

Creative FreedomTM



Also by Lisa Robbin Young

Home Party Solution

The Secret Watch

Creative FreedomTM

How To Own Your Dreams Without Selling Your Soul

*A guide to personal and financial success
as a creative entrepreneur*

LISA ROBBIN YOUNG



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Praise for Lisa Robbin Young and Creative Freedom™

*"I was about to just give up and move to Southeast Asia, and I thought that this whole business thing was just bullshit, and I just needed to stop. [Lisa] was able to help me get my priorities in line and start being a CEO and not just a worker. In the course of the time that we've worked together, I have more than doubled my business. I made more in February than I did in all of 2015. And she has given me so much motivation and support, and I always feel like my work with her helps me be so much more effective, and better at being the leader, the coach, and the therapist that I want to be." - **Dr. Liz Powell**, Founder, SexPositivePsych.com*

*"Creative Freedom is just the right balance of reality checks and encouragement for someone just starting out or figuring out how to keep going! While other authors tend to focus on the glamorous parts of being an entrepreneur to sell the dream and lifestyle (perhaps also to pat themselves on the back if only a little), Lisa gives you a more accurate view and allows you to decide if that's the road and life for you, then shows you how to achieve it." - **Mr. Francis Lora**, LCSW-R, Founder and CEO of So Grand!- Your Source of Guidance and Resources for Autism and Neuro-Diversity*

*"Here's what I want to say about Lisa: She's awesome. She has a tremendous heart and sense of caring, that comes out in wanting to roll up her sleeves and get things done. She also has a sophisticated, fun, open-hearted sense of marketing, with a lot of experience behind her. She gets the vision. She gets strategy. She gets the caring and love in taking care of the itty-bitty details...you can trust her...to care for your heart and your business." - **Mark Silver**, M. Div., CEO, Heart of Business, Inc.*

"Lisa's strength lies in spontaneously and accurately seeing a project (whether hers or someone else's) from a bigger picture view and then focusing like a laser beam on exactly what and how to improve or advance that project. The first time I spoke with Lisa regarding a project I was working on, I was struck by her instant understanding of what I needed and her intuitive sense of which direction I should move in. In short, Lisa is a brainstorming genius and brings a sharp, creative and spontaneous element to whomever she's coaching. I highly recommend you work with Lisa if you've hit a wall and need to move your ideas forward in new and creative ways." – **Julie Anne Jones**, CEO, Julie Anne Jones, Inc.

"Lisa is stunningly effective. She has a unique talent for bringing out the talents of others, and motivating people to take real action." – **Mark Joyner**, #1 Bestselling Author and Founder of Simpleology

"Lisa brings insight and knowledge that can help with reorganizing and relaunching with an eye toward balance and specific goals. This chicky knows what she's talking about. If not for implementing her input, we surely would have lost Hearth Strings at a time we were battling evil that was intent on destroying our business and our family. Don't wait til you hit bedrock to makes changes. When you find it hard to see the forest cuz your nose is scraping tree bark, this chicky is your man. She'll help you find your way out of the forest with a plan to enjoy the view!" - **Cassandra Paquin**, CEO, Hearth Strings Gourmet Granola Products, HearthStringsFoods.com

"[Creative Freedom] is for every creative entrepreneur who struggles to see how today's action leads to money in the bank tomorrow." - **Jeanie Witcraft-Shiau**, LCSW & CEO of Practical Solutions Counseling at jwitcraft.com

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*To creative entrepreneurs everywhere
who are ready to own their dreams
without selling their soul.*

Introduction

I grew up in the 80's, in Flint, Michigan. Surprisingly, many talented folks have come from my home town. Actors, musicians, sports figures and more - all of them creative and talented people. Back in the summer of 1985, *Ready For The World* - an R&B group from Flint - had just launched their first single from their breakthrough album to the top of the *Billboard* charts. I was ten. Seeing a band from my hometown with a number one record set my soul on fire.

If they could do it, so could I.

Right then, I declared my future career intention to my parents: I was going to be a rock star when I grew up.

I still hear the syrupy, patronizing tone of my mother's words in reply. *"That's nice dear, but you're going to need a fall-back plan."*

If you're a creative entrepreneur, you've probably heard that line more than once in your life.

I soon learned that "fall-back plan" meant "go to college so you can get a good-paying, real job". But that made no sense to me. Why on earth would you work so hard at something other than what you really enjoy doing, just so that you might get the chance to do what you really enjoy *someday*?

That was backward thinking! What was going on in Mom's head!? I mean, I came from a long line of creative entrepreneurs. People who provided for their families doing what they loved. My grandmother was a singer in a nightclub when she met my grandfather, a carpenter by trade. In fact, Grandpa's dad was a carpenter, and I think *his* dad was, too.

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Mom was the entrepreneur in her generation. I remember hauling records to and from events when she ran a DJ service for a couple of years with her sister, and I have vague recollections of Mom's Avon route, antique store, and the upholstering business she founded with her dad. There's a scrapbook picture of my dad standing next to a cash register in the store they'd started (and closed) before I was ever born. She even met my dad while freelancing in "the world's oldest profession".

Entrepreneurship wasn't foreign to our family. Neither was being a creative. So you'd think that being a creative entrepreneur would be applauded. Encouraged even.

Not so.

Most of the kids I went to school with had parents who were teachers or worked in the shop. In Flint, the Holy Grail of employment was working in "the shop" - one of several facilities owned by General Motors. The pay was good and the benefits were incredible, including two weeks off every summer during "shutdown" for the model-year changeover. If you were lucky, your mom was a teacher and your dad worked in the shop. If you hit the parental jackpot, both your parents worked in the shop.

We were not a shop family.

By the time I was a teenager, I'd had a ringside seat into the reasons why Mom practically begged me to have a fall-back plan. Most of mom's entrepreneurial endeavors were failed attempts to make money "on the side" while my elderly father worked a full time job as a gas station attendant and mechanic. She didn't have the financial or emotional resources to stick with anything long enough to make it a going concern. We grew up on welfare, unable to feed four kids without government assistance. When my parents split up, Mom put her entrepreneurial pursuits on the back burner to keep the bills paid.

Mom's siblings were either postal workers or teachers with stable employment and retirement plans. Most of them had college degrees. Not Mom. She didn't have a fall-back plan. Without a college degree, and

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unable to meet the physical demands of working in the post office, she found work as a parking lot attendant - across from "the shop".

She'd spend hot Summer days sitting in that shack - with no running water - collecting parking fees from shop workers. She'd spend cold Winter days trudging through the snow, scraping off license plates to ensure that each car in the lot had paid to park. Sometimes, if someone hadn't paid, they'd intentionally back their car into a snowbank so she'd have to dig through the snow with her hands to read their plate.

She especially enjoyed having those cars towed.

You wouldn't know by looking at her that Mom was gifted at math and science in a time when that wasn't what girls did. She was also a skilled musician. She was probably the first example of a Fusion Creative in my life, but I didn't know it at the time. All I knew was that I didn't want to end up like her: putting on a fake smile, working for pennies in a crappy situation just to keep her nose above water.

I went to college to study music. I didn't know a lot of rock stars with college degrees, but I figured if I was going to get a degree and have a fall-back plan, it should at least be related to my chosen career path.

By the time I finished college, I was deep in debt with a child of my own. I'd actually gotten a shop job while at college, but it was nothing like I remembered it. Instead of being hired in as an employee, I was a contract worker, crossing the picket lines to go to work each day.

William Bridges book, *Job Shift* was required reading by my boss. It painted a bleak picture of the traditional employment landscape. Forget about "30 years and a gold watch". Forget about loyalty. Job hopping and "portfolio careers" were the wave of the future. And the future was now.

Swell.

All that time, money, and effort to build a fall-back plan actually worked against me. Now, I was "overqualified" and underemployed. So when my contract at the shop ended, I took the only job I could find - as a financial

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advisor in training, wearing a fake smile, making minimum wage in a crappy situation just to keep my nose above water.

Somehow, I'd ended up just like my mother.

Unlike Mom, however, I refused to let that be the end of my story. As a result, I am now the founder of a production company and business incubator that helps creative entrepreneurs around the world. I get to write books like this one, make music, speak, and perform for audiences large and small. I host a regular web series called *Creative Freedom* that helps creatives learn how to build a profitable, sustainable business doing what they love. And I moved from Flint to Nashville, a thriving community full of creative entrepreneurs.

My rocky journey from nothing became the foundation for everything this book is about. You *can* make good money doing what you love without selling your soul to do it.

Creative Freedom is an action guide to help you create your own foundation for financial and personal success doing what you love - whatever that may be. You'll learn the unique blind spots of your Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type - as well as the ninja skills that make you great at what you do. Then, you'll learn how to apply those strengths to building a profitable, sustainable business in a way that works for who you are when you are at your best.

My goal in writing this book is to give you the tools and confidence you need to be able to build a meaningful income for yourself and your family, with time to enjoy it.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

You probably aren't looking to make "millions in minutes." If you are, this isn't the book for you. Silver bullets only work for werewolves and the Lone Ranger. You are neither.

More likely, you'd like to make a comfortable living doing what you love and get off the hamster wheel of hustle so that you can enjoy the fruits of your labor. You'd like to have the same kind of money you'd make from a good day job, with the added benefit of actually *enjoying* the work you get to do every day.

Or maybe you're not able to work a full-time job. Chronic illnesses like adrenal fatigue and disabilities or mental health issues keep a lot of otherwise talented individuals from making a living wage because they're not suited to a traditional corporate job. Creative entrepreneurship becomes a vehicle through which they can bring in a supplemental income or even a living wage without the difficulties that come with traditional employment.

Don't get me wrong, this isn't an easy ride. Real effort is required for real results, but by following the process in this book, you'll have a customized plan of action that works for who you are and your unique situation.

You can end the starving artist myth once and for all. *Creative Freedom* shows you how.

WHO IS THIS BOOK NOT FOR?

If you're much beyond startup, there might be a thing or two in here you haven't considered, but this book isn't geared for you. If you've got a steady six-figure income doing what you love, this book probably won't give you much in the way of help.

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I believe in serving the holistic needs of the creative entrepreneur - the personal and the professional - using what I call the 360-degree consulting approach. Context is extremely important for a creative entrepreneur, so personal stuff matters. Linear types might have a hard time buying into this - especially if they don't self-identify as creative (you are, but you don't choose to see yourself that way).

For most creatives, your business is an extension of who you are in the world. That's not typically the case for larger organizations. While many of these concepts can be applied to agencies and big start-ups, they are geared toward micropreneurs and solopreneurs. If you're looking for seed money, venture capital, or you're any type of start-up that isn't autonomous and able to make business decisions with agility, this book probably won't help you.

If you've bought into the notion that following your passion will bring you the bucks, yet you lack the skill or talent to actually earn a living at it (or you don't have the desire to learn), then this isn't for you. I'm not teaching you how to do your Great Work, only how to connect it with the right people in a way that allows you to make a good living. You've got to be good at what you do or people won't buy from you (or they'll buy once and find someone else). For example, my youngest son loves playing Minecraft, but he lacks the skills or talent to record and upload videos worth watching. As such, he's not likely to make much money, even though he's incredibly passionate about Minecraft. When he's older and got more experience using video editing software, perhaps, but not right now. He's still got a learning curve before he can build an audience of Raving Fans.

So if you're well versed in your Great Work and you're looking for a way to parlay that skill or talent into useful, meaningful income, you're in the right place. Let's get started!

ACT I

Defining Your Dream





Chapter 1

All Entrepreneurs Are Creative, But Not All Creatives Are Entrepreneurs

"Creativity is the root of entrepreneurship."

--Karndee Leopairote

In 2010, I'd followed the advice of someone I respected, against every instinct in my being. I hired and trusted this person to have my best interests at heart when it came to growing my business. I "did everything right" - followed every step to the letter - and my business tanked.

I didn't honor my instincts. I didn't trust myself and all the guidance I was getting from *me*. Every time this coach made a suggestion that riled me up, I didn't question it. I didn't push back. I didn't listen to or trust myself at all. They were the expert, right? They knew more than I did, right?

Wrong.

I had, in essence, betrayed the very gifts I was given.

The Low-Hanging Fruit Problem

Imagine an orchard, with rows and rows of trees, each burdened with fruit, ripe for the picking. You are in a race against the clock to pick as much fruit as you can by the end of the day. But you are not the only person in the orchard. Hundreds of others have come to participate in this race. At the end of the day, the person with the most good fruit wins.

The starting gun fires, and the race is on. You survey the orchard and with it the competition. There are folks scrambling from tree to tree picking off everything within their reach. There are others picking up fallen fruit from the ground. It looks like a swarm of people dashing around the orchard, haphazardly collecting all the fruit they can.

You, on the other hand, grab a ladder and look for one tree. It's farther back in the field, so you trot off, leaving the noise and frenzy behind. You lean the ladder against your chosen tree, climb up, and begin inspecting the fruit. You take time to pick the best pieces, working from the top down. Then you move to the next tree. You take the same approach to every tree: ladder up and pick your way down.

By mid-day, the throngs of contestants have descended upon your quiet little stretch of the orchard, and the madness continues - everyone grabbing for the low-hanging fruit. You, comfortable with your system, collect what you came for, climb down, and move to the next tree. Ladder up, pick your way down. Ladder up, pick your way down.

By later afternoon, half your competition has quit out of sheer exhaustion, while others have stopped picking because they've still got to sort their fruit. As you make your way to the front of the orchard, you can see some of those left in the race have started going for ladders now. They've been watching your system, and now that the low-hanging fruit is all picked, they're ready to try things your way.

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At sunset, the signal flare is fired, and it's "buckets down" - time to count the fruit. The final tally shows that while you didn't collect the most fruit, you did collect the most *good* fruit. And you are declared the winner.

Chasing after low-hanging fruit leaves you exhausted, with very little return on your investment of resources. Whether those resources are time, money, energy, or attention, as a business owner, you've got to be clear about what you're offering. Low-hanging fruit can be a great place to start - if you don't have a ladder or real clarity about what you offer. Maybe you'll get lucky and pick a winner from the start. But if you know your goal, your best approach is to invest the time to scout your tree, ladder up, and pick your way down. You don't even need to pick every piece of fruit, just the best ones.

I'm a Fusion Creative, which means that I'm pretty good at a lot of things and it's not in my nature to choose just one thing. Yet, that's exactly what I was being asked to do by this coach, whom I respected and admired. Her plan looked good on paper, and we *did* create some immediate income from "low hanging fruit".

She wanted me to build a business around something I could *do*, not something that I loved or even enjoyed doing. Not only was there no passion, it took a LOT of mental and physical energy to prop up this income stream. She reassured me this was a temporary measure to "prime the pump," and with financial pressures mounting at home, I was willing to do just about anything.

That was me, scrambling across the orchard. Sure, I got *some* good fruit, but the income was short-lived. I certainly didn't bring in enough money to make up for the misery. I couldn't find a way to maintain it or grow it without having her feed me leads - which wasn't sustainable. As you'll learn in this book, without a market to consistently buy what you are selling, you simply don't have a business.

Is it a business or an expensive hobby?

I've come to learn that *just because you're good at something doesn't mean you should be doing it* - at least, not for the long term. It just means you've got a lot of practice doing it. If you can't bring joy to the work you're doing, it'll suck your soul dry. In fact, you'll read about other creatives who faced similar roadblocks in their own careers, and how things changed for them when they tapped into their own *Creative Freedom* type.

The other thing I've learned is that you can bring in a lot of income and still not have a business. You can also mix and match those realities. You can have income and no profit. You can invest a lot of time and resources and have an unprofitable business. You can bring in a good income, have a profit, and have to kill yourself to keep your nose above water. That's not a business, that's a job that doesn't begin to pay you well enough.

You either have a hobby, a jobby, or a business, but not all three.

What's the difference? First, in order to have a business, you have to treat this enterprise like a business. If you don't, it's a hobby.

When I lived in Flint, my friend ran a semi-pro community theater. We were paid a small stipend for performing in his productions. This stipend was not going to pay my mortgage or keep food on the table, but it covered my gas to and from the theater for rehearsals. It was not uncommon to be there four or five nights a week. Leading up to opening night, we were there every night. We put in a lot of hours. We didn't come close to making minimum wage for the performances. And that wasn't the point.

Performing in community theater was a hobby for me. I did it because I loved it and wanted to share in the energy of being on stage with other talented people. The money was just frosting.

But if you're running a theater, it needs to make a profit or it can't stay open. You've got to sell enough tickets to keep the lights on and pay your support staff. Or, as was the case with every other theater company in Flint, you have

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to elect non-profit status and compete with all the other groups in town for grant money to keep your doors open. One such company closed their doors when their funding was cut and they lost the lease on their space. Ouch!

A hobby is just something you do in your spare time. There's no financial pressure around it. You either do it or you don't. When you run a business, there's a certain amount of pressure that requires you to get financial results

In her book, *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert confesses that she kept her day job until after her blockbuster *Eat, Pray, Love* became a motion picture because she didn't want to put pressure on her art. She didn't want to force her Great Work to be responsible for feeding her. In fact, she had no intention of turning her writing into her sole career until that day. Gilbert may have been a professional writer, but she was not a business owner - she was not a creative entrepreneur. She was a creative hobbyist with a day job.

Every business on the planet has two primary goals: to serve their clients and to make a profit. How they do that is entirely up to the individual business, which leaves a lot of room for interpretation and imagination. Until that day, Gilbert didn't care if she ever made a profit, and didn't care who she was writing for, because the writing was the thing. She just needed to be able to write and she could do that (safely) with a day job.

But the goals for a business are clear: *you need an audience, and you need to have a profit*. You can be in business and not make any money, but not for long. And if you don't have clarity on who your audience is, you'll be hard-pressed to sell enough to stay in business.

No clients? No profit? No business.

You can also make a profit doing what you love, treat it like a business, and still not have a sustainable business.

As kids, my sister and I had our own entrepreneurial adventures every summer. Whatever money we made we saved up to spend during our family vacation. In Michigan, many beverage bottles and cans can be returned to the store for a ten cent deposit refund. My sister was a pro at

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spotting aluminum cans along the roadside, and if she hovered around the trash cans at the local parks, she could rake in a couple hundred cans and bottles in a weekend.

Dumpster diving was not my jam. I opted to stay closer to home, making and selling popsicles and Kool-Aid to sell to the neighbor kids. Sure, there was some overhead, but I could clear \$5-10 per day in just a few hours, while the freezer did all the work.

But neither of us had a business. We had what Carol Roth would call a "jobby". Author of *The Entrepreneur Equation*, Roth defines a jobby as "a hobby disguised as a business." It doesn't pay you minimum wage, let alone a living wage, even if it's set up like a real business.

I put in about 3 hours manning the stand and my sister would sometimes make deliveries on her bike. Minimum wage was just over \$5, which meant, after expenses, my "gross pay" was a little over \$3 on a good day. And that was before taxes!

My sister had it worse. She'd be out for 5-6 hours trolling the parks and beaches. She didn't have any overhead (except gas money for mom), but she was putting in many more hours for only slightly more income. While her bank account looked like there was more in it, she had to work a lot harder than I did. I'd be swimming at the lake while she was collecting bottles and cans, and we were both making less than minimum wage for our efforts.

But we were kids, so things like taxes and minimum wage were lost on us. Sadly, I see far too many creative entrepreneurs who have suffered along for years working a jobby instead of building a profitable, sustainable business doing what they love.

There's nothing wrong with being a hobbyist. There's nothing wrong with making some side income doing what you love. But don't fool yourself into thinking you've got a real business just because you set up a domain name and registered to pay taxes.

Do you have market clarity? Do you know who your right audience is? Who are your Raving Fans? Have you positioned yourself in your marketplace to attract those folks? Do you have a clear plan on how your investments in your business will bring a positive return? Are you the bottleneck in your business? Does everything have to flow through you before it's complete?

These are just a few of the questions you need to answer if you want to have a profitable, sustainable business doing what you love - without having to kill yourself working a jillion hours a week.

But you don't have to answer those questions *at all* if you're not a creative entrepreneur.

Creative or Creative Entrepreneur?

Not all creatives are entrepreneurs, and that's okay. Elizabeth Gilbert wasn't a creative entrepreneur when she wrote *Eat, Pray, Love* and her work impacted millions around the world. She also made some pretty good money or she'd never have quit her day job.

But what about you? If you haven't had your first six-figure pay day from your Great Work yet, it might be hard to tell. Here are five signs that you're not a creative entrepreneur:

1. You don't *want* to make a living at it.

For the purposes of this book, if you create as a hobbyist, or for side income, and don't ever plan to make it your primary source of income, you're not a creative entrepreneur. It doesn't matter if your Great Work is sculpture, business analysis, architecture, or video game walkthroughs on YouTube. The type of creativity you express has nothing to do with whether or not you're a creative entrepreneur. It's your intention around that creation that matters.

As a creative, you can create for yourself and not care what anyone else thinks about your work. As a creative *entrepreneur*, you have to listen to your audience and respond to their changing needs. That doesn't mean you can't

create for yourself and your own enjoyment, but it does mean you have to have clarity around what elements of your Great Work will respond to the fluctuations of the market.

Jim Henson did a lot of commercial work to have the money he needed to be able to make movies like *Labyrinth* and *The Dark Crystal*. He had his own "shrine to the almighty dollar" as a reminder that you can't make art unless you have the money to do so. Money is freedom for a creative. It gives you the ability to do what you want without having to bear the criticism of others.

2. You don't treat it like a real business.

Are you creating for a specific audience? Did you establish a legal structure for your business? Are you reporting income and paying taxes? Are you actively marketing your Great Work in the world? If so, then you're probably a creative entrepreneur, even if you're just getting started in "jobby" mode. If your aim is to make this a going concern, and you're focused on growing your company as a business owner, you're most likely a creative entrepreneur. You might not have a profitable business yet, but you've got the creative entrepreneur spirit that is needed to get the most out of this book.

3. You don't "do marketing" for your Great Work.

According to author and archivist Leonard DeGraaf, Thomas Edison "vowed he would not invent a technology that didn't have an apparent market; that he wasn't just going to invent things for the sake of inventing them but... to be able to sell them." Edison himself is quoted as saying "All my life, I've been a commercial inventor. I have never dabbled in anything that was not useful."

Edison was very clearly a creative entrepreneur. If you are actively trying to serve a particular market, sharing your gifts with them, and making sales offers to them, then you are a creative entrepreneur.

4. You don't even look at the numbers.

Income and expenses. Cash flow. Profit. Do you have your finger on the pulse of what your business is actually doing? Chaotics struggle with this

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sometimes, because they have an aversion to numbers and structures in general.

In her book, *Put On Your Crown*, Queen Latifah tells how, due to an unchecked clerical error, all her money was out of whack. She was scrambling to pay bills not because anyone was intentionally trying to screw her, but because she stuck her head in the sand and didn't pay any attention to the numbers.

She then revealed a secret that Oprah Winfrey said to her: "always sign the checks." This was a simple way for her to keep a finger on the pulse of her business. By reviewing your numbers consistently - even if they're not where you want them to be - you keep yourself in the know. And knowledge is power. Creative Entrepreneurs need to know their numbers.

5. You can't or don't trust others to help you grow.

This is another sign of creating a jobby for yourself, by the way. Each of the types can suffer from this issue for different reasons. Chaotics don't trust that other people will rise to their high standards. Fusions are so used to doing everything themselves that it feels painful to slow down long enough to get or train help. Linears will micromanage deadlines and budgets, which tends to drive people away.

At some point, if you're growing a business, you'll have to ask for and accept help from others who may not do things exactly the way you would. When I ask my son to clean his room, it may not be the way I would do it, but it meets my criteria for a clean room. If I don't want to be stuck doing all the cleaning, I have to be willing to let go of the trivial things - like how he folds his socks. So long as the clean clothes fit in the dresser, I'm happy.

That doesn't mean compromising on what really matters, but chances are good you're worrying about more than you need to at this early stage in your business growth. Nobody expects a young business to deliver at the same level as a fortune 500 company. Use that to your advantage to surprise and delight your audience - but don't let it keep you from delivering at all because you're too mired in doing ALL THE THINGS!

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To be clear, EVERYONE is creative in some way. It could be the way you solve a problem or spot patterns, it could be the way you dress up a gift bag with ribbons or paint. The fact that you use your imagination to see or bring something to life that wasn't there before makes you a creator and therefore a creative.

Entrepreneurs are especially adept at seeing a need and creating something to fill it, but not all creatives are entrepreneurs. The dictionary definition of "entrepreneur" is someone who takes on a "greater than normal financial risk" to organize or operate a business.

Many creatives I know don't want more risk, they want stability. They're freaked out by the notion of the starving artist. Like Gilbert, they're content to rely on their day job and dabble in their creative work during their hobby time. If that's you, then this book is overkill.

On the other hand, if you're ready to make a transition plan from the day job, if you're already knee-deep in your creative work and need some clarity and direction to make it a profitable and sustainable business, then you're in the right place.

I developed the *Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type Spectrum* to give creative entrepreneurs the clarity they need about how to best set up and run their business - in a way that works with their unique quirks and traits. You'll get clear on how to use the ninja skills of your specific type to make your business more productive and profitable, and how to clear up your blind spots so you don't end up stuck like I was, doing things that will only make you miserable.

Does it take longer or more effort to build a business doing something you love? That depends on you. But my experience and that of my clients shows that it's worth it. You're building a long-term asset instead of looking for short-term "low-hanging fruit". And it's often easier because your efforts are bolstered by the fact that you're doing something you love, instead of something you dread.



Your Assignment

- ★ Review the 5 signs in this chapter and get clear on whether you're a creative or a creative entrepreneur. Be ready for the work ahead!
- ★ Celebrate your progress! The clarity you've gotten so far will set you up for more success.



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The Six-Figure Creative

"Become a millionaire not for the million dollars, but for what it will make of you to achieve it."

--Jim Rohn

In his book, *Real Artists Don't Starve*, author Jeff Goins reminds us that starving for your art is a relatively new myth on the collective consciousness of our world. It was author Henri Murger's "collection of stories that playfully romanticised poverty" that led us to caution our creative friends to steer clear of making a living with their Great Work.

Goins says that because of this romanticised mythology, "many of us take the safe route in life... we keep our passion a hobby and follow a predictable path toward mediocrity."

Goins then points to Michelangelo's career as a creative entrepreneur as an example that pre-dates this pervasive myth by about 200 years. Michelangelo was the model for creative entrepreneurship with creative control of his work and a sizeable fortune to boot.

What happened? How did we as a culture fall so far from the example of creative entrepreneurs like Michelangelo?

The industrial revolution killed creativity

I don't believe that industrialization killed creativity entirely, but guys like Carnegie, Rockefeller, Ford and Edison certainly perpetuated a notion that lives on today. They were the titans of industry - some of whom became so by unscrupulously edging out their competition. These creative entrepreneurs were held out as the exception, not the rule. Today, we call industry giants (and celebrities in general) "unicorns" as if to say that they are the only ones capable of making good money doing what they love.

Not so. We just need a perspective shift to reclaim our inheritance from the unicorns of the Industrial Revolution..

In his famous TED talk, Sir Ken Robinson makes the case that education today is in need of an overhaul because it's designed to stifle creativity at a time when it's not just a "feel good, nice to have" - it's something we need now, more than ever.

"Around the world," says Robinson, "there were no public systems of education, really, before the 19th century. They all came into being to meet the needs of industrialism."

Industrialization and mass production were a logical next step in the work world. As such, there was a tremendous need for skilled workers who could function in that industrial system. Indeed, the concepts of leverage and scale are important and valuable ideas even now that we, as creatives, might use to reach and serve more of our right audience.

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But like any system, it was inefficient at first, requiring more input (human resources) in early development and less input (layoffs) once the system was optimized. The next logical step from industrialization was automation - and the mass layoffs in nearly every industry around the world over the past thirty years are indicative of that step. There simply isn't the same need for labor workers because, like it or not, manpower has been replaced with automated efficiencies that are safer and more cost-effective than the human element.

It's a case of oversupply and under demand which, any titan of industry will tell you, is the fast track to the poor house. Our schools are still built to crank out workers, not creators. The education system, asserts Robinson, prioritizes work skills and academic ability, essentially downplaying or downright negating any value from the creative realms.

Like Mom's admonition when I was in elementary school, it was well-meaning, but off the mark. Robinson explains:

You were probably steered benignly away from things at school when you were a kid, things you liked, on the grounds that you would never get a job doing that... Don't do music, you're not going to be a musician; don't do art, you won't be an artist. Benign advice -- now, profoundly mistaken.

A recent report from the World Economic Forum indicates that, in 2015, creativity was one of the top ten required skills in the job market. By 2020 creativity will jump to number three. That's an exponential jump in a short period of time. Our education system isn't evolving quickly enough to match that demand.

As Robinson puts it plainly:

The whole world is engulfed in a revolution... the consequence is that many highly-talented, brilliant, creative people think they're not, because the thing they were good at at school wasn't valued, or was actually stigmatized.

The Six-Figure Illusion

A few years ago, a well-respected colleague of mine shared a rather vulnerable post on his social media profile. He confessed that despite being flown around the world to mentor business owners, taking trips to exotic locations, driving fast fast cars, and the visible trappings of his success, he was broke.

"By nearly all outward appearances, my life has appeared one of numerous accomplishments. I wrote a book... It became a best-seller. I started a publishing company and published 10+ best-selling books... My financial life leaves little to be desired. At 34 I have a negative net worth and have relied on my father for financial support more times than I care to admit."

He was playing the "fake it 'til you make it" game in the worst possible way, trying to exude an image built mostly on what I call "The 6-Figure Illusion"

It might be dating myself to say that I cut my teeth on the World Wide Web, having built one of the first e-commerce websites back in the days when online video was a far off fantasy. Heck, pictures were still a relatively new-fangled introduction to the Internet back in the 1990s! Nonetheless, being on the Interwebs for more than two decades gives me an insider's perspective on the realities of the so-called "laptop lifestyle" espoused by so many today.

The idea is an attractive, albeit dangerous one. You can build a business working from anywhere with "nothing more than a laptop and a dream" according to one online business trainer who has grown a multi-million dollar business and amassed millions of fans and followers with her virtual support team in tow.

These online entrepreneurs espouse that if they can do it, you can too. A noble idea, but there's a problem. You can't possibly do what they do, because you're not seeing the whole picture! Without seeing the whole

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picture of anyone's situation, accurately reverse engineering their success is an impossibility.

What you're witnessing is basically an airbrushing of someone's life - someone you admire and aspire to be like. The danger? It sets an impossibly high standard for you to attempt to attain. And it's gotten worse thanks to social media.

Here's an example: you see a picture of someone's shiny new car that they paid for in cash, thanks to their awesome business. They tell the story of how they built a nearly seven-figure business in less than a year - and if they did it, you can, too.

Sounds sexy, right?

So you plunk down two grand to be in their training program to learn how they built their empire - only to discover the "secret" to their success is that they maxed their \$20,000 credit card limit on social media ads to grow their business, and they had a relative who is exceptionally good at creating and targeting social media ads.

You don't have a credit card with \$20k available. You don't have a buddy who knows how to create and target ads. You *can't* duplicate their success.

When I started in the online world, you only saw these kinds of flashy photos on sales pages - the web page where a person sold their wares. They were usually accompanied by a lot of text highlighted in yellow with bullet points outlining the benefits of buying their thing. You'd see a picture of a guy leaning up against a flashy Italian sports car, holding a wad of cash (I kid you not), telling you how his product would change your life.

In today's evolution, you see social media feeds full of images of people's toes, with a view of the ocean just beyond, or a group of people at a conference after-party, with drinks raised high in solidarity like old chums, when they'd only met a few days before. These images, taken out of context, give the perception that a person's life is significantly better than it really is - as if they never have a flat tire or dirty dishes in their sink.

CREATIVE FREEDOM

It's an impossible standard for anyone, but especially a creative who thinks something must be wrong with them if they've been working hard for years without the same kind of "credentials" to offer to their audience.

When my friend, Rachael Kay Albers (RKA as I like to call her), relocated to Mexico, she got some light-hearted flak from her family about living as a location independent entrepreneur. She also realized how she might have inadvertently been contributing to this whitewashed illusion.

I can understand why my family scoffed when I relocated... I can also understand why they might have resented me. If it really were true that I traded hard work for hardly working – that I somehow gamed the system to luxuriate in the sun “making pesos in my sleep” then what the heck is wrong with everyone else?! Just quit your job and live your dream, man!

RKA is one of the hardest-working women I know. She runs a six-figure design and branding firm. Rachael's a social activist and creative entrepreneur to the core. But it didn't stop her from falling prey to the Six-Figure Illusion:

It felt good to claim the life other people thought I was living. I felt cool. I might have had -\$50 in the bank but dammit, if I wasn't the envy of every 9 to 5-er with a desk job and a seasonal depression. So, I kept finding my way to beaches.

The lure of the Six-Figure Illusion is obvious: no training or technical know-how required! Travel the world! Work on your own terms as much or as little as you'd like! The danger is that, for most people, this is simply not a viable reality. Someone's got to wear the hats you can't or won't wear, which means you've got to hire it out, and if you're currently a starving artist, that means you're broke, which means you don't qualify for this life of laptop luxury. Too bad, so sad!

On one level, this is a harmless way to share our enthusiasm for what we're up to in life and work. But if your ego starts angling like RKA's did, then this is your wakeup call. Anyone that's posted a photo from that awesome “work

vacation", or that selfie with their "internet famous friend" at a conference (without showing the other realities of their life) has been complicit in perpetuating the unattainable Illusion. But then, as RKA points out, we have to live with the consequences of our "truth":

I didn't make money on the beach. I spent money trying to look like I was making money. Once I got back home to my concrete room in the mountains, I'd have to make up for the hard work I didn't do at my "beachside office." But Instagram didn't need to know that.

That sexy pseudo-reality is true for a hot second, which is what makes us keep doing it - like that elusive gambling win. In that moment we are living the dream, so what's the harm in posting one more photo? But reality is always there, quietly reminding us that there's work to be done and, hopefully, clients ready to pay us to do that work. RKA says it better than I ever could:

The fantasy of quitting real life and swapping it for sun soaked workdays and margarita soaked nights is just that – a fantasy. The dream is alive for as long as it takes to snap a selfie and then you've got sand in your keyboard and the glare on your screen forces you inside. The truth is, for most people – myself included – there is no "quitting" the reality of needing to pay bills, be productive, wear sunscreen, avoid hangovers, and protect your laptop from sand because your warranty does not cover that shit. (I checked.)

The Six-Figure Imperative

So why, then do I endorse the idea of becoming a six-figure creative? Because, once you get beyond the ego-stroking, a six-figure business means a living wage for you in nearly every part of the world.

I swear by the *Profit First* model outlined by my friend and colleague, Mike Michalowicz, in his book by the same name. The book offers a series of simple ratios designed to keep a business profitable at every stage of growth - including start-up. Mike says that until a business is earning about \$250,000 USD, the owner should be paying themselves 50% of the business income.

That means if your business takes in \$1,000, you get half of that. If your business takes in \$100,000, your owner pay is \$50,000. If your business income is \$250,000, your owner paycheck is a healthy \$125,000.

Based on those numbers, there are very few places in the world where you couldn't live on \$50,000-125,000 a year.

The upside is that this keeps the math simple: you get half of whatever your business makes to live on. The downside is that if you're just starting out, you'll recognize the need to supplement your income some other way, because you've basically got a jobby going on. That's okay, though, because this book takes the need for supplemental income into account as we build your growth plan.

Growth Plans

There are three types of growth plans. If you're moving into something new, or planning to move away from your day job, you'll build a Transition plan. Once you're off the ground and working to keep things moving in a unified direction, you'll shift to a Momentum plan. Then, when things are where you want them to be, you'll focus on a Maintenance plan. And yes, that's still a growth plan, because as your market shifts or matures, it will take effort to keep things stable and not shrink backward. The growth just isn't as exponential at this stage.

So you'll determine which plan is right for you and build out your business model around the goals that are most important to you. And I hope that a six-figure revenue is one of those goals. Although, you may not need *exactly* six figures, so let me introduce you to the Six-Figure Distinction

The Six-Figure Distinction

The distinction is around reality and expectations. Simply put, there's a difference between a six-figure lifestyle, a six figure income, and a six-figure profit. And you need to be clear on the distinction that applies to you.

Close your eyes and imagine what a life of ease would look like for you. Imagine the details as much as possible. Where are you? What are you actually doing for work? Are you living debt-free? How are you investing your time each day? Are you living the beach lifestyle that RKA was talking about? Are you living in a penthouse in New York City? Are you in a beautiful, but modest three bedroom home in Palo Alto or a yurt in middle Tennessee?

Document as many of the details as possible, then tally up a ball-park cost to live your life of ease.

Chances are good, depending on where you live, you can do most, if not all of that on an income near or slightly less than six figures. If so, then you're looking at a six-figure lifestyle, where it's less about hitting six figures and more about having the money to live an ease-filled life.

On the other hand, if you're living in New York City or San Francisco, your rent alone might be six figures, in which case, you'll need at least a six figure income to keep all the bills paid, forget about a life of ease.

Then again, if you're the one with the modest home in Palo Alto - and a mortgage that runs about \$50,000 per month - then you'll need to clear a six figure *profit* in order to pay for just your home!

It's important to make the distinction for yourself about the real financial goal for your life and your business. All too often, creative entrepreneurs get lured by the fantasy of easy money without a realistic view of how much money they'd actually need to live the life they dream of. Give yourself a reality check now, so you know what kind of work you need to do in order to achieve your dreams.

Hawaiian Paradise Or Texas Desert?

A client of mine lived in Hawaii for years and, when she married, moved to Texas for her spouse's work. She first came to me determined to get her business to the point where she could move back to her tropical paradise, but she didn't hold an entirely realistic viewpoint of what it would take to achieve that goal.

She had a few things right. She knew Hawaii was pricey. She had lived there for years and knew that she'd need a hefty income to make it possible. She'd probably have to retire her husband, too. But her business had been barely scraping by and she needed help to turn it around..

When we assessed her creative type, she turned out to be a Chaotic Creative, which helped me understand the uphill battle we faced in her turnaround. Chaotics have a very clear vision of how they want things to look, but typically underestimate the amount of resources it can take to turn that vision into reality. Further, their expectations for high-quality in everything often mean a bigger investment of time, energy, and money than they have available to them. That means being willing to lower their standards for a time in order to match their resources to their vision.

As Mom liked to say, "Champagne wishes and Kool-Aid money."

Sure enough, her attention was split in multiple directions. She knew all the things she wanted to offer inside her business, but didn't have the manpower or financial resources to hire it out. So she spread her time and energy across multiple activities and none of them brought the results we were looking for. Things started falling through the cracks and her marketing wasn't getting done. She was too busy looking at what other people were doing and asking how we could do something like that in her business. Comparisonitis almost brought her business to its knees and she couldn't see it.

She also resisted the assignments I gave her. The Dreamblazing planning process you'll do later in this book is a powerful way to get crystal clarity on

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what to do and how to move forward, but she continually resisted doing the work in favor of putting out fires and "making more money."

The irony is that had she done the work she would have seen the clear path that we eventually decided on - at the end of our first year together. You might believe this was lost or "wasted" time, but I believe it was a valuable lesson for her. When she would complain about a client behavior, we could point back to what she was doing in her own business and how she was unintentionally modeling that for her clients.

Sometimes we teach what we most need to learn.

Another issue for her was failing to look at her numbers - usually until it was too late. When it came time for our year-end review, she was disheartened to see that her income hadn't gone up at all, and was wondering when she could expect to be making six figures.

"While your business is profitable, it doesn't bring in enough income to pay you a wage commensurate with the lifestyle you want to live." I told her.

"I know!" she said. "That's why I hired you!"

"Right." I replied. "And to grow your business, we actually had to tear some of it apart and start over, which means going slower."

I then showed her how, when she came to me, she had no business model. She knew she made money by working with clients, but she had no consistent way of bringing in new clients. She had no marketing systems. My client was counting on sporadic repeat business and throwing spaghetti on the wall to see what would stick. She was offering free sessions to anyone who would take her up on it, and often wasting her time with people unqualified to work with her.

It took us most of the year to get her to stop trying everything, build her confidence in herself as CEO, and focus relentlessly on just a few things. Now she has a consistent monthly base of income and a clear way to grow that income through specific types of marketing outreach. But she (or someone on her team) still has to DO that outreach or her marketing system

is basically worthless. When she took an entire month off and didn't send a single email, she faced several months of lower income as she ramped back up.

Finally, she got the picture. By not fixing it for her, by not pushing her to "do it my way," she got the learning she needed to finally step into the CEO role of her company - something she had been resisting for years. She focused on a single income project to build her audience and her income. It took several months of effort behind the scenes, and after 13 months working together, she launched an offer to her audience that ultimately doubled her monthly revenue. She now has the means to continue to build on that momentum.

Are We There Yet?

Not only do you need the clarity of how much you want or need to be making, you need a realistic expectation about how long it will take to achieve that income goal. There are a lot of factors that go into that calculation, your available resources being just one of them.

When I say "resources" I mean anything you could invest: time, energy, effort, money, attention, relationships/support, and focus. In my experience, it takes each person about the same amount of resources to achieve a comparable goal; it's the mix of those resources that make a difference. The more resources available for you to invest, the shorter the time from idea to income. When you're a starving artist, burning the candle at both ends, it's comical to assume you'll hit *six figures in six months* like some people claim. Can it be done? Sure, but they are an exception, and often have a backstory that gave them an advantage after years of effort (even if they don't realize it).

If they can do it, you *might* be able to do it, too, as long as you're realistic about and willing to do what it really takes to grow your business. If you've got a lot of encumbrances on your resources, it's going to take you longer, statistically speaking. If you've got Champagne wishes, but all you have are

grapes, you've still got other resources you'll need before you'll ever have Champagne.

But do you really want Champagne, or have you fallen into wanting it because it's an easy shorthand for "the good life"? Before you go out "chasing paper", let's get clear on how you define enoughness.

Drafting Your Enoughness Number

Go back and take a closer look at your "day of ease." This time, using a critical eye, dig deeper. Is this a typical day for you or is this a special, "once in a lifetime" kind of day? We're aiming to create a typical day-in-the-life for your dream life. Again, getting as specific as possible, identify everything you're up to during the day. And put a price tag next to all of it. Then, tally up the total cost and multiply it out for the year. That's your Enoughness Number.

Here's an example: You wake up early in your antique four poster king sized bed with 1300 thread count Egyptian cotton sheets. You hop into your custom shower in the ensuite master bath and get ready to start the day.

The bed will run you around \$5,000, the sheets another \$200. Your custom-built en suite shower is another \$7,000, for a total of \$12,200. Divide that cost over the course of a couple of years (because they're hopefully built to last), and you're looking at a monthly income need of \$508. Add to that a monthly mortgage of \$3,000, and you'll need to clear at least \$7,000 per month in your business just to sleep and shower - and you haven't had breakfast yet!

The good news is that you don't have to hit that number today because this is what you're growing toward. You can gradually upgrade your life and business until you attain that number. Along the way, you may find, like some of my clients, that it's less about the actual *things* of the dream you've been holding and more about the life you create for yourself when you can hit that Enoughness Number.

Somewhere between where you are and where you want to be is your interim Enoughness Number. I call it the 'interim' number because it isn't, by your own definition, enough. This interim number is lower than where you want to be, so on one hand it feels like settling. On the other hand, it's still probably a stretch to your threshold of belief based on where you are now.

Do You Need An Interim Enoughness Number?

If your Enoughness Number is more than \$5,000 per month from where you are now, you may need an interim number. In my work with creative entrepreneurs in their early growth stages, it's typically too difficult to make the mental and emotional leap for an amount greater than \$5,000 per month. Especially if you're starting at zero.

There's a lot of mental work that has to happen for most creatives to allow themselves to see beyond that first \$5,000 per month. Creatives routinely undervalue their work - a by-product of all those well meaning friends encouraging you to get a "real job to support your habit". They work for free or next to nothing for years because they think that's all they can get.

In truth, as you grow your audience of Raving Fans, you can pretty much name your price for anything you offer. Sure, there's work to get to that point, but when you create a company that has no competitive peer, it becomes easy to name your price.

What makes your company so unique? YOU. It's why sports and entertainment celebrities are so highly paid. There's only one of them, and when they're hot, they're in high demand, because you can't get them anywhere else. People want a piece of you (your time, energy, Great Work, etc.) and that has value because they can't get it from anyone but you!

Once you hit five grand a month, things feel easier, and in a way things *are* easier. The work it takes to get from zero to five grand has a lot to do with

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building emotional and financial foundations that will already be in place when you move from five thousand to ten thousand (or more) per month.

Dr. George Huang, a business coach and founder of freedompreneur.com sat down to chat with me about this phenomenon. He explained that many times, the mindset is more important than the mechanics when you are just starting out. There are a lot of emotional hurdles you have to overcome to move into higher income brackets. Dr. Huang explains:

There's this mindset piece, which I personally and professionally think is the bigger deal... I think the common theme is "I'm not good enough. I'm not worthy. I'm not deserving. I'm a fake... In my head, I know I should be making more money, but in my heart I'm afraid that people won't pay it, and I'll be rejected... I'll be alone and abandoned."

Dr. Huang's thoughts confirmed my own experiences with clients - particularly those on the Chaotic end of the spectrum. Remember, these types of creatives set incredibly high standards, making it almost impossible for even the best of us to achieve and maintain them without a lot of resources to invest. Time and again these creatives come to me saying similar things.

For example, one client I worked with repeatedly told me how she used to make a lot more money in her business, and she knew she could be making more, if she just "owned her value". She knew she was worth more than what she was currently charging.

So on the one hand, she intellectually understood that her Great Work had value and that people should be charging more, but getting her to raise her rates was painful for both of us. Every time I suggested a higher price, she'd push back and cite the current state of her business.

"If nobody's paying my current rates, why would they pay more?"

CREATIVE FREEDOM

Do you see how this cognitive dissonance prevented her from moving forward in exactly the way she most wanted to grow? Her brain was saying "Make more! You are worth it!" Her heart was saying, "I'm not worthy! Who am I to charge *that* kind of money?"

It's a logical fallacy that TV personality Anne McKeivitt disproved when I saw her speak at a conference a few years ago. She told us about working in John Freida's salon as a young woman. Freida's salon was where all the fabulous people went for fabulous hair. When he decided to launch his own line of hair care products, he priced the product with a standard markup over cost.

Nothing sold.

He realized his pricing needed to reflect the expectations of his market. Clients weren't coming in for a \$300 haircut and a \$5 bottle of shampoo. They saw it as an inferior quality product when compared to the *investment* they were making in their hair. When Frieda substantially raised his prices, his products flew off the shelves.

With my client, we decided to try a pricing experiment on a product she was thinking of abandoning. It had been costing her time and money, and it drained her emotionally, so she was ready to call it quits. She had nothing to lose.

Instead of abandoning the product, I suggested modifying parts of it and raising the price. She'd be doing less emotional labor and making more money in the process. She had her doubts, but agreed to it.

Then we had to price it. OY! Knowing her issues around pricing, I suggested something in the middle of the market for the type of offering she was presenting. She resisted. I tried to show her the value, but still she persisted that the price was too high.

As you've already seen, I'm not one to push a client into something they have resistance around. I'll make a suggestion and double check for clarity. I'm not a directive coach, because that's not coaching, frankly. Sometimes

you do a client more harm than good by trying to push them in a direction that they are not comfortable going.

Instead, we found a price that did feel reasonable to her - about 80% lower.

I pushed back for clarity's sake. "Are you sure? Is this going to give you the spaciousness and ease you want if you have a bunch of people buy at this price?"

"Yes. Do it."

We launched the revised offer with a goal of having five or six people buy it. Imagine our surprise when nearly ten times that number jumped on board! Our little experiment worked! She was thrilled with the outcome - until a month later, when she realized that she probably could have charged the original price I suggested and had at least five to ten people buy in. If all 48 had bought at the higher price, she would have had a solid base of recurring monthly revenue that would cover her monthly business expenses.

But you don't know until you try, and sometimes you have to learn the hard way. That's entrepreneurship. It's a balance of mindset and mechanics. As Dr. Huang told me, "I believe that if you have the mindset, you'll figure out the mechanics."

Your Interim Enoughness Number Should Be D.U.M.B.

An interim Enoughness Number is helpful for most creatives starting from scratch. It's about raising your threshold of belief to match the reality you're driving for. It's purely a mindset issue. That's why I regularly encourage my clients to set D.U.M.B. Goals:

Do-able

Understandable

Meaningful

Believable

We'll talk more about D.U.M.B. Goals later, but the idea here is that your Enoughness Number might not be believable, so we need to find an interim stretch goal that is. Your interim Enoughness Number won't feel easy, but it won't feel impossible, either. It will set you up for success by giving you a stepping stone on the path toward owning your dreams.

If you feel comfortable shooting straight ahead to your Enoughness Number, then go for it! Some people have no problem shifting their sights to a new goal no matter how far their current reality is from where they want to go. If you're one of those people, fantastic. If not, your interim Enoughness Number will put you on the right path without causing you panic attacks every morning.



Your Assignment

- ★ Draft your Enoughness Number and your interim Enoughness Number, if you need one.
- ★ Celebrate your progress! This is a recurring theme. As I wrote in my book, *The Secret Watch*, "Small stepping stones build tall towers."



Chapter 3

The Five Key Areas of Success

*"Success is a destination
and you are already there."*

-- Lisa Robbin Young

Anyone who knows me knows I'm fairly friendly and energetic - most of the time. One day in particular, I was not at my best and had I allowed myself to wallow in it, my first book - and the inspired story that goes along with it - never would have happened.

And yes, If you've ever read *The Secret Watch*, you'll recognize just how much this reads like the opening chapter.

I'd been at a conference for several days that I'd hoped would catalyze new growth in my business. It did, but not in the way I expected. In my mind, I expected people to flock to me, beg to work with me, and then I'd watch the dollar bills come rolling in.

Not even close.

I sat in the airport feeling down on myself, and doing my best to hide it from the world. I told the flight attendant I had a cold and asked if she could re-assign my seat. My bad attitude didn't need to rub off on anyone else. She gave me the entire last row in the back of the plane.

Perfect.

Alone in an airport, feeling less than inspired, I wanted to get home, see my kids, and get back to my own bed. Moments later, Stevie made her grand entrance. She appeared to be dressed a bit "too young for her age" carrying a small dog in her kennel bag. All kinds of judgements about this woman flew through my grumpy mind. She was so loud, so flirty, too much fun for an airport - whatever that meant.

She was just enjoying life and not letting anyone else rain on her parade. As passengers started boarding, she headed down the jet bridge with the other first class passengers.

"Of course she's in first class." I grumped to myself. "I'm going to have to try not to hit her in her chipper face with my carry on as I walk past."

Like I said: bad mood.

Sure enough, as I'm one of the last to board, there's Stevie with her arm thrown over one of the seats shouting - trying to find a passenger so she could switch seats with him. Apparently, his wife got the only available first class upgrade for the flight, leaving him back in coach with the rest of us. Stevie was giving up her seat so they could sit together on the flight.

"Okay, maybe she's not all bad." I said to myself, and carefully slid past her to the tail of the plane.

A few minutes after reaching cruising altitude, Stevie came troddling down the aisle to the restroom. Alone in my row, by the window (and well away from the aisle), I was writing (okay, grumping) in my journal. Stevie leaned

against the wall for a minute, trying to make small talk, but she only got curt answers from me in return.

Then, she invaded my personal space. Stevie thrust her arm in front of my face like she was trying to show me the time. Rhythmically pointing to her naked wrist, Stevie insisted, "YOU should write a BOOK called The Secret Watch and EVERY second TELLS you SOMETHING SPECIAL."

Hey, I can take a Divine hint - especially when it almost hits me in the face!

I opened to a blank page in my journal, wrote down what she said and got busy. I figured, if nothing else, she'd leave me alone if I looked like I was working. A minute or two later she walked away. I never did see Stevie use the lavatory.

I had previously developed The PEACE System - a process to help creatives prioritize their daily tasks based on their Five Key Areas of Success. As I was writing, it occurred to me that sixty is evenly divisible by five (I was a music major, not a math major. Cut me some slack!). By the end of the flight, I had mapped out sixty inscriptions - twelve for each of the Five Key Areas of Success, and while they didn't all make it into the book, they were the foundation that made the book an international best-seller.

How You Define Success Matters

Inside my Dreamblazing course, I remind my students that "Success isn't about what other people want for you. It isn't about what you think you want, or even what you think you should want." You've got to stop "shoulding" on yourself and be true to what really matters to you. The Five Key Areas of Success are where we begin the first step of the Dreamblazing process..

In all my research (and more than 10 years of personal experience with this model), these five areas came up time and again as integral to every person's life. They may be defined slightly differently from person to person, but I've learned over the years that if you neglect any one of these areas for

too long, it starts to decay (or die). In some instances, if you neglect an area long enough, it will, quite literally, kill you. That's how important they are.

In this chapter, you'll be creating your own definitions of these words: definitions that resonate deeply with you. The guidelines that follow offer a very loose structure with which you can begin to see the possibilities of how you might define these words, but the actual definitions are up to you – and they are sacred. Don't let my loose definitions – or those of anyone else – force you to change your personal definitions, as they are the core drivers of all your behaviors.

In the event you're working through this material with a partner, it's important for each of you to craft your own definitions first, THEN work together to find meaningful definitions that resonate for both of you. It may mean some compromise, but it should never mean compromising yourself or what matters most to you.

Remember: The only definition that matters is *yours*. This is one time when copying your neighbor's answers will get you a failing grade for sure.

Key Area 1: Faith

What if it were up to you to do something revolutionary, but you lacked the faith in yourself to move forward? We would all be denied your Great Work. As I wrote in *The Secret Watch*, "Faith is the antidote to fear." But what does that really mean?

Faith is that which inspires you to live the life you were called to live on this planet, to serve the world in your unique way with your unique gifts.

It's found in the nexus between your core beliefs and your values. When you drive, you have faith that the oncoming driver will stay on their side of the road because you *value* your life and have a *core belief* that most people also value their life or will at least obey the law.

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If you didn't value your life, what would keep YOU from crossing the double yellow? If you didn't believe that others would obey the law, you probably wouldn't get on the road in the first place! It's a simplistic example, but it conveys the point.

Faith isn't necessarily about religion, God, or spirituality, though they can be aspects of faith. For some people, church is the sum total of their faith experience, but there are plenty of people with no religious background who set goals and achieve them.

Without a set of core beliefs and values, it's very difficult, if not impossible, to navigate the world.

Imagine a person with no core beliefs or values, moving through the world like a leaf tossed about on the breeze. Can you imagine a business like that? Better question: can you name a *successful* business like that?

Key Area 2: Family

When we think about family, sometimes we rejoice, other times, we shudder. Living or dead, whether related by blood or not, our family are those closest to us. Family lifts you up, inspires, and encourages you.

As I wrote in *The Secret Watch*, "sometimes friends are as family." Friends can know us better than our relatives ever could. Friends can often be closer to us than our own flesh and blood. So yes, friends can be part of your "Family" definition. But they are not always that close, and sometimes belong in one of the other Key areas. Your workout buddy may fall under the Key Area of Fitness, while your Bible study group may better fit in the Key Area of Faith.

The other side of this coin, your genetic and ancestral relations might not even be part of your definition of Family. That's perfectly fine. Sometimes, we have blood relationships that are toxic or disempowering – so counting them as your Family for this exercise would go counter to what we're trying to accomplish. If you have a toxic relationship that you want to heal -

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(perhaps with a parent or child), it might fit here, but again, it might not. Trust your own instincts on this. Don't get wrapped up in the "shoulds" here.

For most of us, it's easier to cut ties with a toxic friend than it is a toxic relative. This is one time when you get to pick your family!

Moving to Nashville meant moving away from all of my relatives. When I divorced, I lost a few more relatives. But I never lost my family. Male, female, young and old, related or not, I've made an effort to choose my family, and to surround myself with people who love me for who I am, keeping me honest and humble in the process.

To me, that's the best kind of family a person can have.

Key Area 3: Fitness

You can probably think of a fitness goal easily enough: Drop 20 pounds, get in more exercise, drink more water. But fitness, in this sense, is more of a holistic view at what keeps you healthy. Much like Faith isn't solely or exclusively about church, Fitness isn't solely or exclusively about dropping a size, gaining muscle, or losing fat.

Adequate sleep, proper nutrition, exercise, regular physicals and routine exams are definitely part of the fitness puzzle, but there's more. We're talking mental, physical, emotional, and social well-being. What are you reading? What are you learning? How are you nourishing your brain, your body, and your soul?

Remember those relationships that need healing? That's social and emotional fitness. It may mean getting professional help, or setting healthy boundaries, but it's all in the name of the total fitness package for your life.

In terms of your business, how are you growing and sustaining the business? How does it nourish you, and what is your role in nourishing it? Are there things you need to learn or train others on so that your business can function in a more healthy way?

CHAPTER 3

Your business is an extension of you, and if you're not healthy, neither is the business.

There was a time when I worked from sun up until bedtime. My son called the babysitter "Mom" by mistake. Self-care was not a priority. For over ten years now, I've dedicated time each morning to The PEACE System process as a means of taking care of myself before jumping into the fray of the day. It's made all the difference for my mental and emotional well being. I notice a difference when I don't take the time in the morning to do it - and so do my kids!

Key Area 4: Fortune

Living a life of good fortune is about more than your job or your business. It's about the stories we tell ourselves about money, as well as the amount of income and outflow.

Fortune is about how well you allocate *all* your resources – time, energy, money, and attention. When apply them based on what matters to you, you'll feel more successful, even if you don't have a ton of cash burning a hole in your pocket.

On the other hand, if you're spending a lot of time and energy on projects that deflate you, no amount of money will make you feel successful. I've worked with clients who paid me less than my typical rate, and had an absolute blast working with them. I've had clients who were such a pain in the arse, I charged them a premium and STILL ended up firing them.

At any point in time, it was the money stories I had playing in my head that ultimately impacted my sense of success around my financial situation.

What's Your Money Story?

My friend and colleague, Teresa Romain, holds an annual workshop that gives people an opportunity to experience abundance in different forms. One of my favorite exercises from the workshop is a game where the participants give and receive money.

What's interesting is that there are only three "instructions":

1. Everyone starts with the same amount of money (and we all know that we'll get our money back at the end).
2. Exchange money with the other participants until time is called.
3. Have fun!

Unlike life or business, where there are no guarantees about a return on our investment, Teresa assures us that we'll get our money back. Yet by the end of the exercise (before we get our money back), some participants have significantly more money than others - and some have no money at all.

What happened?

As a spectator, Teresa sees how some people quickly push the money away - almost faster than they can receive it. Others seem to hoard it or get grabby. Some ask and say "thank-you" while others won't even look participants in the eye.

"It's interesting to see the unconscious stories and beliefs that show up in our behaviors around money." She said.

Those who pushed money away often carried an unconscious belief that they didn't deserve to have the money - or that someone else deserved it *more*. Those who amassed more money carried different beliefs - that may or may not have empowered them. An "every man for themselves" mentality, for example, could create unnecessary anxiety in what was supposed to be a fun game.

Some money stories are more empowering than others, and like your Family, you get to choose them.

After Teresa shared her observations, all the money was returned, as promised. And we all got a first-hand experience of how our behaviors reflect our beliefs whether we want them to or not.

Key Area 5: Freedom

People, activities, ideas, adventures that give you a sense of overall freedom, instead of feeling like you're in "bondage" or "servitude." These are the things that leave you feeling a sense of freedom, accomplishment, and confidence in your life.

It's easy to mistake freedom for fun. There's definitely a lot of fun to be had in life and work, but freedom is deeper and wider than just having a good time. In fact, "too much of a good time" doesn't give us a sense of freedom. Instead, it leaves us feeling heavy, responsible, and disempowered.

Sometimes a greater sense of freedom comes in striving for a larger goal. In an effort to get and stay out of debt, I wanted to pay cash for a laptop and phone. I also knew I didn't want to have a car payment anymore, so I sold my car. I was lucky to owe less on it than it was worth, so I used the extra cash to buy my laptop and phone, and started saving for a used car.

My mobility was temporarily hampered, however, and I relied on the kindness of others. That was certainly not fun. Asking for help was a tough, yet valuable lesson for me to learn. Three years later, I had enough cash to buy a safe, reliable set of wheels to cart me around town, and with it a tremendous sense of freedom to come and go as I pleased, without having to make a monthly payment for the privilege.

It would be easy to make this a catch-all Key Area, and in some ways I suppose it is. You've got dreams, goals and desires rooted inside you that may not fit in the other Key Areas. Put them here.

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To be able to take the time to write - when I knew it wasn't going to pay the bills immediately - felt like a luxury (another money story), a dream, or a nice-to-have that didn't fit in any of the other Key Areas. Yet it persisted as important, so it became part of my definition of Freedom long before it was part of my definition of Fortune.



Your Assignment

- ★ Review each of the 5 Key Areas of Success and develop your own definitions for each. You'll need these shored up before we begin to build your growth plan so we know what really matters for your life and business.
- ★ Sleep on these definitions and carry them around with you for a day or two to see if they really resonate, or if you're playing with "shoulds"
- ★ Your growth plan goals will grow out of these definitions, so be sure you're willing to honor these definitions for the next year, since that's the duration of the plan you're creating.
- ★ Celebrate! This can be some pretty tough work. In some respects, it's the hardest part of the journey. Defining success on your own terms is new for many creatives. Congratulate yourself for doing the work!



Chapter 4

The "I Matter" Paradigm

*"If everyone is moving forward together,
then success takes care of itself."*

-- Henry Ford

Back in August of 2014 - long before Jussie Smollett and Alicia Keys collaborated to record *Powerful* for the Fox TV series, *Empire*, I was on a phone call with my friend Deb. She's a recording artist, songwriter, and the creator of TheAwakenedArtist.net. Deb had just started test marketing the method she was developing and I was one of her guinea pigs.

The crux of the conversation was about realigning myself with what really mattered to me and who the Divine created me to be. Like many creatives (and moms in general), I lived a good portion of my life to that point subrogating my own desires and dreams for those of my husband, children, and others. The problem, she pointed out, was that by denying myself the ability to own what was important to me, I was NOT being myself. I was instead showing up in Lisa's shell, but not letting Lisa shine through.

As we talked, she shared with me three principles that inspired what I call the "I Matter" paradigm. It goes like this:

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I Matter.

You Matter.

We Matter.

In that order. No substitutions.

The way she explained it was that we are all important, and all here for a purpose. I matter, and because I matter, that means YOU matter, too (because you are also an "I" from your own perspective). Only then can WE create anything that will benefit the world. We all matter individually and collectively.

As I sat with that idea, a new image appeared for me. If I matter, then I need to take care of myself and my needs before I can serve others. I need to put my own oxygen mask on first, so to speak. Then, and only then, can I truly focus on serving the needs of my clients. You, as a client matter to me, and I want to be able to serve you to the best of my ability. Only then can the work I do have an impact that reaches the world at large.

It can be a little tricky to teach about, since when I say "I matter" I'm not talking strictly about myself, but rather how YOU need to frame the world. So here's another way for you to look at it:

I Matter

I have to take care of myself first.

You Matter

Once my needs are met, I can focus on serving you.

We Matter

Together, we can make a bigger, more meaningful impact on the world.

This paradigm made working with clients infinitely easier. Like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, by taking a look at my own needs first, and getting clear

on my non-negotiables, I was better able to serve my clients knowing that they were getting what they needed - in a way that didn't compromise what was most important to me.

That's the whole reason many creatives turn their Great Work into a business venture. You have something you want to share with the world and you want to have a living wage that sustains you and takes care of your needs. But so often we focus on one at the expense of the other, instead of seeing how the two work together.

I started sharing this concept with my clients as we built out their business models, and it quickly became the foundation of what a Noble Empire is all about. By getting clear on needs and developing a business model that is designed to meet or exceed those needs, my clients had a growth plan they could rely on to keep them moving in the direction of their dreams.

"I Matter"

When I first meet with a potential client, I do what I call the "magic paintbrush" exercise. I give them an invisible, yet very powerful, paint brush with which they can color in the "perfect" image of what their life and work would look like if they had the magic power to make it happen. They then close their eyes and share their imaginings with me. It is here where we often uncover long-lost secret desires and dreams that they've never acted on, or felt foolish about pursuing. We also uncover old stories about what they "should" be dreaming about, versus what they really want. Sometimes we have to repeat the exercise a few times before they allow themselves to own the truth of what they really want.

While you probably don't have the magical ability to make all your wishes come true with the stroke of an invisible paint brush, you do have a lot more power than you might think. Getting clear on what really matters is a great first step.

We started to create your definition of success in the last chapter with the 5 Key Areas. Using those definitions as a foundation, take a closer look at how

you prefer to show up in the world. Are you a morning person or a night owl? Do you do your best work after lunch or a workout? Do you like working in a cozy corner, or a boisterous coffee shop? Do you need to have lots of quiet, or lots of people around? These are just a few of the questions to help jump start your own magic paintbrush image. The idea here is to paint as complete a picture of your "perfect life" as possible.

Some people prefer to create a story about their "perfect day" - from the time the alarm goes off in the morning until they lay their head down at night. Others take the painting metaphor literally and draw or paint a picture. It doesn't matter how you bring this image to life, what matters is that you connect deeply with the truth of it.

As an example, for most of my life I was afraid to admit that I wanted to be wealthy and famous. Growing up as a poor kid, I was mocked and teased about wanting to be "rich and famous". I did, after all, decide I wanted to be a rock star. And with so many voices around me reminding me of the improbability of such a thing actually happening, I started to believe that it was an impossibility.

Still, it lingered in my heart. This desire to be well-known and wealthy. I wasn't even sure why. It just kind of burned inside me, as if I knew it was meant to be. But I never told people, because I didn't want to be judged, mocked, teased, or looked down on for wanting to have money or for being well-known. It took decades of my life before I was able to recognize that what I want is what I want and just because someone else thinks it's a bad idea doesn't make it so.

In truth, their judgements are just that - *theirs*. As a child, it's easy to take those judgements personally - especially if they're coming from loved ones and people you trust. But as an adult, you get to choose what to believe about yourself, about your work, and about the world in which you're operating. If you choose to let the judgements of others dictate your actions, there's a whole lot you'll never do.

So I gave myself the magic paintbrush. I sat down and made a list of all the things in my life and work that would be different if I could magically make

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changes. It took me awhile to get started because it was hard to even admit to myself what I really wanted. But I coached myself through it. And it became clear that all the judgements I had around being wealthy were stories from other people that didn't even apply. I could hear the voices of my cousin and my mom trying to dissuade me from what I knew in my heart to be true: that being on stage and using my voice to inspire and help people was what I was born to do... and I was meant to make a LOT of money doing it so that I could help others use their voice to help people, too.

It took a bit of work, but when I got to my Essential Why, I was able to honestly and enthusiastically own that not only did I want to be wealthy and well known, I was born for it.

Just writing those words still sparks a flash of fear. Oh the arrogance of thinking I was born to be wealthy!

Right?

Not exactly. Arrogance is confidence in your own infallibility. I have no such illusions. I know I'm not perfect, and never will be. Yet, as certain as I am that I have brown eyes, I'm equally certain that my life's journey includes significant wealth and a level of influence that makes a positive impact on the world.

For years, I couldn't own that truth and now I can. It held me back in more ways than I care to count. The process of unpacking all the old stories and disempowering beliefs wasn't easy, but I'm a better person for it - and it has nothing to do with the balance in my bank account and everything to do with how I choose to show up in the world.

We each carry a set of stories around with us. In my story, a woman of worth carries herself a certain way, while a worthless woman behaves oppositely. If I believe myself to be a woman of worth, then I behave in alignment with that story. If I don't, then I won't.

That's what makes the magic paintbrush exercise so powerful. Once you've painted this picture of how you want your world to be, you have to start

taking action to bring it to life. That often means being willing to let go of old ideas and stories or standing strong in the face of tough decisions, both of which can be hard, scary, and downright unpleasant.

Your Non-Negotiables

Marriage, much like starting your own business, is one of life's great personal development programs. Being married and starting a business? Let's just say I was on the self-development fast track!

Remember the show *Green Acres*? City girl and country boy get hitched, leave the big city for the "fresh air" of small town living and hilarity ensues. That was the story of my first marriage... minus the ensuing hilarity. Don't get me wrong, I love my ex. He's a fabulous guy in many ways. We're still friends to this day. We just weren't compatible in the areas that mattered most. Like where we lived.

I grew up in a big house with lots of space. We all had our own bedrooms by the time we were teenagers, and I was always involved in some kind of school activity that kept me out of the house. He grew up sharing rooms with siblings and pretty much keeping to himself. We went back and forth for most of our marriage about where to live. In 10 years together we lived in 4 houses, and while one of us was happy, the other was miserable.

It was time for us to stop the miserable flip-flop. We started discussing relocation and scouted possibilities on our vacations. We looked hard at moving to Nashville. It was a compromise for both of us. A touch of country living for him that was close to a big city for me.

I got serious about it, but my husband didn't share my enthusiasm. In fact, he grew adamant that staying in Michigan was the better choice. He started looking at homes in the area. I knew in my heart that this was not a good fit for me, but I also knew that this was exactly what he needed to feel safe, secure, and cared for. I asked him "Can you see yourself living here even if I'm not living here with you?" When he said "Yes. I think so." I told him to sign the papers and buy the house.

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I love that man deeply, which is why I was willing to buy the house with him. He was happier than ever and I was glad for him. I was also sad for me. I knew in that moment that our marriage was over, but I didn't want it to be that way.

I called a friend in the Nashville area and asked if I could come live with her until I could find a place of my own. Thankfully, she and her family were graciously accommodating. A year after buying that house, I hopped a flight to Nashville. Six months later, the divorce was final, and we both got what we really wanted. We also have a healthy post-divorce relationship and our kids seem pretty okay with the changes. My youngest is especially excited that there's a pool where I live - something his dad was never thrilled about.

For me, I had to be in a city. It was a non-negotiable for me and I'd been denying it ever since we moved to the small town. I tried to pretend that I was okay with it. After all, there were things to do and see there. But the energy was different than what you find in a larger city, and it was that energy that I was needing.

My ex, on the other hand, had no such needs. In fact, one of his non-negotiables is quiet. He likes his home peaceful and quiet, which is a challenge when you're married to a musician! When we finally owned our non-negotiables, we didn't need to play the blame game. We just recognized our differences, owned what was true for each of us, and made an amicable split.

Make no mistake, starting over was hard, and yet, I wouldn't go back. It gave me a new-found confidence in myself, and connected me with some pretty amazing people that I never would have met had I stayed in Michigan. I think my ex would probably say the same for himself. When we stopped compromising ourselves, we were both better able to live.

Think about your magic paintbrush picture. While some of those images might be "nice to have" or might happen "sometime in the future", what are the non-negotiables that you need to have present in your life right now? Like oxygen, clean water, and healthy food, your spirit and your Great Work have their own set of minimum daily requirements. What are they? Do you

have to have music to be productive? Do you need a beautiful view or a place filled with inspiring images? Do you have a "no jerks" rule? Do you insist your clients pay in full in advance? What are the must-have features of your magic picture that give you a greater sense of success as you've defined it?

Are You Being Selfish?

Owning what you want and what really matters to you can appear to be selfish, I'll admit. I used that logic every time I bought my kids a pair of shoes and kept wearing my old ones that were falling apart. Until I realized that taking care of myself is the first step toward taking care of others. If *all* I ever did was care for myself, then yes, that would be pretty selfish, but the idea here is that I'm preparing myself to be able to better serve others through my Great Work.

Plus, we're talking about needs here, not far-flung fantasies. There's nothing inherently wrong with celebrating your victories and treating yourself to nice things. There's nothing wrong with buying yourself a pair of shoes - even a pair of designer shoes. Self-care is not selfish. *If you don't care for yourself, why should anyone else?*

This is how you begin to own the "I Matter" piece of the paradigm. Only then can you step into full service through your Great Work.

You Matter

Your clients, fans, and connections matter. What matters to them also matters to you. Why? Because at the most basic level, the axiom is true: nobody cares what you know until they know you care. Lady Gaga and Taylor Swift have legions of adoring fans because they sing songs that resonate with what their audience is going through, yes, but they also take time to connect to their fans.

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When Swift was an up and coming singer, her then manager, Rick Barker, told her that if she wanted to sell half a million records, she needed to talk to half a million people so that they'd become fans. Swift would stay after a show, signing autographs and talking with fans until the last possible minute. Gaga is very active on social media. Both are building communities.

Another reason listening to your audience is important is because it can often give you inspiration for your next project. Matthew West has released several albums using this very technique. He reached out to his fans, asking for their stories of faith and hope. He sifted through over 10,000 letters and emails on his journey to create *Story of Your Life*, which sold over 10,000 copies during launch week.

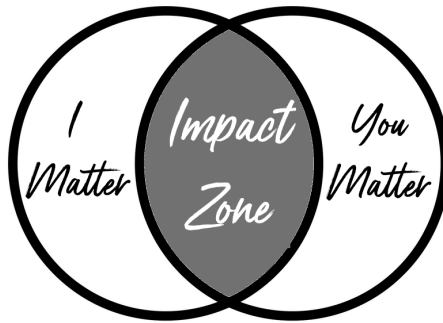
West followed that up with another fan-driven album, *Into The Light*, which spent 17 weeks at number one and garnered West both an American Music Award and a Billboard Music award for the singer-songwriter. West continued to tap the stories of his fans on his future albums, too, and built a separate company, *Story House Collective*, to continue to bring those stories to life in other media as well.

Your Impact Zone

Once you've buttoned up your needs, it's time to focus like a laser on listening to your audience. How you do that will depend on your medium. If you're a performing artist, you may have to do a lot more experimenting than if you're an architect, who will get specific direction from the clients that hire you. But as you create, your audience will tell you what they like, what they don't, and what really matters to them. Your job, then, is to take that information into account as you continue creating in a way that works for what matters to you.

The idea here is to create a Venn diagram of sorts:

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There are things that will matter to you that won't matter to your audience. There are things that matter to your audience that don't apply to the work you're doing in the world. But the place where those two sets of interest overlap is your Impact Zone - the place where you can make the biggest impact on your audience.

Take this book, for example. I could easily write about a variety of topics related to growing a business because I've got decades of experience in a variety of business arenas. That would make this book too overwhelming, so I have to focus on what really matters to my audience. What really matters to you? It's in the title of the book: *personal and financial success as a creative entrepreneur*.

The audience for this book cares about financial stability and positive cash flow for a business that's been struggling to get (or stay) off the ground. You're less concerned about exit strategies because you're in it for the long haul, or you're just getting warmed up! You probably aren't looking for venture capital backing because it typically doesn't exist for the kind of work you're doing. You probably don't even care about building massive marketing plans because you don't have a team to execute on something so complicated. With that in mind, this book takes a simple approach that focuses on the must-need skills and resources to take your creative endeavor from zero to six figures in a sane, steady way. That's my Impact Zone for this book.

We Matter

Once you find your Impact Zone, it becomes a matter of consistency and discipline to spread your message. One of the reasons Oprah was able to launch her own network was because of the years she put in on her daily talk show. For more than 25 years, Oprah showed up five days a week to talk with guests about a variety of topics and holds the record as the highest-rated daytime talk show in American television history. The show received 47 Daytime Emmy awards before Oprah stopped submitting the show for consideration, eleven years before she quit the show and launched her own network.

Oprah's built a global reputation and a multi-billion dollar company, but she started her creative career as an employee. She was hired to take over a 30-minute morning talk show in Chicago. Within a month, she took *A.M. Chicago* from last place to first in the local ratings. Still, it took another two years before Oprah would get her own show and national syndication.

Oprah created episodes that mattered to her local audience. She did that long enough that her reputation gave her an opportunity to reach a larger audience. It was the combination of doing things in a way that worked for her (I Matter) that also served her audience (You Matter) that allowed Oprah to create a movement with her Great Work (We Matter).

How is your Great Work designed to impact the world? Are you out to make a Global footprint, or become a household name? Or is the scale of your work designed to be regional, local, or even personal in nature? There's no right or wrong answer here. Actually, I take that back. The only wrong answer is the answer that's wrong for you.

Dream Scale Shame

That's why the paintbrush exercise is so important. It's easy to get caught up in the big visions of other entrepreneurs who've gone before you. "You should dream bigger!" they'll tell you. Hogwash.

Similarly, I've also experienced the opposite reaction. Well-meaning friends and family who will tell you that your dreams are too lofty, your ambitions too grandiose. "Why can't you just be happy with what you've got?" they'll ask. "I am happy." I told them, "and I know there's something bigger for me, and I'm going for it."

People who are not operating at the same level as you will often try to shame the size of your dream - as not big enough, or too big. They don't always do it on purpose. It's just a function of where they're at and how they view the world. It's your job to drop the judgements and focus on doing what you've been put on this planet to do. If you want to be the next Oprah, then go for it. But if you don't, then don't. Don't let anyone judge the scale of your dream as wrong. It might be wrong for them, but if it's your dream, no matter this size, it is a big dream for you. Period.



Your Assignment

- ★ Imagine you've been given a magic paintbrush. With it, you can paint your world to look and feel exactly the way you desire. What does your "picture perfect world" look like? Who's there? What are you doing? How does your Great Work fit in? The only wrong answers are the ones that aren't true for you. Take time to deeply consider what's most important to you.
- ★ What are your Non-negotiables? Based on your magic paintbrush exercise, what are the non-negotiables that need to be honored in your life and work in order for you to feel fulfilled? Remember the I Matter paradigm.
- ★ Where is your Impact Zone? When you think about the needs of your audience and your own needs, where do they overlap? How is your Great Work making an impact in the world?
- ★ Celebrate. Seriously. Take a lap around the easy chair. Give yourself a high-five. This work matters. Celebrate doing it.

ACT II

Designing Your Dream





Chapter 5

360-Degree Business Design

"There are three responses to a piece of design – yes, no, and WOW! Wow is the one to aim for."

--Milton Glaser

One of the things that sets me apart as a business advisor is my depth and breadth of experience across multiple business disciplines. I began my work career in high school - as a secretary. Like many Fusion Creatives, I found myself moving from job to job every few years as I gained new skills. In my 40+ years on planet Earth, I've found myself in all these jobs and industries:

- Legal secretary/office admin
- Customer service/hospitality
- Home improvement/property maintenance
- Graphic designer
- Real estate sales
- Financial advisor and insurance sales

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- Manufacturing
- Mail order and direct sales
- Retail sales and wholesale distribution
- Food service
- Internet marketing
- Business coach
- Music instructor
- Musician/actor/speaker/performing artist
- Author
- Songwriter
- Screenwriter
- Film scoring/Music Composition/Arranger
- Marketing Director
- And more

I've seen the view from the bottom of the corporate ladder first hand. I've been an underling, a middle manager, and the CEO. I've been interviewed, hired, and fired as well as doing the interviewing, hiring, and firing myself. I've invested in companies that made money and lost it. I've made and sold tangible and virtual goods and services. I'm no stranger to hard work, and I know the value of the gatekeeper because I've been one myself.

All this experience - which looks crappy on a resume - is *exactly* the blend of knowledge I needed to be able to serve my best clients. Most creatives come to me with a deep understanding of their specific field, and little knowledge of how to parlay their genius into a profitable, sustainable business. This breadth and depth of experience gives me a unique advantage in helping my clients see the bigger picture of how their Great Work can serve the world - often in ways they can't even imagine yet.

Another element that's often overlooked by most business advisors is the personal element. A business requires people to run it and, for most creative entrepreneurs, your business is an extension of who you are. Whether you're a company with hundreds of employees or you're a brand-new start-up, you often identify yourself through your Great Work. This is a different approach than most corporations take, because the corporation is an entity unto itself. For a creative entrepreneur, the business is a part of them. It stands to reason, then, that the health and well-being of the company owner (that's you!) is an important consideration in the health and well-being of the company.

That's why I developed 360-Degree Business Design approach. It takes into account the personal and professional demands of a creative entrepreneur that wants to make good money and have a life! 360-Degree Business Design is built on four pillars:

- 1. Context**
- 2. Creative Entrepreneur Type**
- 3. Growth Stage**
- 4. Business Model**

The first two pillars deal with you, the business owner, while the last two pillars are specific to the business you're growing. They are actually mirror images of one another and taken together, create a solid foundation for scaling your business to whatever size you desire.

Each of these pillars has a dedicated chapter, but let's get an overview here and now to see how these pieces mirror each other

Context

This is about understanding what's going on in your personal world that defines the constraints in which you can operate your business. One of my

clients was mother to a growing teenager when we met, and her desire to be a motivational speaker was just ramping up when her husband's terminal illness kicked into high gear. Her energy had to be focused on her family, and rightfully so. When she looked at what really mattered to her, a happy family was her number one goal. She couldn't very well travel to speak, and her small town didn't afford her many speaking opportunities either. She eventually made the decision to go back to the workforce and scale back her business until her family had more stability.

Running a business takes a lot of energy. Building a business takes even more. The more you have to split your focus, the longer it can take to see success. You can't ignore those encumbrances and pretend they don't exist. They do, and they're an important part of the bigger picture of your world.

A colleague of mine takes every summer off to be with her children once they are out of school. No work, just family time. That's a serious consideration she has to make in the way she runs and builds her business. Will she shut everything down, or does she entrust the business to a partner to run while she's away? What's the decision that will best serve her and her company?

Riding The Snail

Another client of mine wanted to transition from her day job, but while she was still employed full time, that left little time for her to do the work of her business. When we started working together, she made it clear that she had five hours per week at most to build her business. Anything above that was frosting.

I told her that with only five hours a week to give, it would be very slow going at first, but she was okay with that. We joked about how other entrepreneurs might be riding a rocket, while she was "riding the snail". But Confucius said that it doesn't matter how slow we go, so long as we don't stop. So we just kept riding the snail.

She had to laser in on high-value tasks and drop a lot of other “nice to haves” that simply didn’t fit her time constraints. We also had to create a business model that paid her a living wage on only five hours of weekly work! Eventually we tripled her hourly rate, which meant attracting an entirely different kind of client - one that paid her well for each hour she was investing in her business.

This is why context is so important. In a corporate environment, if you can’t work a 40-hour week, you’re replaced. That’s not the reality of a creative entrepreneur.

Creative Entrepreneur Type

I know, we’re already five chapters in and we’re only just now getting to this! The Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type Spectrum was born out of my own business frustrations. I began the slow re-building process after my business tanked, but it was more frustrating than profitable. After decades of work, I had no clarity about whom I was meant to serve. It seems laughable in hindsight, but in 2013, I couldn’t figure out my target market to save my skin.

My “Sorting Hat” Experiment

If you read *Harry Potter*, you might remember the sorting hat. It was a tattered, magical, talking hat that sorted each student at Hogwarts into their “house” their home away from home while at school. This magical hat had the final say in which students were assigned to which house.

With an audience too wide to serve effectively, and no easily recognizable demographics to use, I started my own “sorting hat” experiment to get more clarity about my audience. Was there a particular “house” to which each of my clients belonged? Could I find a pattern that would help me see my target market?

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I started looking at the specific reasons clients hired me. One client hired me to be his Marketing Director. Another wanted me to develop an online coaching platform. Another still wanted me to be her business manager while she handled the creative side of the business. I wrote each request — either the initial reason someone came to me or one of the individual tasks that eventually became part of a project — on a piece of paper. Then I began the monumental task of sorting the papers into piles that had a common theme: systems and processes, life skills, marketing support, research, etc.

Then, I went further by considering what my clients and I ultimately ended up working on together. My marketing client, for example, didn't have a marketing problem so much as a systems and communications problem. The client's lack of systems meant that he was the bottleneck in the business. I made a few suggestions, and in less than three months, he went from losing \$5–10,000 per month to clearing \$2–3,000 (or more) in monthly profit.

Again, every suggestion and task went onto a piece of paper. I sorted by client and by task, looking for commonalities. I'm pretty good at finding patterns, but this was a struggle. At first, I couldn't see a thing and just kept shuffling the papers around. My kid thought it was some kind of crazy craft project.

Then, I zoomed out a bit and found some common themes. Seventy piles became thirty, then twenty. After several months of sorting, two camps finally emerged: I called them "Chaotic" and "Linear" clients.

Inside each of these camps was a wide variety of client types and demographics, but with only a few exceptions, my clients seemed to fit into these two groups. Not as quick and easy as the Sorting Hat, but the process was working for the most part.

Except for one problem.

The "non-compliant" clients — those who didn't fit into either camp — were my favorites, and that really bugged me! I wanted to clone my clients to fill

my business, so if they didn't fit my sorting model, why bother? Plus, I felt like I didn't fit my own sorting model, either. Talk about frustrating!

We weren't just square pegs, though. With some patience, another pattern emerged. A third type of client that was stuck firmly in the middle between the two extremes. I called them Fusion types.

Once everyone was sorted, I was able to find one unifying theme amongst all my clients: They were all what I call creative entrepreneurs.

The Creative Freedom Spectrum Is Born

These "camps" weren't really camps at all, but more of a spectrum. At one end is the process-loving Linear Creative, at the other end is the go-with-the-flow Chaotic Creative, and running down the middle is the Fusion Creative. Each creative entrepreneur is a blend of Linear and Chaotic traits, and most people tend to favor one type over the other. Fusions favor neither or both equally, depending on the day.

Why does it matter?

As a creative entrepreneur, you're building a business around doing what you love. There may be times when you wear many hats, but knowing your Creative Freedom type allows you to see the natural blind spots of your type that cause you to wear the wrong hats for too long. When you are clear on not only what you're good at but also what energizes you, it becomes easier to find and implement support systems for the things that aren't in your wheelhouse. That way, you can do your Great Work with confidence and build a profitable, sustainable business that you love — without selling your soul.

The Creative Freedom Spectrum identifies your *preference*, not your proficiency. Like I said earlier, you can be really good at something and hate doing it. Sometimes you expect that you have to, or "should," be doing it because you're a business owner, but that's a faulty assumption. In fact, several Chaotic Creatives I've met are incredibly good at Linear functions,

but those tasks drain their energy and leave them feeling depleted at the end of the day. Likewise, a focus on more Chaotic functions, while important in the growth of a business, can drive a Linear to the brink of insanity. When each type focuses on what's best for them and delegates the other tasks and responsibilities, the result is more time, energy, and money for what matters most.

Growth Stage

According to Les McKeown, author of the book *Predictable Success: Getting Your Organization On The Growth Track -- And Keeping It There*, the business lifecycle has four stages of growth:

- Early Struggle
- Fun
- Whitewater
- Predictable Success

Every business must go through each stage in order, there's no skipping a step, and you'll notice that two of those stages don't sound very pleasant. That's because they're not.

Early Struggle is where everyone starts. The singular goal of this stage is to find a profitable, sustainable market for your offer. Everything else is secondary - including pretty packaging, fancy letterhead, or expensive web design. The only thing that matters in this stage of business is getting out of this stage of business as quickly as possible.

Still, for most companies, that can be anywhere from three to five years. The sooner you find a market that can pay you what you need to be sustainable, the sooner you are out of Early Struggle and into Fun.

Fun is where things get, well, fun! The business is financially healthy and growing at a faster pace. Everything is looking up. It's also the time when the

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business starts to get more complex and a need for systems and processes appears. In the beginning of a business, everything is usually handled on the fly in a one-off kind of approach. You simply haven't faced a situation often enough to need a policy for dealing with it. But as the business becomes more complex, a failure to implement the right balance of systems and structures will bring you into Whitewater

Whitewater can be as rough as it sounds. Things start falling through the cracks. Lots of apologies are being made to clients and customers for things that didn't get done on time or within budget. Balls get dropped. Orders and emails get missed, and profit margins start to slip as growth plateaus. I've personally known businesses who bump around in Whitewater for years because they refuse to implement and enforce the necessary boundaries, systems, and processes to keep the business healthy. If you can strike that balance, though, you can move back into Fun or scale up into Predictable Success.

Predictable Success is the final stage of growth, that theoretically can last indefinitely. It's the stage designed for companies that want to scale their growth. Most creative entrepreneurs aren't looking to become a multinational conglomerate, so we won't spend a lot of time here. Instead, our focus will be on Fun - the stage of growth suitable for most lifestyle-oriented creative entrepreneurs.

Knowing what stage of business growth you're in is understanding the context of your business. You have a clear awareness about what matters most to the health and well-being of the business, just like knowing your personal context gives you a clear insight into your personal health and well-being.

Business Model

This is how your business makes a profit. Mike Michalowicz says that "profit is the lifeblood of the business." Without it, your business is dying.

There are any number of ways a business can make revenue. One of my clients is a dancer who gets paid to dance, but also gets paid to teach dance. That's her business model: one-to-one and performance-based pay. That's also an incredibly time-consuming approach to income generation. If she's not teaching a class or dancing, she's not making money. There's nothing wrong with that, but it's important to know how much of you is involved in making the actual revenue of the company. On the other hand, the owner of the studio where she teaches has scaled her revenue in such a way that she doesn't need to be the one teaching all the classes in order to make an income. There are many business owners who simply manage the day-to-day activities of the company without actually doing the physical work. If your art relies on you, however, you have to look for other ways to scale your reach.

Singers know this issue well. In 2015, Katy Perry was #3 on Forbes' Celebrities list - a list that ranks the highest income earning celebrities each year. Her *Prismatic* world tour contributed heavily to her total \$135 Million in pre-tax earnings that year. A good portion of that wasn't ticket sales. It was merchandise - at roughly \$20 per head (four times the industry average).

But you can't tour all the time. It's just not physically possible. So then what? The 2017 Forbes rankings show that Katy Perry didn't tour at all, but still made \$33 Million from endorsement deals and a contract to appear on the American Idol reboot, which could bring in multiple millions of dollars over the next few years.

That's how you scale when your Great Work relies on you to bring it to life. Or you follow the model of fine artist Dale Chihuly, who has a studio of artists who work with him to create his masterpieces. Dale's name is on the art, but his team helps him create it.

You Need All Four Pillars To Succeed

When each of these four pillars is in place, you have a strong foundation for the health and well being of your business as well as yourself. If one starts to go off the rails or needs tweaking, you've still got three other pillars to

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support you. Think of it like a chair: you can sit in a three-legged chair and still maintain some stability with a bit of effort. But if you lose one leg in a three-legged stool, balance goes out the window and you'll probably fall flat on your ass.

It's like Jim Rohn said: "Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present."

Using 360-Degree Business Design, you'll design a plan for your own happiness right now!



Your Assignment

- ★ Take the Creative Freedom quiz at lisarobbinyoung.com/quiz to learn your Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type. You'll need to know it for the upcoming chapters.
- ★ Celebrate. Get used to celebrating your progress. I'm a party animal like that.



Chapter 6

Personal Pillar 1: Context

*"You have to have a business model
you believe in and like."*

--Brian L. Roberts

Some of my more Linear clients wonder why I put so much focus on the personal side of creative entrepreneurship. It's because, frankly, for most creatives business is personal. Author Michael Port once told me that for solopreneurs, personal problems often become business problems and vice versa. Nearly every creative entrepreneur begins their journey as a solopreneur, so it makes sense to pay attention to how the personal and professional intersect.

Plus, if your Great Work is tied to current events, chances are good that your Great Work is some kind of personal statement about the world around you. To that end, we need clarity on who you are, what matters to you, and how you prefer to show up in the world. In this chapter, we'll look at the first personal pillar of business design: Context

Your Context

Simon Sinek's book, *Start With Why*, caused a stir in the collective hearts of many creatives I know. So many people around me began to sing the chorus often echoed from his book. "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

Um, sort of, but not really.

I think Simon made a dangerous assumption - at least insofar as it applies to creatives. In order to get to "why" you must first understand "who" - that is, who you are at your core. Or said another way, it's not *Start With Why* so much as *Start With Who*.

Many organizations (for whom Sinek originally wrote his book) have already articulated a vision of who they are or what they want to accomplish in the world. Most humans, on the other hand, have not. To make matters worse, their image of themselves is often clouded over or muddled up by years of self-conscious behavior designed to help them fit in and stay safe, with little regard for their authentic nature.

Creative entrepreneurs have it especially bad. All the well-meaning dream shamers who have shut you down or redirected your energy to what they think you "should" be doing with your life have done nothing to help you tap into who you really are or what really matters to you.

The good news is that you've already done a good bit of this work in previous chapters. We're just going to fine tune it and hit some things we haven't previously discussed.

Context gives us the details picture of who you are. Your backstory and the current environmental constraints that shape what's possible for you. Without that understanding, it's impossible to create a viable plan for growth. It's akin to a doctor giving you a cursory glance and writing a prescription without knowing your medical history.

We've touched on this a bit in your definition of Faith, but now we need to go deeper. We specifically need to address three areas that will dictate most of your behavior when it comes to running your business. Grab a pencil and get ready to do some serious soul searching!

Your Beliefs About You

This is probably one of the most critical points in the entire process. It requires you to be ruthlessly honest about yourself. When I say "ruthless" I don't mean angry or without compassion. To me, ruthless honesty is about dropping *all* judgement in favor of clarity. When you place judgement on something as good or bad, right or wrong, you're carrying a story that may prevent you from having success accomplishing your goals. Instead, you need to take the viewpoint (at least for this chapter) that what you're discovering is not right or wrong, it just is what it is. You may not like the truth, it might even hurt a bit to admit it, but until you do, you can't move forward.

With that caution out of the way, let's begin by getting ruthlessly honest about what you truly believe about yourself. It may take some digging, and will probably bring you to the brink of tears a few times. That's when you know you've hit gold. Pay attention to what's triggering you and what's got you fired up.

For example, when I mentioned earlier that I knew, in my bones, that I was destined to be wealthy and well-connected, it was a belief I held deeply, but one I resisted. I felt like I shouldn't want that if I was a good person. I judged wealth and influence as being wrong, slimy, or manipulative, and until I dropped that story, and accepted the truth of what I believed about myself, it continued to color my actions. I wouldn't invite potential clients to work with me. Instead, I practiced the Ray Kinsella approach to business building - I just trusted that if I built it, they would come. I resisted doing the necessary marketing to grow my reach and impact the lives I knew in my heart I was meant to serve, and it made everything more of a struggle.

When I got ruthlessly honest, however, I knew that I was born to be wealthy and well-connected, I just didn't know *how*. That was the truth. It wasn't good or bad, it was just my truth. When I dropped the judgement, I gave myself permission to explore what it meant to be a wealthy, well-connected person. How would Lisa bring that idea to the world? Could I be wealthy and well-connected and still be a good person? Of course I could, but I couldn't see that until I dropped the judgement.

Now it's your turn. Take some time to write down what you really believe about yourself - warts, sparkles, and all. Look at everything you believe to be true about yourself, even if it's uncomfortable to admit.

Lean into that discomfort because there's healing to be had there. When I first did this exercise, I came to see how my body image was interfering with my success. I wanted to be in the spotlight, on stages, and in film, but I truly believed that I was too fat to be successful. Until I saw that truth - without judgement - I couldn't change it.

Was it painful to admit? Hell yes, and it was worth every step on the healing journey. I now have a healthier relationship with my body image and my sense of self-worth isn't tied to a number on the scale. Is it a coincidence that I'm now being paid to speak on stages and to audiences in the tens of thousands? I think not. Because I have more confidence to show up in the first place, I have more opportunities to own my dreams.

What do you believe to be true about yourself? What makes you tick? What ticks you off? Write it all down so we can see the bigger picture of you.

Your Beliefs About Your Great Work

Much like your beliefs about yourself, what you believe about your Great Work will color your behavior as it relates to marketing, among other things. If you believe that you've built the best widget money can buy, and that everyone needs one in their home, you'll promote the heck out of it. But if you believe you barely have the right to show up in your market, you'll be

the wallflower of your industry. You'll also grossly undercharge for your work.

When I launched my third album, *The Fine Line*, I also offered fans who pre-ordered the chance to become a sponsor. For a \$500 contribution to the project, fans would not only get an autographed copy of the album, they'd also get 12 additional songs not on the album that were only available to them. In essence, they were essentially paying me up to \$40 per song just to have access to something that only a select few could have! When most songs can be downloaded for less than a buck, you could choose to see this as highway robbery or value creation, depending on how you judge it. But fans happily contributed to the project and we sold more copies of *The Fine Line* than my previous two albums combined.

But if I'd believed that no one would ever pay that kind of money for my music, I never would have made that offer an option. I see this time and again when my new clients come to me "some money is better than no money" they will say. And to a degree, that's true. But once you've gotten past the beginning stages of your business, it only serves to water down your value and deflate your belief in yourself and your Great Work.

Instead, let's build you up. What do you believe about your Great Work? Who is it for? Why is it important? Why are YOU the one to be doing it? Again, be ruthlessly honest and write it all down.

Your Beliefs About Your World

This one is tricky. When I say "your world" I'm referring to the world in which you and your Great Work are meant to serve. This is different from "the world" in that the scale of your dream might not include the whole world. If your world consists of your immediate family and your neighbors, then that's the context you need to write about. If you're building a global brand, then you need to consider the entire world.

Most creatives in the early growth phases, or who are looking for a lifestyle business, aren't typically concerned with building a global brand - at least

not yet. Again, I encourage you to drop the judgement about the size/scale of your vision and own what's true for you today.

Do you believe that your world is ready for you and your Great Work? Do you believe your world is inherently good and filled with loving, welcoming people? Or do you believe that you need to educate your world about the value you bring, or that your world is filled with deceptive cheaters bent on stealing your ideas? Can you see how these beliefs might color the actions you choose to take? There is no right or wrong here, it is what it is. Drop the judgement and document as much as you can.

Environmental Considerations

What else might affect your context? Aside from your core beliefs and values, there are environmental considerations that you need to take into account. Where do you live and what is access to opportunity like in your area? If you're a fashion designer living in Buford, Wyoming (population: 1), you'll have to build your business differently than if you lived in the fashion district of New York City. Where you live and what's going on around you matters to how you show up to do business on a daily basis.

Like my client with a terminally ill spouse, you may have other factors in your world that create constraints around what's possible for you. If you've got a day job, a chronic illness, or a limit on your time and resources, you need to be clear about that. Again, it's not about judgement, it's about awareness. Trying to do more than you have the capacity to handle will only frustrate and angerify you. Be ruthlessly honest about your constraints - not so that you can be penned in or oppressed by them, but so that you can transcend them and succeed on your own terms.

At this point, we're not trying to change anything. We just want to know what we're dealing with. This is your personal context, the frame that sets up the magic paintbrush picture you've been working on from the beginning. You may already be finding places where the frame doesn't fit the picture. That's normal. For now, don't fret too much about it, just keep moving forward and we'll return to these new awarenesses later.



Your Assignment

- ★ Review the questions from this chapter and get clear on the context in which you're building this business. The idea is to get the fullest picture of your situation so that you know your growth constraints.
- ★ Celebrate! Yes. This is a recurring theme. Get used to it. We don't do it often enough (particularly if you're a Fusion Creative).



Chapter 7

Personal Pillar 2: Your Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type

"Chaos is order reorganizing."

-- Helen Heinmiller

Brace yourself; this is going to be a large chapter. I considered breaking out each creative type into its own chapter, but that would only encourage you to skip around, based on your type. It's important to have an understanding of all the types because you've been interacting with them for years, and having an insight into how other people prefer to show up in the world not only makes it possible for you to better understand them, but also to employ them as your company grows.

Each of us has a preferred mode of operation in the world. It dictates the way you interact with the world around you. It reveals why you choose to do what you do (or not). It also causes blind spots unique to your type. As a creative entrepreneur, you're building a business around doing what you

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love. There may be times when you wear many hats, but knowing your Creative Freedom type allows you to see the natural blind spots of your type that cause you to wear the wrong hats for too long. *When you are clear on not only what you're good at but also what energizes you, it becomes easier to find and implement support systems for things that aren't in your wheelhouse.*

The Creative Freedom Spectrum identifies your preference, not your proficiency. You can be really good at something and hate doing it. You might even expect that you have to, or "should," be doing it because you're a business owner, but that's a faulty assumption. In fact, several Chaotic Creatives I've met are incredibly good at Linear functions, but those tasks drain their energy and leave them feeling depleted at the end of the day. Likewise, a focus on more Chaotic functions, while important in the growth of a business, can drive a Linear to the brink of insanity. When each type focuses on what's best for them and delegates the other tasks and responsibilities, the result is more time, energy, and money for what matters most.

It makes no sense to put a Linear in a Chaotic position, and vice versa. They'll only be miserable. When you can play to the strengths of everyone on your team, you've got serious leverage to grow.

I've already shared some of the backstory on how the spectrum came to be, so let's dig into the distinctions and how to identify where you fall on the spectrum.

Your Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type

Unlike many personality or skills tests, the Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type Assessment is designed to help you discover your natural preference, not your proficiency. It shows you what types of tasks and skills come easy to you, or will boost your energy versus draining it.

Why is that important?

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Just because you're good at something doesn't mean you should be doing it. It just means you've got experience or have developed the skills necessary to do it. Don't get me wrong, learned skills are important. They're survival skills that can help you pick up the slack or better understand other people on the spectrum. But if you get stuck doing this work for very long, you're going to drive yourself nuts.

The opposite is also true: just because you don't have a lot of practice at something doesn't mean you won't enjoy it once you give it a go.

Regina grew up in a tiny town in Germany. Her dream was to be a dancer, but there were no dance studios or dance classes available to her. So she studied physical education and foreign languages, with the hope that she'd be able to put her skills to use outside her hometown.

Eventually, Regina was hired to work as a translator and began travelling the world for her company. Her talent and ability got her promoted to higher levels within the company, where she was tasked with organizing cross-functional teams and setting up the systems and processes to make those teams work. Very Linear stuff.

Regina was good at her job, and got some satisfaction out of it, but it was soul-sucking work for her. A Chaotic by nature, she felt penned in and unable to express herself within the confines of her Linear work. She knew she needed an outlet, so she decided to take a Latin dance class after work.

"It was in that class that I felt the most free," Regina said. "Even though I knew nothing about the style, and it was hard at first, I enjoyed the rewards of doing it."

Regina now enjoys dancing regularly and is good at it. She has taken up several different Latin styles in her pursuit of creative expression and what matters most to her. Her favorite class? "There are no steps to learn," she says. "I just follow my partner's lead and trust him to move me around the floor."

Spoken like a true Chaotic. Regina was so tired of "following the rules" at work, that she relished the idea of just going with the flow.

By discovering your type, you'll have a deeper understanding of why you love some things about your Great Work, yet detest others. You'll learn about your unique set of ninja skills and blind spots - things that can hold you back or set you up for even greater success. You may even get new insights into ways to redesign your business so that you can clear the bottlenecks that have stalled or stymied your growth.

Disclaimer: as of this writing, I've yet to meet anyone who is 100% Linear or Chaotic. Everyone falls somewhere along the spectrum, so you'll probably demonstrate tendencies of both types at one time or another. Our culture promotes a "well rounded" education, so you've no doubt been exposed to Linear and Chaotic tasks and skillsets from a young age. But, unless you're a Fusion type, you'll have a clear preference for one type of task or skill set over the other. The key here, again, is not what you do well, but what you prefer to do. I'm great at alphabetical filing and I'm a lousy piano player, but I'd choose piano lessons over filing any day of the week!

Here are the types, in no particular order:

Chaotic Creatives

Chaotics are the makers, creators, and joy-bringers of the world. At their apex, they are celebrities in their market. Think: rock stars like Lady Gaga or Billy Joel, and world-class athletes like Michael Jordan or Venus Williams.

Ninja Skills

Although everyone is creative in some way, Chaotics are who we typically classify as the artsy ones. They have the clever and crafty ideas that the rest of us steal - with their permission, of course. They are experience-focused. They go out of their way to make memories and leave a positive impression.

Chaotics speak in feelings, moods, and moments. Chaotics are great at setting a scene, telling a story, and inspiring people to take action. They are

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fun-loving, often charismatic leaders, though it doesn't always come naturally.

Chaotics aren't afraid to take risks - BIG risks - especially if it means reaching their fans or helping to make an experience even better for "their people". Lady Gaga once confessed in an interview that she plowed every penny she had into a tour in order to impress the number one promoter in the world, Arthur Fogel, to get him to agree to be her promoter.

Chaotics are fiercely loyal to their audience, too. Chaotics will give you the shirt off their back.

Chaotics are known for high standards of excellence. They make sure every detail is perfect and every customer is delighted. They bend over backwards to make sure everyone is seen, heard, and understood. They care deeply about people and their feelings - especially their best customers. They go out of their way to make every interaction a blessing.

Chaotics are visionaries, and can see their desired end result better than any other creative type. They trust their intuition, which is finely tuned, and generally keeps them moving in the right direction. They are imaginative and often able to see possibilities where others cannot. Walt Disney saw a castle where everyone else saw only swamp. Lady Gaga built an entire career out of doing the impossible.

They also have a strong belief in their dreams and their Great Work. If anyone is going to make their dreams come true, it's a Chaotic, because they can see the details of their dreams so readily.

Chaotics are also more able to go with the flow and adapt to a situation. They may not like the changes, but they get over it and get moving in the new situation quickly.

Blind Spots

Chaotic Creatives typically reach a point when they are ready to "get organized and grow." To stay on track and achieve their goals, Chaotics

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typically need accountability -- without pressure. Oftentimes, they need very directive help because they get overwhelmed with too many details. They're good at seeing details, but managing them can throw a Chaotic into an anxiety attack. Too many details, too little time! Chaotics need structures that work with their lifestyle. They usually know how to relax and have fun, but they can feel both anxious about needing to focus and overwhelmed because there's too much to do. They don't want to be "penned in" and resist most forms of discipline or structure that are foisted upon them.

Still, they recognize that their laissez-faire approach to business prevents them from creating a consistently profitable business.

They're also often the last to reach their true financial potential as creative entrepreneurs.

Why?

Their aversion to all things Linear: money, numbers, structures, and routines are all taboo for Chaotic Creatives. You can't build a relationship with numbers. Processes, systems and rules feel too rigid and confining for Chaotics who like to trust their gut and go with the flow, or who want to deal with people on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Afraid of "selling out" they usually focus on doing their Great Work and trust that "if they build it they will come." When the money finally starts coming in, they often need trusted advisors to keep the business stable, or they will face overwhelm and burnout from managing the day-to-day elements of the business.

Their results often reflect their haphazard approach to business: chronic cycles of feast or famine – usually because they get lost in their work (or socializing) for extended periods of time. Once they come up for air, they recognize the need to "get out there" and market their offerings, but struggle with their negative perception of marketing and sales.

Relying *only* on intuition can cause Chaotics to get into trouble they could have avoided with outside help or a second opinion. They're great at

creating a world-class experience for their audience. But when there's not enough money, time, or manpower to create the perfect replica of what's playing in their mind, they get frustrated and drag their heels.

Remember "champagne wishes and Kool-Aid money"? Never is it more applicable than right here.

Because of their high standard of excellence, Chaotics are challenged to trust other people with their creative vision, and yet they can't possibly attain their high level of quality on a consistent basis without help. If they try, they'll run themselves ragged. Perfectionism can slow progress – especially if you can't trust your team – and it makes you look like a diva. The secret, then, is to keep standards high, hire "A" players, and then get out of your own way, trusting your team to do their best work.

Accountability, Consistency, Profitability

Chaotics can be afraid to right-size their expectations for fear of how it might make them look. I had a client with a growing business that was unable to meet the timeline for customer deliverables. His company was a month behind on delivering the offer promised to his clients - who were growing angrier by the minute. Instead of jumping in to lend a hand to fix the delivery issue, my client's energies were focused on how the website was the wrong shade of blue, and how an inconsistent brand presence spoke poorly of the company.

I'm all in favor of consistency. You just read a whole chapter about creating a compelling brand experience and how consistency plays into that! But if you're more focused on how things look than you are about the timely delivery of what you've promised to your clients, you're probably a Chaotic.

In Early Struggle, Chaotics often have to "settle" and "lower their expectations" a bit. In truth, they're really just right-sizing those expectations to their resource constraints. Of course it would be nice to have a website with the perfect shade of blue, but that's not what your client is worried about - especially if they can't tell the difference between Robin Egg blue and Tiffany blue. It's all blue in your customer's eye.

When you do have the budget, a good portion of it is focused on the total customer experience. That's good news for customer loyalty and retention, but can often result in being over generous on your part. You give too much because you're trying to create a positive experience that exceeds customer expectations... which is a bar that gets continually raised unless you set some healthy boundaries.

Vision is powerful, but without an audience (and a team to bring it to fruition), your vision won't make an impact. Keep your focus on accountability, consistency, and profitability and your business will grow at a healthy rate.

Linear Creatives

Linears are the strategic thinkers, problem solvers, and the innovators of the world. At their apex, they are thought leaders of their industry. Think: Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, or Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and inventors like Thomas Edison, Marie Curie, or Grace Hopper.

Ninja Skills

Linears don't typically identify as creative, but they are. Linears choose instead to classify themselves as "thought leaders," "inventors," or "innovators," which is really just code for "creative."

Linears are results-focused. They love to hit goals, meet deadlines, and check off boxes. They can come across as hard-driving, type-A folks, that are good at setting and achieving goals - *no matter what it takes*.

Linears are problem solvers. Want the job done on time and under budget? Linears will develop a strategy to make it happen. They also have a machine-like ability to perform. Their sense of duty and obligation will have them showing up sick, playing through the pain, and sacrificing themselves in order to hit the goal or meet the deadline.

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Linears speak in systems, patterns, processes, and numbers. Linears can also be great at organizing and keeping people on task. Systems and processes come as naturally to them as breathing. They can be natural leaders and managers, giving clear, concise direction.

Linears are also innovators, and can take someone else's idea and make it even better. They're great at spotting the flaws and details that can stall a project and offer suggestions to put it back on track.

They research, research, research, and only *then* do they make a (very educated) decision. In the meantime, they're focused on efficiencies, systems, processes, and scaling up. "How's it performing? Who's buying it? How can we streamline this?" Think Warren Buffett, the Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, a multinational company with stock that currently trades well above \$200,000 *per share*.

Blind Spots

Relationship building doesn't always come easy to Linears, because relationships don't seem as straightforward as numbers and deadlines. Sometimes they find it easier to relate to a spreadsheet than to the people in their life. Numbers and patterns are predictable. They like stability and comfort, and aren't too keen on taking risks.

Because of their bottom-line focus, Linears can often appear cold, unfeeling, or even calculating. Linear Creatives typically reach a point when the money isn't as important as the meaning. When these clients come to me, they are looking to create more impact and have lives worth living. They want the safety and security that come with the money they're making, and they want to be able to enjoy it, too.

A Linear's health and well-being aren't typically a priority until later in life - unless something or someone intervenes. For example, if a spouse threatens divorce or a loved one falls ill, they may actually learn to live without the daily grind for a while.

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A hard-driving focus on the bottom line can leave Linear Creatives burning bridges and feeling depleted, burned out, and unsatisfied with their work.

Why?

Their general aversion to all things Chaotic: trusting intuition, taking time out for self-care, stepping out of their "results-oriented" box long enough to see the bigger picture of life.

Afraid of "wasting time," Linears can get too focused on the details of meeting deadlines or budget constraints for a project and forget about the people that make it, buy it, or support and encourage the originator of the Great Work in the first place.

Linears can miss the bigger picture of business entirely. In the worst case, they become cold, calculating, and focused on hitting their targets at the expense of everyone around them – including themselves.

Their results often belie what's going on behind the scenes: everything looks good on paper, and to the rest of the world, Linears should be enjoying the high life... but they're often on a "hamster wheel of hustle" searching for "more" of everything except what really matters.

Because money comes so easily, Linears often identify themselves by their results. So, if they're not making money, they somehow feel "less than" or like they're not pulling their own weight.

Permission, Big Picture, Sustainability

Linears typically need permission to loosen up -- without guilt -- and to trust their highly qualified teams to handle the day-to-day operations of the business. Linears love to get granular and can get lost in the details. Providing big-picture oversight is often helpful.

It's hard for Linears to take a day off -- not because they don't have a team to keep things running, but because they are so focused on results and profitability that they lose sight of sustainability.

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Linears aren't afraid to cut a few corners if they have to in order to meet a deadline – sometimes with negative consequences. Because of their results-focused nature, Linears can burn through their team members quickly. They can come across as too demanding, asking for the impossible when it comes to deadlines and sales goals.

A well-tempered Linear inspires their team to achieve great things, setting stretch goals and checking in not only on the progress of their team, but on also on their well being. Without that bilateral "check in", an overbearing Linear can be seen as a judgemental tyrant.

Details are important, but without the bigger picture, Your Great Work has no meaning. Turn your attention to sustainability, and give yourself permission to relax and see the bigger picture of what you're creating in the world.

Fusion Creatives

Fusion Creatives are the "Jack-of-all-trades" types that seem to be good at just about everything. They are the Renaissance men and women of the world. At their apex, they are revolutionary visionaries, often ahead of their time. Think: da Vinci, Steve Jobs, Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, Astronaut Mae Jemison, and The Eagles.

Ninja Skills

Fusions may self-identify as "multi-passionate" because they are adept at a variety of things and find it hard to pick just one to pursue. Fusions have the best and worst of both worlds. Living right in the middle of the spectrum, they have an equal preference and may lean in either the Chaotic or Linear direction as the situation dictates.

Fusions see intricacies in patterns and relationships that others miss. Depending on their focus of the moment, you might mistake them for a Linear or a Chaotic, because they speak both "languages" equally well.

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Fusions are good at getting things done, unless they get stuck in a "perfection loop." If they can transcend the all-or-nothing thinking, Fusions actually have the greatest capacity for fame and fortune. Think of the Eagles, a band of musicians – each succesful in their own right - who created the best-selling album of the 20th century.

Fusions have a wide network of loose contacts that don't overlap much because they have lot of different interests. In other words, they know many people (and many people know of them), but don't feel as if they really know or have a lot of influence with them.

Fusion creatives are blessed with a "can do" attitude, and an ability to tackle almost any challenge because of their depth and breadth of knowledge. They have a voracious appetite for learning and doing just about anything.

Blind Spots

Fusions are prone to comparing themselves to other Linear or Chaotic Creatives, instead of focusing on their own unique blend of talents and skills: "It's got to be better than everyone else's, or why bother?"

Fusions are often reluctant leaders because they frequently suffer from impostor syndrome and don't experience themselves as "good enough".

Because their network is filled with people who are more Linear or more Chaotic than they are, Fusions often see people around them that are *better* than they are at everything they do. What they don't realize is that no one else in their network is good at *both* the Linear and Chaotic things like they are.

Fusions spend an inordinate amount of time trying to perfect something before they put it out into the world. If it isn't perfect, they won't share it.

Fusions are often seen as "the creative one" in their circle of Linear friends and "the strategic one" in their circle of Chaotic friends. They demonstrate traits of both Linears and Chaotics, almost interchangeably, and the most common tell-tale traits of a Fusion creative are perfectionism and

comparison-itis. Their biggest problems are trying to figure out which "thing" to pick, and asking for help.

Why?

All-or-nothing thinking puts them in a feedback loop where Fusions think they should be able to do everything all the time (and do it well), which then, ironically, triggers their impostor syndrome.

Fusions struggle with letting go of tasks. The thought is that "it's just faster and easier if I do it myself." That's true, in the short term, but in the long term it creates two problems.

The first is that Fusions become the bottleneck in their business, slowing potential momentum. The second is that, because they haven't been asking for help, they haven't built the strong network relationships needed to grow their business once they DO get some momentum. Then, overwhelm can set in, which slows momentum again. This keeps Fusions in a feast or famine cycle where they create for a while and then stop creating in order to market what they've created.

Slowing Down, Asking For Help, Trust

Fusion Creatives typically reach a point when they're tired of being busy and not seeing a return on their investment. When these clients come to me, they are ready to have a consistently sustainable and profitable enterprise. They typically need permission to act with confidence -- without being compared to others -- and to trust that whatever project they choose to complete will be successful, because it probably will be.

If you thought Chaotics had it bad, Fusions stuck in comparisonitis set impossibly high standards for themselves because they want to be "as good as" their Linear or Chaotic counterparts (with a high standard of excellence, on time, and under budget). Afraid of not being fully seen (and not measuring up when they are), Fusions can spend countless hours "perfecting" their Great Work, which causes them to finish less and struggle more. The result? When they finally put something into the world it's

amazing, but few people know about it because they don't spread the word (for fear of not measuring up).

When you let go of the need to compare yourself to anyone but yourself, that is when your real light shines! Focus on asking for help, right-sizing expectations around getting that help, and trusting that there's no one else in the world who can do the combination of things you do in the way you do them.

The Cusp Types

When you take the assessment, you might be one of the rare birds who falls into the cusp zone. The Cusp types still show a preference for either Chaotic or Linear skills, but have a greater affinity for their opposite type. They're not true Fusions, again because of their reliance on or preference for one type over the other, but they generally respond to a diversity of tasks with less stress, overwhelm, or fatigue than someone closer to the ends of the spectrum.

My friend Mike Michalowicz is a great example of this. Known for his witty, irreverent personality, he's the author of business books with titles like *The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur*, *The Pumpkin Plan*, and *Surge: Time the Marketplace*, *Ride the Wave of Consumer Demand*, and *Become Your Industry's Big Kahuna*. His fun-loving, playful nature might lead you to suspect he's a bit too casual to be a Linear. But he's also the author of *Profit First*, an innovation in accounting principles based on extensive client research and testing. Pattern finding and thought leadership are very Linear traits, while casual playfulness is more often ascribed to Chaotic creatives.

That's why Mike is a Linear Cusp type. When it's crunch time for Mike, he relies on his Linear skill set of problem solving and pattern finding. He digs in to find an answer, rather than trusting that divine providence will lead the way. But he also enjoys tapping into his more Chaotic side in the way he writes and communicates with his audience. That playful approach comes easily to Mike, rather than draining him, because it's his natural approach to

life. While some Linears might be overbearing and hard driving with zero personality (sorry, Linears!), Mike knows how to have fun!

A Chaotic Cusp type, would show an opposite disposition. They rely more on their personality or persuasive passion to get them out of sticky situations, and show an adeptness at talking or feeling their way through, rather than analyzing a situation to death. Still, their Linear tendencies might show them to be a more subdued or conservative Chaotic as compared to some of their more wild and crazy, woo-woo friends (sorry Chaotics!). Chaotic Cusps bring order to the chaos!

Cusp-Type Creatives don't usually start out life on the cusp. Often, they *learn* their opposing type over time, and develop an affinity for it as they improve at it.

For example, many Chaotics are forced to learn Linear concepts in school. True Chaotics (like Regina) may get good at Linear tasks through practice, but they never enjoy it. Chaotic Cusp types discover they actually enjoy some of the Linear tasks. This learned affinity doesn't negate their original preference for the Chaotic approach, but helps balance their Chaotic leanings. Likewise, a Linear who excels at math and science may take a drama class out of necessity and discover that they actually *enjoy* the aspects of performing on a stage once they've had some practice.

Ninja Skills

Cusp types retain most of the same ninja skills of their primary type, as well as select Fusion traits. Ultimately each Cusp type has a tendency to lean on their primary type, so look there for additional insights into their Ninja Skills.

Blind Spots

With their strengths on both sides of the spectrum, Cusp types have the potential to manifest blind spots common to both Fusions and their primary type. Comparisonitis and perfectionism can put a stranglehold on a Chaotic Cusp type, but a Linear Cusp might miss a solution right in front of them

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because they didn't think to ask for help in hitting their goal. Look to your primary type for more examples of blind spots.

Still not sure about which type you are? I've developed a free assessment that guides you through a series of scenarios and questions to give you clarity on your creative type. Visit the resource page on my website for more details.



Your Assignment

- ★ Determine your Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type either by reading the descriptions above, or by taking the quiz.
- ★ Identify the blind spots that are currently slowing your growth.
- ★ Brainstorm possible ways to mitigate those blind spots. We'll be working them into your Growth Plan later in the book.
- ★ Celebrate! Again. Yes. Do it.



Chapter 8

Business Pillar 1: Your Growth Stage

"The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again... It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life."

-- Steve Jobs

What the last chapter lacked in brevity, this chapter will make up for in spades. There are, in essence, only three growth stages which concern us here, and they were mentioned in the overview of this section: Early Struggle, Fun, and Whitewater. If you've hit Predictable Success, or you're on your way there, this book won't offer much help in the way of scaling up your business. We're much more concerned here with what it takes to get your business launched and running smoothly.

Specifically, we're looking at the three to five years that most businesses spend in Early Struggle, and how those years break down, in terms of business development. Then, we'll quickly skim through Fun (because, well,

it's FUN), and then give you the dirty deets about Whitewater - which can be a hellish predicament for decades, if you're not prepared for it. By the end of the chapter, you'll have clarity on how to navigate any and all of these stages and be able to confidently decide whether scaling up into Predictable Success is the right choice for you.

It's totally acceptable to not scale up if that's not your goal. Not everyone wants to have a global or international following. Not everyone wants to have their name as top billing on some marquee in a big city. In fact, most creatives I've worked with are quite content to be well-known in their circle of influence and earn a living that replaces or moderately exceeds whatever income they made working for "The Man" at their day job.

To that end, let's take a closer look at what the three stages of growth look and feel like so that you can clearly see where you're at and what you need to transition to the next stage of healthy growth. Each of these "sub-stages" is based on my own experience as an entrepreneur and with the decades I've spent helping other creative entrepreneurs in their own businesses. None of them is a hard rule, but more of a guideline of averages. You may move more or less quickly through each of these sub stages, but be assured that you can't move ahead until you've checked off each sub stage in order.

Year 0-1: Offer Clarity

This year can find most creatives flailing about, unless they've been thrown into a hungry market that's ready to buy. Don't let the timeline fool you here. I've had clients who had been "in business" for years that were firmly in Year 0-1 because they didn't have product or market clarity and had bounced from idea to idea for years, never sticking to any one thing.

While Linears will have no difficulty staying the course in the early sub-stages, the first year can be a tremendous problem for Fusions, because they want to keep flexing their muscles on all the things they're good at. As a result, they may have a handful of things that have sold, but nothing sold "well enough" for them to stay the course. Chaotics experience this too

when they operate from a fear-based mindset. When a Chaotic is afraid that what they've done isn't "good enough" or isn't generating results "fast enough" or that they "should be doing more," that's when the proverbial spaghetti throwing party begins.

The singular objective of your first year is to develop and test offers to find what works. Not what "sells like hotcakes," but what people *actually* express an interest in buying. In that respect, there is a bit of trial and error, but it's calculated based on the conditions we've previously discussed: you're doing work you love and serving people in a way that works for them and yourself (the I Matter Paradigm).

Why do we start with offer clarity rather than market clarity? Two reasons.

First, most creatives are already conjuring something from their own inspiration. They feel called or compelled to bring something into the world and may not have a clue where to begin with marketing this thing. They may not know who the right audience is for what they're creating, but they know they've got to create it. So we start with what we have.

Second, often times the audience may find other reasons for wanting what you're creating, which, by extension, points to market clarity. George Gershwin, for example, couldn't have known that "Summertime" from the musical "Porgy and Bess" would become one of the most covered songs of all time (some 26,000 times!). He was just setting a lyric to music and hoping to use it as a recurring theme for his opera. Gershwin's attempt to meet the needs of a particular market in the 1930's opened the door to an entirely different market as the song has endured through generations as a jazz standard.

This is where a lot of creatives get antsy and give up just as they're getting started - and what leaves many creatives stuck in this early phase for most of their career. They have high hopes for their offering and get deflated when their results don't match their expectations.

If a client comes to me looking to double their revenue in a year, the first thing I'm going to look at is whether or not they've got an offer that sells. Only after that will I consider their market. That's because they may not

even be targeting the right audience for their offer, but if they're bringing in revenue, that indicates interest and potential demand.

How many offers should you develop? That depends, but more than four in a given year would tend to suggest spaghetti throwing. More likely, you'll find one thing and spend the year tweaking elements of it until it garners interest. This is an ongoing cycle: create, share, tweak, share, tweak, share, etc. I call these *income projects*.

An income project takes about three months to complete from idea to post-mortem, and in that time, you'll test and launch an idea, gather feedback, and tweak the offer for the next iteration. Ideally, two or three of your income projects in a given year are just variations on the initial one, though some ambitious Fusion creatives might try to do a different income project every quarter. I don't recommend doing more than two different projects in year one because there are too many variables you can't account for because the business is still too new. We'll talk more about income projects in Act III.

Again, your mileage may vary, but if you focus your effort in your first year to develop an offer that sells, then your second year can be focused on audience growth and market clarity.

Year 1-2 Market Clarity

The second year is typically where a business begins to get momentum and feel some financial stability. That's because the hard part of finding an offer that sells is out of the way, and now you can focus on reaching more of the right people with your offer. This is where things get boring for Fusions, frustrating for Chaotics, and mechanical for Linears.

After beating the same drum for a year or so, Fusions won't find the routine very exciting. They'll be itching to branch out before their audience is ready to diffuse their focus. I've been there more times than I care to count. Restless about the direction of my coaching practice, I branched out to work with mompreneurs. I thought it was a natural extension of the work I was

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already doing, since so many of the direct sellers in my audience were also moms working from home. But I didn't have enough traction with my existing audience and the pivot caused a lot of confusion for everyone. People who were thinking about working with me decided that my new direction wasn't in alignment with their goals, so they rescinded offers. I didn't have enough authority in my new market, so people weren't willing to "take a chance" on me. The net result was a shrinking list and abysmal income to match.

Don't be that guy!

For Chaotics, this is a time when your patience is being tested. You've got to start building the basic systems for growth and monitoring them. You'll want to move faster than you are and you'll feel stifled or "held back" from the level of success you see other around you having. You'll ask yourself, *"If they can do it, what's wrong with me?"*

In a word, nothing. You just need to be patient and keep showing up in your current market. This is the year of developing trust, and while you'll want to speed ahead and launch a flashy new website, or a new-fangled offer, the best thing you can do is cultivate what you're already working on.

Think of it like growing a biennial - these plants take two growing seasons to give us their glory. In the first year, they're laying down roots and foliage to nourish themselves overwinter. They're storing up energy for the big reveal in year two, when we get to see their showy blooms and fragrant aromas. It's not until the end of the second year that we really get the full effect of their awesomeness.

Linears, on the other hand, are quite content to just follow the steps: find something that sells, then find more people to buy it, and don't move on until you do. Year two becomes pretty mechanical and methodical for Linears. Tweaking and testing becomes a game to them, and often this is when a Linear hits their stride. Don't be surprised if a Linear moves more rapidly through Years 0-2 than the other types. That's because the ability to monofocus is critical at this stage of business growth.

Year 2-3: Income Stability

These are not the years for fancy branding or flashy websites (even if branding and websites are your Great Work). This is not the time to plow thousands of dollars into visual content or hiring copywriters and content creators.

Instead, buckle down and maximize what you've been doing in Years 0-2. I know Chaotics right now are chomping at the bit to "uplevel" everything, and while it's tempting to do so, it's still a bit premature. You've got an offer that sells, and you've started to tap a market that wants to buy it, but do you have a profitable and sustainable market yet?

Probably not.

Until then, as Les McKeown reminds us, everything else is superfluous. The singular goal of Early Struggle is to get out of Early Struggle as fast as possible and the only way to do that is by finding a profitable and sustainable market. Year 2-3 is where that happens.

Yep. You've just invested two years of your life in a single direction and only now will it start to actually *feel* like it's paying off. You've planted the seeds and things have started breaking through the surface for a while now, but here, in the third year of staying the course, does all that early leg work pay off in visible, tangible ways.

People start to recognize you and call you by name. Influencers in your arena may even begin following or commenting on your work. Other people are recognizing the traction you've created and the audience you've been building and, to put it bluntly, they want a piece of your action.

Fusions at this point want to say yes to everything - all the events, the appearances, the opportunities, and a sense of FOMO might attempt to overtake you. This is when it becomes important to step back and remember the I Matter Paradigm.

This is your chance to become more discriminating in saying yes or no to the opportunities that come along. Chaotics will have no problem staying true to their vision. This will be the time when they can finally start all the "upleveling" they've been wanting to do for a while.

At this sub-stage, you've got a proven offer and a proven track record. You're also amassing a small, loyal following, who knows a bit about you, likes you, and trusts you enough to start recommending you to their friends and colleagues. This is where it makes sense to do some preliminary investing in branding and website development that aligns with the message you've been spreading for the past two years. You should also have enough positive cash flow to afford that kind of investment at this point. If not, delay that order until you've got a bit more stability under your belt.

Things might even start to feel kind of fun at this point - money is coming in faster than you can spend it, and you've got enough clients to keep you in the black without stress or worry. Welcome to the second stage of business growth - Fun.

Beyond Year 3

At this point, you've moved beyond Early Struggle. You've got a profitable, sustainable business doing what you love and frankly, things feel good. That's why we call it Fun! As your business grows during Fun, your income outpaces your expenses. Now's a great time to do some infrastructure investment - like hiring key team members to support your vision, or buying necessary equipment to create efficiency in your workflow. It's also a good time to establish or increase your savings for the future (if you haven't already).

Saving for anything in Early Struggle seems like a joke, so it's understandable if you haven't even considered the notion before now. However, as cash flow increases, it's not long before expenses rise to meet income. We'll talk more about the money stuff shortly, but for now,

recognize that money won't always flow like a mighty river, so it's better to store up your treasure now than to be scrambling later.

Whitewater

At nearly 30 miles (48 km) per hour, the Whirlpool Rapids at the base of Niagara Falls qualify as Class 6 white water rapids - some of the most extreme and dangerous in the world. You can tool down to White Water Walk on foot and traverse the boardwalk to the river's edge, where viewing platforms give you an up-close-and-personal look at the power and peril in these rapids. The thundering roar of the river gives a small glimpse into what are typically considered "extreme" or "unrunnable" rapids, where even the most seasoned pros dare not tread.

The waves are high, the churn is unbelievable, and adrenaline isn't the only thing pumping at this point. Provided you can survive the thrashing and gnashing against the rocks, you've still got to navigate yourself safely to shore once you're out of the churn and headed toward the whirlpool.

That's what Whitewater in your business can feel like, too. Everything was fun when you were in Fun, and now, not so much. In fact, things have gotten downright hard, bumpy, and choppy. Maybe even a bit hazardous to your health, depending on how long you've been in Whitewater.

One creative I know had been bumping around in Whitewater for several years when I met him. His business had grown quickly, and he brought on a few key team members to help scale the business so that he wasn't the only one doing all the work. He also brought on some support staff and over time the business income plateaued. Fixed expenses had increased to meet or exceed current income and he wasn't profitable anymore.

The problem, however, wasn't so much in his expenses as it was in the way he'd set up the business. As a Chaotic creative, he'd designed the business so that everything had to pass through his fingers for final approval. That made him the bottleneck in his business. It also meant that the business

couldn't grow any faster than he could put out fires, regardless of how many new people he brought into the company.

Whitewater happens when a business grows in complexity, but the systems and processes haven't evolved to support the changes. For example, you've been manually sending out an email once a week to a master email list you've created in a spreadsheet, but now you're getting unsubscribe requests faster than you can handle them, and you're starting to get flagged as a spammer. As your audience grows, you can't manage that stuff manually, and it makes sense to have an automated system that handles that for you.

Don't laugh. I know many musicians who build their mailing lists this very way. They put out a piece of paper at every gig and tell folks to sign up for their mailing list, and as the list grows, they never think of doing anything differently. Hey - if it ain't broke, don't fix it, right? Well, in Whitewater, things that have been sort of "working" suddenly break and it's past time to fix them.

Whitewater is also the place where you as the business owner need to make a decision. If you're content to not have an international audience, and you have no desire to scale up your enterprise, it's appropriate for you to scale back and keep things in Fun. That way, you don't have a bunch of systems and processes calling the shots and keeping you chained to the business as you navigate Whitewater. On the other hand, if you do want to scale up and create leveraged growth in your business, it's time to buck up and do the work to build appropriate systems and processes to support the exponential growth of your business and move into Predictable Success.

For this reason, Whitewater is not so much a stage of growth as it is a turning point in the lifecycle of your business. Do you keep things Fun, or do you grow even more?

For all but the most celebrity-minded Chaotics, Fun is where it's at. Not too much structure, but just enough to keep things running smoothly. Enough creative control over your projects balanced with the right amount of team support so that you're not on the hamster wheel of hustle all the time.

Fusion creatives might opt to stay Fun if they're itching to launch something new. Fun is a great place to be if you want to transition to something else because there's plenty of cash flow to prop up the new venture until it has legs of its own. It's not uncommon to see a Fusion creative launch a successful business venture every few years and have multiple projects cooking at the same time. This is only a downfall when they try to launch them all at once, for as we've previously discussed, you need to focus on one thing for several years to give it a fighting chance.

Linears are growth focused, and scalability is a "numbers game" to them. The logic then is to see how quickly they can "grow big" by staying within the confines of their numbers. The rare exception to this is the Linear that has a high need for safety and security. In this case, Fun becomes an acceptable "settling point" because anything more brings too much risk into the equation for their comfort. Their line of thought is "I have everything I need. Why risk it?"

Is it Whitewater or Early Struggle (again)?

I've had several clients who've come to me when their previously successful businesses have hit a wall. They regale me with their stories of how they used to make six-plus figures each year, but now they're struggling to bring in mid-fives. "I'm in Whitewater," they tell me.

"Nope. You're in Early Struggle - again." I reply. One look at their business model shows the problem. They've made a shift in their business, either a pivot to a new audience, or a change in message, and they've basically had to start all over again from Year 0-1, despite the financial success they've had in the past.

If there's been no pivot, and their business has hit a plateau that seems to be draining the life out of the business, then it's more likely to be Whitewater. Remember, the complexity is the key. When emails get misplaced, team members don't know who has responsibility for a task so it gets dropped, that's a clear sign that the business systems haven't caught up with the complexity of the business. If you've just scaled back because income isn't

what it once was, then it's not Whitewater. You just haven't found a profitable, sustainable market for your offer with the current configuration of your business.

Chaotics are most likely to confuse the two stages. Especially if they're operating from the mindset of "I should already be there by now," they've set themselves up to expect more from their business than it's currently able to provide.

Assuming you're managing to sell *something*, your focus needs to be on market clarity so that you can get momentum. That means finding the right platform(s) to present your offers to the right audience. We'll go deeper on that topic in an upcoming chapter.

Exit Strategies

Again, since the purpose of this book is to *launch* creative entrepreneurs into Fun, we're not talking about exit strategies - either transferring, selling, or closing your business. I'm making the assumption for our purposes here that you want to keep doing what you love (and making good money doing it) for as long as you can.

Be advised that at some point you'll reach a place where you're done, and before that time comes, you'll want to have a vision for how you want to end things. Stephen Covey said "begin with the end in mind" and the I Matter paradigm can help inform that. If you're building a legacy company, start thinking now, in your early years, how you want things to look in the final picture. Then, reach out to the necessary professionals to set up the structures you need (legal, financial, etc.) to ensure that future can come to pass. For our purposes, however, we're not going to dig too deeply into that rabbit hole.

Growth Plans For Each Stage

Each stage of business growth requires a different kind of growth plan. We'll cover them in detail in the next chapter, so that you know what's right for where you are now. Armed with knowledge about your current growth stage, and the growth plan that's right for that stage, we can begin to tailor a business model that works for your unique situation.



Your Assignment

- ★ Identify which stage of growth your business is at. Be honest. If you've had a successful six-figure income and then made a pivot in your business that's caused your income to tank, you're not in Whitewater, you're in one of the sub-stages of Early Struggle.
- ★ Celebrate your truth. Because your truth will set you free!



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Business Pillar 2: Your Business Model

*"You will either step forward into growth
or you will step back into safety."*

-- Abraham Maslow

When I was a kid, I always had a side hustle. In addition to my Summer "jobby" as a popsicle salesperson, I sold penny candy for an enormous markup to the kids at school.

That was my business model: sell candy during the school year, popsicles during Summer vacation. I wasn't going to retire on that kind of a business model, but it worked for me.

That's also the problem I see with many creatives: their business model isn't designed to afford them the lifestyle they desire. They sell what they can and are grateful for whatever they can get, instead of being strategic about

their pricing and how they sell their offers. This chapter will give you some clarity on how to design a business model that provides for you and the growth of your business.

In short, a business model is how your business makes money (your offers) combined with the ways in which it does so (your delivery system). This can be a multi-layered, complex web of moving parts and pieces, or it can be as simple as "I sell digital downloads on a website." It also includes specifics about the people who buy your offers, but we're going to tackle your audience in a different chapter. For now, we just need to know what you are selling and how you are selling it.

More than likely, you'll find holes in your model. For example, if you're a painter, you might only be focused on canvas work, and have an abundance of paintings sitting around collecting dust because you can't sell them. But canvas is what you know, so that's what you keep doing. I know an artist who regularly stripped and repainted old canvases because she didn't have a budget to keep buying new canvas and she wasn't selling what she was making. If people aren't buying it, that's a sign that something's amiss.

You might also find that you're spread too thin. In my own business I found that I had amassed over 100 different offerings in ten years of working as a coach and trainer. If an offer needs to be marketed in order to sell, I could sell something different every week for two years and never need to create anything new! Bluntly, I didn't have the bandwidth in my marketing calendar to promote all those offers. Naturally, many of them languished in virtual "cold storage" for years. I had to step back and look more closely at what I was really trying to do and instead of creating a museum of great ideas, take the very best of them and create a marketing strategy that worked to sell them.

Before you go off cutting and culling your offers, though, let's just take an inventory, and then take a look at how to move forward in relationship to your growth stage. Each stage of business needs a specific growth plan, and that will help determine what, if anything, needs to change in your offerings within your business model.

3 Types of Growth Plans

Early Struggle = Transition Plan

Remember, Early Struggle is a race against the clock to find a profitable, sustainable market for your offering. You need to match your offer to an audience big enough to keep the business afloat. Until you do, it's a continual struggle.

"Big enough" is a relative term, but the idea here is that your Great Work has an audience, and you just need to find one that's the right size to keep your bills paid, with a comfortable margin. A fine artist creating one of a kind paintings who can live comfortably on \$50,000 per year won't need as large of an audience (or prices as high) as someone who has to make six figures just to pay the rent (remember the Six-Figure Distinction).

A large candle making company needs millions of units in sales to make a product viable, but a smaller company might do exceedingly well on just a fraction of those sales. That's exactly what happened in 2005 when one of the industry leading candle companies stopped making transparent candles. A company I owned at the time swooped in and filled the hole the industry giant left behind. Because we were a tiny operation, we only needed a few dozen sales each month to have a profitable product line.

Very often, in this early stage, your business is either limping along as a "side hustle" or a jobby. Either way, it's not likely to sustain you without bringing in some kind of revenue from somewhere else. Otherwise, you'd be out of Early Struggle and headed to Fun.

The best thing you can do in a Transition Plan is to focus on a handful of offers so you can test the market without overwhelming it (or yourself). The goal is to find one thing to focus on to move into Momentum, but if you're a Fusion, you'll be hard-pressed to pick just one thing. Regardless, a Transition plan focuses in on just a few things with the aim of narrowing down even further, not expanding into more - a lesson I learned the hard way.

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In the case of our candle company, we started this new direction by making a transparent ball-shaped candle - the size that was made popular by our competitor. We only offered it in a few colors and fragrances - a small offering compared to the wide range of scents and colors we offered in traditional wax candles. Again, we didn't need to sell many to be profitable, and we used that profit to ramp up production.

Because our overhead was low, we were more agile and able to experiment in the market in ways the industry giant couldn't. Our competitor only offered 2 sizes in a limited number of colors and fragrances. We branched out into other sizes, fragrances, and shapes. That's something we couldn't have done if we'd had the overhead of a large manufacturing facility and staff to support. There were just two of us at the time, making and selling candles on eBay. Because we were able to tap a market already interested in the product, we saw profit quickly.

But it wasn't sustainable.

Remember, in a Transition Plan you need a market big enough to sustain you and still be profitable. With a new baby, I wasn't able to put in enough hours myself to keep things going. I had built myself a jobby, and didn't consider hiring someone else to continue making candles, because I didn't think we could afford it. We were also working out of our home, and I was caring for a newborn, so I didn't feel comfortable having a stranger in my house.

According to Les McKeown, 80% of businesses don't make it out of Early Struggle - often because they are underfunded. Money runs out before the profitable, sustainable market is found. It's even harder to do that when you're juggling multiple offers, trying to figure out what sells, that's why it's important to give yourself plenty of time to transition - the two to three years of Early Struggle, for example. If you're ambitious (or have substantial savings you can lean on), you can do it faster, provided you can find the profitable, sustainable market.

There is no magic pill here, but having a single offer (two at most) makes it much easier to test, tweak, and refine your offer as you keep bringing it to

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market. Every great restaurant has a signature dish that becomes their calling card in the community. The chef is relentless in creating just the right blend of flavors and textures until it is as perfect as possible. They don't just jump ship to a different dish after the first attempt. If it's selling, they keep refining the recipe until it's selling like crazy. THAT is how you find the profitable sustainable market.

A Transition Plan helps you ramp up in your new enterprise, while ramping down your other income source. That could be your day job, your savings account, or even a credit card you're maxing out every month. Transition plans are a type of temporary Growth Plan designed to get you out of one thing and into another.

Eventually, I got clear that I didn't want to make candles for the rest of my life. I needed to build a different Transition Plan to take me out of candle making so that I wasn't working so much and making so little. That's how I ended up working with direct sellers.

I started with a single product: a book called *Home Party Solution* that detailed how to ethically build an online business as a direct sales professional. Every bone in my Fusion body was freaking out. *What if it didn't work? What if no one bought this thing?*

That was about 10 years ago. I remember sending out my first newsletter to seven subscribers. One of those subscribers is still on my list today! It took me three months to make my first sale. During that time, I was growing my audience, asking questions, and learning what people wanted from me. It took a couple of years to transition, but when I did, I was able to move out of the candle company and into more ease in my life, income, and work. That's when things in the business got Fun.

Fun = Momentum Plan

As the name suggests, this is probably the most fun time in your business. Cash is flowing freely, business is coming in like gangbusters, and you could pretty much name your price and get it. This is the time of double or even

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triple-digit growth, according to Les, and that's exactly what happened when I started working with direct sellers.

A year after I launched the book, I added one more product to my business model - a virtual event. I had my first five figure month! That's five figures in *profits*, mind you. I felt like I hit the lottery! That income became the nest egg that allowed my business to break out of Transition and into Momentum.

Think of it like a rocket ship. You've launched and gotten off the ground, but you're still trying to break free from the resistance of gravity, and you'll burn through a lot of your fuel to get into space. As a business, a Momentum Plan is all about focusing your business in a particular direction. You may have found a profitable, sustainable market, but you still have to do the work of selling to them on a consistent basis.

Your team may grow, and along with it your spending. Upgrade the website? Sure. Invest in some new infrastructure? Why not? Hire that Director of Marketing? Sounds good to me. Just watch out for the new layers of complexity, which can lead you into Whitewater.

While sales are booming in Fun, you're probably not thinking about systems or processes - particularly if you're a Chaotic. You're small and agile enough that process documents and org charts are laughable ideas. Yet this is the very time you need to be thinking about them. Getting these kinds of repeatable tasks documented is the fastest way to speed through Whitewater, if your goal is Predictable Success. And if your goal is to stay in Fun, then having these systems and processes in place allows you to know when you're growing too big and need to scale back.

A Momentum Plan focuses on strategically expanding your audience reach or your offerings - either through a new method of distribution, a new audience focus, or a new offer that complements your existing offer.. There's a lot of intentional experimentation in this phase, and a need to watch your budgets in the process. This isn't about creating 100 different offers, but about strategically adding to your offer "portfolio" in ways that increase the value of your company without increasing the workload for you, the

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business owner. Remember, profitable and sustainable are the operative words here.

When I wrote my first book, I knew exactly who I was targeting: direct sales professionals who wanted to build their business using the Internet. But when I wrote *The Secret Watch*, I really wasn't sure how this fit my business model. I only knew that I *had* to write it. It took time to not only write the book, but craft the marketing messaging to resonate with the right audience. More than five years after publication, I'm still collecting royalties on a book I self-published, when many self-published books die on the vine after only a few months.

How?

The core message of my business from the very beginning has been about defining success on your own terms. As a candle maker, a coach for direct sellers, and as the founder of a business incubator, regardless of the physical offerings, that message continues to be the same. When I made that realization, it was easy to connect the dots and include the book in my business model as a back of the room sales tool at speaking events. It's a great touch point for someone just getting familiar with me or my work.

Fusion creatives have the hardest time with this. Because their skill set is so far-ranging, it can be hard to connect the dots from one offer to another in a way that makes sense to their audience. It takes time and patience to see the bigger theme that emerges after years of building a "portfolio career" as Jeff Goins calls it. For me, a lifetime of working in a variety of fields became the foundation for everything that Creative Freedom represents: to build a Noble Empire, live an inspired life and own your dreams without selling your soul.

Whitewater = Decision Point

When you're in Whitewater, according to Les, this is the time when you "can no longer improvise your way to success every day." And you can't just sell your way out of it. You've got operational problems that are hamstringing

the company: there's no set way of doing things, or if there is, it's still in your head and not documented anywhere.

At this point, you've got a choice: go back to Fun, or press on to Predictable Success. Either way, once you've broken into Whitewater, you need to course correct, and that's when it's time to look at the final Growth Plan.

Growth Plan #3: Maintenance

It's easy to dismiss Maintenance, but I assure you, this is a bona fide Growth Plan. An author friend once told me that there are no lateral moves, because if you stand still and stay at the same level, everyone else is moving forward, which means you're falling behind.

A Maintenance Plan is about making sure there's enough income coming in to sustain the current level of the business without losing ground. It's not about expanding offerings or markets, but rather optimizing what's already working and culling what's not. That's why, whether you choose Fun or Predictable Success, you'll need to shift into Maintenance mode at some point. Sure, you might continue with a Momentum Plan to increase the scale and scope of your business once you hit Predictable Success, but eventually, you've got to come back to a Maintenance Plan or you'll fall into the decline side of the business lifecycle.

Maintenance is where small tweaks make big changes. Setting up a simple system that makes it easy for you to let go of a task and delegate to another team member may take a little bit of time on the front end, but it frees you up to do the tasks that only you can do (your zone of genius). In fact, systems and processes, combined with the right amount of agility and responsiveness, are the key elements that keep a business out of decline and on the growth track.

Why choose to stop growing?

Why would a business choose to go back to Fun instead of moving to Predictable Success? Actually, most creatives I've met who are looking to be a "lifestyle entrepreneur" wouldn't dream of moving into Predictable Success. They'd stay in Fun, because there's no need or desire to scale up.

If you want to keep things personal and intimate, or you're the sole creator and you have no desire to license your work, stay in Fun. If you want to keep control of and have final approval on everything - in essence, you enjoy being the bottleneck to some degree - and don't want the hassle of systems, processes, and organizational structures bogging you down, then Fun is for you. Keep it simple, and you'll gladly settle for less growth over time. You've found your Enoughness Number and you're happy to stay there.

But if you've got a vision for a global enterprise (or even a national one), chances are good, you'll want to move into Predictable Success. The only reason to grow to this point, according to Les, is because you want to scale up your business and become an industry leader. Many creative entrepreneurs never need to go this far, but some (like Oprah, Apple, or Michael Graves) do. That's not to say you can't be incredibly wealthy in Fun. Sir Richard Branson's personal brand is worth billions, and he's decidedly in Fun, while his primary company, Virgin, is actively pursuing Predictable Success.

Theoretically, a company could stay in Predictable Success indefinitely, but more often, a company begins to rely too heavily on processes, policies, and systems, forsaking agility, responsiveness and innovation, and falls into decline. The interesting thing is that you can reverse-engineer these Growth Plans to turn these declining businesses around, but since we're only dealing with the growth side of the business in this book, we won't cover that here. I highly recommend Les' book for a full discussion on the entire business lifecycle.

Taking The Pressure Off Your Great Work

If you're considering a Transition Plan, I probably don't need to warn you about the need for an alternative income source. Whether you've got a spouse, a credit card, a savings account, or a job subsidizing the start up of your creative endeavor, it's important to take the pressure off your Great Work to provide for YOU during Early Struggle.

When I was married, my husband made it abundantly clear that the candle business had to stand on its own merits. He was not, under any circumstances going to bankroll my entrepreneurial adventures. But he did pay the mortgage, feed and clothe the children, and make sure my business didn't need to pay me a salary to cover my daily living expenses. My business only had to take care of itself.

On the one hand, this was fantastic because I knew that if the business tanked, we weren't going to be homeless, but on the other hand, because I didn't start by paying myself even a modest salary, I was undercharging and creating a jobby for myself.

To correct this, I created a "payday" for myself and started making payroll deposits into my personal account. My first "paycheck" was fifty cents because that's all I felt confident I could afford to pull out of the business. It was a habit I started to remind myself that I'm running a business, and a business has to make payroll.

I don't care how much you pay yourself, the important thing is to get into the habit of valuing your time in the business and paying yourself a salary for being the owner of the company. If you're already doing this, you're a step ahead of many creatives I've worked with. If you're not doing it, or feel like you can't afford to do it, start now. Start small, but start. Even if you move that money right back into the business, it's important to create the habit now of paying yourself as a valuable member of your company.

If the company isn't making much in the way of profit right now, don't expect to cut yourself a five figure check on payday. But if your company is flush,

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you'll want to pay yourself up to half the total monthly revenue as owner's pay, depending on your annual business income. I'll share more about this in a bit.

As the years marched on, I went through phases of feast and famine in my businesses that, had I been a single mom, trying to care for my family, would have put us on the streets more times than I care to count. Still, I kept up with the habit of paying myself a consistent amount of money on a regular basis - even if I rolled it right back into the business.

When I became a single mom again, the first thing I had to do was find back-up income. Something to even out the cash flow from one month to the next so that I wasn't tempted to bleed or blame the company when my personal expenses exceeded my monthly salary. Your boss wouldn't give you a raise just because you're going through a divorce and need more income to cover all your moving and living expenses. So why would my company do that for me?

Nope. In order to keep my business healthy, I had to find a supplemental income source to bridge the gap until my business income grew to meet my new lifestyle needs. Many creatives need a bridge in one form or another, so here are a few less than obvious options:

- **Ridesharing.** This was my bridge of choice. I didn't want the hassle of a part-time job, and I live in Nashville, where people need a ride 24/7. Added benefit: I didn't own a car when I moved here, but I got a brand new car through the rideshare driving program. As long as I drove enough to cover the car expenses, it was mine to do with as I pleased. See also: homesharing (like AirBnB or VRBO).
- **Sponsorships.** When I was about to launch The Fine Line, I put out a pre-order option that included sponsorships. People paid for MORE than the cost of the Album and got special perks in return. Kind of like crowd funding, but limited to my own existing audience. Cuts out the middleman.

- **Patrons.** Sites like Patreon.com have cropped up in recent years to help generate income as you grow your following. Like crowd funding, but on a monthly, recurring basis.

Whatever you choose, get used to the idea that your Great Work may not pay all the bills when you first launch, and that you'll need a separate income source to take care of YOU until it does. Remember, Elizabeth Gilbert didn't quit her day job until after *Eat, Pray, Love* was made into a feature film - and she'd already written several books by then!

Sure, it's sexy to think that push-button millions are out there for the taking, and some people are positioned in a way that it does come to them fairly easily. But don't bet on luck. Hope is not a strategy. Better to plan for the worst and make the best of it, than to expect miracles and be miserable when they don't come to fruition.

Profit First

A few years ago, I was invited by my friend Mike Michalowicz (a Linear Cusp creative) to be one of the editors for his new book, *Profit First*. Little did he know that I would start implementing his strategies before the red ink was dry - and long before the book went to print. By the time the first edition was actually published, I had put his *Profit First* approach to the test for several months, and eventually became one of the first *Profit First* certified business coaches in the world.

The idea is simple: pay yourself (and your business) before the other expenses of the company. As Mike explains, standard accounting practices calculate business money this way:

$$\text{Income} - \text{Expenses} = \text{Profit}$$

Mike, on the other hand, suggests we flip this scenario:

$$\text{Income} - \text{Profit} = \text{Expenses}$$

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Basically, you set aside a portion of your income for profit before you ever spend a dime on the expenses of the business. Then, you use what's left to pay the company bills.

Before I hear your objections, let's take a look at how this would play out ideally. If your company is bringing in less than \$250,000 per year, you'd allocate the income in the following percentages:

Profit = 5%

Owner Pay = 50%

Taxes = 15%

Everything else = 30%

So if your company is bringing in \$100 per month, your take-home pay is \$50. Yes, even if you plow it right back into the company, you need to practice paying yourself half of the company income. That percentage adjusts downward once your company crosses the \$250k mark, but if you've hit that, then you probably don't need this book, because you're already paying yourself a six figure annual salary (or you should be, according to Mike's math).

Yes I hear you saying, *"But Lisa! I can't afford to pay myself half of the company income because I have too many bills to pay!"*

I get you. Believe me. I do. When I first read Mike's book and did my own Instant Assessment of my situation, I was pissed, because I was in your boat. I was "overspending" on things I thought were necessary and important to the health and well-being of my company. Here's how I solved the problem:

I changed the percentages.

Gasp! I know. Shocking, right? Not really. Mike's percentages are based on an *ideal*, and if you're in the real world, you may not be able to start there. I sure as heck couldn't. So I started by earmarking 1% for profit and 5% for taxes, while the rest of the money went to "expenses" which included a payroll I plowed right back into the company. My first quarterly profit check

was less than a dollar, if I remember correctly, but at least I was getting real money! Money I didn't have to plow back into the company! Over time, I was able to correct things and increase income to the point where I could use Mike's actual percentages and not have to plow my payroll back into my company.

That's when I knew I was at the end of my Transition Plan. If you're in transition, too, there are a couple of things you need to do right now, to move your business toward profitability:

1. Commit to paying yourself a minimum amount on a consistent basis. Even if your income for a month is zero, and that would mean you're getting 50% of nothing, pay yourself anyway - at least on paper. I know that your income could be all over the map or totally non-existent, but make the commitment to habitually sit down on "payday" and pay yourself something. The first few months, my paycheck was only on paper (and only for \$20), but creating the habit, and committing to paying myself every single week lit a fire under my pants to actually bring that money in. Then, as business income grew, and I could correct my percentages, my 50% of the company's monthly income was well beyond \$20 every payday.
2. The other reason you want to have a regular payday is that as your company grows, you'll have to pay staff, and this will train you early on to make payday a habit - not just for you, but for your entire company.
3. Adjust the percentages every three months, then STICK with them. Don't give yourself permission to fiddle with them every month or every week. Set them, run with them for three months, and then make corrections. Keep moving toward the ideals and you may find, as I did, that you can increase your profit percentage as your income goes up and overhead decreases. At one point, I was paying myself a 10% quarterly profit bonus because I had raised income and reduced expenses enough that I could put that money in the bank for future growth.

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4. Don't use your business as your personal banker. Treat it like a real business and let it grow on its own merit. Don't pull money out just because you need it. If you wouldn't do it for an employee, you probably shouldn't do it for yourself. Keep your personal expenses separate from your business expenses. Keep separate accounts. It may go without saying, but a lot of creatives I know don't think about this - especially if you haven't set up a legal structure for your business yet. Co-mingling your personal money and your business money can be illegal in some places. Keep things clean!

As your business grows, you'll adjust the percentages for owner pay (down) and expenses (up), because you'll be growing your company and needing to financially support the new complexities. Plus, you'll be bringing in more revenue, so you won't need to take half of everything to pay yourself a six-figure salary. When you're ready to grow beyond your first six figures Profit First has a host of additional insights that will guide you as you go.



Your Assignment

- ★ Identify each unique offering. If you are an artist, for example, identify each method and mode of art you create. If you're a retailer, you probably won't want to itemize each individual item, but rather common groups of items to make this easier to manage. On the other hand, if you're an author or recording artist with multiple titles to your credit, it makes sense to itemize each title - especially if they appeal to different audiences.
- ★ Identify each unique way in to sell those offers. You may have only one or multiple (wholesale, retail, digital, person-to-person, etc.). Use a spreadsheet to lay it out in one place. The idea here is to know exactly how you make your money and all the ways in which money can come to you through your Great Work.
- ★ Make a list of future offers as well as new outlets for existing offers. Don't forget yourself as an offering. If you're a personality, then endorsements, appearances, and performances are all elements of your business model - or could be in the future, if that's your desire.
- ★ Set up your *Profit First* percentages to run with for the next three months. Make a commitment to stick with them for the duration.
- ★ Do you need to take the pressure off your Great Work? What options are available to you to bridge the income gap while you work your Transition Plan?
- ★ You know the drill by now, right? Celebrate!

ACT III

Pursuing Your Dream





Chapter 10

The 4 Strengths Every Creative Entrepreneur Needs To Succeed

"Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you can't practice any other virtue consistently."

--Maya Angelou

In all my years as both a creative entrepreneur and a coach for other creatives, I've watched plenty of people rise and fall. From one-hit wonders to big-shot internet marketers, some have staying power while others go stale faster than an open bag of potato chips in Michigan's muggy Summer weather (trust me, it's bad!).

What is it that causes some creatives to rise to prominence while others remain in obscurity?

CREATIVE FREEDOM

It's something that's fascinated me for years. The first time it grabbed me, I was watching a woman rising in the ranks of our industry. She seemed to be on fire, as she was at everyone's live event, she was getting her picture with all the key players, and I didn't think she was particularly special.

In fact, the only thing that seemed to separate us was that she had a lot more money to throw around than I did. We were both moms with working husbands, and while I was at home being responsible to the care and feeding of my offspring, she was traveling, networking, and growing faster than I ever could.

Turns out, I only knew half the story, which we'll get to later.

You probably know someone that you think doesn't deserve the spotlight they have. You may be more talented than they are, and yet they're the ones with all the attention. Sometimes they're slimy jerks, who've manipulated their way to the top, and other times, they're just "in the right place at the right time" because they've got connections you don't. And then there are the truly amazing superstars that give us hope, inspire us to go after our dreams, and become our role models on our creative journey – the ones who we believe deserve all the kudos and accolades they receive.

Regardless of HOW they rose to prominence in their field, they've worked hard to get there – even if the work was less than ethical. But judging them doesn't help you get to where you want to be. Only action can do that.

So let's get to it. What exactly makes the difference?

There's something I've found that all these people have in common – whether they're good-hearted, wonderful people or slimy, manipulative baddies. In fact, there are 4 must-have skills and traits that every single one of them have in common – regardless of their creative type. Without them, it becomes nearly impossible to achieve the success and longevity you desire as a creative entrepreneur.

Clarity

This one seems obvious, right? But clarity is very nuanced. What exactly do you need to be clear about?

For one thing, a creative entrepreneur needs to be clear on who they are. My friend, Tajci Cameron (pronounced tie-chee), is an international pop music superstar - basically the *Madonna* of Croatia - with millions of adoring fans, and a Barbie-like doll made in her image. But they were trying to cram her spirit into a mold that didn't fit the powerful, thoughtful, change-making woman she was becoming. So she gave it all away. Except for the doll. She kept the doll as a reminder of how she never wanted to be placed in that box again.

She came to the states with just a few dollars, knowing no one. It wasn't sunshine and rainbows. She even turned away from pop music and tuned into a spiritual calling. Decades later, Tajci's a wife and mother who still makes time for her fans. She's created her own path - one that's given her more joy and fulfillment than she ever had in her "glory days" of being a pop music icon.

I confess I was envious when I first saw that doll. To have the kind of fame that would warrant making a doll in your image would mean being able to reach many people with your message. But Tajci reminded me that the doll represented just one small piece of who Tajci really is. She's so much more than a doll in a box. No box could ever contain the boundless light, life, and joy she brings to her fans (and the world) through her music, stories, and video journal. Tajci found a way to stay true to who she is and still create in ways that are meaningful to her.

She launched her own TV Show "Waking Up In America" to highlight the turning points of other people just like her. People who "woke up" one day to the reality that their life wasn't going in the direction they wanted, and realized they had to do something different to make lasting change. The show started the Waking Up Revolution, where Tajci connects with others on this journey of healing and discovery.

Tajci's message is clear, and that clarity started a movement that resonates in all the work she does in the world. It draws in more of her right people, and the result is a growing business doing what she loves without the drama and chaos that was killing her spirit as a pop superstar.

"Throughout my journey, knowing there was someone out there who could hear my voice and my songs gave me a sense of being heard, accepted, understood and loved... I am a singer/songwriter and passionate about my music, I use it to express myself and give voice to my soul - as free as I am courageous to let it be."

In addition to being clear on who you are, you need to be clear on how you want to show up in the world. You also need to be clear on your message and why it matters to your audience. These answers come with time and practice, but they are crucial to having staying power as a creative entrepreneur. Tajci could have given up years ago, but she knew that music was her path.

Courage

It takes guts to face regular rejection of your work – and not see it as a personal rejection. It takes guts to step out on faith and do something you've never done before. Yet courage is one of the biggest elements sorely lacking in so many talented creatives. When I was a kid, I was told to be offended if someone ever said I had potential. "It means you're not living up to it."

For better or worse, Justin Bieber's got courage. In a 2009 interview, Bieber recounts how he met Usher:

"Usher happened to roll up in his Range Rover. I ran up to him, and I was like, 'Usher, I love your songs. Want me to sing you one?' The politest possible way he could say no, he did. ... I took

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the hint. I didn't get to sing for him: He had to run into a studio session."

Kids are often the most courageous among us, and Bieber was still a kid at the time of this chance meeting with his idol. He didn't let that stop him. He knew this might be the only chance he had to meet or talk to Usher, and he took that chance. It didn't seem to pan out at first, which is more common than you might think. But thanks to a little help from his support team (we all need one), Justin *did* get that chance after all:

"He actually watched my videos — after my manager got to talking to him — and was like, 'I should have let this kid sing,' and flew me back to Atlanta where I got to sing for him in a proper setting."

You've got to have the courage to own your message and speak it into the world – in whatever format your Great Work "speaks".

You've got to have courage to consistently show up as your true self – warts, sparkles and all, as I like to say. You've got to be willing to be unpopular, and even borrow someone else's courage for yourself at times. Stephen King's book, *Carrie*, was rejected so many times he threw it in the trash. But his wife was courageous enough to dig it out of the trash and not let him give up.

Courage comes out of Clarity. It's hard to make a move when you can't see what's in front of you. It would be foolish to step out without some kind of clarity. And yes, even faith can be a type of clarity. Faith says "I'm not as clear as I'd like to be, but I'm willing to trust the process and take the next step."

Courage to take the next step (and then the next) begets Confidence.

Confidence

Courage creates opportunities for practice – which is how you build confidence. Confidence to nurture your message, your audience, and yourself.

It's akin to the difference between being a Freshman and a Senior in high school. My physics class had students from all grades in it. Sure, I was smarter than some of the Seniors in that class, but when we left the classroom, they were the ones exuding more confidence in the halls. They knew who the best teachers were, which ones to avoid, and the underclassmen looked up to them, aspiring to *be* them in many cases. Seniors walked the halls like they owned the place, and very few Freshmen ever did.

That's the kind of Confidence that comes from practice and experience.

When you've been at the game for a while, you know the rules, you know where you can bend them and where you have to press on through the hard stuff. You know what to avoid, what to accept, and what you can change. You know the difference you can make.

What's the difference between Courage and Confidence? Courage comes from facing the unknown while Confidence is built through knowing.

Confidence allows you to say no with grace, yes with enthusiasm, and know when things are or are not a good fit for you. Confidence gives you a greater ability to trust the process, trust your team, and make strategic decisions that benefit you in the long term (even if they're not so great for you in the short term). Many times, when working with clients, this is the piece that snaps together the fastest, once we've got their courage issues handled.

Confidence is NOT the same as arrogance. Arrogance is confidence in your own infallibility. No one is perfect. Arrogance is drinking your own Kool-Aid and believing your own hype. Don't fall victim to it.

Cash Flow

Here's the kicker. Ya gotta have more money coming in than going out. Toni Braxton is the poster child of this issue. After filing bankruptcy, she worked her way back and launched a self-funded stint in Vegas. Just after she renewed her contracts, she was diagnosed with medical conditions that kept her from keeping her commitments. She filed bankruptcy again, this time knowing she'd never be able to perform at her peak again. "I'm definitely on a budget," she said in a 2012 interview.

Where's the money coming from? Where's it going to? What do you have set aside or saved up for the unexpected? You can run on credit for a while, but, like Braxton, it'll eventually come back to bite you. The sooner you can get in the black and stay there, the better off you'll be.

That's why we spent so much time looking at things like your Enoughness Number, how to take the pressure off your Great Work, and how to allocate the income from your company so that the business stays healthy and pays you appropriately as its owner. While this isn't a book on financial management, it goes without saying that it's easier to make a business work if you've got positive cash flow. That means profit.

The good news is that this entire section of the book will help you get even more clear on how your growth plan can set you up for success in the next 12 months (and beyond). In fact, this section is more like a workbook than educational reading, so have your pen and plenty of paper ready, because by the time we're done you'll have Clarity and Courage in the bank, ready to move ahead into greater Confidence and Cash Flow (the final section of the book).



Your Assignment

- ★ Check in with yourself. On a scale of 1-9, how clear are you on what you offer, to whom you're offering it, and the pricing and positioning of that offer? It's okay if you're not clear on any of it right now, just be honest with yourself. Set a baseline so that you can compare it with how you're feeling at the end of this section of the book.
- ★ Celebrate. Nuff said.



Chapter 11

How To Create Raving Fans

*"I don't view myself as a queen;
I view myself as one of my fans."*

-- Lady Gaga

By the beginning of 2016, Taylor Swift had sold more than 40 million albums worldwide. Before her multi-million dollar success in the pop music world, Swift was a country singer on the rise. Rick Barker was Swift's manager in those early days. Remember earlier when I told you that Barker advised Swift to meet (and connect with) half a million people if she wanted to sell a half a million records? This is where we break that down.

Making that personal connection with each individual takes time, but it pays big dividends in the long term. Swift stayed late after every show to shake as many hands and sign as many autographs as she could - until it was time to hit the road for the next tour stop. It was tiring work, but I think 40 million records more than compensates Taylor for her time.

CREATIVE FREEDOM

I have a colleague who says that having Raving Fans is like turning on a faucet and unleashing a steady stream of clients any time you choose. Most people sit around with their hands cupped under the spigot, waiting for their ideal clients to start flowing in, but they haven't turned the faucet on!

Raving Fans are the fast track to more money, influence, and impact. The more Raving Fans you have, the easier it is to do almost everything - except, perhaps, answer fan mail. It's also how you create more time freedom as well as financial freedom. Plus, Raving Fans don't balk at your pricing. They happily pay what you're asking because they know you're worth it... and they tell everyone they know about you.

It takes years to build a profitable, sustainable business - especially one customer at a time. When you have Raving Fans you get there faster.

The good news? You don't need a half a million Raving Fans. Just a few will create exponential results in your business. Raving Fans spread your message faster and easier than you ever could by yourself. And the best part? They do it because they love you.

Loyalty

Raving Fans begin with loyalty. There are two faces of loyalty: your loyalty to your fans and your fans' loyalty to you. B.J. Bueno, founder of The Cult Branding Company, puts it this way:

"All major brands try to get their customers to be loyal to their brands. This should be called brand loyalty. Cult brands focus on being loyal to their customers. This should be distinguished as customer loyalty."

Raving Fans, then, are those people who are loyal to your brand, and to whom you are loyal. It's that deeper sense of your commitment to them that encourages fans to rave. They feel like you're looking out for them, like you know them personally - whether you actually do or not.

That means it's not just about how your fans can't get enough of you, but how you build a stronger relationship with your fans. It's what you do (or don't do) on a consistent basis that sets the expectations of your fans. Those expectations establish trust and deepen not only the loyalty of your fans, but your loyalty to them. It's not uncommon to find that some of your biggest fans have also become your friends.

But you can't just slap together a "rewards program" or revamp a stale customer service program and expect that to do the trick. Raving Fans transcend customer service - to the total customer experience. To that end, I've identified four components that create Raving Fans.:

- Brand Identity
- Brand Loyalty
- Brand Experience
- Customer Loyalty

The word "brand" can feel nebulous and hard to define – especially if YOU are the "product" of your company. Most creative entrepreneurs are the face of their brand, so let's distill this image into a more relatable visual:



In essence, you need to be clear about who you are, what you really offer to your fans, and why you do what you do. Then you need to communicate that through every experience you offer to your resonant audience – the people that love you whom you love right back.

Brand Identity

This is all the stuff about you: who you are, what matters to you and your company, and a little bit about why you exist. It's the internal conversations about motivations, missions, and goals. It's the stuff that makes your company what it is.

We've dedicated the entire first section of this book to learning more about you and what really matters to you, which means we've also hit on a good deal of why you do what you do as well. The last few chapters have started you down the path of what you offer, and all that work is going to help you find and connect with more of your resonant audience.

Brand Loyalty

With all due respect to Simon Sinek, your customer doesn't care about why you do what you do - they only care how you can make their life better. Don't take it personally. They simply don't have the time or patience to care. You have to make it easy for them to be loyal to you by making your "why" tangible for the customer.

Borrowing B.J. Bueno's definition from earlier, brand loyalty is when your clients are loyal to your products, services, or offerings. This is where they demonstrate their willingness to choose you first, and maybe even refer their friends and colleagues. But this is only the tip of the customer satisfaction iceberg. This is where you translate who you are and what you stand for into your offerings for your clients and customers to begin to connect with you. This is where Simon Sinek's "why you do it" becomes tangible for your customer.

In her book, *The Customer Manifesto*, Pamela Herrmann says that "loyalty happens when we feel a sense of support or allegiance to someone or something." But what, exactly, can you do to help your clients feel support or allegiance? It might not be as hard as you think!

L.O.V.E. Is The Answer

When you show love to your audience, your audience feels more at ease, and trusts you. When they believe you have more vested in the relationship than they do, they are more likely to say yes to your offers... especially if they like you. The know, like, and trust

factor (KLT) is not something to take lightly, and the best way I've found to stimulate KLT is with a little L.O.V.E.

Listen

Observe

Value

Educate

You've got to *listen* to your resonant audience, and observe what's really going on. People often say one thing and do something else. Ask questions when it's appropriate and really listen to what your audience is saying. Some marketing types would tell you to "find their pain point," but that may not apply to you. You may not be solving a problem, but you can certainly empathize and help make their life better through your Great Work.

Music, for example doesn't "solve a problem" so much as hit an empathetic nerve. People resonate with your music because they **FEEL** connected to it or the story.

You've also got to *value* your audience in ways that are meaningful to them and to you. It can't be a one-way street in either direction. If you're only doing what works for you, business will dry up. If you're constantly doing

things that your audience loves, but it doesn't work for you, then resentment builds.

Lastly, you've got to *educate* your audience – on who you are, how your offers work, what you're about, as well as the expectations you have for them and yourself. You need to keep them in the loop, and the sooner, the better.

The framework is pretty simple. It's how you choose to apply it that makes all the difference. The more you show the appropriate amount of L.O.V.E. to your audience, the easier it is for them to offer up a resounding "HELL YEAH!" and be first in line whenever you offer your Great Work to the world.

Customer Loyalty

This is the element where you show your commitment to your customers. That could be through a rewards program, or personalized messages, or a direct line of contact for your very best customers. How this materializes in your business is up to you.

When you think of your own life and the people to whom you are most loyal, what comes to mind? We are not simply loyal from the onset of a relationship. There are several elements that combine to afford you that sense of loyalty. As children, we develop a sense of trust with our parents and loved ones because we can count on them to provide for us. But that trust isn't innate. It's learned through the consistency of connection and support we've gotten from those people.

Connection, support, and consistency are what Sarah Robinson calls the "advanced evolution" of wildly successful communities. But there's a lot that has to happen first. Sarah lays out several building blocks to fierce loyalty in her book, *Fierce Loyalty: Unlocking the DNA of Wildly Successful Communities*. They are:

- A Captivating Common Interest

- People Who Share This Common Interest
- A Set of Compelling Needs
- Served Through A Specific Structure

Captivating Common Interest

Ideally, that “captivating” common interest revolves around you, your Great Work, and/or how you show up in the world. Don’t ignore the word “captivating” because it is a pivotal word. If you – or your Great Work – are just “meh,” you can forget it. Mediocrity is a one-way ticket to nowhere.

That doesn’t mean you have to be an over-the-top showman. Introverts can be incredibly captivating with their steady, loving presence, or quiet persistence. Be who you are, and do it with conviction. Essentially, you’re becoming a lighthouse for your raving fans to find you. Shine your light; Don’t pretend to be something you’re not!

People Who Share This Interest

Since we’ve established YOU and your Great Work are the Captivating Common Interest, now we’ve got to find the people who like you (and/or your Great Work)! Not all of the people who share a love of you (the common interest) will be part of your community of Raving Fans, but this is the bigger pool of people from which Raving Fans will emerge.

So who’s in this “bigger pool”? These are not just your clients, customers, and fans, but also your evangelists: colleagues and peers who talk you up, send you referrals, and make mention of you in their own work. They are also your friends, your family, and even acquaintances that have shown appreciation for you or your Great Work.

Yes, this is a very large pool, and it’s unreasonable to think you can market to or even reach all of them, but these people are part of your community of

common interest nonetheless. One of the exercises I like to use with my clients to help them narrow the pool a bit is my Number One Fan activity.

Your Number One Fan

Think about the best compliment or testimonial you could get for your Great Work. What would your "Number One Fan" have to say? What makes them love you SO much? Stephen Covey tells us to "begin with the end in mind." Write out the words your number one fan would use (in their voice, not yours), as if you were stepping inside their head for a minute and hearing exactly what they were thinking. Let go of your judgements and feel into what you'd love to have them say about you. Go ahead and dream big! This is your number one fan, after all.

Completing the Number One Fan exercise is a huge step in getting clarity about your Raving Fans. It helps you get in the head of your customers and understand their words, as well as how they will feel once they've had a chance to work with you or experience your Great Work. You still may still have more work to do to refine this, but at least you're narrowing the pool and getting closer.

Compelling Set of Needs

Remember, not everyone who shares your common interest are going to be your Raving Fans. Those who are will have a compelling set of needs that, when you meet them, will stimulate loyalty to your business:

- **Belonging/Unity.** Not everyone wants to join a movement or start a revolution, but if there's resonance for who you are and what you stand for, Raving Fans want to align themselves with that as a means of feeling like they are a part of something bigger than themselves.

- **Individuality.** Raving Fans don't just want to be another face in the crowd. Sure they're part of something bigger than themselves, but they also want to be seen, heard, and acknowledged for the individual person that they are.
- **Safety.** It takes courage to show up fully as yourself and express your individuality - even more so in a group setting (including a virtual one). Raving Fans want to know they can trust you. They want to feel a sense of security and certainty among like-minded people - whether that is you or other members of your growing fan base.

My annual event, *Creative Freedom Live!*, is a place where these three elements are emphasized and intensified. We spend three days together, working individually on a common goal - developing our growth plans for the next 12 months. In order to foster community and a sense of openness, we have to commit to certain levels of confidentiality, which creates and reinforces a safe space for everyone to work, be seen and heard, and know they can trust one another.

A Specific Organizational Structure

When your Raving Fans start showing up, you've got to have a means of providing for those needs. Robinson suggests three necessary "structures" to help meet those needs:

- **Connection.** The ability to connect with you, your company, and even other members of the community feeds the ability to stimulate trust and belonging.
- **Support.** Knowing there is support available, should an individual need it, enhances trust. It also often gives someone courage enough to show up as themselves and be recognized as an individual.

- **Consistency.** When Raving Fans can rely on you to be consistent – in the delivery of a quality offering, in the way you show up and share your Great Work, as well as how you respond to their needs, they can relax and enjoy a deepening relationship with you.

When you're clear on who you are and why you do what you do, that community of "captivating common interest" begins to form. It's through the delivery of the brand experience that your resonant audience begins to shake out your Raving Fans. Consistency in delivering that experience is the linchpin that creates Raving Fans.

Brand Experience

As a kid, my mom would take us on mini-vacations all over the state. Being in Michigan, you're never more than 80 miles from one of the Great Lakes, which meant a lot of summer days were spent at one beach or another. Invariably, we'd have to take a potty break somewhere along the drive. Most of the times, there were roadside rest areas, but when there were no rest areas to be found, Mom's back-up plan was always McDonald's.

We rarely ever got to eat at McDonald's, which always made it felt more like she was teasing us. I remember asking on one of our stops why she stopped at McDonald's but wouldn't let us order anything. Her response was simple: "they always have clean bathrooms."

Well, they did, that is, until the day they didn't.

We were driving cross-country to the East coast. Somewhere in New York State, mom took a "pit stop" at the local McDonald's and the bathrooms were atrocious.

She wouldn't stop at another McDonald's until we got back to Michigan. In her mind, the damage was done, and apparently she could only trust the McDonald's in our home state to have clean restrooms.

When you do something once, people might take notice, and they might just consider it a fluke. When you do something a few times, you start to develop a reputation. When you are known for doing something consistently, that's when trust increases rapidly.

McDonald's never makes a claim in any of their marketing that they have clean restrooms. Sure, you might make the assumption that every establishment should have clean facilities, but we've all experienced a less than stellar bathroom experience. For Mom, McDonald's bathrooms were so consistently clean that she expected every McDonald's to have clean restrooms.

That is the power of consistency.

When you're crafting your brand experience, it's important to think about what you will and won't do on a consistent basis for your Raving Fans. You might not think it's a big deal, but to your Raving Fans, it could mean the world.

In my own business, we've built a "Brand Bible" which codifies all the consistent elements of our work. The colors, words, and images that we will use to consistently represent Creative Freedom in the marketplace. All my social media channels use the same head shot. We have standard copy for bios of various lengths. We also have a list of images, words, and behaviors that we will never use, say, or do, because they are not in alignment with what we believe Creative Freedom is about in the world. As I mentioned earlier, I also have parameters around how I dress. I like to be comfortable, so my brand reflects that.

While there's not enough time and space to develop your brand in this module, there are some things to keep in mind as you develop your customer experience. How do you and your business show up in the world? What would you never be caught dead doing? If your brand was a character on a TV show, who would it be?

That last question might sound odd, but trust me, it brings clarity.

MacGyver vs. Sydney Bristow

I loved the original *MacGyver* series. To me, he was trustworthy, reliable, and he had an unmistakable brand. He never used a gun (except once, in the very first episode of the show), he ate healthy food, and he had a mullet that every girl seemed to love. He wore jeans, drove a Jeep, and was never without a roll of duct tape. He used his brain to solve the problems of the world. On the rare occasions he put on a tux he looked like a fish out of water – and he even confessed to feeling that way! He preferred his jeans and tennies, his Jeep, and his handy roll of duct tape. You might say he was trustworthy and reliable *because* he had an unmistakable brand. You always knew what to expect with MacGyver.

I had the opposite reaction when I watched *Alias*. Sydney Bristow was hard to trust – even though I knew she was the hero of the show. She was a double agent, always in and out of disguises. She was likable, but it was hard to know who she really was or which side she was serving. It took several seasons before I felt like I really knew what to expect from her.

Whether you want to admit it or not you are a character. As a creative entrepreneur, you have to craft a persona – and I strongly encourage you to make it as true to life as possible. Lady Gaga insists on being outlandish in her own way. Even when she's dressed conservatively, she'll have a thick layer of glitter eyeshadow and long, color-coordinated fingernails. They are the calling cards of her brand experience.

That doesn't mean your brand can't evolve. As Steve Jobs mellowed over the years, he stopped wearing business suits and became known for his iconic black mock turtleneck and jeans.

You need to decide now what you want to be known for – before someone else decides for you. Like my friend Tajci, there are countless tales of performing artists who are “made” into a persona by their agents and producers. It's all fun until you reach your breaking point. Don't let that happen to you – even if you don't have an agent or a producer. I tell my

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clients all the time: you train people how to treat you based on what they've come to expect from you and what you've come to accept from them.

Knowing what you want to be known for isn't just about your Great Work. Sure, it's important to deliver a quality product or service, but who is delivering it and how it's being delivered is just as important to the story of your business. The good news is that It's your business. You get to decide. And decide you must – before someone else does.

Still feeling unclear or stuck on this? Stay the course. The next chapter will help clarify in terms you can apply directly to your own situation.



Your Assignment

- ★ What are your Raving Fans feeling, and how does your Great Work help them feel even better?
- ★ Complete the Number One Fan activity and look for the elements of Fierce Loyalty that you need to implement in order to earn that rave review in the future. What's one step you'll take to start implementing a better customer experience for your Raving Fans? This is an ongoing activity, so don't think you can do it once and just walk away. Raving Fans require your focused, consistent efforts!
- ★ Begin building your own Brand Bible - the list of what to do and what not to do that will help establish your brand "character" and help you stay consistent in presenting your brand to the world. Start small, and as your company grows, add what's necessary to help your team stay consistent, too.
- ★ Get the Raving Fans Toolkit from my website to use as a guide for your own development.
- ★ Celebrate. Confetti. Streamers. Group hugs. Whatever floats your boat.



Chapter 12

Resonance

"The most important thing to realize is that people are born without earlids."

-- Tony Schwartz

When I got my first guitar, my Aunt Sue made a point of teaching me how to tune it. It felt like we spent an hour on it which, for a kid, is a freaking lifetime. Aunt Sue reassured me that tuning the strings was an important part of making sure the guitar sounded clear when I played. The other part was finger positioning. If my fingers weren't placed properly on the frets, if I didn't apply enough pressure to the strings, they wouldn't resonate properly, or they'd be out of tune, both of which make for a painful listening experience.

I was no stranger to tuning an instrument. I'd played clarinet and saxophone for a few years by then, and I knew how to match my pitch to the tuner. But this was an entirely different experience.

In case you've never tuned a guitar to itself, you begin by positioning your finger on a string, then you pluck it and the one next to it at the same time. You adjust the tension on one string to bring the pitches into unison, and then continue with each pair of adjacent strings until you've tuned all of them.

When a pair of strings is out of tune, you'll hear a "pulsing" wave of dissonance, which is the difference in frequency between one string and the other. As you get closer to perfect tuning, the pulsing disappears and the two strings sound like one.

That's resonance.

Just like a well-tuned guitar, your business needs resonance with your right audience. That's a core component of Raving Fans - a resonant audience. It's the difference between making sweet music together, and the nails-on-a-chalkboard feeling of brand dissonance. The good news is that there are only three "strings", if you will, that need tuning. They are the first three elements of the Raving Fans framework - and you've already done a good bit of work on them if you've done the assignments so far.

The "bad news" (if there can be any) is that this chapter takes you deeper into creating and maintaining resonance inside your brand. So if you felt stuck at the high-level overview of the last chapter, or if you wanted to get more granular on this work, then this chapter is for you.

The First "String" of Resonance: You

The entire first section of this book has been about getting clearer on who you really are and what really matters to you. This wasn't an exercise in selfishness, because, as a creative entrepreneur, what matters to you often matters to your Raving Fans as well. They care about what you care about.

That said, they won't care about everything you care about, and they may not care about the same specifics that you care about. For example, if you care about making enough money from your Great Work to leave your day

job, your audience probably doesn't care about that, but they might care about the sense of freedom that comes from being able to leave your day job. That less specific, more universal theme of freedom is about both you and your audience.

That's resonance.

Where do you find these themes? There are three places I routinely point my clients:

- Your Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Type (and its common blind spots and ninja skills)
- How you best show up in the world (your presence, voice, and platforms of choice)
- Your filters and priorities in life and work

These three areas often contain enough universally understood themes that your audience can understand and identify with to create content that is both personal and applicable to a wide enough group of people to create resonance.

Your Creative Type

We've already covered your type in a previous chapter, and those traits and skills are something people can identify with easily. As a Chaotic, your go-with-the-flow nature might make you flexible, and it can also get you in trouble with deadlines. Linears can celebrate the plans and strategies they've developed and own the truth of how they can be too rigid or demanding at times. Fusions can fist bump their audience when they launch a new project into the world, and still reflect on the level of perfectionism that drove them to procrastinate on their launch in the first place.

Nobody is perfect. Sharing those small vulnerabilities along with the wins are often a way to connect more closely with your audience and create resonance. Our Raving Fans often aspire to be like us (and sometimes even

liked by us), so it's not uncommon for them to try to put themselves in our shoes. Showing up "too perfectly" makes it hard for them to do that.

Previous chapters have covered a bit of the Creative Type, so let's use this space to focus on the other areas.

Presence, Voice, and Platform

Like the McDonald's bathroom fiasco, your Raving Fans and resonant audience will come to expect a certain level of consistency from you in how you present yourself to the world. I've been the host of Creative Freedom for several years now, and my audience has an expectation that they'll be able to find me there. There's also an expectation of informality and approachability that I've worked hard to maintain. It's easy for me to get intellectual and use two dollar words that fly over the heads of my audience. And yet, big words are part of who I am, so I have to practice using them judiciously - in a way that allows me inner nerd a chance to shine, while keeping it approachable for the audience I'm building.

As a coach and business consultant, I want my Raving Fans to feel like I'm their best friend and that I'll never make them feel inferior about what they don't know. As a performing artist, I want my Raving Fans to feel like I'm their friend, and also their guide. Like I'm speaking for them when their voice fails, and that I've got their back even though I'm not perfect at it.

My girl-next-door/action hero approach is a conscious brand choice. I'm much more MacGyver than Bristow. There are days when I glam up, and days when I dress down, but I do my best to stay consistent when I'm in the public eye. I use the same words over and over:

- Howdy Sunshine!
- Dude!
- Aww Hell naw!
- In blessings and peace

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- Own Your Dreams Without Selling Your Soul
- Noble Empire
- Inspired Life

These are just a few of the word choices I've made part of my brand vocabulary. In choosing to use them consistently, they become identified with me and my company. They become part of my brand.

But it's not just the words you use, it's the platform - how you present yourself. Lady Gaga is known for her outrageous costumes. P!nk is known for her pink hair. Bill Gates is known for his glasses and nerdy demeanor, while Steve Jobs took a more casual, informal approach with his signature black mock turtleneck and jeans.

To be clear (something else I say a lot!), this takes time and practice. Consistency. You don't show up one day, with pink hair or an outrageous costume and call yourself a rock star. In fact, Steve Jobs started his business life as a suit and tie-wearing guy. It wasn't until his return to Apple *after* his ousting that he donned his signature look.

It wouldn't be an episode of Creative Freedom if I didn't sing something a little comical at the opening of the episode. Every episode is connected to a song as both a means of demonstrating my own ability as well as giving my viewers a mnemonic device to reinforce the lessons of the episode. They may not remember a single episode on its own, but when they hear the song from the episode playing on the radio, they'll recall something, which is the whole point of the series.

And yes, you can be consistent at being inconsistent. The key, again, is the unifying theme. Madonna is known for reinventing herself, and yet, her unifying theme is always one of empowerment. Lily Tomlin built a career out of being a character, and yet many of her best-known characters are flighty, kooky, and not perfectly put together people.

This is how you hone your voice - with practice, patience, and consistency. Like tuning those guitar strings, sometimes you have to keep pulling the strings over and over getting closer to resonance each time. Sometimes,

you'll over-correct and go "out of tune" in a different direction, but if you keep at it (that's the practice part), you'll find resonance.

Your platform is also an important consideration. If you show up one day on Social Media, the next week on video, and the next on a radio show, you're making it hard for your audience to know where to find you. If you go to the same restaurant regularly, order the same meal or beverage consistently, eventually you build a reputation and the servers know what you mean when you say "I'll have the usual." But you can't walk in on day one and expect them to know what "the usual" is because you've never been there before!

I encourage most of my clients to start with one platform, maybe two. Fusions get a little more wiggle room here, but only if they can confidently maintain multiple platforms. One social media outpost, a personal platform (like a blog or website), and a mailing list device to keep in contact with your growing audience. Pick one of those things and nurture like crazy.

As I write this chapter, I currently have the following platforms:

- 5 social media outposts
- 1 video channel
- A blog
- An e-mail list
- Multiple guest post & interview outlets
- Guest spots at other people's events/stages

But I didn't start here. I had a blog. I wrote regularly and eventually got up the nerve to cultivate a mailing list. Then came Facebook. I found it confusing and overwhelming, so I jumped to Twitter. I stayed with those three outlets for about a year before I pulled Facebook back in. I had a short-lived MySpace page (because musicians were supposed to), but couldn't keep up with it so I ditched it.

You won't like every new platform that comes along, and you shouldn't feel compelled to do it just because it seems like "everyone" is there. Be willing to experiment and make sure you have the bandwidth to manage it.

Or get help. I now have a staff member that helps to craft and schedule marketing posts for some of my social media platforms, and while I still do a lot of the heavy lifting myself (because being present and accessible is part of my brand reputation), I make the best use of my time by relying on my team when it's appropriate.

Your Filters & Priorities

If you've been listening to yourself about what really matters, then you'll be able to use those ideas as filters through which you'll say yes or no to opportunities that arise.

For example, I had a client, Pam, who knew that the most important thing to her was having a happy family. Professionally she was on track to grow her career as an inspirational speaker and author, but she knew that her priority of having a happy family meant being home as much as possible. So if an opportunity to speak at an out-of-state event came her way, Pam would often decline the invitation, or she charged a premium fee. She knew that not being able to come home at the end of the night would cause extra financial and emotional strain, which did not contribute to her overarching goal - a happy family.

Pam focused on what mattered most to her and she is meeting her goals on her terms. She was able to accomplish what many creatives never do because they don't allow themselves to want what they want and use their creativity to achieve it. As of this writing, Pam is doing work that she loves that allows her to be home with her family most nights. It also provides enough free time to pursue her creative gifts on her own terms without putting stress or financial pressure on her to "make it work" in a short period of time. She may not be a household name yet, but Pam is one of the happiest, most successful creatives I know.

The Second "String" of Resonance: Why

This is where I come into alignment with Simon Sinek to a degree. He's often quoted for saying "people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it." That's mostly true. Let me explain.

See, I don't really care about why Jeff Bezos gets up in the morning. I also don't care why Amazon offers free 2-day shipping for Prime members. I do care that it's a benefit of being a Prime member. But in the bigger picture, I do care that Amazon is trying to reduce its carbon footprint by giving me the option to consolidate my shipments - especially since they're passing the savings along to me in the form of a credit towards a future purchase.

Amazon has given me a reason to care about what they care about by relating their goals to my own.

Your resonant audience cares about your *why as it relates to them*, which is an important distinction. You may have an incredibly compelling motivation for the work you do that's only compelling to you. That won't create resonance. But if you can find the universal themes of your business (as you did for your own personal themes), then you take resonance to a deeper level.

Where do you find these points of resonance? Here are the three areas I often invite my clients to look at for inspiration:

- Your company origin story
- Your company turning point/phoenix story
- Your heroic brand story

Often times, these stories can overlap, but let's take them one at a time so you can see the structures and build your own.

Your Company Origin Story

Origin stories are part of the founding mythology of your company. They often incorporate elements of your personal struggles and vision, as well as the early start-up stories of your company. Even if you've been a creative entrepreneur for decades, each iteration of your business has an origin story. Sharing it helps reveal what your company stands for, as well as inform your Raving Fans about the future direction of your business.

One entrepreneur I know told the story of how she worked like a dog as a copywriter in an office where the guys were pulling in as much in a week as she made in a year. Part of her origin story was the night that she was invited to hang out with friends and went to the ATM for some cash. She had about eighteen dollars in her account and couldn't enjoy the evening because of it. She vowed then and there she wouldn't be in that position again. That moment was the springboard for her marketing communications company. It was also a turning point in her career.

Your Turning Point/Phoenix Story

I've yet to work with an entrepreneur who stayed on the same path their entire career. They may exist, but I haven't met them yet. Typically, creatives are on a path and something happens that causes a turning point that moves them in a new direction.

Remember Tajci? She was living a life that many would consider glamorous and fabulous, but for her it was miserable. Her turning point came when she opted out of the music machine of her home country and moved to the United States, which set her on an entirely new journey.

Another version of this is the Phoenix story - your story of rising from the ashes. Think of the classic "rags to riches" stories, or the modern twist: "riches to rags to riches again." These are the stories of vulnerability that show our Raving Fans that we're human.

Consider the welfare mom who, in a single year, amassed a huge online following and created nearly a million dollars in revenue. That's Kimra Luna's rags to riches origin story, and her Freedom Hackers community deeply resonates with her no-excuses message of overcoming obstacles and living your dreams. They aspire to her level of success and look to her for wisdom, guidance, and the occasional kick in the pants to stay the course on their dreams.

Along the way, Kimra's had her ups and downs, which are what shape your Heroic Brand Story

Your Heroic Brand Story

Joseph Campbell's seminal work on the heroic journey provides a useful framework that you can apply to the stories of your own business. They can include both your origin and phoenix stories, but typically, these are the up-and-down adventures of your company. Like the time in my own business where I tried to launch a live event and it was a total flop. The lessons from that failure taught me more about finding resonance with my right audience than most of my successes. If all we ever do is celebrate our success, we miss the learning and growth opportunities that make us better.

Take Harry Potter, for example. How many times did he get it wrong before he got it right? Sitting in Dolores Umbridge's office, writing sentences that were painfully and magically etched into his flesh? That's not the sign of someone who is winning the game!

In fact, Harry is the classic reluctant hero. He didn't want to have the attention, the adulation, or bear the responsibility of saving the magical world, and he was far from perfect at doing it. In fact, were it not for some of his more capable friends, he might have died before the end of the first book! Yet it is those very trials and tribulations that draw us in and help us fall in love with Harry, the boy wizard who saves the world - with a little help from his many friends.

As you read the heroic journey of Mike Michalowicz across his many books, you learn how he moved his family into a senior living center, made millions of dollars before he was 35, and then lost it all because of his arrogance. You also learn how he had short-lived stints on television, and eventually rebuilt his business by helping other entrepreneurs avoid the pitfalls of his own mistakes and showing them a better path to profitability.

What are the ups and downs of your own career? What are the battles you've fought, the scars and blisters you've gotten from the journey of sharing your Great Work with the world? What are the big wins, and more importantly, how do all those ups and downs relate to your Raving Fans? When you can answer that question, you're one step closer to resonance.

The Third "String" of Resonance: Who

One of the reasons that knowing your heroic journey is so important is because it's often a mirror for your Raving Fans. They, too have a heroic journey of their own, and while they are the Harry Potter of their story, you are their guide.

You're the Dumbledore to their Harry, the Yoda to their Luke Skywalker, the Lady Gaga to their "Little Monster", if you will. You've already tread the path and learned the lessons and your Raving Fans are coming to you to get your perspective, your insight, and often, to shorten their own learning curve. In exchange for their time, money, and attention, you're gifting them with your wisdom and guidance; you're making their lives better.

The Harry Potter Approach For Creating Your Offers

Because J. K. Rowling wrote so many books in the Harry Potter series, it makes for a great analogy to developing your business offerings if you run a problem-focused business.

Think of the different books in the Harry Potter Series. In each book, there was a major obstacle to overcome that became the theme for the specific book: the Philosopher's Stone, The Chamber of Secrets, and so on. Inside each book, however, there were a series of smaller obstacles: learning to make friends and knowing who to trust, how to stand on your own and build your confidence, etc. Each of these smaller obstacles were important milestones on the journey to overcoming the major obstacle of the book. Had Harry not learned how to make friends and trust them, he couldn't have trusted Ron with the game of real-life Wizard's Chess that allowed him to find the Philosopher's Stone.

If Harry Potter isn't part of your consciousness, you'll see similar parallels in any number of films and television shows where there's a story within the story that adds to the complexity of the characters.

In Star Wars, Luke had to learn to trust the force in order to defeat the Death Star. Luke then had to find Yoda to master the force and fight his own father in the Empire Strikes Back, but he didn't win, so he had to battle Jabba the Hut and round up his friends for the final showdown that happens in Return of The Jedi.

Likewise, your own Raving Fans have these internal stories that are playing out in their lives. What are their sticking points? What are the lessons they need to learn on their own journey before they can progress to the next stage of development? What is their Philosopher's Stone or Chamber of Secrets? And how do you come alongside them and help them reach their

goal? When you can pinpoint these points in their journey and speak to them in your Great Work, you've struck a chord in their hearts and minds.

That's resonance.

Begin With The End In Mind

If you're not in the business of problem-solving, it may seem impossible to you to apply this approach to crafting your own offers. So here's another take. As a creative, your Great Work may be less about solving a problem or pain and simply focused on making someone's life better (or even better in the case of luxury goods).

For example, Lady Gaga's not in the business of solving problems. She's a performing artist and songwriter. Yet her song *Born This Way* is one of the best selling single of all time not because of the catchy beat (which is alarmingly similar to Madonna's hit, *Express Yourself*), but because the lyrics speak to the universal themes of freedom and self acceptance - something that makes your life better. In a 2011 interview for *Billboard* magazine, Lady Gaga explained it thus:

"I want to write my this-is-who-the-fuck-I-am anthem, but I don't want it to be hidden in poetic wizardry and metaphors. I want it to be an attack, an assault on the issue because I think, especially in today's music, everything gets kind of washy sometimes and the message gets hidden in the lyrical play... It's not about the track... It's about the song. Anyone could sing 'Born This Way'. It could've been anyone."

This sense of universal appeal is what gives your Great Work resonance with your Raving Fans. It's also how to give it a life that extends beyond you. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series was so popular that the *New York Times* had to create a category for children's books so that someone else had a chance to make their Best-Seller list. Rowling's universal themes of overcoming obstacles, good versus evil, and doing your best despite your flaws were

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ideas that millions of readers (young and old) could resonate with. Her ability to tell these stories in a complex magical world that felt very real to the reader made it even easier for her Raving Fans to resonate with every chapter, every journey, and every obstacle her characters faced.

As you consider your own Great Work, what are the universal themes that stand out? Are there values and beliefs that your company stands for that are represented in your Great Work? Do you share that information with your audience? If not, you could be missing out on an opportunity to connect more deeply with your Raving Fans and create long-term resonance.



Your Assignment

- ★ Review the questions inside this chapter and look for ways you can experiment with or create more organic resonance with your audience.
- ★ Commit to one resonance activity for the next 30 days and stay consistent, tracking your results so that you can make an informed decision next month about where to put your focus.
- ★ Celebrate. Now, and in 30 days when you've completed your resonance activity. Heck, celebrate each time you do it. Celebrate the journey, not just the destination.



Chapter 13

Building Your Business Model

"If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door."

-- Milton Berle

My youngest son is a LEGO fanatic. Since he was old enough to hold a brick, he's been filling drawers and floors in our home with LEGO bits and pieces. He loves to follow the instructions to build whatever comes in the box, but more than that, he loves taking it all apart again and making something totally original - "from his brain" - as he likes to say.

Business models are a lot like that. Sure, there are books and articles that can complicate the issue or give you an in-depth intellectual analysis of them, but the bottom line is that your business model is made up of just a few interchangeable "bricks" that you can configure in a number of ways.

This is where most of the background and foundational work you've been doing so far starts coming together into tangible business shifts. In fact, you've already got more than half your business model fleshed out! Here's the "brick equation" I developed that simplifies the entire business model concept:

(YOU + WHY + WHO) + WHAT + HOW

Like I said, you've already got more than half of this equation handled, because the entire first section of this book has been focused on getting clear on you, why you do what you do, and who your Raving Fans are. The last part of this equation is about your offer - what it is and how you deliver it. We'll spend the bulk of this chapter going deep on offer creation, but before we do, let's look a little more closely at this equation.

Internals vs. Externals

You'll notice that the first part of the business model equation is inside a set of parentheses. That's intentional. This is all the internal work that every creative entrepreneur needs to do that rarely gets communicated to the rest of the world. Because it often goes unseen by your Raving Fans, it's common for creative entrepreneurs to skip this part and jump straight ahead to the offer (the "what" and the "how"). But until you know what matters to you, why you're investing yourself in doing this Great Work, and who will most resonate with it, every offer you slap together will fall short of your expectations... mostly because your expectations aren't grounded in reality.

I skipped ahead once and it burned! I planned a 3-day event for mom entrepreneurs. It was a chance for them to get away, connect with other mom entrepreneurs and hear from some pretty incredible speakers on how to grow a business from home.

Did I mention I was hosting it in glorious Flint, Michigan?

Yeah.

I'd done part of the work - I knew what I wanted. I knew I wanted to do a live event, be on a stage, and inspire this audience of mom entrepreneurs. I knew I wanted to bring smart, courageous women together in my hometown so that I didn't have to travel. I knew I wanted to be able to go home at the end of the evening and be with my family. But that's where I skipped ahead.

Had I really listened to what my audience or Raving Fans wanted, it would have been clear that taking 3 days away from their families would be a challenge, that Flint, of all places, is not a destination hot spot, and that while moms are more than willing to invest in their families, this particular audience had serious issues about "spending that kind of money" on themselves.

I sold one ticket to the event and ended up cancelling.

On the other hand, I did my homework for Creative Freedom Live. Nashville is a regular tourist location for events and happenings, and still reasonably affordable for a major city. My marketing focus was still on carving out time to get away from the daily grind but instead of coming for inspiration, this event helps you make a plan for the next year of your life and business. I already had clients who were interested in coming together and meeting in person. And I had a book coming out that provided a foundation for the content structure (that would be *this* book, ahem.).

In short, it was a perfect storm. But it wasn't magic. It was homework. I relocated, scouted venues, talked with clients and fans, and put that data to use in a format that people could consume. I created an offer that resonated. The "what" was a live planning workshop. The "how" was an in-person experience in Nashville.

I then made a variation in the offer by taking the planning workshop into an online environment. The "what" was still a live planning retreat, but the "how" became a live-streaming workshop hosted on social media. Why the change? Because I wanted to reach a different segment of my audience - the folks who couldn't or wouldn't be able to travel, but still wanted the

hands-on help to build their growth plan. I was able to reach even more people, grow my audience and increase my revenue at the same time.

Same "what", different "how".

I then sold the recordings of the workshop to yet a different audience - the ones that can't make it to a live event, but want the ability to do the work on their own at a time that works for them.

Same "what", different "how".

Once you've done the internal work, then you can focus on the externals: the offer and the mode of delivery; the "what" and the "how".

"What" Is An Offer(?)

That is both a question and a statement! An offer (the "what") is made up of two components: what you're willing to provide, and what you're accepting in return. It's what you give and what they give (even if they're not giving it directly to you). But the "what" isn't always as you think it is. Take this book. On the surface, it appears that the offer is a book in exchange for the cover price, but really it's not. Let me explain.

This book itself is part of the "how" - it's the delivery vehicle (It's just like the workshop. Same "what", different "how"). But the contents of the book make a promise: that you'll be able to build your growth plan for the next 12 months. It's that promise that you're buying; *the results of that promise*, more specifically. You're not buying a book, you're ultimately buying the *result* that the book claims to provide.

In exchange for that result, I'm asking not only the cover price; I'm asking for your time and attention, your labor, your willingness to do the work. Suddenly, that cover price seems small in comparison, right? If I'm asking that much of you, my book better deliver!

What you give

Your side of the offer is going to address one or more of these elements:

- Results or benefits (not features - they are part of the “how”)
- Transformation away from pain
- Pursuit of pleasure

Essentially, your side of the offer is what makes their life better. If you're a musician, your music may not ease a specific pain point, but you might be offering empathy, empowerment, insight, courage, confidence, or any other number of emotions that leave your Raving Fans feeling even better than they did before they heard your music.

What they give

The other half of the offer is the compensation package. What are you asking from your audience in exchange for what you're providing. Yes, you probably want to get paid, but what else are you asking? If you're a graphic designer, do you need their time and attention to help make decisions about your design work? Do you want them to rave about you to their colleagues?

Another consideration: do you want that compensation to go to you or someone else? Many socially conscious companies donate a portion of their proceeds from a sale to a chosen charity. During the hurricane season of 2017, I knew several entrepreneurs donating products and services to their audiences in exchange for a donation in support of relief efforts. Whether or not the compensation comes directly to you or your company is irrelevant. Ultimately, there are only five things you can ask for as part of your compensation package:

- Time and attention (labor, effort)

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- Permission (like your mailing list)
- Currency (payment or donation)
- Approval/validation (testimonial)
- Trust/Reputation enhancement (referral)

Look at all the possible offer combinations that you can create! Mixing and matching these elements can give you a lot of options, which is why it's so important to remember the internals. If you're driving toward your Enoughness Number, you'll naturally want currency as part of your compensation, for example. But if you're trying to grow your mailing list, you may want to make an offer that's focused solely on permission. On the other hand, if you're floating a new offer into the world, you may want to offer it for a lower price in order to get some testimonials on the board.

When I taught the live workshop on social media, My compensation package looked like this:

- **Time and attention** to watch the sessions & do the work
- **Permission** to get on my mailing list for updates (optional)
- **Currency** (optional - only if they wanted to purchase the recordings)
- **Trust** (asking them to like, share, and tell their friends during the live sessions)

Some people voluntarily provided testimonials during the sessions, while others did not. I didn't ask for them as part of my compensation plan, so that was a bonus for me.

Once you've decided on what you're willing to give, and what you want in exchange, you can then decide how you're going to deliver it.

For example, if you want *permission*, you'll need to deliver your offer through some mechanism that allows you to collect permission - a sign up or permission form, an email list, or simply collecting business cards. I once saw an event presenter ask people to pass their business card to the center

of the aisle if they wanted a copy of the notes from their presentation. The presenter then walked down the aisle collecting stacks of cards, making their way to the back of the room. It was quick and easy for the attendees, and the presenter walked out with permission from everyone who handed in their card. Easy peasy!

Resonant Pricing

When it comes to the *currency* piece of the offer, I get a lot of questions about pricing. In most cases, creative entrepreneurs are grossly underpricing because they're accustomed to people asking them to work for free - or worse, "for exposure". People *die* from overexposure, yo! Don't let that be you!

There is a time and a place for free - typically when you're asking for permission or trust in lieu of payment. That's where the whole "exposure" thing comes into play. When Oprah Winfrey launched her "The Life You Want" tour, her team reached out to artists local to her tour stops and invited them to perform on an outdoor stage - for free. The idea being that these folks would get plenty of exposure, build their resumes, and it might lead to additional paid performance opportunities in the future - just *not* with Oprah.

When Oprah's team reached out to Bay-area hula-hoop artist, Revolva, with this standard "exposure" offer, she negotiated for something more. Oprah's team came back with a willingness to cover travel expenses. When Revolva pushed back for a fair wage, Oprah's team replied that they had filled the stage and that the next time they had a bigger budget, they'd keep her in mind.

Excuse me? Oprah's tour had her speaking in venues that had a capacity in the tens of thousands. The lowest priced ticket was \$99. The highest was a VIP seat in the thousand dollar range! With other big name speakers appearing on the same stage, I get that there may not have been a huge budget for these other performers, but there should have been something!

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Revolva didn't need permission or trust. She already had it, or Oprah's people wouldn't have been reaching out. To her, this was just another example of someone devaluing her work by choosing to not pay for her Great Work. Her open letter to Oprah was a wildfire burning across the internet for weeks afterwards.

On the other hand, electric violinist, Dave Kim, saw things differently. Having previously performed at a local (unpaid) TEDx event in the Bay area, Dave saw value in saying yes to the Oprah tour invitation. His TEDx credentials gave him the justification he thought he needed to raise his corporate rates, and saw how Oprah's tour opportunity might do the same.

Same event, two different perspectives on pricing - and neither is wrong.

Say what?

You heard me. *They are both right.* Revolva's values dictated that if someone who had the means approached her and asked her to work for free, then the proper answer is "hell no!". Dave's values dictated that if there was a strong possibility for reaching a new or larger audience and getting paid more "down the line" then the proper answer is "hell yes!" - regardless of whether the person asking had the means to pay him.

When it comes to determining your resonant pricing - beyond the ethical and moral considerations of your core values - there are 3 components that go into every pricing decision.

Your Lifestyle

As a creative entrepreneur, your Enoughness Number, and the lifestyle you want for yourself makes a difference in your pricing. One of my clients was a therapist living in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is one of the most expensive real estate markets in the United States, and she was charging \$160 per hour to see clients. With two roommates her share of the monthly rent was \$1700. That meant she had to see 10 clients per month *just* to pay her rent.

When we worked on her Enoughness Number, it became clear that sharing her living space wasn't her dream scenario, and charging \$160 per hour would mean working all the time in order to pay her rent. I suggested \$500 per hour, but she wasn't confident that she could keep her practice full at that rate, so we compromised. She raised her rate to \$250.

The irony is that there are therapists in her market who struggle to charge \$160 per hour. Several of her colleagues tried to dissuade her from raising her rates because of their understanding of "what the market will bear".

What the market will bear is often a "lowest common denominator" approach to marketing. Apple, Starbucks, and Tesla all dumped the world in its head when they announced pricing well above what the market was currently bearing for products in their markets. A \$5 cup of coffee was highway robbery before Starbucks made coffee an experience instead of a commodity.

A year later, my client was right - all the clients she had previously worked with at \$160 were no longer in her practice. She had replaced all of them (and added a few more) that were paying her new \$250 rate. Seeing this, she immediately realized that she could raise her rates to \$400/hour with any new clients she enrolled without hurting her existing book of business.

If you can't live on the money you're making from your offers, could it be that your pricing doesn't accurately reflect the lifestyle you're trying to live? Take a moment to do the math. If you need \$5,000 per month to live and you're charging \$100 for an offer, you'll need to sell 100 of them every month - if you use the "Profit First" method to pay yourself. Where will you find 100 people every month to buy your stuff?

Positioning

If you were to compare the buying experience of your offers to other offers in the world, where is your product positioned? Are you more like Wal-Mart or Tiffany? Starbucks or Tom's Shoes? How are you positioning your offers in the marketplace?

Remember John Frieda from Chapter 2? You can't position a cheap product in a luxury salon and have it sell well. Your pricing needs to be positioned to match the expectations of your ideal client. If you're positioning your business in the middle of the market, Your pricing needs to reflect that. If you're creating a unique experience, your pricing needs to reflect that.

How, exactly do you do that? Your pricing mythology.

Pricing mythology and stories

I'll concede that it's a challenge to bring a familiar product to market with prices that are remarkably higher than expected, and yet, it happens all the time. The stories of Kobe beef, where cows are fed beer and massaged daily are used to justify the higher prices. Kobe is a specific, pricier type of Wagyu beef, and as of this writing, Wagyu currently sells for about \$110 per pound, and Kobe is selling for nearly ten times that amount, while "regular" grass-fed beef here in the states runs about \$21 per pound for finer cuts.

To be clear, you're not telling lies about your offers. The word "mythology" should not imply fabrication, but rather, the collection of stories and beliefs about you, your company, or your offerings that have become part of the foundation of who you are. Much like your origin, phoenix, and hero's journey stories, these stories about your offerings are also part of your pricing mythology. They are the "reasons why" you choose to price your offers as you do.

For example, Tiffany makes it clear in their mythology that you can not buy a Tiffany blue box. No sum of money can get them to part with a single box. In fact, when they opened on a special Sunday to film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, they hired extra security to protect not the jewelry, but their boxes instead! While you can't buy an empty box for any amount of money, Tiffany is happy to *give* you a box free - so long as you buy *something* to put in it.

What are the stories you tell about your offers, and how do they paint the picture of your pricing and positioning? One client of mine hand-dipped her

dyed silk scarves not once, but twice, which gave them a richer appearance. She also pressed them by hand. That's not an uncommon practice for garment makers, and because of it, most people don't tell the story. But by telling the stories of her "small batch, hand-dyed, double-dipped, custom silk scarves" and how each one is lovingly pressed by hand, she positions her product to have higher value in the marketplace than other run-of-the-mill scarf makers.

Advertising legend Claude Hopkins crafted one of the best and most famous marketing mythologies for Schlitz beer. Nearly 100 years ago, every brewery in the U.S. was shouting claims about how pure their beer was. They all used the same process, however, so no one was keen to promote it.

Except Hopkins. When he discovered all the steps that went into brewing and purifying beer, he told that story in his advertising copy for Schlitz - the "beer that made Milwaukee famous" according to another ad campaign.

Say what you will about Schlitz today; Back then, it ran neck-and-neck with the "King of Beers" for market dominance. Mythology stories like the one Hopkins wrote were a huge contributing factor.

Even if it seems like no big deal to you, stories about your process can be a big deal to your audience - especially if they've never been told before. What seems commonplace to you might seem amazing to your audience when they get a chance to peek behind the curtain.

Marketing Strategy

Telling those stories takes a bit of practice, but with time, they become a staple in your marketing strategy. The key is to connect stories to an understanding of why it matters to your audience. Massaged cows, hand-dipped scarves, and a 50-year history of making beer mean nothing to your audience by themselves. It's what those stories represent: More flavorful beef, a gorgeous scarf that's as unique as you are, and better drinking beer are what matters. Your stories bring the reasons into resonance.

CREATIVE FREEDOM

Like the other building blocks, your Marketing Strategy also can be distilled into a few simple components:

- The message
- The voice
- The platform

Whatever story you're telling has to be told by someone, somewhere. When you figure out who's saying what, and what platform they're saying it on, you've got the foundation for a marketing strategy.

For example, Wendy's tapped their founder, Dave Thomas, to speak about the wholesome nature and great value of their food, but hired Clara Peller to play the grumpy old lady to go head to head with their competition in the Where's the beef? Commercials. Different message, different voice, same platform (television).

In most cases, you'll be using your own voice to share your message with your audience, but not always. Sometimes, you'll want to feature your clients, fans, or even your colleagues as they share their reviews, raves, and recommendations. Like positioning, however, you'll want to be sure the voice fits the message and the platform. Can you imagine Dave Thomas shouting "where's the beef?" It just doesn't land the same.

We're about to take a closer look at platforms when we dig into "the how" - which is about the delivery mode(s) of your offer. You can market on different platforms than you actually deliver, which is why I mentioned them here. You can't get a burger through your television, but about 385 million dollars were spent on Super Bowl ads in 2017, including a 30-second ad from Wendy's.

The How - Delivering Your Offer

Again, the modular "bricks" of this part of the offer are easy to grasp. You're looking at only two elements:

- The platform
- The delivery system

That's it. Two elements that you can use to create a number of combinations. In the case of Wendy's, for example, their platform for delivery is their network of locations. The delivery system is a personal delivery of the food and drink you order, either at the indoor ordering counter, or outside in the drive through. Other restaurants may bring the food to your table, or maybe there's a buffet where you serve yourself. Those are all delivery systems - a way to get the thing you've paid for.

Platforms & Delivery Systems

In all those cases, however, the platform is the building where the food is located. As I said before, Wendy's can't get their burger through the television, but they can use the television as a platform to market to potential audience members who are likely to visit their building to order their food.

There are also other platform options - like having Uber Eats pick up your food and deliver it directly to your customer. My favorite Ethiopian restaurant doesn't have the ability to provide a delivery service on their own. The overhead and insurance are too cost prohibitive. Instead, they've partnered with Uber Eats to have their drivers provide their food to customers in exchange for a small fee.

This looks like a delivery system, and it is, but it's *Uber's* delivery system and the restaurant's platform. The Ethiopian restaurant uses the Uber Eats app (platform) to get their product sold. The food is delivered by the restaurant while still *inside* their store (to the driver, not the customer). It's the driver that then provides final delivery of the food through Uber's delivery system.

Admittedly, this can look a little complex, but it's no different than wholesaling your offers to a third party who then marks it up for sale in their

establishment. Your platform is their store, while your delivery system is the act of wholesaling it to them in the first place.

For example, every time I sell a copy of my book on Amazon, they handle the printing and shipping for me. They are both my platform and delivery system. On the other hand, if someone buys the book through my website, and I pass that order to Amazon for fulfillment, then my website is the platform, and Amazon is my delivery system. If someone sees the book on Amazon, but buys a signed copy from me in person, then Amazon was the marketing platform, but I am the ordering platform and delivery system.

"Platform" is basically the "place" you go to get (or market) the thing, whilst the "delivery system" is the way in which you get it. It's a slight, but important distinction. In this way, a vending machine is both the platform and the delivery vehicle.

As I've mentioned before, this can be as simple or complex as you make it - with multiple platforms and distribution channels. Or you can keep it simple - digital downloads (delivery system) of your songs that are only available on iTunes (platform), for example.

As you're assessing your offers, consider not only how you are currently delivering them, but other ways that might also work. Before recorded music, the only way to enjoy your favorite tunes was to listen to them live. Before radio, the only way to enjoy the music of your favorite performer was to either watch them live or have a recording. Now, you can hear your favorite artists in a variety of formats (delivery systems) from a variety of places (platforms), including live (assuming they are still living, of course). At one time, copies of art were considered forgeries, and now, limited edition prints of an original artwork are a commonplace, more affordable way to make the artist's work more accessible to a larger audience.

In the internet marketing world where I've spent most of the last 20 years, affiliate relationships and joint venture (JV) partnerships are all the rage. In essence, you team up with others to help promote your offerings in exchange for a commission. It's an exchange of trust, permission, and currency that capitalizes on the partner's existing audience relationship.

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Basically, you don't have to do the work of finding the audience, because you're relying on your partner's platform for that.

If they're only helping to promote, it's an affiliate relationship like Uber Eats. If they're also participating in the offer, it's a JV partnership. Tony Bennett is probably the best-known JV partner in the world. His collection of Duets albums (Duets, Duets II, and Viva Duets) have him partnering with some of the biggest names in music, which not only helps to bolster his career, but also puts him in front of audiences that might not otherwise know his music. The benefit for the partner is not only financial compensation, but the added benefit of working with a legend in the music industry and getting their voice heard by an audience that might not otherwise listen to their music. There's not typically a lot of crossover in the fan bases of artists like Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga - at least, not until they do a duet together!

What different ways can you bring your great work to your people? Remember, it's not your job to tell them how to consume it, it's your job to get them to consume it in a way that works for them.

If your "what" and "how" don't match up with what works for your audience, don't be surprised if nobody shows up. Remember, "I matter, you matter, we matter" - you have to strike the balance between what works for you and what works for your audience.



Your Assignment

- ★ Take one of your products or services and hold it up to your business model. Do the internals and externals match up? If not, what needs to change?
- ★ Review the "what" and "how" of your offers. Do they work well together? If not, what needs to change? Are you asking too much from your Raving Fans, or do you need to ask for more?
- ★ Examine your Lifestyle needs in relation to your pricing. Do you need to make adjustments so that your offers can actually provide for the lifestyle you'd like to live?
- ★ What are the stories and mythologies of you, your company, and your offers that you can start sharing with your audience? Look for stories that help reinforce the positioning you're trying to establish in the marketplace.
- ★ What's your Marketing Strategy for your offers? What platforms will you use to spread your marketing message? Get clear on what's being said about you, your company, and your offers. Then, decide who needs to be saying those things (mythologies, marketing, etc.), and what platforms you'll use to spread those messages.
- ★ Celebrate! You've done quite a bit of work so far, and it's about to start paying off!



Chapter 14

Your 3-Minute Marketing Plan

*"Build a lifestyle around your brand
and the audience will follow."*

-- Eva Chen

When my oldest was living in a wilderness camp, every day they sat down to make a plan. Then, they'd spend the day executing that plan. At the end of the day, they'd gather around the campfire and discuss their day - what went well, what didn't - so they could start to make a plan for the next day.

Plan, do, evaluate. That was their mantra.

It's about to become yours.

You've heard me say this before, but it's important enough to keep repeating: no amount of planning will help you if you don't actually do the work. So, let's pick one of your offers and build your marketing plan!

Yes! Right now! This might be the shortest chapter in the book, but it's certainly one of the most important. If you take the time to actually do this work, you'll be miles ahead of other creatives who are still wondering why they can't sell their stuff.

The 3-Minute Marketing Strategy Plan is a document that I created to give me an at-a-glance look at the effectiveness of my marketing. It's called the 3-minute plan because you can look through the entire document in about 3 minutes and know exactly what's going on. It actually takes a bit longer to create. But once it's done, you've got a tool that anyone in your company can use to measure the effectiveness of your marketing and make improvements as you go.

What's the goal?

Remember the "I Matter" paradigm. You need to be clear on what you want from this offer. What do you want people to give you? What's the end result you're looking for? Is it money? Awareness? Permission? Be clear on what you really want from this offer so that your call to action with your audience is clear. Again, it doesn't have to be complicated. A clear goal is to have 25 people enroll in your program, 100 new people to sign up for your mailing list, or sell 10 copies of your new book.

What's the offer?

What are you giving them? Remember, this is the *What* as well as the *How*, so make sure you understand the resonant pricing, the stories you're telling around that pricing, and how the offer will actually be delivered. Remember, too that people aren't buying your offer, they're buying the *results* of that offer - results that typically make their life better in some fashion.

Who is the Resonant Audience?

If you've never offered this before you might be guessing, but make an educated guess about who you think would get the most benefit from your offer in the way you're delivering it. Remember, if you're targeting mom entrepreneurs, a 3-day "working vacation" in Flint, Michigan is not likely to resonate!

How will this make their life better?

Remember benefits, not features. Results, not delivery models. Spell out as much of the story as possible to create resonance for your audience. Use the words they'd use, whenever possible.

When I started using my tagline "own your dreams without selling your soul™" it received mixed reactions from my existing audience, but the people I was trying to attract understood deeply what it meant to struggle and hustle all the time, feeling like they were selling their soul and getting nowhere fast. In fact, those were the exact words I heard people using, so I just started using them myself. It's an easy and ethical "shortcut" to resonance. By listening to your audience, observing their language (hey! That's a little bit of L.O.V.E. right there!), and reflecting it back to them, my audience knows I hear them, understand them, and know them like other people won't.

How do they get it?

Are they buying it? Downloading it? Are you emailing it? What platforms and delivery systems are you using to get this offer into the hands of your Raving Fans?

My live streaming videos are recorded and then published to my blog and to other social media outlets. My music is available for sale on my own

website, on iTunes, and on a wide variety of websites through a distribution deal with a third-party provider. My books are currently only available in physical form through my website and on Amazon - or through a third party platform that works with Amazon for physical distribution. Someday, they might even be in bookstores!

How do they come to know about it?

Here's where your actual marketing activities come into play. What's your message? Who's voice are you using? What marketing platforms are you using? Are they different than the delivery platforms?

I can't run an ad on iTunes, for example, but I can run an ad on Facebook, or send out a promotional email telling my fans about my new album. I can send preview copies of my book to readers in exchange for their honest review and use those reviews in my marketing to have a different voice talking about my message.

Be as specific as possible here. If you know you're going to run paid advertising for a week, specify the dates, platforms, and any other details you know about before implementing the plan. How many emails are you sending? Are you getting affiliates to help spread the word? The more details you document, the easier it will be to do your post mortem.

Post Mortem

Once you've executed the marketing strategy plan, you need to do a post mortem. This is probably the most crucial step. So many people execute a plan and then don't evaluate what actually happened. In their minds, it either worked or it didn't, nevermind the innumerable details that went into the results. Did you actually stick to the plan or did you need to make changes? What worked? What didn't? What needs to change for next time? What were the lessons learned? Document them so that when you build your

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next strategy, you're armed with useful information that will make your next promotion even more effective.

That's it! Now it's just a matter of executing and doing your post mortem. Don't skip the post mortem. I can't stress that enough. Make a plan, do the work, evaluate the results. It's not hard work, but it's important work that many creatives skip, Don't be that person!



Your Assignment

- ★ Download a copy of the 3-Minute Marketing Strategy Plan and create a Marketing Strategy Plan for one of your offers.
- ★ Execute the strategy
- ★ Complete a post-mortem on your plan
- ★ Celebrate! Regardless of the outcome, you did it! You've got lessons learned, and you can fix the problems for next time! Way to go!

ACT IV

Owning Your Dream





Chapter 15

Don't Wait To Be Picked

*"I am an artist and not a politician...
I want to end my life as an artist."*

--Adolf Hitler

Adolf Hitler was an artist and house painter long before he became a tyrannical hatemonger, he just didn't see it. Something happened on the way to being a creative entrepreneur, and the rest, as they say, is history. Steven Pressfield even criticized Hitler in his perennial best-seller *"The War of Art"*:

You know, Hitler wanted to be an artist. At eighteen he took his inheritance, seven hundred kronen, and moved to Vienna to live and study... Ever see one of his paintings? Neither have I. Resistance beat him. Call it overstatement but I'll say it anyway: it was easier for Hitler to start World War II than it was for him to face a blank square of canvas.

Pressfield gets part of it right. Hitler did dream of becoming an artist, moving to Vienna, and eventually auditioning several times for the Vienna School. But Pressfield not only makes a huge overstatement here, he doesn't give any light to the efforts Hitler put in to become an artist. It wasn't Resistance that kept Hitler from becoming an artist, it was Hitler's reliance on the gatekeepers that kept him from forging his own path.

Throughout his youth, Hitler dreamed of attending the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (the Vienna School). He applied twice and was rejected both times. He passed the timed portion of the application, but his portfolio was found to be lacking in depth, and was told his portfolio was more suitable for architecture students. My guess is that Hitler was a Linear Creative. One look at his paintings and you see the order, structure, and process clearly (it was also evident in his political plans to eliminate anyone and anything that stood in the way of his rise to power, but I digress.).

Hitler didn't have the academic credentials to apply to the school of architecture, and had no interest in (or money for) going back to school to get the prerequisites out of the way. For six years he hustled on the streets of Vienna, selling watercolors, and subsisting on his own, doing what he could to make a living. He painted hundreds, if not thousands of works in his lifetime. He even sold a few pieces over the years, and the few works that still survive are not bad, artistically speaking.

Finally, he called it quits in Vienna and headed to Munich, eventually serving in the Bavarian Army during WWI. He took his art to the front lines as a soldier to fill down time. It wasn't until after the war ended and his return to civilian life that Hitler took to politics. Imprisoned for years after a failed coup attempt, he wrote the book that became his platform for his ultimate rise to power - not as an artist, but as the criminal we now know him to be.

And his art? Much of it has been seized, destroyed, or held under lock and key to never see the light of day. The U.S. government confiscated a cache of Hitler art, refusing to ever show it due to its controversial nature.

Would things have turned out differently for Hitler if he'd been born in 1989 instead of 1889?

Eliminating The Barrier To Entry

In nearly every corner of the creative world, the barriers to entry that once existed (the gatekeepers) have been virtually eliminated. Want to write a book? You can self-publish. Want to record an album? There's an app for that. Want to write, film, or star in a movie? Pull out your phone and start shooting, upload it to the Internet and you've done it! Industries that have been tightly guarded for decades are feeling a seismic shift in the way things are done and in the way people get discovered. YouTube sensations are getting book deals, not because they're great writers, but because they've developed a platform of Raving Fans that publishers know will buy their book. I can't tell you how many bad books make the best-seller lists simply because a legion of Raving Fans bought it.

Ever hear of Michael Lee Austin? No? That's because it's a fictional persona created by Internet marketer Armand Morin to prove a point. In 2006, Morin wanted to prove that, with a big enough platform, anyone could have a hit single, best selling book, or whatever. So he and his team recorded an album, built a website, and sent an email to his list inviting them to join him for an exclusive training event. He also had several of his colleagues send an email to their lists (affiliate marketing at its finest). The cost of admission was buying 2 copies of his album and emailing him a copy of the receipt for proof.

Naturally, his Raving Fans jumped at the chance for an intimate training session and the cost of 2 albums was significantly less than what he ever charged for one of his training seminars in the past. That made it an easy buy for his fans.

Within a few days, Morin's marketing plan worked. His album was the #1 country album, indie album, and overall, beating out big name country acts like Kenny Chesney. Morin's album (as Michael Lee Austin), *Labor Pains*, debuted at No 7 on the Billboard Internet Music chart and No 63 on Billboard's Overall Country Music chart, proving that you don't have to be good, you just have to be a good marketer.

Badges? You dont need a stinking badge!

In 1889, without the implied endorsement of an art school, Hitler wasn't considered a true artist - at least, not by himself. Without the credentials from an institution, all Hitler could do was want to be an artist. But the fact remains that he did paint, he did draw. And that, by definition, means he was an artist. He even got paid for it, which made him a professional artist, but because Hitler didn't have the seal of approval from some gatekeeper, he carried himself like a wannabe.

He, and perhaps the bulk of the Viennese audience for whom he was painting, never saw himself as anything more than a street painter, a wannabe at best. But in today's world, the story could have been much different. Hitler could have international reach, he could build a following, and with his style of charismatic and passionate appeal, probably could have made a killing as an independent artist.

How different would the world be had Hitler realized his artistic dreams? How many lives could have been impacted in a completely different way had he simply chosen to ignore the gatekeepers and find his own path as an artist?

We'll never know how things could have turned out for Hitler, but what about you? What gatekeepers and credentials are you looking for, waiting for, hoping for in order to validate your work as a creative entrepreneur? The very nature of entrepreneurship is that you can't wait for someone else to "discover" you; you've got to pick yourself. Promote yourself, share your work with an audience and keep sharing it consistently until your Raving Fans show up and start sharing it for you. Keep meeting people, keep connecting. Don't let someone else define your worth. Do the work, share the work, get paid, and keep working. That's the best way to be a creative entrepreneur.



Your Assignment

- ★ Pick yourself. Don't wait. You've done a lot of work already.
- ★ Identify your barriers to entry, and start formulating ways around them.
- ★ Celebrate. It's what we do, yo.



Chapter 16

Your Noble Empire

*"Your income flow or lack thereof
doesn't tell me how evolved you are
as an artist and a human."*

-- Kelly Diels

When I first selected this epigraph, I had no idea how ironic it would become. Kelly had so many of the "right" things in place to have success as a creative entrepreneur. Her brand message was tight, focused, and clear. Her content was valuable and delivered consistently. Her audience was growing rapidly, and her followers were truly Raving Fans - rabid even - furiously sharing her work, promoting her in other online communities, and watching her make much needed waves in the world through her offerings and programs like *Feminist Marketing School*.

Kelly's star was on the rise. She was working on a book for a potential publishing deal and all kinds of market influencers were banging down her door.

Until they weren't anymore.

A flurry of emails and blog posts from various sources soon brought to light behavior and actions that led many in her community to not only flee, but publicly condemn her for unsavory business practices. The backlash from reports of alleged intellectual property theft, co-opting the ideas and metaphors of others without citing sources, and the betrayal of some of the most ardent fans of Kelly's work had caused her to close her community and virtually withdraw from the online world.

In a matter of weeks, Kelly's online presence shrank to almost nothing, and her reputation tanked. As I write this, there's still no clear resolution to the problems that have plagued her community, and no clear path to business recovery for Kelly.

In short, Kelly Diels became the poster child of what *not* to do when building your Noble Empire.

Noble vs. Evil

When I first started using the phrase "Noble Empire" I was struck by how many people compared it to the more commonplace "evil empire". That phrase often conjures up images of world-dominating, tyrannical rule, bloodthirsty emperors, and people "going over to the dark side" from Star Wars lore.

A Noble Empire veers wildly from that description and is predicated on the notion of loving service - that is, that you're sharing your Great Work with your Raving Fans as an act of service to them. It's out of love for your craft and your audience that you keep showing up and doing the work. Sure, getting paid is important, too, but *it's not the number one reason* for doing what you do. If it is, you've really been missing the boat with this book!

Being a creative entrepreneur often happens by accident, as a means to an end. You love doing what you do, and if you can make money doing it then so much the better! Many creatives fall into entrepreneurship by accident because of their love for the work they do or the audience they serve. Some don't. Some creatives are very strategic from the jump, and have a clear path to income as they begin. They are often the Linears among us, but I digress.

Regardless of your type, doing the work is rarely about only the money. It's about delivering a message or serving an audience that needs what you have to offer. It makes sense, then, that you'd want to care for that audience, nurture it, and cultivate it so that it can grow.

That's the premise behind a Noble Empire.

A Noble Empire is, at the core, a transformational business or organization that seeks to serve and is highly rewarded (and highly regarded) for that service.

In our world today, empires are scorned, disdained, and generally maligned, because they are seen as greedy, despicable enterprises or political machines plotting to take over the world and leave us "Regular Joes" in utter despair.

In my heart, I believe it's possible to build something grand. Something focused on *serving* the masses, instead of *severing* them. A Noble Empire is an enterprise that benefits not only the founder, but all who connect to it. It's a "symbiotic" existence and yep, it might be a little Pollyanna of me to think it exists, but I believe in it all the same.

Five Tenets of The Noble Empire

The Noble Empire is founded on a higher calling.

I'm not necessarily talking about God here, although that's as good a calling as any. For me, I believe that each and every one of us was put on this

planet with a gift. Our life's work is to share that gift, whatever it is, with the people that most need it. We are not even to let the threat of DEATH stop us from pursuing that calling. I suppose some might call that lunacy. So be it.

There is no one else on the planet more qualified to share your unique gift with the world than YOU. If you don't share it, who the heck will?

The Noble Empire is a holistic one.

There's a balance between work and play – and it doesn't look like the scales of justice. It looks more like spinning plates on a tightrope. I've already talked about the Five Key Areas of Success. You can literally and figuratively die in one or more of these areas if you neglect them for too long.

The holistic approach recognizes that there's got to be a balance between work and play. You can't live on the hamster wheel of hustle. There's a time and place for hustle, and a time and place for rest, relaxation, and enjoyment. Make time for both.

The Noble Empire is built by many, not by one.

Your empire will be built not only by you, but also by your audience. They are the army of un-leaders, trailblazers, and believers who will ignite your message and share your gifts better than you ever could. It takes time, dedication and commitment to build the kind of fierce loyalty that teems inside these folks. And the payoff is incredible. They'll take a bullet for you. . . well, maybe not a bullet, but they'll defend you from trolls, spread the word, and stand in line to buy what you're offering.

It is those people that you nurture, cultivate, and continue to L.O.V.E. on throughout your career. They'll be the ones saying "I remember you when..." and they'll be with you through some of your biggest ups and downs. If you can't throw some light their way, why should they ever show love to you?

The Noble Empire is about service, not servitude.

There's a BIG difference between service and servitude. No one is a slave to The Noble Empire – including we emperors. There's a sense of mutual

reciprocity = a "rising tide lifts all ships" kind of energy that is pervasive throughout the empire. Respect, mutual admiration, and a willingness to collaborate and learn are high on the list of values.

This supports the previous tenet. It takes a village, yo! And that village ain't gonna stick around if you treat 'em like crap. That also means that you have to have healthy boundaries so that you're not a doormat to the whims and fancies of your audience. You are the creator, even a co-creator, but not an order-taker. You're not meant to be a slave to your work or your audience!

The Noble Empire is about connections.

Speaking of villages, let's face it: no one can really get anywhere on their own for long. Even Fusion Creatives, notorious for trying to do everything themselves, will hit a wall and need help!

Someone somewhere has to collaborate, connect, or otherwise contrive to make something happen. Humans are not meant to be independent, nor are we meant to be co-dependent. We are interdependent beings. Sometimes we do stuff by ourselves, but on the whole, we need each other at various points along the journey. That's as it should be, so why try to pretend otherwise?

With so many people building walls and cloistering themselves, my experience has shown that reaching out is really the best way to build strong ties (and thus, a strong empire). Empires need allies, after all.

As you grow your organization - both your audience of Raving Fans and your internal support team, remember that success doesn't happen in a vacuum. There are people at every point in your development. People who need your help and people whom you need to help you. Here's to building your Noble Empire.



Your Assignment

- ★ Look at the 5 Tenets of a Noble Empire. Where are you falling short?
How can you shore up your empire now?
- ★ Celebrate. With friends. It's more fun that way.



Chapter 17

Becoming The CEO

"If you want a CEO role, you have to prepare for it with a vengeance."

-- Denise Morrison

When I first started working with direct sales professionals, I used to encourage them to see their time as worth \$500 per hour. This wasn't because they'd be making \$500 for an hour-long party or sales presentation, but because of the mental shift that needed to happen to see themselves as business owners rather than employees in their business.

Working a standard, 40-hour week at \$500 per hour, would be a \$20,000 work week. Not bad if you can get it. The problem is that you can't. It's almost impossible to work 40 billable hours in a week without working substantially more than 40 hours. Most creatives are lucky if their billable rate is around 20% of their work time. Which means, if you actually put in 40

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hours, your total billable hours would be about 8 - or \$4,000, a comfortable weekly wage at \$500 per billable hour.

As an employee, you'd be paid somewhere above minimum wage for all the hours you put into your business. Basically, punch a clock, rack up the hours, collect your pay at the end of the week. But as an owner, as the CEO of your company, it's different. You've got a vested interest in the success or failure of this company, and you've got to work differently. That also means you have to think differently about how you're compensated.

As a CEO, you're not just being compensated for your work hours. You're being compensated for your presence, your forward thinking nature, and the leadership you provide to the company. You're also being compensated for your persona, and how you show up in the public eye. You're representing your brand, your company, everywhere all the time. An employee gets to punch out and go home every night. You don't. Your business is an extension of who you are. Therefore, you need to price yourself differently than an employee.

Don't get me wrong, there are still times when you'll be doing the minimum-wage work in your business until you can afford to hire the help you need to support you. In those respects, you'll still be charging employee rates. But if you only ever see yourself as worthy of those kinds of rates, you'll have a hard time growing your business to the six figure mark or beyond - where you can begin to afford to hire full-time help in your business.

As an employee, your concern is primarily focused on the short-term, right now, of getting to the next paycheck. As a CEO, you have to look at the bigger picture. While you may only be a company of one right now (or you and a few part time contract helpers), there's still more at stake here than just your weekly take-home pay. A company that's built to last can't just focus on the immediate needs of a single employee, even if the company only has one employee at the moment.

Remember: I Matter

It's true we've worked through this entire book putting yourself and your needs first. The I Matter paradigm begins by taking stock in what's important to you, and what's going to work best for your unique situation. But if you stay there and never look beyond your own needs, you're staying firmly planted in an employee mindset. A CEO has to think bigger, and the risks and rewards are bigger because of it.

When we apply the I Matter paradigm to your company, versus you and your clients, it helps provide structure to the vision of your company:

I Matter

What really matters to your company?

You Matter

What really matters to your company's internal audience (team/staff)?

We Matter

How can you and your team work together to build something that makes an impact on the world?

Some of these answers will transfer over from your personal I Matter work, but some of it will be different. Creating a vision for the company that is separate from you is part of giving the company a life of its own. It's part of making it a living, breathing entity that doesn't need your hands on it 24/7. It's the first step to becoming a CEO.

Your Bigger Vision

What's the big picture for your life and your role in this company? Do you see yourself working all day every day, or slowly pulling away from the day-to-day operations of your business? Do you want someone else to run the

show, or are you content to be at the helm? Are you looking to build something you can sell or retire from, or are you planning to work until the day you die?

Even Billy Joel got bored with being in a songwriting pigeon hole. In a 2013 interview with New York Times Magazine, Joel said:

I wanted something more abstract, I wanted to write something other than the three-minute pop tune even though that's an art form unto itself. Gershwin was incredible, Cole Porter was incredible, Richard Rodgers, great stuff, Hoagy Carmichael and John Lennon, the three-minute symphony. For me, it was a box. I want to get out of the box. I never liked being put in a box... Very nice box to be in for a while, but then it becomes like a coffin.

Joel, who made his mark as a songwriter, hasn't released an album of pop music in over 20 years. Instead, he's leading masterclasses at colleges and universities around the world, hosting a radio show, and performing when he feels like it. He's pivoted his business model to support what works for him in his life right now.

When you look at the bigger picture of your life, where do you want to be? How do you want to live? Not just in terms of your Enoughness Number, but in terms of the rest of your life? How is your business set up to support that?

Your Business Vision

As Stephen Covey famously said to "begin with the end in mind". It's more than likely though, that you've already begun, and the end wasn't anywhere in sight. That's okay. In fact, that's normal for most creative entrepreneurs. Remember, you most likely fell into the entrepreneur side of things by accident (unless you're a linear). The key now is to shape the business and direct it so that you can attain that bigger vision as you go.

As a kid, remember, I wanted to be a rock star. I had mapped out a meticulous plan from high school through college and onto the world stage. None of it materialized, because I was too focused on the how of it all.

Go to school. Check. Get the degree. Check. Book some gigs. Check. Record an album. Check. I did all the things I knew how to do, but I still never became rich or famous. Because I didn't see the bigger vision of how my work as a performing artist fit in the world.

Remember when I said that we spend an inordinate amount of time focused on the how? That's my proof, right there. The same thing happened when I fell into coaching. I didn't know why I was doing any of it, other than I was good at it and it helped pay the bills. So I focused on how to do the work and how to reach more people, and it burned me out.

The *how* will sustain you for a while, but eventually that fuel runs out.

As I worked with more people, however, something shifted. It became clear that clients were coming to me because of the fears, concerns, and struggles they were facing in navigating their own sense of work-life balance. That gave me a bigger picture in which to work. It became a mission of sorts to help people see that they could do the work they loved without having to hustle all the time, without having to sell their soul, without having to give up on having a life in the process.

That mission, that why, led to the bigger vision of my company, Ark Entertainment Media, and the platform I've built for Creative Freedom. Ark is a company focused on helping creative entrepreneurs stop waiting to be picked and start getting their Great Work into the world now. Creative Freedom is one of the vehicles through which we make that happen. With training content (like this book and our annual event), a web series, and regular appearances at conferences, events, and in the media, we're spreading the word that you can own your dreams without selling your soul, and showing people how to do exactly that.

What's the bigger purpose behind your company? Why does it exist, beyond paying your bills? As the CEO, you need to be able to articulate that

message to everyone you meet - including your staff, the media, and your customers. If you can't, then don't expect anyone else to do it for you.

Getting Help

As your company grows, you'll need support. That could be in the form of a part-time babysitter or bookkeeper at first, just so you can stay focused on the work of the business. My first hire was a nanny for my baby. As a mom working from home, I quickly discovered how much of my "work" time was being usurped by baby distractions. By having an extra set of hands in the house, I was able to be present to my work and still be available when there was something only Mom could handle.

Hiring a nanny also forced me to work when I was working, instead of falling into the social media distraction trap. As a creative who does most of her marketing online, it's pretty easy to fall down a rabbit hole for an hour or two, which means I'm not doing income-producing activities (IPA). That would mean my nanny was *costing* me money instead of being an *investment* in my growth. I simply couldn't allow that.

When my youngest started school, I had five dedicated hours of peace and quiet each day he was in school. So I reallocated those funds from a nanny to a virtual assistant (V.A.) who could handle sales reports, scheduling, and other tasks that pulled me from my best work. It was only 10 hours a month to start, but it was something and it made a huge difference in my productivity. I had to be judicious about the tasks I sent her because, using the *Profit First* method meant her pay was coming out of my operating expenses, which only made up 30% of my monthly income. That pushed me to be vigilant about not only what I was delegating, but also how I was making the money to afford her help.

An employee doesn't need to think about these things. They just show up, do the work, collect their check and go home. The CEO needs to see how all these pieces fit together. You need to look at your projected income for the next few months and see what needs to shift to be able to keep the lights on and your team paid.

For all you Chaotics out there starting to freak out, relax. This doesn't have to be rocket science, and you don't want to jump into hiring a bunch of people all at once anyway. The easiest way to begin to get help is to look at what needs to be done that you hate doing. Even if you're good at it, that doesn't mean it's in your zone of genius. If you can start creating a training manual now that includes the process documents for the stuff you'd like to pass off, then you can start small. Hire someone to handle that task just one time and see if the process document works. If it does, then you can hire someone to keep doing that task.

You don't have to hire full-time help, but you should be ready to pay a living wage. If you're building your business on the back of slave-labor wages, it will come back to bite you. There are plenty of gig-economy platforms like Fiverr and Revv that allow you to get a great deal on the help you need, and you're paying next to nothing for the work being done for you. Admittedly, most tiny businesses need that kind of a leg up, but if you *stay* there, you're no different than when Oprah asked artists to work for exposure. Karma is a bitch, yo!

Other kinds of help

There are other kinds of support you can get as well. Coaches, mentors, and trainers are in abundant supply, and one quick online search will yield millions of results. Be prepared to invest to work one-on-one with someone. Like you, they are building a business and their time is valuable. It's another reason why I ask you to consider your time as worth \$500 per hour. That way, when someone else is charging that rate for their services, you begin to understand why.

Not ready for the investment of one-on-one help? Group programs, courses, and even small mastermind groups can be a great boost for you. I say small masterminds, because larger groups aren't really a mastermind at all. If you look at the original idea popularized by Napoleon Hill, he talked about intimate groups of colleagues who were moving forward on a similar trajectory or common goal. The key to a real mastermind is the level of

commitment each member has to the other. In his book *The Law of Success*, Hill describes it thus:

If the entire group has met for the purpose of discussing a given subject, ideas concerning that subject will come pouring into the minds of all present... The minds of those participating in the 'Master Mind' become as magnets, attracting ideas...

Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Harvey Firestone were a cozy group of men who were three of the Four Vagabonds. They went camping, toured the countryside and visited each other at their homes. The Fourth Vagabond was originally John Burroughs, but over the years, the group expanded to as many as 6 or 8, including presidents Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Edison, Ford, and Firestone were tight, the real core of their group, while other members came and went with the seasons.

For this reason, it's almost impossible to scale a true mastermind - because people have to have a vested interest in each other and be moving in a common direction or have a common goal that they are actively working together to achieve. Too many members means too many irons in the fire. It's become common practice in the online world to create a group program or course and call it a mastermind when no such focus actually exists. If member have no solid connection to each other, aren't able to provide meaningful support and help to one another, and don't even know each other, then it's not a real mastermind, it's a group program.

Something else to consider: It's easy to slip into becoming a "course collector", so when you're deciding on investing in an offering, ask yourself, *is something that will be good for the overall health and well-being of my business or is it just something that makes me feel good about my business?* If you can't see a clear path to the betterment of your company, say no. If the opportunity is right for you, it'll come back around another time. If not, you haven't missed anything that would really make a difference in the current state of your business.

Ultimately, it's up to you as the CEO of your company to see the bigger picture needs of the company, not just your immediate personal needs. A

CHAPTER 17

CEO doesn't hamstring the company for the sake of helping out one employee. As you ramp up your business growth, you'll start to see your business with a life of its own.



Your Assignment

- ★ Start clarifying the types of support you need to grow your Noble Empire. Who will be on your support team?
- ★ Begin reaching out, or at least building relationships if you're not ready to make a formal ask for help just yet. But remember that it's better to ask before you need help than to wait until you're up to your eyeballs in alligators!
- ★ Celebrate. Asking for help isn't usually fun for creatives. Do it. Celebrate that you did it – NOT what the results were.



Chapter 18

Strategic Planning

*"Strategy without tactics is the slowest route
to victory, tactics without strategy
is the noise before defeat."*

--Sun Tsu

By now, you should have some semblance of what you're trying to accomplish over the next 12 months. You've taken a look at the big picture, gotten clear on what really matters to you in life and your Great Work, and the past couple of chapters have given you some perspective on what it means to really own what's true for you in the grand scheme of things.

Now, it's time to build your plan. Pull out your calendar, we've got work to do!

Top-Down Annual Planning

When I work with clients, I typically start with the big picture and then get granular - *really granular* - from a year-long view down to the minute-by-minute activities of each day. The reason for this is two-fold.

First, most Chaotics only get granular in the immediate term, meaning what's happening right now. If it's right in front of them, they can become detail obsessed to the point of paralysis. That doesn't provide for any kind of forward momentum, and then their dreams stay stuck in neutral.

Second, most Linears are too granular and forget about the bigger picture for which they're playing. Their overarching goal is "out there" somewhere, instead of being a consistent reminder of why they are doing all this work in the first place. They stay in "planning" or "research" mode, which means decisions aren't getting made.

By taking a top-down approach, Chaotics start in their comfort zone, and Linears open up their field of view. Then, we can get as granular as you need to be in order to build momentum on your projects. I suggest breaking year-long goals into milestones that you can track on a quarterly, monthly, and weekly basis. So it looks something like this:

Year -> Quarter -> Month -> Week -> Day -> Hour

How granular you choose to get is ultimately your choice, but at least have a clear understanding of what's going on each month, so that you can adequately allocate your time to everything you need to accomplish. One of the biggest problems that Fusions and Chaotics face is over-committing or over-scheduling either because they're not clear on how much time they actually have available, or the amount of time it takes to complete their task.

Fusions struggle with this especially hard. They have this mistaken notion that if they've got seventeen seconds of unallocated time, they can use it to save the world! Because they're quick studies, they have a hard time right-sizing their expectations around the amount of time it actually takes to

complete a project. This book, for example, took over two years to come to completion, with the bulk of the work happening in the final months before the due date. A recovering “deadline girl,” I fully believed I could bang out a chapter in an hour, since I knew the content so well. Wrong. Even my shortest chapters took several hours to compose and edit. Luckily, I had already blocked out several hours in my calendar for writing, but instead of hammering out multiple chapters in a day, I was lucky to complete one.

To mitigate the over-scheduling issue, we’re going to right-size your expectations from the beginning. You’ll start creating space in your calendar by planning for your personal needs first and then your business goals. After all, your business is an extension of you, and as your company grows, not everything that needs to happen for your business will need to be on your calendar. Plus, Creative Freedom is about building your business around you, not spackling your life inbetween the cracks of your work.

If it's not scheduled, it's stressful.

In your planning calendar, start plugging in all the planned personal activities and events for the next year. Everything that’s already known needs to be scheduled. Dental appointments, school, practice, and rehearsal schedules. Vacations, staycations, and other time off. In short, everything that affects you personally that you already know about needs to be in your calendar now. If you’ve got some tentative plans, put those down in pencil so you can change them later, but by all means, put them down. If you’re not sure about the dates, plug them into the month you want or think they’ll be happening.

The idea here is to remember that “I Matter” and, by putting your personal plans into your calendar first, you’ll have a much clearer sense of how much time you actually have to focus on your Great Work. If you’ve got a day job, you need to plug it in, too. Those hours simply aren’t available for pursuing your creative dreams, so don’t try to pretend they are. Don’t create extra stress for yourself by trying to cram a bunch of “projects” in on your lunch hour. Eat your dang lunch in peace and enjoy it! Does that mean your

progress might be slower than someone else? Yup. And you won't have the "indigestion" that comes from hustling all the time, either.

Dreamblazing: An Overview

The foundation of all the goal setting I do with my clients is the Dreamblazing process. Using the definitions you created for each of the 5 Key Areas of Success, you'll want to set annual goals for yourself in each of these areas. By setting goals around what really matters to you, you'll have the inspiration you need to make your business work for you, instead of you working for your business.

Defining your goals

Begin with the Key Area of Faith, and ask yourself this question: Based on my current definition of Faith, what one shift could I make in the next year that would give me the most cause for celebration? Write down your answer. Get clear on why that particular shift would be so significant to you. What would you gain by making that shift? What would you miss out on (or lose) if you didn't make that shift in the next year? Take time to feel into the truth of what you want.

Do this for each of the Key Areas. In the Key Area of Fitness, you'll actually create 2 goals. For most of us, it's easy to set a physical Fitness goal, but a mental, emotional, or social fitness goal? We rarely consider it. Fitness, then isn't just about your body, it's about living a life of fitness. That's why we create two goals - one for your physical "container" and one for that which is being contained inside it.

Take your time with this. You may have multiple ideas come up in the process of drafting these goals - and you may also be wondering how any of this relates to your business. That's fine, just do the work and trust the process. If multiple goal ideas come up and you simply can't decide between them, try my "cluttered floor" technique for decision making:

Close your eyes and imagine yourself writing each option on a sheet of paper, wadding it up and throwing it on the floor in front of you. Once all the options have been thrown out onto the floor, it's time to clean up. Which piece of paper do you pick up first? That's the one that holds the most pull for you right now.

Once you've written down your number one goal in each of the Key Areas, let it "marinate". Sleep on it for a day and come back to this list. Seriously. Take the time to let your mind work in the background overnight and give yourself a chance to see these goals with fresh eyes in the morning.

Pre-planning for worst-case scenarios

After you've had a chance to marinate and confirm that these are your top personal priorities for the next year, now you've got to rank them in order from most important to least important. This is not always an easy task. The idea here is to decide in advance (while you've got a clear head) how you're going to handle things when your goals end up competing with one another in the coming months. Deciding now gives you clarity so that you can make intentional choices in the future, instead of kicking yourself for giving in during a moment of temptation.

As an example, one of my perennial goals is related to weight loss. Most years, however, it hasn't been my number one goal. One year, I had to choose between spending quality time with my kid or working with my fitness trainer. Had fitness been a higher priority, I may have chosen to take my kid with me to go work out. Instead, I cancelled my training session and stayed home to play board games with my child.

When we build our plans, we never plan for the tough choices and bad times. We don't pencil in "get diagnosed with cancer at my annual physical". We plan for the best-case scenario and cross our fingers that nothing bad will happen. But life happens! Those kinds of choices will come up at some point in the year, and if you decide now, you'll be better equipped to make those tough choices later.

If all this decision-making is starting to feel a little too rigid or permanent, let me put your mind at ease. While you are defining your goals for the next 12 months, you'll also have opportunities every quarter to come back and review these priorities, to make sure they're still relevant, still important, and still in the same priority order. Why every quarter? In my experience, anything shorter gives you permission to waffle too much and not make solid progress. If you're changing your priorities and goals every month, you do a lot of flailing. But if you wait until the 6-month mark or the end of the year, things may be too far gone to correct.

When I was a financial advisor, I was taught that "life happens every six months" - so if we needed to be connecting with our clients every six months to make sure they were staying on track with their financial plans, it's even more important for you to revisit your goals and objectives every quarter. Three months is plenty of time to make progress on any goal, but not so long that you get bored or forget about it.

Pumpkins, Radishes, and Milestones

If you've never planted a garden, radishes are a great ego booster. You can plant a seed and in as little as a month, you've got a ripe red veggie ready to be pulled from the earth. Pumpkins, on the other hand, take an entire season of nurturing, cultivation and growth before their large, delicate flowers will produce an orange gourd that's pie-worthy.

The same is true with our milestones. Some tasks we can bang out in short order and check them off the list, while others can take months, if not the entire year to complete. That's why I encourage you to create milestones in your goal planning process. How do you know what makes for a good milestone? Here are two different approaches:

Building a Bridge

If you know where you are now and where you want to be at the end of the year, and the path ahead is pretty clear, you can simply build a bridge. Let's

say, for example, that you've got a physical fitness goal to lose 100 pounds. Each quarter of the year, you set a milestone goal of 25 pounds. At the end of the year, if you've stayed on track, you've hit your goal. This is a solid, simple approach when you can see the path ahead clearly, and works well for Linear goal setting.

Building a Mind Map

But what if you can't begin to know the path ahead? Let's say you've got a mental fitness goal to become fluent in Italian by the end of the year. But you don't know anyone who speaks Italian, and you have no idea what it will take to be truly fluent. But you know your goal, and you have an idea of some of the possible steps along the way. You're just not clear in what order they need to go for you to be successful. Building a mind map, where your goal is in the center of the map and each of the key ideas radiates out from the center is a great way to start. You'll quickly see that some of the tasks to reach your goal may go together (researching classes or visiting the library) while others may be farther out on the timeline (visiting Rome). This is a much more Chaotic, stream of consciousness approach to finding the exact steps and milestones on the journey to reaching your goals.

Setting Quarterly Milestones

Once you've identified the steps you need to take to reach your goals, it's important to identify them as either radishes or pumpkins, to help you see clearly how much time it will take to accomplish these steps. Going to the library is a radish, something you can complete in a month or less, but holding your own in regular conversations in Italian will be a pumpkin for sure. This helps you right-size your expectations around what kind of time it will really take for you to reach your goals.

Pumpkin goals make great quarterly milestones, while radishes are great monthly milestones or supporting tasks that help you drive toward your yearly goal. To give you a more visual representation, here's what your annual goal might look like:

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Yearly Goal: Lose 100 pounds

Quarterly Milestone: Drop 25 pounds

Monthly Milestone: Drop 8.3 pounds

Weekly Tasks:

- 15 minutes daily exercise 3-5 days this week
- Drink 100 oz of water 6 or more days this week
- No dairy 3 or more days this week

Each of the weekly tasks, and the monthly milestone are all radish-sized activities. I recommend leaning toward action-oriented tasks and activities, since those are things you have more control over. You can't directly control what the scale will read when you step on it, but you do have more control over the actions you take on a consistent basis that will influence the results on the scale.

Here's another example, for a goal that's a bit less linear:

Yearly Goal: Three REAL vacations this year

Quarterly Milestone: Save \$1000 toward my first trip

Monthly Milestone: Save \$350 toward my first trip

Weekly tasks:

- Select a destination
- Review my budget to find places I could spend less to save more
- Raise rates with clients
- Have 3 sales conversations to find one new client this month

In this example, you're not even sure where you're going yet, but that's not stopping you from getting started. You know you'll need some money set

aside for wherever you're headed, so you're taking action the best way you know how. It's like author Amaka Imani Nkosazana said: *start where you are and use the resources you have to build from there.*

With clarity on the quarterly and monthly milestones, you can now put them in your calendar. I can't stress enough how important it is to actually put these plans in writing. Making your priorities a real priority may be a new concept for you, but once you start, it'll be hard to go back... it's the getting started part that makes all the difference.

The Next 90 Days

Pay special attention to the next 90 days. Get as many details about your weekly tasks and action steps on your calendar so that you'll begin taking action. As the end of the quarter approaches, be sure to schedule time to review your progress. Are you still on track? Did you already complete a goal? YAY! Are the milestones and annual goals you set for yourself still relevant? If not, what needs to shift to get you back on track? Schedule 2-3 hours in your calendar now for your quarterly review. Remember, if it's not scheduled, it's stressful!

Growth Planning

Now that you've got all the important IPA in your calendar, we can talk business. What space do you have left? Remember my client with only five hours each week? Five hours to do client work, marketing, and business management is not much time! We needed to make the most of every second she had available. That meant being ruthlessly honest about what had to be done now and what had to wait.

Many things that a full-time business owner could handle were simply not on her radar. She didn't have time for networking meetings, fancy marketing collateral, or anything that didn't drive to bringing in paying clients. Remember, the sole objective of Early Struggle is to get out of it as fast as

possible! She needed to find the right offers for the right audience with haste. But she was also a team of one, with very limited time. How do you manage to make that work?

She dedicated one hour per week to marketing activities, one hour per week to business support activities, and three hours per week to client work. If she had any extra time, she applied it as needed to those areas of her business. It took almost a year of focused effort (and a bit of mindset coaching along the way), but the work she was doing paid off in the form of clients that adored her work, paid her fees, and helped her start the transition from her day job. She also streamlined her schedule and found more time to do the work in her business as the year progressed.

As you look to your own business objectives: your Enoughness Number, your marketing plans, etc., what space is available in your calendar after all your other obligations and commitments are met? Most likely, there's a lot less time than you imagined. That means, especially if you're still a team of one, that you've got to right-size your expectations about what you will and won't do in the next quarter.

Transition Plan

If you're building out a transition plan, you'll have many more action steps than someone in Momentum. You'll also be looking at more radish-type milestones. That's because you're still experimenting, trying to find what works. It's not uncommon to plan 3-6 launches in a transition year. Not all of them will work, that's part of the experimentation, and you need to be agile enough to move to the next thing as quickly as you can.

Part of the reason I had over 100 different offers available on my website was because of the multiple transitions I've made in my career. Direct Sales trainer, then a coach for mompreneurs, then author, musician, performing artist, and finally a return to coaching, working specifically with creative entrepreneurs. Many of those offers fell flat, but I didn't have the heart (or the time, frankly) to pull them from my website. So there they sat collecting

virtual dust on the offhand chance that someone might stumble upon them and buy.

But the offers that do work are perennials. People still buy my books and music. Direct Sellers still find Direct Sales 101. My Accountability Club has been around for several years now, and my Creative Freedom Incubator continues to grow. You can't know what's going to work for sure until you put them out into the world and see who responds.

Fair warning: sometimes it's not a function of your offer, but the timing or the audience. I've talked about cultivating Raving Fans for years, and while the framework was solid, I didn't have the right audience with which to share it. I had one taker the first time I offered the training. One. It wasn't a viable offering at the time, but now, it's a core component of the work I do with clients. So just because something isn't selling now doesn't mean it isn't valuable for the future. Don't dwell on what's not working, just move on to what is.

Momentum Plan

When you find what's working, it makes sense to maximize your efforts around that offering. Instead of pushing out six offers, focus on marketing and re-marketing the offer that works. If you're a Fusion Creative, you might have 2-3 offers that you rotate through over the course of the year, but the more you can focus on one offering, the easier it is to reach more of your market.

The idea here is that you've found something that works. You've found an audience that's receptive to it, so it makes sense to continue to expand your reach in that audience so that more people become aware of (and ultimately buy) your offer. That could mean turning your attention to media or PR placements or using affiliates or JV partnerships to help increase your reach. The more people who are aware of your offering, the larger the pool of potential buyers.

It's like when I enlisted my sister to turn my single popsicle stand into a mobile delivery service. Once I knew people wanted what I had to offer, my focus shifted to finding ways to get my popsicles into the hands of more buyers. That's how a Momentum Plan works: leveraging one offer to many people, instead of the "many offers to many people" approach of a Transition Plan.

Maintenance Plan

When you've got market stability, and your offers are selling consistently, it's often time to consider Maintenance. Again, this may not look and feel like a growth plan, but it is. In Maintenance, you're still listening to and responding to your market. You may even be making new offers or testing new audiences, but the core mission is to keep things stable and not fall backward. This is where the exponential growth of Momentum curtails to incremental or nominal growth because things are healthy. You've found enoughness with this offering.

It's rare for an author to launch multiple books in a single year. A lot of energy is focused into the marketing campaign for a single book, and it continues for months before, during, and even after the launch. That's a full-blown Momentum Plan. Only when momentum starts to wane, does the offering go into Maintenance.

The Secret Watch had a multi-year marketing plan and when the return on effort started to decline, I placed the book in a "quieter" marketing rotation - mentioning it periodically on social media, in my newsletters, or during specific interviews. This book has had a multi-year ramp-up and platform build before it even hit the market! I spent months crafting marketing content, appearing on podcasts, and writing guest posts to share the foundational concepts of the Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Spectrum before the book was even written. But I knew the book was coming; it was only a matter of time. So every opportunity I had to talk about the book, I did. I launched a free live training to share the concepts outlined in this book - and I pre-sold copies of the book before it was ready to publish.

With the book complete, there's additional work in the Momentum Plan that has to get in my calendar to be executed: more guest posts and interviews, affiliate outreach, requests for promotional support, book reviews, and building a street team to help spread the word organically. There will also be advertising, social media, and other media - all of which needs to be coordinated with my client work and put in my calendar so I don't over-schedule myself.

Admittedly, there are also things I don't know for sure will happen. Things I can't plan for - what I "don't know I don't know". That's why making space in your calendar is so important. Again, no one plans for things to go wrong, but if you're booked to the gills, it makes it hard to deal with even the pleasant surprises that might show up.

Your Daily Priorities

A common problem for solopreneurs is that there are too many things that need to be done and not enough hours in the day to accomplish them. That's why I stress the importance of prioritizing throughout the goal setting process. I developed *The PEACE System* as a means of getting clear on my daily priorities so that when opportunities and challenges begin to compete, just like your key area goals, you have clarity on a daily basis about what will get accomplished.

Each morning, I have some quiet, sacred time. I use it to clear my head, ground and center myself, and connect with my better half, my divine self. Sometimes I pray, sometimes I meditate, but the goal is to start each morning fresh without worry or fear in my best possible mental and emotional state.

Then I look at all the tasks and activities already planned for the day. Sometimes, there's just too much, and there's no human way I can get it all done - even for a Fusion Creative like me! I have to make tough choices about what I'm actually going to accomplish for the day, what will be delegated, and what will be deleted or delayed. I make a plan to ask for help where I need it, and consciously choose what will not get done by me

that day. I look at my calendar with an eye for spaciousness so that I have room for unexpected surprises. Then, I re-schedule the things I simply can't accomplish today.

Rescheduling Vs. Procrastination

Because I am doing this prioritization process on a daily basis, it's easy to find patterns of procrastination. If something gets rescheduled once or twice, that can often be a function of over-scheduling or emergency situations that need to be prioritized first. On the other hand, if I'm constantly rescheduling or putting off a task (or the same types of tasks), then it's a pattern of procrastination.

Identifying the pattern gives you clarity. Granted, you still have to choose the courageous action and do the thing, but once you've seen the pattern, you can't unsee it. For most of my clients, this is enough awareness to help them take the action they've been putting off. With accountability built into your daily planning process, it's a lot easier to actually stay the course on your dreams.

Course Correction & Quarterly Reviews

The Creative Freedom method gives you the ability to build your business around you and what is most important in your life, rather than spackling your life in and around the cracks between your daily business activities. By using this top-down approach for your whole year, you get a much clearer picture of what's possible for you in the next 12 months, instead of hoping and praying that things will improve. But what happens if life throws you a curve ball of massive proportions?

When a client's husband was diagnosed mid-year with an aggressive form of Stage IV lung cancer, her music and performance income became the primary income source in her family. To say her life shifted dramatically is an understatement. And yet, her priority to be fully present to her husband and

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children didn't diminish. If anything, it gave her a renewed sense of determination on her business goals.

Now, more than ever, she needed to capitalize on the performance opportunities coming her way. No longer could she procrastinate for even a second, and more importantly, she could no longer rely on doing everything herself. She called on extended family and friends to help with meal prep and child care so that she could travel hours away for a performance. She leaned on her mother-in-law (a retired nurse) to help care for her husband when she needed to be present for her children at school functions.

She deftly balanced on the razor's edge of life and work for months, all the while getting ruthlessly honest about where to invest her time. Her presence on social media was curtailed; she simply didn't have the time to spend posting inspirational memes every day. But when she did post glimpses into her work and the changes in her life, her audience responded and engagement went through the roof.

Don't wait for tragedy to strike to help you clarify your priorities. Be ruthlessly honest now and be willing to take a hard look at where your time actually goes each day. When you do, you may find that there are better ways to invest your life. Capitalizing on those moments will go a long way toward the success you seek.

That's why we re-evaluate everything at the end of the quarter. Remember: plan, do, evaluate. Take a look back over the last 90 days and make note of what went well, what didn't, and what surprises came along. Correct your course by adjusting your schedule, your plans, or even your goals, if need be. Stay true to the I Matter paradigm, and you'll keep moving in the direction that's most important to you - even if it doesn't look like much to the rest of the world. What matters to you is all that matters.



Your Assignment

- ★ Identify your 6 Key Area Goals
- ★ Break those goals into quarterly milestones
- ★ Put those milestones in your calendar
- ★ Identify the supporting tasks for this quarter's milestones
- ★ Put those tasks in your calendar - *if it's not scheduled, it's stressful*
- ★ Assess the amount of time you have remaining to work on your business
- ★ Schedule your business growth tasks related to your specific Growth Plan for the next 90 days
- ★ Remember to include time in your calendar for a quarterly review
- ★ Leave space for surprises in your daily calendar whenever possible. Practice doing less each day so that there's room for organic growth.
- ★ Right-size your expectations around what you're going to accomplish this year
- ★ Ask for help where needed
- ★ Execute! Start taking action on the things you've planned in your calendar. Stick with it for the next 90 days.

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- ★ Celebrate the heck out of everything you've done!
- ★ Do your quarterly review and course correct as needed
- ★ Rinse and repeat!



Chapter 19

Cadenza

"This is the end, my beautiful friend."

-- Jim Morrison

Okay, creative entrepreneur, let's take a look back at the long road you've travelled in this book. You've defined some pretty personal goals, probably in a way you've never done it before. You've discovered some ninja skills that give you an advantage in the Great Work you do, as well as some blind spots that might be slowing your growth. But most importantly, you've built a growth plan that aligns with your most important priorities. You've got a roadmap for the next 12 months of your life that, if you get to stepping, can move you closer to your dreams faster than you might imagine.

I developed the first bits and pieces of this work almost 10 years ago. I kept working on it, honing it, evolving it, and it's been the constant companion on

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an otherwise rollercoaster life. One of the things people constantly say to me is "I don't know how you manage to get so much done!"

This is how. There's no secret here. But if there was, you've got it now! There's also no promise of magical happiness and unending delight. Owning your dreams takes effort, and life won't stop happening just because you've stepped out to pursue the life you most want for yourself.

Six years ago, I was knee deep in writing *The Secret Watch*, building out the characters, getting their back stories straight so that the whole parable made sense. The year prior, my kid enrolled in a wilderness camp for boys with emotional issues. He was there for 25 months as my whole life started unraveling. Doing the work kept me sane at a time when I could have given up completely.

Five years ago, I was inches away from launching that book into the world. It was a process, but when we launched, it became an Amazon best seller. It was also the year my business started falling apart. I was struggling to keep my business and family together and the bad choices I made with that coach I told you about had started catching up with me.

Four years ago, I got my first (and only, so far) 1-star review and sold over 1000 copies of the book in 2 days. It was also the year I probably should have died in a weird car "incident" that gave me a fresh start on life and led to the 300 Songs project. Doing the work allowed me to spin multiple plates, launch dozens of offers during my transition, and keep myself from going off the deep end of depression.

Three years ago, *The Secret Watch* broke the top 5000 books on all of Amazon and became a bestseller on 3 continents. I recorded my third album, *The Fine Line*, which outsold my previous two albums combined. I started slacking on doing this work, and it showed in my lack of income and the stress in my marriage. It was also the year I got clear that I couldn't be the glue holding everything together anymore in my family - and all the stress of trying to be that person crushed me.

Two years ago, I discovered the Creative Freedom Entrepreneur Spectrum and started sharing my discoveries. I outlined the book - several times - and

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started getting interviewed about this new approach to building a profitable, sustainable business doing what you love. We bought a house. It was also the year I asked for a divorce. Doing the work gave me a focus to dig myself out of that hole and rebuild my life and work.

Last year, I launched the Creative Freedom Incubator. Since then, I've helped some smart, talented creative entrepreneurs make a real difference in their worlds. They've increased their revenue, developed profitable offers, and learned how to be the CEO of their business. They've unpacked fears and grown as human beings in ways I'm not even sure they realized were possible. They've also informed much of what I'm teaching you in this book. It was also the year I left everything behind, packed two suitcases to the gills, hopped a one-way flight to Nashville, and stayed with virtual strangers who held space for me in their hearts and home when I had no place else to go. Doing the work gave me a direction and determination to get out of their home before I wore out my welcome.

In the 12 months that followed, I traded my cardboard box furniture and air mattress for a fully furnished space. I launched this book that I know will continue to impact many creatives and help them make a living wage doing what they love. The Secret Watch even has a real shot at becoming a motion picture! I have GREAT clients, wonderful new friends, colleagues, and connections, and a life I never believed was possible for a poor mixed kid from the ghetto of Flint. All because I did the work of building a growth plan and executing on it day in and day out.

It's been a great year and hard year in a LOT of ways. I cried at some point every day from the time I landed in Nashville for more than four months! The alone-ness isn't easy for me. I miss my kids, my friends, and family. I miss hugs and being close to people. It's challenging for an extrovert to have so much alone time. And yet, I'm clear that this is what I was called to do, so I'm showing up each day and doing it.

No creative entrepreneur is immune to the need to do the work of showing up consistently in their business and bringing their Great Work to the world. And it's not without its sacrifices. There are hard choices to make on the regular. There are people you have to whom you must say no so that you

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can say yes to others. I think it was Marilyn Monroe that said sometimes good things must fall apart so better things can fall together. For creatives, choosing between two equally viable options can be like deciding which limb to cut off - especially if you're a Fusion creative. But decide, you must, because you can't put all your resources into everything. The decisions you make today shape your success tomorrow. Remember: success is a destination and you are already there.

Social media makes it easy to share only the veneer of life - the pretty, polished moments that make our friends envious, jealous, or otherwise disappointed in their own lives. Sure it's great to share the highs of our lives - the fancy dinners and fun nights out - but it's also important to remember that it's only the highlight reel. There's a LOT more that happens when the cameras aren't rolling. My stove explodes. The dishes sit in the sink. My tires need to be replaced. I don't live on the swanky side of town. I let people down. They let me down. We don't always get it right. We're human.

And still, we love, we live, and we strive. That's really all we can do. As creative entrepreneurs, it's what we must do. We can't not do this work for long, or it comes a-knocking. Sharing your Great Work with the world isn't always easy, but it doesn't have to be torture, either. My hope is that *Creative Freedom* gives you the clear path you need to own your dreams without selling your soul.

If you're one of those creatives who can take an idea and run with it, then you've got all the fodder you need to get moving on the next 12 months of your creative endeavors. On the other hand, if you'd like my support and encouragement - or the support and encouragement of a growing community of creatives just like you, I invite you to visit my home base in cyberspace, download the free resources that accompany this book, and learn more about the ways we can work together to bring your dreams to life.

Here's to another trip around the sun for you and me. I look forward to seeing what's in store for both of us!



Your Final Assignment

- ★ Take one last look at how far you've come.
- ★ Book a date 3 months from now in your calendar to revisit your progress (if you didn't in the last chapter).
- ★ Celebrate. You've got a roadmap that will work for you – if you work it consistently. I believe in you.
- ★ Reach out and let me know how it goes for you. I love hearing your feedback and answering questions!

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Before I wrote this book, I had to live it. That, in and of itself was a long slog, tough going, and I wouldn't be here today without the faith and encouragement of an army of people who believed in me through the roller coaster of the last few years. You are too numerous to name and too marvellous for words. Thank you.

To my Incubator clients, who have seen these principles bear out in their own lives and Great Work, thank you for trusting me - and for doing the work! It's an inspiration and an honor to watch you grow your businesses into something that makes a big impact in your world. And to think, I knew you when...

When I needed a spare set of eyes and right hand helper the last few months of this project, Jeanie jumped in with enthusiasm, catching things I couldn't see anymore. She made sure the book was ready and correct.

But a finished book means nothing if it doesn't sell. And it can't sell if people don't read it. Great cover and interior design doesn't grow on trees, but thankfully, it lives in Idaho, where my brand guardian, Tracy, keeps me, my brand, and this book on point at all times. You went above and beyond and saw the potential beauty, magic, and craftsmanship that could go into a how-to book when others were just too Linear for the task.

To all my advance readers: Phoenix, Linda, Jeanie, Tracy, Nicky, Lori, and all the other names I need to put here, thank you thank you THANK you.

I couldn't live sanely as a single woman if my ex-husband hadn't stepped up to be such a loving father to our child. Caring for him is the greatest gift you could ever give me, and I wish you nothing but light, love, and happiness in the future chapters of your life.

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my working career. Forest saved my life at a time when I had no hope for myself, and Liam's infectious enthusiasm bouys me every time I feel like giving up. They are my light, my hope, and I can't imagine my world without them in it.

Lastly, to you. Yes! You! Thank you for investing your time, energy, attention, and money in this book. Thank you for showing up and doing the work in your life. Thank you for letting me hold space for your greatness to evolve. Now, get out there and share your Great Work with the world. We need you. Own your dreams!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lisa Robbin Young is the founder of Ark Entertainment Media, a production company and business incubator for creative entrepreneurs. She's helped sales professionals, best-selling authors, actors, musicians, and other creatives make good money doing what they love, and have the time to enjoy their life in the process.

An award-winning speaker, writer, and musician, Lisa penned the international business best-seller "The Secret Watch" and her latest music album, "The Fine Line" is a collection of pop-infused jazz and blues tunes recorded as part of her "300 Songs" project.

Lisa believes that the best way to be truly successful in life and business is to be yourself – warts, sparkles, and all – so you can own your dreams without selling your soul.

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