"This book is a powerful new look at how to build a business that makes an impact in the world."
Paul Lindley, Founder of Ella's Kitchen

24Assets®

Create a digital, scalable, valuable and fun business that will thrive in a fast changing world

DANIEL PRIESTLEY

24Assets®

In every industry, there are companies that take off. They effortlessly hire talented people, attract loyal customers, create cool products and make lots of money. These companies seem to stand out and scale up quickly with support from investors, partners and the media.

Sadly, most companies don't perform this way. Most entrepreneurs aren't building anything of value. They work hard, make sacrifices, struggle, dream, plan and strive, but in the end, it doesn't pay off.

This book sets out a method for building a business that becomes a valuable asset. It focuses you on transforming your organisation into something scalable, digital, fun and capable of making an impact.

It's time to, stand out, scale up and build a business that has a life of its own.

Start now by reading this book.

"24 Assets offers a fresh look at how to advance your business in the digital age. If you want a business that scales and achieves value, you'll need to develop the business assets prescribed in this book."
Dale Murray CBE, Entrepreneur and Angel Investor

"Now is the time to build businesses that have a huge impact. That means becoming successful and making a difference beyond philanthropy – it's about embedding values to build value. This book shows you how to do both."
Lord Dr Michael Hastings CBE

"A powerful system for building a business that is robust, valuable, enjoyable – an asset."
Andrew Griffiths, Australia's #1 Entrepreneurial Author

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For my family – my greatest asset

INTRODUCTION

In every industry, there are companies that take off. They effortlessly hire talented people, attract loyal customers, create cool products and make lots of money. These companies seem to stand out and scale-up quickly with support from investors, partners and the media.

Sadly, most companies don't perform this way.

Most entrepreneurs aren't building anything of value. They work hard, make sacrifices, struggle, dream, plan and strive, but in the end, it doesn't pay off.

When I first discovered entrepreneurship, I was a blind optimist and believed that most entrepreneurs were succeeding, earning big money, enjoying freedom and making an impact. I knew there was work involved, but I couldn't understand why people wouldn't choose to be an entrepreneur – success was a sure thing if you were ambitious, tenacious and focused on adding value.

Over the following 15 years, I had the chance to interview thousands of entrepreneurs and I discovered that on the whole they were hurting. Most were highly confident when they started out – smart, hard-working and dedicated as well – but their businesses were failing to provide real benefits. This game was beating them and after several years they weren't so self-assured.

Statistically, you'll work harder and earn less as a self-employed person than you would in a salaried job. The very reasons people start businesses – to earn more, work less and have a bigger impact – are actually less likely to occur.

Fortunately, I also had the chance to get close to a number of highly successful entrepreneurs who were living the dream. I flew on private jets with them, visited their palatial homes, spent time in their businesses and relaxed with them on extended holiday breaks. It was this contrasting experience that first allowed me to discover the ideas contained in this book.

I set out to codify the way for businesses to scale-up, earn great money, stand the test of time and create fun places to work. The answer is *24 Assets*. There are 24 assets a business needs to develop, and this ecosystem of value produces scale, robustness and enjoyment.

An asset is anything that would still be valuable without you. Consider the traditional assets. Your home doesn't change in value when you walk out the door. Shares in a blue-chip company don't fall if a shareholder takes a holiday. Assets such as art, wine and metals maintain value regardless of what their owners are doing.

In your own business, it's hard to see the assets. You're so close to them that all you're likely to see is a whirling mess of tasks, systems, documents, websites, lists. One day you're making sales, then you're in a meeting about a strategic partnership, then you're brainstorming with a team member and then you're presenting financials to the bank for an overdraft. It's hard to spot *anything* that's happening without you.

This book is going to demystify assets. By the end, you'll know what's an asset and what's just work. You'll know how to create them and improve them. You'll know how to drive an important number – revenue per person. The higher it gets, the more quality assets you've built. You'll know that income follows assets, there are 24 assets your business must develop, and that the best assets to own in today's economy are 'soft' or 'intangible' assets – digital assets.

We often hear about the entrepreneur who sold their company for a life-changing sum of money, but rarely do we get the breakdown of the assets the business had in order to achieve such a lofty valuation. I'm going to help you understand your business and your competitors' businesses with a far deeper insight to give you a framework for building and developing the 24 assets that matter in today's economy. If you follow this plan, you will watch your revenue per person improve and there will be more money flowing around. You'll have a choice – take a short-term win, paying out dividends and bonuses, or invest in further research and asset development to stay ahead of the game.

The world is going through massive transformation, and it's speeding up. This book will cover several factors creating a tsunami of change in every industry. You have the chance to surf that wave, have an impact, change lives and shape the future if you have a business that's positioned correctly. Conversely, I believe that if you fail to create the 24 business assets covered in this book, you run a serious risk of being dumped by the wave and swept out to sea – another business that fails due to disruption.

If you follow the plan in this book and do the work to develop your ecosystem of assets you'll be able to build either a lifestyle business or a performance business. In the decades ahead, a boutique lifestyle business will give you the opportunity to travel, build a community, make a difference and earn a high income. A performance business will scale up, solve big and meaningful problems, generate millions in revenue and create tens of millions (or more) in shareholder value. You can use the tools in this book to create whichever type of business you desire but, you must also add something special as well.

SOMETHING IS MISSING FROM THE METHOD

There are 24 assets to create, but there's also something vital to your business that will bring all of these assets to life. If you fail to discover this unique asset, there's a good chance that you'll have a soulless, uninteresting business that is technically correct but still doesn't work.

Entrepreneurship is alchemy, and you can't create something from nothing without a little bit of magic. I can't tell you what your missing asset is – it's unique to you.

As you read through the book, keep an open mind and a keen eye out for what's missing. I want you to discover it. Something hasn't happened yet; something is due to unfold; something is waiting to get done. Only you can spot it.

When you find what I call 'asset zero', you'll know what I mean when I say, 'Be brave, have fun and make a dent.'

PART 1

THE ENTREPRENEUR JOURNEY

CHAPTER 1

THE JOURNEY

Sitting down with me for a coffee meeting, a guy I'd never met before began sharing with me a few snippets of information about his growing enterprise. Rather than buying into the surface story, I told him that there was probably tension in his team, he was constantly out of cash and he was regularly thinking about the 'good old days', considering whether he should go back to a smaller team. Several of his staff were fighting and others were sleeping together, he was losing great people, clients weren't happy, his business partner had mentally checked-out, he was feeling isolated and not sharing the extent of his problems with anyone.

Shocked, he nodded in agreement. All he had told me was his industry, current team size and the top-line revenue number of his London-based business. With those few clues, I had verbalised several key issues with absolute accuracy.

I'm not a clairvoyant; I've just talked with thousands of business owners and discovered the entrepreneur's journey is more predictable than most people realise. All businesses exist on an axis of team size and revenue per person (RPP) – the same things happen over and over again as teams grow and revenue tries to keep up. When you see businesses on these two axes, they follow a predictable pattern of growth.

You might be asking why I've honed in on revenue per person and not profit per person or gross profit per person. People who run private companies usually try to minimise profit, and many don't have a clear understanding of gross profit per person. In fast growth companies, it's usual for the entrepreneur and the CFO to have heated arguments about whether the company is actually profitable or losing money.

In my experience, any metrics that need an accountant to decipher will not hold the interest of an entrepreneur for long. Revenue per person is a 'back of a napkin' number that works for small companies. As a business matures, it might switch over to gross profit per person or EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation) per person if it has access to this information easily in real time.

You might also wonder who counts as a 'person'. In this case, it is someone who considers the business to be their main career focus. If your graphic designer tells friends that you are merely one of their clients, then they are a supplier, but if they say they work for you then they count as a person on the team. If someone is part-time or on a special discounted rate (e.g. graduate, apprentice) then they probably count as half a person.

If a business has 50 people and 10 million revenue, it's likely to be more financially successful than a company that has 100 people and 12 million revenue. When it comes to business success, the two numbers that cut through a lot of noise are the number of people on the team and the average revenue per person.

THE ENTREPRENEUR JOURNEY

I run a global business accelerator. From 2010–2015, our team interviewed over 4,000 entrepreneurs and leaders in the UK, USA, Australia and Singapore. We discovered a common journey that businesses go through that presents the same problems in the same order time and time again. The solutions are predictable as well; in fact, there are industries dedicated to fixing these problems if you know what you're looking for.

Here are the stages in the Entrepreneur Journey:

1. Startup. Every business began as a concept in someone's mind, with excitement and nervousness in anticipation of launch. Working with ideas, plans, prototypes and skill sets, someone created a vision, expecting rewards of money, more meaningful work and increased freedom. In their mind, it was brilliant, and so they began.

2. Wilderness (1–2 founders). After launching, most businesses end up in survival mode with the founders working alone. There's no team to help with making sales, delivering the service or day-to-day operations. The owner is left with little spare time, money or freedom. They swing between stress and boredom, often feeling lost and unable to see a way to break the cycle. In the UK, USA and Australia, 75% of all businesses do not reach a point where they can employ anyone.

3. Struggling boutique (3–12 people with low revenue per person). A small team begins to form and the roles become more focused. The struggling boutique is able to pay basic wages but it's not very profitable. It defines itself by geography (e.g. Paddington Pizza Shop, Birmingham Printing) and fails to develop many assets, mostly trading time for money.

4. Lifestyle boutique (3–12 people with high revenue per person). A small, dynamic team with low overheads and high-energy culture forms. The team self-organises, has fun developing digital assets that reach people globally and the business looks much bigger than it is. The owner receives better income than they could get at a corporate job with more freedom, greater impact and less stress. This type of business often centres on a 'Key Person of Influence' who's known, liked and trusted in their industry.

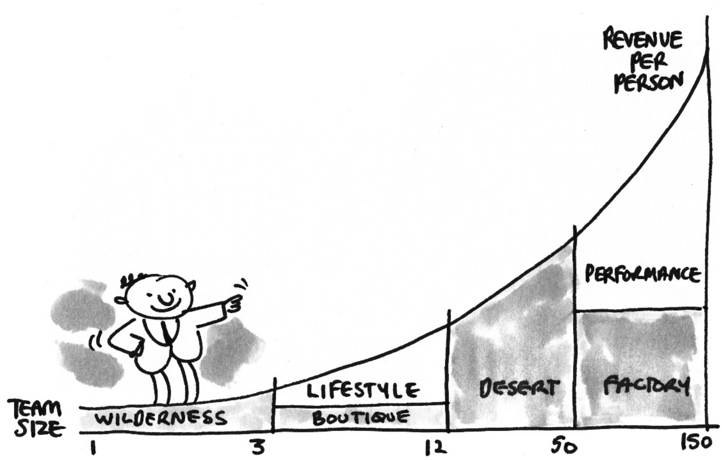
5. The desert (13–49 people). During this scaling phase the business is too big to be a small boutique and too small to be a big business. The overheads increase with additional staff and investment into growth. The business requires leaders, managers and technicians but can't afford these roles. Although the fundamental business is sound, it becomes unprofitable, and investing into long-term projects kills cash flow. Culture is damaged as it's pulled in two directions – the flat structure of the past vs the professional culture of the future. It needs to either grow or shrink fast before it runs out of cash.

6. The factory (50+ people with low revenue per person). Adding a high headcount without improving revenue per person creates a stressful business known as a factory. The business is always on the edge of a financial cliff as payroll ticks over month by month. There's no money to reward the high-performers and they leave, and there's no money for research and development so things stagnate. The business begins a cycle of cutting back overheads and eroding the few assets it once had.

7. Performance (50–150 people with high revenue per person). This is a dynamic team of professionals working with high-quality business assets. The business is almost unrecognisable from the lifestyle boutique it once was. The culture, brand, systems and products have all shifted up a gear and the business now serves more markets and territories. There's healthy profit from well-developed strategic assets (mostly digital or intangible). The business owners can either hold on and enjoy the profit or exit for a life-changing amount of money.

8. Unicorn (250+ people with ultra-high revenue per person). This is a performance team that was in the right place at the right time with the right opportunity and access to lots of funding – like Facebook, Uber, Tesla and LinkedIn. They receive a lot of attention and achieve soaring valuations in a short timeframe. These businesses are almost impossible to replicate, although thousands of copycats try.

9. The corporation (250+ employees and established in the market). This big, established, bureaucratic beast has lots of assets and many people working to sweat or improve them. Corporations used to enjoy a gilded position because not much could dethrone a business with global scale and strength. More recently, every corporation has needed to think like an entrepreneurial team or risk being disrupted by a fast growth performer or unexpected unicorn. The money flowing around corporations is now fair game for ambitious entrepreneurial teams.



Knowing these predictable phases can guide you towards the business you want. If you are an entrepreneur with a level head, your real choice is to focus on either a lifestyle or a performance business. Unicorns require so much in the way of luck and deep pockets that it's impossible to plan them and no one wants to be alone in the wilderness or sweating it out in the desert.

I've worked closely with hundreds of entrepreneurs and leaders around the world in 50+ industries, and consistently they make poor decisions that are incongruent with the type of business they are in or wish to build. For example, many people in the wilderness say they want a lifestyle but refuse to hire anyone, instead juggling emails, accounting tasks, scheduling, selling, logistics and delivering technical expertise. They have anything but a lifestyle and are unable to switch off for a break or earn more money than they'd make in a job.

If a person knows they want a lifestyle business, they need to hire a few people, but avoid a team of more than 12, which will require management and leadership. They should also avoid setting expectations within their team of high growth and hierarchical structure, instead emphasising fun, flexibility and variety.

An entrepreneur with performance ambitions makes very different decisions about whom they hire, how much funding they raise and how they spend their money. If they learn from a lifestyle entrepreneur, they'll get completely stuck at 25 people and have to shrink their business back to a team of fewer than 12 as they give up on their dream of a big exit or a huge impact.

It's easy to get consumed in your own business and lose perspective. Many people reason that business 'takes time' and every challenge is unique. In reality, business follows predictable phases of growth, and many challenges are common and solvable. Most problems can be addressed quickly and time is an enemy, not a friend when it comes to leaving issues unchecked.

By the end of this book, you'll have a clear strategy for building either a lifestyle or a performance business that is scalable, valuable and energising to run. Follow the strategy and you'll also have a greater ability to reach people, influence, solve meaningful problems and use your business as a force for good. But for now, I want you to make an honest decision about the type of business you want – and can achieve.

Jeremy Jauncey is living his dream. He has over 12 million followers on Instagram accounts. His business revolves around him and his brother travelling to exotic locations, photographing their adventures and posting the pictures on social media. The more fun, the better the adventure, the more wonderful the experiences and the more money the business makes.

The business is called Beautiful Destinations and has a small, flexible team of eight professionals who manage the various aspects while Jeremy jets around the world, staying at the best hotels and having outrageous adventures full-time.

Jeremy has a lifestyle business.

Rob Gardner is living his dream. He arrives in his central London offices early, and by 9am he is surrounded by 100 of the most talented and hard-working people in the pension fund industry. The company now wins business from giant corporations, along with major awards, and has a world-class graduate programme and a charity that gives financial education to children in the UK.

The business is called Redington and it is fast growing across new products, markets and territories. Rob and his business partner Dawid have bold ambitions to shake up their industry, improve the lives of 100 million people and transform the education system.

Rob has a performance business.

Both of these men are in their 30s, both consider themselves to be successful and both have built exactly the type of business and lifestyle they want.

You can choose to pursue a lifestyle or a performance business using the 24 assets method. You might need to take into consideration whether you have what it takes to build a performance business – if you have a young family or are in a saturated industry, it's going to be harder, and if you like what you do but you don't really like 'business stuff', it will be very hard indeed.

For most people, the answer will be a lifestyle business with a team of 3–12 people, a Key Person of Influence at the helm and lots of digital assets. This will still give you high revenue per person, great income and the ability to reach many thousands of people with your message.

Almost anyone can make it to Everest Base Camp, but few people have what it takes to get to the summit. In these times with the technology that's widely available, almost anyone can build a lifestyle business (especially if they develop their 24 assets), but few are cut out to go beyond that.

A lifestyle business is lean, dynamic, portable and geared towards maximising income for the owners. It keeps stress and overheads low. The focus is to enjoy life, build stability and have enough income to create wealth through diversified assets. *24 Assets* helps build these assets that keep working even when the owner is away. At some point the business can be sold, but normally not for a life-changing amount of money.

Both require higher than average revenue per person, which is why you must develop assets. This decision will shape the quality of the assets you create and the suppliers you choose to work with. It would be crazy to appoint McKinsey & Co to write your business plan if you want a lifestyle business, although it would add value to have their stamp on your forecast if you were building a performance business.

A performance business is focused on achieving a high valuation, fast growth and acquiring market share. There's plenty of stress and challenge as the team grows, but it all becomes worth it when life-changing amounts of money change hands via an exit or large dividends. Some people build performance businesses for reasons other than money, because they want to fulfil a big vision that requires them to achieve a certain scale.

If you go down the performance path, *24 Assets* helps you build a business that will hold together as the growth kicks in. As you open up new markets, launch new products, increase the employee headcount and take on investment, your business assets will perform under pressure. On the day that you get an offer to sell the business for a life-changing amount of money, you're likely to be reluctant to accept because you'll know the value of its high performing assets.

Of course, the default option for most entrepreneurs is to struggle – the wilderness, the local boutique, the desert or the factory. Most business owners are stuck making reactive moves. They think that if they keep going on their own, one day things will improve and the business will be worth something. Sadly, this struggle doesn't end well. It's like trying to build a house without an architect, an engineer or a team of experienced builders – rarely will the finished product be worth anything, and any savings are a false economy.

For the rest of the book, keep in mind what you are aiming for – lifestyle or performance. This decision will drive the quality of the assets you create, the type of people you bring onto your team, the suppliers you select to work with and the point at which you know you've made it.

CHAPTER 2

INCOME FOLLOWS ASSETS

In central London there's a serviced office building, home to over 100 companies. Some of them are small – four or five people in a room; some of the companies occupy a whole floor.

These companies do all sorts of things. Mostly they offer professional services in one form or another, but some are brokerage businesses and a few are involved in manufacturing a physical product.

On every floor are sales people. They are often young men and women who have spark, determination and a desire to impress their team leaders. The good ones are hungry for training, arrive early and leave late. Despite their overwhelming similarities, they have vastly different results in what they produce and often earn very different incomes.

Many of them have coffee together in the building cafe and compare notes. Some manage existing clients; some chase new business. Some make 70 calls a day and get two people to agree to a free trial; some have four face-to-face meetings a day and typically get £25,000 in orders. Some sales people are making £30K a year and some are making £90K. Why do their results vary so much? Why does a motivated 23-year-old selling retargeted Google ad campaigns generate £500k in new business, while their clone down the hall at a financial planning company is lucky to set a few appointments a week for a free consultation? The answer is simple – income follows assets. All a sales person can do is 'sweat an asset', but they can't get blood from a stone.

An estate agent can easily sell a four-bedroom apartment in Mayfair, London for £5 million. The same agent would struggle to sell the exact same apartment for a third of the price if it was located in Liverpool. The majority of the work to achieve a high price is done by the fact that property in Mayfair is more valuable than property in Liverpool, rather than the skill-set of the sales person.

It's easy to understand that income follows assets when it comes to traditional assets like residential property, and that the quality of the asset matters. If someone owns a house, they can earn rent. If a person owns shares, it's not surprising when they get a dividend. Government bonds pay a yield.

We can also easily understand traditional business assets that might show up on a balance sheet. If a company owns a storage shed compound, they can rent it out to people who need to store their valuables. If someone owns a truck, they can earn more profit doing furniture removals than someone who doesn't own a truck. If someone owns a widget manufacturing plant they naturally make their money creating and selling widgets.

What most people fail to see is the impact of soft assets or new-economy digital assets. A salesperson who's working for a respected brand will make more sales than someone who's working for an unknown startup. If a company has beautifully produced videos, brochures, blogs and websites, it can make a lot more money than a company that doesn't invest in quality design and print. When a business has a finely kept database of 10,000 records, the sales people think they are brilliant. If the same people had to find their own leads and cold-call them, they'd earn a lot less.

Soft digital assets drive income today as much as traditional assets like property, factories or machinery did in the industrial age. An empty restaurant would start to bustle if it was taken over by a celebrity chef. A consulting firm would have a waiting list if the Managing Partner wrote a best-selling business book. A brokerage business would earn more if it won a major industry award and was featured in a respected magazine. These achievements all represent soft assets.

Entrepreneurs and business leaders all over the world have come to think that income is correlated with sales and marketing activity, but this is short sighted. Income is inextricably linked to the underlying assets.

If you want more income flowing through your business, develop new assets, improve the assets you have or buy assets that someone else has created, resisting the urge to keep focusing on lead generation, sales conversions and hustle. If hard work was rewarding, every woman in Africa would be a millionaire. Assets have always been the key to building income; it's one of the first things we learn from the board-game Monopoly – green houses and red hotels win the game. What's changed is the nature of these assets.

If I was writing a book about assets any time prior to 2000, I would probably talk about property, shares, plant and equipment, cash, bonds and collectables. These assets now give little reward, and their price has never been so inflated and volatile. We don't live in the industrial and agricultural age anymore – we live in the digital age, and the assets that matter are also digital. They can occupy the most important space on the planet now – the screen of a smartphone.

A wealthy land-owner in the agricultural age would have a hard time believing that the richest people in the industrial age don't own very much land. In the industrial age a small plot of land with a productive factory would out-produce a large farm. The industrial revolution transformed the assets that mattered most from land, animals and crops to factories, machines and stock.

As we move into the digital age, the assets that matter most are changing again. The people who are earning the most income in today's business landscape are the owners of digital assets – intellectual property, brands, products, algorithms, websites, systems and software. They have books available on the Kindle store, videos on YouTube, podcast shows ready for download, business plans on crowdfunding platforms, collaborators working on their teams, and everything's held together in the digital landscape.

24 Assets is your new portfolio; an approach to building an ecosystem of digital assets that will scale, add value and create stability. The 24 assets, especially when you have all of them, will give you more income and more freedom than traditional assets. You and a small team will become highly productive income generating machines who make the most of the unique times we are in.

A simple definition of a business asset is anything that is unique to your business and would continue to add value even if any particular person left. A digital asset fits that description and it can be experienced online, transferred as a file or coded as an algorithm, and the cost of reproducing it once it's created it is negligible. If you were on a deserted island, the assets in your business would be unaffected in value; if you had access to a smartphone, the digital assets would be ready at your fingertips.

TOOLS VS ASSETS

The world is full of great business building tools now – Microsoft, Wordpress, Cisco, MailChimp, Xero, Google, Amazon and Salesforce all offer powerful tools. YouTube offers your business video production tools; Facebook has tools for advertising and audience building; PayPal has tools for collecting money.

These companies have all invested millions upon millions of dollars to create these tools, but everyone has access to them, so tools alone don't grow your business; assets do. These tools don't work without you plugging your assets into them. A YouTube account doesn't do much unless you upload a video. Facebook ads need you to provide the images and the copy. Webinars need you to have slides and a script. MailChimp can optimise your email marketing provided you've got something to say.

Assets are unique to your business. Tools are available for everyone to use.

Struggling businesses obsess over tools. They put hours of research into understanding the features of a CRM system; get excited about auto-responder software; read blogs about shopping carts and which colour button has the highest click-through rate.

Successful businesses obsess over their assets. They focus on capturing powerful stories on video, write insightful blogs, win awards for their work and get insanely specific about their company brand and culture. Armed with great assets like books, reports, videos and a honed message, these companies quickly discover that any of the tools they use come to life and perform. A business with amazing assets can use very basic tools and get a huge result. Conversely, a business with every tool ever developed but nothing much to say is dead in the water.

We live in an era where tools will actually come and find you if your assets are good enough. The musician Seal decided to use his following on Facebook to unearth talented buskers. As he walks the city streets, he finds street performers and uses Facebook's live video streaming tools to broadcast them to his followers. These unknown artists suddenly have a platform to perform to hundreds of thousands of people all over the world with an endorsement from Seal, who sometimes even invites them to perform with him at his shows. If these artists obsessed about the live video streaming technology, they would miss the point. The reason they get an audience isn't because of the tools, it is because of their unique musical ability.

Your job as an entrepreneur is to create assets first and then look for tools that can leverage them.

Gabriella Rosa runs a fertility clinic specialising in couples who have been trying unsuccessfully to conceive for over two years. Her business was once geographically limited to Sydney, Australia. For many years, she was confined to dealing with patients who could visit her in person. As hard as she tried, she wasn't growing the business of her dreams and couldn't see an end in sight.

Like most small business owners, she was constantly on the lookout for a breakthrough tool that would solve her problems. The shift happened when she focused on asset creation rather than the latest tools. She developed powerful video content, designed her 11-Pillars methodology and put it into posters, collated data and documented her client case studies on video, produced better products, scripted customer service responses and built her own unique systems. These assets caused more people to discover her, buy from her and work for her. Her dream clients showed up because they saw content posted on Facebook, videos on YouTube and emails full of rich information and data.

As her empire of assets took shape, her revenue doubled with her staff headcount staying almost the same. She expanded effortlessly into new territories and stopped needing to compete on price – today she has clients across more than ten countries. It wasn't Facebook, YouTube, MailChimp and Infusionsoft that made this result happen; it was the high quality of the digital assets that were totally unique to her business.

Your business will not suddenly change (certainly not long-term) because you've discovered a tool developed by another company. When you have an ecosystem of assets, the tools suddenly become useful. This book gives you a framework for developing your own unique assets in 24 different categories.

The good news is that you are probably a lot closer than you think to discovering valuable assets.

CHAPTER 3

ASSET CREATION

PASSIVE INCOME

I can't count how many times I've had people tell me that their goal is to create 'passive income'. As the name suggests, it's an idea that you can earn income you don't have to work for. It's closely linked with concepts like automation, auto-responders, distributors and marketing funnels.

In my experience, it is also the most damaging wealth creation idea I've ever come across. It sucks the life out of people and causes them to waste their time, money and energy on stuff that doesn't produce results – the opposite of what they set out to do. I view the idea as the modern day pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and I believe it's just as mythical.

Let me explain.

1. Passive income means you are trying to make money from something you don't want to be doing. I see people who aren't interested in property buying it because they think it will be 'set and forget'. I see people who loathe technology setting up websites because they think their uninspired creation will earn them a wage. I see people who have never taken an interest in large publicly traded companies suddenly fixating on price charts so they won't have to worry about money someday. There is a deep fundamental flaw in this logic.

2. Passive income stimulates the most primitive part of the brain. The reptilian limbic system, the part of the brain that controls fear, fight and flight, is a sucker for easy wins. It believes we live in a scarce world with drought around the corner. This primitive part of our mind isn't built for complex thinking; it can't figure out that spending 1,000 hours and £5,000 setting up an £87.60 per month surplus is hardly time well spent. It just wants the emotional payoff of never having to worry about money someday.

The worst thing is that when the limbic system is in control, the creative parts of the brain, that do generate opportunities, can't function.

3. It's *not* passive. What most people come to discover is that a property portfolio is hardly passive, nor is a website or an MLM downline. All of these so-called 'passive-income' vehicles require maintenance and upkeep. Tenants cause dramas, websites need updating and downlines require constant encouragement.

In reality, most passive income is actually differed income. When you do the maths on how much unpaid work a person has to do and the risks they have to take compared to the money they receive, there is nothing passive about the income. It would be like an employer asking staff to work for a year and then receive their pay over the following five years.

4. I don't see examples of it working. When was the last time you bumped into a couple on holiday who proudly declared that they were travelling non-stop thanks to their passive income? Theoretically, every beach in the tropics should be overrun with people who can't even remember how they make their money.

So what does work? What is the alternative to passive income that does produce results? What has been the secret to wealth since the dawn of time?

Building credible assets.

Assets produce income. To get asset income, you must either create assets (entrepreneurship), acquire them (wealth management) or be given them (inheritance, etc.). If you're not the owner of the assets, you won't be the beneficiary.

Using entrepreneurship as a strategy for building credible assets is a legitimate way to create wealth, power, influence and fulfilment. With your ecosystem of assets in place, things happen without you being in the room – sales get made, rent comes in, fees are paid, royalties are collected, but it isn't passive.

An ecosystem of credible, strong assets is what I call an empire. You can never turn your back on your empire; it will always be something that you are building and protecting. If you're not leaning-in, sell the assets to someone who will care for them and improve upon them.

People who get cited as the beneficiaries of passive income are actually asset creators and empire builders. Richard Branson doesn't have passive income; he has the Virgin Empire with brand assets, culture assets, unique products and funding capabilities. Warren Buffet doesn't sit back thinking about how great it is to have passive income; he goes into his offices at Berkshire Hathaway each day and builds his empire, looking for ways to develop his ecosystem of unique assets.

When you have developed all 24 assets in this book to a remarkable standard, you'll have your own mini-empire.

The quest for passive income brings out the juvenile desire to shirk financial responsibilities, get money sorted and get on with life, and of course that never happens. Building an empire requires you to run head-on at the challenges of money, business and work in the knowledge that it will take time, energy, creativity and diligence until all 24 assets are created to a high standard. The empire builder chooses to play an inspiring game, because the game will never be over as long as they have air in their lungs. It will be the source of joy, frustration, passion, fury, boredom and exhilaration.

The assets you create will take you deeper into your industry, not remove you from it, so you'd better make sure you are building assets in an industry you love.

ALCHEMY OR ADMINISTRATION

The most popular qualification for big business managers and leaders is the coveted MBA (Masters of Business and Administration). In this course, you learn the skills required to run a business successfully. However, most MBA graduates don't go off and start businesses. They become executives for existing companies.

This is because 'administration' focuses on how to get the most from existing assets, but not how to create these assets in the first place.

The entrepreneurial journey is actually a journey of asset creation. It requires you to start with nothing and conjure up something of value and take it out to the world. This results in the creation of assets that could be handed over to an MBA to optimise and commercialise.

Entrepreneurship is alchemy – the process of starting with nothing and creating something of value – whereas administration is the process of starting with assets and making money from them.

This explains why so many entrepreneurs pour so much energy into their business and get so little back in return – they confuse the roles and either fail to create an asset or fail to commercialise what they have.

To fast-track the process of developing assets, we want to explore the seven predictable steps that allow the entrepreneur to move forward. These milestones overlay the entrepreneur's journey that we discussed in the first chapter of Part 1.

Step 1: discovery of value. Every business must solve a problem in a commercial way and stick around long enough to succeed over time.

Discovering value is finding the intersection of three ingredients – something that others perceive as valuable, you enjoy doing and is commercially viable.

Two out of three won't do. If you love the work and others think it's valuable but they simply won't pay you for it, you will feel unrewarded and you will quit. If you are paid well and others find it valuable but you don't have any passion for it, you will feel uninspired and you will quit. If you're paid well and have a love for the work but others don't think what you do is of value, you will feel unethical and you'll quit.

When it comes to finding the intersection of value, passion and a commercial approach, it's best not to look at the extremes. Your extreme passion is unlikely to be commercial (e.g. going on holiday or spending time with your friends). The thing that pays you the most is unlikely to be something you truly love. Whatever would be of the highest service to others might not be all that fun or rewarding to deliver. The real art is to blend ingredients of all these things until you find where they meet.

The first hurdle to overcome is to find a problem or an unmet desire that's not being solved as well as it could be. For example, people need to connect with their loved ones, and this need once met by the telephone is now better solved by Facebook.

A classic error many entrepreneurs make is to assume that because they would enjoy a service, there must be a need for it. I see people setting-up 'Gluten-free Retreats' or 'Landlord Advice Memberships' and putting enormous effort into creating all the bits that would form the basis of a product or service before they try actually selling their solution to others.

In reality, it's quite easy to test if you've created value or not – make a sale. The simplest approach is to get 10 targeted prospects in a room, present them with an offer on a PowerPoint slide-deck and see how many part with their credit card details. If two out of ten people sign up for a £2,000 package, you've probably hit on something of value and you can proceed to develop your product or service to meet the need you've discovered.

Step 2: oversubscribed value. The UK Government has a test to see if you have developed something of value. It's called the 'Value Added Tax Threshold' which is currently set at £83,000 a year. Essentially, the Government believes that if your business is earning under £83,000 (about £7,000 a month, ballpark US$10,000) then you have yet to discover something of real value – you're not 'value adding'. They treat you the same as someone who's working – you're 'self-employed'. However, when you hit £83,000 in revenue, they think of you as a value adder and tax you for it. This simple test is a useful gauge for discovering if you're on to a winner.

If one person can hit £83,000 in sales per year, there's every chance that a small dynamic team will each pull their weight and average £7,000 monthly revenue per person (e.g. three people will bring in £21,000+ per month). After you've proven the value of what you can offer, the next step is to establish a small team of people who can develop a 'Key Person of Influence' in the industry.

Step 3: gaining influence. Influence allows you to reach more people, do business faster and charge a premium price because you are known, liked and trusted in your industry. It relies upon your Key Person of Influence embodying the vision and values of your business, pitching powerfully and enrolling others into this vision. If an influencer has a powerful message, the world becomes their oyster as soon as they create digital assets such as content, media and products.

In the value steps, you might win clients based purely on price, but that can't last if you want to grow a business with even basic overheads. With influence comes the power to attract talent and partnerships that take the business further, and the type of clients who don't want to shop purely on price. Revenue per person jumps when influence is present – you can double your revenue without doubling your overheads.

To achieve influence, focus on developing and communicating unique insights, and master the 5Ps of influence:

- Pitching: the ability to powerfully describe what you do and why it's valuable
- Publishing: the ability to write and distribute materials about what you do and why it's valuable
- Products: the ability to deliver value consistently in a scalable way

- Profile: the ability to be known, liked and trusted in the eyes of your market
- Partnerships: the ability to enrol other people and organisations to cooperate in the implementation of your vision.

Please visit www.keypersonofinfluence.com to learn more.

Step 4: oversubscribed influence. There comes a time when you start to experience all the good 'problems' to have. You can't keep up with demand, your diary fills up months in advance and every booking is a dream. You're turning away high-value opportunities because you simply don't have the capacity to deal with them. You've figured out your secret sauce and now there's a queue forming for it.

At this point, formalise the assets of your business so that you can scale up to meet this demand for more people in more places.

Step 5: formalisation of assets. This is about turning what you do into a high-quality digital asset that can scale. If you are excellent at telling stories, get those stories into a book, a video, a podcast and a blog. If your team culture has a magic spark, codify what causes it. If you have a gift for generating leads and sales, explore it and document it.

A business that has digital assets can add people to its team and know that revenue and profit will grow accordingly. Every person on the team is enhanced and supported by the digital assets of the business.

Step 6: oversubscribed assets. Digital assets give you the ability to scale with greater ease, and growing numbers of people will have a positive experience of your brand. You will get requests from people to license your business, buy a franchise, resell your products, invest in your shares or even buy the whole operation and give you an exit.

Step 7: commercialisation of assets. At this point, the ecosystem of all 24 assets working in harmony creates a business that is highly valuable – an asset in its own right. You can commercialise it by enjoying the profitable cash flow it produces or by selling it at a multiple of its profit.

Revenue per person

Apple earns US$2 million per person with 110,000+ employees. Google has 60,000+ people and $67 billion in revenue, earning $1.2 million per person. Facebook earns US$1.4 million per person with 10,000+ people. Microsoft comes in at $785k per person and has 100,000 people.

A small consulting business I know has four people and bills £1 million – that's £250k per person. Another team the same size does £320K – or £80K per person. A celebrity I know has three staff and earns an average of £1 million per person.

Revenue per person (RPP) is a pretty simple number to calculate. It's the total revenue or sales a company makes divided by the full-time people working there.

If your business makes $10 million in sales and has 100 full-time or equivalent people, you have $100k revenue per person. A business that makes $10 million revenue with 50 people ($200k per person) and one with 150 people making the same amount ($66k per person) have very different futures. Both business owners can boast about their eight-figure revenue, but the smaller team will be hiring more people next year, while the bigger team is barely keeping its head above water and will likely start to shrink.

RPP is a powerful indicator of success. If a business maintains a high RPP, it can scale-up and hire great people quickly, grow without much debt or investment, innovate, take risks and acquire competitors. If a business has low RPP it's fighting a difficult battle. It can only afford to hire low-skilled workers, can't take chances, needs external investment or debt to grow, and a big mistake can put it at risk. It's like gravity constantly pulling the business down and keeping it small.

RPP is the key to scale, profit, strength and agility. If you want performance, with few exceptions you'll need higher than average RPP.

Despite the obvious fact that RPP is correlated with growth, profit and success, there are almost no books on the topic. Searching Amazon for 'Revenue Per Person' gives you nothing but a few books that reference the metrics. Therefore, for millions of business owners, the secret to driving high RPP remains a mystery. Their businesses stay small because they don't know whether their RPP is high or low.

If you search for the term 'Revenue Per Employee' in Google, this definition pops up in a special box:

> *'Revenue per employee is a measure of how efficiently a particular company is utilising its employees. In general, relatively high revenue per employee is a positive sign that suggests the company is finding ways to squeeze more sales (revenue) out of each of its workers.'*

How strange that even Google – a company that has itself mastered high RPP – can't find a good definition with all its powerful algorithms. RPP is *not* a measure of how efficient employees are. It's *not* a way of squeezing more sales out of every worker.

Consider a highly-motivated team of lumberjacks with sharp axes entering a tree-felling competition. The burly members of this group are as trained, strong and motivated as any person could ever hope to be. They compete against some low-skilled and barely motivated teenagers who have industrial-strength chainsaws.

Who's going to win the competition for the most trees felled per person?

The motivated lumberjacks will pale in comparison to the teens with chainsaws. The result has little to do with motivation or squeezing performance out of every lumberjack – it has everything to do with the chainsaws.

Now consider a motivated family running a local cafe. They might be passionate, friendly, hard-working and well trained people, but the business still won't earn huge money. In the USA, the typical coffee shop earns $60,500 revenue per employee.

Compare that with a team of bored, spotty teenagers working at Starbucks armed with a global brand, a bulletproof system, diverse products, better data and many other assets. Starbucks brings in an average of $109,500 per employee. The assets earn an extra $50k per person. What's more, the average coffee shop makes a profit of under $5,000 per person, whereas Starbucks is making profit of $12,000 per person. Digital assets that scale create higher profit as well as revenue.

If technology wasn't moving at warp speed, employee motivation or utilisation would probably be a leading factor in creating higher than normal RPP. However, in a world where the sixth richest person on earth started a company a decade ago in his dorm room, revenue per person has more to do with technology, insights, intellectual property and media. The fact that your competitor might be earning twice the RPP as you doesn't mean they have doubly motivated people or they put twice the pressure on their people to perform. Their people probably don't work double-shifts or have double the qualifications. It's got more to do with the soft assets that their business has developed. Their people have been given chainsaws and your people are still swinging axes.

Revenue per person is a reflection of the assets your business has, and to a lesser degree how well you're sweating those assets. I would assume that if you are reading a business book, you're already motivated and driven and you inspire those around you to lift their game too. If that's true, the key to your future growth isn't about even harder work, it's about developing high quality assets.

CHAPTER 4

CHANGE YOUR THINKING

PROFIT AND LOSS VS BALANCE SHEET THINKING

After interviewing thousands of business owners, I noticed that small companies constantly focus on generating leads and converting sales. Almost every conversation revolves around selling more or saving money. An accountant would record this type of activity as Profit and Loss, so I've come to recognise it as profit and loss thinking.

Profit and loss thinking looks only at the income and the outgoings of the business. It does not question whether you are in the right business with the right assets. It assumes that everything will be just fine if only you can make more sales at a higher price while keeping overheads down.

Small business operators talk to me about whether I prefer Google ads or SEO lead generation strategies. They ask me what sales closing techniques I use or if I generate leads using LinkedIn or Twitter. They ask me how to get cheap interns and virtual assistants and how to cut down the cost of IT or HR. They want shortcuts that lead to lower overheads and quicker sales; they look for savings on suppliers.

Often they are unaware of fundamental flaws in their businesses. Their product is commoditised, they mostly sell their time for money, their value proposition is unclear and they aren't positioned as a leader in their field. For all of these reasons, the strategies that might work for me probably won't work for them, even if I give them a point-by-point walk through of what my team does to drive sales or reduce wastage.

Big businesses are different. In the boardrooms of large companies, you won't find many sales and marketing people at all, and the conversations revolve around what I call 'balance sheet thinking'. The Board talks about accessing funding to develop new products, opening up channel partners, securing a celebrity ambassador, opening new territories, filing patents, refreshing their brand, disposing of an asset to free up cash, acquiring a competitor or investing into a proprietary system that will give the business an edge.

Balance sheet thinking is about understanding the mix of assets and how they can be utilised. Profit and loss businesses ignore the assets and simply look for ways to generate money selling what they have – usually little more than time and expertise for a small business.

If you want your business to grow, become profitable and be robust, shift your mindset from profit and loss thinking to balance sheet thinking. Talk to your team about the assets of the business and go on a mission to create or improve those assets.

In this digital age, think about creating media, intellectual property, data and technology as primary assets for your business. These things probably won't go on the actual balance sheet, but they are the assets that allow you to win.

My business really took off when I shifted the majority of conversations from profit and loss to balance sheet. I treated all problems as 'asset deficiencies' rather than leads, sales or costs issues. If I wanted more sales, I assumed that I must be missing the right product, brand or channel, rather than simply thinking about how I could talk to more people.

My instincts have now completely shifted. The old me would never have spent money on a high-quality video production, a brand guidelines document, proprietary technology or management consultants to draft a business plan unless I could see an immediate uplift in sales or decrease in costs. The new me is constantly looking for ways to develop or acquire a new asset that will add value for years. Rather than making a sales call, I will make a high quality video that trains people about our sales approach. Rather than spending more money on ads, I will spend it on improving our products. Rather than negotiating hard for cheaper suppliers, I push to work with the best suppliers I can afford.

In the short-term, this feels scary. In the long-term, the business takes on a life of its own.

Hidden assets

Sometimes your most valuable assets are closer than you think. The Mustad family in Norway has been manufacturing fishing tackle for over 100 years. For several generations, the family business has grown and transformed with trends and technology. Along the way, there must have been years that were incredibly hard and times when the family wasn't sure if the business would survive.

Then one day a painting which had spent the best part of a century hidden from sight was found up in the attic of the family home. Experts identified it as the original Van Gogh 'Sunset at Montmajour' that had been missing, worth an estimated $50 million.

How strange to think that many heated debates about money must have occurred in the rooms directly under the painting. So many times, the family would have asked the banks for finance and turned down opportunities because the funding wasn't there, and all the while a $50 million paining was sitting above their heads!

I believe that you have hidden assets in your 'attic'. In your brain there are methodologies, stories, contacts, visions and values that would make your business take flight. Sitting on your computer hard-drive are documents, presentations and files just left lying around.

I was guilty of ignoring these hidden assets too. Let me share my story of how an email evolved into a multi-million dollar product.

In 2002, at the age of 21, I launched my first company with my best mate Glen Carlson in Brisbane, Australia. I had discovered an exciting training product with an eloquent speaker, who was its creator. He was an older man and admitted he knew little about the sales and marketing side to the business – he was presenting his concepts to audiences of 10 people at a time. I knew Glen and I could add the sales and marketing required to put this product in front of hundreds of people.

I was right. We filled events with hundreds of people, the speaker told his story and then we followed up with sales calls to sell the training programmes. Within 12 months of launch we'd made over $1 million in sales – we moved ourselves and the business into a huge four-storey townhouse and were having lots of fun, working fairly relaxed hours with a small team. I felt pretty good about being an entrepreneur, full of enthusiasm and passion.

Over the next two years we expanded upon our success. The formula was simple – I would attend poorly marketed events to see if they were selling anything appealing, and then we would secure a contract to get 10 times more people in the room and control the sales process. Our team did event marketing, management and sales for products that we thought were underexposed and poorly sold. This winning formula became a national business in Australia, generating over $10 million in sales in 2005. It then moved across to the UK where it became a multi-million-pound success.

In 2008, the business was based in London and we had exclusive contracts for products and services from Singapore and the USA. We made millions in sales and split the money based on our agreements with the overseas companies.

In 2009, the UK papers announced that the whole world was on the verge of economic collapse. Troubles in the US housing market had caused the failure of several institutions, and this had impacted almost every bank and economy in the world. In turn, this affected almost every small business in the world – our typical buyers.

Within weeks we began to feel the pinch as people became hyper-cautious about spending money. When one of the companies we promoted refused to renegotiate their prices with us, we ended the deal. The other company in Singapore couldn't afford to pay us some of the money they owed and we ended the deal with them too. This left me with a business that had a dozen full-time staff and no products to sell.

I was slow to fire any of the staff because they would have had an impossible time getting jobs in a global recession. Very quickly, I began burning cash, and only when things got really bad did I fire them. I also cut back in my personal life so I could afford to pay my business costs, moving from a penthouse apartment into my sister's spare room.

I went looking for products but couldn't find anything I felt sure I could sell, so instead I sought an exit. We had solid financials from the year before and I figured someone might want to buy the business for a bargain. I was living in a fantasy that if I could sell the business, I would have enough breathing room to stop, think and re-evaluate without the constant pressure of finding money for overheads.

To my disappointment, the best offer I got was £300k for the business. This was less than the previous year's profit, and less than a third of what I wanted, but I knew things weren't improving any time soon so I agreed to the deal.

On the day we were going to exchange the business for the money, the buyer didn't show up. That morning he had collapsed and gone into hospital with high blood pressure – the deal was off.

I looked for answers on how to run a better business. Why was my company so affected by the recession? Surely it was possible to run a business that was more robust than this? How could it be so dramatically impacted by the economy?

This lead me to a chance meeting with Darren Shirlaw, a fund-manager turned business advisor. He looked at my financials and told me immediately what was wrong.

'You don't own any assets', he said.

The problem, he explained, was that the primary assets of my business belonged to someone else. The products we sold and the brands that mattered to our clients weren't ours. He described us as a 'brokerage model' business that did sales and marketing grunt work for people who had business assets. In good economic times, this wasn't a problem because there was plenty of fat in the sale to warrant our efforts, but in a recession, the market simply wouldn't tolerate it.

Brokerage businesses don't sell for high prices compared to businesses that have more defined assets. Essentially, my only asset was a database of people who would open my emails. I had a small brand, a sales process and some basic systems. All in all, it was probably only worth the £300k I had been offered.

Income follows assets. So does stability. So does valuation. If I wanted to build a better business, I would need to start developing and owning assets.

When I went looking for intellectual property that I already owned, I found an email template that I would send to people who requested a speaking slot at our events. The email said, 'We don't hire speakers, we hire Key People of Influence' and it explained the five things I looked for to establish more influence. This email template became the basis for my first book, *Key Person of Influence*, and the book became the basis for the Key Person of Influence Accelerator. The Accelerator became the basis for a global training business that offers a range of products and services.

What began in 2009 with an email template and an obsession to develop business assets, was by 2011 a business worth £4 million; by 2013 it was worth over £7.5 million; in 2016, I did a deal that valued my business at just under £10 million. My first seven years in business had produced something worth £300k and constant highs and lows – I was a boom-buster and it was exhausting. My second seven years created a mini-empire worth £10 million.

Despite those numbers, I have no desire to exit. The new feeling of stability is only matched by the realisation of how scalable this business is becoming. It feels solid, like a strong house.

The turning point was when I stopped looking for more income and started looking for the hidden assets. Success wasn't about enthusiasm, motivation and a desire to succeed; it was about creating an elegant ecosystem of assets.

Desire vs design thinking

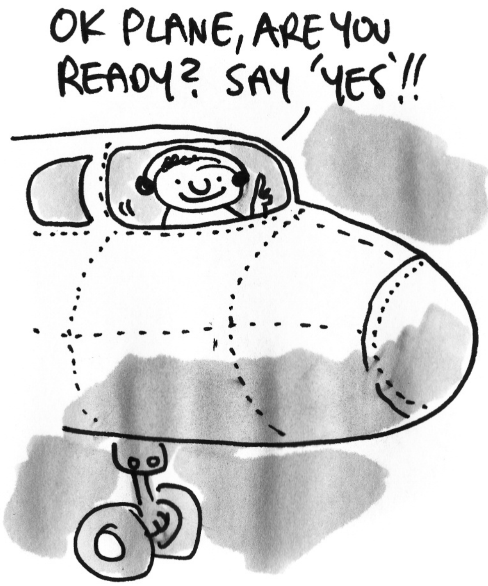
Dream-boards, goal setting workshops, visualisation, pep-talks, speakers, gurus and inspirational quotes seem to be the staple diet of the ambitious person. The underlying message is that humans lack motivation to succeed, or at least need reminding what they are striving for. If these things are valuable it's because desire is a key ingredient in success and it must be enhanced and recreated as often as possible.

Every top entrepreneur will talk about their desire to succeed, but very few failed entrepreneurs get interviewed for magazines. If you did interview the failing business owners (like I have), you would discover they want success just as badly, if not more than the top entrepreneurs.

Is desire important when it comes to success? Is it vital that you really want something in order to get it? Is it necessary to visualise success and conjure up an emotional storm?

To a degree, desire is important. It's an easy argument to make that you must know what you want if you're going to get it; it's not terribly profound though. Far more valuable than desire is design. We live in a world where successful outcomes are designed to occur far more than they are desired into existence.

A 200-tonne plane takes off in flight because it was designed to; the pilot doesn't need a pep-talk to get it airborne. A Porsche 911 accelerates swiftly to 100km/h because of the engineering; the passenger seat isn't put there for a guru to stir the driver up. A 100-storey building stays upright in a storm because of its architecture and construction; it doesn't require motivational quotes to reinforce its structure.



These amazing feats of human innovation had something to do with desire, but mostly it was the design that got the job done.

Imagine for a moment a cyclist wants to travel at 100km/h. This particular cyclist doesn't just desire this goal the way a normal person might – they live and breathe it. They wake up in the morning and fall asleep at night thinking of it. They have a dream-board and a motivational guru; they read books that make them burn with the passion to achieve. Sadly, however, they are blind to the fact that a cycle is not designed to go at 100km/h. No amount of peddling, no amount of training, no amount of wanting will get the job done.

On the flip side, my Nana Val, who is in her 80s, can comfortably achieve 100km/h in her old Toyota. She doesn't think too hard about it, she doesn't care all that much about it and she hasn't consciously asserted an ambition to do it. She just finds herself travelling at speed along the highway because she puts her foot down on the accelerator.

A business succeeds because it was designed to succeed. It is an ecosystem of assets that have been developed and utilised efficiently – a blend of intellectual property, capital, equipment, staff, leadership and innovation. Each component is thought through, improved, refined and enhanced. Each little insight is processed and measured against a new level of output.

You are about to be introduced to a business design that works. Once you know this design, you will be able to plan more powerfully, invest your resources more wisely, diagnose specific bottlenecks, fix them and grow rapidly. It will profoundly change your entrepreneurial approach. Many people wish they'd known it sooner; it would have saved them years of trial and error.

The *24 Assets* approach took me years to discover. I sat with thousands of business owners and engaged emotionally in their struggles and frustrations. The blueprint emerged over the course of hundreds of meetings solving problems and overcoming obstacles with my clients.

This isn't to say that all businesses are meant to succeed. For some people, a huge benefit will be to discover that their business must fundamentally change – they're not on to a winner, and the faster they shift, the faster they could be successful. I'm also not saying that *24 Assets* is only for people who are struggling. This method has been helping healthy businesses to thrive too. Successful entrepreneurs and their teams have used it to stay sharp, better understand what's working, focus during change and decide how to make the most of what they've got.

No amount of desire on my part will get you to place a high value on *24 Asset*s – it's designed that way, so let's begin.

PART 2

24 ASSETS

CHAPTER 5

24 ASSETS OVERVIEW

> This section outlines the 24 assets you will need in order to add more value to and scale your business. It will be much more useful and relevant to your business if you first complete the *24 Assets* Heat Map. Visit: www.24Assets.com, complete the questions and download your report. This will give you a guideline as to the current quality of your ecosystem of digital assets and you can start to strategise your way forward in building your business.

There's no one thing that creates a valuable business. Value is created in the ecosystem of assets.

If you asked a Formula 1 racing team whether the engine, tyres, body, fuel, sponsors or driver was most important, they would probably say that you can't win a race unless you have all of these things. A successful Formula 1 team requires an ecosystem of assets, not just one strong component.

In the same way, a business requires an ecosystem of assets all functioning at a remarkable level to create maximum value. It is also this that protects your business. Your competition might be able to copy one or two elements of your business, but it's really hard to copy an entire ecosystem. Likewise, one or two elements might need to be rebuilt from time to time, but it's rare that the whole business fails as a result when there's an ecosystem of assets present.

Whether you intend to sell your company or not, it's worth playing a game called 'build a company that someone would want to buy'. This game ensures that you are building a business that's strong, robust, has potential and attracts the right people. Some of my favourite companies are multigenerational family businesses like Lego, Victorinox and Ermenegildo Zegna. These businesses are still family owned, but could easily be sold for vast sums of money.

Broadly speaking, people want to buy companies that have a good mixture of assets in seven categories:

Intellectual property. The business lays claim to, or is known for, valuable ideas, methods or defensible intellectual property rights.

Brand assets. The business is known, liked and trusted by a loyal group of fans who are unlikely to switch to a new brand.

Market assets. The business can sell products, disseminate ideas or be present to a large group of potential buyers faster and more cheaply than others in the same market.

Product assets. The business has created unique products and services that are either difficult to replicate or difficult to compete with.

Systems assets. The business has a set of systems and processes that allow it to run more efficiently than its rivals while still delivering the same or better quality.

Culture assets. The business is able to attract, retain, develop and manage good people at a lower cost than its competitors.

Funding assets. The business is able to raise capital or borrow money on better terms than its competitors.

There are 24 assets in total spread across the seven categories. In each category, there are three or four key assets you can focus on that will allow your business to stand out. Until now, this complex blend of assets hasn't really been codified in a way that entrepreneurs and leaders can quickly digest and act upon. My intention with *24 Assets* is to give you a way to measure and improve all the key areas of your ecosystem, bringing together the various business disciplines into a single dashboard. I want to make scale and value creation a fun game rather than a tangled mess.

This strategy is designed to overcome a few common problems entrepreneurs face, giving you a way of organising the overwhelming amount of advice that comes into your awareness and prioritising what to improve in your business. It removes the need for intuition about what to do next or the normal habit of over-developing an area that you're naturally good at.

As I outline each of the 24 assets, you will need to consider three things.

Asset quality. What quality of assets do you currently have in each category? A high quality asset is remarkable – it adds value and it is easy to scale. A brochure is remarkable if people keep it to show their business partner, spouse or friend. A report is remarkable if someone posts a tweet encouraging people to read it. Your culture is remarkable if your staff show their friends collateral from your workplace and want them to apply for a job with you.

Assets add value if they pass the '90-day yachting test'. If you went to sea for 90 days and had very little phone or email access, such an asset would not fall apart. Instead it would keep making the business function. If your videos on YouTube would keep getting watched, the book you've written would keep getting sold, websites you've launched would keep driving business and the products you've created would keep delivering value for 90 days, then you've got high quality assets.

An asset is scalable if it can move freely across distance. In the times we live in, all assets must be able to be expressed digitally. If you can email a file to someone and they immediately understand and can reproduce the asset, then it's scalable.

If your assets can't be reproduced digitally, you won't keep up with the speed of change we are experiencing. When I have examined some of the world's fastest growing companies, I have easily been able to find all 24 of their assets on their websites and social media profiles.

A specific person (including you) cannot be an asset, but their image, their videos, their audio recordings and their written content can be. Something isn't an asset if it's described purely as a vibe or instinctive way of doing things. It can be an asset if there are handbooks, posters, guidelines, images, videos, audio files and the like documented and easy to find.

Assets must also be scalable through time. They should be as evergreen as possible so that they do not require reinvention at every twist and turn. If you create videos that are only relevant to specific news events, they will date quickly. If you create assets that would have to change if you sold the business, you'll never be able to sell.

Desired outcome. What result are you looking for in your business: lifestyle or performance?

If you want to go hiking to Everest Base Camp, you can go to the local camping supplies store and purchase all the gear you'll need for a couple of thousand pounds. If you want to go to the summit, you'll need to order highly specialist gear for a lot more money. To the undiscerning eye, it all looks much the same, and a lot of the expensive gear seems pointless, but an experienced mountaineer knows the difference could be life or death.

It's the same in business. An experienced entrepreneur can take a quick look at your business and assess whether you'll hit your desired goals or get stuck along the way.

If you want to build a lifestyle business you don't need specialist equipment. Most of the assets in this section can be created fairly easily and cheaply if you know what you are focusing on. Industries have evolved that offer powerful business tools for leveraging fairly basic assets.

On the other hand, if you want to build a team of 50–250 people and more than £10 million of revenue, you'll need to invest a disproportionate amount of money in the creation of your assets. You can't build a performance business using WordPress plugins, videos you filmed on your iPhone and a brand a graphic design student made for you. Performance businesses custom build assets using award-winning suppliers who have an eye for detail and experience executing a big strategy.

The business you desire to create drives the decisions you make when developing your assets. It determines whether you customise Infusionsoft, Salesforce or SAP as your database. It determines whether you use KPMG as your accountant or a small firm that specialises in Xero. It helps you decide on sponsoring industry conferences or taking a holiday instead.

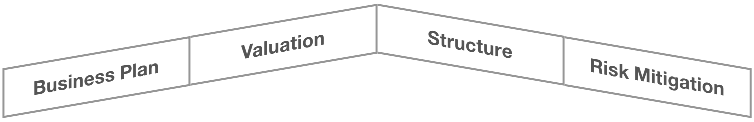
Improving the assets. What needs to happen so this asset category contributes to your desired outcome?

When you've assessed the quality of each asset against the desired outcome you've chosen, make choices about how to move each of the assets forward to the level you want. In most cases this will require you to select a quality supplier and brief them on what you're looking for, then manage the improvements of each asset until you're happy with it. After I've outlined the 24 assets, I will go into more detail on how to approach the process of improving them. I am a pragmatist, not an academic. My goal is not to give you a complete deep-dive into each asset, but to give you talking points to discuss with professional suppliers and advisors.

Your job as a business leader is to be in a position to get these professionals helping you. Together you'll build a valuable and robust enterprise.

With that in mind, let's take a look at the 24 Assets.

FUNDING ASSETS:



CULTURE ASSETS:

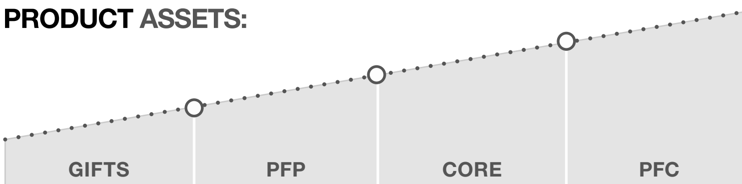
Key People of Influence

Marketing & Sales	Mgmt & Admin	Technicians

SYSTEMS ASSETS:

Marketing & Sales	Mgmt & Admin	Operations

PRODUCT ASSETS:



MARKET ASSETS:

Position	Channels	Data

BRAND ASSETS:

Philosophy	Identity	Ambassadors

IP ASSETS:

Content	Methodology	Registered

CHAPTER 6

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ASSETS

Being seen as different and special follows assets.

Today, fast-growth businesses run on intellectual property assets: ideas that have been formalised into legally protectable property, e.g. libraries of text, images, videos and audio files, code, algorithms and methodologies that a business has devised. Mark Zuckerberg joined the world's top 10 richest people by the age of 30 because of his ideas on how people network online. His assets are mostly intangible – the vast data, patents, algorithms, trademarks and registrations along with all the other digital assets that make up Facebook.

These assets add value because they carry the essence of a business's uniqueness. A customer can read up on you, an employee can learn your way of doing things, and key identifiers can remain distinctively yours. They are also scalable because they fit seamlessly into the digital universe.

You're already standing on mountains of value when it comes to intellectual property. You have a unique perspective, interesting stories and powerful insights that could be transformed into assets in three ways – content, methodologies and registered IP.

ASSET 1: CONTENT

Content is King in today's digital world – text, images and multi-media. The content you create differentiates you and allows people to get to know your business.

Content clarifies your thinking – when you write an article, record a video/audio or capture an image or a diagram, you are forced to focus on what you want to share with your audience.

Content is scalable. Until recently, if you wrote a book, you needed a publisher to green light it for distribution. If you recorded a song, you needed a record label. If you had video, you needed a TV station to appreciate it. Today, the minute you upload your content, it's freely available to a global audience of billions.

Content is cheap to produce. It wasn't that long ago that video, audio, publishing, photography and design were prohibitively expensive. Only a big business would dare to create its own content, and it would have been seen as wildly extravagant for that business to have a multi-media studio in house. Today everyone has a multi-media studio in their pocket. Even using external suppliers to produce content for your business is cheaper than it's ever been.

For many reasons, content is a business generation tool. Research from Google (see the report called 'Zero Moments of Truth') shows that people who have access to content are more likely to buy from businesses or individuals that produce it. It's a powerful tool for sales people to use during the process of winning clients. It's sharable – when you have a client who absolutely loves what you do, the easiest and most wide reaching way for them to recommend your business is to refer to your content.

You can encourage your team and even your customers to create content for your business. If you curate a blog, podcast or YouTube channel, content can be shared from a variety of sources.

Content can be repurposed easily as your business evolves. Your blogs can be chunked up into a book or audio recording. A video can be transcribed into a white paper, infographic or a slide presentation. It can then be used in a myriad of ways – from marketing campaigns to employee handbooks, the content finds its way across the whole business.

Finally, it creates an archive of your work. When you publish your content, it's date-stamped and can be referenced at a later time to show the evolution of your thinking on a topic. Many of the world's most admired businesses evolved out of articles, blogs, white papers or media created by the founder. Twitter started out as a series of blogs that connected its founders around common ideas. Bitcoin began as a white paper on digital currency. What is now Tesla Motors evolved from a masterplan blog written by Elon Musk.

You don't need to be JK Rowling or Steven Spielberg to create content. It can be produced by companies like Rethink Press (www.rethinkpress.com) that supply writers to work with you or your team and capture interesting ideas to put into written content.

ASSET 2: METHODOLOGY

A methodology is a specific way of getting to an outcome. In a business context, a powerful methodology is also a compelling reason for people to engage with you. As you create content, your methodologies will emerge.

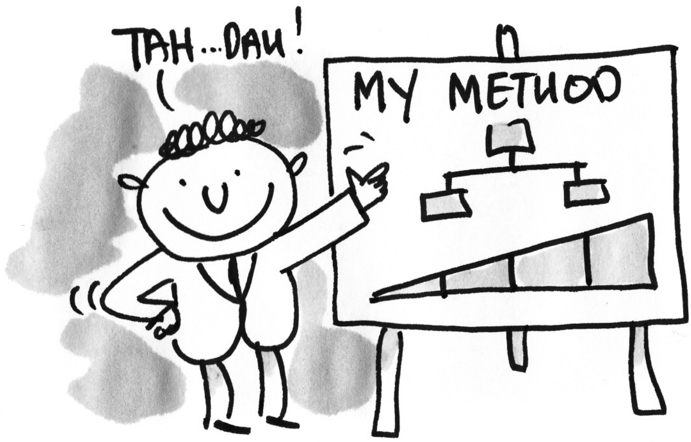
When you are close to an industry, you often take for granted how much you know. Many of the complex tasks you undertake can easily be labelled intuitive. Dig a little deeper and you might discover you can create methodologies that scale.

Sometimes a business will openly share its methodology with the market as a way of cementing its uniqueness, and sometimes the methodology will be kept secret so no one knows how the result happens perfectly every time.

Google created its search algorithm methodology and kept it a secret. Billions of people per day visit Google because they want access to its methodology for finding information. They don't know how it works, but they want the results it produces.

My first book *Key Person of Influence* offered a five-step method for becoming more visible, valuable and connected in your industry. I openly shared the 5Ps with my readers so they could see how they could get a result. Tens of thousands of people have come to my events and become clients because they saw value in the methodology.

Methodologies can often be expressed on posters using diagrams, images, lists and algorithms. These can sometimes be coded into software that reproduces the methodology automatically.



Challenge yourself and your team to sit down with large sheets of paper or whiteboards and create your own unique methodologies. My experience tells me that you will have your own recipes for all sorts of outcomes, and it's worth capturing them.

ASSET 3: REGISTERED INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)

Legally defensible intellectual property must be documented and registered in order for your business to think of it as an asset. This could include the basics of registering your business name as a trademark with a government body. It could also include the registration of URLs and social media profiles your business uses on all the major platforms. Even if your business doesn't currently use social media platforms like Instagram or Snapchat, it's worth registering and setting up a basic profile so that if you decide to use them later, you can. Registering IP requires you to find an independent third party who keeps track of it and can help you to defend it. At a more advanced level, it could involve filing for patents and registering product names or slogans and certain designs and images as trademarks.

A business like Nike owns all sorts of IP such as its name, its logo, the words 'Just Do It' and the patented technology inside some of its products. It also owns nike.com, justdoit.com, airjordan.com and the URLs for social media like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Pinterest and LinkedIn.

When you use external suppliers to create content or methodologies for your business, be sure to sign an Intellectual Property Assignment Agreement with them so you are clear who is the legal owner. This kind of agreement is recognised by the legal profession if ever it is in dispute.

If you decide to sell your business, the acquirer will want to know for sure that you own and can protect your business's intellectual property. They'd think twice about the sale if it emerged that your name, URL or any other unique aspect of your business wasn't protected. They'd likely completely abandon the sale if they discovered another business owned key components of your intellectual property, as is sometimes the case.

To create and protect legally defensible intellectual property, you'll need to work with a specialist lawyer. I have personally worked with the teams at Azrights (www.azrights.com) and at Lawbite (www.lawbite.co.uk), and I rate both highly.

HOW DO YOU RATE YOURSELF?

Think about your business's content, methodologies and registered intellectual property. How do you rate? Are you confident that you have enough high quality content in a digital format? Are you proud of the unique methodologies you are associated with? Are you secure in the knowledge that your intellectual property is registered and protected?

For a lifestyle business, you can often create and register your intellectual property cheaply and easily. I know many businesses with over $1 million revenue which have videos, books and posters that didn't cost a fortune to create.

For a performance business, work with an excellent intellectual property lawyer, a professional publisher, video production company, IT and design firm to capture and protect your best ideas. Don't fool yourself into thinking that you can do all of this yourself to save money; an investor or acquirer will give you a better valuation if they know these assets were created by experienced professionals.

RAPID ACTION STEPS

1. Collate all your blogs and articles into one document directory so they can be easily found and used.
2. Produce a professional report that showcases your ideas, stories, diagrams and methods.
3. Create a shared folder in your company for capturing images, video and audio files that can be used at a later date.
4. Register all your social media profiles even if you don't intend on using them yet.
5. Book an appointment with an IP Lawyer to discuss what your business could potentially register and own.

WORDS FROM THE EXPERTS

Clive Rich is a barrister who's done over £10 billion worth of deals in the music and entertainment industry. He says:

> *'Intellectual property is everywhere in your business and deserves to be discovered, valued and protected. Your intellectual property could one day be worth more to you than bricks and mortar. The internet is an engine for scaling and commercialising your intellectual property globally. Without intellectual property you're a consumer on the web; with intellectual property you're able to build wealth.'*

Shireen Smith is one of London's most respected IP lawyers and the author of *Intellectual Property Revolution*. She says:

> *'Don't underestimate the threat to your business if you do not protect your intellectual property. Without knowing it, you could be infringing on someone else's rights and they may take action against you. In a short space of time, your growing business could be slowed to a halt because you didn't consider your strategy for owning, protecting and defending your ideas.'*

CHAPTER 7

BRAND ASSETS

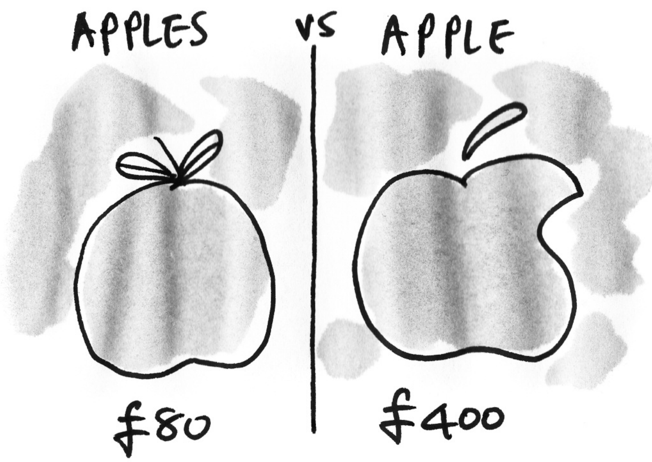
Being known, liked and trusted follows assets.

In a world full of choices for every product, and countless unethical suppliers in every industry, a trusted brand has become more valuable than ever.

Consider the impact of a brand on commoditised products. A Victorinox Swiss Army Knife retails at around £50, whereas a comparable multi-tool pocket-knife (the generic name for the device) sells for around £10.

Underpants from Calvin Klein cost £25 for a pair, whereas almost identical pants without a brand sell for £6 per pair.

An Apple iPad costs about £400, whereas a generic tablet PC with the same specifications costs about £80.



A Fender Squire costs about £300, whereas a very similar electric guitar without a brand name costs £60.

The brand that is most known in a category can charge four to five times more for its product compared to an equally reliable generic version of the same product. Brand helps you to add value because consumers look for the cues that you are known, liked and trusted, and they are happy to pay for that additional reliability. It creates scale because you can show up all over the world as looking ready for business if you've put thought into your brand.

To build brand assets, focus on three key areas: the philosophy, the identity and the ambassadors of the brand.

ASSET 4: THE PHILOSOPHY

Behind every great brand is a philosophy that sets it apart. This philosophy normally centres around the vision and values of the company, which don't often change and help to shape every decision.

Microsoft famously had a vision to put a PC in every home and on every desk in America. That vision attracted great employees, secured big partnerships and impacted almost every decision the company made in its first 25 years.

Companies that have strong values end up with more empowered employees, more loyal customers and fewer stupid decisions. They innovate more easily and customers understand why the business is evolving.

A great example is the enduring Lego brand, which has a mission to “inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow”. The values include imagination, creativity, fun, learning, caring and quality. This philosophy has driven decisions like creating computer driven Lego robots that require children to learn how to code in order to make the robot move. The philosophy also lead to major script changes in the Lego movie to emphasise the joy of building and the pride of creativity.

For your philosophy to be an asset it must be highly distinctive and clearly documented. It must be distinctive in the sense that if I spoke about your philosophy without mentioning your brand name, people would quickly realise I was talking about you. For example, if I asked you to think of a brand that ‘shakes up old industries, champions customers and creates a fun place to work’, you would almost certainly recognise that I’m describing Virgin.

At Dent, our core values are ‘be brave, have fun, make a dent’. We put this philosophy all over our websites, materials and social media. We make videos about it and discuss what these values mean with our clients and customers. At our performance reviews, our team members are scored on their levels of bravery, fun and impact.

This philosophy is so distinctive at our company that if you do a Google search for 'be brave, have fun, make a dent', you will get pages of information about Dent Global.

If you want to look at a video about these three values, visit www.dent.global/video-values.

Your brand needs to have documented values and a clear vision that's easy to find. Display your philosophy on your website, your office walls, your packaging, within your employee handbooks and all over your social media. It should be easy for your customers to identify what you stand for and what you stand against.

ASSET 5: IDENTITY

The way your brand looks, feels, sounds, tastes, smells and behaves on a consistent basis forms an identity in people's minds. They then trust the brand and expect it to continue to fit this identity. Strangely, consistency is more important than the behaviour itself – some brands can get away with being cheeky, irreverent and casual while other brands would lose trust for the exact same behaviour. A publicity stunt that would be normal for Virgin Atlantic would seem strange for British Airways; if Virgin Atlantic delivered a serious and understated service it wouldn't seem on brand.

Consistency and repetition build a brand identity. I remember hating the logo for the 2012 London Olympic Games. I could not understand how it was the final choice from a city so rich in design talent, and I wasn't the only one. When the design was unveiled, it was hammered hard in the press as a failure and many people wanted it replaced.

To me it looked boxy, childish and poorly conceived, but the logo stuck and it was emblazoned across a flood of T-shirts, posters, billboards, newspaper ads and web banners. Pretty soon I hated it less as it came to represent feelings of excitement, anticipation and healthy competition, and by the time the Games came around, I was proudly wearing the logo over my chest.

A businesses brand must maintain a distinctive identity across all of its platforms. It should look and feel and behave the same on social media, printed materials, websites, retail locations, events, videos and the like. The most important thing when it comes to the identity of a brand is that it is consistent.

Prior to my company being rebranded as Dent Global, we were called 'Entrevo', a contraction of the words 'Entrepreneur Revolution', and the logo was a mix of several colours and fonts. However, the word Entrevo was difficult for people to say, spell or remember, and even our staff continued to answer the phone with 'Key Person of Influence' (the name of our product).

To make matters worse, the logo we had chosen for our Key Person of Influence product brand was in completely different colours and fonts to the Entrevo brand. We had clever answers on why we had decided to go down this path, but ultimately it was a huge mess that needed fixing if we were going to successfully launch new products and services associated with our brand.

I paid an award-winning branding expert several thousand pounds to write a report on how to transform it. He said that we should choose one font and two colours for the whole brand, avoid colour-coding products and get rid of anything that caused confusion. We renamed the business 'Dent' after the Steve Jobs quote 'An entrepreneur's job is to go out and put a dent in the universe', and settled for one font and two colours (Helvetica in blue and red) that we use consistently everywhere.

We compiled this into a brand guidelines book (an asset) that got distributed to our whole company and we made sure everything, from our presentation slides to our websites and videos, matched the brand guidelines. Our suppliers were given the brand guidelines book and it allowed them to stay tightly on-brand with the work being produced for us.

Within 12 months, people were using the brand Dent to describe the company, and clients bought T-shirts displaying our logo and put our 'Be brave, have fun, make a dent' stickers on their computers and phones. We successfully launched three new products and services under the brand and it all worked seamlessly.

Instagram had a detailed image of a leather-bound camera as their logo for many years, then made the decision to simplify it. The founder and CEO, Kevin Systrom, said, 'We wanted a logo that would look good on a billboard, a T-shirt, a website or an app, and our original brand didn't do that.'

He hired a design team that explained, 'Every brand goes through a migration from complex to simpler, simpler, simpler, to iconic.' The team at Instagram made the brave decision to transform their look and feel dramatically so that it could be used consistently everywhere.

Consistent beats clever when it comes to a brand. Of course a brand should be intelligent and leverage the vision and values that you've chosen, but if you have to choose between consistent and recognisable versus clever and subtle, I'd go for the former. In a complex world, simple colours, words and fonts used over and over again are reassuring to your customers. With the exception of Google, most of the strongest brands in the world use one font and one or two colours consistently.

Once you get your brand identity right, stick to it. Remember that long after you are sick of the way your brand looks, your market will just be starting to notice you.

ASSET 6: AMBASSADORS

Trust, likability, notoriety and even fame can be transferred on to your brand if you are associated with people who are already in positions of influence.

In 1976, Nestlé Corporation launched an office coffee machine that made strong coffee from a capsule system. For 30 years, this small division grew slowly, gaining customers one at a time by sending sales people out to office buildings to demonstrate the product.

In 2005, the CEO of the division had a bold idea to turn this coffee company into a globally recognised consumer brand that would target a premium retail consumer market. They wanted it to go from being a dull office coffee machine to a sexy, desirable home kitchen appliance, and found the perfect face for it in George Clooney. A sexy, desirable American with his home in Lake Como, Italy was perfect to connect the affluent urban shopper with the charm and sophistication of European coffee culture.

With George Clooney as the face of the brand, Nespresso grew rapidly and became one of the leading coffee brands in under a decade. The power of the right ambassador can be transformational for a brand.

You don't need to be a multi-billion global conglomerate to take advantage of this strategy. Your business could sponsor a local sports team, you could host events with industry influencers or get a letter of endorsement from an expert in your field. At every level of business there are ways to align your brand to an ambassador who can lift your profile or embody your values.

Rob Gardner decided to sponsor university rowing teams at Oxford and Cambridge when Redington was a relatively small business. He noted that when he was in an undergraduate rowing team, he would look at brands like KPMG, Deloitte and Barclays Bank advertising along the river, and think that they must be great places to work.

Placing his business brand alongside those massive companies yielded several great results. He has a steady stream of bright graduates applying for jobs at his firm and powerful images from competitions to use in his marketing materials, and he often explains to clients that the values of his pension advisory firm are reflected perfectly in competitive rowing (teamwork, timing, balance and having perspective on the future and the past).

You can run events with brand ambassadors to galvanise their impact. These events create photo opportunities, videos, podcasts and other brand building materials that end up on your website and social media profiles. A well-run event can have an uplifting effect on your business for the six months leading up to it and the six months after – one event can give you a year of benefits.

Ambassadors create value by embodying the philosophy of your brand, and scale through their digital profile and social media presence.

RAPID ACTION STEPS

1. Write down three of your unique philosophies about your industry and publish them on your website.
2. Visit www.charitywater.org/media/ and explore the philosophy and the identity of this unique brand.
3. Make a list of celebrities or teams you would love to sponsor if money was no object.
4. Find ambassadors you can afford who embody your philosophy.

WORDS FROM THE EXPERTS

Mike Symes is the author of *Light Your Firebrand* and is responsible for the brand strategy of some of the world's biggest banks. He says:

> *'Your brand is an asset that you should build and cultivate with focus and care. If you get it right, your brand can take you into new markets, new territories and enable you to launch new products and services. Over time, your brand will add to the overall worth of your business. Small companies should think big about their brands from the early days and then live and breathe those intentions with clear and compelling value propositions. At any size of business, you should ignite your brand, illuminate your points of difference and get your messages to spread like wildfire.'*

Paul Lindley built Ella's Kitchen into a £50 million plus business in under seven years, based on the brand values of 'healthy, handy and fun'. He says:

> *'From day one we thought of Ella's Kitchen as a brand that had to be built. Whether it was customers, stockists or staff, we wanted to win people over to our philosophy of healthy, handy and fun. We captured a large share of the market because of the brand we built and, although other companies tried to copy the product, they never achieved a brand that was loved like ours. That gave us a huge advantage.'*

CHAPTER 8

MARKET ASSETS

Having a strong foothold in your marketplace follows assets.

Owning a defensible place in the market is a powerful idea for growing a solid business. There's only one problem – there's no such thing as a market.

A market is an abstract concept that people selling something like to imagine. If you are selling business-class plane tickets, you imagine millions of business travellers. If you're a life-coach, you imagine a market of professional executives looking for ways to improve their lot in life, with the money to pay for support.

As buyers, we do not think of ourselves as being part of a market. We are individuals with personal needs, wants and criteria for buying something. We don't care how many other people are looking to buy something similar or how much the aggregate spend of all buyers will amount to in the year. All we care about is buying from someone we know, like and trust who can adequately care for our personal desires.

Therefore, the businesses that end up successfully 'owning their market' are not the ones that imagine the large, nebulous mass of people out there looking to buy something, but those that recognise the nuances and details that matter to each individual. Businesses that treat customers like unique people and create something that perfectly matches their needs are the ones that win the right to do business with them. To achieve this at scale, you need to position your business correctly in the eyes of your customers, have convenient ways of reaching people, and data that allows you to cater to people as individuals.

When a client is looking for the better/cheaper/faster provider, your business wants to be the obvious choice, and this should be easy to figure out. A customer shouldn't have to work too hard. Avoid doing anything that would damage your chances of being an obvious choice to buy from. If you address a customer as 'Dear Sir/Madam', you have immediately lost credibility as a company that cares about them as an individual. If you are a 'digital marketing expert' with 122 Twitter followers, you are already on the back foot.

Having market assets allows you to communicate, sell products and disseminate ideas to the right people quickly, powerfully and at a lower cost than others in your industry. Your most valuable market assets are positioning, channels and data.

ASSET 7: POSITIONING

Any effort to influence consumer perception or awareness of your brand or product relative to competing brands or products is referred to as positioning. Your objective is to occupy a clear, unique and advantageous position in the mind of your potential buyers.

Your position in the market normally revolves around key questions people ask before they make a purchase:

- Who is the best quality (normally implying either durability or cutting edge features, depending on industry)?
- Who is the most affordable (cheap or available on finance terms)?
- Who is the most convenient (either close in proximity or delivered rapidly to where you are)?
- Who is the most trusted or reliable (usually a long-standing brand with a track record of positive reviews)?
- Who is the most delightful (often associated with personalities or superior customer service)?

These aren't the only ways to position your business, but these classics are the most fiercely contested in every marketplace. Each year, companies fight to demonstrate that they occupy one of these top spots in their industry.

Additionally, companies now fight to position themselves within categories that you might search on Google. For example, Google itself does not want anyone else being known for the word 'search'. Nike may want to position itself with words like 'run', 'athlete' or 'sports', and will employ people to place its brand closely alongside those terms. Some brands like McDonald's want to avoid being positioned alongside words like 'fattening' or 'unhealthy', and will have teams of people whose job it is to ensure the brand stays away from negative words.

An advanced strategy is to position a brand alongside a feeling. Rolex wants its brand to evoke feelings of success, achievement and pride. UBS wants to be known as the best private bank in the world, and the front page of its website showcases all the awards it's won in that category. Coke overtly uses slogans like 'Open Happiness' to slam home that it wants its brand of cola to be linked to positive feelings.

There are four main ways to position yourself and generate an asset:

Awards. Businesses of all sizes can enter and win awards that externally validate their position in the market. This can include being featured on certain referenced lists and rankings (e.g. Industry Top 20). An award is a powerful asset because every sales person can use it in their conversations for years to come, and marketing campaigns can reference you as an 'award winning company'. It can even add value to your business if you win highly-prized awards.

Accreditations. Externally recognised accreditations such as ISO, CPD and Investors in People are indicators of quality or reliability. It can be time-consuming and difficult to achieve an accreditation, but it becomes a valuable positioning asset once you have achieved it.

Associations. An association can take many forms, from being listed as a preferred supplier to being a member of an industry group or closely aligned to a bigger brand. If your business is a supplier to Rolls Royce cars, it positions you in their league. If you are a Fellow of the Institute of Cosmetic Surgeons, it would imply you're more credible than someone who isn't (all things being equal). If I Google 'best pizza in Notting Hill' and you have a restaurant that occupies the whole first page then I will happily assume you make the best pizza in Notting Hill.

Acknowledgement. When a recognised authority in an industry acknowledges a business publicly, it is a powerful asset. Being featured in a high-quality publication, championed by an expert or selected as a preferred supplier to a big brand gives you a stronger position in the market. Be sure to capture these moments and use them as assets. A client of mine had been endorsed by pop singer Robbie Williams but hadn't put it on the company website – a wonderful moment can become an asset when it's documented.

ASSET 8: CHANNELS

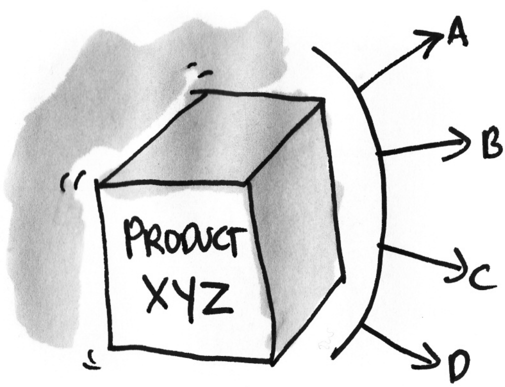
A channel to market, also known as a distribution channel, is the way products, services or communications get to your customers.

Baroness Michelle Mone OBE built her lingerie business Ultimo through channels to market. Starting with absolutely nothing, she developed a unique push-up bra and dreamed of getting it under the blouses of millions of women.

She first asked the question, 'Who already sells to my market?' The answer to that question led her from her small town near Glasgow to the head office of Selfridges in London, where she showed up unannounced and begged to pitch her product to the head buyer of women's wear.

With a small contract secured, she then asked, 'Who already talks to millions of women every day?' The answer to that question led her to a publicity stunt. With a dozen men dressed up as cosmetic surgeons and a dozen women dressed in lingerie, she staged a fake picket line in front of Selfridges where the surgeons claimed they would go out of business if women were allowed to wear the Ultimo bras. This stunt made national newspapers and magazines, and put her brand in front of millions of women who promptly bought up every piece of stock.

Over the years, Michelle Mone has gained over £1 billion of free publicity and over 1 million Twitter followers. With so many people following her on social media, she has been able to launch a multitude of products, services and events without having to ask for anyone's permission or involvement.



There are two types of channels:

Owned channels. These are channels that you develop yourself and include all the ways you can reach your customers or sell something directly. You own your YouTube channel, Twitter account, email list, blog, podcast channel, events or retail stores.

Owned channels take a while to develop from scratch, but once you have done this, you can choose how you will use them and they can earn revenue in their own right. If you have 10,000 podcast subscribers, you can probably charge a company to sponsor your channel. If you have your own retail store, you can stock products for others and earn money from their innovations.

Once you own your channels, you can add products, services or messages to them whenever you like. Often this can be very lucrative.

Earned channels. These are channels that others have developed and you can utilise if you prove yourself to be worthy. If you are seen as a Key Person of Influence, you will often be asked to give an interview on other people's YouTube shows or speak at events that put you in front of hundreds of perfect clients. If you can formalise a large channel partner like Walmart, you might be set for life just by managing that channel relationship.

For a small business, being featured on a prominent YouTube channel or podcast can provide a steady stream of business. I was featured on the YouTube channel London Real in 2015 and it has provided a new client to my business every month ever since. When I realised the longevity of online videos and podcasts, I made it a goal to be featured on someone's show at least once a month.

ASSET 9: DATA

Data is the key to personalisation, and personalisation is the key to owning the relationship with someone. If you have a powerful data collection and management approach, you can create personalised relationships with millions of people en mass.

I was staring out of the window of a plane, waiting for it to taxi down the runway and take flight, when a charming Cabin Crew Assistant approached me and said, 'Hi, Mr Priestley, thanks for flying with us again. I'm wondering if you want to be moved into an aisle seat as you usually prefer to sit on the aisle?'

My jaw almost hit the floor. As it turned out, when I'd checked-in only window seats were available, but an aisle seat had become vacant and the Cabin Crew member somehow knew my preferences.

British Airways flies over 40 million passengers a year, so how on earth did they manage to pull off this remarkable act of customisation and anticipation? It turns out they have an internal program called 'Know Me' which is a big data project designed to highlight the wants and needs of frequent fliers. The more you travel with British Airways, the more they can predict ways to surprise and delight you. The more they surprise and delight customers, the more those customers keep coming back and tell their friends to do the same.

Data isn't some boring, geeky set of dehumanising numbers; data is the key to creating a highly personal and touching experience. At Dent, we use scorecard tools to discover what type of entrepreneurs we are dealing with. We know what frustrations are occurring, the desires of each client and what we should be doing to help them. Often people are quite shocked when we rapidly predict and address problems that have existed for years in their business. We can only achieve this because of the data we've collected; any business that doesn't have this data asset lacks insight into their clients and prospects.

The more data your business collects from your customers, the more you can customise and predict what your customers will want. High quality data is a hugely valuable asset any business can develop over time.

RAPID ACTION STEPS

1. Get featured through other people's channels such as podcasts, YouTube or blogs.
2. Win an award that indicates you are either the better, faster,

cheaper or the most loved in your industry niche.

3. Choose your top 50 clients and start a data-gathering exercise on them, using their social media profiles to learn as much as you possibly can about them – where they live, what they love, how they feel on key issues, what frustrates them, who they follow, etc.
4. Gather data that shows the impact of your business – what measurable positive impact do you have on your clients? What quantifiable negative impacts would happen if your business disappeared?
5. Ask your prospects for at least 10 more points of information about them so you can better meet their needs.

A WORD FROM AN EXPERT

Martyn Dawes built and sold Coffee Nation for over £60 million. He says:

> *'We achieved a lot of our growth through cultivating market assets. We had a powerful channel partner strategy that led to us being in over 1,500 locations in under seven years. We positioned ourselves as the only premium self-serve coffee in the UK and were featured in leading publications for it. We also used data to show the impact of our product in drawing new and engaged customers to their locations. I encourage all businesses to build assets that position you powerfully, give you access to your market and allow data to flow back to your business.'*

Martyn Dawes
Founder of Coffee Nation and author of
Wake Up and Sell the Coffee

CHAPTER 9

PRODUCT ASSETS

Delivering consistent value to clients follows assets.

Most people think of a product as a set of physical items with some packaging, like an iPhone in its box, a tube of toothpaste at the store, a luxury pen in a special leather case or a stylish item of clothing in a branded shopping bag. This is a simplistic view and overlooks the key elements that really make up the value of a product.

Another way of looking at a product is to see it as a replaceable and consistent way of achieving a desired outcome that your customer wants. It could be delivered the same way in any number of cities across the world at a comparable price point.

A product is more than its physical components. What makes a bottle of champagne worth four times more than a bottle of Prosecco? It's not the bottle, the label, the bubbles or the cork. Despite differences in the grapes and the production method, very few people can tell you which product is which when given a blind taste test. Champagne is, however, a different product to Prosecco – champagne is a product people buy for an important celebration and Prosecco is a product for less important occasions.

Is a Hermès handbag really worth £10,000 more than a Louis Vuitton bag? If so (and plenty of people think it is), what makes it so? To the untrained eye, the bags are similar in design and quality; to the person who's owned several LV bags and has always aspired to own a Hermès bag, the pull of the new brand is magnetic. She imagines the reaction it will get from her friends when she casually places this designer piece by her chair in an upmarket restaurant.

Products have a lot to do with non-physical elements – the brand identity, the content that the buyer digests prior to purchase, the positioning, the brand ambassadors and the customisation they've felt. All the assets we've discussed up to this point set the scene for what a product is really about – it is the perfect solution to the frustrating problem all packaged up and made ready for sale.

I have several rules for creating a product:

Products have a name. The Air Jordan, the iPad, the X5, the Stratocaster – a product really becomes a product when it has a distinctive name that sums up all its various elements.

Products are complex packages. They have many suppliers who make the result possible. The more complex the package, the less likely it is to become commoditised. A Porsche 911 has over 2,500 suppliers, such as Bose (stereo) and Bridgestone (tyres), that deliver all the elements of the car. They are then brought together in an elegant package that appears to be one thing.

Products are distinctive and can be reproduced. Even when a product is not a physical thing, it becomes a product when it can be replicated in cities around the world. The stage musical *Book of*

Mormon follows the same direction with the same music, the same script, and delivers the same experience to audiences in New York, London, Chicago and Sydney. The cast and crew change, but the product is still replicated effectively across the world.

Products have collateral. When you take all the elements that make up a product, both intangible and tangible, and sum them up in a brochure or a webpage, you have a unifying document that defines that product. With a brochure, you can sell an item that has not yet been manufactured, win a channel partnership pre-launch and get preregistrations of interest. A brochure can travel with you in a physical format or in a PDF on your iPad. It can turn mountains of complexity into something that is simple and desirable for the customer.

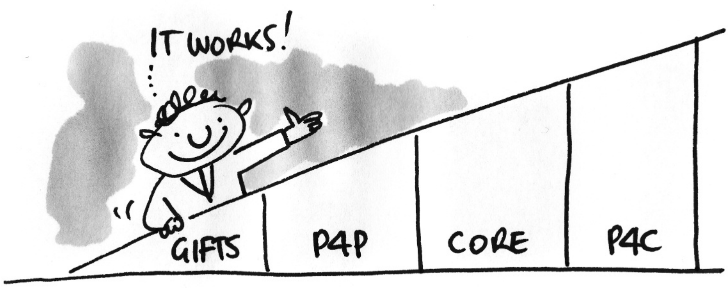
As a rule, anything that sells for over £1,000 should have a physical brochure and a webpage that explains its value. Anything that is under £1000, needs a website landing page at the very least.

Using these guidelines, you can build services like products. When a service has a name, distinctive elements, a standardised method of delivery and a brochure that describes it all in an elegant and desirable way, it starts to appear like a product, and scale like one too.

The product ecosystem. Having one product is not enough to make a successful business. After working with thousands of businesses, I've learned that a single product rarely makes money. Product ecosystems make money.

Most small businesses make the mistake of having one core product. Often, it's their most expensive product, and it's the only one they're offering to customers. Accountants sell accounting; lawyers sell legal services; plumbers sell plumbing.

But this isn't how great businesses operate. Great businesses have a product ecosystem with four types of product, including a range of free, low-cost and core products that all serve a unique purpose.



ASSET 10: GIFTS

Gifts are exactly that: a product given totally freely with no strings attached, primarily to capture attention. They are scalable, shareable and affordable for your business to give without too much thought. Usually they are digital and easy to distribute anywhere in the world at very little cost.

Gifts need to be insightful, educational or entertaining, highlighting the problems your business can solve, illuminating your points of value and building an emotional connection. They require no commitment from the person receiving them; a gift ceases to be a gift when expectations are attached or if an exchange is implied.

The ultimate gift-giver is Google, offering searches, maps, email, browsers, storage, videos, research and many other digital products completely free to the world. These products capture attention that Google can then use to commercialise its other offerings.

You don't need to be Google to give away gifts. You can create reports, podcasts, videos, samples, events, slide-presentations or apps that cost very little to give away once they're developed. The key is that you ask nothing in return – not even a name or an email address. You just give the gifts away to anyone who wants them and watch how quickly relationships progress.

ASSET 11: PRODUCT-FOR-PROSPECTS (P4P)

Once you've captured a prospect's attention with a gift, a product-for-prospects will usually be the first purchase a customer makes. Products-for-prospects build trust, offer quick wins for a fair exchange, typically requiring a small commitment of time, money or data from your prospect. In return, you offer them a valuable first step with your company.

Often a product-for-prospects helps to diagnose a problem that your company can solve or narrow down the decision-making process. A consultant might offer a diagnostic tool or an initial two-hour workshop that hones in on the problems and possible solutions for their client as a product-for-prospects. Google offers businesses test campaigns to evaluate the impact of various AdWords.

A product-for-prospects should set the scene for a powerful sales conversation. If your sales people are talking to potential clients who have experienced your product-for-prospects, they have someone who's already moving in the right direction.

At Dent Global, our products-for-prospects include workshops, scorecards, physical books, webinars, strategy-session meetings and e-books.

ASSET 12: CORE PRODUCT

The core product of a business is its main source of revenue – the product the business is typically known for. BMW's core product is cars. Google's is AdWords. Mont Blanc's is pens (or 'writing instruments', as the company says).

The core product focuses on delivering remarkable value to a client and is centred on solving a problem or satisfying a want fully. Gifts and products-for-prospects tend to offer education or entertainment to whet the appetite, whereas the core product resolves the problem or satisfies the want.

It's worth having the goal of being the best in the world at delivering your core product. Unlike the gift and the product-for-prospects, the core product requires a full commitment to delivering a solution to problems that the client is looking to resolve. It is implementation, not ideas; it's a packaged solution, not a promise of things to come.

At Dent Global, our core product is businesses accelerators. We are the best in the world at what we do for the market we serve – service led businesses with under 50 employees. We are not the best accelerator for technology-led companies; Y Combinator occupies that mantle. While most accelerators fight for 22-year-old technology wunderkinds, we ignore that market and look for people with 15+ years' experience in a traditional industry.

ASSET 13: PRODUCTS FOR CLIENTS (P4C)

Products-for-clients are product extensions, taking customers even further on their journey. A product-for-clients delivers a solution that addresses the customer's ongoing wants, needs and desires. It is usually a recurring revenue product that provides value over time.

BMW sells its core product, cars, and then offers its products-for-clients which are finance, insurance and servicing. Apple sells its core product, devices linked to iCloud (iPhones, iPads, iMacs, etc.), then its products-for-clients are things like media, storage, software and music subscriptions that tick over every month.

At Dent Global, we offer business services to our clients such as book publishing, digital transformation and video production. Our clients want trusted suppliers who can implement change year-on-year, and we have found those suppliers and brought them into our services offering through either partnership or acquisition.

The ecosystem

It often appears that the most profitable products are products-for-clients. When a financial analyst crunches the numbers on BMW, they might think that there's more profit in financial services than there is in cars. This would be a foolish error because products-for-clients only appear highly-profitable within the context of the overall product ecosystem. BMW's financial services are profitable because it has a steady stream of luxury cars to finance without having to run a single ad.

Products-for-clients downstream from all other products. The costs of winning clients and running a business have been absorbed into those products, and now the only overheads associated with them are the direct costs.

A financial analyst might question the logic of Dent Global giving away £50k worth of books. In isolation, this would seem like a waste; in the context of our product ecosystem, this is one of the most profitable activities we do each year.

I often see businesses that do not become profitable until they have products in all four categories. Only when it has a product that gains attention, a product that builds trust, a product that creates revenue and a product that is highly profitable will the whole business work.

Between 1998 and 2013, Apple went from near bankruptcy to the most successful company in the world. The success was closely linked to the product ecosystem Steve Jobs innovated that moved people from PC to Mac. He gave away iTunes as a gift to PC users, the iPod became the ideal first Apple purchase (P4P), the core business was computers and devices linked together with iCloud and then the highly profitable content and media sales flowed from there (P4C).

Keep this in mind when developing your business – products and services don't make money; product and service *ecosystems* make money. Your business will become highly profitable when you have a strong offering in each of the four categories.

RAPID ACTION STEPS

1. Create a brochure for your core product or service that fully explains its features and benefits.
2. Add an additional element to your product package that

comes from another supplier, e.g. consulting can include an online learning component that is already produced by another provider.

3. Work with a supplier to create a digital gift product that can be downloaded from your website, no strings attached, e.g. an audio interview, a PDF report or an extended video that adds value.

A WORD FROM AN EXPERT

Nic Rixon built and sold a highly valuable product packaging business. He then went on to grow a global team of business coaches working with intellectual property. He says:

> *'People don't want your time and they don't want your expertise, they want a problem solved, they want a result and they want it better, cheaper, faster and with more emotional benefits. They want it done reliably, consistently and with very little effort on their part. Don't fall into the trap of thinking it's about you – your product is about the person buying and how they feel. When you really connect with what your customers* want *– let me say that again, want – you'll be able to create products that have true value for them. People remember how they were treated in the restaurant long after they have forgotten what they ate or how much it cost.'*

CHAPTER 10

SYSTEMS ASSETS

Predictability follows assets.

With systems assets, your business becomes simple, repeatable and predictable to run. Great businesses do not inflict problems and decisions on to their teams unnecessarily. If there's already a way of getting a result, repeat that way over and over again.

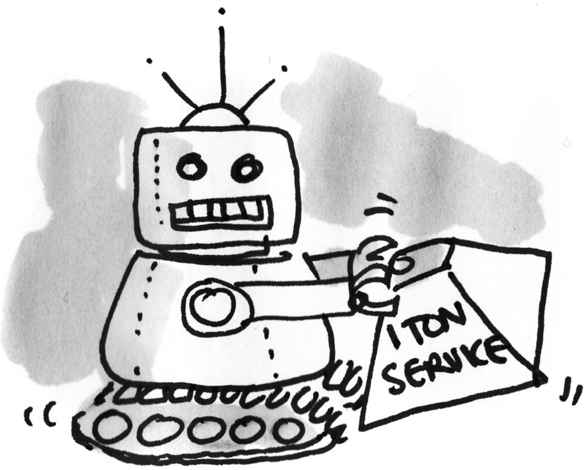
Systems take a few forms – documents like operations manuals, scripts, spread sheets or slide-decks; checklists that break a big job into lots of small steps; software that automates functions and machines that move things around. Systems can also rely heavily on media. You can create videos that train your team, animations that explain complex ideas in a matter of minutes, or content that helps your clients solve common problems themselves rather than putting pressure on your call centre.

Amazon is the King of systems. It has pioneered game-changing sales and marketing systems such as one-click, affiliate portals, Amazon recommendations, and more recently the speech recognition assistant Alexa that is always listening to your conversations for clues on what you might buy. Amazon's warehouse crawls with automated activity as robots race around moving products to the dispatch centre. The systems are so powerful that many customers are stunned when their purchase arrives in under 24 hours after being ordered.

Amazon has hundreds of thousands of affiliates recommending products in exchange for a commission. Its affiliate system automatically knows how much commission to allocate, compiling a report and issuing the payments with very little human oversight.

Your business, although a lot smaller than Amazon, can punch above its weight with carefully crafted systems. We live in a time where venture capital has backed thousands of companies to build useful systems for small businesses to subscribe to at little or no cost. There are systems for running teams, shipping products, collecting payments, managing enquires, resolving complaints and just about anything else your business might need. The baseplate of these systems has already been created, and you only need to customise them for your needs and string them together to do as much as they possibly can. Then you'll save an enormous cost in development but still reap all the benefits.

It's expensive and difficult to create a fully automated end-to-end system. Instead, make it your goal to use technology and systems to do the heavy-lifting for your business. If you tried to fully automate a business, the costs and creativity would make the task almost impossible, but technology with human oversight is a powerful combination that anyone can afford.



There are three areas to focus your attention on in systems:

ASSET 14: MARKETING AND SALES SYSTEMS

To drive leads, sales and referrals to your business at scale, you need strong systems. Firstly, you need a system that puts your message in front of the right people. This could be based around targeted Facebook ads, SEO optimised content, Google retargeted ads or any number of great tools that provide targeting. Your system could be based on affiliate systems or tested email marketing campaigns. Some businesses rely upon a system of selecting the right retail space that guarantees them a steady flow of prospects.

The important assets you'll need to plug in are images, marketing copy, video, audio and the targeting criteria. You know you have good lead generation systems when it would be hard to stop the leads flooding in. At Dent Global, we combine a blend of content distribution, ads, social-media, affiliate marketing and opt-in pages.

The result is a steady flow of 300–500 data rich leads every week hitting our database, and it would be difficult for us to turn it off.

The key is for you to combine your content, brand, data, products-for-prospects and other assets to innovate a system of marketing that suits you and generates a steady flow of business. The system isn't only about generating interest; you need to carry it all the way through to a sale. When prospective clients show interest, your system typically needs to allocate the lead to a sales person whom it arms with as much information as possible for them to have a sensible conversation with the lead. Involve the use of scripts and other sales aides in your system to make your sales people more effective.

When a customer buys, your system should 'on-board the client' so they feel great about their decision. Maybe it could send an email or some video content for them to watch; maybe it could send a welcome pack to their office or instruct your team to make time to meet with them. Make it part of your overall system to have reviews of your sales and marketing systems if ever your cost per lead exceeds a predetermined amount or your sales conversions fall below a certain point.

ASSET 15: MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION SYSTEMS

One of the most destructive things a team can do is focus too much energy on administration and management tasks that don't add value directly to the customers or future acquirers. If a sales person takes a day to collate her results and compile a report so that she can get paid her commissions, that costs the company and the sales person in missed opportunities. It should not take a long time to pay suppliers, collect money from clients, keep receipts or determine tax obligations. It should not be hard for team members to communicate and file important records.

A management and administration system needs to be able to report accurately what has happened in the past, forecast what the business expects to achieve in the future and provide useful information for making decisions in the moment.

A key asset is a dashboard that allows the team to see how the business is performing. Carefully select some of the metrics that drive performance and make sure they show up prominently on your dashboard. You might select metrics like cash at bank, payments collected, expected invoices, revenue per employee or monthly users; the general rule is that whatever you measure will improve.

Over the last 10 years, management and administration systems for small to medium businesses have had billions of dollars invested in their creation too. Industries of consultants who can support a business to set up, customise and improve these systems have emerged beside the software. Both the software and the support services have become affordable and usually only involve monthly subscriptions and small retainers.

As you blend all these services to find an overall solution that's right for you, keep a document that explains how they fit together in your business. Imagine that a new employee could join your team, read only this document, download the apps and fit in almost straight away.

Services like Xero, Receipt Bank, Lawbite, Slack, Trello, Evernote, Dropbox, Zoom, GoTo Webinar, Office360, Google Docs, MailChimp, Skype, Docusign, Scannable and many others can be considered must-haves for your business. Literally billions have been invested into their creation, and often you can get them for free.

Your business needs to ensure it keeps these systems updated with the relevant inputs so they can keep producing valuable insights and reports.

ASSET 16: OPERATIONS SYSTEMS

In this context, 'operations systems' refers to any system that ensures your customers get what they paid for in a predictable and delightful manner.

The absolute key to being successful long-term in business is to deliver remarkable value and surprise and delight your customers beyond their expectations. If you get this right, your customers become your marketing department and it's hard to keep up with the demand that is generated from their positive comments.

Uber grew to one of the word's largest transportation companies in under a decade without spending much money on advertising. It achieved this result because its operational systems are breathtakingly superior to anything that went before them.

The first time I used an Uber, its powerful system shocked me. I could see cars circling a few blocks away, and in a couple of clicks I had a car on its way and an accurate prediction of its arrival time. Without needing to talk to the driver, I was whisked to my destination and the payment was processed automatically. This seamless experience led hundreds of early users to tell thousands of their friends, and eventually those people told millions more people to get signed up.

How could your business be a little bit more asset driven when it comes to delivering value to your clients? Consider how your business could use video, apps, direct mail or events. Look for the systems that would make it predictable that your customers felt loved and appreciated by your brand.

At Dent we support our clients with a learning management system full of videos, checklists, activities and other resources. This system underpins and supports us in delivering value to clients. We don't expect this system to be the complete solution to every problem our clients may face, but we know it helps a lot.

It's also worth considering the assets you can share with your suppliers who help create the customer experience. In the same way as your company puts effort into on-boarding and managing staff, you can create on-boarding documents for your suppliers that explain how important they are and how best they can add value. It doesn't end there: you can also recognise their efforts with awards, thank you cards or referrals – all of this can be part organised into systems and documents.

You aren't necessarily striving for end-to-end automation that delivers everything to a client. Your people may still be involved in delivering the special touch, but ensure they aren't distracted doing things that could be done with a well-constructed operations system. With the right assets, the customer experience can be remarkable every time.

RAPID ACTION STEPS

1. Set up a highly targeted Facebook ad that you can let run for 12 weeks at a time to produce quality leads consistently at an acceptable price.
2. Generate an automatic monthly report that lets your team know how it performed for the month.
3. Systemise an email sequence that every new client gets to make them feel really happy to be doing business with you.

A word from an expert

Marianne Page spent 20+ years in a leadership role with McDonald's, developing both systems and the high performing teams to run them. She says:

> *'Systems aren't there to replace people, they are there to make life easier – your team's, your customers', yours. With the right systems in place your team can perform to their absolute best, and take ownership for what they do every day. Whatever you might think of McDonald's or their food, you can't help but be impressed by their ability to take a moody 16-year-old, who wouldn't dream of washing a dish or tidying their room at home, and turn them into a productive and positive team member within weeks – preparing food, handling money, working with suppliers and solving problems at a world-class level, with many going on to run multi-million dollar restaurants. Systems are McDonald's secret ingredient – and should be one of the key ingredients for every successful business owner looking to scale, franchise or sell their business.'*

CHAPTER 11

CULTURE ASSETS

High performing teams follow assets.

The true test of culture is your ability to attract, develop and retain highly skilled employees without paying above the odds for them. It's unlikely that someone will quit their well-paid, secure job for a lower paid position on your fledgling team unless there's something special going on – the flexible hours, the training or mentoring programme, the flat structure and open dynamic of your team, or the vision and values held by your organisation. All these magical ingredients make up the culture, and in order to scale them, carefully document them. You need the basics like job descriptions, accountability charts and workplace contracts alongside investment into advanced assets such as videos that explain the vision and values, on-boarding programmes, performance reviews and bonus structures.

For a small business, it's unlikely that you will attract high performing people at all. They already have top-paying jobs at exciting companies, so unless you're willing to give away large chunks of equity or offer some other radical benefit, you're simply not going to get them to leave their great jobs.

This means your viable options are either to start with passionate young people who need training and development or to hire people who need a lot more flexibility than the corporate world will offer (e.g. parents, remote workers, disabled workers, etc.). Your small business will need assets that train, develop and cater for these people. To the degree that you can document and formalise these assets, you will be able to attract an endless stream of great people on to your team. More importantly, you will keep up with the hiring, on-boarding and management of your expanding team.

As a team grows, the complexity grows exponentially. A team of eight people has over 100 possible variations of who could be in a meeting room. When you hit 50 people, the permutations and combinations run into the tens of thousands. It's a common experience for founders who grow a company from 0 to 50 people to discover staff who have been working at the company for weeks before they meet them. It's also common to discover in a team of 50 that there are romantic relationships blossoming, people who strongly dislike each other, informal sub-committees meeting regularly and groups who are discussing leaving the organisation to form a business together. Without a well-crafted set of culture assets, all this complexity mounts into an unholy mess and the company can implode.

The ultimate success is to create assets that attract, retain, develop and manage people who are better than the founder – the ability to hire 'overlings' rather than underlings in every role. Only great assets will allow that to happen.

Key culture assets are:

- Documented role descriptions
- Accountability/organisation chart
- On-boarding process
- Team handbook
- Training videos
- Structured performance reviews
- Ongoing training and development programmes
- Remuneration and rewards structure
- Disciplinary and complaints policy
- Flexibility policy
- Communications tools, maxims and decision making guides
- Key performance indicators

There are essentially four types of people you'll need to attract on to your team:

ASSET 17: KEY PEOPLE OF INFLUENCE

Key People of Influence are the leaders, figureheads and rainmakers who can do deals, open partnerships, lead teams, liaise with media, inspire, innovate and represent the brand. They will solve problems, attract A-players and grow the business faster than the founder could.

Richard Branson is known, liked and trusted globally as a billionaire who's built Virgin into one of the world's most recognisable brands. His ability to hire top CEOs to lead the various divisions of the Virgin Group is legendary. Regularly senior executives will leave stable, high-paying jobs for the opportunity to work alongside Branson, and in many cases they take a pay-cut to do so.

Businesses that have Key People of Influence outperform those that don't. The assets that attract Key People of Influence are often the assets that exist within the business – a world-class product, exceptional intellectual property, strong systems, ample funding or a powerful position in the market. Additionally, they look for a culture that will help them to attract other A-players.

One asset I recommend is to write and publish a book. This is a powerful asset for attracting clients, but even more powerful at attracting great people on to your team. Sir Richard Branson has said that his recent business books were written as culture documents for the 60,000 people who work at Virgin more than the general public. Many of these 60,000 people first fell in love with the brand when they read a book like *Screw It, Let's Do It*.

ASSET 18: SALES AND MARKETING

Dynamic sales and marketing people are sought after in most companies. They bring in a steady stream of prospects, qualify them, warm them up, present the right products and services, expand opportunities, collect testimonials and land money into the bank account.

In the marketing role, there tend to be two types of people. The first is highly creative and loves the words and imagery that get people to engage. The second type is someone who has a deep love of data, measurement, testing and statistics. The ultimate aim is to combine the two types. They'll then place stunning ads, measure results and improve rapidly.

When it comes to sales people, they normally fit into the camp of being either a 'hunter' or a 'farmer'. Hunters go aggressively after new business. They are charming, warm and exuberant and aren't afraid to ask tough questions, get playful and close a sale on the spot. Farmers are nurturers who take longer to foster relationships and attend to people's needs. They are diligent, detail-orientated and methodical in their approach. Farmers are much more likely to perform well in roles that require a long-term relationship to develop over many years. Hunters are much more likely to come back to the office with a big initial order from a new client, but they aren't as good at following up every month to build the relationship.

Sales and marketing people leverage the other assets like content, data, branding and great products in order to succeed. Even the best people can't sell a second rate product with a dull brand. Having great assets in your company – powerful ads, landing pages, videos, case studies – will attract top performers in the sales and marketing roles, but you also need to create assets that are specific to developing these people. You'll need assets that quickly test if they're a good fit with the values and chemistry of others on the team. Develop assets that make the first 90 days of work a memorable experience that sets people up for a great five years.

Some of these assets we have at Dent Global are videos about our vision and values, team handbooks, training providers our team can use, recordings of successful sales calls, reports on successful marketing campaigns and online forums to discuss challenges and opportunities in real-time.

ASSET 19: MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

A great manager translates the vision of the leader into small, actionable steps, delegates responsibilities, measures performance, generates reports and ensures the smooth internal operations of the business.

Administrators are able to stay finely attuned to the financials and forecasting of the business. They know if the business is heading for a cash flow shortage and they seek out financial solutions. They don't let money slip through the cracks or important paperwork go missing. They stay on top of bad payers, managing expectations and relationships with suppliers. Good managers and administration staff empower the business to run as effectively as possible, making adjustments and improvements while adhering to budgets.

It's common for managers and administrators to feel disconnected from a high-performance team because often their work isn't as easy to measure as sales and marketing, and customers rarely rave about them. Treat your administration team as the enablers of high performance who ensure that resources are allocated optimally. It's important that your culture assets acknowledge the role they play and showcase examples of high-performance in that role.

Capturing case studies is a powerful approach for creating culture assets. When someone does something that really benefits the organisation and is aligned to its values and the vision, make it a priority to record a video interview about that achievement. This could be as simple as using a phone and shooting an interview to share with the team (and new team members who join).

One of the decisions we made at Dent was to encourage our managers and administrators to create and capture assets for the business. We have trained the team in the *24 Assets* method and everyone is on the lookout for potential assets that can cement our culture.

ASSET 20: TECHNICIANS

Every business exists to solve problems for clients. For that to happen, every business needs people who have technical skills that relate to value delivery. A hair salon needs hairdressers, a digital agency needs designers, a training company needs facilitators, a dental clinic needs nurses, and so on.

Technical people build the products and deliver the services your business offers. Google has an army of coders who constantly improve its products. A tourist using Google Maps may never meet the engineers who built the platform, but they judge Google by how well it works. If Google doesn't have great technical people, its products suffer and it loses its position as a market leader.

Increasingly, the success of the customer experience relies upon the exceptional technicians who can deliver it. Reliable, dedicated, passionate, technically skilled people are vital for the long-term success of the business. Never underestimate the value of great technical ability in your organisation. People might discover your company through sales and marketing, but they will stay with you because of the technical capability you demonstrate.

Your technicians need assets that develop and maximise their skills. They need world-class tools, the ability to focus on important tasks without disruption, training and time to think or recharge. Technical people thrive in environments where they learn and grow with other skilled technicians. It's powerful to encourage them to collaborate, share and learn together as part of their role, and capture some of their best insights to put into a report that new members of the team can learn from.

Technicians also need to feel that if they create an asset that produces a huge efficiency, they won't do themselves out of a job. Sometimes technical people have ideas that could make their current role redundant and keep quiet about them for fear of being fired after the new system is in place. Be very clear that asset creation makes technicians more valuable to the company, not less valuable.

Quick tip: don't use the word 'staff' or 'employees' if you want a high-performance team. Can you imagine a professional basketball team referring to its players as employees or staff? Find a term for your people that reflects the level of performance you expect from them. I believe there is no such thing as an entrepreneur, there are only entrepreneurial teams. Mark Zuckerberg would not be seen as a top entrepreneur without the people who work at Facebook. Create an entrepreneurial team by honouring the entrepreneurial spirit in every person in the company.

RAPID ACTION STEPS

1. Create a video for new employees to watch that will explain the vision and values of the company.
2. Have a weekly meeting that everyone feels adds massive value. Each person can cover what they are working on, what they're struggling with and how they're measuring success for the week ahead.
3. Write a description for the key roles in your company that clearly sets out what success looks like.

A WORD FROM AN EXPERT

Julia Langkraehr built a retail business in over 1,000 locations across the UK, Germany and the rest of Europe. After successfully exiting, she formed the consultancy Bold Clarity to help companies build strong teams. She says:

> *'Culture is often confused with having free food, beanbags and office dogs. High-performance culture has a lot more to do with the way the team interacts, the quality of people who stay, the quality of people who leave and the clarity each person has for their role. Culture assets are working when your team stays together and produces output that exceeds expectations. I want to see a culture where the big picture goals*

are clear to everyone. I want to see a team that can identify issues, discuss them and solve them. I want to see a culture where the team chooses the right goals and achieves them every 90 days. When that's happening consistently, you've got the right culture assets in place."'

CHAPTER 12

FUNDING ASSETS

Accessing funding for your business follows assets.

Your funding assets are the key to your business accessing money to develop your assets further. If you have the rights assets in place, it's easy to get funding. If you're buying a house, the bank wants independently produced documents – payslips from an employer; a building inspection from a certified builder; a report from a quantity surveyor. If you can show the bank all these documents, they will likely lend you the money to purchase the house. It's the same for other assets like shares, art, bonds or land. Lenders or investors want to see documentation to prove the asset's value, the ownership structure and the serviceability.

Likewise, if your business needs funding, you'll need to show some independently produced documentation to an investor. But for some strange reason, many startups don't produce documentation from top independent providers. They show a business plan they wrote themselves, a valuation they made up and some random slides about their ideas for the future. Then they wonder why they can't get funding.

With high-quality, independently produced funding assets you can access investment or lending on good terms and you can use that funding to build out the other assets in your business.

To access funding in a business, we need the following documentation assets:

ASSET 21: BUSINESS PLAN

Your Business Plan clearly defines where the business is heading, the challenges it will face, the risks it will reduce, the opportunities it will develop and the returns you expect. If you're building a lifestyle boutique, you might be able to use a Business Plan template to sense check your thinking and map your future. You can then work with your accountant to improve the plan before seeking a loan from the bank or an investor. If you're building a performance business, though, it's imperative that you commission an independent Business Plan from a reputable advisory firm. Your investors are less likely to question the assumptions in your Business Plan if a professional created it.

Investors can tell straight away when a Business Plan has been created by an entrepreneur. It's like someone designing their own architectural plans to build a house – the engineers would take one look and know they'd not been professionally produced. Furthermore, when a plan has a stamp from a respected firm, investors trust that everything will be in order. Large companies spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to get the likes of Boston Consulting to produce Business Plans not because they can't do it themselves, but because there's more value in having a reputable firm involved.

You may wonder how a Business Plan can be created by a professional without your involvement – it isn't. They will interview you extensively and prepare the Business Plan based on all the information you share with them and add their own objective perspective. Some people may ask why the business planning company doesn't steal your ideas. These firms understand that the plan is only as good as its execution and therefore they stick to what they do best, letting you do your best to implement your plan.

If an investor likes the look of the Business Plan, they will need to know the terms of the investment. They'll want to see how much you're raising, what percentage that will get them, how the funds will be used and when they'll get their money back with a return. This is documented in an Investor Memorandum. Once again, particularly for a performance business, this should not be produced by the entrepreneur. It must be done by a professional advisor. Additionally, an investor will want to see the Shareholders'/Lenders' Agreement so they know what to expect legally while they are an investor. The other document that is important to investors is the Capitalisation Table (or Cap Table for short) which shows the existing shareholders of the company and the number of shares they hold.

ASSET 22: VALUATION

Harvard Business School identifies dozens of valid ways to arrive at a company valuation –future cash flows; the likely sale price minus a discount based on the time until liquidity; comparable prices for similar business sales; the costs to set up the company again; the strategic value of preventing a competitor from owning it. The list goes on and on.

When it boils down to the reality of valuation, a company is worth whatever people are willing to pay for it. One thing, however, is a sure-fire way to devalue a business and that is to have no independent valuation.

I've seen entrepreneurs trying to raise money at a valuation of £2 million, and when asked why they have that value, they've said, 'We need £200k investment, but we don't want to give away more than 10% of the company.' Hardly justification for a seven-figure value. Those who do raise money are able to show an independently produced valuation that explains how it was calculated.

The valuation report will normally show the financials or projected financials along with industry data on what other companies are worth and potential acquirers. This is important because it indicates how the business will be valued at a later date when the investor wants to liquidate their holdings. If they invest based upon a multiple of profit, it is reasonable that they will exit based on a multiple of profit.

If you show your investor or lender a valuation and they question it, make sure you can say, 'I didn't make this up, it was created by an independent professional.'

The ultimate valuation of a business is a public listing where the stock is valued moment by moment on an exchange. All things being equal, publicly listed companies often achieve higher valuations than their private counterparts because they're perceived as less risky, more liquid and transparent. When the value of your business equity has been verified through transactions, it becomes an asset that your business can leverage. Each year many companies are bought and sold based on shares in the company being used as consideration for the deal.

If you want to know more about business valuation, grab a copy of *What's Your Business Worth?* on Amazon. You can also get a data-driven valuation for your business cheaply and quickly at www.bizequity.com

ASSET 23: STRUCTURE

Businesses are more or less fundable depending on their structure and the jurisdiction they're based in.

Investors want three things from a structure – control over their investment, reduced risk to their investment and easy liquidity to unlock their returns. A good structure in a familiar jurisdiction with appropriate safeguards is appealing and will give more funding options.

A business can be structured in many ways. Here are a number of structures you can talk with your accountant about:

Sole trader. This is an individual who is running a business themselves. Normally this is not a fundable structure other than by small loan/overdraft facilities or investment from friends/family.

Limited liability company. This is the most common business structure, designed to limit the risk of the business to the business itself. The owners of a small limited liability company are normally asked for personal guarantees when raising money.

Subsidiary company. This is a limited liability company that is owned by another company (parent company), and for that reason it typically has smaller funding capability than the parent company.

Partnership. This structure formally organises the business interests of groups of people. It's common within professional services like accounting and law, and often the partners all need to agree to funding requirements.

Discretionary trust. A trust structure is a more complex entity that holds assets in limbo and can disperse benefits to beneficiaries. It has discretion as to how, when and to whom it disperses benefits.

Unit trust. This is a trust that has a set number of beneficiaries (units). It has prearranged rules on how much is distributed to each beneficiary.

Charity/not-for-profit. This structure operates in much the same way as a company, but there are no shareholders. Therefore profit cannot be disbursed and must be redistributed back into the activities of the charity or not-for-profit organisation.

Unlisted public limited company. This is a company that declares its finances publicly and agrees to complex regulations which makes it more attractive to investors. This is normally a company that is preparing to publicly list its shares on a stock exchange.

Listed public limited company. This is a public company that is listed on a stock exchange, making it easier to buy and sell shares. It often attracts the highest valuation because it is less risky for investors and offers greater liquidity than an unlisted or private company.

The second consideration is the jurisdiction of the company. Even within the USA, each State has its own regulations and tax laws for companies. Around the world, countries try to attract companies with low tax rates and low regulations.

This doesn't mean that you should necessarily set up in the lowest tax country. Vanuatu in the South Pacific Islands has a low tax rate, but investors don't want to invest there because its legal system is not set up to protect them adequately. There's no easy way to enforce agreements or transparency once the investment has been made.

Investors and lenders normally like to deal in major economies like the USA, UK, EU, Australia, Canada or Singapore. Normally, investors and lenders prefer to deal in the jurisdiction that they themselves are based in or know. In the USA, many investors only invest in companies based in the particular States they are familiar with.

Restructuring a company is expensive, disruptive and time consuming. If you change jurisdictions or trading vehicle, you'd better be sure it's worth it and all your investors are in favour. However, if done correctly, a restructuring can add a lot of value and investment potential. For example, a limited company in South Africa that becomes a public company in the UK will become more valuable and investable.

The structure of the business can also include the way the business is controlled. Facebook is structured so that it's founder Mark Zuckerberg is ultimately in control even after his percentage ownership is diluted by investors. If you invest into Facebook shares, you have to agree to this structure that reduces your power.

Smaller companies use shareholder agreements to formalise issues of control over information rights, appointing directors, the ability to block a sale and other structural issues.

ASSET 24: RISK MITIGATION

Every investor or lender is interested in the opportunity or upside of their investment, but equally important to them is the potential loss of capital. They want to see assets that protect the business from harm and their money from evaporating.

There are a number of risks that all investors are concerned about. Whether they ask you or not, they generally have these sorts of questions buzzing around in their minds:

- What if the main people leave or can't work?
- What if the leadership team makes stupid decisions?
- What if someone runs off with the money?
- What if there's a dispute between shareholders and/or directors?

- What if the CEO/Founder isn't performing?
- What if the strategy isn't working as planned?
- What if the business gets sued?
- What if the business gets hacked?
- What if the business is impacted by a rare event (fire, flood, theft, etc)?
- What if the business fails?

These concerns can be addressed with a few key assets:

A well-constructed Shareholders' Agreement. In addition to clarifying and formalising the company structure, this document addresses in advance all the scenarios that are important to shareholders from a perspective of risk. It covers things like how dividends will be paid, how disputes will be resolved, how new shareholders will be vetted, how important decisions must be agreed and how Directors and leaders will be appointed or changed.

An experienced Board of Directors who are known and trusted offers investors huge comfort because it reduces the chance of poor decisions or unethical behaviour. It also maximises the likelihood of good decisions and increased value.

Guarantees, warranties and debentures. When investors have access to a back-up plan, they feel safer. If you guarantee the investment with your house, you can almost certainly borrow up to the value of your home equity because now it's you taking the risk and not the investors. If you warrant that they will get their money back first in the event of a liquidation, it reduces their risk, provided they believe a liquidation would cover the capital they put in.

You will need to discuss these options with a lawyer who can help create suitable protections for your investors.

Policy. If you can showcase how well you have thought through legal, operational or cyber-security risks and mitigated them with strong policy, you will improve your chances of investment. Show that you have policy in place for protecting your business assets and the capital that has been trusted to you. Ensure that the policy isn't a token document, but a strictly enforced procedure that offers genuine risk reductions.

Insurance. Some risk can be externalised through insurance, such as professional indemnity insurance or 'key person insurance' that protects against the loss of a person who is vital to the business. Having an insurance policy that protects against harm can be the ingredient that makes an investment or a loan proceed.

These risk mitigation assets add to the overall fundability of your business and ensure you get the highest valuation on the best terms possible.

RAPID ACTION STEPS

1. Get a business valuation from www.bizequity.com.
2. Hire someone outside the company to write a Business Plan and Forecast.
3. Talk to an accountant and lawyer about ways to improve your structure and legal agreements in preparation for investment. You may not go ahead with the investment, but it will get you thinking differently about your business.

4. Strengthen your Board of Directors by appointing an experienced individual with a good reputation.

A WORD FROM AN EXPERT

Jeremy Harbour has bought and sold over 50 companies and now runs a private equity firm in Singapore. He says:

> *'There's so much money sitting in the investor community looking for opportunities to invest. Billions upon billions of dollars have to be invested each year, and traditional investments simply aren't producing returns like they used to. The problem is often that entrepreneurs fail to present their business as a suitable investment. Small companies appear risky, illiquid and unable to handle invested funds. When you can solve those problems, there's no shortage of funds available. A big part of the solution is having funding assets that explain your business in the language of an investor.'*

SUMMARY

ASSETS ARE THE KEY

Revenue, profit, scale, valuation, fun and freedom all follow assets.

Consider what it would feel like to have all 24 of these assets functioning at a remarkable level. Imagine that you have professional videos online that drive sales every week, a brand guidelines document that makes everything in your company look perfectly on message, highly talented people fighting for jobs on your team, and a Business Plan and valuation that allow you to raise all the money you want without losing control of your baby. How great would it be to take a six-week holiday to a remote location that barely has an internet connection and not worry about how the business will perform without you there?

I can tell you from personal experience a business can genuinely feel like an asset – as solid as a house, as predictable as a rental property, as flexible as owning shares and as scalable as a website. If your business is run as an ecosystem of highly functioning assets, it will not be a drain on your energy; it will leave you feeling proud, uplifted and free.

Amazing things happen within my business empire that I don't instigate. We win awards that I didn't know we had entered. We hire talented people whom I've never met. We deliver great value to clients whom I've had no contact with. We sell products that I'm not familiar with. We have seven-figure revenue coming from cities that I rarely visit. All of this is possible because my team understands how to create and utilise assets.

I don't write books about business; I run businesses and write books about what I've learned. I'm sharing my learnings because I want you to shortcut the time it took me to implement these strategies. I'd love for you to achieve more in the next three years than I did in the last 10.

Depending on where you are in your business journey, you might be feeling overwhelmed by the *24 Assets* methodology. It might feel like I've piled 24 projects on to your to-do list that are each complex, time consuming and expensive. I get it. Business is tough at times, and it can seem like there's an endless list of things that are important, urgent or both. You probably feel stretched already with your time, money and focus – developing the 24 assets will take effort but it will be worth it.

If I've learned anything in the past 10 years of working with entrepreneurs it's that the easy stuff isn't very valuable. Is there an easy approach to doing *anything* of value? Are there a few exercises that give you the perfect body? Are there quick steps to raising happy children? Is there a shortcut to having a long, healthy marriage? Is there a cheap approach to building your dream home? Entrepreneurs who are constantly looking for the quick-fix, the cheap shortcut or the magic bullet stay broke, spending decades in struggle.

Entrepreneurs who expect to build a business over seven years with plenty of blood, sweat and tears get more done and build more value. In all the valuable areas of life there are strategies that work, best practices to follow and philosophies to learn from, but ultimately it takes effort, creativity and commitment to get rewards. The desire for a smooth road is what makes people feel every little bump. As soon as you accept that the road is long and rough, it suddenly seems smoother and more manageable. Especially if you have a good map for where you are heading.

The *24 Assets* approach is about giving you a framework to focus your energy. But it isn't easy. It requires you to lean in and build value in a multitude of ways, allocating money, time and creativity across two dozen areas of business.

The next section of the book is designed to give you some guidelines to follow as you implement the *24 Assets* framework into your business. It will help you dig deep, stay focused and get the results.

PART 3

ASSET CREATION

CHAPTER 13

WHAT ARE YOUR CORE ASSETS?

All the 24 assets are important to make up your business, but at least two will be highly relevant to you. These are your core assets. Protect and value them above all others.

Google's core assets are its intellectual property (in particular its algorithms) and its culture (its ability to attract people who can keep innovating at warp speed). If everything else failed, with the best search algorithms and the smartest people, Google could rebuild its other assets quickly.

Apple's core assets are its brand and its products. This business almost died when the products became sloppy and the brand boring. It was revitalised when the products became world class again and the 'Think Different' campaign reminded people why they loved Apple.

Airbnb is built on market and systems assets. It defined a new category in the market (position) and has a huge database of houses available to rent, combining that with a totally innovative system for listing and managing properties for short stays.

Microsoft's core assets are funding and market. One breakthrough moment for Bill Gates was securing a big channel to market with IBM. Ever since, the business has remained dominant because it is so effective at managing channel partners. The other big breakthrough was when Bill Gates successfully secured a high valuation and did an IPO (initial public offering) at a time when it was rare for a tech startup to get serious funding. As the most funded tech company, Microsoft was able to spend its way out of most problems, and to this day, MSFT shares trade at a value equivalent to 29 years of profit.

Amazon's core assets are systems and market. Jeff Bezos developed the simple payment system called '1-Click' in 1999 and it catapulted Amazon ahead of other eCommerce platforms. To this day, the sales, operations and delivery systems are a huge asset to Amazon and something it innovates constantly. Additionally, Amazon is a leader in data, positioning and channels to market. It probably knows more about what you like to buy than you do.

These businesses are now strong in all 24 assets. Amazon has a huge valuation and is a globally recognised brand; Microsoft has a treasure trove of intellectual property and a distinct culture; Apple has world-class systems; Airbnb has a huge funding capability. But they took off in the early days because of a few core assets and then developed the others.

Double down on at least two of your business's assets and become world class at these. All of the assets are important, but the core assets are religion – the linchpins that all else hangs on. More often than not, your core assets are the ones your business was founded on. At the very beginning, there was something special that emerged to give you an edge in your market.

If you ask your customers, 'What matters most when you work with us?' or 'What are the things that drew you to working with us?' the answers will reveal your core assets.

BizEquity.com offers a revolutionary approach to valuing businesses. A valuation from an accountant can cost many thousands of dollars and take several weeks to complete. BizEquity uses data and algorithms to deliver a valuation report instantly for a few hundred dollars.

The CEO of BizEquity, Mike Carter, knew his core assets from day one. Before he developed the other assets of the business, he went all-in on acquiring 33 million records of data and working with professors at Harvard to construct a bulletproof algorithm to crunch it. When I first met Mike, the team was small, the brand and products were at an early stage of development, but it didn't matter because the core assets were leaps and bounds ahead of the market.

Over the last three years, Mike Carter and his team have kept the core assets strong while developing the other 24 assets to add value to the whole business.

The *24 Assets* system can't save your business if you don't have strong core assets. It might look good, but it is going nowhere without you putting extra effort into the core assets. They give you the power to meet customers' needs in a way that is better, cheaper, faster or gives greater emotional payoff than other businesses. The degree to which you facilitate that is the degree to which your core assets are clearly valuable.

This requires self-awareness, curiosity and honesty. Identify what matters most to your market and then become your own harshest critic, digging for flaws in your core assets and resolving them.

FARMING FOR ASSETS

When my wife Aléna buys a turkey for Christmas lunch, she does her research. She starts by Googling the term 'organic turkey farm UK' and a list of results appears on her screen. She then looks through the pages for clues that she's found the type of turkey she's looking for – one that has had a healthy, happy life (except for the last few minutes).

A little place called Graig Farm in Wales caught her eye. On the webpage is information about the family that owns and runs the farm, a video series about their farming philosophy, a section that talks about the daily routine of the farm and the type of food the turkeys eat. There are hundreds of customer reviews, photos, lots of awards and statistics. After 15 minutes on this website, Aléna had no reason to shop around any further. She bought a 5kg bird for the price quoted on the website and it arrived 48 hours later, then she told several of her friends and our dinner guests about the quality of the farm. They too went on to buy from this family business.

Other farmers in the UK may look at the website and say, ‘So what? That’s how most family run farms look.’ So why can’t they sell their produce for half the price asked by this little boutique farm?

For any organic farm, the core asset is its quality product. When the core assets are strong, especially in established industries, the other assets give a business the edge. The family at Graig Farm recognised they were sitting on thousands of potential assets and formalised them, putting it all online for Aléna to see.

Almost all the assets I have talked about in this book are closer to you than you may think. You probably already do something that could be entered for an award or have photos on your phone that would win hearts and minds if more people saw them. You may package up products and services, but you’ve not given that package a unique name. Many assets are right there, waiting for you to formalise them.

To gain some perspective, you need to get some distance from your business. A masterpiece isn't recognisable if your nose is pressed against the canvas. Likewise, being too close to your business prevents you from seeing its real value. Step back and appreciate it. Go out and talk to people who can offer a perspective. Customers can give great insights, as can investors.

One of the best perspectives you can get is from a person who's built the type of business you aspire to. When someone has previously built a business that runs like an asset, they can easily see what's missing from other people's enterprises. A performance business entrepreneur can glance at a startup and know what sort of a future it has. A lifestyle entrepreneur knows what you need in the business and what can be cut out in order to enjoy more time on holiday. Be curious and open to every perspective that comes back to you.

First-rate suppliers also know what's wrong with your business (within their field of expertise). A book publisher, a digital agency or a finance professional can often reveal gaps in your thinking. Many times, I have walked into the offices of a supplier to talk about an idea I've cooked up only to be told that it won't work (for good reasons) and then offered an alternative.

A business accelerator is powerful because you'll be surrounded by people who aren't close to your business but are encouraged to offer feedback and ideas. In this environment are experts and experienced entrepreneurs as well as dozens of peers to draw upon for advice.

I am always blown away to see ideas generated by people in vastly different industries. In Dent's accelerators, I've seen mortgage brokers teaching fashion photographers how to create repeat business in a totally new way. I've seen the CEO of a plastics manufacturer bouncing systems ideas around with the Managing Partner of a family law practice. These ideas are groundbreaking because people in different industries can often see value that's hiding right under your nose.

You already have a big farm that's endlessly growing assets. Identify, capture, formalise and utilise them.

CHAPTER 14

BUILDING YOUR ASSETS

CAN YOU BUILD A HOUSE?

I've been inside hundreds of houses. I've seen tens of thousands of houses from the outside. I have no idea how to build one. If I tried to build a house, I would fail because I don't know enough about the foundations, the electrical wiring or the plumbing. Even if I managed to get some sort of structure in place, I would struggle to sell it because experienced buyers would spot the signs of an inexperienced owner-builder.

The same is true for building a business. People who try to build businesses on their own often leave out crucial elements of each asset, and these errors accumulate. Eventually when they attempt to sell their business, the buyer points out their shortcomings and the sale price drops well below their expectations.

I used to wonder why big businesses wasted money working with expensive suppliers when they could have done the work in-house.

Why would a bank get an agency to develop its branding assets for £400k? Why would a telecommunications company hire a consulting firm to create a team training and development process? It initially made no sense to me.

Then I thought about it in another context. A property developer works with leading architects and engineers. They sign deals with estate agents to sell the properties and town planners to liaise with the local council. Experienced suppliers not only get the job done right, they also add value to the asset. Buyers trust and will pay more for a property that's been developed alongside award-winning suppliers.

When you're building a business, the suppliers you choose add to its value and scale. Certain suppliers are best for building a lifestyle business – typically they provide off-the-shelf customisable products and services that support a small business to focus on its core assets. Other suppliers are perfectly suited for developing a performance business that has a high valuation – they custom build assets that make a business extra special and attractive to institutional investors or acquirers.

Since 2007, I've worked closely with Steven Oddy who runs SOtechnology, a multi-award winning digital agency (www.sotechnology.co.uk). Over the years, he's developed large chunks of Dent's digital strategy and ensured that we are always two steps ahead of our industry. He suggested a data gathering asset that cost £15,000 to create and generated over £2 million in sales over three years. He also suggested that we create a blog for industry influencers to post content on. It generates over 10,000 unique visitors to our site each month, and it cost just £6,000 to produce and £300 a month to manage.

Another supplier is a multi-award winning film production business Really Bright Media (www.reallybrightmedia.com) which happens to be co-founded by my sister Justine Priestley. Each month I go into the London studio and record 90 minutes of interview questions that its directors talk me through. This one activity produces dozens of video assets that we use for marketing, team training and added value for clients. I always marvel at how 90 minutes of me answering questions somehow turns into professional looking content that will serve our business in a multitude of ways.

I work with Lucy McCarraher and Joe Gregory at Rethink Press (www.rethinkpress.com) to produce my books. They take my rough draft manuscript and turn it into a high-quality publication. With decades of experience, they know all the tweaks and refinements that go into creating a successful book. In the UK business book charts, at any given time you'll often see three or four of their creations in the top ten because they know what works.

When you work with successful, experienced, award-winning suppliers to build your assets, life gets easier. You don't have to pretend to be an expert in film production, design, publishing, coding, animation, technology, accounting, law or team training. Your suppliers will know what the industry trends are and how to produce assets that will retain value even when you're away on holiday or exit the business. They know what ideas to keep and what to throw away. A great supplier will come to you with ideas; they won't let you pursue a short-term fad or something that's now out of date.

If an entrepreneur is trying to save money by working with average suppliers, or worse doing everything themselves, they're building a business that isn't worth anything long-term. This is painful. It means they can sacrifice decades of their life without a payoff.

When you work with great suppliers, you build more valuable assets faster.

EVERY PROBLEM IS AN ASSET DEFICIENCY

It's easy to throw people at a problem. If you don't have enough sales, hire more sales people. If customers are complaining, hire a customer service manager. Accounts in a mess? Bring in a new bookkeeper.

Most problems are symptoms of not having an asset in place. Sales performance could dramatically improve without the need for any new sales people if the business released a set of podcasts featuring high-profile industry experts. The accounts could be in a mess because there's no on-boarding process for sales people explaining the importance of correctly entering information into the CRM system. Complaining customers might transform into flag-waving fans if you have a portal for them to log into and solve their own query. Any unique methodology that your business develops could provide each and every client with additional value and certainty. Then they'd be likely to tell others about this method rather than complaining that they didn't get what they wanted.

Hiring people isn't necessarily a bad thing. If you hire people who are going to sweat the assets and improve them, you're on the right path. When Starbucks hires an extra person, it knows it will earn another $1,000 per month of profit from that person utilising the Starbucks assets. The new person will use the systems, represent the brand, sell the products, generate more data and even increase the Starbucks valuation. Because the assets are in place, hiring a new person is a smart thing to do.

But if the assets are not in place, more people equals more headaches. New people who aren't given great systems, products, training, branding and IP to leverage don't tend to improve the business. Then if you throw people at problems, your RPP drops fast. There's no such thing as a white-knight employee who will come in and develop your business for you – employees can only be as good as the assets you give them allow for.

If you don't earn enough money to live an exciting global lifestyle filled with travel, adventure and abundance, you probably don't have enough business assets. If I were to give you a property portfolio of 24 nice houses which would be 100% yours to own, rent, sell or mortgage, how would you feel about making money next year? Would you be stressed about your income, future and livelihood? Would you feel safe taking a holiday? Would you be hiring dozens of people to help you? My guess is you'd feel a lot more relaxed because you'd have a strong asset portfolio behind you.

It's now time for you to develop digital assets that give you the same sense of freedom, security and contribution people once felt from owning houses. When you address the 'asset deficiency' in your business, you'll have income and increasing value regardless of what you do with your time.

CHAPTER 15

THE ASSET CREATION CYCLE

Asset creation goes through a predictable cycle in order to become something that's remarkable, and each of your 24 assets will have to go through this cycle. Entrepreneurship is hard because there's a lot to do to make all 24 assets stand out but that's also why your business will be highly valuable when it's done. The cycle of valuable asset creation goes through these steps:

CONCEPTS AND IDEAS

Ideas are exciting and fun but get way too much credit. When people tell me they have a valuable idea, I immediately disagree with them and say ideas are worthless. Ideas only have potential if they are taken on a long and arduous adventure. Microsoft had the concept of the iPad long before Apple, but didn't take it through the asset creation cycle as quickly as Apple did.

At the idea phase, ask yourself whether you are willing to take it to its ultimate conclusion. A good question to ask is, 'Would I run with this idea for several years receiving almost nothing in return for my efforts?' A great idea is one that you'll pursue even when your friends seem to be making more money doing something you could be doing too – and you don't care.

Another question is, 'Does this idea leverage or multiply my existing skills, experiences and assets?' Virgin has a strong brand asset, market asset and culture asset that Richard Branson can use to enhance almost any product. When he chooses ideas to devote his time to, he looks for products that leverage his existing brand, market and culture assets. Unless you're young or willing to start over completely (which I don't often recommend), your ideas should build against each other and create a multiplier effect.

Within the context of your existing business, brainstorm ideas for each of the 24 assets. Good ideas happen when you allow yourself to generate bad ideas too.

James Altucher, author of *Choose Yourself*, says, 'If you can't come up with 10 ideas, you should come up with 20.' Take the pressure off and get a volume of ideas before you start to judge. If you are coming up with a list of potential brand ambassadors, don't shoot down a suggestion because you don't know how you would contact a particular person. At a later point, you can explore your options and refine the list. In the ideas stage, let them flow.

CONSTRUCT A BRIEFING DOCUMENT

After you have an idea, construct a brief for a supplier. This could take the form of a Word document, a video, a slide-deck or a set of drawings. Your goal is to put as much important detail into the brief as possible – show clippings of existing work you love, do screen recordings that show websites you admire, put together slides about your perfect audience.

When you have a briefing document, sit down with some trusted people and pitch your idea to them. They could include your team, potential clients, friendly investors or experts. You want them to criticise the idea as well as praise it.

My mentor Mike Harris (who built three multi-billion dollar businesses) said to me, 'Embrace the critics.' He loved it when people gave him negative feedback – rather than being offended, he became curious and asked them lots of questions. He believed that the gift of honest negative feedback was gold dust that you rarely get even when you pay a team of consultants.

After harnessing the feedback and making changes, you can then select suppliers who can begin prototyping.

SELECT YOUR SUPPLIERS

Don't build your ideas yourself – it doesn't work. You have your core competency which is probably quite narrow. For everything else, use an excellent supplier to get it right.

Present your briefing document to your suppliers, and be sure to tell them the outcome you want. Be open to their input – sometimes suppliers can help you get to the same outcome faster and cheaper if you're not rigid on your ideas. It's worth making the stretch to work with suppliers who are a little bit out of your current league. Suppliers who serve businesses you admire will help you lift up to their standard.

If you have great suppliers, it's easier to get funding too. If you were an investor and you had to choose between a company working with award winning suppliers or a team that was trying to do everything itself, which would you put your money into? Most investors are reassured to see wise choices in suppliers.

If paying for great suppliers is a problem, you might want to begin by developing your funding assets so that you can raise the money to build a valuable business rather than wasting your time.

With a compelling briefing document, you'll get to meet great suppliers to discuss, bounce ideas, prototype, design, code, record, edit, draw and create together. The chemistry will be dynamic at times and frustrating at others, but it will feel like you are making real progress.

Until it's done.

BETA VERSION

Despite your best efforts, the first outcome will be underwhelming. Sure your idea will show some promise and a few early adopters will love it (because they see where it's going), but it will have problems, flaws and shortcomings. Very rapidly the excitement and anticipation you had for the project will fade and you will be dissatisfied with your creation. A big mistake is to think that your efforts have been wasted. An underwhelming first attempt is a completely normal part of the process.

Steve Jobs and Jonathan Ive worked for several years together on the iPhone. When they released it in 2007, it was a flawed device with a short battery life, software bugs and limited functionality. True Apple fans loved it, but in the wider business landscape, it was considered to be impractical for everyday use.

The purpose of a beta version is to get feedback from the market. It's not the finished version and it's not the version that will make you millions; it's the version that will break and need fixing – this is normal and it's a good thing.

The trick is to capture the feedback quickly and introduce a new version as soon as you can. Go back to the briefing document phase and list all the changes that need making, look for solutions to the problems and find additional suppliers who can improve certain details. Buckle down with your suppliers again and pull together a new version with all the improvements. At first you're likely to resent the process, but when you see it coming together there's a good chance you'll be blown away with how great the changes are.

COMMERCIAL VERSION

After this reinvention phase, relaunch your product, and this time it will work. It will do what you promised it would do, clients will be satisfied, your team will be relieved and you'll start seeing some rewards. The iPhone 3G was the second version Apple produced. The battery life was adequate, there were thousands of useful apps, the camera was decent and the design was more elegant. It sold much better and silenced a few of the sceptics.

At this point you'll have something that helps to pay the bills and washes its face for the time, money and effort you've put in, but you still won't have your big payoff. The product will be doing well, but it won't have tipped you into the upper echelon.

The strong temptation here is to stop and think about completely new ideas. Having reinvented this thing, you can easily think you've peaked. You're no longer getting negative feedback, most people are satisfied, so it's difficult to see what needs improving – maybe the idea was only average in the first place.

Don't stop just yet. Buckle down again. Do your best to tear the thing apart; explore what's possible; ask yourself tough questions as to the nature and core essence of what you are trying to achieve. Trim the fat, and be willing to get rid of anything that's good but doesn't quite blow people away. Push your suppliers to dig deeper and produce their best work.

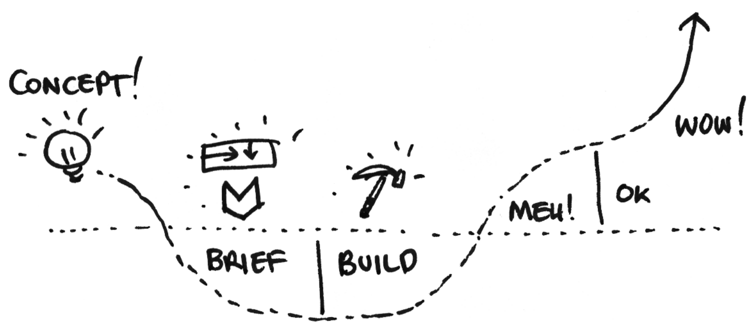
Relaunch the product, and if it's not remarkable, go back and repeat the reinvention process until it is.

THE REMARKABLE VERSION

Now, and only now, do you find out if that idea you had was of value. Through the process of reinvention several times over, you will have created an asset at a level very few companies push through to.

Today the iPhone is regarded as the most successful product in history. It's a supercomputer in your pocket with over 250,000 professionally produced apps, seamless integration with the Cloud, a camera that rivals an SLR, stunning design and bulletproof supply chain. When you create an asset at a remarkable level, people tell their friends about it, and those friends tell their friends. People tweet and post on Facebook about it, and pretty quickly it scales. The scale-up is cheaper than the initial creation because it's built on word-of-mouth and social sharing. The money other companies spend on sales and marketing campaigns, you take as profit.

Finally, the hard work pays off when you hit the level of remarkable. You and your team are proud of what you've done, and you know very few others will have the dedication to compete with what you have built. You'll be referred to as an overnight success, and people who were unwilling to invest will now throw money at you (but you won't need it so much). At this point, work hard to stay remarkable, but you don't have to completely reinvent yourself. Apple's new iPhones aren't radically evolving now; Lego innovates, but it doesn't mess with its remarkable brick system; Porsche updates the 911 rather than reinvent it.



A REMARKABLE BUSINESS

Your business is an ecosystem of 24 assets, so if you want to have a remarkable business, you need to go through the asset creation cycle with all 24. Your content, your ambassadors, your sales systems, your gift product, your business plan – all must stand out. Then you'll have created a very valuable business. Today, many companies are being bought for 10–20 times their profit. Put another way, the owner gets over a decade's worth of profit in a single transaction, so they have the next 10+ years with both time and money on their hands. Not only that, they have the skills to do it all again if they want to, and investors who will back them. People can copy one or two aspects of what they do, but they can't copy their whole ecosystem.

It's not enough to get 23 out of the 24 assets to a remarkable level if you want maximum value. That would be like building a beautiful home but not putting any glass in the windows. A buyer won't pay full price if there's still work to be done. With your team, conduct a quarterly inspection of all the 24 asset categories and look for anything that is less than remarkable. Remember that a remarkable asset is one that stands out – people talk about it for all the right reasons.

Become a connoisseur of remarkable businesses. Look for the individual assets that make them so remarkable. The greatest shortcut to creating something remarkable is to copy something that is already remarkable – to steal someone else's ideas and make them yours. I only have one rule when it comes to copying ideas and that is to steal from industries as unlike your own as possible.

When I created the Key Person of Influence Accelerator I wanted it to be able to run in multiple cities around the world. I asked myself which brands already had a time-tested and remarkable business running in multiple cities – my best answer was Cirque du Soleil's shows and *Les Misérables*. I loved the way they had a different cast and crew in each city, but the shows were the same. They'd got it right then didn't change much. I loved how they had darkened auditoria and impressive printed materials. As a result, we started running events in theatres. We upped the standards of our printing and scouted our mentors from local talent rather than touring a small number of gurus.

Stealing ideas from theatre productions and putting them into leadership training and business accelerators is fine. No one says you're a scoundrel when you use ideas from different industries.

On the flip side, my business has been copied by countless people in similar industries. They rename a concept we've been talking about for years, use the same venues we've used or make their webpages look like ours, and it simply doesn't produce the same result. What almost always happens is that people immediately compare them to us, and because it's obvious that we innovated the ideas, the copycat gets put out the door.

An interesting activity as you go looking for the remarkable in each of the 24 assets is to buy a dozen magazines you would never normally buy and scour them for ideas. What can you learn from a feature in *Model Rail*? How do people advertise in *Max Sports & Fitness*? What catches your eye in *Superyacht World*? Visit websites, subscribe to newsletters, walk into the retail stores of industries that are nothing like your own.

Remarkable businesses can stay in the family for generations. Provided you pass on the secrets of their success, your children's children can continue the legacy, adding new markets and territories, and improving the assets where necessary. You might even decide to give your wealth away to worthy causes. Making money is fun, but transforming the lives of others and improving the planet is beyond words. We were born into a time when it's possible to have a greater impact than ever before.

Great companies sell for large sums of money because it's hard to build one. If it was easy, no one would pay to buy a successful company; they'd just create it from scratch themselves. Given that it's hard to do, find people who can help you. Success is less about your individual talent and more to do with the environment that brings out the best in you.

BLACK BELTS BEAT WHITE BELTS

Which martial arts style is best? Is it karate, judo, kung fu, jujitsu or tae kwon do?

Every style has its advantages and drawbacks, but if you want to be a black belt you have to choose a style and go deep with it. There's no point jumping from beginner class to beginner class in different styles; you'll always be a beginner and end up confused.

At some point you need to choose a martial arts school, commit to practising that way, getting better over time and accepting that there will be some bloody noses. There's no avoiding the work or the practice if you want the results.

It's the same with business. There are many approaches, many 'black belts' to learn from, many books to read and much work to do. If you jump from idea to idea, book to book, seminar to seminar you'll always be a beginner. At some point you need to pick a style and run deep with it.

One common behaviour I've seen in my millionaire mentors is that they read and re-read a small selection of books by a few authors they admire every year. Their goal is not to learn new ideas but to become world-class at implementation.

A common trait I see in people who are struggling is that they read a new book every month, watch lots of videos and attend lots of free seminars, but rarely go deep into any one discipline.

When you discover an approach that resonates, you should immerse yourself in it. The information in a book won't change things, the application of that information will. Not at a superficial level – at a level that gives you a black eye!

It would be easy to read this book, put it down and move on to the next game-changing title. It's a lot harder to insist on putting ideas in place and not moving onto new content until you're seeing results.

I want to encourage you to stop reading new books, going to new seminars, consuming a wide variety of videos and podcasts. Instead, pick a style and run deep with it – get yourself into the environment and implement.

In the next chapter, we will explore what a high-performance environment looks like so you can get the support you need.

CHAPTER 16

ENVIRONMENT DICTATES PERFORMANCE

I used to believe that there were successful people and unsuccessful people. I assumed that the difference between the two was attitude, skills and personal development. This led me to attend dozens of programmes with an aim to fix my shortcomings or limiting beliefs. I wanted unshakable confidence, crystal clear vision and the secrets to unlocking everlasting happiness. If I could get those things, surely I would be successful.

On my personal development journey, I walked on red-hot coals, karate chopped boards, broke arrows on my neck, set fire to pages of limiting beliefs, crafted dream-boards and visualised successful scenarios during guided meditations. All this inner work felt amazing and I was sure it would have a positive effect on my results.

Sadly, the reality set in when I stayed with some friends who had been doing personal development for decades. In their tiny run-down flat, they had shelves full of workshop manuals, walls full of dream-boards and framed wooden blocks they'd broken year after year. Over a glass of carrot juice, they confessed to me that they were in serious debt from doing these programmes and they hadn't yet built their consulting business successfully. They hadn't even hit 100k in annual revenue.

As a result of building fast growth businesses from a young age, I have had the chance to rub shoulders with individuals who have multiple homes, yachts and sports cars. These rich friends have all the stuff my personal-development friends pinned on their dream-board, but they often weren't very personally developed. Almost all had insecurities, good days and bad days, they weren't crystal clear all the time and they never did things like fire walks or wooden board-breaking. One of them didn't even believe in goal setting!

How was it possible that personally developed people were struggling while people who didn't even have a dream-board were making huge successes of themselves?

I discovered an interesting truth – there's no such thing as successful people and unsuccessful people. Anyone can become successful if they have the right environment to succeed.

ENVIRONMENT DICTATES PERFORMANCE

There are environments that make you seem like a confident extravert; environments where you will sit quietly, not engaging with anyone; environments that allow you to focus for hours; environments that make you distracted and prone to procrastination. A soldier could be powerful, brave and organised within a military environment. Later, that same person may struggle to achieve basic living standards in the civilian environment. A Google employee won't think twice about working on an app that reaches 10 million new users in a matter of weeks. Take them out of Google and they might struggle to start a business that reaches 10,000 people, ever.

When you know what you want, find an environment where it would be normal to achieve it. I became highly attuned to this concept and looked for the ingredients that would make up a high-performance environment. It turned out that environment has less to do with the physical space and more to do with four other factors.

ACCESS TO CURRENT BEST PRACTICES

The process of trial and error takes a long time. For many hundreds of years, sailors died of scurvy. They tried everything to prevent this – rubbing salt on the skin, praying to Poseidon, abstaining from alcohol, drinking extra alcohol, and of course the use of leeches. None of it worked and they continued to die at sea until the fortunate discovery that oranges cured scurvy. Oranges! All along the cure was simple, cheap and accessible.

I see entrepreneurs struggling and failing in business. They pray to the business gods, they keelhaul themselves, they drink, they stop drinking, and still the problems persist. Often the solution is simple, cheap and accessible, but unknown to the person who's suffering. Without best practices, they're left to explore the painfully slow process of trial and error, and each lesson could take years to discover. If they have access to current best practices, they can move their business forward quickly.

I succeeded in my first business because I'd been given access to all the best practices at that time for my industry. I knew how much to spend on marketing, who to hire, what to say in a sales meeting, how to solve a customer complaint and how to create a product offering that would sell. As a result, I hit $1 million plus revenue in my first year of business at age 22, starting with little more than a personal credit card for funding.

We live in a world where the answers are already out there. Plentiful, low-cost targeted leads exist, and there's a best practice for generating a steady stream of them. Talented, dynamic, results-focused people exist, and there are best practices for attracting them. Systems that do the heavy-lifting for your business exist, and there are best practices for implementing them.

Best practices change every 18 months now. What works today won't necessarily work in two years from now. There are some core principles that are timeless, but the execution shifts across platforms, styles and technologies. This is why a high-performance environment should give you access to an unfolding conversation about the best ways to achieve a result.

Activity: what is one area of your business you don't really understand (marketing, accounting, legal, finance, etc)? Go and find three best practices in that field that help you to better understand it.

A PEER GROUP TO NORMALISE HIGH STANDARDS

Statistically, if you try to train for a marathon on your own, you have very little chance of starting the race, let alone finishing it. If, however, you join a group of people who are all training for a marathon, you have a huge chance of finishing with a respectable time. Yet few people consider running a marathon as a team sport.

I've witnessed the power of a peer group many times in the last seven years of running business accelerators. We create a book-writing challenge for our participants, and collectively they have to write 1 million words in six weeks (about 25,000 words per person). This activity normalises the results and the activities that produce the results – our clients' peer group is writing a book, so it becomes normal to write a book. They find themselves writing in a coffee shop between meetings; they get up early to write; they write instead of watching the news. They don't want to be the person who lets the group down.

Your income is typically the average of your five closest friends. I once spent time with a group of super-successful entrepreneurs who were comparing notes on how much annual income they needed to live comfortably. They each had a number close to 1.2 million, and reasoned that was needed considering they had school fees, multiple homes, charity contributions, alimony payments and boats to run. For their peer group, 100k a month was normal.

If you look around and discover your peers aren't living the life you want to live, add some new friends who normalise the results you want for yourself. If you want to get fit, you need more fit friends. If you want fun, you need more fun friends. If you want success, you need more high-achievers in your group.

Activity: make a list of the five people you spend the most time with. Do these people have the kind of results you want for yourself? Do they live the lifestyle you aspire to? If not, can you think of some people you want to connect with who would lift you up?

EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONSEQUENCES

It turns out humans are hardwired to procrastinate. For tens of thousands of years, being a motivated self-starter who got up early, exercised, strategised and began tasks months in advance burned too many calories and killed you. The smartest thing a hunter-gatherer could do was to conserve energy and respond to threats when they arose.

I'm shocked to discover that high performing people often describe themselves as natural procrastinators. If they weren't being held accountable, they simply wouldn't be doing half the stuff they get done. Sometimes I meet a naturally motivated person and discover they have a huge amount of pain in their past that requires them to rise above it every day. Motivational icon Tony Robbins had a highly abusive childhood and decided to fight his way out of it. He appeared to be self-driven, but in many ways he was facing a very real threat.

For those of you who aren't dealing with a threat, put in place external accountability systems. To be clear, pay someone, join a group or set up an ugly consequence for not acting. The accountability needs to be daily or at least weekly, because humans are hardwired to wait until the last minute. If you have a quarterly deadline, you'll probably begin to act less than a month from it.

I was highly motivated to succeed because I started my business on a personal credit card and I didn't have the funds to pay off the balance unless I made sales. I quickly got over my fear of talking to strangers because the fear of not clearing my balance was greater. As my business evolved, I was motivated by the fear of not making payroll and later I hired consultants and coaches that I respected to help keep us on track – the consequence of inaction was that I would pay a high fee and get nothing in return.

Activity: who do you have currently holding you accountable for your actions? How could you increase the stakes?

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Sometimes you just need £3 million. One of our clients had everything they needed to succeed except for the money to scale up their business rapidly. The CEO asked me to help him raise the money and I agreed. After eight weeks of meetings, the money was in the bank and the business took off.

Sometimes you just need a brilliant supplier. A client was a world-leading expert in DJ techniques and wanted to scale his music school to the world. He needed technology providers who would help him to execute his ideas with excellence. We introduced him to SOTechnology and within months his online systems were generating unprecedented growth for the business.

Sometimes you just need strong legal advice, HR contracts, templates, a loan, a salesperson, a database or speciality equipment. Access to resources is a necessary and often overlooked aspect to high-performance.

Research shows that the majority of successful entrepreneurs actually grew up in wealthy families and had access to resources (read the report 'What Makes an Entrepreneur?' by David G. Blanchflower and Andrew J. Oswald: http://www.andrewoswald.com/docs/entrepre.pdf). More often than not, they had startup capital, accounting and legal support, and safety-nets in place if they failed. All these resources allowed them to get going – personality traits, desire and goals didn't make as much difference to success as having resources did.

Rags to riches stories make the papers, but the majority of success stories don't start with rags. If you're lacking resources it's not game-over, get into an environment that can provide them. The very definition of entrepreneurship is to undertake a commercial venture that requires resources you don't currently control.

Activity: make a list of the resources you wish you had. Who already has plenty of these resources and how would you create a deal that would give you access to the resources and would appeal to their self-interest?

You can use these four principles of high-performance environments to improve any area of your life or business. You can join a tennis club, cooking school, dance academy or investing group and if it has the four ingredients you'll improve your results dramatically.

My team and I created Dent Global to run accelerators based upon these four principles so that entrepreneurs would be in the right environment to achieve their best output. The results have been staggering – after working with 3,000+ clients, we've seen vast numbers become authors, win awards, launch new products, hire great people, raise money at a value they didn't realise was possible and exceed their financial projections. Working alone hadn't produced those results, but as soon as they were in the right environment, the results became inevitable.

It's never been more important to be aware of our environment. The world is going through an astounding shake-up, and in the absence of a positive environment there are distractions, negativity, bad ideas and a scarcity of resources. Our own personal environment is within our control but it's also worth paying some attention to the big trends that make up the macro environment. We are standing on the shore of the digital revolution, surfboards under our arms, and there's a big wave coming.

CHAPTER 17

THE GREAT WAVES

There's no doubt now that 2016 was a turning point in the world. The good, the bad and the ugly unfolded more rapidly than ever.

The UK referendum favoured Brexit – driven by a campaign to close borders, stop immigration, take back control and return to being 'Great Britain'. The USA elected Donald Trump, who ran a campaign based on building walls, putting Muslims on a watch list, creating coal mining jobs and 'making America great again'. The Australian government was in limbo for weeks after the election gave no clear result when a host of populist candidates rose to prominence and split the vote. Italy's banking and political crisis started to boil over. Cold-war tensions resurfaced and NATO troops were deployed near the border of Russia. In France, the populist candidate Marine le Pen lurched forward in the polls with a message of closing borders and mosques, returning to 'France's former glory'. Everywhere, liberal, open global society seemed to be unravelling, or at least transforming, at a speed few people had experienced in their lives before. It seemed that people everywhere wanted to go back to a time they perceived as being 'great' – a more conservative, closed kind of great.

Why was this happening in an age of abundant technology, entertainment, innovation, prosperity and health? Why were people so mad at governments? Why were people feeling so disenfranchised?

The answers we are given by the mainstream press mostly come back to Muslims, millionaires and migrants. The real answers relate to bigger trends that can't easily be fixed with political upheaval; the fault lines run deeper.

All these events were linked to trends in technology and demographics. We are living through times of great change driven by digital technology that has put a super-computer in the pocket of nearly 2 billion people. At the same time, life expectancy has extended by decades and we have a huge wave of people – Baby Boomers – entering their 70s.

As a flow-on effect, almost every natural system on the planet is dealing with new pressures. The convergence of these trends creates a massive wave that is transforming the way the world lives, works and shares wealth. As with any wave, there are two sides to it – some people, businesses and organisations are going to surf and some are going to get dumped and swept out to sea.

THE FIVE GREAT TRENDS

Five mega-trends are converging; just one of them would be enough to transform the business landscape, but all five simultaneously will cause one of the greatest shifts human civilisation has ever seen.

Trend 1: Ageing Baby Boomers. In 1945 World War Two ended and the soldiers returned home. Traumatised by their experiences in war and driven by their longing for their loved ones, many returned with one thing on their mind – find a girl, settle down and start a family.

In 1946 there was a huge spike in the birth rate, and it continued until 1964 as these families had their second, third and fourth children. Combined with breakthroughs in medicine reducing the infant mortality rates, this created a huge population spike.

The Baby Boomers quickly became an economic powerhouse. In the 50s, baby food, nappy and toy companies saw explosive growth, and the government had to build schools to keep up with the demand. In the 60s, the music industry exploded as the Boomers discovered acts like Elvis, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. The term '1970s used-car salesman' conjures up an image of a fast-talking young hustler with gold chains and a flashy watch. The Boomers wanted to buy their first cars in the 1970s and used-car salesmen got rich as a result. In the 80s the Boomers wanted bigger homes and mortgages went to double-digit interest rates. The 90s saw the rise of home entertainment and personal computers as Boomers filled their lives with electronics. In the 2000s, Boomers decided they needed to own investment properties and stock portfolios so asset bubbles were created.

This generational demographic is huge, and whatever they collectively spend money on is impacted. Billionaire Sir Richard Branson has ridden this trend perfectly by starting a student magazine, becoming a music mogul, getting into travel, then finance. Rumour has it his next venture involves cruise ships and nursing homes.

In 2016, the youngest Baby Boomers were mid 50s and the oldest turned 70. As people retire, they earn less, pay less tax and need more social welfare and healthcare. The drawdown on savings, pension funds and accumulated equity begins to increase. There is also a mindset shift from hopefulness to nostalgia and from liberalism to conservatism.

All over the world, Boomers have begun moving away from big cities and into areas that are better suited for older people. These communities are going to feel the effects of the Boomers' decline in spending and increased demands for care.

Conversely, urban areas are full of young 'Millennials' (born 1980–1998) who are approaching the career uplift that occurs from age 35. As a generalisation, cities like New York, London, Sydney and San Francisco are full of young, affluent, educated professionals with their best earning years ahead of them, while suburban areas tend to be full of people whose highest income is behind them. This creates a huge disparity in the mindset between urban areas and their suburban counterparts, which sets the entire tone for the western economy.

As a result of this trend alone, there will be political, social and economic upheaval in the coming 15 years. If you're unaware of why this is happening, you might give up on your dreams in the midst of the changes. But if you understand this trend, you can make more informed decisions about where to do business, why certain news events happen and what to ignore as noise. Your business might be better expanding into London, New York, Sydney and Singapore as opposed to wider regions of your own country.

Your 24 assets will keep your business global in a time when local markets will be looking pretty choppy. If you have developed your

24 assets your business is less linked to geography and you can easily respond and move to wherever the best opportunities present themselves.

Trend 2: Disruptive Millennials. While the Boomers are going through major life changes brought on by retirement, the Millennials are breaking all the rules of prior generations.

According to Goldman Sachs, the median age for getting married has moved from 23 in 1970 to 30 in 2010. Millennials don't just get married later, they buy houses later, have kids later and are more interested in experiences and 'access' rather than ownership.

The Millennials are a different generation from their parents and grandparents for several reasons. They're 'digital natives', having grown up with a PC in their home and a mobile phone from a young age. They were the first generation to be given credit cards from the age of 18, and most had to pay for their university degrees.

Boomers grew up with parents who'd faced wars and great depressions and had grown accustomed to austerity and rationing – they told their kids to work hard, get good jobs and save. Millennials grew up with enthusiastic Baby Boomer parents who told them they're special and could do anything they set their minds to. They have constant media images of celebrities' lives as well as contemporaries who are saving the world, floating companies on the stock exchange or living off-the-grid in tropical paradises. Against that fantastic backdrop, incomes haven't risen much in a decade, house prices are 10–15 times their annual pay cheque (Baby Boomers bought houses at 4–6 times the average wage) and many Millennials are in debt already. These young people tend not to think much of settling down and paying off a car and a seven-figure mortgage – especially when the world is full of Airbnb homes to stay in, Uber drivers to move them about cheaply and endless Tinder dates to romance.

At the exact same moment, Baby Boomers want to sell their houses, liquidate their stock portfolio and live off the proceeds, the Millennials are completely uninterested in buying. This spells out a huge economic change ahead.

Many Millennials are highly engaged in tearing down the last remaining walls of the industrial age and bringing forward an open, random and connected world. They're armed with all the technology, information and media resources they need to unleash a wave of transformation.

I'm betting that the world will not go back in time to an era of closed borders. The genie is out of the bottle and the digital revolution, led by the Millennials, is unstoppable. No physical wall can prevent technology from making the rest of the world a few clicks away.

Developing your scalable digital assets is vital to stay ahead. Without new-economy digital assets, you'll be stuck in a localised world where those around you are struggling. With digital assets, you can tap into the movements of those who are mobile and affluent and scattered all over the world. Build a business that can reach people anywhere – a business that is bursting at the seams with high-quality digital assets.

The most important real estate is the mobile phone screen – a few square inches that occupies the attention of a typical Millennial 157 times per day. If your business isn't built for the smartphone screen you're going to miss out on the Millennials and the emerging markets.

Trend 3: Technology unemployment. For the last 50 years, technology has been our friend because it makes any human being more powerful and efficient. An accountant with a PC is a more productive and knowledgeable accountant; a driver with an on-board computer is a better and safer driver.

This isn't going to be true for much longer because new technology is removing the need for human intervention.

A visit to the local supermarket demonstrates this perfectly. It's obvious that the self-checkout machine removes the need for a checkout person, but what you don't see is the software running behind the scenes, updating inventory, financial and management systems in real time. All of these systems used to need humans running them, but not any more. Computers are far more reliable and intelligent than most people could hope to be.

The USA manufactured twice as much in 2015 as it did in 1985, but it did so with one third of the workers. Foxconn in China is replacing over 50,000 workers per year with fully autonomous robots that can assemble all sorts of products. The West might bring local manufacturing plants back, but it won't bring the manufacturing jobs back – software, media and machines are the builders of the future.

It's no great secret that manufacturing jobs are being automated, but highly-skilled knowledge workers are on shifting sands as well. Artificial Intelligence can solve a wide range of problems that only the smartest humans have a grasp on.

There are three types of artificial intelligence (AI):

- Narrow AI: a system that can do a narrow set of things well
- General AI: a system that can do all sorts of things well
- Super AI: a system that is far more intelligent than the entire human race combined.

Already we have narrow AI in everyday life. A calculator is a narrow AI because it performs a single function very well but doesn't do much else. Google is running a narrow AI, so is the algorithm that prices airline tickets, the Amazon book recommendations you get and the newsfeed you see on Facebook. Narrow AI is so ubiquitous that we rarely stop to marvel at it any more.

The most advanced narrow AI is able to diagnose diseases, compose music, write news articles, value businesses, advise on legal cases and detect lies and emotions in real time.

General AI is starting to arrive in the form of Siri on Apple smartphones or Alexa on Amazon Echo. This 'digital assistant' technology can help organise your day, do your banking, get you to your flight on time and reply to emails that don't need your attention. Siri functions as a central intermediary for lots of narrow AI systems to interact with a human. If you ask it 'Will I need an umbrella today?' it knows you are asking about the weather so it translates your request into a search on a narrow AI weather program, then translates the answer back to you as 'I don't think it will rain today.'

In reality, Siri didn't think at all; at least, not the way we humans do. It just knew which app to use to find the weather and how to translate the answer back into 'human speak'.

Very soon Apple, Amazon and Google will allow developers to create narrow AI systems that plug into their virtual assistants. Uber will integrate its car booking app so the mere mention of a journey begins the process of summoning a car. Your bank will integrate internet banking functions so that your virtual assistant can fix all sorts of problems you would normally spend hours on hold dealing with. Hotels will integrate with Siri so that your visit runs seamlessly even though all you did was tell your phone you needed a place to stay. These functions used to be performed by humans, but now all they need is a general AI using a lot of narrow AI systems.

This birth of general AI is happening at the same time as we are discovering systems that can drive your car, invest your money, audit and file your company accounts, respond to legal issues, diagnose illness and dispense the right drugs. In the next 15 years, many human jobs will not be made more efficient by technology, they will be made redundant.

Some experts point to the industrial age as an example of how humans elevated out of manual labour thanks to tractors and mills. Before the industrial revolution, over 80% of the population was employed in food production. Now it is less than 5%. Fortunately for humans, when tractors replaced people in farms, we discovered that we had big brains that could do all sorts of intelligent work. The difference now is that software, media and machines are replacing human intelligence, which leaves us with our human emotions as the last key differentiator. Emotional intelligence is the new frontier, and if you have a job that doesn't require you to empathise, connect, inspire or love then you're running a risk.

It will take decades to transition to a new type of economy that serves the millions of workers automated out of the productive economy. The businesses that make it through this change are those thinking digitally and establishing Key People of Influence within their ranks. Millions of people will flock to the certainty of a known, liked and trusted individual who can be accessed across platforms such as video, audio, blogs, books, profiles and updates – digital assets.

Trend 4: Government austerity. Governments are incapable of generating enough taxes to sustain the normal spending and borrowing habits of the past. For thousands of years, governments have defined themselves primarily by geography. Each government defines itself primarily by its geographical borders– the US Federal Government, the London City Council, the European Union, etc. This poses a huge problem in a digital world that doesn't run on geographical lines anymore.

None of the big companies limit themselves to a geographical border. They define themselves by their vision, mission and values and will happily go anywhere they lead. It's effortless for companies to move money internationally and profits to a low tax environment.

Historically, countries didn't really care too much about this because whatever they failed to collect from corporations, they made up for with income tax from workers. In a world where people travel freely and work from anywhere, this gets harder. When companies can easily outsource labour costs to low income countries, local governments are in real trouble. In a world where a lot of the value is created by systems not people, it's an impossible shortfall.

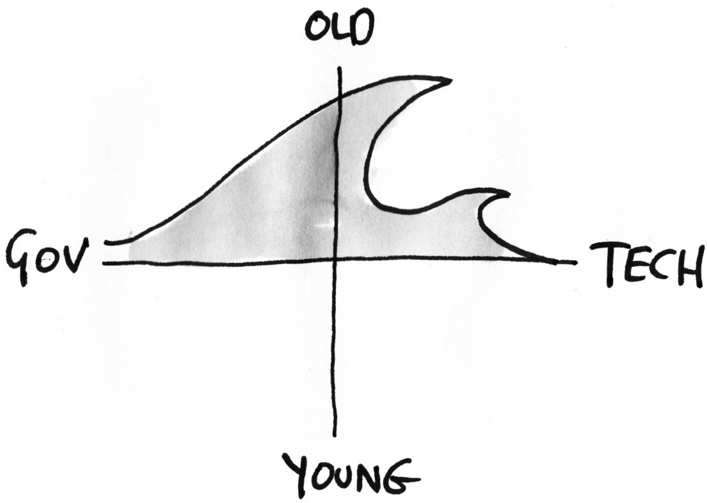
The only options are to transform to a global network of cooperating governments or have government austerity inside geographical borders.

Another huge impact of this trend is the inability for central banking to function. Central banking is a system of endlessly expanding debt to fuel economic growth, and it relies upon a growing population with growing incomes in order to function. Without Millennials earning more, getting into debt and having lots of kids, the Central Bank needs to keep adjusting interest rates down – except they are already at zero. When interest rates are negligible, property investors borrow to buy houses and values soar. People become angry that houses are unaffordable and vote for hard-left and hard-right politics, causing political systems to become less trusted. Eventually there's so much debt in the economy that a small interest rate rise would crash the entire system. At this point, the Central Bank is like a car driving with no brakes.

It's likely that the world will put more trust into the blockchain-backed digital currency. A platform like Facebook could integrate a digital currency (or create its own) that would allow digital natives to trade freely anywhere in the world without using debt-backed currency from Central Banks.

Geographically defined governments are old-technology running on an old operating system. They cannot sustain themselves in the digital economy, and already we're seeing a movement of power. Super-cities are more relevant than the countries they reside in (London is more of a global brand than England). We are seeing the shift from a world made up of 220 countries to a world defined by 600 super cities.

The key to surfing this trend is to have digital business assets that allow you to reach people in any city across the globe. Be open to accepting the new digital money that's emerging as well as traditional currencies.



Trend 5: Systemic collapse. To top all of this off, the scientific community is warning that the world is dangerously close to ecological disaster. This needs fixing urgently.

Global warming is the challenge of our generation, but it runs deeper than that. We have problems that relate to life beneath the oceans, deforestation, species loss, super-viruses and a host of other issues that, if left unchecked, could cause a litany of disasters for our civilisation. These problems will need all hands on deck.

This might actually be perfectly timed. As people become displaced by technology, we will have a huge need for them to get engaged in solving the meaningful problems we face as humanity. In many ways, Donald Trump is the President the world needed.

Prior to President Trump, the scientific community was crying out for people to get engaged in environmental issues.

One environmentalist said, 'Where's the outrage? Where are the people marching in the streets? Why is everyone sleepwalking off a cliff?'

Donald Trump has done more to galvanise the planet into action than anyone else. People are beginning to question what they want for the future, standing up and fighting for a better world. Today, they are more outraged and active than we've seen in decades. They are marching, petitioning, inventing solutions and being more aware of their choices. And not a moment too soon. If the world doesn't engage in these issues, we face the prospect of leaving an irreparable habitat to our children.

It's now the entrepreneurs who are solving the world's most meaningful problems. IKEA is utilising its resources to create flat pack shelters for refugees. Facebook and Google are finding ways to bring the internet to rural Africa. Tesla is building an end-to-end solar powered lifestyle for the western world to aspire to. Funded startups are creating medical solutions for the world's poorest, disposal solutions for plastic waste and breeding solutions for endangered species.

Build a business upon an ideology of values, ethics and sustainability. The more you rely on digital assets, the more you can achieve with a smaller ecological footprint. This exponential entrepreneurial thinking can create fast scaling solutions. Entrepreneurs are now the ones who can solve meaningful problems at scale and shape the way we move forward as humanity, and we've all got a big part to play.

Lord Dr Michael Hastings CBE is KPMG International's Global Head of Corporate Citizenship and Chancellor of Regent's University London. He says:

> *'Now is the time to build businesses that have a huge impact. That means becoming successful and making a difference beyond philanthropy – it's about embedding values to build value.'*

CHAPTER 18

SURF OR GET DUMPED

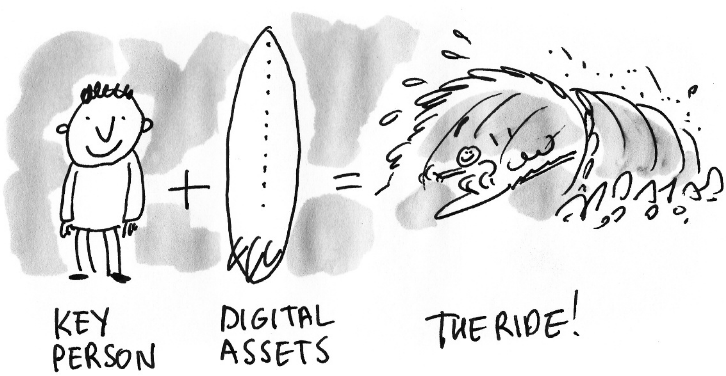
Some people look at the five big trends and feel like giving up. They wonder how they will be able to continue their life as they know it with so much change. Other people recognise that this is the greatest shift in wealth in human history and focus on creating the life of their dreams.

As we hit the apex of the industrial age, wealth accumulated into the hands of a few people and companies. The digital age will shake everything up and move money and opportunity to new people and places. This wave of change is a great thing if you're an entrepreneur who can see what's happening.

Become a surfer. Learn to paddle and then ride the wave.

THE SURFER

Surfing the wave requires you to become a Key Person of Influence. In my book *Key Person of Influence* I describe how every industry has people who are known, liked and trusted by so many people that they are spoiled for choice when it comes to opportunity. These people are great communicators, are respected for their thought leadership and have no shortage of ways to make money. They are the creators and owners of assets. Every time new tech comes along, it fuels the growth of their brand into new audiences. Each new disruption opens up a new market.



People like Tim Ferriss (Author of *The 4-Hour Work Week*), Gary Vaynerchuk (Founder of VaynerMedia) and Michelle Mone (Founder of Ultimo) are recession-proof, disruption-proof trend surfers. The only things they have to fear are self-inflicted errors.

You don't need millions of followers on Twitter or a *New York Times* best-seller to become a Key Person of Influence, though. If you build a reputation with a few thousand people who watch your videos, read your blogs and buy your products and services, you'll feel solid in these remarkable times.

PADDLING ONTO THE WAVE

To speed up your business, become campaign driven and run regular promotions. My book *Oversubscribed* is about paddling onto the wave in this way. In it I recommend that you have:

- Weekly LAPS (leads, appointments, presentations and sales).
- Quarterly campaigns that generate buzz and an uplift of sales.
- Annual big messages and causes that de-commoditise you from your marketplace.

Paddling on to a real wave requires you to move to a rhythm and put effort into every action. If you paddle hard enough, you catch the wave and you can stand up and surf. In the same way, a business requires you to establish a rhythm of sales and promotions and execute each action with effort and excellence.

As you run your campaigns and promotions be sure to capture the assets and put them online. For several years you might feel like you are constantly paddling hard and you're tired, but keep going. As you build out your assets, you're closer than you think to catching the wave.

RIDING YOUR SURFBOARD

To ride the wave all the way and truly make the most of the times we are in, you need to create the 24 assets. There comes a time when your content reaches so many people, your products are referred by so many clients and your culture attracts so many great team members that the business takes on a life of its own.

When all 24 of the assets are remarkable, you'll see opportunity everywhere, effortlessly scale your business, make money, have great people around you and attract further opportunities. You'll be having fun surfing the wave.

Then you'll be faced with a new challenge – a question that will gnaw away at you.

'What is the most meaningful problem I could solve?'

Humans are built to make the most of their surroundings in a way that benefits themselves and their tribe. They derive meaning from a blend of personal success and doing the right thing by others.

A person who has an expanding business that allows them to improve the environment or society or the lives of individuals is someone who has a deep sense of purpose and meaning in their life. Even more satisfaction comes from working with other change-makers who are achieving success and having a positive impact on the world at scale. In general, we are a communal species, and being part of the right tribe unlocks endless rewards.

Why wait until after you are financially successful to do your most rewarding work? The approach that works best is to choose something big from day one. Naming something bigger than your business as a mission expands your thinking and attracts collaborators. A big problem to solve in conjunction with an enterprise you want to build creates nuclear fusion powered growth.

Let's finish this book with something bigger than your business. Let's look at the power and purpose you'll experience when you're doing something beyond making money.

SELECTING A GLOBAL GOAL

The United Nations have identified and documented 17 Global Goals. These goals will move humanity forward, but they require everyone to get involved in order to achieve them. One of the most powerful things you can do as an entrepreneur or a leader is to select one of the Global Goals for your business to champion and find ways to make an impact in that area.

On the list of Global Goals are outcomes that relate to the environment, human rights, animal welfare, energy, education, peace and politics. There's something for everyone and there's lots to be done.

Here's a list of the Global Goals:

1. No Poverty – End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

2. Zero Hunger – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

3. Good Health and Well-being – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

4. Quality Education – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

5. Gender Equality – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

6. Clean Water and Sanitation – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

7. Affordable and Clean Energy – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

8. Decent Work and Economic Growth – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

10. Reduced Inequalities – Reduce income inequality within and among countries.

11. Sustainable Cities and Communities – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

12. Responsible Consumption and Production – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

13. Climate Action – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy.

14. Life Below Water – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

15. Life on Land – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

17. Partnerships for the Goals – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

You can find out more on each of the Global Goals here: http://www.globalgoals.org

One of the most remarkable organisations I have come across is B1G1.org (Buy One, Give One). This concept is based on businesses giving to a cause each time they make a sale. B1G1 has found projects all over the world that relate to the Global Goals and created micro-giving impacts that you can factor into every product or service you offer.

Giving can start small. There are coffee shops where every cup of coffee factors in the cost of a litre of clean water in a remote village in Africa (a few cents). Giving can be bigger. When I run workshops, I factor in the cost of a year's tuition fees for a student in India.

The best system I've ever seen for turning your business into a force for good is to select a Global Goal and then use B1G1 to find a project to support. Because giving is linked to sales, as your business grows, so does your impact.

From the moment you start this approach, you will build purpose and contribution into the growth and success of your enterprise.

As an added benefit, you'll be part of an inspiring global community of entrepreneurs, leaders and change makers. Not only will this approach attract more customers and better team members, you'll unlock a deep sense of pride and empowerment when you're solving meaningful problems in your business and in the world.

By the way, as a result of you reading this book, a donation has been made to give a school student in India a set of stationery to use at school. Goal 4 – Quality Education for all.

ASSET ZERO

In the Introduction I said there would be something missing – something that would bring all the assets to life. There is an ingredient in every successful business that simply can't be summed up.

A medical journal could describe all the parts of a human body, but it can't describe the human quality that brings everything to life. In the same way, there's an asset in your business beyond the clever methodology or the ultimate checklist that I can't put my finger on. I call it Asset Zero.

Your business is here to do something big. You are here to do something big. Everything you've done up until this point has formed part of your story. Asset Zero is the thing you started with when you had nothing, and it'll be the thing that still has your attention after money, fame, power and influence all show up. It is right there in the background of every milestone, setback and achievement you've had.

Asset Zero makes you face your fears and take brave actions. It brings out your passion and your playfulness. It fuels the dent you want to make in the universe. The 24 assets are important, but really they're not very valuable without Asset Zero. Only you can know what your Asset Zero is.

Strip everything away and what are you left with? What have you been about since day one? What are you really up to? What is it that gives you the feeling of being in flow? What lights you up even though it's hard? What will you go to your grave trying to get done in the world?

Success isn't 'out there', and it's not in this book either. Asset Zero is the beginning and the end of it. Go find it and unleash it for the world.

Be brave.

Have fun.

Make a dent.

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THE AUTHOR

Daniel Priestley is an entrepreneur and best-selling author. He started his first company at age 21 and built a multi-million-dollar enterprise by age 25. He has since gone on to grow businesses in the UK, USA, Singapore and Australia, as well as be an advisor and stakeholder in a portfolio of ventures. In 2010, Daniel co-founded a business accelerator, which has helped thousands of companies to stand out and scale up. He's helped to raise millions of dollars investment funding for ventures and hundreds of thousands for charities. Daniel is also the author of:

Key Person of Influence – The five-step method to become one of the most highly valued and highly paid people in your industry.

Entrepreneur Revolution – How to develop your entrepreneurial mindset and start a business that works.

Oversubscribed – How to get people lining up to do business with you.

What's Your Business Worth? – The entrepreneur and advisor's guide to discovering, monitoring, and optimizing business valuation (co-author).

Visit www.dent.global/DanielPriestley

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