

Introduction.

So you have started a business or about to start a business... If you are already in business, are your goals and ambitions being fulfilled? Are you working all hours for little reward? Is your future secure? Do you want to do better? Do feel under pressure? If you are about to start a business, do you know what it is really like and what you have to do to succeed and survive.

So is this handbook for you? It is fast, practical and easy to reference...ready made for a busy person like you! I set out to create a *great* business that I and my employees would enjoy and have fun with. My goal was:

To enjoy my work so much that I could not wait to get there in the mornings.

I have a chemical engineering and information technology background and have run a *great* small software business for over 20 years. When I unpicked how I operated my business, I was astonished to discover that I was following the principles of nature and genetics.

This handbook is written from the trenches, and will give you a practical set of principles with which you can steer your company to greater success and meet a similar objective to mine. I know what works and what does not: I'm a business person like you that is always trying to make my business better, stronger, and easier to manage. The book offers a complete and balanced guide to setting up and operating a *great* small business using an evolutionary approach based on the powerful principles of nature and genetics. It is packed with tips, techniques, checklists, book references for further reading, and methods to help you apply these principles practically.

Be patient. To transform your business using these principles is not an overnight exercise. It can from months to a few years, depending on your starting point and the energy you put in.

1. What Do You Really Want?

Do you desire...

- more sales
- more profits
- sustained growth

- stability
- security
- more fun and challenge

If the answer is **yes** to any of these points, this evolutionary practical handbook will help you. The evolutionary approach described in this book has a great number of advantages:

- easy to implement
- low risk
- less stressful
- needs minimal capital
- market flexible and responsive

2. What Does This Handbook Offer?

Imagine...

- profits that zoom year after year
- employees that smile each day
- customers that rave about your work

Now imagine that you...

- **love** your work so much that you can't wait to get there
- **sleep easily** at nights and have no worries about money
- **stop fire-fighting** and start to make real progress
- **have customers rave** about your products and services
- **enjoy working** with a great bunch of supportive staff
- **become a symbol of excellence** in your field across the world

Whether you are starting a business or wanting to grow your business, this book is designed to put a **big smile** on your face. You're about to become a smiling owner or manager!

3. What Do You Need to Do?

My goal was to have fun and to enjoy my work, but I have found business stops being fun when things start going wrong: when you lose control. Control is all about managing risk. From my research and experience, in small businesses the major issue is **control** (75%), followed by **adaptability** (20%) and then being able to **cope with a crisis** (being also in control) (5%). To succeed in business you **need to master all three factors simultaneously**.

CONTROL THE DETAIL of everything you do
ADAPT CONSTANTLY to your environment or market
COPE WITH A CRISIS - large and unexpected events

Appendix One will help you make a detailed self assessment to **assess your potential** against these three factors, using my three *Great Business Scorecards*. First, try this quick control scorecard.

4. Are You in Control?

Do you suffer from any of these business issues? If so you're out of control!

Issues	You
Not enough sales. Long sales lead times. Sporadic sales.	
Competition taking your market.	
Late Payments or Non Payment of Sales Invoices - Large Debtors.	
Rising work in progress that is not billed on time.	
Increased borrowing to keep going - Bank keeps calling you.	
Cash flow problems. No money to expand - just prohibitive level of investment required.	
Customer or Supplier contract disputes.	
If you want it done properly, do it yourself - Staff keeps making mistakes.	
Fire-fighting all the time. Just reacting all the time to demands. Lots of reworking going on and/or mistakes being covered up.	
Lack of resources. Frustrated because you cannot do the things you want to.	
Stock Control issues - too much - too little.	
Staff unhappy, morale low - object to any change.	
High Staff Turnover. Can't get and keep the right staff.	
Limited customer base. All 'eggs in one basket'.	

Very High growth.	
Diminishing Market.	
No idea how best to improve your business.	
Is your business environment subject to – collapse of markets, wars, currency runs, new technology, or disease outbreaks?	
You're doing extremely well. You feel relaxed and confident. You assume it will never happen to me.	

5. How Do You Do it? – Go Belly Button to Belly Button!

Observe three key things: STOP, TALK & ACT. You must step off the treadmill periodically to draw breath and reflect.

STOP working in your business for a few hours and
TALK (Go Belly Button to Belly Button) with your
customers, employees, other business owners, and
business advisors about how you could make it easier and
more fun for all concerned, then
ACT – take action in Small Steps

The hardest thing is to STOP because you are fearful you will lose momentum and business. Try it for a few hours... try hassle busting. Talk to your staff about any hassles they have that impact on your customers. It is important to focus on your customers here. Then take the most important hassle and fix it in Small Steps. Also STOP yourself – take a short vacation for a few days, stand back, think, and reflect. Get things in perspective. Difficult, I know, but it might be the first step to making your life a better one. Take the risk of stopping for a few days! Work ON making the infrastructure of your business stronger rather than working IN your business actually doing it!

6. How to Use this Handbook

Get an overview of the eight principles

If you want to get an OVERVIEW of my eight simple principles to build a *great* business, read chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6. The first step is usually to gain control (principle 7).

The eight principles are:

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1. maximise outside influence and external contacts
2. learn fast from your mistakes and successes
3. fulfil your and your staff's needs
4. build on your best and discard your least good
5. take small cumulative steps
6. build everything in simple interchangeable building blocks
7. gain control – create an operating manual, work templates and checklists
8. be prepared for a crisis

These principles are described in more detail in chapter 6 alongside how these principles link to the four step '4S' improvement cycle: SENSE, SELECT, SMALL STEPS, and STABILISE.

Work with the stages in your business

1. Part one: Starting your business (2-4)

- SENSE - what business areas to consider
- SELECT - how to select your business area
- SMALL STEPS - how to start up your chosen business
- STABLISE - how to keep control of your business

2. Part two: Transforming your business (5-6).

- SENSE - what issues you have with your business now
- SELECT - what issues you really need to sort out to make the business better
- SMALL STEPS - how to implement the transformation
- STABLISE - how to keep control of the transformation and the existing business

3. Part three: Expanding your business (7-12): If you want to GROW or EXPAND or ADAPT apply principles 1 to 6 (chapters 5 to 12) ensuring principle 7 is applied. Remember: don't start to grow or expand until you have very good control

4. Part four: Gaining and maintaining control (13-14): If you feel you NEED MORE CONTROL, you need to study and implement principles 7 and 8 (chapters 13 and 14). To achieve control effectively, you may have to apply principles 1 to 6 (chapters 7 to 12) to create the necessary and appropriate change first to gain control.

Start today on your journey to building your great business. You'll find it becomes a never ending journey of continuous improvement, but if you keep going, the rewards are high.

This handbook contains a detailed index so that you can 'dive in' and reference any topic of current interest.

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