crucial.

Once you have a firm understanding of who your customer is, you can begin to craft the marketing messages needed to attract their attention and obtain their interest, influence their buying behaviours, and ultimately encourage them to make a purchase. We cover this in more detail in the Marketing steps on Day 25.

Once you have identified your target customers and your business is progressing, it is crucial to focus on retaining those customers, as acquiring new customers is typically four to five times more expensive. If your product is not a one-time purchase (and it rarely is), consider what will encourage your customers to return. This might involve after-sales exclusive offers, repair services, or cross-selling opportunities for complementary products. However, you must understand who your customer is before building a customer retention strategy, as different customers will respond more favourably to different offers.

Contrary to the previous point, there are some customers we do not want to return. I passionately believe that we should only work with customers who align with our business values and brand. Repeat customers who frequently complain, those who are poor at paying, or customers who take too much time before making a buying decision can be more trouble than they are worth. There is absolutely nothing wrong with telling these customers, “No.”

Many businesses are too polite or too nervous to turn away business but managing a difficult customer has a cost. Occasionally evaluate each customer and consider whether the profit they bring to your business outweighs the cost of maintaining the relationship. If a customer is difficult but still contributes positively to the bottom line, it might be worth keeping them. However, if a customer actually costs you money, it is better to distance yourself from them.

Do not be afraid to say “No”!

## Day 23 - Customer Experience

Yesterday we mentioned the importance of customer retention as acquiring new customers is peppered with hidden costs, primarily involving the time invested, the cost of marketing to attract that customer, and, if you have a traditional sales force, the cost of employing a salesperson to visit and convert that prospect into a customer. Retaining existing customers is more cost-effective and can significantly contribute to the profitability of your business.

In summary, we should all strive for customer loyalty to encourage past customers to return and buy again. To attract customer loyalty, you need to deliver a positive customer experience. Do not confuse customer experience with customer service; customer experience is the entire lifecycle of engagement with your business, from initial contact (such as seeing an advertisement) through to receiving the goods and any after-sales engagement. This is the customer's experience but now we need to understand the customer's perception of how they would rate that experience.

To get a Customer Experience rating, the most straightforward approach is to simply ask the customer, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how did working with our business make you feel?" While this may seem like an unusual question, it is a simple and highly effective way to measure customer experience. This question captures the emotional impact of their interaction with your business, which is crucial for understanding and improving overall customer satisfaction. Since we are asking about their feelings, it is not necessary to ask immediately after the engagement; how you made someone feel is something they can accurately report on days or even weeks after their interaction with you.

The results of asking this question, make up the common Customer Experience measurement tool, called the **Net Promoter Score (NPS)**.

Based on their responses, customers are categorised into three groups:

- Promoters (score 9-10): These are loyal customers who are likely to recommend your product or service to others. They are enthusiastic and can drive growth through positive word-of-mouth.
- Passives (score 7-8): These customers are satisfied but not overly enthusiastic. They are vulnerable to competitive offerings and may switch to a competitor if given a better option.
- Detractors (score 0-6): These customers are unhappy and can potentially damage your brand through negative word-of-mouth.

The NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters:

$$\text{NPS} = \% \text{Promoters} - \% \text{Detractors}$$

The score ranges from -100 to +100. A higher score indicates a higher level of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

NPS is valuable because it provides a clear and actionable insight into a customer's attitude towards you and your business. It is a simple yet effective tool for gauging the likelihood of customers recommending your brand, which is a strong indicator for potential growth.

If you invest in follow up calls with those Detractors, not to complain or react to their poor rating, but to find out what aspect of their engagement went wrong, you can identify areas for improvement.



Frederick Reichheld, a thought leader in this field, explains that customers who rate you a 7 or 8 are likely to return, but if their next experience with you is below what is acceptable for your brand, they may rate you 6 or below in the future. In contrast, customers who rate you a 9 or 10 are your ambassador customers—those you might ask to write a reference or document a case study about their relationship with you. Even if these customers have a poor experience next time, they are more likely to remain loyal and give you another chance to improve.

Reichheld refers to this concept as the "**8th Gate**." The goal is to get your customers through this 8th Gate, ensuring that even if you occasionally offer below-par service, they still consider themselves loyal customers. This gives you a second chance to demonstrate that you value their business and are committed to making their experience better than before.

**On-line reviews** - If you are not prepared to ask your customers directly about their satisfaction, or if the nature of your product or go-to-market channels makes it challenging to do so, it is still crucial to listen carefully to what your customers are saying about you. With the plethora of online review sites available, it is crucial to proactively monitor these platforms, promote all positive reviews and respond professionally and sympathetically to all negative reviews.

Never respond angrily or accuse the customer of being wrong. How they felt is their own individual experience and you are not in a rightful position to challenge that. Instead, respond politely, with empathy and sincerity, and offer to rectify the situation if they would like that to be the outcome. This approach not only helps to maintain a positive image but also shows that you value customer feedback and are committed to improving their experience.

And let us not forget that a good customer experience does not necessarily need to originate from a positive event. If you buy a new car and it breaks down within the first 5,000 miles, this could infuriate you and make you vow never to buy this brand of car again. However, if the company arranges for your car to be collected, provides you with a courtesy replacement vehicle (often one with a higher specification than yours), maintains excellent communication about the repair progress, quickly returns the car within the promised timeline and demonstrates a genuine sense of apology for the inconvenience, a negative situation can quickly be turned around. You might find yourself so pleased with the brand that you retain confidence in their vehicles, knowing that if a breakdown occurs you will be well taken care of.

Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate customer experiences after every engagement, not just those that seem to have gone well. Pay special attention to customers who have had a bad experience because their assessment of your after-sales service is just as important as the happy customer's pre-sales rating. This comprehensive evaluation helps ensure that you are consistently meeting and exceeding customer expectations, even when things go wrong.

## Day 24 - On-line Presence

Before delving into the details of marketing strategies on Day 25, let us begin with the basics.

Consider your online presence as your digital shop window. Just as retail outlets invest considerable time and expertise in carefully designing and arranging their window displays and entrances, your online presence serves the same purpose. It is the first impression your customers have of your products or business when they come across them.

Just like a captivating storefront draws in foot traffic, an appealing online presence brings potential customers to explore further. Therefore, it is important to invest effort into creating an attractive and engaging online presence that effectively highlights your products and reflects your brand.

Your homepage should make it absolutely clear what your brand identity is, displaying what you stand for and what sets you apart from the competition. It is the virtual storefront that welcomes visitors and sets the tone for their journey through your website.

Once visitors land on your homepage it is essential to ensure that their journey is seamless, intuitive, and purposeful. This means designing a user-friendly look and feel that guides them effortlessly to the information they are seeking or encourages them to take action towards becoming a customer.

**Customer journey** for any website should follow a series of stages that guide visitors from their initial interaction with the site to becoming a customer. Understanding this journey is vital for creating a seamless and rewarding user experience.

- **Discovery:** The journey begins when a potential customer discovers your website, often through marketing activities, which might be on-line channels such as search engines (see below), social media or real-world activities like printed advertisements or word-of-mouth referrals.
- **Arrival:** Upon arriving at your website, the visitor's first impression is crucial. The homepage should immediately and clearly display your brand identity, values, and offerings. It is so important that on the first page of your website, it is instantly clear what your business does and why.
- **Exploration:** Once on the site, visitors require clear navigation tools to explore the content and offerings to learn more about your products. This may involve browsing through product pages, reading blog posts, watching videos, or exploring other relevant content. The goal is to provide valuable information that addresses the visitor's needs.
- **Engagement:** As visitors interact with your website, prompt them to take actions like signing up for a newsletter, downloading a resource, or adding items to their cart. These actions show interest and allow you to capture their identity for future outreach if they do not make a purchase. For instance, request their email before they download a "How-To" guide.
- **Conversion:** The conversion stage occurs when a visitor takes a desired action that aligns with your business goals, such as making a purchase, filling out a contact form, or booking a consultation. This marks the transition from a lead to potential customer and represents a successful outcome of the customer journey.
- **Retention:** After converting to a sale, the focus shifts to retaining and nurturing the customer relationship. This involves providing excellent after-sales support information

and, if applicable, providing transparency regarding progress of their order.

- **Promote:** Happy customers often become brand promoters, spreading positive experiences and referrals. Encourage them to leave feedback and highlight to prospective customers that others have trusted your business before them. This boosts brand credibility, expands reach, and continues the customer journey cycle.

By understanding the stages of the customer journey and tailoring your website accordingly, you can effectively engage visitors, build virtual relationships, and drive business growth.

**Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)** is the practice of enhancing a website's visibility and ranking on search engine results pages. It involves optimising various elements of a website, such as content, keywords and backlinks, to improve its relevance and authority in the eyes of search engines like Google.

Effective SEO requires you to work on both your website (on-page) and on other websites (off-page). On-page SEO focuses on optimising individual web pages to make them more search engine-friendly, while off-page SEO revolves around establishing authority and credibility by generating links from other reputable websites (backlinks) that direct traffic to your site, alongside leveraging social media signals. However, SEO is not something you can effectively do yourself, not without a lot of research and training. Thankfully, SEO skills can be provided from external service providers and are relatively inexpensive. Note: if you do outsource this task, make sure that they teach you some of the basics of what they have done, so that you can keep backlinks and keywords updated yourself, and use their expertise as a one-time engagement.

**e-commerce** - For any business, embracing e-commerce offers numerous advantages essential for growth and competitiveness. Firstly, it expands the market reach beyond local boundaries, allowing access to a global customer base. This increased visibility can significantly boost sales and revenue potential. Additionally, if you are selling physical products, e-commerce reduces overhead costs associated with maintaining a store. For these businesses, partnering with organisations specialising in end-to-end e-commerce solutions, including inventory management and logistics, is an option. This allows you to concentrate solely on marketing activities aimed at attracting potential customers to make purchases.

## Day 25 - Marketing

Firstly, we must understand the meaning of 'marketing.' Marketing takes place in many forms, and it is all about communicating a message to potential clients, and sales is the action of securing the business and making a transaction.

Simple example:

- A street performer puts up a poster to say he will be performing in the town square later that day – that is advertising.
- He then walks around the street singing with the advert now held aloft – that is promoting.
- If he then walks into a department store, still singing and people are videoing and sharing it amongst friends – that is publicity.
- Collectively – that is marketing.
- If later, when a large crowd has gathered, he performs well and asks the audience to tip generously – that is sales.

So marketing is one to many, raising awareness of your product, and Sales is one to one closing the deal.

Now we understand what marketing is, we next need to understand the 7 core principles. They are called the **7-Ps of Marketing**:

- **Product:** The goods or services you offer to meet customer needs. How does what you sell solve a problem, or what pain or gain does your product address when purchased?

- **Price:** The amount of money customers are willing to pay. Pricing strategies are key and should match the value your customers will gain from the product.
- **Place:** Where are your target customers and what are the best communication channels (social media, email, paid advertisements) to reach them? Marketing can be expensive, so you must ensure your messages are in front of the right audience.
- **Promotion:** How will you promote and communicate the product's benefits and persuade customers to purchase it? How will you capture their attention and create a desire?
- **Positioning:** What is your value proposition and how do you intend to position this message so that it resonates with your target customers?
- **People:** Who are the best individuals to deliver these messages? This includes marketing agencies, employees, salespeople, and anyone who might interact with customers.
- **Physical Evidence:** The tangible aspects that help customers evaluate the product before a purchase. This includes packaging, branding, and any other proof of the product's value.

And an 8th P that some like to adopt:

- **Process:** The procedures and flow of activities that follow up and follow through, furthering customer engagement and prompting action (purchase).

If you have a clear understanding of each of the above principles and how they relate to your business, and if you know how to test and evaluate their effectiveness and are prepared to rework any of the principles that are underperforming, you have the foundations of a strong marketing strategy.



There are many other aspects that complement a good marketing strategy, many of which I have already covered in this guide:

- Websites and the importance of a clear and engaging first impression – Covered yesterday.
- Knowing who your customers are – Day 22.
- Understanding your brand, business values, value propositions, and all the details prospective customers would be interested in – Day 18.
- The value of networking (one of the few free marketing activities) – Day 27.
- The sales cycle – we will cover that tomorrow.
- Blogs – This is one aspect I have not covered in this guide. While not relevant to all business types, never underestimate the value of being perceived as an industry expert. People who blog typically do so because they know their trade. Those who blog without expertise usually stop quickly since no one listens to them. However, if you are a thought leader, innovator, or just trying to stand out, consider adding a blog to your website. Link it to business and industry forums (e.g., LinkedIn and Facebook groups for your target customers) and share relevant insights. Remember, as a thought leader, do not focus too much on your product. Instead, discuss industry challenges, trends, and the problems experts are addressing with compelling solutions.

## Day 26 – Sales Cycle, Managing Leads and CRM

Ensuring a consistent stream of sales is vital for business continuity. However, sales rarely materialise out of thin air. Depending on your industry, there is typically a significant amount of groundwork required between gaining customer interest (a task often performed by Marketing, as covered yesterday) and closing the deal (a task typically handled by Sales, see Day 28).

This intermediary process involves nurturing leads, building relationships, providing valuable information and support, addressing concerns, and guiding prospects through the decision-making journey. It may require multiple touchpoints, personalised communications and follow-ups to convert prospects into customers.

**The sales pipeline or funnel** can vary significantly between Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) markets, reflecting differences in purchase decision-making processes.

In a B2C context, the typical sales pipeline consists of the following stages:

- **Customer Awareness:** The customer becomes aware of the product through marketing efforts, advertising, or word-of-mouth.
- **Customer Interest:** The customer expresses interest in the product, indicating a potential desire to learn more or make a purchase.
- **Customer Desire:** The customer develops a strong desire or inclination to purchase the product, driven by its perceived value or benefits.

- Sale: The customer makes the purchase, completing the transaction.

In contrast, the B2B sales pipeline typically involves more complex stages, reflecting the complexities of business purchases:

- Customer Awareness: Similar to B2C, the customer becomes aware of the product through various channels.
- Customer Interest: The customer expresses initial interest, signalling potential interest in exploring further.
- Customer Consideration: The customer considers the product as a potential solution to their business needs or challenges.
- Customer Evaluation: The customer evaluates the product in more detail, comparing it with alternative solutions and assessing its suitability.
- Customer Intent: The customer demonstrates an intent to move forward with the purchase, often indicating commitment or readiness to proceed, but usually based on conditions that they set (this is where the negotiation starts).
- Sale: The customer finalises the purchase.

In B2B sales, managing and nurturing potential customers (leads) is crucial for guiding them through the sales cycle effectively. Once a customer shows interest in your product or service, it is crucial to record them as a lead and provide ongoing support and information to address their needs until they are ready to make a purchasing decision. This involves maintaining communication, building relationships, and offering relevant insights to help them along their journey.

Conversely, in B2C scenarios with successful ecommerce platforms, the need for lead management may be less pronounced due to the streamlined purchase process. However, if the B2C sales cycle is more complex, such as with longer consideration periods or offline

interactions, managing these interested customers/leads becomes vital to ensure no opportunity is missed.

In both B2B and B2C contexts, the goal remains the same: to guide customers through the sales process effectively, whether through online transactions or more detailed decision-making processes. By recording and managing leads appropriately, businesses can reduce the risk of missing opportunities.

**Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** applications is the broad term used for Lead Management, playing a crucial role in managing leads effectively throughout the sales process. While some powerful CRM platforms like Microsoft Dynamics and Salesforce come with a higher cost, there are also free online options available such as Zoho or Google Workspace.

CRM platforms enable sales teams to organise and prioritise leads, automate follow-up tasks, and track customer interactions, ensuring that no opportunity is missed. Additionally, CRM systems provide valuable insights into customer behaviours and preferences, allowing businesses to tailor their sales and marketing efforts more effectively.

Whether through a powerful, feature-rich CRM solution or a simpler, free option, implementing a CRM system can significantly enhance lead management processes, provide valuable data to help you decide the best next sales or marketing activities, and ultimately drive business growth.

## Day 27 - Networking

Attending networking events as a business owner is not just about exchanging business cards or making small talk; it is about actively investing in the growth and success of your business. These events provide invaluable opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals, industry professionals, and potential collaborators within your local community and beyond.

Many networking groups now allow remote attendance via online platforms. This means you are no longer limited to connecting with individuals who live or work locally. It also makes it easier to connect with a wider community of industry experts and reduces the time commitment required to attend these events.

**Building Relationships and knowledge sharing:** Networking events offer a platform to meet new people and establish meaningful relationships. By engaging in conversations and sharing insights, you can build rapport with fellow entrepreneurs, professionals beyond your immediate circle, and potential clients.

As well as connecting with previously unknown individuals from different backgrounds, industries, and expertise levels, it broadens your reach and can open doors to new opportunities, whether it is finding new clients, sourcing new suppliers, or just obtaining advice from other professionals.

**Referral Opportunities:** Networking events often lead to referrals and recommendations from fellow attendees. When you establish trust and credibility within your network, others are more likely to refer potential clients or business opportunities your way. Likewise, you

can reciprocate by referring clients or contacts to others in your network, creating a culture of mutual support and collaboration.

**Access to insider information:** Attending networking events can provide access to key resources and insider information that may not be readily available elsewhere. This might be the competitive edge you need to stay updated on the latest developments in your industry and leverage this knowledge to drive innovation and growth within your own business.

**Building Strategic Alliances:** Networking events offer a platform to identify potential strategic partners or alliances that can benefit your business. By forging alliances with complementary businesses or industry peers, you can pool resources, share expertise, and pursue joint ventures. Often, small businesses may not be able to compete for certain projects on their own, but collectively they can present a compelling proposition and drive mutual success.

**Boosting Confidence and Visibility:** Networking events provide a forum to highlight your expertise, accomplishments, and unique value proposition. By actively participating in conversations, sharing insights, and offering assistance to others, you can boost your confidence and visibility within your industry. This increased visibility can lead to enhanced brand credibility.

In conclusion, attending networking events is a strategic investment in the growth and success of your business. By actively engaging with like-minded individuals, industry professionals, and potential

collaborators, you can build relationships, expand your network, gain valuable insights, and access new opportunities that could propel your business forward. Networking is not just about making connections; it is about relationships, collaborations, and building a strong support system that can enable you to achieve more.

## Day 28 - Sales

Sales is the lifeblood of any business, driving revenue and facilitating growth. Without sales, a company cannot sustain itself, as sales generate the income needed to cover operational costs, invest in new projects, and ensure profitability. Sales also play a crucial role in understanding customer needs and preferences, which influences product development and marketing strategies, ensuring that the business remains competitive and relevant.

If sales are the lifeblood of your business, then the sales activities must be the beating heart. Without a healthy effective beating heart, your business no longer has a pulse. So, whether a Sole Trader or leading a team of in-house or outsourced sales experts, a lot of this section will still be relevant to you.

**Addressing Customer Needs** - To successfully sell a product or service, businesses must prioritise solving problems or fulfilling desires for their customers. This requires the sales role to obtain an understanding of the customer pain points and preferences. Those in your business responsible for selling should always identify these prior to any customer engagement. Your product should only ever be presented as a solution to the potential customer once you have established their need/desire. The other way around and you immediately fall into the “me too” debate, which makes selling against the competition much harder. When selling on the merits of your product, it is always important to acknowledge the competition respectfully and focus on your strengths while addressing the competition's weaknesses without mentioning them or being disrespectful. Adopting a “we understand your challenges and can address your needs” approach, not only helps close the deal but also creates customer relationships built on trust and satisfaction.



**Planning and Forecasting** is a fundamental strategy. Accurate sales forecasts allow businesses to predict future sales volumes, manage inventory levels, and allocate resources effectively. Having tools (e.g., CRM application – Day 26) in place to track and monitor these forecasts is really important for making informed decisions and adjusting strategies in real-time.

**The Sales Funnel** - Understanding the sales funnel (see Day 26) is crucial for guiding prospects through the buying process.

Maintaining a clear and transparent track of your sales funnel is key, as a low-value funnel can signal a potential decline in sales. It is really important to react swiftly based on data and make informed decisions about why your funnel is underperforming. This might be due to weak marketing messages, a negative brand image, or effective strategies implemented by the competition. Regardless of the reason, having a sales funnel allows a business to respond proactively, addressing issues before they significantly impact cash flow and the business long-term.

**Cost of Customer Acquisition vs. Retention** - Acquiring new customers is often expensive and time-consuming (Day 23). Marketing campaigns, promotions, and outreach efforts require significant investment. However, retaining existing customers and encouraging repeat sales can grow a business with less effort and cost. Loyal customers are more likely to make additional purchases, refer others, and provide valuable feedback. Therefore, businesses should focus on an approach that enhances customer retention, such as loyalty programs, personalised communication, and exceptional customer service.

**Training and Equipping Sales Teams** - A skilled sales team is essential for achieving sales targets and driving business growth. Sales professionals need to be knowledgeable about the product, the customer, the customer's internal purchasing and decision-making processes, understand your own sales processes, and possess effective communication and negotiation skills. However, it is also important to recognise that sales teams do not need to know everything. Far better to tell a customer, "I do not know the answer to that question." Customers appreciate honesty and prefer receiving accurate, trusted information in a timely manner rather than given a guess or no response at all.

**Monitoring and Evaluating Sales Performance** - Regular monitoring and evaluation of sales performance are crucial for continuous improvement. KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) such as the number of leads, number of orders, average order value, and average profit provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of sales strategies. Businesses can identify strengths and weaknesses, make data-driven decisions, and adjust their sales approach as needed, based on these numbers.

Additionally, it is important that individual sales team members are aware of their own performance. This helps recognise top performers, providing targeted training, and ensuring that the team operates at its highest potential. Continuous feedback and performance reviews create a culture of accountability.

**Growing the Average Order Value** – It is every business owner's ambition to sell more, but sometimes it does not mean you need to actually find more customers or sell more of your core product. Sometimes just increasing the Average Order Value is all it takes.

- **Cross-selling** involves offering complementary products alongside a customer's initial purchase. For example, an online store selling laptops might also suggest a case, printer, or software. When these items are closely related to the primary purchase, customers are more inclined to buy them. This is effective in an online setting, where tactical marketing can gently nudge customers toward these items without sales pressure.
- **Upselling** encourages customers to upgrade to a higher-priced version of the product they are considering by offering additional features or benefits.

Both techniques rely on understanding customer needs and strategically positioning complementary products or upgrades to maximise sales and strengthen customer relationships.

To summarise, sales are fundamental to the success of any business. By implementing effective sales strategies, utilising CRM tools, focusing on customer needs, and balancing the search for new customers with building relationships with existing customers, businesses can drive growth and achieve their goals.

# Management and Leadership

## Day 29 - You, The Business Owner

*Note: Not all aspects of this chapter are relevant to Sole Traders or Start-Ups*

This is probably the hardest of all the steps to read and take action on, as this is all about you – The business owner.

**Leadership** - As we have outlined earlier in this guide, the most important aspect of the business is you. Recall from Day 19, that your team can be anyone who supports you and your business, not only people you employ. Your team looks to you for guidance, your customers look to you for future requirements, the company looks to you for direction, and your investors (if you have external stakeholders in the company) look to you for confidence.

However, to support all these teams and individuals, you are not expected to know all the answers, nor are you expected to be right 100% of the time. To be effective as a Leader, as referenced way back on Day 1, it is all about mindset.

Throughout your business journey, your mindset will need to change often in reaction to the changes within your business itself. At times, you might feel as though you are in a fight-or-flight scenario. In such instances, approaching each situation with a calm and composed mindset is crucial for navigating through challenges. However, during

more stable periods—when your business is not suffering from uncertainty—the most consistent mindset you will need is a Growth Mindset.

A **Growth Mindset** revolves around taking calculated risks to enhance various aspects of your business: your skills, your business operations, your customer base, your team, your product offerings, and even your financial reserves. Individuals with a Growth Mindset typically exhibit the following characteristics:

- They always remain positive.
- They view failure as a lesson to personal and professional growth.
- They take accountability for their actions.
- They demonstrate creativity, using all available tools and resources. This might involve the team in brainstorming sessions, taking feedback and insights from customers, or tapping into networks and online communities where individuals are often willing to offer assistance and support.

However, maintaining this mindset over time is paramount. The entrepreneurial journey is marked by highs, lows, and rock-bottom moments. Yet, with the right mindset, you can emerge from setbacks stronger, more resilient than before and your team draws inspiration and motivation from this. Your ability to stay positive and resilient in the face of challenges sets the tone for how your team will respond.

**Management** and leadership, while closely related, serve distinctly different roles. Leadership involves setting the vision and inspiring the team, while management focuses on the details and execution. Teams often respond better to leadership, but hands-on

management is sometimes necessary depending on the organisation's size and stage (e.g., startup, making a loss, high profitability, growth, decline, etc.).

So, when working with your “sleeves rolled up and both hands on the tiller” effective management is crucial. Managing teams requires a diverse set of skills to ensure smooth operations, achieve targets, and team productivity. Below are some key areas of focus in business management, along with practical strategies to enhance each aspect.

- **Time Management** - Efficient time management is crucial for both individual and organisational productivity. Using schedules and planning tools can help manage tasks and time better. Tools like calendars, and project management tools, enable managers and team members to prioritise tasks, set deadlines, and track progress. By planning your day, week, or month in advance, you can ensure that high-priority tasks are completed on time and that you have allocated time for unexpected issues. (Day 6)
- **Team Management and Organisation** - Managing a team effectively requires strong organisational skills. KPI's (Keeping People Informed – Day 20) are simple practices for tracking and measuring team performance. Regular reviews and feedback sessions can help keep the team aligned with business goals and provide opportunities for improvement.
- **Meeting Management** - Effective meetings are essential for maintaining clear communication and ensuring that everyone is on the same page. Start with a clear agenda and stick to it to avoid unnecessary deviations. Only include participants who have something to contribute to the meeting. This ensures that meetings are productive, and that time is not wasted.

- **Strategy Management and Task Prioritisation** - Strategic management involves setting long-term goals and priorities. Evaluate tasks based on their importance and urgency. Tasks that are both important and urgent should be tackled first, while those that are neither can be deprioritised.
- **Planning and Delegation** - Planning is vital for achieving business objectives. Ensure that you have a clear plan that everyone in the team understands. A 90-day plan with specific actions, owners, and timelines can help keep the team focused and accountable. Trust your team to manage their responsibilities with your support, which can also serve as succession planning to ensure the business operates smoothly in your absence.
- **Effective Communication** - Clear and effective communication is the backbone of successful business management. Ensure that everyone knows what everyone else is doing and how their work contributes to the overall plan. Regular updates and open channels of communication help in aligning efforts and ensuring that the customer experience is consistently positive (Day 23).

## Day 30 - Take Action

This is the final day of the guide. However, reading this far does not automatically mean your business is in a better or stronger position than it was 30 days ago. You still need to take action. Knowledge is power, but power is useless, unless you use it.

If you need some motivation to take action, consider this: One in four men do not make any lifestyle changes after a stroke or heart attack, despite strong recommendations and advice from their doctor. These individuals have narrowly escaped death, yet 26% do nothing to avoid a repeat incident. This alarming complacency mirrors what we often see in business. Just like those men, business owners risk losing everything if they do not address weaknesses, adapt to market changes and plan for the future.

It is recognised that a fear of doing something different is quite common, but success requires overcoming that fear. Never be complacent or too busy to make improvements. You do not need to make drastic changes immediately. Instead, reflect on the previous twenty-nine steps, identify areas misaligned with your personal goals and your business vision, and spend 15 minutes daily planning corrective actions. Set goals, establish milestones, and determine who will work with you to achieve them. If you work alone, share your goals with someone and hold yourself accountable.

Just like in the game of chess, any player [or business], no matter how experienced, can fail if they focus on just one area, overlooking any moves or changes going on elsewhere on the board. Changes will expose weaknesses and ultimately be their downfall. Businesses of all



sizes fail when they lose focus and forced rapidly into developing new strategies. Whereas proactive planning is a far better approach to maintain both operational and financial control.

Always be aware that if you think you have everything covered, the only constant in business, is change:

- Customer attitudes change,
- Markets change,
- The competition changes,
- Governmental and environmental practices change,
- Even the speed of change itself, changes.

Get ready for change, adapt for change, and execute change.

Thank you for reading this guide. I hope you found it insightful.

I will leave you with one final thought:

**"Hope is not a strategy."**

If you are relying on hope to grow your business or navigate challenges, start planning for its failure, so it does not come as a surprise. Good luck!

If you would like Richard to coach you and take your business to the next level, contact him via the contact form on the website.

[www.rmbcs.co.uk/contact](http://www.rmbcs.co.uk/contact)

Richard can provide business advice and support that is based on your business needs and budget.

A one-off half-day session through to comprehensive 6 or 12-month structured Business Growth Programs.



The Business Roadmap – 30 Essential Steps for Business Success

Author – Richard Moss, Founder of Richard Moss Business  
Coaching Services – RMBCS

[www.rmbscs.co.uk](http://www.rmbscs.co.uk)