

*It's time to start your business and make it massively successful. Now, you can read the insider tips, techniques and strategies to accelerate your success financially and spiritually.*

– Mark Victor Hansen,  
Co-creator, #1 New York Times bestselling series  
*Chicken Soup for the Soul*  
Co-creator, *Cracking the Millionaire Code* and  
*The One Minute Millionaire*

*In this book, Sheila Elliott reveals how you can engage your often overlooked God given talents for business success. She confronts wrong thinking, and offers down-to-earth principles to take your business from survival to significance.*

– Dr. Tayo Adeyemi,  
Senior Minister - New Wine Church

*To succeed in business, you need to think successfully and adopt sound and proven strategies. This book provides you with the tools that will empower your business's success!*

– Gerry Robert,  
bestselling author of *The Millionaire Mindset*

*This book will show you how to organize your God given talents effectively for business as well as think correctly for business success.*

– Dean Storer,  
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*By the time you finish reading this book, you will learn how to leverage your resources and become successful in business.*

– Matt Allen,  
author of *Leverage your IRA* and  
Director of IRA Lending N.A. Savings Bank

*If you are looking for answers to those questions that have plagued you as to how to build a successful business and earn a fortune, then get inspired and work this book!*

– Chris Snook,  
author of *Burnout* and *Wealth Matters*

MY BUSINESS  
*is*  
MY BUSINESS



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LEARN HOW TO EARN A  
**FORTUNE**

— SHEILA ELLIOTT —



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is with great pleasure that I dedicate this book to all those who have contributed positively towards my life over the last forty odd years. I want to thank my family, particularly my step-mother for her patience, support and encouragement throughout this project.

There are other special people I wish to mention. I will start off with my pastor, Dr Tayo Adeyemi, who challenged me throughout his Sunday sermons and various teaching sessions to regularly read books, listen to tapes, crash the boundaries of my comfort zone and take on more responsibility in life. What I did not know at the time is that by accepting his advice I was going to become an author in the process.

Then there are many other inspiring teachers of Premiere Christian Radio, including Bob Proctor, through his SGR programme that helped me to discover myself. Through their teachings, I became extremely inspired and confident in my ability to share my knowledge and experience with the world through this book. I am most indebted to them. For as I grow older, I have learned not to depend exclusively on my own understanding but to trust more in my creator, who without a shadow of doubt provided me with tremendous strengths, courage and wisdom to complete this book, which you now have in your hands.

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It is my sincere hope that as you read this book with an open mind and digest its contents, your mind will be illuminated and expand. In my opinion, the wonderful tools contained within this book, when read thoroughly and applied correctly, will propel you and your business to new heights. I wish you every success in your business and your quest for financial success.

## FOREWORD

Sheila Elliott's book is one of the most promising strategies I have seen to help new and aspiring entrepreneurs build a strong foundation for business success. Each chapter in this book has been chosen carefully and purposely, taking the reader through a journey that will help better prepare them for the business world. Sheila is an expert in her field, an individual who is dedicated to pursuing her dreams relentlessly and helping others to do likewise, following proven strategies. Her quest for excellence in the mind of all those seeking to become an entrepreneur comes out very clearly in the book and no doubt, there are tremendous insights that even those who have been in business for a while can benefit from.

Much has been written about business start ups and management in a bid to strengthen business success, but nothing compares with *My Business is My Business*. Sheila unequivocally asserts that every entrepreneur should take complete responsibility for their business success and cannot afford to do otherwise. In order for this to happen, she provides a holistic practical approach, with recommendations and business tools which if implemented should empower readers to become successful.

—Gerry Robert,  
Bestselling author of *The Millionaire Mindset*



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## INTRODUCTION

Many people aspire to be their own boss, run their own business, and achieve financial independence, but seldom do they sit back and ask what it takes to run a successful business. Perhaps you are one of the few who have asked this question, and if so, I want to congratulate you for your brave action.

When I first told people I was writing this book, many asked, “Why this subject?” and, “What qualifies you to write about starting your own business?” Let me answer these questions by explaining why I believe that I am the best person to advise you about starting your own business. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt so attracted to something that you just couldn’t get it out of your mind? Have you ever fallen in love with something? The subject that I cover in this book is one that I fell in love with at an early age, and I am still so attracted to it that I just cannot live a single day without discussing what makes a business successful. I have been very interested in the subject of business dynamics since I was a child, and this interest never dissipated over the years. In fact, my interest in the subject intensified with the passing of time. I have spent countless hours talking to business owners of all types about what makes their business successful and what challenges they face. My research is not just limited to interviews with business owners; I have also read many books on the subject of business management, strategy, and development.

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Whenever I think about all the books I have read on this subject, however, there is one author who sticks in my mind: Robert Kiyosaki, the author of Rich Dad/Poor Dad and other books. I have found Kiyosaki's books about business very inspirational, enlightening, and motivational. His humility about his own failures and the lessons he learned through the influence of his Rich Dad and his Poor Dad are awesome. Another book that forms the bedrock of the topics covered in my book is Think and Grow Rich, by Napoleon Hill. This is a book that was instigated by Andrew Carnegie, one of the richest businessmen of his time. He was very keen to share the recipe for business success with the rest of the world. It was Andrew Carnegie who asked Napoleon Hill to interview over 500 successful businessmen and compile their success formulas, which have helped millions of people to develop successful businesses and earn financial fortune. With this same goal in mind I have written this book to help you, the reader, access useful tools and knowledge for managing your own business or for advising current or new entrepreneurs how to manage their businesses effectively.

All too often, business support programmes and business studies tend to be limited to teaching technical skills; they fail to provide an adequate focus on areas such as attitude and personal character. In this book, you will find that success in business calls for a respectable amount of positive attitude and character strength, as well as the technical skills required to deliver products and services. Failure to give adequate attention to any of these elements carries the risk of causing a business to fail. It is therefore not surprising to find that a significant proportion of businesses fail before their fifth birthday. When it comes to

## MY BUSINESS *is* MY BUSINESS

attitude, it is important to have an understanding of limiting cultural beliefs, as well as a willingness to ditch them and replace them with empowering beliefs. This is an area that many people, including business advisors, are frightened to discuss. There are those who believe that the government owes it to them to bail them out from their self-inflicted predicaments. Rather than being grateful for business support, such people would rather criticise the level and types of support they receive. They even go one step further by asserting that they should be given handouts, irrespective of the quality of their services and products. Allow me to state unequivocally that there is nothing wrong with getting grant aid or financial support from the government. After all, some businesses could not be started without such support. However, when people believe that the responsibility for the success of their business rests with the government, and when they fail to appreciate support given to them in any form, then a culture of irresponsibility is bred, which in itself is dangerous for sustainable social and economic development.

The title of this book should hopefully bring it home to you, the reader, that your business is your business, first and foremost. If you fail to take full responsibility for your business, then you do not deserve the assistance of anyone else. There are certain communities where people have failed to start a business because they are too focused on recounting their insufficiencies, deficits, scarcity, and historical heritage. These people are completely oblivious of the fact that if they spend their time and effort on developing their ideas, they will be able to attract the money required to bring their business to the market. Then there are other communities where limiting cultural beliefs stealthily

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kill businesses even before they have gained enough strength to prosper. Without adequate understanding of these issues, using a one-size-fits-all approach to support businesses in such communities will simply result in private or public-sector capital investment being poured down a black hole.

Consider another limiting belief I have observed many Christians professing, and you will see some of the challenges that cripple success in some communities. I was once privy to several discussions in which people asked individual business owners whether they believed that they were really working within the will of God, simply because their businesses had not been profitable in the first two years. These business owners were made to believe that they might have acted too soon in starting their businesses, when in fact it is not uncommon for businesses to suffer a loss in the first two years after they are founded. Given such ingrained beliefs, you can see why many businesses pack up before they barely start. If they had only looked at the experiences of successful businesses like Southwest Airlines, they would have discovered that their situation is not uncommon. By sharing stories of the founders of several successful businesses, this book will give you a broader perspective on the reality of starting, developing, and growing a successful business. It will also enrich you with tools that will empower you for success in the business world, and, as a result, you will save considerable time and effort as you implement proven strategies and tactics used by wealthy entrepreneurs who have made significant financial fortunes through their businesses.

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# CHAPTER ONE

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Why Do You Want  
to Start a Business?

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# CHAPTER ONE

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## EXPLORING YOUR MOTIVE FOR STARTING YOUR BUSINESS

You may have heard people say, “Starting your own business is not for the fainthearted.” Allow me to add, “Starting a business is not for people trying to escape a bad situation in their 9-to-5 job in the false belief that being their own boss will solve their predicament.” Starting a business with the wrong motive will surely jeopardise one’s chance of success. Indeed, many people who have carelessly gone down the road of starting a business without adequate mental, social, financial, and educational preparation for the business world eventually find it an uphill struggle. It is always prudent to start a business after carefully considering the demands that it will put on your time and on those closest to you. You should be able to make a clear and well-informed decision that you indeed want to take this path.

Very often, when entrepreneurs are asked about their motive for starting their business, financial independence is usually one of the top answers given, followed by the desire to maintain a balance between work and the rest of one’s life, and the need for more money. Irrespective of the motive for starting a business,

new entrepreneurs often fail to take account of the fact that customers are the real bosses in the business world. Yes, you will no longer have to account to a supervisor or boss for your decision to come to work or leave work at a certain hour. However, you surely will need to justify your existence in the marketplace through your capacity to service your target market.

Businesses exist to serve the market effectively and efficiently. In return for such service comes financial compensation, which is how financial fortune is amassed by a business. I like the way that one author put it: “Money is simply a reward for serving others”. Therefore, the first principle in accumulating financial fortune through your business is none other than that of adopting an attitude of servanthood. A great teacher in the Bible, Jesus, put it this way, “The greatest amongst you will be your servant.” In other words, the more services you give to others, the greater your capacity to generate financial fortune. Business owners who are obsessed with enriching themselves financially, but fail to consider how to serve their customers efficiently, rarely, if at all, sustain their marketability, and of course they fail to realise their dreams. Their obsession with cutting corners to deliver products and services to their market soon diminishes the quality of their products and services. Furthermore, this diminishes their competitiveness.

**Money is simply  
a reward for  
serving others.**

Therefore, if you are planning to start your own business or you are already in business, the first thing you need to do is to quietly and critically examine your motivation. Ask yourself the following questions. Take at least five minutes of your time to answer these questions.

What is your motive for starting this business?

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Is your motive balanced?

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Will your motive lead to the sustainable marketing of your products and services, and if so, how?

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I remember coming across a woman who had set up a business that she really knew little about. The owner was over 55 years old and wanted to create a financial nest egg for herself as she approached retirement. She had neither taken time to find out what is required to service her target market, nor did she employ the right manager and staff to service her customers adequately. A few months down the line, she realised that the business was not doing well, but her primary concern was that she was not making money; thus, she totally ignored the solid business advice that she should improve the quality of the services provided to the market. After a few months, the business was generating income that was well below the cost of delivering the services. The owner, in her foolish obsession with money, and in violation of the principle of taking good care of one's customers, now turned her focus on her manager's so-called incompetence in generating cash. She continued to blame her manager until her landlord padlocked the shop one day because she had consistently failed to pay the rent. Although this is an extreme example, it goes to show what obsession with creating financial fortune can do when

one fails to understand that it is through delivering high-quality services and products that fortune is acquired.

## THE MYTHS ABOUT BUSINESS STARTUP

Many would like to start their own businesses, but sadly they are held back by the misguided belief that they need thousands of pounds sterling or dollars to do so. Nothing can be further from the truth. A close relative of mine was given £10,000 to start a business, and within a space of three months, the money disappeared. To date, we await clarification on how the money was spent. No business was ever started, and the money may have been put to personal use. This experience made it clear to me that money is not the starting point for the birth of a business. In fact, I like the way Napoleon Hill put it in *Think and Grow Rich*: “Money in the hands of someone who does not have brains is dangerous.” I will add that money in the hands of someone who lacks integrity is also dangerous.

**Money is not the starting point for the birth of a business.**

Whilst there is no doubt that money is needed to birth a business, the starting point is always a good solid idea. Many of the great corporations we know today were founded by men or women with no money. What the founders had was a sound idea that continuously developed over time in response to the market needs. Henry Ford, Robert Kiyosaki, and Thomas Edison, to name a few, were not from wealthy families. What they had when they started their businesses were ideas and the determination

to bring their ideas into the market. They attracted the money they needed to finance their businesses subsequent to their great ideas. Why, then, do people go around with the false belief that they need thousands of pounds sterling or dollars before they can start their business? In some cases, there are those who believe that the government must give them money before they can start their business. Allow me to digress here a bit. I was asked to give a presentation on how I started my business to a group made up of aspiring entrepreneurs, as well as existing entrepreneurs. I was extremely taken aback when someone in the audience asked me whether I received financial assistance from the government when I started my business. I responded that I did not and that I used my own savings to capitalise my business. This gentleman could not comprehend that it is possible for someone to start a business with their own money. I later advised him to read a book entitled *The ABCs of Making Money*, by Denis Cauvier and Alan Lysaght, in order to gain some ideas on how he could raise some capital for his own business. Needless to say, he was not impressed.

The belief that you need money in your bank account before you can consider starting a business will surely cripple and limit your capacity to develop a business idea. Great business ideas will always attract capital from private financiers with liquid cash who are looking for investment opportunities to maximise their returns on capital. With this in mind, your focus should be to develop your business ideas and then approach financiers for the opportunity to partner with them through their financial investment. Granted, this may involve transferring some control to the financier, but it is a much better situation than allowing a great idea to bleed to death.

Let us explore another myth that many have fallen in love with, totally oblivious of the truth. This is the myth that there is security in a 9-to-5 job and extreme risk in starting a business. I recall engaging in many conversations about being in business. Many professionals expressed their reluctance about starting a business because they were afraid of losing their regular income. In their world, starting a business is a great idea, but it carries the risk of not creating income, which would diminish their current lifestyle. Notice again that their attention is focused on the possible negative outcome. These individuals frequently worked in government-sponsored organisations and never considered how the government raised the income to pay their wages or salaries. I very often reminded these people that if the fear they had was to materialise on a wider scale, their so-called secure jobs would soon be axed, and then they would realise that it is the entrepreneurs who, by creating employment and driving the economy, pay their wages and bills.

**Many professionals expressed their reluctance about starting a business because they were afraid of losing their regular income.**

It is true that you will need money to bring your business to the market, and it is also true that your business may succeed or not, as the case may be. However, when it comes down to it, great ideas are always the starting point for a new business. Aside from those less fortunate people who are incapacitated, we all have brains and time to think. Of course, some people use their brains and their time more efficiently than others. As the starting point of your business, you should spend time thinking

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and generating new ideas that will give your business a greater chance for success.

## GENERATING BUSINESS IDEAS BY NURTURING SPIRITUAL SEEDS

If you want to generate financial fortune through your business, you need to remember this simple formula:

$$\text{Real Wealth} = \text{Ideas} + \text{Energy}$$

The businesses that are booming in the market are those that are never lacking in good ideas, which are subsequently converted into products and services. Ideas are spiritual seeds that should be allowed to nurture and develop into full-grown children. The trouble is, many so-called entrepreneurs do not want to spend enough time developing their ideas, and they frequently fall prey to the copycat mentality. In some communities, the situation is even worse, so that people show no creativity in their business endeavours, perhaps due to a limited understanding of our individual creative powers. The tendency of such communities is to follow the same line of business pursued by existing entrepreneurs without an adequate understanding of the economic and social impact of such practices. There are some streets in the United Kingdom where there are more hairdressing salons than there are people living on the street, and the same holds for other businesses, such as restaurants. All the salons and restaurants look alike and provide similar services and products. The trouble is that all of these businesses eventually find themselves competing for the same clients, and so they are

forced to reduce their prices, thereby limiting their capacity to accomplish their dreams of financial independence.

In order to develop business ideas, some time must be spent using one's faculty of imagination. In case you have forgotten, let me remind you that we all have a faculty of imagination that can be put into creative use. Some people have lost touch with their imaginative faculty since they left primary school, and they have grown to believe they are not creative. Everyone is creative, however, very few people use their creative muscles, and those who do not use their creative muscles falsely conclude they are not creative. Whatever we don't use, we lose, but there is good news. We can always go back and start training our creative muscles through proactive relaxation, visualisation and meditation. It is up to you to make the decision and implement it to strengthen your creative muscle. No one can do this for you.

Now let me introduce to you a number of strategies and resources you can use to begin the process of developing your imagination and creativity abilities. First, you need to know that creativity is best enhanced in certain environments. Creativity thrives in a relaxed, rule-free, supportive and open-minded atmosphere. Rigidity and rule-bound environments are the sure way to stifle creativity, and, sadly, many people are accustomed to such environments and have grown accustomed to not thinking freely. If you want to boost your creative power, consider adopting an open mind

**Creativity  
thrives in  
a relaxed,  
rule-free,  
supportive, and  
open-minded  
atmosphere.**

about situations, so that you can broaden your perspective and gain a much fuller understanding about things. The practice of open-mindedness will not only enlighten you as an individual, it will also provide you with a much broader resource for solving problems effectively. Generally speaking, creativity is the foundation of innovation. Through creativity, new business ideas are formed which give rise to unique products and services. Consequently, businesses that develop their creativity tend to

**A creative approach will take you beyond this point.**

be the ones that consistently roll out dynamic services and products that are different from those in the existing market. They are the market leaders, and they deserve to be.

Let me now put this in the form of a practical example that you can relate to. Suppose you were considering setting up a business in the beauty industry. You want to start a unique hairdressing salon. Let's say that you are ignorant of the creative powers within you. You went off, surveyed the market, and then came up with an idea to start a hairdressing salon that will provide all the usual services: wash and set, perms, cornrows, weaves, colouring and so forth. This is nothing more than a cut throat approach or, should I say, a competitive approach. What you have done is merely to follow the masses and come up with a counterfeit of a business that already exists in the market. A creative approach will take you beyond this point. This is where you will need to utilize your imagination in order to develop a unique beauty business.

You may want to employ a technique called *combination*. For instance, you can begin to think about other services and products

your clients may need that can be combined with hairdressing services to develop a business that is different from those currently serving the market. This may involve combining hair care services with beauty massage, facials, pedicures, manicures, and so forth. Combining all these different treatments or services will not only create the potential to increase the amount that customers spend per visit. It will also create a unique experience for the customers, giving them a wider variety of services than they would otherwise get if you used the competitive approach.

Other techniques you can use to boost your creativity are relaxation and imagery techniques. Relaxing your mind and body has the power to boost your creative abilities because you are able to access a wealth of resources from your subconscious mind. For those of you not familiar with relaxation techniques, I recommend *Essential Steps to Revitalize Your Work and Life*, by Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas. You can purchase this from our website: <http://www.businessservicesupport.com>. Usually, when people unfamiliar with this technique first start practicing relaxation and imagery, they find it daunting and may not see immediate benefits. With persistence, you will soon find it easy to practice, and with time, you will begin to experience ideas flying across the screen of your mind unannounced. I like the way Earl Nightingale, a cofounder of one of the largest providers of electronic personal development resources, put it in his recording, *The Strangest Secret*. He asserted that “ideas are like slippery fish, when they come, you must ensure you catch them in writing because there is no guarantee they may return to you.” Make it a habit of keeping a book and a pen close to you at all times when you start engaging in creative activities.

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Be aware that ideas are necessary to help you resolve the problems of your target market. The idea of developing an automobile is simply an idea that aims to redress the need for speedy and comfortable transportation. The idea of creating a relaxing restaurant responds to the need for human entertainment and pleasure. Therefore, if you make a habit of listening to the problems people are expressing and then proactively thinking about solutions to those problems, you will soon become an avid solution finder, using some of the creative techniques mentioned in this book.

## PROTECTING YOUR IDEAS FROM MISCARRIAGE

Ideas, by their very nature, are often unrefined and rough when they arrive. As a result, they may appear senseless to others who are less emotionally attached to them. Until it has developed over time, the period between the conception of an idea and its eventual birth in the form of products and services can be protracted. For that reason, wisdom, patience and discipline are essential throughout the development process. It is of great importance that you do not expose yourself to the wrong environment during this period; this simply means that you should confine and protect your ideas in a loving and supportive environment. Keep your ideas as private matters – except, of course, when you share them with the trusted and respected individuals who are part of the process of development. Just as a responsible pregnant woman will take good care of her mental, spiritual, and physical status during pregnancy, so should an entrepreneur take care of their business idea during the cycle of its conception and development.

It takes wisdom to know when to speak and when to shut up. Very often, when ideas are generated, immature entrepreneurs may want to announce their ideas publicly, sometimes for the wrong reasons, other times out of pure naivety. There is a sense of achievement that must be shared with others in the expectation of reciprocal action. After all, a newborn baby is imminent, so to speak. Nothing can be further from the truth. The first shock that such an entrepreneur may encounter is lack of enthusiasm and excitement, followed by cynicism, ridicule, and doubt over the validity of the idea. It is at this point that many ideas get their first dosage of morphine, usually administered by the entrepreneur's own loved ones, who are ignorant of the creative process and may be acting in good faith. An ignorant entrepreneur who is not mentally strong and is unprepared for this possibility will soon begin to doubt the wisdom of his or her idea, instead of injecting faith and breathing life into the idea. The idea is abandoned and finally death occurs. This is tragic and sad, but it happens all the time.

**It takes wisdom to know when to speak and when to shut up.**

Let me now take this opportunity to share with you a story that will boost your capacity to strengthen yourself for this type of situation. People say knowledge is power, however, knowing is one thing, but knowing when to apply your knowledge is another. In my opinion, power comes when you know when and how to use your knowledge for your benefit and for the good of everyone. What I am about to share with you is a story that you may have heard, though you may never have applied it in this type of situation. In the Bible, there is a story of a man called

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Joseph who had 11 brothers. He was a dreamer, and by the end of this story, you will have learned that dreamers are leaders when they are prepared to roll up their sleeves to bring their dreams into reality. In many cases, these dreamers are businessmen and businesswomen. Joseph dreamed that his brothers were bowing down to him. This dream was followed by a series of similar dreams. Joseph's dreams clearly indicated that at some time in the future, he would be the leader or ruler of his family. He was very excited about his dreams and naively shared them with his father and brothers. Have you been in this situation before? Of course, Joseph's brothers did not share his excitement, and they were hostile to him. Because of his brothers' animosity, Joseph was eventually sold as a slave to a foreigner. He ended up in a strange land and started working for a wealthy family.

One day, Joseph was left with the wife of the owner of the house. He was enticed by the wife, but he, being a man of high moral standards, with strong religious beliefs, decided not to succumb. Eventually, he found himself in prison when the wife told her husband that Joseph had attempted to entice her. Whilst in prison he became renowned for his ability to interpret dreams accurately. He interpreted dreams for a couple of people and his interpretations materialised. Although still a prisoner, Joseph gained some third-party testimonials to his ability to interpret dreams. When the butler whose dream he had interpreted left the prison, Joseph asked him not to forget him. One day, the pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had a dream that no one could interpret. It was then that the butler remembered Joseph's unusual talent in interpreting dreams, and he told the pharaoh. Well, Joseph clearly knew his job well. He interpreted the dream. The pharaoh

made Joseph the prime minister of Egypt and put him in charge of the distribution of food.

Meanwhile, famine struck the land where his family lived. They came to Egypt, where Joseph was still serving as prime minister, to buy food. Thus, the brothers eventually found themselves being ruled by Joseph, just as his dreams had indicated years before. His dreams came to pass in the end, but Joseph indeed suffered some unpleasant events. The moral of this story is that no matter what kind of challenges you meet from those close to you, when you are developing your business idea or dream, stay focused, uphold sound business success values, and ensure that your dream or business idea does not leave your mind. There is another important lesson to be learned from this story; be very careful whom you share your business ideas with. You never know what others may think or feel when you do so. Be cautious.

**Your fortune  
will be earned  
if you develop  
products and  
services that  
people need.**

## RESEARCHING AND SHAPING YOUR IDEAS INTO PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Now that we have looked at techniques for generating new ideas, let us look at how you can go about shaping your ideas to translate them into products and services. Your fortune will be earned if you develop products and services that people need. In his all-time classic book, *Acres of Diamonds*, Dr. Russell Conwell states, “If you know what people need, you have gotten more

knowledge of a fortune than any amount of capital can give.” Consequently, it is important that you research your market thoroughly and understand its needs so that you can develop your business ideas to solve its problems.

Recently, I encountered a barbershop whose customer base had taken a significant downturn, owing to a significant change in the market structure and profile. The owner of the barbershop unfortunately continued to offer the same services in spite of the change, and even blamed the local government for allowing other barbershops to be registered in the street where he traded. I had the unenviable task of working with this business, and I had to point out to the owner that the businesses that thrive in a market are those that provide services that are required in the market, and what he needed to do was restructure his business services and products in line with market needs. It was as though he needed to start his business from scratch, and this was something he was not keen to do. After several discussions, we finally proceeded with researching the market and developing a number of strategies to generate new products and services. To do this, we needed to adopt a number of marketing techniques:

- **Primary research: surveying the market and talking to local residents about their needs, in so far as they pertain to the core operations of this business**
- **Observation: carefully studying the buying habits of the target market**
- **Secondary research: reviewing existing reports that have been produced by third parties**

- **Focus groups: meeting with a select number of individuals to find out about the needs of the market, and soliciting suggestions for future provision of services and products**

Finally, the information collected was used to put together a list of business ideas, which was presented to the owner of the business for consideration.

Another reason for researching your market is to determine its size, geographical spread and general profile. If your market is small in size, remember that it is hard to sustain a business whose market is small, unless you can charge fees for services and products that are high enough to guarantee the income to cover operating costs and generate profits. Of course, you need to ensure that the target market will be prepared to pay the high price or fee. Therefore, it makes no sense to develop services and products for a target market that has limited purchasing power. That is, your market should have enough disposal income to buy the products and services. If your target market's purchasing power is limited, you will soon find that your business idea will not be viable. When we come to look at financial planning later in this book, you will see how this pans out. Thus, the questions you need to ask yourself are these:

- **Is your target market limited to a specific ethnic group? If so, is there a justifiable reason for this constraint?**

- **Is your target market limited to a specific geographical region? If so, is there a justifiable reason for this constraint?**
- **Is your target market large enough to provide you with the level of income you desire?**
- **Does your target market have sufficient disposable income to pay for your services?**
- **What is the average amount of money that you expect to earn from the customers in your target market?**

It is so important for you to answer these questions objectively. Make no mistake; if you do not answer these questions objectively, you will pay a high price later. Let me tell you why. Recently, I was speaking to a black business owner who owns a hairdressing salon in the United Kingdom. She complained that business was not doing well and I asked her why this was the case. In her view, most of her customers, who were black African and Afro-Caribbean women, were not spending much. I asked her why she was not providing services to other ethnic groups when every woman needs her service. Her response to me was classic; she was not trained to provide services to the European and Asian market. I was shocked and disappointed by this response and I began reflecting upon why this woman would want to continue trading in a limited market that held very little chance of supporting her goal of achieving financial independence, which is why she started her business in the first place. Was something else going on in her mind, and if so, what was it? In my opinion,

there is nothing to stop people from minority ethnic groups, or anyone from any ethnic background, whether male or female, from providing services and products to the wider market. When I go to Tesco, Sainsbury's, and other supermarkets, I see people of different ethnicities paying for their food at the checkout. When I go to other ethnic restaurants in both the United States and the United Kingdom, such as Chinese restaurants, I see people of different ethnic backgrounds, including Chinese people, eating in the restaurant. Why, then, should anyone design a business strictly for people who share their own ethnic background? To achieve financial fortune, it is the size and the income profile of the target market that matter. To that end, entrepreneurs aspiring to financial independence will need to ensure that their target market is large enough to allow them to accomplish their aspirations. Entrepreneurs should be prepared to change their mindset, roll up their sleeves, and do what it takes to reach a wider market. This simply means crashing through your comfort zone and embracing change by ditching one of the most limiting habits: making excuses. Stop making excuses and stop compromising your dreams; pick yourself up and start working towards what you really want. Make it your mantra that your business is your business. Repeat this affirmation daily: "My Business is My Business." No one else can achieve your dreams for you. People will help you through your journey, but you have to help yourself by being the most active participant.

**Make it your  
mantra that your  
business is your  
business.**

SHEILA ELLIOTT

## PROTECTING YOUR IDEAS FROM INFRINGEMENT

How much does your idea cost? What is the most important asset in your business? I want you to answer these questions before you proceed.

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The greatest asset in any business is its products and services. If these are not protected against infringement of any type, the business risks losing its precious gem. A business that fails to protect its assets against theft is like someone who goes to sleep but leaves the front door of their house ajar. It is only a matter of time before someone pays a visit to that house and robs it of its furnishings and equipment. Businesses that generate massive financial fortunes are all too aware of the importance of protecting their business ideas well before they are rolled out into the market; this is the purpose of patents, licenses, copyrights, etc. This is why they are able to sell their products and services freely and amass great wealth over an extended period. Can you imagine Microsoft selling its products without any form of protection for its intellectual capital? Of course not. Yet, did you know that in some communities, paying a solicitor's fees to secure a patent or other protection for intellectual property is seen as nothing but an unnecessary expense? I remember reading the tale of how Robert Kiyosaki lost one of his businesses shortly after six months of buoyant trading activity. He explained that

he could not afford to make an investment in the protection of his product at the time. Shortly after he started trading, new suppliers arrived in the market with products similar to his. It was then that he learned his lesson about the importance of legal protection. He could not do much to stop these copycats from infringing on his intellectual property; legally he did not own the property, because he chose not to pay an attorney for his services.

Bringing your idea into the market is always preceded by a considerable investment in time and money in expectation of future financial gains, which accountants label as the return on an investment. If you fail to protect your business idea, you risk a significant dilution in the future return on your investment. Therefore, as a word of caution, get yourself a solicitor to advise you on how you can protect your business ideas against illegal infringement so that you do not get caught out in any way.



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# CHAPTER TWO

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Linking Your Vision,  
Mission, and Strategy  
in a Business Plan

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# CHAPTER TWO

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## HAVE YOU PUT TOGETHER A PLAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

Let me ask you two quick questions before we start exploring what is involved in producing a business plan. Would you build a house before planning and counting its costs? Would you purposely build your house upon sand? I guess most of you will answer “No” to these questions. Why, then, do some individuals delve straight into starting a business without first planning its foundation and counting the cost? Sadly, these so-called entrepreneurs nearly always find themselves in a deep black hole not too long after the event, and they often need a rescue army to bring them back on course. Planning is a management process used to focus the mind and resources of individuals towards a particular course of action. Napoleon Hill, in *Think and Grow Rich*, highlighted the importance of organised planning as part of the process of acquiring riches. The importance of writing a business plan for the acquisition of financial wealth was also emphasised by Andrew Carnegie, one of the richest men in the world during his time, as well as by Thomas Edison. Needless to say, wealthy business owners fully understand the value of a

written plan. However, let me quickly add that it is not enough for you to produce a business plan to support your quest to achieve financial fortune. You need to have a strong desire to succeed in business and to meet your aspirations for financial wealth through the provision of quality services and products. You must have definite plans in order to achieve your business goals, and those plans must be implemented by you and those in your team. Furthermore, by all means, your plans should not be nice glossy documents that are put on shelves to gather dust. So let us now look at what a business plan is, and how it differs from a strategic plan.

### WHAT IS A BUSINESS PLAN?

A business plan is a document that articulates the objectives and goals of a business, as well as the strategies and resources required to accomplish them. Business plans generally contain a mixture of non-financial and financial information. The process that leads to the production of a business plan is known as business planning. It is a process that is very dynamic and complex by nature, and it draws on a wide range of expertise in areas such as marketing, finance, leadership, human resources, and general business management.

A business plan is a management tool with tremendous potential to add value to a business. Like all tools specifically designed to accomplish a purpose (sometimes multiple purposes), the benefit of preparing a business plan will not be realised if it is not utilised appropriately. If you think about this point carefully,

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I am sure you will agree that the inappropriate use of any tool, no matter how powerfully designed it is, will ultimately provide limited benefits to users. Consequently, to optimise the benefits from a business plan you must have:

- **An in-depth understanding of its functionality**
- **The required skills**
- **The willingness and commitment to apply the required skills**

Business plans articulate the purpose, vision, value, and strategy of a business in writing. Therefore, all four elements should be congruent.

A business plan is not synonymous with a strategic plan. It is important that you understand the key difference between the two documents. Strategic planning focuses on a business's long-term goals and objectives, as well as its value systems. It involves determining the direction of a business after a careful consideration and assessment of the current position of the business, where it wants to be in the future, and how it will get there. The outcome of strategic planning is the production of a strategic plan. The strategic plan determines the future goals and objectives.

The link between the strategic plan and the business plan is very important to understand. A business plan is a support tool to the strategic plan. A business plan facilitates the delivery of goals and objectives in a bid to realise the vision and mission of the business.

## WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE CONTAINED IN A BUSINESS PLAN?

The first point to note is that there is no universally agreed-upon standard that determines what should or should not be included in a business plan, or the level of information that should be contained in the business plan.

Robert Kiyosaki, author of the Rich Dad/Poor Dad series, had just a short written business plan for his Cashflow board game. A business plan can be as brief, or as detailed, as a business wants it to be. However, over the years, some

management gurus have come up with what is known as a best practice guide to inform the process. Best practice demands that at the very least, a business plan must contain the following information, all of which is explained in detail below:

**A business plan can be as brief, or as detailed, as a business wants it to be.**

- **Description and legal status of the business, as well as details of products and services**
- **Vision and mission statement**
- **Analysis of the internal operating environment**
- **Analysis of the external operating environment**
- **Analysis of the market profile**
- **Marketing strategies**
- **Milestones (i.e. specific tasks that must be carried out by an individual)**

- **Quantification of the resources required to deliver the plan and the expected income**
- **Risk identification and management strategies**

Before looking at the information that should be included in the description section of the business plan, let us quickly discuss the different types of legal status a business can take.

The legal entity you choose for your business can take one of the following forms:

- **Sole trader**
- **Limited liability company**
- **Partnership**

Sole trader is a business structure that is not incorporated (i.e. it is not registered as a limited company). As a result, the entrepreneur is the business. If the entrepreneur dies, the business dies with him or her, and similarly if the entrepreneur is alive, as long as he or she is willing to operate as a business, the business continues. This type of business structure is simple and easy to start because it does not involve tremendous paperwork, as an incorporated business may require. The startup costs are minimal, and for that reason, most individuals starting a business will opt for this structure. There are, however, risks that you need to be mindful of with this structure. In some ways, you will come to accept that people who opt for this structure are trading simplicity for higher personal liabilities, although there are ways of reducing the higher liabilities. One of the risks is that the

entrepreneur is personally liable for any business expenses that are incurred. If the business fails to make sufficient income to cover costs, the entrepreneur will need to meet the business expenses from their personal savings or funds. In worst-case scenarios, the entrepreneur may be forced to sell their personal property and other valuable items to make good any financial insolvency of the business. This risk can be minimised, however, by taking out an insurance policy.

A limited liability company is a business structure that separates the entrepreneur's identity from the business. The business is incorporated, and as a result, it is a separate and distinct legal entity from the entrepreneur. Monies invested in the business are

supported by evidence known as shares. The shares represent the capital value that investors (usually the entrepreneur and other business partners) have invested in the business. The formal documents of the company will specify the maximum share value of the business. Unlike the sole trader, the entrepreneur's, and other investors', personal assets are not exposed to risk, except in certain situations where they knowingly continue trading when the business is insolvent, or in situations of fraud or financial irregularity. It is for these reasons that chief executives and directors of insolvent companies, or companies guilty of misrepresenting their financial position to the public, frequently find themselves dragged to court, charged with an offence of one sort or another. Setting up a limited company can be more

**A limited liability company is a business structure that separates the entrepreneur's identity from the business.**

expensive and costly. As a result, an incorporated structure can be less attractive to most entrepreneurs at the initial stage of business startup. To repeat, limited liability status protects directors/entrepreneurs from losing their personal assets in the event that the business becomes insolvent (barring improper conduct on the part of the directors/entrepreneurs). Thus, the high startup costs and other expenses involved in setting up a limited liability company are the price that directors and entrepreneurs have to

**When partnerships  
are unincorporated,  
they carry the same  
risks as a sole trader  
business.**

pay to gain protection over their personal assets in the event of litigation or business insolvency. In the United Kingdom, a limited liability company is governed by the Companies Act. The Companies Act stipulates that at least two people should

be involved in the startup of the business. One of them should be a director and the other a company secretary. Decisions have to be taken formally with respect to specific matters, and there are formal documents that require the signature of both the company secretary and the director. For instance, opening a bank account in the company's name will require the signature of both the director and the company secretary for most banks. A word of caution: at the time of writing this book, in the United Kingdom, the company secretary does not need to have any shares in the company. The company secretary can be a spouse, a child, or a close relative.

A partnership is a business structure that may or may not take the form of an incorporated business. It involves two

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or more people coming together to form a business, with the agreement that each will be jointly responsible for the liabilities of the business and, of course, will share profits equally, or in any agreed-upon proportion, during the life of the partnership. Each partner has his or her responsibilities toward the business. When partnerships are incorporated, they enjoy the same protection as limited liability businesses. When partnerships are unincorporated, they carry the same risks as a sole trader business.

Having now covered the types of legal status that a business may have, let us quickly look at the information that should be included in the business description section of your business plan.

This section of a business plan merely requires basic information about the business. The business need not be a company. It can be a sole trader, a partnership, a charity, a social enterprise or any other type of organisation. It is important that the purpose and objectives of the business are clearly articulated so that readers understand the business plan. Vague descriptions of what the business is about can be an early warning signal that those responsible for the development of the business plan are still struggling to understand the purpose of the business. If this is the case, no further progress should be made with preparing other parts of the plan until the description section is completed clearly.

Let us look at a typical example of what will be covered in this section.

**WYZ Limited is a newly formed company, registered in the United States of America to provide information technology (IT) consultancy services to small and medium-sized businesses. The company is based in Ohio and aims to provide its market with expert IT solutions in hardware design, development and installation, as well as support services.**

Now use the next space to provide details of your business. Remember to include as much information as possible.

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## VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Successful businesses are vision-led and, more often than not, their strategy is the product of their vision. The vision is the end state an entrepreneur aims to achieve through a business. For instance, an entrepreneur may have a vision to improve the standard of education in a particular part of the world. If he or she were to visualise the end state of that vision, they would form a picture of people going to schools or colleges to acquire knowledge, which in turn will be used to secure a job or create a business, which will boost the economic development and standard of living of the community. An entrepreneur's vision of an automobile company that will manufacture cars that are affordable by both rich and poor people worldwide may sound ludicrous to many. However, to the entrepreneur it is a vision. A vision will not automatically materialise unless the person with the vision does something about it. He or she must be prepared to roll up their sleeves with others to turn the vision into reality. The scope of a vision may also be too wide, and may need to be divided into manageable chunks with the support of a business plan. Whatever the nature of the vision, it must be articulated in the business plan in order to ensure a clear and consistent link between the vision, mission, values, and strategy of the business. This takes us neatly to the next point – the mission statement.

In Robert Kiyosaki's Rich Dad/Poor Dad series, he endorses the mission statement as the foundation of the business. You will soon know why. Do you want to pause a bit to think about why this is the case? The mission statement articulates the ultimate purpose of the business. This is not articulated in terms of products and services. It merely articulates what the business

**The products and services a business provides need to be aligned with its purpose and vision.**

seeks to accomplish. It is the ultimate purpose of the business, and purpose is not the same thing as products or services, although they have to be congruent. The products and services a business provides need to be aligned with its purpose and vision. However, the products and services need not be set in stone. Think about it: there are many ways to skin a cat.

Let us now look at examples of mission statements of real-life organisations.

**To become the leading provider of personal coaching services in the United Kingdom**

**To help people to develop their maximum potential and utilise their talents in their career**

**To improve the quality of social housing for tenants**

**To provide a unique experience to customers**

**To help people with learning difficulties live independently and in dignity**

**To integrate people of different cultural backgrounds, age, and ethnicity**

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Now use the next table to provide details of the vision and mission of your business. Remember to include as much information as possible.


## MARKET ANALYSIS

For this section of a business plan to be completed, the products and services of the business must be clearly defined. Preparing a business plan calls for a clear analysis of the market that a business is designed to serve. In short, you need to be able to clearly define the individuals or businesses your business is set up to service. You need to have a clear knowledge of the needs, status, habits and location of your market before you determine how best to serve them.

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The following information about your market is critical and you will need to take time to answer each question separately to complete this section of your business plan:

- **Who is your market?**
- **What are the characteristics of your market?**
- **What is the size of the market?**
- **Is the market growing, declining, or stagnating?**
- **What does the market need?**
- **How does the market assess who to buy from?**
- **What are the critical factors important to the market, etc.?**

Marketing experts refer to this section of the business plan as market segmentation. Let us now look at how you can do this for your own business through an illustrated example. Suppose you are a business that provides information technology consultancy services. Let us go through a series of questions you need to answer to complete this section of your business plan effectively.

### WHO IS YOUR MARKET?

- **Small, medium, and large businesses, based in the United Kingdom, with a minimum turnover of £100,000**
- **Businesses located in London, operating in the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors**

## WHAT IS THE SIZE OF THE MARKET?

- The market is growing and there are currently a total of 6,000,000 businesses operating in the three sectors. (Source: various market research reports obtained from the British Library.)

## IS THE MARKET GROWING, DECLINING OR STAGNATING?

- The market is growing, with statistics showing that over the last five years the market has grown by 40%. Currently, only 25% of the potential market has been penetrated and a remaining 75% is yet to be reached.

## WHAT DOES THE MARKET NEED?

- The market needs flexible and expert IT solutions that can be delivered in-house at competitive and affordable prices.
- The market also needs their staff to be properly trained by professional IT experts to boost staff productivity through maximum utilisation of the IT systems, etc.

## HOW DOES THE MARKET ASSESS WHO TO BUY FROM?

- **Reputation**
- **Price**
- **Speed**
- **Knowledge and skills**
- **Business size, etc.**

Include sources for this information (e.g. various research reports from the British Library).

## WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FACTORS IMPORTANT TO THE MARKET?

- **Reputation**
- **Professionalism and experience, etc.**

Now that you have seen how this should be done in practice, you can use the above framework to complete your business plan. It goes without saying that it will help you complete a robust business plan that will give your business the greatest probability of success. Yes, it will be time-consuming, but this is the price you need to pay for financial success. Many businesses fail because they do not want to put in the time to do this research, and in the end, they lose, big time. Don't be the next victim just because you want to start quickly. Remember, your foundation must be strong if your house is to survive hurricane and flood. I urge you to take this very seriously.

## ANALYSIS OF THE INTERNAL OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Now that you are clear about the purpose of the business and why it exists, the next stage is to look at the internal operating environment of the business. The internal environment includes the resources that the business has at its disposal in order to deliver the vision of the business. This information generally includes an evaluation of the number and quality of the business's tangible and intangible resources:

- **Human resources: number of staff and their skills and experience**
- **Plant and machinery: number, location, and age of the machinery**
- **Land and buildings: the number, location, type, and size**
- **Financial resources: the value of the resources in money terms**
- **Network and information: critical information for business success**

In short, this section of the plan critically evaluates the know-how of the business and the quality and amount of the machinery, etc., at its disposal. It is important to note that this section of the plan must be carried out objectively if the business plan is to be robust. There is no need to overstate the resources that a business has at its disposal and then press on with the plan, only to find that a gap in resources ultimately limits the feasibility

of the plan. Furthermore, wishful thinking will not help the business plan to stack up, and neither will self-denial. When we come to look at the external environmental analysis, you will see why it is important to address this section of the plan objectively. Let us now pause and think of some of the information that will be contained in this section of the business plan.

Suppose you are operating a restaurant and you need to complete this section of your business plan. You will first need to think about the resources you have in the following areas; I have provided samples of the kinds of questions you should be asking yourself:

## 1. PEOPLE

- How many qualified caterers do you have?
- What level of experience do they have in catering and managing a restaurant?
- How competent are your caterers or managers?
- How many waiters do you have?
- Do you have access to qualified managers who can help with the general management of the business?
- Do any of the waiters have management experience?
- What level of management experience do you have access to and in what areas?
- Your list may include other personnel resources as well. Remember to include the résumé (CV) of the key personnel under this section as an appendix.

## 2. PREMISES

- Do you have immediate access to suitable premises to carry out the business?
- What is the capacity (i.e. size) of the premises?
- Where are the premises located?
- What is the quality of the premises? Is any improvement work required?

## 3. EQUIPMENT AND MACHINERY

- Do you have the necessary catering equipment and tools?
- What catering equipment do you have?
- What is the condition of the catering equipment, etc.?
- Do you have dining tables and chairs, as well as the right cutlery?
- Do you have access to cash registers to accept payment from customers?
- Do you have access to telephones, fax machines, and computers?

## 4. FINANCE

- How much money do you need, and how much money do you have to invest in the business?
- Is the cash immediately accessible?
- Is there any agreement in place to access cash

**from a bank or any other third party for business investment?**

- **What is the cost of capital for borrowed monies or equity investment (i.e. the interest and dividend rate on capital)?**

## **5. INTANGIBLES**

- **Do you have access to invaluable information that is critical to your business?**
- **Do you have connections to someone with access to vital information useful to the business?**
- **Do you have strong connections to people in authoritative positions or positions of influence who can support your business?**

Intangible assets are equally important in business situations, as they can help to significantly increase the development and growth of a business. Intangible assets can reduce the learning curve of a business significantly and speed up operational activities. Think about your relatives and friends. Think about your social contacts and friends of friends. Every little bit helps.

So why is this analysis important? It helps a business identify and compare its current resources against the resources required to deliver the plan. The outcome of this analysis informs the production of the SWOT analysis, which I will cover later in this book. The internal environmental analysis is therefore a reality check that helps identify gaps that must be filled if the business

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is going to accomplish its stated purpose and objectives. Now use the next table to describe your internal environment clearly. Mention the resources you currently have at your disposal to start this business. Be objective.


### ANALYSIS OF THE EXTERNAL OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

This is where the going begins to get tough. Unlike the internal environmental analysis, which is within the reach of a business, in that the information required to carry out the work is readily and easily accessible, the information required for the external operating environmental analysis is outside the immediate vicinity of a business. In order to carry out an external environmental analysis, some amount of research is required.

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Research, by its very nature, is time-consuming but nevertheless critical for the development of a robust business plan. The analysis and evaluation of the external environment should cover a number of areas, all of which we will now discuss so that you will gain a thorough understanding of the rationale for this section of the plan and its importance to the business planning process.

The most common framework used to carry out this assessment is the PEST analysis. PEST stands for four points of analysis:

**P – Political**

**E – Economic**

**S – Social**

**T – Technological**

Let us now look at each point separately.

### POLITICAL

This is concerned with the impact of government policies and regulations on businesses and individuals. It covers areas such as government taxation (a levy on businesses and individuals); government pricing policies (on industries where consumer prices are controlled); government social policies, which protect the rights of individuals (e.g. minimum wage, entitlement of employees to annual leave, working hours); and so forth.

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The economic conditions of the environment a business operates in or wishes to operate in must be carefully considered when preparing a business plan. This is because a business plan has to be based on realistic assumptions, not wishful thinking. Consequently, the main economic indicators you will need to evaluate are as follows:

- **Inflation:** This concerns the general price of goods and services and its trend over time. This is the price that you will pay to purchase the resources you need to produce the products and services that you will sell to your target market. Of course, you will need to ensure that the price you charge your market for your goods and services exceeds the costs of producing them.
- **Employment rate:** This measures the number of people who are employable and are engaged in employment. Again, it is a measurement of the purchasing power of the market. The higher the employment rate, the higher the disposable income in the market, which means people will have more money to spend. The reverse occurs with a lower employment rate.
- **Interest rate:** This represents the price at which capital can be borrowed from the bank. Generally, the higher the interest rates, the higher the cost to a business,

and vice versa. The business must generate a return on capital invested that is higher than the cost of capital borrowed if it is to be viable.

- **Exchange rate:** This represents the price of the local currency of your business operations against another country's currency. The stronger the currency of your local market, the more expensive your products and services will be in another market, and vice versa. This is particularly important if you plan to sell your products or services outside your local market, where your products and services will be in direct competition with those produced locally.
- **Gross domestic product (GDP):** This measures the rate of growth in an economy in terms of the level of domestic production. The higher the level of GDP, the higher the level of economic activities and growth (and vice versa). All other things being equal, you want to expand your business when the GDP is growing, and to be more cautious when the GDP is expected to decline.

## SOCIAL CONTEXT

This is mainly concerned with the demography of the operating environment. It covers issues affecting the population:

- **Trend:** whether the population is increasing, decreasing or stable
- **Gender:** the proportion of male and female members of the population
- **Age:** the age distribution of the population
- **Lifestyle:** changes in lifestyle and social habits of the population (dining out more frequently, longer working life)
- **Ethnicity:** the ethnic composition of the population

## TECHNOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Having a good understanding of the benefits of existing and new technologies can be useful in forming a judgement on how best to capitalise technological advancement to improve business processes and outputs. Technological changes can create new opportunities for businesses and can change the way businesses operate. Technology continues to evolve and eliminate barriers that once existed in markets. For instance, the advent of the Internet, aeroplanes, and automobiles has destroyed communication and transportation barriers that once limited the scale and speed of international trade. Factors such as differences in time zones, language, and distance are no longer a cause for concern by those who wish to undertake global trading.


## MARKET COMPETITION

With the exception of monopolistic businesses (i.e. businesses that are the single supplier of their products and services in a given market), competition will ultimately have an impact on the performance of businesses. By competition I mean the presence of other suppliers producing similar goods and services to those that you provide. In practice, most businesses operate in markets where there are many suppliers of similar products or services, as well as many buyers of those products and services. The degree of similarity between products and services can vary considerably, and it is necessary for you to objectively acknowledge this point. Before pressing on, we should now look at what market competition means and what forms it can take. This will help you to identify your competitors, as you certainly

must be aware of their market position and offerings so that you can develop a unique selling point to differentiate yourself from them. It is also helpful for you to find ways to work cooperatively with competitors through joint venture projects that will yield higher benefits for your business and theirs. Some of you may be wondering how on earth you can work with your competitors. Simply put, your competitors are not able to meet the needs of the entire market, and there may be core strengths of your business that complement theirs and which provide grounds for working in partnership in some areas. Consequently, there are good reasons for knowing who your competitors are.

Competitors are businesses that supply the market with services and products similar to what your business offers. Remember that the services and products businesses provide are designed to address specific market needs. For instance, food addresses basic human needs for survival, a house supplies basic human needs for shelter and safety, a telephone satisfies humans' communication needs as well

as social needs, and so forth. However, whilst food, clothing, and accommodation are products that satisfy basic needs, you need to be aware that these same products can be used to satisfy higher-level needs such as status, pleasure, self-worth (actualisation), etc. Consequently, given that a business must understand who its competitors are, it must also be able to clearly define the needs and benefits its products and services address so that it can locate

**Competitors  
are businesses  
that supply the  
market with  
services and  
products similar  
to what your  
business offers.**

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its competitors accurately. For instance, a caravan or a flat can be used to meet basic housing needs, as well as higher-order needs like status and pleasure. It all depends on the design, location, and facilities offered in the different caravans and flats.

Now, I want you to think carefully about your own business. Then use the space below to provide details about your competitors, including a description of their size, status, location, market position, and more:


## PULLING TOGETHER ALL THE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

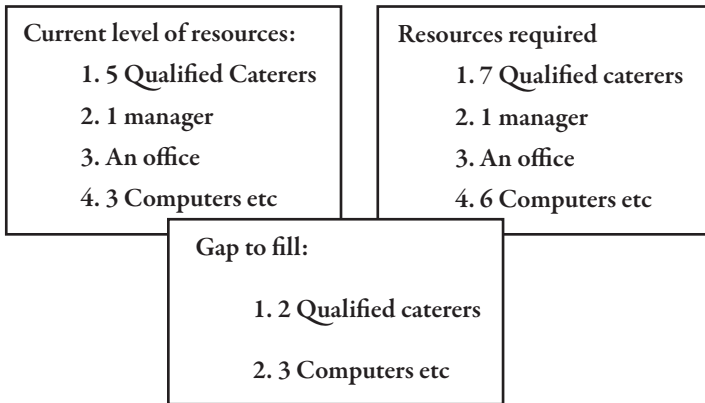
Now that we have looked at the different levels of information required to gain a complete picture (by and large) of the business environment, the next step is to pull the information together in

a meaningful way so that it will help you determine the specific actions you should take to accomplish your business objectives and goals. So far, we have looked extensively at how to go about evaluating the external market environment. To summarise, we can conclude that the external environmental analysis helps a business to determine several features of the market:

- **The type and quality of products and services needed by the target market**
- **The mandatory regulations a business must comply with, as well as those that influence its activities indirectly**
- **The prices at which goods and services produced by a business can be sold to the market, taking account of the purchasing power of the market as well as competition**
- **The prices at which resources can be bought from the market to produce the goods and services produced for sale by the business**
- **The strengths and weaknesses of competitors in the same industry**
- **The characteristics and profile of the market**

To take this further, the business plan should assess the resources required to accomplish business objectives. This must be done objectively, drawing from the results of any research carried out by the business. Let us now look at the next diagram for a clearer illustration of this point.

## RESOURCE ANALYSIS MODEL



The box in the middle represents the resources required to close the gap between what is needed to service the market and what is currently available in the business. In this illustration, you will see that the business needs two key resources:

- **Qualified caterers**
- **Computers**

You will recall that earlier we carried out an internal environmental analysis. The information in the current level box is the outcome of that review. In the same vein, we also carried out an external environmental analysis as well as a market competition analysis. Information shown in the resource-required box is drawn out of that analysis. In our illustration, you will see that the business is now faced with the challenge of procuring the resources that will allow it to compete effectively in the market.

Unless steps are taken to close the gaps in the planning process, the business will risk developing a business plan that is not feasible. Consequently, as part of its strategy for competing effectively in the market, a business will ensure that steps are taken to recruit the right level of staff and to purchase the right types and level of resources for effective market competition.

### **SWOT Analysis**

**SWOT is a mnemonic for:**

**S – Strengths**

**W – Weaknesses**

**O – Opportunities**

**T – Threats**

The SWOT analysis is also linked directly to the outcome of the environmental analysis (both internal and external). Let us now explore the SWOT analysis further.

**Strengths** represent those aspects of the business that are above average in the market. Strengths can include the following:

- **Access to quality staff with the right types of skills and attitude**
- **Location of the business, perhaps nearer to customers**
- **Network of business contacts**
- **Control of resources that are in limited supply**

**Weaknesses** represent those aspects of the business that can limit its potential for success. They can include:

- **Limited access to competent staff**
- **Limited innovative products**
- **Limited quality customer services**
- **Limited financial resources**
- **Poor credit rating**
- **Limited network**

Note that strengths and weaknesses focus on the internal environment, whereas opportunities and threats focus on the external environment. Let us look at what the latter means.

**Opportunities** represent factors in the external environment that can help promote the expansion of the business. They are generally factors that have the potential to stimulate business development and growth. For instance:

- **Decline in interest rates**
- **Favourable changes in government policies**
- **Increase in demand for a service that can be provided by the business**

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Threats represent factors present in the external environment that limit the capacity of a business to expand or be successful. They are generally events that have the potential to slow business development and growth. For instance:

- **Increase in interest rates**
- **Increase in competition, depressing the prices charged to customers**
- **Reduction in the supply of a critical resource, resulting in higher prices for the goods or service**
- **Unfavourable changes in government policies**

The SWOT analysis is a useful exercise to go through in a bid to determine the future direction of any business. Generally, a business will do well if it stays within the bound of its strengths and steers clear from areas of weaknesses, until actions can be taken to address these weaknesses. Furthermore, the outcome of the analysis can be a useful process to determine strategies to address factors that are critical to business success. So for instance, if having a qualified competent staff in marketing is important to the success of a business, but this is currently lacking, then the business can develop a strategy to accomplish this goal. The strategy could involve procuring outside marketing expertise as and when required for a fixed price, whilst training internal staff to strengthen future internal capability.

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Now, use the next section of the table to produce a SWOT analysis of your business. Make sure you carry out this exercise objectively, making good use of all the information you have gathered so far.


## THE MARKETING STRATEGY

The marketing strategy is concerned with how the business will reach its target market in order to increase sales. The marketing strategy pulls together all the information covered so far into a coherent plan. The marketing strategy provides details of how different segments of the market or target markets will be stimulated to purchase services and products. It will include the pricing tactics that will be used, as well as the promotional tactics that will help increase awareness of the existence of the products and services. Common promotional tactics include:

- **Local advertisements in business trade shows, newspapers and exhibitions**
- **Direct marketing through highly targeted mailing lists**
- **Advertising in the Yellow Pages, Thompson Direct, Kellysearch, etc.**
- **Advertising on online directories such as <http://www.upmystreet.com>**
- **Advertising through the Chambers of Commerce**
- **Networking**
- **Forming strategic alliances or partnerships**
- **Leaflets or business cards**
- **Industry-specific websites and journals**

The marketing strategy can also include the sales strategy. Selling is different from marketing. Whereas marketing drives traffic toward the business, that traffic will not necessarily translate into sales. Selling strategies cover those aspects of the business's activities that will stimulate customers to make purchases. They can include developing a high-quality customer care service by cultivating rapport with customers and prospects, as well as treating prospective customers politely and professionally, coupled with a strong demonstration of product knowledge, which will help customers to make an informed decision. An effective marketing and sales strategy should help a business drive up its sales and revenue. Taking account of all the information you have gathered so far, consider the following questions: how will your business compete in the market? And, how will your

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business drive up the demand for its goods and services, ensuring that it generates adequate income to cover the cost of producing the goods and services? Use the space below to explain the marketing and sales strategy of your business.

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## HOW TO MANAGE YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

A business plan will not be realistic until an individual or a team of people working together for the achievement of a common goal takes responsibility for managing the activities detailed in the business plan to achieve the desired business objectives and goals. This implies that business planning and management are two separate functions. Management of a business plan requires strong leadership, expertise in different technical areas, and support and commitment from all those involved in the business. As an entrepreneur, you need to play a leadership role in your business, and so it is important that you

understand what it takes to become a good leader. You need to understand the difference between leadership and management, as very often entrepreneurs launching new businesses can be caught in the trap of fulfilling both roles, with the leadership role being given less important status. If you are to succeed in business, leadership skills are going to be very critical in your success formula. In the next chapter, you will find more information about leadership; for now, let us continue with the business planning process. The practical implementation of the activities required to manifest the business goals and objectives, as set out in the plan, is always the point where most people start feeling the heat of starting and developing a business. The topics covered in this book have been chosen to prepare you for business success by helping you move from formulating a business plan to implementing it. The most common mistake made by a business is to prepare a plan and then set it aside and continue operating as if the plan didn't exist. Obviously, if this approach is taken, the process of preparing the business plan will serve no fruitful purpose. Remember, your business plan is not just a document you prepare to raise finance.

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Consequently, a business plan must include milestones – i.e. activities that must be carried out – to deliver the goals and objectives in each section of the plan, and the plan must certainly include target dates. Once the milestones have been established, specific individuals must be given responsibility for the management and delivery of the milestones. Specific dates

to review progress against plan must be set to ensure proper accountability for the resources of the business. Business plans are normally prepared for a period of more than one year (for instance, a period of three to five years).

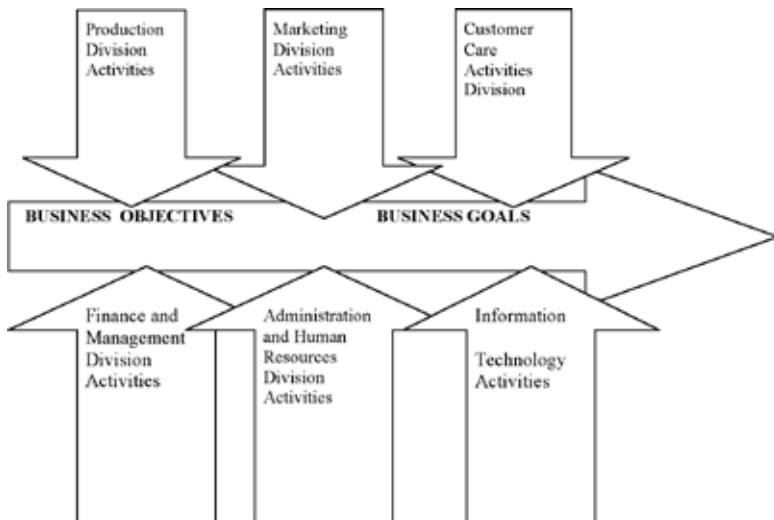
**Your operational plan should clearly state all the activities you will carry out to ensure that your financial goals are achieved.**

Consequently, an operational plan for each 12-month period within the larger scope of the business plan must be prepared, with a view to ensuring that managers are aware of the key goals and objectives for that period so that resources can be focused toward achieving them. In summary, operational plans are support tools for implementing the business plan.

The operational plan will set out all the activities to be undertaken by the business and the lead officers for each activity. The operational plan is essentially the list of milestones, and for it to be effective, a robust performance management framework must support it. In simple terms, if you plan to achieve an income of £100,000 in a particular financial year, you need a system for managing marketing activities, hiring human resources, managing and controlling money, and so forth. Your operational plan should clearly state all the activities you will carry out to ensure that your financial goals are achieved. Next, you need a system for monitoring your actual performance against the goal. This is what setting up a performance management framework is all about. In later chapters, you will learn some examples of performance management systems. A performance system must be characterised by SMART targets that are challenging, achievable, and clearly understood by those responsible for delivering them.

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(The acronym SMART, discussed in detail later in this book, stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound.) Equally, a good performance management system will have clear key performance indicators that are linked to the business plan's objectives and goals. A performance management framework must be put in place for the effective management of all functional activities relevant to the plan. Each functional team must be aware of what the business goals and objectives are, as well as the targets that must be met in order to achieve these goals. Do not feel intimidated by the title "Functional Team." In the case of a sole trader business, it is more than likely the entrepreneur will initially play most of these roles. However, with time, some of the roles will be carried out by external service providers, or even paid staff or associates. The diagram below illustrates the importance of getting all the different functional teams working towards the same business objectives, in spite of different team objectives.



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As your business grows and more people are involved in its day-to-day activities, someone should be assigned the responsibility for the delivery of each specific goal. Moreover, as part of the management process, there should be regular reports on actual achievements against targets so that appropriate actions can be taken to address any problems.

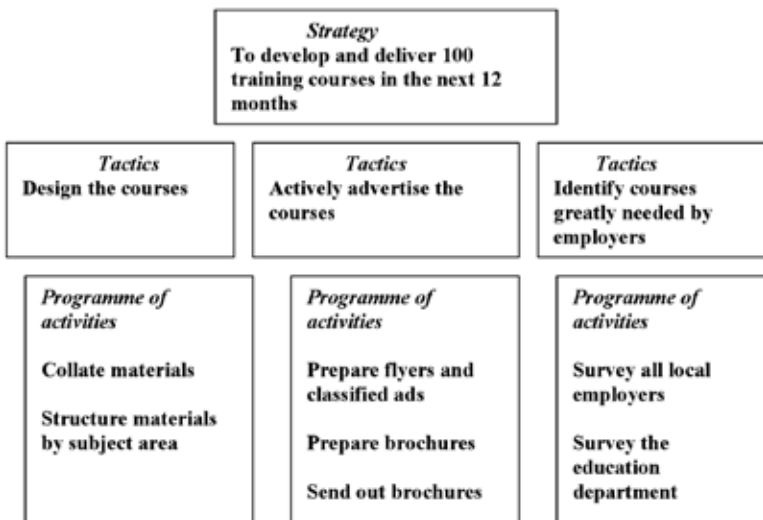
This is where risk management strategy comes in. Those responsible for the management of, say, marketing will need to identify the risks that can undermine their abilities to drive up leads and sales so that they can manage those risks effectively. Let us look at some of the risks that can limit the marketing function:

- 1. Lack of adequate financial resources to employ the right calibre of staff or experts to promote the business effectively**
- 2. Lack of resources to manage leads effectively to generate high levels of sales**
- 3. Lack of expertise to research the market objectively and provide feedback to the organisation on the needs of the market**
- 4. Lack of good working relationship with other team members who are responsible for providing effective support to the marketing team**

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Once these risks have been identified, the marketing department should move on to devise strategies and control mechanisms to reduce the chances that these risks will materialise. Of course, a system of monitoring performance should be established so that adequate actions will be taken on time to address weaknesses.

Let's look at another example very quickly. Suppose you are a training company with a target to deliver 100 courses over the next year. The diagram below shows a snapshot of what the management planning process should look like.



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## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF PREPARING A BUSINESS PLAN?

The common challenge facing most businesses, especially new businesses, is the lack of one or more of the following needs:

- **Time**
- **Resources**
- **Expertise**
- **Objectivity in the process**

Given the importance of a robust business plan, a business that does not have sufficient expert knowledge or staff to create a plan will be better off utilising the expertise of a consultancy firm like Business Services Support Limited. The information contained within this book should, however, give you the tools you need to produce your business plan. Visit <http://www.businessservicesupport.com> for more information on this topic.

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# CHAPTER THREE

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Leading to  
Create Confidence  
in Your Business

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# CHAPTER THREE

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## UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF GOOD LEADERSHIP IN BUSINESS

No business will survive for very long if it lacks leadership. Leadership is one of the keys to building a successful business that provides excellent services and products for the market as well as earning the owners' financial fortune. However, very often, this term is misconstrued and in some quarters abused. Therefore, before we progress any further with this subject, I want you to think carefully about the following questions:

- **What does leadership mean to you?**
- **Why is leadership important in a business?**
- **How can you cultivate good leadership in your business?**

These are very important questions, and your close attention to the answers and correct application of the knowledge gained in this book will earn you significant rewards. Someone once said that for you to lead others, you must first be able to lead yourself. This is so true, and some of you may be wondering what this means. Well, are you capable of giving yourself an instruction and

following it through? Are you capable of taking a decision to do something and then following it through? This is the first sign of self-leadership. If you are not capable of leading yourself, how do you expect to lead others? Ghandi said, "For you to see the change you want to see in the world, you must first be that change." Think about it. It is so true. In fact, I want to go one step further to say that you will never be able to lead others if you are not capable of being led yourself, or, for that matter, if you cannot lead yourself. I like the way Jesus Christ put it in the Christian Bible when he referred to the Pharisees as blind leaders. He went on to say that they were the blind leading the blind, and sure enough, where do you think such leaders will end up? In the ditch.

**Are you capable  
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through?**

**Leadership** is the act of leading others towards a particular course of action or direction. Leadership involves influencing the behaviour of others, and no doubt as a business owner you are going to need a good injection of the ability to influence, persuade, and lead others when you start putting together a mastermind team, as well as when you begin to hire the services of people, whether as paid employees, associates, or otherwise. The ability to lead others is not a skill that is common among many, and there are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, many people are in love with the title rather than the process that makes them worthy of the title. They have not come to understand that good leadership involves influencing others without any force or threats and getting the best out of others. Some people, rightly or wrongly, have twisted views about the entire concept of

leadership, and very often they engage in practices that generate followers out of fear of their position and so-called authority, rather than out of respect and trust for what they offer their followers and society at large. Therefore, it is important that we quickly explore the characteristics of good leaders so that you have a good understanding of what you need to become to be able to lead others successfully.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD LEADERS

The ability to lead others successfully lies in your character and personal qualities. Moreover, good leadership will help your business earn divine favour as well as favour with men. I want you to pay very close attention to these personal qualities and ensure that you continually strive to achieve them, and that you cultivate them as an important part of your value system. If you are to forge good relationships with your staff, business partners and associates, suppliers and financiers, your character is going to be something you want to work towards improving so that people will trust and respect you and become more eager to do business with you. Most of the good leaders around the world possess many of these qualities:

- **Integrity: Fundamental to building good relationships and influencing others successfully is the need to be trusted. No one wants to deal with people they can't trust, particularly when they have to exchange their money for your products or services in a business context.**

- **Love and care for others:** One of the reasons good leaders can influence others is because they are willing to help people to rise above their weaknesses, rather than focusing on their weaknesses. They recognise that everyone has areas requiring improvement, but their focus is to maximise the strengths of individuals whilst dealing appropriately with personal flaws.
- **Knowledge and competence:** Having the technical know-how in any business is critical for success. However, this does not mean that the leader should have it all. I like the way Jack Welch put it in his book, *The GE Way*. He had no technical knowledge about the production of the products of the company, but he was superb when it came down to recruiting the right people and organising the structure of the business. Good leaders know how to harness the support and skills of others.
- **Respect for others:** The quickest and surest way of winning the support of others is to treat them with respect and dignity. Dale Carnegie illuminates this so well in his personal development book and audio CD, *The Leader in You: How to Win Friends, Influence People, and Succeed in a Changing World*. If you respect people, and treat them well without demeaning them, you can surely count on their support in the future. However, if you devalue them

by treating them disrespectfully in your words or actions, you can rest assured that they will return the same to you. Consequently, you need to be mindful of the impact of your behaviour on others.

- **Justice and fairness:** Treating people fairly should be one of your most important values. Everyone wants to be treated fairly. The beginning of human disintegration is when one person begins to indulge in unfair practices, whether covertly or overtly. Good leaders do not have to practice injustice in order to lead. They lead out of respect and dignity for others and themselves.
- **Humility:** Good leaders are willing to roll up their sleeves and do any of the work that they have delegated to others if it is necessary. They do not see themselves as superior to others and they have a strong understanding of the principle of servanthood, which Jesus demonstrated so well when he washed the feet of his disciples.
- **Vision:** Knowing where you want to be in life is important, and having a strong and clear picture of that end destination is one of the core characteristics of good leaders. Can you imagine being a follower of someone who does not know where he or she is going? I should think not.

- **Responsibility:** Whereas the masses want the glory but not the pain, good leaders have no problem taking full responsibility for their actions and those of others, recognising that their followers look up to them for direction.
- **Self-confidence:** The ability to influence others depends to a large extent on a leader's confidence. Good leaders have strong self-confidence brought about by their own understanding of themselves and their strengths and limitations, as well as the strengths and limitations of others.
- **Communication:** For good leaders, communication is a critical skill for bringing people along with them. They recognise that their ability to articulate their visions and goals clearly to their business partners and team is essential to getting others to play their own parts effectively.
- **Self-control:** Have you ever met people whose lives are an emotional roller coaster? Well, believe me, there are many people who fall into this category. Good leaders exercise self-discipline and are in charge of their emotions. They recognise human weaknesses and they are master over their thoughts, and that mastery helps them to generate good feelings and reactions.

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Now that we have looked at all of these characteristics, we are now going to explore some of them in more depth.

### INTEGRITY

How would you like to buy your services or products from a business whose trustworthiness you question, because they have a track record of dishonesty? They say one thing, do another, and frequently misrepresent their products and services to the market. I guess I know the answer to this question. Many of you will say, “No, thank you.” Well, guess what: that is precisely what others will say about your business when your integrity is brought into question. This is why businesses will pay handsome sums to protect themselves from unfounded rumours because of the untold damage a perceived lack of integrity can have on their business. Integrity in its simplest form is doing what you say you will do. People often think that just because they have a great product, their character will not matter. My friend, I am here to announce to you very clearly that nothing can be farther from the truth. Character matters just as much as the quality of your products and services. Let me share a story I witnessed that should bring this whole concept of integrity home to you. I will never forget watching Dragon’s Den (a TV show in the United Kingdom, where entrepreneurs meet wealthy investors to solicit financial investment in their business). Some of you may recall witnessing this event on air. One evening, an entrepreneur walked into the den with a handsome product that had great potential. He needed these wealthy investors to invest in his business so that he could take his products to a wider market.

In fact, these wealthy investors were so impressed that almost all of them expressed an interest in the business. But not too far into the discussion, a question was posed about the patent right of the product. The response to this question resulted in an exposure of the flaws in the entrepreneur's character. Needless to say, he displayed dishonesty of great proportions as he answered numerous questions pertaining to patent right. The excitement that had been booming in the room when he made his formal pitch suddenly dropped below minus one. One by one, all the investors decided to pull out of the discussion. Why did they do this? It was because of his character. He was an African gentleman with a great product, but he needed to improve his character before he could accomplish the success he desired. His ethnicity and colour did not adversely affect the interest in his product, and all those who watched that programme will attest to this fact.

The issue was his character. The fact is, I would not have invested in his business either, and I am sure you wouldn't have invested. As a financial investor, I would like to know that the business I am investing in demonstrates strong leadership that will take the business to greater heights. Such expectations are not likely to be met in an environment of distrust. Such is the power of trust in the equation of business success and your capacity to accomplish financial fortune. The greatest mistake anyone can make is to think that their character is separate from their business. People buy you, not just your products and services. Therefore, take heed to cultivate the habit

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of honesty in all that you do. If you have an habitual challenge in this area, contact us at <http://www.businessservicesupport.com>. We have coaching programmes and tools that we can use to help you in your personal development.

## DEALING FAIRLY WITH OTHERS

Accomplishing financial fortune and success through your business will be short-lived if you continually embark on relationships in which you win and others lose. As stated in the previous chapter, it is important that you understand that you are going to need people who will work as a team if you are to succeed in business. Examples of unfair treatment of others include relationships where you buy the services and products of others below their normal price, or where you get people to provide you with free services continuously without compensating them for their effort, time, and skills, whilst you on the other hand pocket the profits and other associated gains. Some call it cheap labour, and others call it slavery. Whatever the terminology used, it is demeaning to others when you engage in such practices. Your capacity to continue in business in the foreseeable future without attracting negative publicity is extremely slim when you perpetually treat others unfairly. There are a number of caveats that I should quickly add to this point. I am not commenting here about people who seek the support of others in exchange for free services at the initial stage of their business or at times in the future when the business is not generating sufficient cash to pay for the services. We can all do with some help in periods of limited cash flow. I am merely talking about the sweatshop scenarios or

similar situations where an entrepreneur will consciously squeeze the life out of others through unfair engagements, just so they can generate the maximum profit for themselves at the expense of others. If you are already in business, I advise you to screen all your current agreements and engagements with others to ensure you are not dealing unfairly with your staff, business associates, suppliers, or any other stakeholders.

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

How often have you heard people say that there has been a communication breakdown, or, for that matter, that no one knows what's going on around here? When you hear this statement, very often you know that the leader of that business is too far away from the shop floor or the front end of the business. The leader's vision is beginning to lose ground, and unless prompt actions are taken this could be the beginning of a downturn for the business. Communication is one of the greatest strengths you can possess – if you know how to do it well – because people like to be communicated with. Please do not confuse communication with talking to others. In a while, I will explain what communication is. I remember dealing with a business where the owner was very frustrated about the manager's performance. In the words of the owner, the manager was unsuitable for the post, because she was not generating adequate sales and was also keeping her in the dark about her business. Further probing into the situation revealed that the owner had inadvertently delegated her leadership position to the manager, who saw no need to consult the owner of the business on some of the critical issues

facing the business on a day-to-day basis. The owner of the business had not communicated clearly what her expectations were for the post of the manager, nor had the owner put in place systems for managing the manager's performance in a structured manner, whether formally, informally, or semi-formally. This lack of clear communication caused tension in the business,

**This lack of clear communication caused tension in the business.**

and the manager began contemplating leaving the business at the same time the owner was thinking of terminating her contract of employment. Had the owner clearly communicated what she expected and defined the boundaries

of the manager's powers, the tension would have been avoided. Communication is often confused with talking. Communication is the medium of exchanging information, whether verbally or in writing, and the process should involve all of the parties concerned. Communication involves transferring and receiving information through words and body language, although very often the later is done involuntarily. Effective communication involves listening, questioning, and interpreting information so that you will gain a thorough understanding of the spirit of what is being communicated to you. As a leader of your business, you want to ensure that you promote effective communication so that those involved in your business, whether staff or associates, can emulate you, build trust, and accomplish business goals and objectives. Remember that the dividend of miscommunication is misunderstanding, which frequently leads, at worst, to further misunderstanding and conflict. At best, miscommunication leads to wrong actions.

## LOVING AND CARING FOR PEOPLE

The ability to influence people successfully lies in your capacity to recognise and overcome their flaws in the full realisation that you yourself are not perfect, and others have to cope with your own flaws. Loving and caring for your staff and other team members will stimulate their loyalty and commitment, which in return will give you the added edge to lead them effectively. This is because your focus is on their strengths and not their limitations. You recognise their limitations and have plans to address them, however, against this backdrop you are constantly striving to draw out the best in them so that they feel good about themselves and display their best performance consistently. I remember attending a seminar in which a very wealthy lady whose business had grown significantly was sharing her experiences with us. She strongly recommended that all those who were serious about starting a successful business should remember the importance of caring for their staff as part of their winning strategy. Similarly, in my role as a consultant, I have come across businesses whose financial turnover exceeds the million-pound mark and whose owners live by this very principle. In one particular ethnic restaurant business based in the United Kingdom, with a turnover in excess of £1 million, nearly all of the staff working in the business live in subsidised rental accommodations owned by the business and located within a reasonable distance from the restaurant. The owner recognised her moral duty to care for her staff, and in return, they rewarded her with loyalty, commitment, and excellent customer services. The restaurant is the most popular in a very busy London high street, where competition is strong.

However, regardless of competition, people still travel very far to dine in the restaurant because of the unique experience it offers through a team of dedicated staff.

Love is the greatest divine gift that we can give others. Good leaders are well aware of this fact and are very mindful about any practice that contravenes the principle of loving and caring for others. As a leader in your own business, you want to leverage the resources at your disposals. You want to draw out the best results

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give others.**

in others, and you want to do so without violating their rights and dignity. When you uphold this value, the results can be immense. Loving others requires us to be patient, and being patient does not come naturally to most people. It is therefore important that you learn how to cultivate this attitude of love so that you can reap the benefit for your own business. Jesus was the greatest leader in the history of the universe, in my opinion. Throughout his stay on earth, he influenced many, and those familiar with the Christian Bible will know that he was compassionate and loving to the vulnerable in society. He rebuked those who were disposed to expose the weaknesses of others, whilst at the same time he encouraged those who were weak to abstain from violating divine principles and laws, often on a one-to-one basis. This is my hallmark of love, and one that I will encourage you to implement.

## SHOWING RESPECT FOR AND VALUING PEOPLE

People will always value and respect you if you do the same to them. It is the law. You reap what you sow. Good leaders have a habit of valuing everyone, recognising that each individual has a role to play and can make a difference. Valuing and respecting people can add tremendous strengths to a business. Let us now look at a chief executive of a business who understands this concept all too well. He works around the office speaking respectfully to staff members, regardless of their position in the business. He discourages any practice that carries the risk of creating an us-and-them mentality. People feel at ease with him, and as a result, he is able to win the trust and respect of all his workers. He is genuinely interested in listening and hearing what others have to contribute, irrespective of their position in the business. Would you like to work for such a person? I bet you would. Dale Carnegie, in *The Leader in You: How to Win Friends, Influence People, and Succeed in a Changing World*, articulates this so well. If you want people to work to their maximum potential and be energised, practice valuing them and you will be amazed at their productivity. Valuing people boosts their confidence and self-image, which in turn stimulates them to perform better. I remember John Maxwell sharing a great truth about this concept with his audience during one of his leadership summits in the United Kingdom. He stated that it is not enough to say you value someone; you have to demonstrate in your actions that you do. You cannot say you value someone and yet not

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consult with them on matters that affect them. You cannot claim you value someone, but yet speak to them disrespectfully and with contempt. Good leadership is about influencing others positively for mutual benefits.

## DEMONSTRATING TRUSTWORTHINESS

How would you like to work for someone who says one thing and does another? When I was a kid, I would hear my parents say something in particular about the preacher. This was a sad comment now that I reflect on it. They would say, “Do as the preacher says, but never as he does.” In short, the preacher was not a good role model, and all he or she was doing was telling you what was in the book. Sadly, many people have grown up living their lives according to this model, preaching what should be done instead of living it out. Trust is one of those unique qualities that everyone admires in an individual when it is spotted. Have you ever been in a situation where you listen to someone and then respond positively to what they say, simply because you trust them? Something in you lights up and convinces you to believe they are truthful. When this happens, no amount of convincing to the contrary will make you change your mind until the individual betrays your trust. So why do we trust people? We do so when someone demonstrates honesty, integrity, and reliability. Simply put, we trust when we know where we stand with someone, because we know what they stand for. Again, leadership is about influencing people towards a particular course of action. If you want a good relationship with others, then the quickest way to earn it is by developing your trustworthiness. To reiterate this point, in business, people do not just buy products: make no mistake about this. They buy you,

as well as those involved in your business. If you appear dodgy, they will soon take their business elsewhere, and that is it.

## SELF-CONTROL

The ability to control your emotions is one of the greatest strengths a person can possess. Our emotions are simply products of our thoughts and, to a great extent, we have control over our thoughts. Have you ever stepped back and asked yourself why you feel happy or sad about something? Perhaps you have or have not, as the case may be. Whatever your answer to this question, in business, and dare I say in life in general, you will do well if you master the art of controlling your temper. I beg to repeat this point again: leadership is about influencing others, and this means being a good model to others. You may have heard about people of great talents who just seem to be unable to make it in life because they lack control over their emotions. To be able to influence people, there are times when you will need to set your views aside and listen to theirs. There are times when comments they make, or things they do, may lead you to want to tear their brains apart. However, you have to stop yourself from thinking along those lines and consider such events as an opportunity to gain mastery over your emotions, in the full realisation that other people may be immature and need your support. However, if your support is not rendered and their immaturity is met by a negative reaction from you, then your ability to lead them is immediately diminished. This is so important. Leadership is a character trait. You have to be the possessor of the qualities for you to earn the title. This is what makes the difference between a boss and a leader.

SHEILA ELLIOTT

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACTIONS OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Taking responsibility for your actions is the icing on the cake. This is the one trait you ought not fail to develop. When it comes down to it, there are two categories of people in this world: those who take responsibility and those who blame others and never take responsibility. Those who take responsibility for their actions grow, whilst those who absolve themselves from responsibility shrink. A leader knows all too well the importance of taking responsibility and actively does so. When we dodge responsibility, we dodge the opportunity for greatness and success. Think about it: no one is absolved from the consequences of their actions, whether good or bad. Those who indulge in finger-pointing or the culture of blame reap the consequences of their actions. In the same vein, those who take it on the chin and admit their mistakes and learn from their mistakes reap the consequences of their actions. The difference between the former and the latter lies in the direction of their respective personal development and growth, which are poles apart. Lack of willingness to take responsibility for your actions will almost certainly provide you with no motivation or stimulus to change your beliefs and behaviours for future improvement. On the contrary, those who accept responsibility for their actions will almost certainly be motivated to change their behaviours to achieve better results in the future. Good leadership requires taking responsibility for mistakes as well as good results. You will gain the respect of others when you demonstrate such qualities, and as a result, leading others will become easy.