

The
SUPPRESSED
ENTREPRENEUR
TO
THRIVING
ENTREPRENEUR

UNLEASH YOUR INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL



Start here. Rise Anywhere.

Danielle Michel

**SUPPRESSED
ENTREPRENEUR
TO
THRIVING
ENTREPRENEUR**

DANIELLE MICHEL VENTURES

SUPPRESSED ENTREPRENEUR TO THRIVING ENTREPRENEUR

UNLEASH YOUR INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL



Start here. Rise Anywhere.

Danielle Michel

For my three sons and every current,
recovering, or undiscovered
suppressed entrepreneur out there.



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Edited by Elizabeth Gaer-Leví.

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This book is a work of non-fiction based on the life, experiences, and entrepreneurial journey of Danielle Michel. Some names and details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

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FOREWORD

If you've got this book in your hands, you're in for a real-life story about my daughter, Danielle Michel. I'm John Imbriano and I've had the privilege of watching Danielle evolve from a curious kid into a top-notch entrepreneur.

Danielle always stood out. When she was little, she'd bombard me with questions about everything under the sun. We're talking relentless curiosity here, and it was clear she wasn't gonna settle for just any old path in life. I'd take her to my workplace, and she'd be there, taking in how I ran my business. It wasn't just a kid being nosy; it was a future leader sizing up the world.

Let me tell you, when Danielle said she wanted to run her own business a few months into her first career after a six figure college education, it was both exciting and nerve wracking. But looking into her eyes, I saw a fire that reminded me of myself back in the day – fearless, ready to take on anything.

Growing up here in Brooklyn and Long Island, NY, things were pretty straightforward. We're Imbrianos, we've always been about hard work and the self-made hustle. That's the way Danielle was raised. I've seen her handle the business world with immense determination and grit. She's made her mark alright, and in her own unique way. Watching Danielle grow into the entrepreneur she is today, is one of my proudest stories. It's one thing to watch your kid do well; it's another to see them shoot for the stars and actually hit 'em.

For those of you starting out like Danielle once did, know this: her story isn't some fairy tale. It's tough, it's real, and boy, is it inspiring! This book isn't just about making a buck; it's about life's lessons, the hard-earned kind.

You know, Danielle, even though you'll always be my little girl, you've amazed me with your spirit and drive. I call you 'superwoman', because not only have you been self-motivated, but you are also an amazing daughter, sister, wife, and mom. You've become one hell of an entrepreneur, and that's saying something.

To the readers out there, I hope Danielle's story and guidance gives you the blueprint you need to embark on your own journey. I hope it sparks something in you, lights a fire that makes you chase after your own dreams, no matter how distant they may seem. Because if there's one thing I've learned from watching my daughter, it's that no dream is too big, no challenge too great, if you've got the heart and hustle to go after it.

--John

A BIT ABOUT ME

If you're reading this, you might be standing at a crossroads; considering starting your own business, shifting your career, or chasing a dream that's been nudging you for a while. Maybe you're wrestling with 'what ifs' and paths not taken, longing for work that's more than just a job. Perhaps you have a passion you want to turn into your career, or you're stuck in a dull 9-to-5, wondering if there's more to life. Or you have gotten your feet wet with owning your own business, but have not yet gone all in and broken ground. Or you could be between jobs, thinking of breaking into a new field, or putting together various gigs while looking for something more stable and fulfilling.

I'm Danielle Michel, and while I'm not a big-name entrepreneur (yet!), I am a serial one on the rise. My story is like many others who dared to dream but felt held back by their circumstances. It's a story about someone who felt trapped in an ordinary job and dreamed of doing something more meaningful.

My journey has been about overcoming self-doubt, facing failures, and understanding that hard work and determination don't always guarantee success. I've learned that running your own business doesn't always lead to complete happiness, defying the glamorous image often portrayed.

I'm not here to sell you unrealistic dreams, or say that positive thinking solves everything. My journey has been about overcoming doubts and facing failures. I've experienced the tough reality behind entrepreneurship. I've also hit some major

milestones and achieved real, tangible success. It's not all been smooth sailing, but the results are undeniably rewarding. I'm looking forward to spilling the entire pot of tea, sharing the nitty-gritty of these triumphs, and maybe even a few trade secrets. After all, what's a little success if you can't share the wealth of knowledge that comes with it?

Running your own business is tough; emotionally, physically, and financially taxing, but also incredibly empowering. Starting something new is challenging. Building your life around an entrepreneurial dream often feels like there are no signs of success on the way. It's true, success doesn't come overnight, and often there are no signs that you're anywhere close to it. Sometimes being your own boss feels really hard, and no motivational quote can change that. However, imagine transforming your vision into reality, leading with passion, and creating your own path. Yes, there are obstacles, but the potential for achievement and personal fulfillment makes the climb worth it. Let's dive into this adventure together, equipped with resilience, and driven by excitement for what lies ahead!

I can't give you a step-by-step guide for dealing with tough times because there isn't one. But I can share my experiences – the difficulties, the fears, and the moments when I wasn't sure I could keep going. I'll tell you what worked for me and what didn't. I will provide you with the blueprint on how to get started and keep going successfully. You'll hear from other entrepreneurs who've faced similar challenges and turned them into learning experiences. There are no regrets, just lessons. Every entrepreneur, no matter how successful, goes through ups and downs, doubts, and victories.

Entrepreneurship can be lonely and challenging at times. It's

easy to feel down when you're comparing yourself to what appears to be glamorous and successful business ventures with perfect images displayed in the media. Entrepreneurs often feel pressure to manage their business and maintain an inspiring personal brand. But the reality is not as perfect as it seems.

Here's the truth: Building your own business or following your entrepreneurial dream will have its tough moments.

But above all, the feeling of tapping into unexplored potential and steering towards success is unmatched. It's a feeling that ignites a deep, fulfilling sense of accomplishment, opening doors to endless possibilities. This isn't just about reaching goals; it's about discovering the vast expanse of opportunity and the incredible heights to which your entrepreneurial spirit can soar.

So, if you're thinking about starting a new venture, a side hustle, a brand change, or any big change, remember that you're embarking on a journey filled with challenges and growth.

Getting to the point of success and freedom is the most freeing and rewarding feeling of them all, and I want you all to experience this.

Now if you're wondering, 'Who the heck is Danielle Michel, and what in the world is a 'suppressed entrepreneur'?' – you're not alone. And oh, it's 'Michelle' (pronounced like the common female name) without the extra L or E– Michel, that's me!

Let me guide you into (and hopefully also out of!) the world of suppressed entrepreneurship, a world I once called homebase but have since soared out of, wings mended, full throttle into the great beyond. It's been one hell of a journey so far, and I can't wait to share it with you.

IT'S EASY TO FEEL DOWN WHEN YOU'RE COMPARING YOURSELF TO WHAT APPEARS TO BE GLAMOROUS AND SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS VENTURES WITH PERFECT IMAGES DISPLAYED IN THE MEDIA.

ENTREPRENEURS OFTEN FEEL PRESSURE TO MANAGE THEIR BUSINESS AND MAINTAIN AN INSPIRING PERSONAL BRAND. BUT THE REALITY IS NOT AS PERFECT AS IT SEEMS.

CHAPTER 1

UMMMM...

**SO, WHAT IS A
SUPPRESSED
ENTREPRENEUR?**

So what is a

SUPPRESSED ENTREPRENEUR ?

Sə-ˈprestän-trə-prə-ˈnər,-ˈnör

Noun

Definition:

A suppressed entrepreneur refers to an individual who is brimming with ideas, vision, and ambition; yearning to launch and steer their own business venture(s). Yet, they find themselves hemmed in, not by a lack of will, but by external factors. These factors may include economic conditions, regulatory barriers, lack of access to capital or resources, sociocultural constraints, or any other impediments that limit or prevent the realization of their entrepreneurial aspirations. It's the story of a dreamer whose wings are clipped by forces beyond their control.

'Despite their innovative ideas and business acumen, [insert your name] was a suppressed entrepreneur, as [insert what's holding you back from going for it] stifled their ability to launch their new venture.'

In other words, imagine having a fire inside you, a burning desire to create, innovate, and lead; but feeling like you're stuck behind an invisible barrier. It's about having dreams bigger than your current reality and feeling like something, maybe even yourself, is holding you back. That was me, once upon a time. I broke free from that mold, and I'm here to share how I did it, wings and all.

Now, you might be curious about who I am. After all, I'm not a household name (yet!). Well, I'm just your everyday entrepreneur with a story to tell. A story that could resonate with you.

The Long Island Mold

Coming from the suburbs of Long Island, New York, possibilities were at fingertips length, or at least just a train ride away to the city and life might've seemed predictable, each day blending into the next. But beneath that surface, I felt a constant tug – a desire to break free. It wasn't the town; it was the routine, the mundane 9 to 5 that promised stability, but felt like a cage, and was at the cost of my dreams. It was something else. I knew I had more in me. I didn't quite know what it was just yet, but I knew I had to mend my wings and find out.

The Spark

Now, think back. What's the first business idea that ever crossed your mind? How old were you when this spark of ambition first took light? For me, it began with the classic, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' My answer was clear – I wanted to own businesses. Multiple businesses.

Roots of the Dream: A Family Legacy

My family is a true quilt of the American Dream, the Italian American dream with vibrant roots, a blend of old-country work ethic and American ambition that were instrumental in shaping my aspirations. My 'Papa', a man of many talents who journeyed from Italy and made Brooklyn his home, set the stage for my father, his son, the eldest of five, to inherit this unyielding spirit.

Now, my dad, he's the real deal in serial entrepreneurship. He had a rare coin business, leading a team of thirty. I remember hanging out in his office, completely awestruck, thinking, 'I want to be just like him.' But wait, there's more. Dad didn't just stick to coins. He was doing it all and then some – a manufacturing and installing Formica countertop business, restaurants, art galleries, and even real estate. Watching him juggle all these ventures wasn't just inspiring; it was like a roadmap for my own dreams.

Every day I'd dream about the businesses I'd own, the ventures I would dive into. What would they be? I had no idea, but I was ready to find out. That's the kind of spark I grew up with – dreaming big, inspired by the best. And let me tell you, those dreams? They're the fuel that's gotten me where I am today.

Early Ventures: The Foundation of Entrepreneurship

My childhood was like a mini-business boot camp created by me. My basement was transformed into a playground infomercial studio- think infomercial meets home shopping channel network! My friends and I would get super creative, selling these made-up products on our very own home shopping channel or infomercial commercial. I was all about arts and crafts, constantly sketching out my latest inventions in this giant sketchbook.

Remember lanyards? They were the rage in the 90s. I was THE lanyard queen in my neighborhood and at my local summer camps, holed up in my room, mastering the most intricate designs through sheer trial and error. Then I'd sneak these lanyard masterpieces into school and camp, trading them for lunch money or secret stashes of cash from my classmates.

And then there was Space Jam – huge, right? I was full in on it, in elementary school at the time (third grade), making all sorts of Space Jam-themed gear: pencils, bags, you name it, and sold them like hotcakes at school. Sure, I did the lemonade stand gig, but that was just child's play compared to creating my own stuff. I even had this little outdoor nail salon in front of my house, where I'd jazz up nails with cool designs. It wasn't just about the polish; it was about the art.

By 12, I was the neighborhood's go-to babysitter. No clue what I was doing at first, but I loved it. Then at 14, I took a dive into the working world – bagel shops, bakeries, restaurants, and even —

hair salons. I was all over the place, soaking in the joy of earning my own cash. Even as a teenager working in local businesses, that sense of independence, of earning my own money, was intoxicating. It was an early taste of entrepreneurship I couldn't shake off.

The Path to Professionalism: College and Beyond

When it came time to choose a college, majoring in business was a no-brainer for me. I dove into the required courses, but it was my first accounting class that truly clicked. The world of debits and credits just made sense. As the semester rolled on, I found myself eagerly anticipating each accounting lesson. This led me to shift my focus, pairing my business administration degree with a major in accounting. The field was in a frenzy at the time – great salaries, bonuses, the works. I saw it as my gateway: start here, learn the business ropes, then launch into and rise with my own venture when I was ready.

Post-graduation, job offers came in, and I chose one with offices in NYC and Long Island. Working in the city was an adventure, a slice of life I thoroughly enjoyed.

The Fitness Dream to the Third Degree

But here's the thing: fitness and health have always been my passion. Since my soccer days, transitioning to gym workouts at 13, fitness was my world. My mom set the example, and I vividly remember watching her workout from the gym daycare regularly, itching to join in. Group exercise classes became my happy place – social, fun, and before you knew it, an hour of working out just flew by. I dreamt of not just participating but leading these classes, maybe even owning my own gym someday. And not just any gym – I wanted to create and franchise my very own brand!

After college, around age 21, juggling working as an accountant –

as my first post-school gig, a daily grind to the city and back, I made a move. I walked into a local Jiu Jitsu center, met with the owner Jerry, and pitched my idea: train me in boxing and kickboxing so I could teach my own class. We struck a deal, and I started training, paying him weekly for his time and expertise. But I decided not to teach boxing, and instead created my own class. My concept was 'Hot Core' – a heated, core-focused fitness class with cardio and weights. It was intense, nothing like your average Pilates session. Creating a brand new class was a lot more exciting to me than training in an existing class, getting certified, and sharing someone else's routines.

The first test class was a hit, packed with friends and family. Jerry gave me a regular weekly slot, and I poured everything into it. Perfecting routines, creating playlists – I even learned to DJ, blending songs for each session. The class grew, and my passion for it deepened with every session.

Then, my college bestie – also a fitness enthusiast – entered the picture. We shared this love of workouts and dreamed of owning a business together. When I continuously pitched the idea of our fitness studio, potentially franchising it, she was interested. Our shared passion and vision made the prospect of embarking on this entrepreneurial journey together even more exciting.

The Leap on the Ground

Setting up our first official business was like stepping into a whole new world. Brittany (college bestie/business partner), and I met up weekly, sometimes over dinner, sometimes at Panera or the local library, armed with laptops and notebooks. We brainstormed, shaped our ideas, and came up with this solid business plan. It wasn't just a dream anymore; it was becoming a reality! That plan eventually got the bank to extend us a \$25k line of credit on top of the modest savings we had.

The next step was finding the perfect location. Our target areas were bustling with both corporate and residential activity. I had my heart set on a central location; Melville, NY - right off major highways, a commuter hub, and a huge corporate district. A place where busy professionals could squeeze in workouts before, after, or even during work hours. After all, the gym business is all about location and convenience!

Our vision was to bring something fresh and exciting to our community. We even flew out to LA to get certified in 'Piloxing', this new cool fusion of Pilates and boxing that was all the rage on the West Coast. We were the first to be certified in NY, eager to introduce this trend to the East Coast. Along with that, we saw a massive opportunity with Hot Yoga and Pilates, which were just starting to gain momentum. I got certified in Pilates in NYC, and Brittany got certified in yoga. Our fitness revolution was just getting started.

Originally, we wanted a space with two rooms - one heated for hot classes, one not. Thanks to Brittany's mom, a real estate agent, we started our search with high hopes. But reality hit hard – the rents were sky-high, and the spaces were either too big or too small. We eventually found a spot in Port Washington, NY, a suburban, higher end town on the Northshore of Long Island that was at least a 15-20 minute ride off the main highway. Not exactly in line with my initial vision for location, but it was affordable and beautiful. My intuition was telling me “location, location, location”, but I overruled and suppressed it with the desire, impatience, and excitement to get started.

Breaking the news to my dad, telling him I was leaving accounting after just a year, was tough. His expression said it all. He was an entrepreneur himself, so he got it, but he never pushed me to follow in his footsteps. I was only out of college for-

under two years and we had hefty bills we were paying from my private college bills, and a degree I was already boycotting. Then, quitting my job – that was another emotional rollercoaster.

The studio needed a lot of work to customize it the way we envisioned before we could open. My boyfriend, now husband who was in construction, took on the task. This involved a rigorous waiting period for town approvals and code, which was frustrating and felt like it was slowing us down. We invested heavily in the fit-out, and finally, after months, we were ready. Our grand opening was a dream come true. I was finally doing what I always wanted – running my own business, and with my best friend no less!

We did everything by the book – set up an LLC, and hired a lawyer for the legal stuff.

The studio opened, and the initial response was good, but it wasn't what I envisioned since we were in a more secluded town. We became a local town studio when I was envisioning being this huge well-known chain. I was teaching 28 classes a week, working from 6am to 8pm, started feeling burnt out quickly, and my mental health was spiraling. We were not paying ourselves anything since we had construction bills to pay and my personal bills were piling up. The moment I had to borrow money from my parents was one of the lowest points for me.

From a steady job with a good income to no guaranteed paycheck, the stress was overwhelming. I was independent, never having to ask for financial help, and the thought of it was crushing. That is when the anxiety kicked in. What was I doing? Did I make the right choice? This was what I always wanted, but boy, did I set it up all wrong for the big time results I was aiming for. If I were content with running a small, local studio, I'd have --

been satisfied. But I wanted more, a lot more. Settling was not an option for me. I was determined to grow, expand, and not just make do with what was comfortable or easy.

Seven months in, Brittany saw through my façade. She offered me an out, willing to take over the remaining time left on the 2-year lease herself. That conversation, that moment of understanding and acceptance from her, was a mix of relief and disappointment in myself. I am personally as loyal as they make them, I would have stayed there to carry out and complete our 2-year lease no matter how unhappy I was deep down inside.

I parted ways with the business, repaid my loans, and returned to accounting feeling embarrassed with my head down. It was a journey filled with highs and lows, but in the end, I learned more about myself and the journey than I ever thought possible.

Looking back, I know the gym did not 'fail' it just did not serve me for the purpose I was looking for.

FROM A STEADY JOB WITH A GOOD INCOME TO NO GUARANTEED PAYCHECK, THE STRESS WAS OVERWHELMING.

I WAS INDEPENDENT, NEVER HAVING TO ASK FOR FINANCIAL HELP, AND THE THOUGHT OF ASKING WAS CRUSHING.

THAT IS WHEN THE ANXIETY KICKED IN. WHAT WAS I DOING? DID I MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE?

CHAPTER 2

BOON ***AND*** **BANE**

THE WAY BACK

There are no regrets in life, just lessons learned.

There are no regrets in life, just lessons learned. Reflecting on the upside and downside of that first business venture, I've come to realize it was a monumental learning curve for me. The biggest takeaway? Intuition is powerful. Every time I speak, I stress this - intuition is real. You have to slow down, be attentive, and listen to your inner voice. In this case, my intuition was sending me signals, but I was too caught up in the rush and excitement to heed its advice.

Boon and Bane

Navigating a partnership with friends or family can swing either way – it's either a boon or a bane. In our case, thankfully, not only did our friendship survive our business venture, but it grew even stronger. She remains one of my close friends to this day. I still engage in business with family, but now, I lean towards more passive roles. Active investments, where your finances, heart, and emotions are deeply entwined, carry a different weight, a heavier risk compared to being a silent partner or engaging in sideline investments.

Another vital lesson for me was partnership dynamics. The whole 50/50 partnership concept seemed ideal back in my early 20s, especially with a friend. Fair and balanced, right? But life taught me that this model just isn't my cup of tea. I've realized I either need to be at the helm, making decisions as a majority owner without needing to run every detail by someone else, or I need to step back completely and let someone else lead.

This clarity about my role in a business – whether leading or following – has been a critical learning lesson from my early entrepreneurial journey.

That moment of realization, when I realized my first business venture was not going to live up to my plan, has stayed with me. I felt disbelief, disappointment, and a deep sense of failure. The business I'd poured my heart into, the dream I'd nurtured, was not capable of bringing in the success I imagined.

Returning to the accounting world felt like the worst kind of walk of shame. There was an opportunity to reclaim my old job, but my pride wouldn't let me. The thought of facing those colleagues, admitting my idea “failed”, was too much. I chose a new firm instead, starting afresh but internally battling a bruised ego and a cloud of depression.

The Aftermath

During this period, my mental health took a nosedive. I began therapy, and my therapist prescribed antidepressants and anxiety medication. I can without a doubt say that this period of my life was one of the darkest. For the first time, I was thrown off by the side effects of these new medications, and the whole experience was disorienting.

It was during this chaos that a ray of hope appeared. Jim, my boyfriend, proposed, and things started to look a little brighter. Around four months into my medication, I started weaning myself off. Slowly, I got back on track. Thankfully, I've been in a healthy place since.

There were so many lessons I learned on this journey, especially about mental health. I learned coping mechanisms that have become my safeguard, ensuring I never spiral down that path again. It was a tough phase, but it shaped me in ways I hadn't —

anticipated, making me stronger and more resilient.

The Click

The concept of a ‘suppressed entrepreneur’ clicked for me during a period of profound introspection and external challenges. It's a term that transcends sex, age, race, religion, or economic class. It embodies that feeling of knowing, deep down, that you're meant to be a thriving entrepreneur, yet feeling shackled by constraints, obstacles, or limitations that prevent you from fully realizing that potential.

After my first venture and my return to the accounting field, I was initially absorbed in proving my worth in this new role and to my colleagues. The pursuit of my CPA certification, an intense eight-month journey, served as a distraction from my entrepreneurial aspirations. Doubts naturally crept in. Could I really build a business from scratch? Was I just fooling myself thinking I could be more than a well-paid corporate professional? These thoughts would visit, but they never settled.

CHAPTER 3

THE
WORLD
KEPT
SPINNING

LIFE CONTINUED.

Engagement. Marriage. A new home.

Life continued – engagement, marriage, a new home – these personal milestones were fulfilling, yet a part of me felt like I was settling in my career. Business ideas and inventions continued to brew in my mind, noted down but not pursued, as I climbed the corporate ladder.

When I first began to dip my toes into running my own specialized tax firm, I began exploring these ideas more seriously and created an LLC where I started taking on clients on the side and would work on them during evenings and weekends. I now had a family, a home, and I was ready for more. I noticed a gap in the accounting industry – a lack of guidance on tax credits and refund programs for businesses. Meanwhile, at my day job, I was being groomed for a CFO role, which added another layer of complexity and focus to my aspirations.

The Spark

The real turning point was around the same time when I was starting my new venture and still deep into my 9-5, I had a close call with a candle left burning at home. It was in a bathroom next to my not even one year old son's room. When I found it cracked and fully engulfed in flames, it was one of the scariest moments of my life. This near disaster did more than just scare me; it sparked a profound realization about life's fragility and the need to act decisively. Coincidentally, the next day, two separate incidents at work involving forgotten appliances underscored this urgent need for a solution. It hit me: I wasn't alone in this. There-

was a widespread need for a solution to this common problem.

This understanding transformed my sense of urgency into action. I began to channel my energy, balancing the demands of my full-time job, my accounting business, and my unwavering commitment as a wife and mother, into developing this invention. It became clear that addressing this issue could not only save lives, but also resonate with countless others who've faced similar fears. This wasn't just about creating a business; it was about responding to a mother's instinct to protect, and a professional's drive to innovate. From this blend of maternal instinct and entrepreneurial spirit, my best business idea up until that point was born.

I was the true embodiment of a suppressed entrepreneur during this time. I was juggling a full-time job that provided security and a comfortable salary, yet I was passionately working on my startup and tax credit business in the shadows. Just when I thought I was almost ready to venture on my own journey, my husband experienced a job loss. This added financial pressure, making the idea of leaving my stable job for full-time entrepreneurship seem even more intimidating. Looking back, I've come to realize that waiting for the 'right time' is futile. Life is full of unexpected twists and turns, and there will always be external factors and challenges that complicate our plans and decisions.

I felt trapped, torn between the security of my 9-5 job and the burning desire to pursue my entrepreneurial dreams. This dichotomy was the essence of being a suppressed entrepreneur – thriving in spirit but constrained by circumstances. It was a challenging period, but it also taught me the value of resilience, patience, and the importance of timing in the entrepreneurial journey.

Reflecting on my entrepreneurial journey, a few special moments really stand out – the good, the bad, and everything in between. There were those moments of self-doubt where I questioned if I had what it takes, and those exhilarating peaks of triumph, feeling like I had conquered the world. Then there were times of loss, where it felt like my dreams were slipping through my fingers. Each of these moments brought realizations, shaping me into the entrepreneur I am today.

The Start, the Run, the Closing Call

What's it like to start, run, and sometimes close a business? It's like riding the most unpredictable ride at the amusement park. You're cruising one minute, then you're plummeting the next. When you think you've got the path all figured out, a sudden turn throws you off. It's not just about smooth sailing; it's about being ready to face rough waters, to roll up your sleeves and dive in headfirst. You're going through uncharted territory, sometimes navigating twisty turns - off-roading. It's not for everyone. It's for those with an innate drive, a spark of curiosity, and the tenacity to keep pushing forward, even when the road gets tough.

This is for Me *and* You

Reflecting on my journey, I've come to realize the power of intuition and the importance of resilience, patience, and timing in the entrepreneurial journey. Now, I stand ready to guide you through the ups and downs, the successes and failures, and help you embrace your path, whether it leads to entrepreneurship or another fulfilling direction.

Why should you read this book? Because it's a roadmap for those feeling stuck, ready to break free and soar. My aim is to help you transition from being a suppressed entrepreneur, full of potential, to becoming an 'Ex-suppressed Entrepreneur.' By the end, I want you to feel equipped and empowered to embrace —

your entrepreneurial journey, free from the constraints that once held you back, clipping your wings.

This isn't just another entrepreneurial success story; it's a roadmap for those who feel stuck, ready to break free and soar. Ready, set... Let's get into it!

**I FELT TRAPPED, TORN
BETWEEN THE SECURITY
OF MY 9-5 JOB AND
THE BURNING DESIRE
TO PURSUE MY
ENTREPRENEURIAL
DREAMS.**

**THIS DICHOTOMY WAS
THE ESSENCE OF BEING
A SUPPRESSED
ENTREPRENEUR –
THRIVING IN SPIRIT
BUT CONSTRAINED
BY CIRCUMSTANCES.**

CHAPTER 4

ARE *YOU* A SUPPRESSED ENTREPRENEUR?

THE REAL CATCH-22 OF SUPPRESSED ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS

No one has outright told you "no" but you still feel that "no" deep inside you.

Imagine having a groundbreaking business idea, something so revolutionary it could shake up the market like never before. Or maybe you're looking to toss your hat into an established arena, because why the hell not? You're brimming with this unshakable feeling, this gut instinct that you're cut out for carving your unique path in the business jungle. But hold up – there's this pesky sense of being suppressed, like an invisible hand holding you back.

You're there, wondering, "Am I the next Bill Gates, Cathy Woods, Oprah? Or a budding Bezos or Musk?" Sure, you might not have all the answers yet, but you can feel that pull, that magnetic draw towards the realm of the ambitious and brave go-getters.

The real catch-22 of suppressed entrepreneurship is that no one has outright told you "no," but you still feel that "no" deep inside you. Something is holding you back.

It's like being in a mental tug-of-war, grappling with your own doubts and fears, those sneaky little whispers in your head that keep you second-guessing. And let's be real – these doubts are like unwanted guests at a party, crashing your confidence and feeding your hesitations. If you're standing in the shoes of a suppressed entrepreneur, your journey is more about an internal battle, gearing up to bust through these invisible barriers. It's —

about flipping those quiet ‘no’s’ into a resounding ‘yes’ to chasing your dreams.

But here’s the kicker – knowing when to dive into the deep end, and when to stay on the shore, is key.

According to a Gallup poll, 87% of people aren't engaged at work. This sense of suppression doesn't always scream in your face; sometimes, it's a sly, subtle force, gently nudging you towards a safe, predictable existence. It's like an invisible hand clipping the wings of potential entrepreneurs, burying groundbreaking ideas and dreams in a pile of ‘what-ifs.’

Whatever category you fall into, you are in the right place. I have put together this book as a form of resources and tools to offer you a clear understanding of what it means to be an entrepreneur in suppression, without sugar-coating or misleading. I've been where you are, I've felt what you're feeling right now, and I know how to get out of that neck-deep funk you might be slowly sinking into.

The Suppressed Reality

Welcome to a world where dreams are often just that – dreams. Many aspiring entrepreneurs find themselves chained down by hurdles like family expectations, the comfort of a steady paycheck, or self-doubt stemming from their background. ***Did you know?*** *Just under a quarter adults in the U.S. have kicked off at least one business venture in their lives.* For me, it took years of patching up my wings to finally take off again after my first venture. And let me tell you, as rough as the ride was, I couldn't be more thankful for each step forward, backward, and even those missteps that seemed way off track.

Taking the Leap vs. Staying Grounded

It's crucial to know when to take that leap and when to keep your feet firmly planted. So, how do you juggle a side hustle with your 9-to-5 without ending up like a clumsy circus act? Because, let's face it, we all aspire to be that do-it-all, 'go-getter-preneur'.

Let me lay it out straight – there's no magic formula for this balancing act. Keeping yourself organized and accountable is your best bet to dodge any mishaps or detours. But remember, balancing a side hustle with a full-time job is not about keeping both sides of the scale perfectly even. It's more about knowing when to tip the scales in favor of your long-term dreams.

Here's my take on it: The road to entrepreneurship is littered with 'should haves' and 'what ifs.' I've been there, juggling a million things at once, feeling like I was one step away from either a breakthrough or a breakdown. It's the classic entrepreneur's dilemma – the safety of a steady paycheck versus the thrill of the chase.

From my own rollercoaster ride, I know it all too well. I remember those days, feeling like I was split in half – one side playing it safe in the corporate world, the other side itching to break free and chase after what I really wanted. The concept of being a 'suppressed entrepreneur' isn't some fancy term; it's that nagging voice in your head at 2 AM asking, "Should I go all in on this now?" It's about battling those inner demons of doubt, and the external pressures that keep you tethered to the safe harbor of a regular job.

I get it. I've sat at that very desk, staring at the clock, my mind racing with ideas that felt too big for the cubicle I was in. I've felt the weight of family expectations, the comfort of a stable job, and

the fear of stepping into the unknown. It's not just about taking risks; it's about calculated leaps.

This balancing act became crucial for me, especially at a time when life threw its curveballs. My husband lost his job and with it came a wave of financial uncertainty. My kids were growing up, each day needing more than the last – not just materially, but emotionally and mentally. In the midst of all this, there was a moment of clarity – I needed to put myself first.

It sounds counterintuitive, doesn't it? But here's the thing: by prioritizing my aspirations, by daring to carve out time for my entrepreneurial dreams, I was bringing my best self to my family.

I realized that my fulfillment was not just for me, but it was also for them. When you're fulfilled, when you're chasing your dreams and catching them, even just a little, you're happier, more present, more alive. And that's the version of you your family deserves.

Taking that leap, therefore, became a mission not just for my own sake, but for my family's well-being. Every late night spent working on my business plan, every weekend used to research and develop ideas, wasn't just an investment in my future – it was an investment in our collective future.

It's about understanding that putting yourself first isn't selfish; it's necessary. Your dreams and aspirations are the very things that make you the best version of yourself – for you and for those you love. So, when I took those calculated leaps, it was with the belief that a happier, more fulfilled me was the best gift I could give to my family.

Now, you might be asking, “Okay Danielle, I am listening, but how on Earth do you juggle building a business while stuck in a 9-to-5?” Let’s cut through the fluff and talk brass tacks. It’s about nailing that elusive balance – easier said than done, right?

CHAPTER 5

**HERE'S HOW TO
BALANCE
BUILDING YOUR
BUSINESS ON
THE SIDE *WITH* A
FULL-TIME JOB.**

Remember, every step in your career, whether it's the 9-to-5 or your passion project, is a step toward that ultimate goal of running your empire. When you turn on a scale to balance it, it starts at zero. Neither side is heavier than the other. This is nearly impossible in a scenario like this. Conserve and provide any additional efforts and energy to building your next steps and dreams.

Time Management

This is such a crucial component. Make adjustments in your current daily activities and allocate specific hours in your week dedicated to your side business. Whether that means waking up earlier, staying up later, or dedicating chunks of your weekend, make it happen.

- **Find Your Prime Time:** *We all have those hours when we're unstoppable. Pinpoint yours and guard them for your side hustle.*
- **Schedule Like a Boss:** *Literally, put your side business hours in your calendar as if they're the most important meetings of the week – because they are.*
- **Cut The Fat:** *It's time to temporarily reduce the activities that drain your time without adding value. This means cutting down on Netflix binges, gaming sessions, and endless social media scrolling. Consider these activities as treats to enjoy once you've hit your daily or weekly targets.*

Allocating time to your side business requires more than just good intentions; it demands consistent focus and discipline. Identify the parts of your day when you're most energized and productive – maybe that's early mornings or late nights. These are your power hours, and they're now reserved for your side hustle. Treat this time with reverence – it's as non-negotiable as-

our most crucial work meetings.

During these periods, your focus should be laser-sharp on your side business, away from the distractions of daily life.

Remember, consistent small steps can lead to significant strides in your entrepreneurial journey.

Set Milestones

Define what success looks like for you. It could be a revenue goal, a certain number of clients, or a fully developed product.

- **Acknowledge your accomplishments:** *Each little achievement – a new client, a social media milestone, a prototype – is a step forward. Stay present in the moment and acknowledge what's working and what's not.*
- **Eye on the Prize:** *What's your 'made it' moment? Full-time business? A certain income level? Visualize it, write it down, chase it relentlessly.*

Success in a side business is more than just a series of random achievements; it's a carefully charted journey marked by specific milestones. Start by setting small, achievable goals that keep you motivated – securing your first client, launching a product, or even completing a business course. These small victories are crucial morale boosters. But don't lose sight of the bigger picture.

Define what ultimate success looks like for you – is it going full-time with your venture, hitting a six-figure income, or making a significant impact in your field or with others? Keep these long-term objectives in focus, regularly reviewing and adjusting them as your side business evolves.

Evaluate Readiness

Regularly assess the progress and viability of your side hustle. Ask, "Is my business financially sustainable? Can it support my living expenses?"

- **Money Matters:** *Is your side business starting to look like a viable main gig? Do the math – when can it take over your day job income?*
- **The Passion Pulse:** *Still feeling fired up about your side business after a long day at work? That's a sign you're on the right track.*

Assessing the viability of your side business is critical and should be done regularly. Financial sustainability is key – can your venture support your living expenses if you decide to go full-time? Also, gauge your emotional and mental investment in the project. If working on your side hustle feels more like a passion than a chore, even after a long day at your day job, you're on the right track. However, it's important to be brutally honest with yourself about the readiness of both you and your business for this transition.

Seek Advice

Consult with mentors that have been down this journey and entrepreneurs in similar fields and others who have done it already. How did they know it was the right time to transition?

- **Mentor Insights:** *Find someone who's been where you are and is now where you would want to ideally be. Their wins and losses are invaluable lessons for you.*
- **Community Wisdom:** *Join online communities where side 'business-ers' share their journeys. Learn from their experiences and share your own.*

Embarking on an entrepreneurial journey doesn't mean you have to go it alone. Connect with individuals who have successfully navigated the path you're on. Whether it's through informal coffee meetings, networking events, or online forums, these interactions can provide invaluable insights and guidance. Learn from their experiences, both good and bad, and apply these lessons to your own journey.

Remember, every entrepreneur's path is unique, but the wisdom shared by those who've walked similar roads can be a guiding light. In today's entrepreneurship world, armed with traditional resources and cutting-edge technology, you're more equipped than ever to turn your side business' success dreams into reality.

The Real Power Couple: Traditional Resources and AI

We've come a long way from the days of pen and paper planning. While traditional resources like SCORE remain invaluable, especially for their business plan templates and industry-specific workshops, the digital age has opened a whole new realm of possibilities.

AI [Artificial Intelligence] Defined!

Think of AI like a super-smart computer that learns and makes decisions. It's like having a robot brain helping out with things like predicting what will happen in the market, or helping you plan your business better.

Let's dive into how AI in 2024 is changing the game:

AI-Powered Business Plans: Your Digital Strategist

Gone are the days when drafting a business plan meant endless nights with just you and a stack of papers. Today, AI tools are revolutionizing this process. Imagine an AI tool as a blend of a consultant and a creative partner. You feed it your raw ideas, and it molds them into a structured, strategic format. This tech can craft sections like market analysis, financial projections, and

even suggest marketing strategies. It's not just about filling in the blanks; it's about AI understanding your vision and giving it a concrete shape. This tool is particularly handy for those who find the enormity of writing a business plan daunting. It breaks down the process into manageable pieces, making sure you're not overwhelmed.

AI in Business Plan Creation!

AI in business plan creation is like a mix of a consultant and a creative buddy. It takes your ideas and turns them into a well-structured plan, helping you cover all the important parts of your business strategy.

But here's the straight deal: as the owner of your business, don't just offload the entire process to AI. Sure, it's a powerful tool, but it's not a substitute for your insight and understanding. You need to know your business plan inside and out, from the abstract concepts down to the nitty-gritty details. Real mastery comes from diving deep into the plan, understanding each element, and then using AI as a guide or roadmap. Take what it gives you, then customize and tweak it to fit your unique vision and needs. After all, it's your dream, your business, and in the end, your responsibility to bring it to life in a way that's authentically yours.

AI as Your Personal Assistant: The Ultimate Organizer

Think of AI tools like Reclaim.AI or Monday.com as your personal schedule optimizers. In the past, juggling your side business with a full-time job meant a chaotic mix of sticky notes and alarm reminders. Now, these AI tools can learn from your habits and preferences to create a tailor-made schedule. They can suggest the best times to focus on your side business tasks, based on your productivity patterns and existing commitments. This means you can focus on being creative and strategic, rather than getting bogged down by the minutiae of time management. It's like having a personal assistant who not only organizes your calendar, but also understands your working style + adapts to it!

Market Analysis at Your Fingertips: AI as Your Research Wingman

Before AI, market research was a heavy encyclopedia kind of book task involving hours of manual searching and analysis. Today, AI tools have stepped in as your research wingmen. They can scan the internet for the latest market trends, competitor strategies, and customer insights relevant to your industry. This instant access to data ensures that you can make informed decisions quickly, keeping your business strategy agile and ahead of the curve. It's more than just gathering information; it's about AI providing insights and foresights that can be pivotal in shaping your business plan and strategy.

Financial Forecasts with Precision: Your AI Financial Guru

AI in financial forecasting is like having a crystal ball with data-driven insights. Unlike traditional methods that relied heavily on historical data, AI can predict future market trends and customer behavior. This means you can plan your business finances with a level of accuracy previously unattainable. AI tools analyze your business's financial data and market trends to provide forecasts on revenue, expenses, and profitability. This isn't just number-crunching; it's strategic foresight that helps you make informed decisions about investments, growth, and scaling.

This rise of AI in 2023 is like giving entrepreneurs a jetpack.

The integration of AI into business planning and management in 2023 is akin to having a team of experts at your beck and call. But, and it's a big but, as powerful as AI is, it's important to remember that it serves to augment your abilities, not replace them. The unique insights, creativity, and decision-making skills you bring to the table are irreplaceable.

In short, AI is like having a helpful robot that researches, analyzes, forecasts, and writes up complex papers for you. But —

while it's smart, it's not a lawyer, proof-reader, or your grammar snob BFF, so always have a real person check the important stuff.

YOUR VISION, CREATIVITY, AND HUMAN TOUCH ARE THE THINGS THAT ARE GOING TO BUILD YOUR EMPIRE.

From 'Suppressed' into 'Ex-Suppressed'

My Mission: Turning Suppressed into Ex-Suppressed Entrepreneurs

My goal? To empower you to break free and soar. I'm here to give you the tools and the tough love needed to make it happen. But let's keep it real - it's not all smooth sailing. Sometimes, you need to grind it out, tweak, and adjust before you're ready to take flight. With the right mix of traditional wisdom, AI smarts, and your relentless spirit, the sky's not the limit – it's just the beginning.

Now, let's pivot to the heart of the matter – making that shift from a side hustle to a full-time gig!

CHAPTER 6

ENTREPRENEUR SHIP 101: GETTING OUT OF THE *9-TO-5*

There's no going around it, there's safety in the traditional 9-to-5 routine, a predictable path with a regular paycheck. The problem is that some see it as a straightjacket, restricting their wings, creativity, and most of all, growth. Entrepreneurship offers an escape from this 'rat race' and a chance to build a life dictated by passion rather than routine.

Suppressed Entrepreneurs are Often Caged Birds, Eager to Spread Their Wings.

It's not just about running a business; it's about breaking free from 9-to-5 suppressions and limitations. Although these jobs offer stability, they can also stifle innovation, creativity, and the desire to do something true to you. Many suppressed entrepreneurs want more than just financial stability; they want purpose, impact, and a sense of fulfillment.

As a child, I got my start in several amateur (but at the time very, very serious) business ventures; I sold handmade items like lanyard creations and even some Space Jam swag. Each small sale was a thrill, teaching me the basics of supply, demand, and customer satisfaction. From selling lanyards as a kid to navigating the challenges of opening a fitness studio, each step was a lesson in entrepreneurship. Overcoming obstacles like sourcing materials on a shoestring budget, or learning to market my services taught me resilience and innovation. It's about more than money; it's about molding a life rich with purpose and fulfillment. These early experiences in creating and selling products and services were my initial toe dips into entrepreneurship, teaching me the value of independence and the joy of making my own money, calling my own shots, and making my own decisions. It wasn't just about the thrill of earning, but about gaining practical skills—from those first lanyard knots to the polished and professional services I offer —

today. Each experience has shaped my approach, improved my abilities, and strengthened my determination to succeed on my own terms.

LIVING > MONEY

Entrepreneurship is more than money. (The money is still important, though!) But it's more than that, it's about having the ability and willingness to create, organize, and manage a business venture or dream, accepting all its risks to make a difference and make a living. Business, to me, appeared to be one of the most exhilarating adventures, and looking back on my early view of entrepreneurship, it was a ride I wanted to jump on with two feet right away.

The journey isn't just about the venture itself, but also about the safety nets – mentors, peers, family, and professional networks. They're the ones who are there when you need a piece of advice or a nudge in the right direction. Entrepreneurship is about having vision, being innovative, and striving for growth, not just in business, but also in your personal life. Are you ready for that?

Being an Entrepreneur Means Challenging the Norms. The Entrepreneurial Mindset is One of Growth, Curiosity, and Resilience.

Entrepreneurship is more than money. (The money is still important, though!)

An Entrepreneur's Head on Your Shoulders

People start new businesses every day. Some soar, others stumble. What sets them apart? Preparation, grit, and a dash of daring. Knowing when to jump in full-time and when to keep it as

a side hustle until the time is right is a delicate balance.

The decision to major in both business and accounting during college was a pivotal moment for me. It was a strategic move to learn everything I could about business before venturing into my own. This led me to explore the fitness and health industry, where I developed a unique fitness class and eventually partnered with a friend to open our own studio. Despite the challenges and setbacks my business partner and I faced, including financial difficulties and mental health struggles, this journey was invaluable in shaping my entrepreneurial mindset.

Entrepreneurship comes in all shapes, sizes and sources.

Some take the plunge straight out of college, others after raising a family, or after rejecting traditional retirement. But transitioning out of a structured 9 to 5 job is the common thread. The journey of an entrepreneur is often sparked by unexpected moments. For me, it started with a realization during my stint in the accounting field, and then transitioned into the launch of a tax firm, coupled with developing a unique invention. For me, it was a seemingly mundane, yet potentially dangerous incident that became the spark that lit it all up. I still vividly recall the day when a forgotten burning candle at home sparked a rush of realization. It wasn't just the near-miss with a potential fire hazard; it was a wake-up call about life's unpredictability and the urgency to act on my dreams.

This incident did more than just jolt me; it planted the seeds of innovation in my mind. It led me to conceptualize Eye-Temp, a unique invention addressing everyday safety. This idea wasn't just a 'shoulda – woulda - coulda' thought; it represented my leap into a realm filled with patents, tech development, and manufacturing challenges. It was a significant shift from working as a mundane accounting employee.

As I ventured into this new territory, the hurdles were numerous. Navigating the complex world of manufacturing, understanding patent laws, and delving into the intricacies of tech development were challenges I hadn't faced in my previous 9-5. Each step was a learning curve, a test of resilience and determination.

But Eye-Temp was more than just an invention; it was a manifestation of my entrepreneurial spirit finally breaking free from the shackles of suppression. It symbolized my journey from a career that offered stability and a clear path, to one filled with unknowns and endless possibilities.

This period was a balancing act of immense proportions. Managing my full-time job in accounting, nurturing my burgeoning tax firm, and dedicating myself to developing Eye-Temp, all while being a wife and mother, was an endeavor that tested my limits. The loss of my husband's job added another layer of complexity, injecting financial pressures into an already challenging equation.

Yet, this experience was pivotal. It wasn't just about creating a product; it was about embracing the essence of entrepreneurship. It taught me the importance of innovation, the value of stepping out of comfort zones, and the power of pursuing a vision with tenacity.

The thrill of the potential opportunities that just felt so close and real kept me up at night; planning, dreaming, and woke me up every morning, driving me to put in the work. We were all over the map, hitting trade shows, important meetings, and TV spots across the U.S., anything that seemed like a good fit. I poured all my vacation and PTO into this venture, not missing a single day of work for six years, all before the world changed with Covid.

Now I realize that Eye-Temp remains a significant part of my entrepreneurial identity. It's a reminder of the path my own potential can carve from pure dirt. It's a project that, despite being on the back burner, continues to simmer with possibilities, waiting for the right moment to be brought back into the spotlight and shared with the world.

So remember, sometimes it takes an unexpected spark to ignite the flames of innovation and drive us towards realizing our true potential. And sometimes that potential isn't on par or parallel with a 9-5 at all.

Transitioning out of a structured job isn't just about financial planning; it's about understanding your readiness, market demand, and the support system around you. Networking and building a support system through mentorships and professional groups can provide invaluable guidance. It's also about knowing when to take additional courses or attend workshops to stay ahead in your industry.

**THE PATH FROM A SUPPRESSED
ENTREPRENEUR TO A THRIVING
BUSINESS OWNER IS AS UNIQUE
AS YOUR FINGERPRINT.**

CHAPTER 7

ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS *PRE*-FLIGHT

LET'S TALK ABOUT ENHANCING YOUR SKILLS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP PRE-FLIGHT.

Identify Skill Gaps. First thing's first – let's figure out what you don't know. It's like realizing you can't make an omelet because you never learned to crack an egg. Is digital marketing your Achilles' heel? Or does the thought of managing finances give you hives? Pinpoint these gaps. It's about being brutally honest with yourself. After all, you can't fix what you don't acknowledge.

Formal Education and Certifications. Time to hit the (digital) books. Platforms like Coursera and Udemy are like all-you-can-eat buffets for knowledge. You can gobble up courses on everything from Facebook Ads to Blockchain basics. Look for courses that fill your specific skill gaps. And hey, a shiny new certification on your LinkedIn profile never hurts!

Networking Events. Remember real people? They're still important. Dive into the world of industry meetups and conferences. Websites like Eventbrite or Meetup are like treasure maps to these golden networking opportunities. Rub elbows, exchange business cards (or LinkedIn profiles, because it's the 21st Century), and soak up real-world wisdom. These events are your chance to absorb insights and shoot the breeze with folks who've been in the trenches. Don't stop there; check your state and local business agencies for Chamber of Commerce and other associations advertised on their websites. Ask around for what others in similar situations are doing for networking. And if you're not finding what you're looking for, why not take the initiative and start your own networking group? There's a whole community out there looking to connect and grow, just like you.

Mentorship. Mentorship is gold in the entrepreneurship journey. Platforms like LinkedIn are great for finding potential mentors who've walked the path you're eyeing. Don't be shy; reach out with a personalized message. A good mentor can help navigate tricky waters, offer sage advice, and maybe even open doors you didn't know existed. Before you dive into the wider world, though, start with your existing core network. Take a moment to go through your contact list for a refresher. See if there's anyone—or a friend of someone—who might already be part of your network and reach out to them first. It's always easier and often more effective to start with a common connection. But if you find that your immediate network doesn't hold the mentorship potential you're looking for, then certainly extend your search to additional resources. Remember, the right mentorship can be a game changer in your entrepreneurial journey.

Reflective Questions. Time for some self-Q&A. Ask yourself: "What skills are critical for my entrepreneurial success?" "Who in my network can help me level up?" "How can I make learning a regular part of my life?" This isn't just navel-gazing; it's strategic introspection. The answers will guide your journey and keep you focused.

Successful entrepreneurship isn't just about having a great idea. It's about overcoming setbacks, learning and upgrading skills, building a supportive network, and managing risks effectively. We'll dig deeper into these aspects in upcoming sections, but it's crucial to understand these elements form the backbone of that entrepreneurial head on your shoulders.

There's not one way to be an entrepreneur, it's as simple as just deciding to be one ***and (this is very important) actually acting on it!***

If you're planning to quit your 9-to-5, consider the implications for your professional relationships. Leave on a positive note, ensuring your departure doesn't burn bridges, but rather, opens future opportunities.

ONLY YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S THE RIGHT TIME!

(Spoiler alert: there is no such thing as the right time)

One of the most pervasive myths in the entrepreneurship experience is the existence of the 'right time' to start your business. It's a concept that often holds the aspiring and the suppressed back, waiting for a perfect alignment of stars that, frankly, never comes. The truth is, there's no such thing as a universally perfect moment to launch your venture. There will always be reasons to wait – economic uncertainty, personal life events, or fear of the unknown. However, these reasons, while valid, are part of life, not stop signs on your path.

Embracing the Personal Timing of NOW

Your entrepreneurial journey is just that – yours. It's personal, unique, and cannot be compared to anyone else's path. What's right for one person may not be right for another. The best time for you to start a business is when it feels right for you, in your circumstances, with your goals and dreams in mind.

Here's the deal: 'Now' is as good a time as any. There's something magical about the present moment that future 'perfect times' just can't beat. If you're waiting for all your ducks to line up, you might end up a duck collector rather than an _____

entrepreneur. Seize the now – it's the only moment guaranteed!

Reality Check: Riskiness

The idea that there will come a time when everything in your life lines up perfectly is a phony, an illusion. There will always be challenges, be it personal commitments, financial constraints, or market uncertainties.

Let's get real.

Jumping into entrepreneurship is risky, like trying to skateboard for the first time on a downhill road. It's thrilling but could end up with a few bruises. Ask yourself, "Am I ready to embrace the risks?" This isn't about fear; it's about acknowledging reality and strapping on your helmet.

Your Entrepreneurial Toolbox

Passion gets you started, but skills keep you going. The entrepreneurial journey is a continuous learning curve, and your toolkit should be ever-expanding. What should be in this toolkit? Well, a blend of hard skills like financial literacy, digital marketing, and industry-specific knowledge, mixed with soft skills like leadership, communication, and resilience.

Start by identifying your strengths and weaknesses. Are you a marketing whiz but clueless about accounting? There's an online course for that. Not confident in your leadership skills? Books, seminars, and even a personal coach can help. The internet is an endless resource – platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and even YouTube and TikTok offer a wealth of knowledge!

And don't forget the real world – real-life experiences, whether it's a true side 'hustle' or a volunteer project, can teach you things no online course can!

When You're Ready to Commit: Turning What Ifs to Why Not's

Rather than seeking the right time, look for your readiness to commit. Are you ready to dive into the complexities and joys of running your own business? Do you feel prepared to face challenges head-on and learn from them? Your 'go-getterness' ability to embrace the entrepreneurial lifestyle are better indicators of timing than any external factor.

Ah, the dreaded 'what ifs' – those sneaky little thoughts that keep you up at night.

Flip the freaking script.

For every 'what if it fails?' ask yourself 'why not give it a try?' Fear of failure is like a rocking chair – it gives you something to do, but gets you nowhere. It's time to stand up and start walking.

Starting a business is, in many ways, a leap of faith. It's about trusting yourself, your idea, and your ability to navigate through unknown waters. It's about understanding that challenges are part of the journey and that overcoming them is where growth happens.

Your Personal Support Squad

Who's got your back when the entrepreneurial seas get choppy? Think of entrepreneurship as a team sport. Yes, you're the captain, but your crew – family, friends, mentors – they're invaluable. They're your sounding board when you're in doubt, your comfort when plans go awry, and sometimes, the voice of reason when you're about to jump without a parachute.

Your family and friends provide emotional support, understanding, and sometimes, the much-needed distraction from the high seas of business challenges. Then there are mentors – the seasoned sailors who've navigated these waters —

before. They can offer guidance, open doors, and sometimes, just be there to tell you that yes, those waves are big, but you've got what it takes to ride them.

It's crucial to build and nurture these relationships. Attend networking events, join entrepreneur groups, actively seek mentorship, and never underestimate the power of a coffee chat. And remember, support can come from creative avenues too. If the opportunities you are looking for do not exist, create them. Take, for example, the informal local women networking group I just started – a gathering of powerhouse women from various industries. We meet every month, inviting friends and their connections, each a leader in her field. It's a space for networking, exchanging tips and insights, and fostering growth in our businesses and personal circles. It's about creating a supportive environment where ideas can flourish and friendships can strengthen – and it all started with a simple lunch invitation.

Adapting to Change: The Only Constant

If there's one truth in the world of entrepreneurship, it's that change is as inevitable as taxes (and sometimes just as painful). But here's the thing: change is also an entrepreneur's playground. Markets evolve, consumer preferences shift, and new technologies emerge – these are not hurdles; they are opportunities to innovate and grow.

Adapting to change requires a mindset that's both flexible and forward-thinking. Keep your ear to the ground; stay updated with industry trends. Subscribe to newsletters, follow thought leaders on social media, and attend industry events. But it's not just about being informed; it's about being ready to pivot. Pivoting doesn't mean abandoning your original idea – it's about tweaking it, reshaping it to fit the evolving landscape.

Yes, those waves are big, but you've got what it takes to ride them!

Consider my tax credit firm, Manufacturing Tax Recovery Services, aka @MTRSNOW, for instance. While it might not have been my most thrilling or attractive venture, it has been a consistent source of stability and income. The thrill in this venture for me is being a specialized, uncommon service that is able to specifically help businesses save money through refunds and tax credits. There's a certain comfort and safety in the reliable and useful – even if it might seem mundane.

The firm has been a testing ground for various services and team working formats. By adapting to a mostly remote team spread across the U.S., we were able to seamlessly transition during the COVID-19 pandemic. This flexibility not only allowed us to maintain our operations, but also to grow and thrive amidst the chaos. The experience solidified my belief that sometimes the most unassuming businesses can be the most resilient.

Remember, the most successful businesses are those that can adapt best to change. It's about finding the balance between the excitement of new ventures and the steady progress of established ones.

Every moment, whether it seems opportune or not, is a chance to learn, grow, and progress. *When you decide to start your business, that moment becomes the right time for you.* It's about taking control of your LIFE, making the best of your current situation, *and turning your vision into reality.*

The 'right time' is a deeply personal decision.

And as you stand at this crossroads ready to step into the world of entrepreneurship, it's crucial to navigate the transition with care, thoughtfulness, and professionalism.

HERE'S HOW TO LEAVE YOUR 9-TO-5 WITHOUT BURNING BRIDGES.



Leaving your 9-to-5 job to pursue your entrepreneurial dreams is a significant step. But let's not forget, it's not just about the big, exciting leap forward; it's also super important how you make your exit. The way you handle this transition can totally shape your future business relationships and opportunities. The same people you meet on your way up are often the same people you meet on the way down.

Think of it this way: A thoughtful and professional approach can turn your current workplace into a potential stepping stone for your business. It's overall a smart strategy and good for your personal rapport, too!

Plan Your Departure. Setting a realistic timeline for your exit is key. Start by evaluating your financial readiness and the status of your side venture. Don't just wake up one day and decide to quit. Instead, give yourself a buffer period, ideally ranging from a few months to a year. This time allows you to save up, reduce debts, and maybe even get your side hustle income closer to your current salary.

Consider *all* aspects. That means, think about everything; financial stability, health insurance, and even how your departure will affect your team. It's about being responsible, not just for your future, but also in how you leave your current role. Remember, leaving a job is like ending a chapter in a book – you want it to conclude well, so the next chapter begins on a positive note.

Tip! A thoughtful and professional approach can turn your current workplace into a potential stepping stone for your business.

Professional Communication. The way you communicate your decision to leave can set the tone for your future relationship with the company. Schedule a meeting with your supervisor, and prepare a respectful and concise resignation letter. This isn't just about professionalism; it's about maintaining relationships that could be beneficial down the line.

Use this as an opportunity to express gratitude for the experiences and growth opportunities the job provided.

TIP: Remember, the business world is smaller than you think, and a respectful exit can lead to future collaborations or referrals!

Transition Assistance. Offering to train your replacement or preparing a detailed handover document is a gesture of goodwill that will be remembered. You will never regret doing a few extra steps to leave off on good terms and set a great example. It's not just about doing the right thing; *it's about leaving a legacy of reliability and commitment.*

This kind of helpful attitude can lead to positive references and maintain a healthy professional network. Your aim is to **ensure your departure doesn't cause chaos** – it's like passing the baton smoothly in a relay race.

Plus, you don't want that bad mojo following back to your own business, do you?

Maintain Relationships. Don't just disappear into the sunset. Stay in touch with your former colleagues and supervisors. Platforms like LinkedIn are perfect for nurturing these connections. These relationships can evolve into future partnerships, client referrals, or even a supportive professional network.

Attend occasional industry events or former company gatherings if invited. Keeping these connections alive can open doors you never knew existed while you were busy being by the water cooler!

Self-Reflection. Regularly evaluate your exit strategy. Are you communicating effectively? Are you leaving your current role in a way that you'd be proud of in retrospect? Reflect on how your actions during this transition period reflect on you as a professional and as an individual.

REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS TO
TRANSITION FROM YOUR 9-TO-5 WITH
GRACE AND RESPECT, SETTING THE
STAGE FOR A FUTURE WHERE YOU
CAN LOOK BACK WITH #NOREGRET!

Rather than rejecting stability, this entrepreneurship mindset redefines it. When it comes to stability, an entrepreneur might think it's about making their own schedules, choosing their projects, and determining how tomorrow will look.

Redefining stability doesn't mean giving up comfort. It means shifting the locus of control. As an entrepreneur, you get to decide what stability looks like – whether it's freedom over your time, who you work with, or the projects you take on.

Essentially, it's looking beyond the daily grind to ask, "What more can I achieve? What legacy can I leave behind?" While it often comes naturally, it can also be cultivated.

IN CASE YOU FORGOT: The world is bigger than the office *(or classroom, or whatever bubble you're in)*.

Have you ever looked out your office or classroom window and thought, "There's got to be more to life than this"? Well, you're right. Beyond the confines of those structured walls lies a vast world brimming with possibilities.

Entrepreneurship is like holding a golden ticket to a grand adventure, a departure from the monotonous loop of 9-to-5 tasks into a realm where every day is a new chapter with its unique set of challenges and triumphs.

Consider the countless entrepreneurs who found their million-dollar ideas in the most unexpected places. It could be while sipping a latte in a Pacific Northwest café, hiking through the Appalachians, or even during a pottery class. The world outside the office isn't just for leisure; it's a giant playground for inspiration. Opportunities don't knock on the door; sometimes, they're found with a notepad and pencil or at your computer and sometimes they're found in the wild, unexpected corners of life.

Take the founders of Pluckers, a wildly popular wing bar born in Austin, Texas. It's a classic tale of friends turning a simple idea into a thriving business. While attending the University of Texas, these students were on a quest for the perfect wing spot. Realizing this void in their college town, they saw an opportunity. This wasn't just a business idea formed in a boardroom; it was born from a genuine desire for something they and others like them wanted but didn't have access to.

Their journey started small, with a lot of trial and error, but their commitment and passion turned Pluckers into what it is today – a go-to spot for wings aficionados. This is the beauty of stepping out of the office (*or classroom, or wherever!*) and looking at the world as a playground of opportunities.

And it's not just about finding opportunities; it's about the perspectives gained. The founders of Pluckers didn't just stay within the confines of their college experience. They ventured out, observed, and engaged with the world around them. This broadened their horizons, fueled their creativity, and eventually, ignited the entrepreneurial spark within.

Stepping out of the suppressed bubble exposes you to diverse cultures, new ideas, and different ways of thinking. It broadens your horizons, fuels creativity, and often, ignites the entrepreneurial spark within.

AND IT'S NOT
JUST ABOUT
FINDING
OPPORTUNITIES;
IT'S ABOUT THE
PERSPECTIVES
GAINED.

CHAPTER 8

**READY,
SET...
*ERR!***

READY, SET...

So, what lights the fire under a budding entrepreneur?

For some, it's a dramatic event – a job loss, a missed promotion, or a sudden realization during a mundane meeting. For others, it's a slow build-up of professional dissatisfaction, a feeling of being stuck in a rut, or a longing for something more meaningful.

There's often a defining moment – a line in the sand – when you decide, "It's now or never." It's like standing at the edge of a cliff, knowing the only way forward is to leap. And this leap is not just a physical action; it's a mental, emotional, and sometimes, a spiritual one.

This sense of urgency is a common thread among many successful entrepreneurs. It's a combination of restlessness and a fierce desire to control their destiny. It's about not wanting to spend another day working towards someone else's dream. It's about wanting to create, to build, to make a mark in your own unique way.

As we've talked about earlier, the path of entrepreneurship is paved with risks. Some entrepreneurs risk financial stability, relationships, and the comfort of a predictable career. The idea of following someone else's vision or taking orders just doesn't cut it for them. It's not enough to be just a gear in the midst; they want to build their own machine!

This drive often comes from a deep, almost primal place. It's about fulfilling a personal vision, living a life of purpose, and creating something that resonates with one's deepest values. It's a journey of self-discovery as much as it is about building a business.

But, err, wait a minute!

It's not just about your readiness; it's about the preparedness and understanding of those around you, especially your family. Entrepreneurship is a journey that doesn't just affect you; it reverberates through your personal life and those closest to you.

REAL TALK: ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THIS?

It's not just about having a business idea that gets your heart racing. It's about being ready to face the rollercoaster of highs and lows, the uncertainty that comes with running your own show. It's about asking yourself if you can handle countless late nights when needed, setbacks, and sometimes, the deafening silence of things not going as planned.

It's also about resilience. Can you take a hit and get back up? Are you ready to learn from failures without letting them define you? Being an entrepreneur means being your own biggest critic and your most enthusiastic cheerleader. It's a test of your mental and emotional strength. So, before you leap, take a moment. Are you ready to embrace the chaos, celebrate the small wins, and weather the storms?

Now, let's talk about the home front. Starting a business isn't just your journey; it drags your entire family along for the ride. So, have you sat down with them and really talked about what this means? This isn't just about the financial impact. We're talking about time – time away from family activities and duties. It's about them supporting and understanding why you're chasing this dream and what it might cost, in terms of time and emotional investment.

This conversation is crucial.

It's about setting expectations, discussing sacrifices, and most importantly, securing their support. Your family needs to know the sacrifice and commitments you are making are for the benefit of your family unit as a whole. It's about finding that balance and making sure they understand and support your journey.

For me. My family is my world—my children, husband, and extended family are at the center of everything I do. It's crucial to me that my kids learn the value of hard work and initiative, the same principles I was raised on. We don't give our children money for household chores; instead, we emphasize that contributing to the home is part of being a family. We avoid cultivating a mindset of expecting rewards for every task.

Right now, our version of lemonade stands isn't just child's play; it's a lesson in real-world business. My children create a brand, use their savings to buy supplies, and calculate their profits after considering the cost of goods sold. They're learning to manage funds, deciding whether to reinvest in their venture or save their earnings. It's about teaching them the basics of business and the importance of financial prudence from a young age.

For my two eldest, 6 and 8 years old at this writing, I've introduced the concept of invention and innovation. They each have a sketch pad for their ideas—anything from fantastical to practical. We brainstorm, discussing the potential market and the logistics of turning their dreams into reality. As a patent holder and former inventor, I find these moments incredibly rewarding.

Recently, my 8-year-old came up with an idea with real promise. Together, we're bringing it to life, starting with a domain name. When he was short on funds, I encouraged him to earn the difference, setting a fair rate for his age and efforts. Now, he's —

enthusiastically working on prototypes and planning how to finance further development, perhaps through another lemonade stand or a 'loan' from mom and dad. This journey isn't just about business; it's about instilling values, responsibility, and a sense of achievement. Each step forward excites him and teaches valuable life lessons that will stay with him forever, proving that when we teach our children about business, we're not just passing on skills, we're crafting a true familial legacy of entrepreneurship through balance.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE THING.

Let's be real – it's going to be a juggling act. There will be moments when you'll have to choose between finalizing your business plan and a family movie night. And yes, you'll face the guilt of working late nights or being glued to your phone during family time.

Tip: But it's not just about managing your time; it's about managing your energy.

It's about being present when you're with your family and giving your business your all when it's time to work. Communicate openly with your family about your schedule and try to carve out uninterrupted time for them even if you have to schedule it into your business calendar. *Remember, you're doing this for them as much as you're doing it for yourself!*

And also your social circle – it's about to get a shake-up. Your entrepreneurial journey might not resonate with everyone. Some friends might cheer you on, while others might question your sanity or not have any interest in the journey. It's crucial to identify the people who genuinely support you. The ones who understand your 'why', who stand by you when you rant about the challenges, and who celebrate your successes, no matter how small.

But don't just focus on the cheerleaders. Pay attention to those who challenge your ideas constructively. You need people who can look you in the eye and tell you when you're off track.

This is where building a business friendship circle comes into play. It's not just about surrounding yourself with people who pat you on the back. It's about forging connections with individuals who genuinely understand and share your entrepreneurial spirit. Think of your business friendship circle as your personal board of advisors. These are the people who provide different perspectives, challenge your ideas, and push you to think bigger. They are the ones who aren't afraid to ask the tough questions and offer honest feedback, even when it's hard to hear. But more than that, they are your comrades in arms, riding with you through the ups and downs of your business journey.

Creating this circle doesn't happen overnight. It's about actively seeking out individuals whose values align with yours, and who are equally committed to growth and success. This could be through networking events, entrepreneur meetups, or even online platforms. The key is to find people who not only have the expertise, but also the empathy to understand what you're going through. In this circle, there's a powerful exchange of knowledge, experiences, and support. These relationships can be invaluable, especially when you hit rough patches. They can offer fresh insights, provide moral support, and sometimes, just be the sounding board you need to vent your frustrations.

And remember, a business friendship circle is a two-way street. It's as much about what you bring to the table as what you take away. Be ready to offer your own experiences, insights, and support. This mutual exchange strengthens your bonds and sets up a support system rooted in mutual respect and understanding.

REAL TALK: MYTHS VS REALITIES

Now, let's shift gears and face some hard truths. Becoming an entrepreneur is more than just a career choice; it's a lifestyle change that comes with its own set of myths and misconceptions. It's time to confront these head-on, so you're fully equipped for the reality of what lies ahead.

MYTH: ENTREPRENEURS MUST ALWAYS BE CONFIDENT AND NEVER DOUBT THEMSELVES.

REALITY: DOUBT AND FEAR ARE NORMAL AND CAN BE CONSTRUCTIVE.

Let's bust this wide open! Entrepreneurs are human, which means doubt and fear are part of the package. The key is not letting these feelings overpower your drive. It's about embracing uncertainty, learning to question yourself constructively, and using doubt as a tool for continuous improvement. Fear can be a compass, pointing you toward areas where you need to grow or adapt. Remember, even the most successful entrepreneurs have had their moments of self-doubt. It's not about never fearing; it's about not letting fear dictate your actions.

MYTH: ALL ENTREPRENEURS ARE RISK-TAKERS.

REALITY: THEY ARE CALCULATED RISK-TAKERS.

Like Sara Blakely, the founder of Spanx, she spent her entire savings of \$5,000 on her idea. Risky, but calculated. She did her own patent research and patented the idea herself. Sara's approach shows that while entrepreneurship does involve risk, successful entrepreneurs often take informed and thoughtful risks.

MYTH: ENTREPRENEURSHIP MEANS GOING BIG OR GOING HOME.

REALITY: SMALL STEPS AND STEADY GROWTH OFTEN WIN THE RACE.

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This myth glorifies the 'big bang' approach, but let's get real, slow and steady often wins the entrepreneurial race. It's about building a solid foundation, understanding your market, and growing at a pace that's sustainable. Think of it like building a house – you wouldn't start with the roof. It's the small, consistent steps that eventually lead to substantial results. This approach reduces risk and allows for flexibility and learning along the way.

MYTH: WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS UNATTAINABLE FOR ENTREPRENEURS.

REALITY: WHAT IS BALANCE TO YOU? ACHIEVING THE RIGHT FIT OF BALANCE IS POSSIBLE WITH THE RIGHT STRATEGIES AND MINDSET.

Contrary to the popular belief that entrepreneurs work 24/7, achieving your own personal version of a 'work-life' balance is possible. It requires understanding that there is no set formula or exact amount of time to achieve this. The feeling of achieving 'balance' is often a moving target and can change momentarily. It is setting clear boundaries, effective time management, and the ability to delegate. It's about quality, not just quantity. Prioritize tasks, automate where possible, and don't be afraid to ask for help. Remember, burning out won't help you or your business in the long run.

MYTH: IF YOU'RE FROM A MINORITY OR UNDERREPRESENTED BACKGROUND, ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS EVEN HARDER.

REALITY: DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS CAN BRING UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

Being from a minority or underrepresented group can bring unique perspectives and insights that are invaluable in business. It's about turning what some might see as a 'disadvantage' into your superpower. Yes, there may be additional hurdles, but your unique background can also be the source of innovative ideas and solutions. It's about embracing your story, your heritage, and using it to create a business that resonates with a diverse audience.

MYTH: ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS ONLY ABOUT MAKING MONEY.

REALITY: IT'S ABOUT PASSION, SOLVING PROBLEMS, AND MAKING AN IMPACT.

How about Oprah Winfrey? As one of the world's most influential women, she built her media empire based on the passion she had for sharing real, raw human stories. While she has amassed significant wealth over her career, her primary motivation has remained true to its roots- to inspire, educate, and uplift others.

In entrepreneurship, there's much diversity, so the idea that all ventures are the same falls apart. There are many different ways entrepreneurs can succeed and fail, depending on their circumstances, talents, and visions.

MYTH: EVERY ENTREPRENEUR'S JOURNEY IS THE SAME.

REALITY: EACH JOURNEY IS UNIQUE, AND THERE ISN'T A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL FORMULA.

Tory Burch, for instance, faced distinct challenges in establishing her fashion brand, illustrating that there's no one-size-fits-all in entrepreneurship. Starting out, she had a different set of challenges. Beginning in her kitchen, her 'affordable luxury' vision was challenged by naysayers who doubted its potential. Tory's unique approach to brand-building and commitment to social responsibility set her brand apart from the crowded fashion industry.

MYTH: IF YOU'RE NOT MAKING MONEY RIGHT AWAY, YOU'RE FAILING.

REALITY: INITIAL STRUGGLES DON'T DEFINE YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY.

Early financial struggles are often part of the entrepreneurial journey. It's a marathon, not a sprint. Building a profitable business takes time, patience, and perseverance. What's important is learning from each setback and continuously refining your approach. Many successful businesses didn't see profit immediately but thrived over time through resilience.

MYTH: ENTREPRENEURS MAKE IT ON THEIR OWN.

REALITY: EVERYONE NEEDS A SUPPORTIVE TEAM AND/OR NETWORK TO SUCCEED.

This is true for myself! With MTRS, my startup, Eye-Temp, and my real estate ventures through Coastal Charm, my accomplishments aren't just a testament to my own vision and determination, but also to my team and network's efforts, dedication, and support. It's a humbling realization that success is not just a solo endeavor, but a collaboration of comradery, shared aspirations and dedicated work. I truly became successful when I recognized and deeply valued the contributions of everyone around me.

ACHIEVING
SUCCESS IN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IS AS MUCH
ABOUT
COLLABORATION
AS IT IS ABOUT
YOUR OWN
DRIVE.

THE SUPPRESSED ENTREPRENEUR'S SELF-ASSESSMENT

WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO? BEYOND FINANCIAL FREEDOM, WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS? ARE YOU DRIVEN BY THE DESIRE TO INNOVATE, CREATE, OR MAKE A DIFFERENCE? WHEN YOU'RE FACING CHALLENGES, IS YOUR DRIVING FORCE YOUR ANCHOR?

STEPPING OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE: ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

The path to entrepreneurship can be uncertain, and it often involves sacrifices, compromises, and many lessons. But with this risky uncertainty comes the potential for high reward—not just in financial terms, but also in terms of growing personally.

There will be bumps along the way.

Lots of bumps.

There will be hurdles, roadblocks, and sometimes, full stops.

Consider this: *When was the last time you last stepped out of your comfort zone, and what did you learn from that experience? How did it help you grow?*

Discomfort is often a catalyst for big change.

SUPPRESSED ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION

Say you're the main character in a story (well, you are the main character in your own story, but you know what I mean!) You're the main character in a story about discovering your entrepreneurial footing. As you progress through the story, your choices will guide you to an outcome that suggests whether you might be a suppressed entrepreneur or if your strengths and aspirations lie elsewhere.

(No right or wrong answers here, just varying paths!)

LET'S SET THE SCENE: YOU'RE IN A JOB THAT'S COMFORTABLE, BUT NOT FULFILLING. ONE DAY, YOU STUMBLE ACROSS SOMETHING IN YOUR INDUSTRY THAT COULD BE SOLVED IN A CREATIVE WAY.

Choice 1: Your Reaction is:

- A) Excitement and idea generation
- B) Interest but detachment
- C) Indifference and routine focus

In each case, the narrative illustrates how you handle challenges and opportunities in your life.

Choice 2: There you are, out with friends, talking about your career goals and aspirations. What do you talk about?

- A) Passionate about a business idea
- B) Uncertain about job satisfaction
- C) Content with current status

Your choice pinpoints whether you feel conformed, comfortable, or free in your current place in your career.

Choice 3: A big setback happens at work or at home. How do you handle it?

- A) Proactive and learning-focused
- B) Seeking advice and support
- C) Prioritizing other life aspects

This shows how you handle stress and challenges, either by embracing the entrepreneurial roller coaster, seeking guidance, or finding balance in other life aspects.

REFLECTING ON YOUR CHOICES

Based on your choices, here is some guidance for you:

- **Mostly As:** you are definitely a suppressed entrepreneur, driven by a desire to innovate and solve problems!
- **A mix:** You might be on the fence, exploring the idea of entrepreneurship or seeking a more fulfilling career path (suppression isn't just limited to entrepreneurship after all!).
- **Mostly Bs or Cs:** Your strengths and happiness might lie outside of where you currently are, you might not be a full on suppressed entrepreneur, but something else might be calling you and that's wonderful too!

**YOUR PATH IS
YOURS.**

For those who've discovered they might not fit the 'suppressed entrepreneur' mold, don't stop here! There's immense value in understanding your strengths and how they can be applied in various aspects of life, be it in a fulfilling career, a passionate hobby, or a cause you believe in. Your path might be different, but it is equally important and exciting.

And to those who have identified with being a suppressed entrepreneur, the journey is just beginning. Embrace the discomfort because it's often the catalyst for amazing change. Think about a time when you were pushed out of your comfort zone. What did you learn? How did you grow? This kind of self-reflection is crucial to understanding your capacity for resilience and adaptability.

Once you've accepted that you are - in fact - a suppressed entrepreneur, there are several things you should do before taking that big venture step. ***For you, the next steps involve delving deeper into the entrepreneurial world, equipped with a clearer understanding of your goals and capabilities, so continue reading on!***

For those of you who might be continuing on different paths, keep this knowledge in mind. It can provide valuable insights as you navigate your career and personal aspirations. Regardless of your path, understanding the entrepreneurial mindset can enrich your approach to challenges and opportunities.

HERE'S A TALL GLASS OF TRUTH: OWNING A SMALL BUSINESS WON'T MAKE YOU RICH OVERNIGHT. IT TAKES DETERMINATION, PATIENCE, PERSISTENCE, AND WILLINGNESS TO MAKE SACRIFICES TO GET THOSE REWARDS.

Owning a business comes with a lot of responsibility. When things go wrong, you're responsible. There's no going home at 5 o'clock while the boss stays all night to fix a mess. That's the difference between being a suppressed entrepreneur and someone who just wants the title of entrepreneur sans the hard work and sacrifice.

Suppressed entrepreneurship comes with self-work. Work on your confidence. Not only in yourself, but also in your ability to sell your ideas, setting up a business, and trusting your intuition along the way. Small businesses are fiercely competitive, and the ones who survive are the ones who are confident.

You might often grapple with varying degrees of suppression syndrome – that nagging doubt questioning your capabilities, be it due to age, gender, experience, or even your educational background. It's essential to recognize and address these feelings head-on.

Addressing the Cultural Weight in Entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurial journey is richly layered, especially for those carrying the cultural weight of family legacies and expectations. This weight is significant for many – not just children of immigrants, but anyone grappling with the feeling of not quite fitting the traditional entrepreneurial mold. This could be because of your cultural background, your family's history, or simply the feeling that you need to live up to an established norm.

Here's the thing: *the beauty of this cultural weight is that it's both a challenge and a unique strength.* Your heritage, the stories of your parents and grandparents, infuse your entrepreneurial spirit with depth and resilience. They're the threads that weave into your business ethos, setting you apart in

a world of cookie-cutter ventures.

For some, like myself, a second-generation Italian, the entrepreneurial spirit is often inherited from parents or grandparents who immigrated with dreams of building a better life. My grandfather, ‘papa,’ an Italian immigrant in Brooklyn, exemplified this spirit. His diverse experiences, from military life to Wall Street, laid a foundation of ambition and resilience that trickled down through the generations. My father, absorbing this drive, ventured into various businesses, from rare coins to real estate. My grandpa on my mother’s side was also a small business owner, owning a local butcher shop. Growing up around such a dynamic environment instilled in me a deep desire to carve my own path, fueled by the dreams and sacrifices of my grandparents and those before him.

Understanding this cultural and familial weight is crucial. It's about honoring the sacrifices made by your parents or grandparents, while recognizing that pursuing your entrepreneurial dreams is not a betrayal, but rather an extension, of their legacy. Your business venture is a testament to their journey and a continuation of the story they started.

But it’s also about realizing this journey is yours to shape. Your heritage is a part of you, but it doesn’t define your entire entrepreneurial identity. Embrace your unique background, use it as a source of inspiration and differentiation, but also make sure the path you choose resonates with your personal aspirations and dreams.

But embracing your heritage in entrepreneurship doesn't mean sidelining your aspirations. It's about harmonizing your family's dreams with your own. For instance, you might pursue a career in medicine or law to honor your parents' wishes, but simultaneo-

usly channel your entrepreneurial drive into a related (or *completely unrelated!*) venture. It's entirely possible to be a doctor with a health-tech startup or a lawyer running a legal-tech firm. This balance respects your background while allowing you to forge your unique path. In crafting this balance, it's essential to navigate cultural pressures with sensitivity and understanding. The goal isn't to rebel against your background, but to integrate it into your entrepreneurial identity. It's about showing how your unique background enriches your business perspective, not limit it.

Remember, every culture, every family story brings with it a unique perspective on business, resilience, and success. Embracing this diversity can be your superpower as an entrepreneur. It allows you to see opportunities where others might not, to innovate in ways that resonate with a broader audience. Your journey isn't about fitting into a predefined box; it's about expanding the box to include the richness of your background.

So, if you ever feel overshadowed by the weight of cultural expectations, take a step back and reflect. Remember that your entrepreneurial journey is not just about business; it's a narrative that intertwines your personal aspirations with the legacy of those who came before you. It's a path where your background, your family's sacrifices, and your unique vision converge to create something extraordinary.

In this mesh lies your strength. Your entrepreneurial path can be a testament to your family's journey and a beacon for your personal dreams. It's about building a legacy that honors the past while boldly stepping into the future. So embrace where you come from, let it inspire you, and use it to fuel yourself.

Remember, you're not just building a business; you're building an empire built on the backs of everyone who made it possible for you to be here now.

Combatting Imposter Syndrome

Let's face it, imposter syndrome is like that uninvited guest at your party, constantly whispering doubts and fears into your ear. It's a sneaky foe, lurking in the shadows of your entrepreneurial journey, making you question your worth, your abilities, and even your achievements. But here's the thing – imposter syndrome is not the boss of you. It's time to face this challenge head-on with guts, grit, and a bit of swagger.

First off, acknowledge that imposter syndrome is part of the game. It doesn't matter how high you climb; those nagging doubts can creep in at any level. The trick is not to let them take the wheel. When you hear that little voice saying, “You’re not good enough,” or “You don’t belong here,” confront it with the facts. List out your achievements, no matter how small. Every successful meeting, every problem solved, every happy client – they’re all proof you’re not just playing the part; you’re living it.

Reframing **your mindset is key**. Instead of seeing challenges as proof of your inadequacy, view them as opportunities for growth. Each obstacle overcome is a level up in your entrepreneurial journey. Think of it like a game; the bosses get tougher, but so do you. Every challenge you face and conquer is proof of your growth and adaptability.

Now, let's talk about feedback. Sometimes, we are so stuck in our heads that we fail to see the reality. Seeking feedback from peers, mentors, or even customers can provide a fresh perspective. It's like holding up a mirror that reflects not just your flaws, but more importantly, your strengths and successes.

This feedback can be the reality check you need to silence the imposter within.

Here's a personal confession: I've wrestled with imposter syndrome in my early career days too. But I've learned to recognize this as a minor annoyance and face it head-on. When doubts creep in, I remind myself, "I've achieved so much, and I've doubted myself at every step." My approach is to meet imposter syndrome with a bold stare and a cheeky grin, acknowledging its presence but refusing to let it take the driver's seat.

Visualization is another powerful tool. It might sound like some new-age mantra, but trust me, it works. Close your eyes and picture yourself nailing that big presentation, signing that dream client, or seeing your product on the shelves. This isn't just daydreaming; it's manifestation and setting your GPS for success. Ever read the book or watch the movie "The Secret"? This is what it is all about. It's about programming your mind to not only expect success, but to embrace it when it comes.

And remember that confidence is a muscle! The more you flex it, the stronger it gets. Embrace your successes, learn from your failures, and keep pushing forward. Imposter syndrome is just one more opponent in the ring and you've got the grit to take it down. So put on those gloves, step into the ring, and show that imposter who's boss. Remember, you're not just playing the part; you're the real deal, the main event, the entrepreneur who's here to stay and make a mark.

Age Is Just a Number

In the entrepreneurial world, age is more than just a number; it's a narrative. Whether you're a bright-eyed 20-year-old or a seasoned 60-something, your age brings a unique set of experiences and perspectives to the table. This diversity in age is-

not just a reality, but a significant advantage in the business landscape.

Let's start with the young guns. If you're on the younger side of the spectrum, you might feel your age is a handicap. But flip that script. Your youth is a goldmine of fresh ideas and unbridled enthusiasm. You bring to the table what others might have lost in the grind – an untainted perspective and an appetite for innovation.

I vividly remember being in my 20s in authoritative accounting positions, leading teams and running the departments where I was the youngest by milestones. In the moment of time this did provide a level of discomfort and I remember always thinking, once I am at least 30 years old they will start to respect me more. I felt the need to have to 'prove myself' to earn the level of respect I desired, so that is exactly what I did.

Now think about the myriad of young Zuckerbergs, Gates, Belniks, and more who started their journeys in the midst of their academic pursuits, some even bypassing the traditional college route. Your so-called inexperience is actually your ticket to think outside the box, to challenge the status quo. It's not naivety; it's a fresh pair of eyes in a world that often gets too comfortable with 'how it's always been done'; they're a testament to the power of youthful energy and unorthodox thinking.

Now, to those who think they've missed the entrepreneurial train because they've crossed a certain age threshold – think again. With age comes wisdom, patience, and resilience. These are the years of untapped potential, waiting to be channeled into a venture that's been brewing in your mind. Your wealth of experience is invaluable – you've seen trends come and go, you've navigated life's ups and downs, and you've gathered a tre-

asure trove of knowledge along the way. Take Fran Maier for example, an entrepreneur who raised funds for Baby Quip in her later years. Featured in Forbes, her story is a testament to the fact that age can be a formidable ally in entrepreneurship. It's about bringing a depth of understanding and a breadth of experience to your business that only years can provide.

In my own journey, being in my 30s, I find myself right in the middle of building my empire. I'm living proof that age doesn't define your entrepreneurial success – your determination and passion do. Your 30s are a time of convergence – where the zeal of your youth meets the insights gained from your initial professional years. It's a sweet spot, a time when you're young enough to take risks, yet old enough to make them calculated.

Ageism, particularly in entrepreneurship, can be a double-edged sword. It's true that it disproportionately affects women, often underestimating their capability due to age-related stereotypes. But here's where you turn this challenge into an opportunity. Use ageism when it works for you – let them underestimate you, and then surprise them with your acumen and success. And when it doesn't work for you, rise above it with the confidence that your age, whether young or old, brings something special to the entrepreneurial table.

Being an entrepreneur is about being savvy, using every card you've been dealt to your advantage. It's about knowing when to play the youth card for its freshness and innovation, and when to play the age card for its wisdom and experience. The entrepreneurial journey is not a race against time; it's about making your time count, at any age. So, whether you're just starting out or you're looking to start anew, remember this – your age isn't just a number; it's a narrative. A narrative you can write and rewrite to suit your entrepreneurial saga.

Your time is now, regardless of what the calendar says. Forge ahead with the knowledge that your age, whatever it may be, is one of your greatest assets.

The Pink Ceiling

When we talk about breaking into male-dominated fields like finance or manufacturing, the journey for women entrepreneurs often feels like navigating a maze designed without us in mind. But here's the thing – these stereotypes, they can be your secret weapon. It's about flipping stereotypes on their head and using them to your advantage.

The Pink Ceiling Defined!

The pink ceiling is like an updated version of the 'glass ceiling.' It's about those invisible but real barriers that can stop some women and minorities from getting ahead in business. Think of it as not just a see-through barrier, but one colored with challenges especially faced by women – like getting paid less than men, not enough women bosses, and juggling work with family life. It's about breaking through a barrier that's not just hard to crack, but also painted with the specific problems women and minorities may face in the entrepreneurship world.

Take the case of Victoria's Secret, famously started by a man, Roy Raymond, who dared to venture into a female-centric business. It's a classic example of how stepping out of traditional gender roles can lead to unprecedented success. This narrative isn't just inspiring for women; it's a call to action for men too, to explore and innovate in areas traditionally seen as 'not for them'.

In an industry like finance or manufacturing, being a woman can sometimes feel like you're a lone flower in a field of thorns, yet, it's this uniqueness that becomes your strength. I've experienced this firsthand in my ventures, particularly in MTRS and other male-dominated arenas. The landscape has evolved since the 2000s, and the shift is noticeable – there's a growing appreciation for what women bring to the table.

This isn't about 'fitting in' or playing by the rules set by a predominantly male industry. It's about rewriting those rules, about bringing a blend of intuition, empathy, and resilience that often goes overlooked in these sectors. I learned early on that trying to blend in was a losing battle. Instead, I chose to stand out – to leverage my femininity as an asset. Whether it was in board meetings or strategy sessions, I brought perspectives that were often missed. And let's be real – there were raised eyebrows. But those very perspectives led to innovative solutions, and true meaning to the value of diversity in thought and approach.

In a male-dominated field, being a woman can sometimes feel like you're constantly proving your worth. It's exhausting, but it's also where you find your true grit. I've navigated this by being sly, by understanding the rules of the game, and then playing it my way. It's not just about being tough; it's about being smart, about knowing when to push forward and when to strategically pull back. Building a successful career in these industries as a woman has been like constructing a mosaic – each piece representing a challenge, a stereotype broken, a milestone achieved. It's about embracing your femininity, your age, your unique perspective, and weaving them into your professional narrative. It's about not confining yourself to 'woman-appropriate roles', but defining what those roles can be. The key to breaking gender stereotypes in entrepreneurship is to remember that your gender, your age, your unique traits – they're not hurdles. They are your arsenal. It's about wielding these with confidence, about creating a space where being a woman is not just accepted, but celebrated for the unique viewpoints it brings.

So, to every woman navigating the choppy waters of entrepreneurship in male-dominated fields – remember, your femininity is your strength, your age is your wisdom, and your journey is your story.

**WRITE IT BOLDLY,
UNAPOLOGETICALLY,
AND LET IT BE A
BEACON FOR
THOSE WHO
FOLLOW.**

CHAPTER 9

BUILD
THAT
CONFI-
DENCE

LET'S TALK CONFIDENCE.

Confidence building in entrepreneurship is a unique mix of self-discovery, skill enhancement, and mental resilience. It's not an overnight affair; it's a gradual climb, each step reinforcing the last. For me, fitness and wellness have been integral in this journey. They are not just about staying in shape; they're about mental clarity, discipline, and building a routine that reinforces self-belief.

When you commit to a fitness regime, you're doing more than just working out. You're setting a goal, following through, and witnessing your progress. Each milestone, whether it's lifting heavier, running faster, or just feeling stronger, is a confidence booster. It's a physical manifestation of your ability to commit and succeed. And this doesn't just apply to physical fitness. Whether it's picking up a new skill, learning a new language, or honing your cooking skills, the process of learning and growing in any area of life feeds into building your entrepreneurial confidence.

Another aspect of building confidence is understanding the power of a positive environment. Surround yourself with people who not only encourage your dreams, but also challenge you to grow and improve. This could mean joining entrepreneur groups, attending networking events, or simply having a circle of friends who share your ambition and drive. These interactions are like checkpoints on your journey, offering new insights, perspectives, and sometimes, the necessary reality checks.

Self-care is another critical element. It's the pit stops in your entrepreneurial road trip. Just like a car needs regular maintenance, your mind and body need downtime to recharge.

This could mean different things for different people – maybe it's a yoga session, a meditation practice, or just an evening with a good book or your favorite show. The key is to find what works for you, what helps you disconnect, relax, and return to your entrepreneurial journey with renewed energy and focus.

Celebrating others' successes is also a crucial part of building confidence. It's easy to view others' achievements as a reflection of what we haven't accomplished. But flipping this mindset and seeing their success as inspiration can be incredibly empowering. It's a reminder that success is achievable and that the entrepreneurial path, though challenging, has its rewards.

A continuous learning attitude is a major confidence builder. The world of entrepreneurship is ever-changing, and staying updated with the latest trends, technologies, and market shifts is crucial. Whether it's through formal education, online courses, or self-study, knowledge is a powerful tool. It not only prepares you for the challenges ahead, but also instills a sense of preparedness that is key to confidence.

So, whether you're a man, woman, or of any other gender identity, remember that building confidence is a universal journey. It's about finding what makes you tick, what challenges and inspires you, and embracing the journey of self-improvement.

Your path to confidence might be unique, but the destination is the same – a stronger, more resilient and self-assured you, ready to take on the world of entrepreneurship.

Learning to Trust That Gut

Trusting your gut or intuition in entrepreneurship is like having a sixth sense, a secret weapon that guides you through the murky waters of decision-making. It's more than just a hunch; it's an accumulation of your life experiences, knowledge, and emotional-

intelligence. Your intuition often whispers the right path to take, even when your logical mind is still weighing the pros and cons.

Here's the deal: intuition isn't some mystical force; it's deeply rooted in our subconscious. It's quite literally just that gut sitting in the middle of you. It's the brain's way of using past experiences and current information to make decisions quickly. Think of it as a mental shortcut. Developing this skill, however, takes a bit of work.

Start small. Begin by paying attention to your gut feelings in everyday situations. Did you have a hunch about someone's character and later found out you were right? Or perhaps a feeling about a decision that seemed illogical but turned out to be spot on? These everyday instances are your training ground. They teach you to differentiate between impulsive reactions and intuitive insights.

In the world of business, intuition plays a crucial role. Of course, data and analytics are key, but there are moments when your gut feeling is your best guide. It might be a decision about a partnership, a new market, or even walking away from a seemingly lucrative deal. Sometimes, your intuition sees red flags that your logical brain might overlook, or it recognizes potential where data is not yet available.

Trust-building exercises can also help. Try making small decisions based on your intuition and see how they pan out. Reflect on these decisions – what did your gut tell you? How did it feel to trust it? What was the outcome? These reflections help in honing your intuitive skills.

Mindfulness practices like meditation can also enhance your intuition. They quiet the noise in your mind, allowing you to hear-

your inner voice more clearly. A calm mind is like fertile soil for intuitive thoughts to flourish.

Remember, intuition thrives on self-trust. If you're constantly second-guessing yourself, you'll drown out that inner voice. Building self-trust is crucial – it involves acknowledging your past successes, learning from failures, and understanding you're capable of making sound decisions.

It's also about balancing intuition with rationality. Sometimes your intuition will lead the way, other times data will. The art lies in knowing which to lean on and when. This balance is what makes a savvy entrepreneur.

But don't forget to give your intuition space to breathe! In our hyper-connected world, we're constantly bombarded with information, opinions, and advice. It's essential to disconnect, to give yourself the silence and space needed for your intuition to surface.

Your gut feeling is a powerful tool in the entrepreneurial toolbox. It's not about discarding logic, but complementing it with the profound insights that only your inner voice can provide.

As you grow in your entrepreneurial career, you'll find that trusting your intuition becomes second nature – a guiding light through the complexities of business and life.

No Doubt On Self-Doubt

Self-doubt can be paralyzing, but it can also be a tool for growth. You can use self-doubt as a tool for refining and honing your ideas. When that inner critic pipes up, use it as an opportunity to pause and reflect. It's not about silencing self-doubt; it's about engaging with it constructively.

Let's break it down. Self-doubt usually stems from three sources: a lack of confidence in your skills, uncertainty about your plan, or a general fear of the unknown. The first step is identifying the root of your doubt. Is it a skill you feel you're lacking? Then, it's an opportunity for growth and learning. Unsure about your business plan? That's your cue to delve deeper, seek feedback, and strengthen it. Fear of the unknown? Well, that's the essence of entrepreneurship - stepping into uncharted territory.

The key is not to let self-doubt spiral out of control. It's like holding the reins of a powerful horse – you need to guide it, not let it run wild. When doubts start to cloud your judgment, take a step back. Ask yourself, “Is this doubt based on facts, or is it just my fears talking?” Remember, 'fear' has two meanings: 'Forget Everything and Run' or 'Face Everything and Rise.' Choose the latter.

Self-doubt also plays a crucial role in keeping you grounded. It's the yin to your overconfidence's yang. It makes you question, re-evaluate, and often leads to more robust, well-thought-out decisions. The trick is to strike a balance - enough self-doubt to keep you vigilant, but not so much that it paralyzes you.

Here's a practical tip: write down your doubts. Seeing them on paper can take away some of their power. Then, next to each doubt, write a counterpoint or a solution. This exercise not only clears your mind, but also puts things into perspective.

Engage with mentors or peers when self-doubt creeps in. Often, what you perceive as a mountain might just be a molehill for someone who's been there. A different perspective can be a game-changer.

Visualization is another powerful tool. Visualize yourself overco-

ming these doubts and succeeding. This mental exercise can significantly boost your confidence and reshape your mindset.

Remember, self-doubt is a universal experience, not unique to you. Every successful entrepreneur has wrestled with it at some point. What sets them apart is not the absence of doubt, but the ability to move forward despite it. Embrace affirmations. Simple, positive, statements can rewire your brain to be more positive. Whenever doubt creeps in, counter it with an affirmation. For instance, 'I am capable of tackling any challenge that comes my way.'

Embrace it. Entrepreneurship is not a sprint; it's a marathon with hurdles. Accept that self-doubt is part of this journey. It's not about never doubting yourself; it's about not letting those doubts define or defeat you. Like I always say, 'In the world of entrepreneurship, self-doubt is a bump, not a stop sign.'

Self-doubt in entrepreneurship is inevitable, but there's no doubt it's manageable. It's about transforming this doubt into a catalyst for growth and improvement. Remember, on the other side of self-doubt lies growth, confidence, and success.

So, whenever you feel doubt creeping in, remind yourself: 'I am stronger than my doubts'.

Embracing Your Unique Path, Suppressed Entrepreneur

Your path is yours. So as you navigate this path, remember that self-work is an ongoing journey, not a destination. It's about continuously evolving, growing, and learning. And it's okay to stumble along the way – each fall is just another lesson, not a failure. We're here to guide you, offering a hand to pull you up, a word of advice to steer you in the right direction, and a cheer to celebrate your every win, big or small.

Breaking free from the shackles of suppression – be it self-doubt, societal expectations, or cultural norms – is an act of bravery. It's about stepping into the entrepreneurial world with a spirit of resilience and self-assurance. It's about saying, “Here I am, with all my fears and dreams, ready to carve my niche.”

As you make your mark in this world, remember that your journey is about more than just profit margins and market shares. It's about the impact you leave, the lives you touch, and the legacy you build. It's about creating something that resonates not just with the market, but with your very soul. The sky's not the limit – it's just the beginning. Start where you are, use what you have, and do what you can. Recognizing that you, as a suppressed entrepreneur, isn't a weakness; it's a profound act of self-awareness and confidence. It's an acknowledgment that yes, there are forces holding you back, clipping your wings, but it's also a declaration that you possess the needle and thread to mend them.

Being a suppressed entrepreneur is in itself a testament to your resilience. It's about seeing the barriers – be they societal norms, personal doubts, or external circumstances – and choosing to rise above them. It's a quiet, yet powerful form of self-confidence, knowing you have within you the courage and the resourcefulness to break free and soar.

Being suppressed is only a part of your story, not the conclusion. It's a chapter that adds depth to your narrative. So hold your needle and thread with pride and determination. Mend your wings, and prepare to take flight.

Remember, in the grand scheme of things, the only limit is the one you set for yourself. So start, and let the world see what you're truly made of. **Remember, start's the limit. So start!**

**AND TO YOU (YES
YOU!), THE ASPIRING,
SUPPRESSED ENTREPRENEUR
READING THIS: YOUR
DREAMS ARE VALID,
YOUR ASPIRATIONS
ARE ATTAINABLE, AND
YOUR DOUBTS ARE
CONQUERABLE.**

CHAPTER 10

**STEP INTO
YOUR**

POWER!

***MAYBE WITH A PLUS 1
OR 2 OR 3...***

SO, YOU'VE TAKEN THE LEAP.

Welcome to the world of the Founded Entrepreneur – where the ground you tread is of your own making. This journey, my friend, isn't just a career move; it's akin to rebirth, a metamorphosis from being an employee, to the architect of your destiny. Feeling that mix of dread and excitement? Good. It means you're alive and kicking, ready for the entrepreneurial rodeo.

Let's get one thing straight – being a founding entrepreneur isn't just about replacing your desk job with a fancier title. It's about redefining and finding yourself. So are you ready to be a founder entrepreneur?

It Starts With You

Whether it's 5:06 PM after a long day at work, or 5:06 AM during a restless night before your 9-5, 8-5, or even 6-2 job—whatever your schedule may be—the specific time is not the crux of the matter. The essential point is that you've made a pivotal decision. Congratulations are in order, for you are now embarking on a journey towards becoming a founding entrepreneur. Has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?

This decision is a game-changer. It's not just about swapping your job title; it's about overhauling your entire identity. Picture this: you're moving from being an employee to a founding entrepreneur – it's like stepping off a diving board into the unknown. Every move you make, every deal you strike, now mirrors your personal ethos and ambition. Sure, it's scary and exhilarating all at once. If you're not feeling a flutter in your stomach or a little thrill of 'what have I gotten myself into?,' then we might need to check your pulse or maybe even phone a friend for a quick chat!

Remember, it's not just about being savvy in business; it's about growing as a person too. Strap in, because this ride doesn't just test your business skills; it's a full-blown face lift of self-discovery.

ONE AND MAYBE A PLUS I, 2, OR 3...

Embarking on an entrepreneurial journey isn't always a solo flight. Sometimes, having a co-pilot or two can make the flight more navigable, especially when turbulence hits. My story is peppered with partnerships that have shaped not just my businesses, but also me as an entrepreneur, friend, and person.

Brittany. Starting a business with Brittany, my college bestie, was like jumping into a tandem skydive. Our weekly meet-ups at Panera, or the local library transformed from casual catch-ups to serious strategy sessions. We brainstormed, scribbled in notebooks, and slowly, our dream morphed into a tangible plan. This plan was our ticket to a \$25k line of credit, on top of our modest savings. But the real test was finding the right location. I had my heart set on Melville, NY, but we ended up in Port Washington. It wasn't perfect, but it was a start. This venture taught me the value of compromise and adapting to circumstances. While we initially envisioned a bustling location, we found our niche in a quieter town. Despite the challenges – the emotional rollercoaster of quitting my first well compensated accounting job out of college, navigating town approvals, and the overwhelming financial strain – it was a dream come true. Running a business with a friend is exhilarating, but it's also a relentless grind. When I had to borrow money from my parents, the weight of my decisions hit me hard. The entrepreneurial path is not just about the victories; it's about enduring and learning from the setbacks.

Jeff. EyeTemp started as my solo venture, with a team of freelancers bringing my vision to life. But when it came time to scale, Jeff Bergstein came into the picture. Our partnership was serendipitous, sparked by a recommendation at a startup hub. Jeff, a retiree from Arrow Electronics, brought a wealth of experience to the table. Working with Jeff was like finding my entrepreneurial soulmate. We were in sync, from business development, product development, to marketing strategies. This partnership was different from my fitness studio venture. We were complete strangers who were provided introductions because of EyeTemp and our complementary skills. The icing on the cake was that we got along so well and had so many similar visions and interests, that naturally we bloomed into very close friends. Our joint venture, the Upside Downside podcast, is a testament to our harmonious friendship and partnership, combining our experiences and perspectives in a unique intergenerational dialogue.

Cody. In Coastal Charm Properties, my partnership with Cody Greenfield, my brother-in-law, is built on mutual respect and shared ambition. Cody's background in sales and my experience in entrepreneurship create a dynamic synergy. We both dream big, but we also put in the hard work to turn those dreams into reality. This is the first venture I have ever done with family, but it has worked to benefit both of us and our families. Our approach to real estate is agile and adaptive, always staying ahead of market trends. We motivate each other each day to grow in our sector and look into new ventures. We also lean on each other as sounding boards for business advice. Cody's tenacity and my strategic thinking complement each other, pushing our ventures to new heights. It's a partnership where we both bring our strengths to the table, creating a robust and forward-thinking enterprise.

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Danielle. And then there's my accounting business, a solo venture that's unfolded alongside my partnerships. It's brought its own set of challenges, but more so a whole lot of rewards. More than anything, it's shown me the real power of relying on myself. There's a unique confidence that comes with running your own business, a straightforward, satisfying sense of achievement. It feels great to make decisions and see the direct impact of my work. This isn't just about building a business—it's about building the confidence and pride that come from creating something on my own terms. Each experience, be it partnership or solo, has taught me invaluable lessons. Whether blending different skills, experiences, and perspectives with a co-founder or navigating the skies of entrepreneurship on my own, it's all about trust, adaptation, and the willingness to take calculated risks.

And, whether you're winging it with partners or going it alone, when you hit your stride - man, what a feeling!

**BEING A FOUNDING
ENTREPRENEUR ISN'T
JUST ABOUT
REPLACING YOUR
DESK JOB WITH A
FANCIER TITLE. IT'S
ABOUT REDEFINING
AND FINDING
YOURSELF.**

CHAPTER 11

**CONGRATS,
NOW YOU
HAVE TO
NAME IT!**

Ah, the naming ceremony of your entrepreneurial baby! Choosing a name for your business is like naming a rockstar – it sets the stage for the personality, vibe, and future hits.

But let's get something straight: *while a catchy name can turn heads, it's not the magic wand that transforms a startup into a unicorn.*

In the grand scheme of things, a name is just the opening act – your business's performance is the headliner. Think about it. Google wasn't always synonymous with search. It was just a quirky name until the quality behind it made it a verb in our daily lingo. The same goes for your venture. Whether you lean towards a self-named brand or get fancy with some Latin or 'fancy-shmancy' European flair, the real magic happens after the name is chosen. It's what you do with the name that counts.

But, oh, the thrill of that “aha!” moment when you find the perfect name. When it happens, you feel it in your gut. It's more than just a name; it's a declaration, a promise, a tiny peek into the soul of your venture. Now, let's not forget the legal tango you have to do. You have to ensure that your business name isn't already taken, i.e., registered in the state you want to set up shop in. Legally navigating business structures is a different story. Corporations, partnerships, and sole proprietorships all have their own advantages and nuances. What we're trying to do is provide clarity on what might work best for your business right now.

In the digital age, your business name is more than just a label; it's a brand identity that echoes across various platforms. It's the first thing people type into their search bars or social media apps. A catchy, memorable name can be a game-changer in the world of hashtags, handles, and hyperlinks.

Imagine this: You choose a name that's sleek, trendy, and just rolls off the tongue. The next step? You hop onto Instagram or TikTok, only to find that your perfect name is already a hashtag for something entirely unrelated, or worse, taken by a completely different business. Now your marketing strategy has to compete with an established digital presence, and that's like starting a race a few laps behind.

Your business name on social media isn't just about branding; it's about accessibility. When your name aligns seamlessly with your social media handles, it creates a cohesive online presence. This consistency makes it easier for customers to find and engage with you. Think of it as digital curb appeal – the easier and more attractive you make it for people to stumble upon your business online, the better your chances of converting clicks into customers. So choose wisely!

Let's talk tone. Your business name sets the stage for your brand's voice. A playful, quirky name invites a more casual, approachable tone in your social media interactions. A sleek, professional name? That might call for a more polished and sophisticated approach. Your name is the first hint of your brand's personality, and in the social media landscape, where personality is king, this is crucial.

Networking, ah, the lifeline of any business. In networking events, your business name is often the first impression. It can spark curiosity, resonate with a shared experience, or simply make people go, "Tell me more."

It's not just a name; it's a conversation starter!

And in the world of LinkedIn and online networking, where every interaction (really, a DM or Direct Message) is a potential lead, a name that stands out can be your best networking tool.

Basically... When selecting your business name, think beyond the signboard. Consider its digital footprint, its tone, and its networking power. Your name is the first step in telling your story – make sure it's a story that resonates both offline and online, from a handshake to a hashtag.

IDEA GENERATION AND VALIDATION

Your venture out of suppression begins with a spark of an idea. But let's get real – we need to ground this spark in reality to avoid a crash landing.

So, you're ready to break free and start something of your own, right? Here's the deal: the best business ideas often come from what you already love doing. What do you do for fun and free? What could you talk about for hours on end without needing a caffeine boost? That's your goldmine.

Here's a little homework for you (don't worry, it's the fun kind!):

Here's your first task: for a week, keep an eye on what grabs your attention. What topics do you find yourself scrolling through during lunch breaks? What do you find yourself Googling? What sort of videos are your go-to when you hit play? What type of podcasts do you listen to or books do you read? There's a hint in these habits. They're not just random interests; they're the raw materials for your future business.

Now, let's get practical. How can these interests morph into a business? That love for baking or knack for organizing – can they be monetized? If you can figure out a way to monetize your passion successfully, that may be your definition of success.

However, if you are unable to do this you may have to leave passion out of the formula initially until you find the right fit. Striking a balance between doing what you love and making it work in the real world is the ultimate outcome. You can start small, think pop-up shops or an Etsy store, and test the waters. This phase is all about finding the sweet spot where your passion meets market demand.

Networking is your new best friend. Jump onto LinkedIn or Instagram, not just to post, but to engage. Connect with folks who've turned their hobbies into actual real-life businesses. These chats are more than just networking; they're reality checks and inspiration rolled into one.

Your business idea doesn't have to be revolutionary. It just needs to be something you're crazy about.

Keep this in mind: transforming a passion into a paycheck isn't just about the thrill of doing something that resonates with you deeply. It's also about the nitty-gritty of business – understanding your audience, marketing your product, and yes, dealing with the less glamorous side of things like taxes and inventory management.

Because when you love what you do, it shows – and that's what makes customers come back for more.

But, and this is a big but, don't just leap into the passion pit without peeking first. Sure, loving what you do is a big plus - it keeps you going when the going gets tough. But passion alone doesn't pay the bills.

**BE PASSIONATE
ABOUT YOUR
WORK, BUT
DON'T BE
PASSIONATE
ONLY ABOUT
YOUR WORK.**

CHAPTER 12

VENTURE TIME

AND YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY, RIGHT? IT TAKES 21 DAYS TO FORM A HABIT.

So, you've got a business idea? Great! But let's see if it's more than just a fleeting thought. Welcome to the 21-Day Business Idea Marathon, where you put your idea through its paces to see if it's got the legs to run the entrepreneurial race.

Here's your game plan:

Daily Deep Dive: For the next 21 days, immerse yourself in your business idea. It's time to live, breathe, and dream about it. Whether it's crafting artisanal candles, designing a revolutionary app, or launching your consulting gig – put your heart and soul into it. Each day, dedicate some solid time to refine, research, and ruminate over your idea.

21 Conversations: Reach out and spark conversations with 21 people you don't know. This is your networking goldmine. Engage with potential customers, fellow entrepreneurs, or just a curious friend of a friend of a friend. Gather their feedback – the good, the bad, and even the brutally honest. Every opinion is a nugget of insight!

Document Your Journey: Keep a journal or a digital diary. Note down everything – your progress, your doubts, your eureka moments. This isn't just about tracking your progress; it's about watching your idea evolve in real-time. Plus, when you look back, you'll have a clear map of how far you've come.

Socialize Your Idea: Take to social media like LinkedIn, Instagram, or TikTok. Share snippets of your journey, your process, your learnings. This isn't just about building an audience; it's about building a community around your idea. Use hashtag: [#TheSuppressedEntrepreneurChallenge](#) to track your journey and connect with others on the same path.

Reflection Time: At the finish line of your 21-day marathon, step back and reflect. Are those initial butterflies about your idea now raging eagles? Or does it feel like a hobby that's best enjoyed on the sidelines? This is your moment of truth.

This 21-day challenge is more than just testing an idea; it's about making those wings soar! It's about building discipline, fostering connections, and getting a taste of what it feels like to breathe life into an idea. Remember, this journey is as much about discovering your idea as it is about discovering yourself.

Are you ready to sprint, jog, or maybe just walk through these 21 days? Whatever your pace, the goal is to cross that finish line with clarity and confidence.

So, lace up your entrepreneurial sneakers, and let's hit the track. Who knows, by the end of this marathon, you might just be ready to join the league of [#SuppressedEntrepreneur's](#) turned [#ThrivingEntrepreneur's](#).

READY, SET, VENTURE!

Finding the Entry Gap

Alright, now that you know if that idea is your real-life venture, let's dive into figuring out where your business idea can really make a splash.

First things first, *know your competition.*

- **Direct Competitors:** Who's out there? What are they doing right? More importantly, what are they missing? It's like stalking someone on social media, but you're stalking businesses.
- **Indirect Competitors:** These are the ones who might not seem like a threat at first glance, but they're nibbling at the edges of your market. They're the undercover agents in your business world. Who are they?

When you delve into understanding your competition, it's like being a detective. You're gathering clues, understanding their strategies, and finding their weaknesses.

Start by identifying your direct competitors, the ones offering similar products or services. Analyze their marketing tactics, customer engagement, and product quality. It's not about imitating them, but learning from their moves and finding ways to do it better. Then, widen your scope to include indirect competitors, those not in your exact field, but still vying for the same audience. This broadens your understanding of the market and uncovers potential opportunities you might have missed. Remember, your competition isn't just your adversary; they're also your teacher.

Next, do some serious sleuthing

Now, turn your focus to uncovering the secrets behind your competitors' success. Imagine yourself as a business spy, sneaking through the digital world to gather intel.

Check their investor reports, strategic plans, and market positioning. These documents are like hidden maps revealing their strategies and weaknesses. Online platforms are another goldmine for information. Dive into their social media profiles, customer reviews, and forums. These platforms offer unfiltered insights into what customers love, hate, and desire from your competitors. Use this knowledge to refine your strategies and find your unique selling proposition.

- If your competitors are the big fish with fancy reports and investor briefings, give them a read. It's like peeking into their strategy playbook.
- Check out resources like Crunchbase to see where they got their cash and how they grew. It's like LinkedIn stalking, but for business insights.

Now, let's go undercover online.

- How's their social media game? What are people saying about them? This is where you get the real tea.
- Reviews are a goldmine. People spill the real deal when they review.

This step involves a deep dive into the digital footprint of your competitors.

Scrutinize their social media activities, website user experience, and online customer interactions.

Pay attention to their content strategy, engagement tactics, and response to customer inquiries or complaints. This online investigation offers a wealth of information about their operational strategies and customer relations. It also provides insights into current trends and customer expectations within your industry.

Let's play compare and contrast.

- Make a list of what you've got versus them. It's your mini business face-off.
- Try some blind tests. Can people tell the difference between your stuff and the competition without the branding? It's a great way to see where you stand.

After gathering all this information, it's time for a showdown. Compare your business directly with your competitors. Create a detailed chart analyzing how you stack up against them in various aspects like quality, pricing, customer service, and innovation. This comparison will help you identify your strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, conduct blind tests or focus groups with potential customers to get unbiased feedback about your product compared to others.

This feedback is crucial in understanding how your business is perceived in the market and where you can improve or capitalize on your uniqueness.

Time to wear your detective hat.

- Dive into how they're pulling in customers and keeping them. It's like solving a mystery.
- SWOT Analysis time! Yep, lay it all out.

Conduct a SWOT analysis (aka a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats deep dive) for your business and your competitors. This analysis will help you understand where you stand in the market and identify potential opportunities for growth; and with AI it's easier than ever to get it done. It's a strategic tool that can guide your business decisions and help you focus on areas where you can gain a competitive edge.

Stay on top of trends.

- Keep your finger on the pulse. Follow industry news, sign up for newsletters. It's like keeping up with your favorite influencers, but for business.
- Patent searches? Yep, they can be dry, but they tell you where the big guns are focusing their efforts.

Keep yourself updated with the latest industry trends. Subscribe to newsletters, follow industry leaders on social media, and attend webinars and conferences. Staying informed helps you anticipate market shifts and adapt your strategies accordingly. This proactive approach ensures that your business remains relevant and competitive in a rapidly changing market.

And don't forget to map it all out.

- Price matters. How much are people willing to pay, and why? Think of it like a big jigsaw puzzle.
- Keep this map fresh. Update it as things change, like when your competitors drop a new product or tweak their services.

Finally, use visual tools like graphs and charts to map out your findings. Tools like Tableau or Power BI can help you visualize complex data and make informed decisions. Share these findings with your team or mentors and brainstorm strategies to capitalize on these insights. This collaborative approach can lead to innovative ideas and strategies that can give your business a competitive edge.

Now, for the grand finale, put it all together

Now comes the grand finale of your market research saga: synthesizing and visualizing your findings. Tools like Tableau or Power BI are like your storytelling partners, turning raw data into compelling visual narratives. With these tools, you can trans-

form complex information into digestible, insightful charts and graphs. This visual storytelling is not just for your understanding, but also to communicate your findings effectively to your team, potential investors, or mentors. It's about taking the raw essence of your research and weaving it into a clear, strategic vision for your business.

Organize brainstorming sessions with your team or with friends who can offer a fresh perspective. Discuss the implications of your findings - what do these market gaps and trends mean for your business idea? How can you leverage this information to carve a niche for your venture? This collaborative approach can unearth innovative strategies and new directions that you might not have considered alone.

- Bring your findings to life with tools like Tableau or Power BI. Visuals make complex info way easier to digest.
- Brainstorm with your team or your friends. What do these gaps and trends mean for your business idea?

Finally, validate your idea

After all your research and planning, it's time to put your business idea to the ultimate test: validation through a Minimum Viable Product (MVP).

Think of your MVP as your business idea's first real-world audition. It's a stripped-down version of your product or service, containing only the essential features necessary to make it functional and appealing to early adopters. This approach allows you to gauge customer interest and gather valuable feedback without the full-scale investment of a complete product launch.

Utilize platforms like UserTesting.com to get unbiased feedback from real users. This feedback is gold – it gives you direct insights into what works, what doesn't, and what could be impro-

ved. It's about testing the waters before diving in fully. Remember, the MVP is not your final product; it's a learning tool, an experiment that provides real-world data and insights. It helps you refine your business model, tweak your product, and better align with your target market's needs and expectations.

Remember, the goal is to find that sweet spot in the market where you can swoop in and offer something awesome. And hey, don't stress too much about getting it perfect from day one. Business is about evolving, adapting, and finding your groove as you go!

But it's also about learning from those who've been there, done that.

NETWORKING: YOUR IDEA LAB

Online: Sliding into the DMs (Direct Messages)

In today's digital age, networking extends far beyond in-person events. Sliding into DMs on platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram is the new norm, and it can open doors to exciting opportunities. Here's how to do it right:

DM's are a direct line of communication unlike no other that can be incredibly valuable. It's a great way to connect with peers. It's less about selling and more about sharing experiences and knowledge. *Here's how to craft the perfect DM.*

Start with a warm introduction. Crafting the perfect DM is an art form in the digital networking world. It's your first impression, your digital handshake. Start with a personal touch – mention a blog post, a shared interest, or a mutual connection. This initial connection is about laying the groundwork for ———

a relationship, not just a transaction.

Be Genuine! Let your personality shine through. Avoid sounding like a scripted sales pitch. You're aiming for a peer-to-peer chat, not a cold call. Your message should ooze authenticity. This isn't the place for a copy-paste job. Personalize your message, show genuine interest, and let your personality shine through. Think of it as a virtual coffee chat – you're trying to start a conversation, not close a deal.

Offer Value. Always aim to provide value. Whether it's a useful article, an insightful comment, or a helpful suggestion, make sure your message brings something to the table. Networking is about mutual benefits, not just what you can take. By offering value, you're laying the foundation for a reciprocal relationship.

Keep It Short and Sweet. Long messages can be overwhelming. Stick to a few sentences that get straight to the point.

Navigating the Digital Space is about respecting people's time, because after all it is money and they might be busy.

If you don't get a response right away, don't take it personally. Here's what to do after hitting send.

Follow up is important. Often, it's the repeated nudges that finally get you a response. Ever heard 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease'? That's the idea, but balance is key. You don't want to come off as pushy. Instead, craft your messages to radiate genuine interest and a bit of tenacity. Show you're in it for more than just a quick win.

Build a Relationship. Networking is a marathon, not a sprint. Focus on building relationships over time, not only just when you need something. When you meet a contact of interest, make a point to be helpful first. Maybe send them a lead, or share something they'll find valuable. It's about laying down a foundation of generosity and trust, not just collecting contacts.

The Hybrid Approach. In today's world, successful networking is a blend of online prowess and offline charm. Use your online connections as a springboard for real-world interactions. A LinkedIn or Instagram conversation can lead to a coffee or e-meeting, which can then evolve into a valuable business relationship!

Find opportunities by exploring industry groups like LinkedIn and Facebook which are hubs for like-minded professionals. Participate in discussions and share your insights. These platforms are brimming with groups where professionals gather to share insights and experiences.

Actively participating in these groups can not only expand your knowledge, but also put you on the radar of potential collaborators, mentors, and clients.

Don't be afraid to attend virtual events. Many events have moved online, offering new opportunities to connect with speakers and attendees in chat rooms or breakout sessions. There's a wealth of opportunities to network from the comfort of your home.

Engage actively during these events – ask questions, participate in discussions, and follow up with speakers or attendees who piqued your interest. These interactions, though virtual, can lead to meaningful connections.

IRL: GEARING UP

Networking is not just a buzzword; it's an art form. It's about more than just exchanging business cards – it's about building connections that last, and learning from those who've walked the path before you.

Here's how you can dive into the networking pool with finesse and purpose.

Social Media Savvy. Platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram are more than just social spaces; they're goldmines for networking opportunities. But it's not just about passive scrolling; it's about active engagement. Follow industry leaders, accounts with mutuals and influencers, but don't stop there. Engage with their content, drop thoughtful comments, and share your insights. This isn't just about getting noticed; it's about starting conversations and getting your username in their inbox.

Use hashtags wisely – they're like the breadcrumbs that lead you to the right events. Keep an eye on tags like #networkingevent or #industryconference. These tags are your compass, pointing you towards events that could open doors for your business.

Event Platform Sites. Websites like Eventbrite or Meetup are awesome for discovering events. Whether you're looking for a local meet-up, a webinar, or an industry-specific workshop, these platforms have got you covered. The key here is to filter events not just by location or industry, but also by the type of engagement they offer. Remember, each event is a potential goldmine of connections and knowledge.

But here's a pro tip: *Don't just attend these events; participate actively.*

Ask questions, offer insights, and if it's an in-person event, don't shy away from initiating conversations. Networking events are not just about listening; they're about engaging and leaving an impression.

Industry Newsletters! Think of industry newsletters as that one friend who knows everything about everyone, and they're not afraid to share all the scoop. They bring you insider information right to your inbox. When it comes to staying updated in the fast-paced business world without spending hours scouring through news, I've got some personal favorites that hit the sweet spot between informative and concise.

- ❑ First up, **Morning Brew**. It's like the Swiss Army knife of business newsletters, covering everything from Wall Street to Silicon Valley. It's witty, sharp, and gives you just enough to keep you in the loop.
- ❑ For the startup enthusiasts I'd recommend my go-to— **CB Insights**. It dives deep with data-driven analysis, giving you the lowdown on emerging business trends and investment patterns.
- ❑ **TechCrunch** is my go-to for all things tech. If you want to keep your finger on the pulse of the latest in tech, startups, and Silicon Valley gossip, this is it.
- ❑ If you're looking for something a bit more scholarly, **Harvard Business Review** and **MIT Sloan Management Review** are like attending a mini-MBA class. They offer profound insights into management practices and the latest in business research.
- ❑ Then there's **The Hustle**. Perfect for entrepreneurs and business buffs, it delivers tech and business news with insights that can spark some great ideas.

- ❑ **Forbes** is another staple. It's a mix of everything – business news, lifestyle, and even some inspiring success stories. It keeps things light but informative.
- ❑ **Inc. This Morning** is a must for small business owners. It blends practical advice with motivational stories that resonate with the entrepreneurial spirit.
- ❑ And for those keen on market trends and economic insights, **BloombergQuint** is a treasure trove. It's especially great if you're into investment strategies and global financial news.

These newsletters have become an integral part of my daily routine, giving me everything I need to stay ahead in the game. Remember, knowledge is not just power; it's an icebreaker, a conversation starter, and sometimes a deal maker.

Pre-Event Practice: Confidence on the Left, Optimism on the Right

In addition to keeping yourself up-to-date with the latest news, a bit of prep before the event can boost your confidence. Practice introducing yourself in the mirror. It might feel a bit silly at first, but it's a great way to work on your body language and delivery. Remember, your posture and gestures speak volumes. Aim for a stance that's open and inviting, maintaining good posture without seeming stiff.

For those who find it challenging to interpret or exhibit body language, practicing in front of a mirror or recording a video selfie can be especially helpful. This allows you to see how you might appear to others and adjust accordingly.

IRL: THE MINGLING

Prep like a Pro. Before you step into the world of networking events, doing a bit of homework can really pay off. Walk in with a game plan. Ask yourself: What's my goal here? Looking for referrals, business buddies, potential clients, or just to wave your brand flag? Who are the players? What's their story? Jot down some questions or thoughts that relate to your business idea. Think of it as peeking at the test questions before the big exam - it's a strategy, not cheating!

Read the Room. Incorporating the art of room scanning into your networking strategy can enhance your ability to make the right moves. When you enter the event space, take a moment to observe. Where people position themselves in the room can reveal a lot about their intentions and openness to engage. For instance, those lingering near the snack bar or the DJ booth might be looking for casual, easy-going conversations. It's akin to those early college days at a freshman year party, where you'd gauge the crowd to see who was approachable, and where the interesting conversations were happening.

Here's a useful tip: *look for individuals or groups standing in open circles. These formations often indicate that others are welcome to join the conversation. On the other hand, closed circles or intense one-on-one discussions might signal that it's best not to interrupt.*

As you scan the room, also pay attention to body language. Are people leaning in, smiling, or nodding? These are good signs they are engaged and open to new connections. Those who are looking around or standing alone might be more approachable and, like you, looking to start a conversation.

Think back to your first college party experience – how did you approach new people? What worked and what didn't? Networking events are similar in many ways. Starting a conversation can be as simple as asking someone about their role, their company, or what brought them to the event. Just like asking someone their major, it's a straightforward way to break the ice and delve into more engaging topics. Moreover, position yourself strategically. Standing near the entrance gives you the chance to greet people as they come in, while mingling near the coffee or snack table can provide easy conversation starters. Just like in those college days, being in the right place at the right time can lead to the most memorable and valuable connections. Remember, networking events are about more than just exchanging business cards; they are opportunities to build relationships. So, take a deep breath, scan the room with confidence, and step into the dance of networking with a keen eye and an open mind.

Get in there and Mingle it Up. Don't just be a wallflower. Be bold, make the first move. Everyone's in that room for the same reason - to mingle. You're there to connect, learn, and leave an impression. Remember, the best networkers aren't just talkers; they're excellent listeners too. Absorb what others are saying – you never know what golden nugget of advice or idea you might pick up.

Listen Up! Approaching speakers or participants doesn't have to be a high-stress situation. A casual greeting like "Hi, I'm [Your Name]," paired with a genuine compliment, can open doors to interesting conversations. For a more relaxed approach, try complimenting something specific like their presentation, attire, or even the energy they bring to the room. A simple, *"I really like your style/energy, it made me want to come over and say hello,"* can be a great icebreaker.

Let Them Shine. Here's a little secret – people love talking about themselves. So, give them the spotlight. Ask about their experiences or opinions. You'd be surprised how much folks are willing to share when they're the center of the conversation. It's like opening a book full of industry secrets – all you need to do is turn the pages.

Pay attention to their vibe. Interested? Keep chatting. Eyes glazing over? Thank them and move on.

Timing is Everything. But remember, timing is crucial. If they're rushing off to another session or in the middle of a bite, give them space. Find the right moment where you can have their attention without being intrusive.

Keep it Accessible and Inclusive

Networking events should be inclusive spaces where entrepreneurs of all abilities can interact comfortably. For entrepreneurs with physical disabilities, check in advance about the accessibility of the venue. If you have specific needs, don't hesitate to contact the organizers ahead of time. They are usually more than willing to make accommodations.

For those with paw terns. If you have a support or guide dog, don't hesitate to bring them along. They're not just a source of comfort; they're part of your team. Their presence can ease anxiety and provide a natural conversation starter, making networking a more manageable and enjoyable experience.

Tag-Team It. IYNI. Navigating networking events with a companion involves a delicate balance between their supportive presence and your own networking goals. Before attending, it's crucial to set clear expectations with your companion about their-

role, whether it's initiating conversations, providing moral support, or simply being a comforting presence. It's important to ensure that your companion's presence isn't overwhelming or dominating, allowing you to remain the focal point of your business interactions. Encourage your companion to occasionally step back, giving you space to engage independently with others. This approach fosters more natural interactions and prevents the perception of having an 'entourage,' which might intimidate potential contacts.

Developing non-verbal cues can be helpful for times when you need support or prefer to handle interactions alone. After each event, reflect with your companion on what worked and what could be improved for future engagements. In challenging conversations, a well-timed intervention from your companion can provide a chance to regroup or steer the discussion in a more favorable direction.

Go Beyond the Small Talk

Instead of just talking at them, ask a question to get them involved. Like, *"What do you think about [Specific Aspect] in relation to [Your Idea]?"*

Networking is more than just exchanging business cards; it's about forming genuine connections. Think about it: everyone in that room made a conscious decision to be there. They're not just filling space; they're seeking meaningful connections, just like you.

If you're not comfortable with small talk, try steering the conversation towards topics you're passionate about. This not only eases the pressure, but also allows you to connect on a more meaningful level. If there's meant to be a real connection here- it will flow! If not, on to the next.

PITCH PERFECT: THE ELEVATOR PITCH AT THE EVENT

In a networking context, your elevator pitch isn't just about selling; it's about sparking interest and inviting further conversation. This pitch is your verbal business card, a snippet that encapsulates who you are and what your venture is about. The environment is more relaxed than a formal investor pitch. The key here is to stir curiosity and forge a connection, not to close a deal on the spot.

Here's a breakdown of what that will look like:

- ❑ **Who You Are:** Quick intro – make it snappy and personal.
- ❑ **Your Street Cred:** A brief shout-out to your experience or background.
- ❑ **Spot the Problem:** What's the big issue you've spotted you want to tackle?
- ❑ **Your Super Solution:** Here's where your idea shines. What are you offering?
- ❑ **Why It's Awesome:** Highlight what makes your thing special.
- ❑ **The Proof:** Got early wins or positive feedback? Flaunt it.
- ❑ **Invite Them In:** Wrap it up with a call to action, like asking for their thoughts or suggesting a coffee chat to dive deeper.

Here's something I would use: *“Hey, I'm Danielle Michel... So, I've kind of carved out this niche in the world of business tax credits. It's a bit like being the go-to resource, the specialist that businesses turn to. I focus on helping businesses get refunds and save money through complex tax credits. It might not sound like the most exciting topic, but believe me, it's like uncovering gems for businesses. I chose this path because, at heart, I'm an entrepreneur who loves supporting other entrepreneurs. So, what's your business about? I'm always intrigued to hear fellow entrepreneurs' stories”.*

When and How to Pitch

The key to a successful elevator pitch at a networking event is timing and context. Read the room and the conversation. If there's an opening where your pitch feels natural and relevant, go for it. However, if the conversation is flowing elsewhere, it's okay to hold off. Networking is about building relationships, and sometimes that means prioritizing listening and connecting over pitching.

Adapting Your Pitch

Be prepared to tailor your pitch slightly based on who you're talking to. If they're from your industry, you can use more specific jargon. If they're not, simplify it. The goal is to be understood and to create a connection, not to overwhelm with details.

Practice Makes Perfect

Practice your pitch but keep it flexible. It shouldn't sound rehearsed but rather like a natural part of the conversation. Record yourself, watch your body language, and make sure you come across as confident, yet approachable.

In essence, your elevator pitch at a networking event is your ———

quick-fire way to make a lasting impression. It's an art of balancing the essence of your business idea with the nuances of human connection. So, go in with confidence, stay adaptable, and remember, sometimes the best business relationships start with a simple “*Hey!*”

After the Party

The debrief session! Reflecting on a networking event is like sitting down after a big game. Just like athletes review their play, debriefing helps you assess what worked and what didn't. Think of it as your personal networking playbook. For those who had a friend or support person along, discuss how their presence impacted your networking. Did they help break the ice, or did they inadvertently overshadow your conversations? This is like analyzing game footage – learning from each interaction to refine your strategy.

Remember those college sorority/fraternity rush days, where you learned the art of conversation with almost anyone? That's what you're doing here. Review each interaction, just like you would have discussed social interactions during rush week. What did you learn from each person you met? How can you apply these insights going forward?

Mastering the Follow-Up *After* the Actual Meet. Timing is everything, and the key is to 'strike while the iron is hot.' Reach out the next day while you're still fresh in their minds. This approach extends the conversation and maintains interest, avoiding the dullness that can set in after a few days of waiting. While tools like Kennected or Apollo.io can automate your outreach, it's crucial to personalize each message for individuals you've met in person. It's about striking a balance between efficiency and personal touch.

Crafting templates for cold outreach is like having a set of blueprints. Each one can be tailored to suit the individual you're reaching out to, but the foundation remains the same. When setting follow-up meetings, be mindful of their schedule as well as your own. *This isn't just courtesy; it's smart.*

Cultivating Diverse Connections. Expand your network beyond your immediate field. Connecting with professionals in different industries is like adding different spices to a dish – it enhances the flavor. These diverse connections can offer new ideas, fresh perspectives, and unexpected opportunities. It's about growth, learning from others, and stepping out of your comfort zone. Look at networking as an ongoing educational journey. You're not just adding contacts; you're expanding your worldview. Embrace the diversity in your network, and be open to learning from everyone you meet.

Patience and Persistence in Networking... It's also a virtue here. Networking is an art and a marathon, not a sprint. The strongest connections are often built over time, through multiple interactions. Be patient and persistent in your efforts. It's about planting seeds, nurturing them, and watching them grow. Remember, networking isn't about instant gratification. It's about building meaningful, long-term relationships. Don't be disheartened if not every interaction leads to an immediate opportunity. The goal is to cultivate a network that values genuine connections, not just transactional ones.

So, keep it friendly, genuine, and open-minded.

Networking isn't about selling your idea on the spot. It's about starting conversations, building relationships, and getting different perspectives on your idea. Approach each networking opportunity with the mindset of building adult friendships.

These are not the simple friendships of childhood; they require more nuanced social skills and a deeper level of engagement. Each person you meet adds a unique block to your networking structure, creating a diverse and robust network that supports your personal and professional growth. Remember, the key to effective networking, whether in person or via DMs, is authenticity. Be yourself, show genuine interest, and focus on building something that will last. You'll be surprised how far a “hi, hello, how are you?” can take you in the entrepreneurial world!

A strong network is full of strong people. Strong business owners. Strong venturers. Strong entrepreneurs.

In order to build this you have to master the art of attracting people who not only want to see you succeed, but also are eager to contribute to that success. The kind of people who are excited to add you to their brunch invites or holiday card lists. They are the ones who recognize and appreciate authentic leadership and genuine ambition.

In the entrepreneurial world, it's easy to get lost among larger-than-life personas and flashy success stories. Yes, the Musks of the world have their appeal, but the entrepreneurial landscape is also filled with unsung heroes whose ingenuity and sincerity form the backbone of their businesses. These are the entrepreneurs who understand that their success is not measured by the size of their ego, but by the impact of their work.

In this environment, being a leader means more than just being at the head of a venture. It means being a magnet for positive energy, a beacon for others who share your values and vision. It's about nurturing a network of like-minded individuals who support each other's growth and celebrate each other's victories.

**I ALWAYS SAY THIS,
"IN A WORLD FULL OF
ENTREPRENEURS WITH
EGOS BIGGER THAN
THEIR BUSINESS, BE THE
ONE WHOSE BUSINESS
IS BIGGER THAN THEIR
EGO."**

CHAPTER 13

**I'M NOT THE
BOSS,
I'M JUST
RUNNING THE
DA*N THING**

RETHINKING LEADERSHIP

Here's a curveball for you: I'm not a fan of the word '**boss.**' It sounds too... bossy. I prefer to think of myself as the original cog in a well-oiled machine. Sure, I may have kickstarted the engine, but it's my team that keeps it humming along. Your ideas may spark the process, but it's the collaboration, the harmony of different skills and perspectives that drives the business forward. Embrace this mindset.

Collaborative Spirit. Think of yourself as part of the team, not just the person calling the shots. A 'we're in this together' attitude goes a long way. So, ditch the 'lone wolf' act and embrace the 'pack mentality.' It's about being ready to wear any hat necessary, be it the strategist's cap or the intern's beanie. You might find yourself covering for an ill team member or stepping in during emergencies. This is where your leadership truly shines. Remember, though, there's a fine line between being a hands-on leader and micromanaging. Your role is to guide and support, not to overshadow or control. Show your team you trust their capabilities and judgment. It's okay to dive deep when necessary, but don't lose sight of the bigger picture - guiding your ship through the entrepreneurial waters. By being a part of the action, not just overseeing it, you embody the spirit of a true team player and leader.

Empowering Others. There's something incredibly powerful about giving credit where it's due. Recognize the achievements of your team members, your peers, and even those in your network. Every clap, every word of encouragement can be the fuel that propels someone to their next big breakthrough. Remember, every big shot was once a little shot that kept shooting. In the world of running your own business, people's potential is your —

best asset. When you empower others, you're not just being altruistic; you're investing in the future of your business and your industry. Offer guidance, share insights, and be willing to mentor.

Plus, when people feel like their ideas matter, they'll work like they have a stake in the success — and not just because the job description says so.

Leading by Example. Here's the deal: Lead like you're just as deep in it as the rest of your team. Leadership is an action, not a position. Being willing to get down to work shows commitment, passion, and integrity. It's about showing your team that no task is beneath you and that every role in your business is valuable. When your team sees you in the thick of it, not shying away from challenges or hard work, they're inspired to mirror that energy and dedication. Leading by example also means being the calm in the storm. Your attitude, especially in tough times, sets the tone for your entire team. Show resilience, optimism, and a problem-solving mindset. Let your team see that challenges are just stepping stones, not roadblocks.

Staying Grounded. Remember, a title is like a nametag at a high school reunion; it tells people who you are but not what you're about. It's easy to get caught up in the upsides of success or the downsides of setbacks. But remember, a grounded leader is like the keel of a ship, keeping it stable no matter how rough the seas get. Being grounded means remembering your roots, your initial vision, and the reasons you started this journey. It's about maintaining a connection with the day-to-day operations of your business, understanding the challenges your team faces, and keeping your finger on the pulse of your industry, business, and your own wrist. Staying grounded also means being approachable and open. Encourage open communication, feedback, and ideas from all levels of your team.

Create an environment where creativity and innovation are not just welcomed, but actively sought.

AFTER ALL, EVEN THE CEO/FOUNDER/PRESIDENT NEEDS TO KNOW HOW THE COFFEE MACHINE WORKS!

Incorporating this philosophy not only sets a positive tone for your business' culture, but also aligns with the whole 'founded entrepreneur' vibe. While it's vital to stay grounded and collaborative when leading a team, this principle becomes even more crucial when your team is, well, just you.

Entrepreneur Party of 1

Starting out, your team might just be a party of one – that's you. Here, being your own 'boss' means more than just making all the decisions; it's about being the best teammate to your future self. As a solo entrepreneur, your future self is your most important team member. Start by setting the stage for their success: tackle those less glamorous tasks today to clear the path for tomorrow. Celebrate your milestones, even if it's just you in the audience – every high-five, even a self-given one, counts. Being your own cheerleader is key; stay disciplined, but also be ready to give yourself a pep talk or a well-deserved break when needed. Regular self-reflection is crucial. Act as your own advisor: assess your strategies and be brutally honest with your progress. Remember, you're wearing multiple hats – the strategist, the executor, and the analyst. Every hurdle you clear is a lesson learned, laying a stronger foundation for the future you. And while it's just you right now, think ahead. Prepare as if you're about to welcome a whole team. Set up processes, systems, and cultivate a culture that will allow others to seamlessly join in when the time comes. So, keep an eye out for Future You – they're counting on you to make the right moves now.

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CHAPTER 14

for
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PLAN IT

A business plan isn't just a mere formality or a bunch of mumbo jumbo on paper; it's a comprehensive document that articulates the vision, strategy, and practicalities of your business venture, especially in high-stakes scenarios like pitching to investors.

When I walked into the elevator on Entrepreneur's *Elevator Pitch*, to pitch my start-up device, Eye-Temp, my business plan wasn't just a stack of papers in my hand; it was the backbone of my presentation. ***Let me walk you through how this seemingly mundane document transformed into my pitch's superpower.***

First off, the executive summary of my plan was a lifesaver. You see, it had already forced me to boil down my entire business concept into a crisp, engaging elevator pitch. When those elevator doors opened, and I had mere seconds to capture the investors' interest, this clarity was my ace in the hole. It wasn't just about having a good idea; it was about presenting it in a way that immediately clicked with them.

Then came the market analysis part. This wasn't just a dry, statistical section of my plan; it was the heart of my argument. I dove into the numbers, painting a picture of the market size, the specific needs of my customers, and precisely how my product was the missing piece in this puzzle. It wasn't just throwing around fancy market jargon; I was sharing a story – a story backed by solid data.

Talking about the financials was where many pitches could get shaky, but not mine. The financial projections in my business plan were more than numbers; they were a testament to the potential and scalability of my business. Discussing revenue forecasts, break-even analysis, and profitability wasn't just about showing off my Excel skills; it was about showing them the money – in the most literal sense.

The operational plan and marketing strategy – which I had laid out in painstaking detail in my plan – were not just my roadmap; they were my credibility tickets. I wasn't just a dreamer with a big idea; I was a planner, a doer.

And finally, **the negotiation part**. Here's where many entrepreneurs fumble, but I had it all jotted down. My business plan outlined my funding needs, how I valued my business, and how I intended to use the investment. This wasn't just about asking for money; it was about starting a partnership, and my plan laid the foundation for this conversation.

In short, what I'm trying to get at is that my business plan was more than just my TV debut homework; it was my actual pitch in disguise.

DE-CRAFTING A BUSINESS PLAN

Alright, you've got your solo entrepreneur game face on, and you're prepping for the big leagues. Now, let's roll up our sleeves and de-craft this whole business plan thing. It's like building a Lego set for your business – each piece has its place, and while some parts need your unique touch, others can be handled with a little help from AI and handy templates. It's not just corporate gibberish or a magical spell for success; it's your entrepreneurial GPS. Let's break it down, no fluff, just the real deal.

A traditional business plan typically includes several key components:

- ❑ **Executive Summary:** This is the elevator pitch of your business plan, summarizing your business concept, the problem it solves, and why it's unique.

- ❑ **Business Description:** Here, you elaborate on your business idea, the market need, and how your product or service meets that need.
- ❑ **Market Analysis:** This section requires thorough research, detailing your target market, industry trends, and competitor analysis.
- ❑ **Organization and Management:** Describe your business's organizational structure, including details about ownership, management team, and employee profiles.
- ❑ **Product or Service Line:** Here, you describe in detail what you're selling or the service you're offering, focusing on the value it adds for customers.
- ❑ **Marketing and Sales Strategies:** Outline how you plan to attract and retain customers, your sales process, and marketing tactics.
- ❑ **Funding Request and Financial Projections:** If you're seeking funding, this section outlines your requirements. Additionally, it includes detailed financial projections like income statements, cash flow statements, and balance sheets, typically for the next three to five years.
- ❑ **Appendix:** This includes any supporting documents or additional information, such as resumes, patents, or legal documentation.

But what does any of that mean exactly? I'll explain.

The first step in crafting your business plan is setting clear objectives. This means not only defining what you hope to achieve in the short and long term, but also understanding why these goals are important. For short-term goals, consider what milestones will significantly advance your business within the next year. This could include launching a product, reaching a —

certain sales figure, or securing key partnerships. Using project management tools like Trello or Asana can be instrumental in tracking these goals, allowing you to break down each objective into actionable steps and deadlines.

When setting long-term goals, envision where you see your business in the next 3 to 5 years. This foresight is critical for guiding your strategic decisions and can include plans for expansion, diversification of product lines, or entering new markets. Utilizing a vision board can be a powerful tool in this process. Digital tools like Canva allow you to create a visual representation of your long-term aspirations, which can be both motivating and clarifying. Remember, these tools should serve as a complement to a well-documented plan, which can be saved as a PDF, or in cloud storage for easy access and updating.

The next step is detailing your strategies for market entry, marketing and sales, and operational planning. This is where in-depth research and a solid understanding of your market come into play. For market entry, consider both online and offline channels. Online platforms can offer vast reach and scalability, but depending on your product or service, physical stores or direct sales might be more effective. Researching your competitors and understanding their strategies can offer valuable insights here.

In terms of marketing and sales, defining your target audience is crucial. This involves more than just demographics; it's about understanding the behaviors, needs, and preferences of your potential customers. Tools like HubSpot or Mailchimp are excellent for managing marketing campaigns, but the real insight comes from understanding how to use these tools to effectively reach and engage your audience.

Your operational plan should detail how your business will run on a day-to-day basis. This includes supply chain management, inventory control, customer service procedures, and more. For many of these areas, AI and automation tools can significantly increase efficiency. For instance, AI can optimize inventory levels based on predictive analytics, while customer service chatbots can handle routine inquiries, allowing you to focus on more complex issues.

No business plan is complete without anticipating challenges. Performing a SWOT analysis is more than an academic exercise; it's a practical tool for preparing your business to face potential hurdles and capitalize on opportunities. This analysis should be thorough and honest, potentially incorporating feedback from mentors or industry experts.

Contingency planning is also crucial. This doesn't just mean having a backup plan; it's about thinking through how you would respond to various scenarios that could impact your business. This kind of foresight can be the difference between navigating a challenge successfully or being caught off guard.

And don't forget that a business plan must be a dynamic document.

Regular reviews and updates are essential. This isn't just about checking off completed tasks; it's about revisiting and revising your strategies in response to real-world successes, failures, and changes in the market. Platforms like Feedbackly can be instrumental in collecting and analyzing feedback, but it's also important to have direct conversations with customers, partners, and other stakeholders to get a holistic view of how your business is perceived and where it can improve.

Breaking Down: Legal and Admin

Starting a business isn't just about having a killer idea and a sleek business plan. It's also about wading through the less glamorous, yet essential world of legal and administrative tasks. It's like setting the foundations before you build your dream house – tedious but necessary.

Mini-Venture: Facebook's Early Days. When Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook from his Harvard dorm room, he initially didn't anticipate the legal intricacies of running a social media platform. As Facebook grew, so did its legal challenges, highlighting the importance of staying ahead of legal and licensing requirements as your business scales.

RESEARCHING REQUIRED LICENSES AND PERMITS

Here's where you turn into a legal explorer. Local ordinances, state requirements, federal licenses – it's a trinity of bureaucratic fun. Most local governments have a section for business permits on their websites. It's your first stop in this scavenger hunt. Sometimes, you might need to actually (gasp) talk to a human being at the local clerk's office, or make your way to your city hall.

Local Ordinances: *Navigating the local labyrinth.*

- ❑ **Finding Them:** Most local government websites have a dedicated section for businesses. It's a good starting point. If not, a quick call to the local clerk's office or town hall will set you in the right direction.
- ❑ **Acquiring Them:** Visit your local city or county office. Some permits can be applied for online, while others may require an in-person visit.

- ❑ **Preparing:** Expect to provide details about your business, including its nature, location, expected volume of clients, and other relevant specifics. Some licenses may require an inspection (like health or safety inspections) before they're granted.
- ❑ **Renewal:** Keep tabs on expiry dates. Some permits need annual renewal, while others might last longer.

When it comes to state requirements, think of each state as having its own personality. What flies in California might not in Kansas. State government websites are your treasure troves here, but beware, some might still make you do things the old-fashioned way with paper applications.

State Requirements: *State lines, diverse guidelines.*

- ❑ **Finding Them:** State government websites often have a 'Business' section. Here, you'll typically find comprehensive resources including required permits and licenses.
- ❑ **Acquiring Them:** The approach varies by state. While many states have streamlined online application processes, some may still require paper applications or in-person visits.
- ❑ **Preparing:** Apart from standard business details, state-level permits might require more in-depth information, such as environmental impact assessments for certain industries.
- ❑ **Stay Updated:** States occasionally update their regulations. Subscribing to newsletters from the state's commerce department or business regulatory body can keep you in the loop.

And then there's the Federal level – the final boss in your licensing quest. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) website is a good starting point. Just know that Federal licenses can be as tough as a final exam – thorough and demanding.

Federal Licenses: *The highest echelon of business regulation.*

❑ **Finding Them:** Forget searching one central database. Agencies responsible for licensing handle their own domains:

- Agriculture? There's the USDA.
- Broadcasting? The FCC takes the lead.
- Importing special goods? Customs and Border Protection sets the rules.

The Small Business Association is your best starting point – they have a good breakdown of common federal licenses.

❑ **How to Get Them:** Thankfully, there's usually an online application, unlike some state processes. That said, each agency has its own portal and system. Don't expect uniformity here.

❑ **Get Ready:** Federal licenses go deeper than basic business info. Depending on your industry, prepare for:

- **Financial disclosures:** Proving you're on solid financial footing.
- **Compliance plans:** Outlining how you'll stay within regulations.
- **Background checks:** Sometimes required for individuals within your business.

❑ **The Time Factor:** Don't assume federal means fast. Processing times vary dramatically from agency to agency. Plan ahead!

A note on cutting corners: *While it might save you time now, it can cost you big time later.*

UNDERSTANDING BUSINESS STRUCTURES

Choosing your business structure is like picking your character in a video game; each has its own abilities and weaknesses.

Sole proprietorship is the lone wolf mode – simple, straightforward, but a bit risky. This type of business structure embodies the true entrepreneurial spirit. It's you, your business, and all the rewards and risks that come with it.

Sole Proprietorship. *Ah, the lone ranger approach!*

Pros:

- **Simplicity:** No complex paperwork or legal ceremonies here. Just you, your business, and the open market.
- **Direct Control:** You're the captain, the crew, and the ship. Every decision starts and ends with you.
- **Tax Ease:** Income and losses flow directly to your personal tax return. No double taxation woes!

Cons:

- **Unlimited Liability:** If your business lands in hot water, guess who's getting burnt? That's right, it's all on you.
- **Limited Lifespan:** The business's life is tied to yours. If you decide to hang up your boots, the business goes with you.

How to:

- Choose a business name and check for its availability.
- Register your business name with the local county or city authorities.
- Obtain any necessary licenses and permits specific to your business type.
- If you plan to hire employees, obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS, even though it's not mandatory for sole proprietorships without employees.
- Set up a separate business bank account to keep your personal and business finances distinct.

Partnerships are about teamwork and shared vision. You combine forces, bringing diverse skills and resources, but also share the responsibility for successes and setbacks.

Partnership. *Two (or more) heads are better than one, right?*

Pros:

- **Shared Responsibility:** Double the brainpower, halved stress. More hands on deck can lead to better decisions and shared responsibilities.
- **Tax Simplicity:** Like the sole proprietorship, partnerships avoid the double taxation hurdle.

Cons:

- **Joint Liability:** In general partnerships, every partner is on the hook. If one messes up, everyone pays the price.
- **Potential Conflicts:** More brains behind the recipe can mean more squabbles over the final plate. Clear communication is essential.

How to:

- Choose a business name and ensure it's available.
- Register the business name with the state or local authorities.
- Draft and sign a Partnership Agreement outlining roles, contributions, and processes for conflict resolution.
- Obtain any necessary licenses and permits.
- Get an EIN from the IRS.
- Open a bank account in the name of the partnership.

Despite the risks, a well-structured partnership with clear agreements can be a powerful way to launch a business. If communication and planning are priorities, the rewards of a partnership can make the journey worthwhile.

Corporations are the well-established empires of the business world. They offer formidable protection for owners but come with the complexity of rules and regulations.

Corporation. *The big league play!*

Pros:

- **Limited Liability:** Corporations are their own legal entities. If the ship sinks, the captain remains dry.
- **Potential for Investment:** Corporations can issue stocks, wooing investors and raising capital becomes more feasible.
- **Endurance:** The business outlives its founders. It can continue on, even if key members exit the stage.

Cons:

- **Double Taxation:** Corporations get taxed on their earnings. Then, shareholders get taxed on dividends. Ouch, twice the sting!
- **Paperwork and Formalities:** More structure means more bureaucracy. Regular meetings, extensive record-keeping, and legal dance steps are the order of the day.

How to:

- Select an available business name and incorporate it within your state.
- File Articles of Incorporation and pay the filing fee.
- Create Corporate Bylaws to outline the operating rules for your corporation.
- Hold an initial board of directors meeting and record the minutes.
- Issue stock certificates to the initial shareholders.
- Obtain an EIN and any necessary licenses and permits.
- Open a corporate bank account.

LLCs (Limited Liability Companies) are like adaptable hybrids – they offer the liability protection of a corporation with the flexibility of a partnership in terms of taxation.

LLC. *The best of both worlds? Perhaps!*

Pros:

- **Liability Shield:** Like corporations, your personal assets stay guarded against business debts and claims.
- **Tax Flexibility:** Choose how you'd like to be taxed – as a sole proprietor, partnership, or corporation. A tax buffet of sorts!
- **Operational Ease:** Less rigid than corporations, you decide the operational structure.

Cons:

- **Limited Life:** In many states, the LLC dissolves when a member departs. Not ideal for those looking for long-term stability.
- **Varied State Rules:** LLC regulations can vary by state. A smooth sail in one state might be choppy waters in another.

How to:

- Choose a compliant and available name for your LLC.
- File the Articles of Organization with your state's LLC filing office and pay the filing fee.
- Create an Operating Agreement, which isn't mandatory, but is highly recommended.
- Obtain licenses and permits as required for your business.
- Get an EIN regardless of whether you have employees.
- Open an LLC bank account to keep finances separate from personal accounts.

C Corporations are the standard corporation model. They act as separate entities, shielding owners from liability but facing the potential for double taxation.

C-Corporation: *The Big Player with lots and lots of layers!*

Pros:

- **Unlimited Growth Potential:** Think big. C-Corps can have unlimited shareholders and raise significant capital through stock sales.
- **Liability Protection:** Like an armor suit, a C-Corp separates your personal assets from the business. If things go south, your personal wealth isn't on the line.
- **Perpetual Existence:** Even if you decide to retire to the Bahamas, your C-Corp can continue without you.

Cons:

- **Double Taxation:** The main downside. The company pays taxes on profits, and then shareholders pay taxes on dividends they receive.
- **Regulatory and Paperwork Burden:** Expect a ton of paperwork, regulations, and formalities – it's like the bureaucratic Olympics.

How to:

- **Incorporate:** File the necessary paperwork with your state, which usually involves Articles of Incorporation and a fee.
- **Follow the Formalities:** Regular board meetings, keeping minutes, bylaws – the whole corporate shebang.

Venture for the Big Tech Approach. Major tech companies like Apple and Google opted for a C-Corporation structure from their early days, facilitating their massive growth and enabling them to attract significant investments.

S Corporations are the nimble cousins of C Corporations. They retain liability protection while allowing profits and losses to 'pass-through' directly to owners for taxation, avoiding the double taxation issue.

S-Corporation. *Like that clever friend who knows all the tax loopholes!*

Pros:

- **Tax Benefits:** The main draw is that S-Corps avoid double taxation, something their big brother, C-Corps, can't dodge. Profits and losses pass directly to your personal tax return, so the business itself isn't taxed separately.
- **Personal Asset Protection:** Like an LLC, an S-Corp acts as a shield, keeping your personal assets safe if your business faces legal issues.
- **Prestige Factor:** Having 'Inc.' in your business name might just add that extra bit of credibility and prestige.

Cons:

- **Eligibility Requirements:** It's a bit exclusive. S-Corps have strict rules, like limiting the number of shareholders, who all must be U.S. citizens or residents.
- **Salary Requirements:** You have to pay yourself a 'reasonable salary,' which the IRS keeps an eye on. So, no low-balling to save on taxes.

How to:

- **File as a Corporation:** First, you set up as a regular corporation.
- **Elect S-Corp Status with the IRS:** File Form 2553 to tell the IRS, "Hey, I want to be taxed as an S-Corp."

Venture for Tech Startups. Many tech startups initially register as S-Corps to benefit from tax advantages. However, they often transition to C-Corps as they seek venture capital and scale, as seen in numerous Silicon Valley success stories.

Thinking of taking your business global?

Expanding your business globally is like playing a video game on hard mode - thrilling but full of challenges. Navigating different countries' laws, tax systems, and cultural nuances can feel like juggling flaming torches. Here, partnering with local experts and lawyers who speak the language (both literally and figuratively) can save you from many sleepless nights.

Like understanding the international market. Before going international, do your homework. Market research is your best friend here. It's not just about knowing if your product will sell, but understanding the legal intricacies of operating in a different country.

And learning how to network and collaborate in their language. Building relationships with local businesses and professionals can be invaluable. It's like having a guide in a new city - they know the best paths to take and the pitfalls to avoid.

Practical Tip: Don't just parachute into a new country with your business. Test the waters first – maybe start with a pilot project or a local partner.




Choose wisely, entrepreneur! The right structure not only provides legal cover, but sets the tone for your business journey ahead.

Document Everything. If the business world had a golden rule, it would be 'document everything.' Your business plan is your script, but it needs updates, just like software. Keep it in cloud storage like Google Drive or Dropbox for easy access and safekeeping.

But here's where it gets even cooler: AI has entered the chat. Tools like ChatGPT, Jasper AI, or Copy.ai can help you draft ——

complex paperwork, from business plans to legal documents. It's like having a digital assistant who's ready to help 24/7. But remember, AI is smart, but it's not a lawyer. For the nitty-gritty legal stuff, it's crucial to have a professional set of eyes review your documents. Think of AI as your sous-chef - great for prepping the ingredients, but you'll need a head chef (a.k.a. a lawyer) to make sure the final dish is Michelin-star worthy.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR DOCUMENTING:

-  **Use AI Wisely.** Leverage AI tools for drafting and brainstorming, but be wary of relying on them for legally binding documents. They're like training wheels - great for support, but you don't want to race the Tour de France with them.
-  **Professional Review.** Always have contracts, agreements, and crucial legal documents reviewed by a qualified lawyer. It's like having a safety check before launching a rocket - you want to ensure everything is in order.
-  **Data Safety.** With great power (or great documents) comes great responsibility. Ensure your data is secure, especially when using cloud storage. Implement robust security measures - think of it as putting a safety lock on your most important information.

In short, keep it smart, keep it safe, and keep it legally sound.

**STARTING A BUSINESS
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HAVING A KILLER IDEA
AND A SLEEK BUSINESS
PLAN. IT'S ALSO ABOUT
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LESS GLAMOROUS, YET
ESSENTIAL THINGS.**

CHAPTER 15

IF *AND*
WHEN TO
HIRE ON

Self-Sufficiency at Start. In the beginning, being a one-person show or operating with a small, tight-knit team that consists of family and friends can be incredibly beneficial. In the initial phase of your business, it's often wise to operate on your own or with a lean team, if possible. This period allows you to fully grasp the ins and outs of your business without the added responsibility of managing employees. Being self-sufficient initially also means you avoid the complexities and responsibilities of being an employer, allowing you to focus solely on refining your business model and strategy. But before you post that 'Help Wanted' sign, let's consider a few critical points to ensure you're making the right decision at the right time.

Delegate to Elevate. As an entrepreneur, understanding your strengths and weaknesses is key. (*Remember that reflection exercise we did earlier? Yeah, you do!*) You're the heart of your business, so it's essential to focus on what you do best and delegate the rest. If certain tasks aren't in your wheelhouse or are too time-consuming, outsourcing or hiring freelance support can be a smart move before a full-on W2/4 hire. Platforms like Fiverr and Upwork are goldmines for finding talented individuals who can handle these tasks more efficiently, saving you time and allowing you to concentrate on growing your business's core aspects.

Balancing the Books and Dreams. Here's the bottom line: early-stage hiring decisions are not just business choices; they are deeply personal commitments. One of the toughest challenges in early entrepreneurship is managing finances, especially when it comes to payroll. For me personally, this was a significant challenge. The responsibility of ensuring I had enough revenue not only to sustain my family, but also to support my first hire weighed heavily on me. Each payroll period wasn't just about disbursing paychecks; it represented the livelihoods of real ———

people who had placed their trust in my vision. When you're at the helm of a budding business, the stakes are high. Your employees depend on you for their financial stability, and this responsibility extends beyond the professional realm into the personal. It's a balancing act between nurturing your business and honoring the commitment to those who help it grow. This realization drove me to be more strategic and discerning with every financial decision, especially hiring. In my experience, the decision to bring someone on board isn't just a matter of filling a role; it's an investment in the future of your business and a commitment to another person's welfare.

Make it Efficient and Effective. In the initial phase of building your business, your main goal should be to excel in the areas that define your brand and services. If you find yourself getting sidetracked by tasks that aren't central to your business, it's time to think about delegating. This could mean hiring someone to handle these side tasks or outsourcing them. By doing so, you can concentrate on your primary strengths, which is crucial for the growth and development of your business. This focused approach not only makes your daily operations more efficient, but also lays down a strong foundation for your business to build upon.

Meet Capacity in its Corner. A sure sign your business is on the right track is when customer demand begins to outpace what you can handle alone. This is a positive indicator, signaling that it's time to expand.

If you find yourself in a position where saying no to work equates to missed opportunities, then hiring additional help is a logical step.

Responding to increased demand with appropriate staffing not —

only meets immediate needs, but also positions your business for sustainable growth. It's about aligning your business expansion with the market's needs, ensuring every new team member contributes effectively to meeting these demands.

Strategic Growth with Thought. When it comes to hiring, a long-term perspective is key. It's not only about filling a gap in your current operations, but also about how each role will contribute to the future of your business. This could mean hiring a salesperson to explore new markets or a marketing expert to enhance your branding. Each new team member should align with your broader business objectives. It's important to keep an eye on market trends and future projections and tailor your hiring strategy accordingly. Strategic hiring is all about forming a team that not only tackles today's challenges, but is also prepared to drive future successes. In doing so, you ensure your business not only survives, but thrives in the upcoming years. Remember, strategic growth is a careful balancing act – it's about expanding your team in a way that supports your long-term vision without overextending your current resources.

HERE'S HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR FIRST HIRE

Clearly Define the Role. Before you even post a job listing, it's crucial to nail down exactly what role you need to fill. This isn't just about slapping a job title on a posting on Indeed and calling it a day; it's about understanding the actual day-to-day responsibilities and how this role will fit into your business's bigger picture. Draft a job description that outlines the specific duties, skills required, and how this role will contribute to your business's goals. Clear role definition helps in attracting the right candidates and sets the stage for their success in your business.

Resumes Galore. When you're sifting through a giant file of resumes and AI-generated cover letters, it's not just about ticking off qualifications. It's about understanding the person behind the PDFs. First, focus on clarity and relevance. A well-crafted resume that smartly highlights experience and skills relevant to your business is a window into a candidate's professionalism and attention to detail. This isn't just about their past job titles; it's about how they present their journey. Are they able to communicate effectively and concisely? Do they tailor their experience to show how they can contribute to your business? Next, look for the human touch. AI-generated cover letters and cookie-cutter resumes are all too common. But what you're really looking for is a glimpse of the person behind the words. How do they express their passion for the industry? Do they share any unique experiences or challenges they've overcome? These nuances can give you a better sense of who they are and how they might fit into your team's culture. Pay attention to the little things. Typos and grammatical errors might seem minor, but they can be red flags for lack of attention to detail, especially in roles where precision is key. Conversely, a well-polished and error-free resume speaks volumes about a candidate's diligence and care. *Don't just stop at the resume.* In today's digital world, a quick LinkedIn or social media scan can provide additional context. How do they represent themselves professionally online? What kind of content do they engage with? This can give you insights into their professional persona and if that's the first for your business.

Interviewing Process. Interviewing is more than just a Q&A session; it's your opportunity to truly understand who the candidate is, beyond their resume. Focus on a holistic approach to questioning. This means not just asking about their previous job roles, but delving into how they handle complex situations, their adaptability, work ethic, and how well they resonate with your company's culture. Scenario-based questions are particular-

-ly useful here. Present them with a common problem your business faces and ask how they would solve it. Their responses can be very telling about their practical problem-solving skills and how they might handle real-life challenges in your business. Something I always take notice of is if the candidate has done their homework on my business or even on me as an entrepreneur. It shows initiative and genuine interest in the role and the company. This level of preparation is a strong indicator of their dedication and attention to detail, traits that are valuable in any employee. The interviewing process should also be a two-way street. It's not just about you assessing the candidate; they're also evaluating your business and what it's like to work there. Make sure you give them space to ask questions. The nature of their queries can also give you insights into what they value in a job and a workplace. If you're uncertain, consider a second opinion that can provide a different perspective, especially if they bring expertise in areas you might not be as familiar with. And after the interview, take time to reflect. How did the candidate's answers align with your business needs and culture? Did they bring new perspectives that could be beneficial to your business? The right hire can significantly impact the trajectory of your startup, so this decision should be made with careful consideration of all these factors.

Legal and Regulatory Obligations. When you're ready to bring on a new team member, understanding the legal and regulatory aspects is critical. First, familiarize yourself with the legal requirements for hiring in your state or country. This includes understanding the tax implications, employee rights, and mandatory benefits. It's not just about compliance; it's about ensuring a fair and legal working environment for your employees. Consider using AI tools to help draft initial employment contracts. These tools can provide a good starting point, but it's essential to have them reviewed by a legal expert.

A lawyer specializing in employment law can help ensure your contracts are legally sound and tailored to your specific business needs. This step is vital in avoiding potential legal issues in the future. Be aware of your responsibilities as an employer. This includes everything from providing a safe working environment to meeting minimum wage requirements. These obligations can vary widely depending on your industry and location, so staying informed is crucial. Remember, staying on top of legal and regulatory obligations isn't just about avoiding penalties; it's about building a trustworthy and responsible business. Employees are more likely to be engaged and committed when they feel their rights are respected and protected.

Training and Onboarding: Training and onboarding are more than just formalities; they set the stage for your new hire's success in your company. Utilizing AI tools can be immensely helpful in streamlining the onboarding process. These tools can assist in scheduling meetings, organizing training materials, and tracking the new hire's progress. However, ensure the human element remains central to the process. Personalized interactions and open communication are key, especially in a virtual setup. Ultimately, a thoughtful onboarding process in a virtual business context is about more than just relaying information; it's about building connections, establishing trust, and laying a solid foundation for long-term collaboration and growth within the team. By investing time in getting to know them, discussing their career aspirations, and aligning their goals with the company's objectives, I aim to foster a sense of belonging and purpose. *Remember, every moment spent considering whether to hire is an investment in the future of your business.* As you grow, so will your team, but timing is everything. Lay a strong foundation, and ensure you're hiring to fuel growth, not just to patch up a gap.

**REMEMBER, EVERY
MOMENT SPENT
CONSIDERING
WHETHER TO HIRE
IS AN INVESTMENT
IN THE FUTURE OF
YOUR BUSINESS.**

CHAPTER 16

ON THE RECORD(S)

Let's Talk Financial Records aka The Backbone of Your Business.

Financial Records: *This includes invoices, receipts, tax filings, and bank statements.*

As a newly Unsuppressed Entrepreneur stepping into the business arena, your financial acumen is as crucial as your innovative ideas. From the get-go, establishing a system to manage your financial records will set a precedent for sustainable growth and operational excellence. As a virtual business owner and CPA, I understand the significance of meticulous financial record-keeping. It's not just about complying with legal requirements; it's about having a clear picture of your business's financial health at any given time. Here's my approach to managing different types of financial records.

Invoices and Receipts

The key to managing invoices and receipts is organization and timely documentation. I use good old fashioned QuickBooks to generate, send, and track invoices. This not only simplifies the process, but also allows for real-time monitoring of accounts receivable and payable. For receipts, I recommend apps that let you scan and attach them directly to transactions, ensuring nothing gets lost in the shuffle.

Bank Statement

Regularly reconciling your books with bank statements is crucial. I've found tools like Banktivity invaluable for this task. They help me stay on top of cash flow and spot any discrepancies early on. This practice is key to a regular health check-up for your business's finances, ensuring everything is in order and accounted for.

Tax Filings

As a CPA, I cannot overstate the importance of well-organized tax records. My strategy involves digital storage of all tax documents using secure cloud services. This ensures easy access during tax season and provides a reliable backup for future reference. Remember, being proactive with tax documentation can save you a world of stress later.

Expense Records

Tracking every expense is critical for budgeting and tax purposes. Again, I use QuickBooks for its user-friendly interface and receipt attachment feature. This not only makes tax time less stressful, but also gives me a comprehensive view of where my money is going, allowing for more informed financial decisions.

Payroll Records

When you start hiring, maintaining organized payroll records becomes essential. Services like Paychex have been lifesavers for me. They handle everything from salary disbursements to tax withholdings, ensuring compliance and accuracy.

Asset Records

Recording every asset, from hardware to software subscriptions is necessary for depreciation and tax benefits. I keep a detailed asset register, updating it whenever new assets are acquired or disposed of. This practice is vital for accurate financial statements and tax filings.

Loan and Credit Records

Managing liabilities is as important as managing assets. I keep a clear record of all loans and credit lines to ensure I'm always aware of my financial obligations and can plan repayments accordingly.

Money Apps

For the Unsuppressed Entrepreneur whose business card reads ‘CEO, CFO, and everything in between,’ embracing technology that simplifies financial management is non-negotiable. Here are my top apps to download and purchase choices for biz money.

Expense Tracking and Receipt Management

For keeping track of expenses and organizing receipts, QuickBooks remains my trusted go-to. It simplifies expense reporting with features like receipt scanning, automatic categorization, and integration with accounting software.

Mileage Tracking

MileIQ is a standout app for tracking mileage, especially useful for entrepreneurs who travel frequently for business. It automatically logs drives and calculates mileage, making it easy to claim deductions or reimbursements.

Time Management

In my business, we use Hubstaff. It's straightforward and reliable for tracking time. The app captures screenshots and logs hours, which simplifies my team management. I trust my team with their time input, and Hubstaff ensures everything stays on track without any fuss.

Quick Payment Receiving

For receiving payments swiftly, the Zelle feature integrated with the Chase Bank app offers a convenient solution. It allows for quick money transfers directly between bank accounts, which is ideal for entrepreneurs who need to manage client payments efficiently.

Knowing When to Bring in a CPA. As a CPA myself, let me tell you, there's a moment in your business journey when you'll need-

to call in the pros. This isn't about admitting defeat; it's about playing smart. When your business starts expanding or dealing with more complex transactions, that's your cue. You need someone who eats, sleeps, and breathes numbers. Don't try to be a jack-of-all-trades; focus on what you're good at and let a CPA handle the financial gymnastics. They're wizards with tax planning, making sure you don't pay a penny more than you need to. And if the taxman comes knocking or you're pitching to investors, your CPA is your knight in shining armor, armed with solid financial reports and strategic advice. Trust me, having a CPA on your team is like having a financial guardian angel.

Selecting the Right Financial Guide. Now, finding the right CPA is like matchmaking for your business. Start by asking your entrepreneur buddies. A referral from someone who's already been in the trenches is gold. You want a CPA who knows your industry inside out. If you're in tech, a CPA who specializes in retail won't cut it. They need to speak your language and understand the unique financial landscape of your sector. And, of course, check their credentials. Make sure they're not just throwing around the CPA title; verify their license and look into any professional affiliations. You want the best in the game, someone who will not just balance your books, but also offer strategic financial guidance to fuel your business growth. Remember, a great CPA is more than just a number cruncher; they're a pivotal part of your journey to success.

Staying Updated with Renewals and Regulations. Running a business means always staying on top of legal stuff. Laws and regulations change, and you've got to keep up to ensure your business stays legal. This is where your CPA can really help out. They're not just about taxes and numbers; they can also give you a heads-up about financial laws that might affect your business. But remember, CPAs aren't lawyers. You should also check local

and state, as well as federal websites each year for any updates.

And about having a lawyer: it's a good idea to have one you can talk to. They'll make sure you're doing everything by the book. Staying legally compliant might seem like a hassle, but it's way better than dealing with legal problems later.

Your lawyer is your legal guardian and your CPA is like a lifeguard for your finances, but you've got to pay attention to their advice. Reply to their messages and respect their time – they're there to help your business succeed.

CHAPTER 17

BUILD *THAT*
BRAND

Identifying Your Brand Essence. *The compass that directs every decision.*

The essence of your brand is like the compass that directs every decision you make. It's more than just a mission statement; it's the core of what you stand for. To uncover this, consider hosting brainstorming sessions, and use tools like the Brand Pyramid or the 'Why-How-What' Golden Circle to distill your brand's essence into something tangible and authentic. As you craft your message, use storytelling techniques. Think of your brand as a story with a beginning (your origin), a middle (your mission), and an end (your vision for the future). This narrative approach not only makes your brand relatable, but also memorable. Consistency is key here. Develop a brand guideline document with the help of tools like Canva or Lucidpress, to ensure every team member is aligned with this essence. Dive deeper into the emotional aspect of your brand. What feelings do you want to evoke in your audience? Whether it's trust, excitement, innovation, or comfort, this emotional resonance can significantly differentiate your brand in a crowded market. It's crucial to test and validate your brand essence. Don't just settle for a concept; expose it to your target audience, gather feedback, and refine it. This process ensures that your brand essence truly connects with those you aim to serve. Alignment is key!

Visual Branding. *The attire your brand dons.*

Visual branding is akin to the attire your brand wears; it's the first impression and a lasting image in the minds of your audience. This is all about how your brand looks. Color choice is huge. When choosing colors, consider the emotional impact. Use tools like Adobe Color to create a palette that reflects the emotions and values of your brand. The design of your logo plays a pivotal role as well. While professional designers on platforms like 99designs can provide bespoke designs, budget-friendly DIY tools like Canva can also yield impressive results.

Remember, your logo is often the first visual interaction people have with your brand, so it should be memorable, unique, and representative of your brand essence. Extend your visual branding to stationery and merchandise. Websites like MOO or Vistaprint can help you produce branded materials that align with your visual identity. These tangible elements of your brand can leave a lasting impression and should consistently reflect your brand guidelines.

Online Presence. *Your brand's digital mansion.*

In today's digital age, your online presence is your brand's digital face. It's where you invite your audience to learn more about you. Your website should be user-friendly and reflective of your brand's essence. Platforms like Wix, Squarespace, or WordPress are great for those starting out, but for a more bespoke experience, consider hiring a web developer. Your social media presence is just as crucial. Utilize analytics tools like Hootsuite or Buffer to gauge where your audience spends their time and tailor your content to those platforms. Don't underestimate the power of SEO and ad campaigns. Tools like Google's Keyword Planner can help you identify keywords relevant to your brand. For ads, platforms like Google Ads or Facebook's Ad Manager offer avenues to reach your target audience effectively. Consider investing in online courses on platforms like Coursera or Udemy to deepen your understanding of these digital tools and strategies.

Brand Voice and Content. *Your brand's ongoing narrative.*

Your brand's voice and content are its ongoing narrative. Start by creating customer personas to shape your communication style. Tools like HubSpot's 'Make My Persona' can be immensely helpful. Your content, whether it's blogs, videos, or podcasts, should align with your brand voice. Plan your content creation using tools like Trello or Asana. Consistency in your brand's ———

voice across all media is key to building a strong and cohesive brand identity. Use surveys (SurveyMonkey or Google Forms) to gather feedback from your audience. Engage with them in comments and adapt your strategy based on the insights you gain. This feedback loop is invaluable for ensuring your content remains relevant and engaging.

Building Trust and Credibility. *The bridge between you and your audience.*

Trust and credibility are the bridges that connect your brand to your audience. Deliver on your promises consistently. Use project management tools like Slack or Monday.com to ensure your team meets deadlines and maintains quality. Engaging with communities is crucial. Join forums like Reddit, or industry-specific online communities, or local business groups on platforms like Meetup to broaden your network and gain new perspectives. Transparency is key in building trust. Regularly update your stakeholders through newsletters (using platforms like Mailchimp) or through Annual Reports. In times of crisis, address issues head-on, preferably on the platform where the issue arose. This level of honesty and openness goes a long way in cementing your brand as reliable and trustworthy.

It's all part of it

Branding is like putting together a puzzle. It's all small details, but together they create a comprehensive, recognizable, and relatable image. With the right tools and strategies, you can transform your brand into a symbol of quality, trust, and promise in the marketplace.

CHAPTER 18

**SOMEONE SAID THAT
YOU NEED MONEY
TO MAKE MONEY.**

*But where do you
get that money?*

You're doing it

Alright, let's cut to the chase. As a Founded Entrepreneur, you've stepped up and shown the world what you're made of. Shedding that layer of suppression, you've stepped into the arena where it's more than just ideas; it's about making things happen. And let me tell you, you're doing an incredible job. You've navigated the tricky waters of starting up, you've branded your passion into a business, and now, you're standing at the threshold of the big leagues. Feel proud? You should.

But don't get too comfortable just yet. The journey's about to get even more intense. We're stepping into the world of 'Funded Entrepreneur' now. This is where the real test begins. It's not just about having a great idea anymore; it's about fueling that idea with the right funding, marketing it like a pro, and being prepared to handle any crisis that comes your way. It's about playing hardball in the business world. You've got the foundation. Now it's time to fund this venture. Get ready to dive deep into the nitty-gritty of securing funding, marketing your brand to the masses, and managing the unforeseen challenges that come with running a growing business. This is where you turn your venture from a startup into a powerhouse. Buckle up, my fellow entrepreneur. The next part of your journey is where you make your mark. You're not just playing the game; you're in it to win it. Let's show them what you've got.

As you've probably realized by now, bringing your vision to life takes more than sheer will and hard work. It takes resources – and that means money. Welcome to your new era, Funded Entrepreneur. This is where you take your well-crafted enterprise and propel it into a realm of greater possibilities. It's time to talk funding, and not just any funding, but smart funding that aligns with your business goals and values. We're talking family-funded investments, venture capitalists, loans, and even tapping into ——

governmental support. This part is all about understanding the landscape of financial support, learning how to present your business as an irresistible investment opportunity, and unlocking the doors to financial avenues that were previously out of reach. But it's not just about finding money; it's about finding the right kind of money. The kind that doesn't just fuel your business, but also respects and understands your mission. You're not just looking for investors; you're looking for partners. So gear up, this is where you secure the fuel to skyrocket your venture to new heights. *Now, let's get you funded.*

FUNDING AND FINANCE. THE LIFEBLOOD OF YOUR ENTERPRISE.

Bootstrapping. Bootstrapping is a journey of profound self-belief and meticulous financial planning. It's about building your business from the ground up using personal savings, profits, and minimal outside help. This approach may limit your growth speed, but it keeps you in complete control, allowing you to shape your venture as you see fit. A shining example is Melanie Perkins, who bootstrapped her company, Canva, in its initial stages before turning it into a design powerhouse. Perkins' story is a testament to how a clear vision, combined with a scrappy and strategic approach, can lead to monumental success.

Bootstrapping is not just about financial prudence; it's about building a strong foundation that aligns perfectly with your entrepreneurial ethos.

Venture Capitalists (VCs). VCs are professional groups that invest substantial funds into high-potential startups in exchange for equity. When considering this route, it's crucial to have a solid business plan and demonstrate market viability. VCs often provide more than just capital – they bring industry connections, mentorship, and strategic guidance.

Angel Investors. When you're ready to scale up and make significant market impact, venture capitalists (VCs) can be your allies. Securing VC funding means being prepared for rigorous scrutiny and rapid scaling. Mark Cuban, a renowned angel investor and venture capitalist, exemplifies this pathway. His investment style is not just about capital, but also about guiding startups towards strategic growth and innovation. Getting VC funding is about proving your business's potential to disrupt markets and scale massively. It's a high-energy, high-reward path suited for those prepared to navigate the intense dynamics of big-league entrepreneurship.

Crowdfunding. Crowdfunding is the art of turning your audience into your investors. It's not just about raising funds; it's about building a community who believes in your vision. A fantastic example is VELO Luggage's 3-in-1 Expandable Hardside Luggage campaign on Kickstarter as of October 2023. Their campaign showcases how a well-presented idea, coupled with effective communication, can attract a broad base of small investors. Crowdfunding is about compelling storytelling, transparency, and creating a tangible connection with potential backers. It's a unique way to validate your idea in the market, build a customer base even before launch, and gain invaluable feedback. This approach suits entrepreneurs who are not just seeking funds but also looking to create a buzz and validate their product in the real world.

Small Business Loans. Small business loans are the tried and true path of funding. They provide a structured way to finance your growth, but they come with the responsibility of repayment with interest. When exploring this option, your business plan and financial projections need to be rock solid. This is the choice that demands the most meticulous planning and a clear understanding of your repayment capacity.

Family Investments. Funding from family is often the first financial support many entrepreneurs receive. It's rooted in trust and personal belief. Like how Warby Parker's early days were supported by friends and family investments. While this option can provide a more flexible and understanding financial platform, it's crucial to maintain professionalism. Clear agreements and communication are key to ensuring these financial ties strengthen rather than strain your personal relationships. Family investments are not just transactions; they're partnerships grounded in mutual trust and belief in your entrepreneurial vision.

Specialized Business Loans. Many financial institutions and organizations offer loans specifically tailored to support underrepresented entrepreneurs. These loans often come with more favorable terms, lower interest rates, and additional support services. For instance, the Small Business Administration (SBA) in the United States offers various loan programs that cater to minority business owners, providing them with the necessary capital to start, grow, and sustain their businesses.

Specialized Business Loans Defined!

Specialized business loans are like helpful money boosts for businesses, especially for those who don't usually get a fair chance. These loans come with nicer conditions like lower interest rates and extra help.

Grants for Diverse Entrepreneurs. Grants are another powerful tool for minority entrepreneurs. Unlike loans, grants do not require repayment, making them an attractive option for funding. Numerous organizations, governmental, state, and non-profit, offer grants specifically aimed at all different circumstances including but not limited to supporting women, Latinx, Black, and other minority entrepreneurs. These grants can be industry--

specific, providing targeted support to sectors where these groups are typically underrepresented. A shining example of leveraging such opportunities is Nely Galan, a Cuban-American entrepreneur and former President of Entertainment for Telemundo. Galan's journey epitomizes how embracing one's cultural identity and utilizing available resources can lead to groundbreaking success. Her story is just one of many for minority entrepreneurs, illustrating how perseverance, coupled with strategic use of funding avenues like loans and grants tailored for underrepresented groups, can pave the way to significant achievements in the business world. For entrepreneurs belonging to these groups, tapping into these specialized funding sources can be a game-changer. It's not just about the financial boost, but about being part of a broader movement towards diversity and inclusion in the business ecosystem. These funding sources acknowledge the unique challenges faced by underrepresented entrepreneurs and offer a stepping stone to overcome them, turning entrepreneurial dreams into reality.

Grants for Diverse Entrepreneurs Defined!

Grants for diverse entrepreneurs are like financial gifts that you don't have to pay back. They are there to help businesses led by women, people from different cultural backgrounds, and others who often get overlooked, giving them a better shot at success.

CHAPTER 19

PUT THOSE FUNDS TO *WORK*

Marketing and Sales. Your ticket to visibility and growth.

As a newly funded entrepreneur, the realm of marketing and sales might seem scary at first, especially if you're operating on a tight budget. But fear not, because the key to successful marketing isn't always found in deep pockets. It's about innovation, resourcefulness, and tapping into the potential of the digital world.

The Power of Digital and Social Media. In this age, digital and social media platforms are your best allies. They are the modern-day marketplace where you can connect with potential customers without spending a fortune. Utilize LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook to showcase your brand. Share engaging content, engage in industry conversations, and leverage the virality and guerilla tendencies of these platforms. For instance, take a cue from Bang Cookies in Jersey City. They carved a niche for themselves with a daring brand name and quality products that stood out in the cluttered social media space. Their approach shows that sometimes all it takes to catch the public's eye is a pinch of audacity and a well-crafted product.

Get Creative. The beauty of marketing in today's landscape is that it's not confined to traditional norms. Viral and guerrilla marketing tactics can work wonders for your brand. It's about being creative, thinking outside the box, and creating campaigns that resonate with your audience. Remember, marketing is about storytelling and making a connection. It's not just the product you're selling; it's the story you're telling and the emotions you're evoking.

Put That Net to Work. Your network is a treasure trove of opportunities. Engage with your connections, collaborate, and share each other's content. This not only amplifies your reach, but also builds a community around your brand. Join online ———

forums, participate in discussions, contribute valuable insights, collaborate on Instagram posts, guest star in each other's podcast- whatever and everything at all! Your network is your net worth.

Sale for Free. When it comes to sales, the goal is to be effective yet economical. Utilize CRM systems like HubSpot CRM, which offer free tiers for startups and small businesses. These systems help you keep track of customer interactions, making your sales process more streamlined and personalized. Additionally, embrace cold outreach but with a twist – make it warm and personalized. Research your prospects, understand their needs, and tailor your approach to show how your solution fits their problem.

Make your marketing budget work for your business. And always, always, always, keep an eye on what's working and what's not. Be ready to adapt and pivot your strategies based on customer feedback and market trends. The digital landscape is ever-evolving, and so should your marketing and sales tactics.

Marketing and sales are not just about spending money; they're about spending ideas, creativity, and effort. It's about building a brand that resonates, tells a story, and connects with people. So, embrace your role as a marketer and a salesperson with enthusiasm, creativity, and a dash of boldness. With these tools in your arsenal, you're well on your way to making a significant impact in the marketplace.

Navigating the Challenges. *Every ship will face storms; the trick lies in navigating through them.*

Navigating the challenges of a new business is as much about managing finances as it is about steering the actual business ——

itself. Here's how you can integrate financial wisdom into dealing with potential crises, preventing burnout, and adapting to change.

Crisis Management. In the realm of crisis management, financial preparation is paramount. Anticipating potential pitfalls isn't just about having strategies in place; it's also about ensuring you have the financial buffer to withstand unforeseen events. Aim to maintain at least six months' worth of operating expenses as a financial safety net. This cushion allows you to navigate through rough patches without the added stress of immediate financial ruin. It's about being prudent, not paranoid. When a crisis does hit, your preparedness will not only help in weathering the storm, but also in the recovery phase where funds might be needed to implement changes or repair damages.

Burnout Prevention. Burnout isn't just a personal health issue; it can also drain your business's financial health. Keep a close watch on your work hours and those of your employees. Overworking might seem productive in the short term, but can lead to costly mistakes and decreased efficiency in the long run. Ensure that your business's budget includes resources for employee wellness programs and adequate staffing. Hiring additional help or investing in tools that streamline operations can reduce the workload, thereby preventing burnout. Remember, your team's well-being is directly linked to your business's financial health.

Adapting to Change. Adaptability in business is often tied to financial flexibility. The ability to pivot, introduce new technology, or upgrade skills is often contingent on available resources. Regularly assess your business's expenditures and cut back on non-essential spending. I know, your brand new business that is fully online does not need that ad free Spotify —

subscriptions- literally make a mixtape! I know you remember how. The key is to keep your financial commitments lean and flexible, allowing you to swiftly redirect funds to where they're needed most, be it in embracing new technology, training, or market adaptation strategies.

By intertwining financial readiness with these very real possibilities of business management, you create a robust framework for navigating these new uncharted waters of being a successful entrepreneur in the making. This new phase is proof of your resilience and savviness. You're in full gear now!

**MARKETING AND
SALES ARE NOT
JUST ABOUT
SPENDING MONEY;
THEY'RE ABOUT
SPENDING IDEAS,
CREATIVITY, AND
EFFORT.**

CHAPTER 20

WHERE TO *GROW* FROM HERE

Congratu-freaking-lations! You've made it through the initial stages of entrepreneurship and have built a solid foundation for your business. Now, it's about scaling, refining operations, and sustaining growth. You've learned to balance the books, manage crises, and adapt to changes. These skills are now your tools for scaling up. Remember, your business's growth is tied to your ability to adapt and manage resources smartly.

So, brace yourself. You're moving from laying foundations to building the structure of a thriving business. It's about applying all you've learned in a bigger, bolder context. Let's get into the nitty-gritty of making your business not just survive, but really thrive in the competitive business world.

GROWTH AND SCALING. MOVING BEYOND THE START LINE

Expanding and scaling your business is where the real adventure begins. It's like stepping into a larger playing field with more opportunities, but also more challenges. Here's how you can navigate this crucial phase.

Market Analysis. This step is critical. It's not just about understanding your current market, but also about predicting where it's headed. Tools like Google Analytics provide a wealth of data, helping you track trends and monitor competitors. But don't rely solely on digital tools. Attending trade shows and industry conferences offers invaluable insights and networking opportunities. As you've done in the early stages, apply this same analytical rigor now, but with your business's growing scope in mind. Understand where your industry is heading and how your business fits into that future.

Client/Customer Feedback. Listening to your customers is more important than ever. Their feedback is a goldmine of information that can guide your growth strategies. Regularly ——

engage with them through surveys, social media interactions, and direct conversations. What are they saying about your product or service? What improvements are they suggesting? This feedback loop is crucial for refining your offerings and staying aligned with market needs.

Product/Service Expansion. Diversification is key, but so is deepening the value of what you already offer. For instance, if you're a software company, think about additional features that could enhance user experience. In e-commerce, explore complementary products that align with your brand and meet customer needs. This approach not only broadens your portfolio, but also strengthens your market position.

Geographical Expansion. Before jumping into new territories, use tools like Facebook's Audience Insights or Statista to analyze potential customer bases in different regions. Start with targeted marketing campaigns to test these new waters. This way, you can gauge interest and potential success before fully committing to a geographical expansion.

Managing Increased Demand. With growth comes increased demand, and meeting this demand requires scalable infrastructure. If you're an online business, consider cloud solutions like AWS or Google Cloud for scalability. For physical stores, experiment with pop-up shops or short-term leases to test new markets before committing to permanent locations. Always prioritize maintaining quality as you scale. Regular quality audits and even mystery shopping exercises can help ensure your standards stay high as your business grows. In this phase, your role as an entrepreneur evolves. Embrace these new challenges with the same soar that got you this far, and you'll find the venture of growth and scaling can be as rewarding as it is demanding.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE MILESTONES

Prepping for an IPO (Initial Public Offering). Going public is a monumental step. It requires meticulous preparation and expert guidance. Start by consulting financial experts and consider partnering with an investment bank that has a track record of successful IPOs. Your financial records need to be flawless, which means ensuring all audits are up-to-date and accurately reflect your business's financial health. Additionally, familiarize yourself with the regulatory landscape, such as the requirements of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), or equivalent bodies in your jurisdiction. This preparation is not just about meeting legal standards, but also about presenting your company as a sound investment to potential shareholders.

Fielding Buyout Offers. When you receive an offer to buy your company, it's not just a business decision; it's personal. Assess the offer carefully. How does it measure up against your company's valuation? Is the offer fair and in line with your expectations? Also, consider your role post-sale. Will you continue to be involved, and if so, to what extent? Engage legal and financial advisors to scrutinize the details of the proposal. Remember, a buyout is not just a financial transaction; it's the passing of your entrepreneurial torch.

Decision to Sell. Selling your business is a decision that goes beyond financial metrics. Reflect on your long-term vision for the company and yourself. Does the offer align with your exit strategy? Sometimes the decision to sell encompasses considerations about the legacy you want to leave and the future direction of your enterprise. This reflection helps ensure that any decision to sell is not just profitable, but also fulfilling on a personal level.

Protection Steps in a Potential Sale. If you're considering selling, due diligence is critical. Vet potential buyers to understand their intentions and capabilities. Make sure all agreements are legally sound. Confidentiality is key during these discussions to protect your proprietary information and business interests. A non-compete clause might be necessary to safeguard your business's future.

PLANNING FOR THESE FUTURE MILESTONES INVOLVES BRINGING IN THAT BLEND OF FINANCIAL ACUMEN, LEGAL SAVVY, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT!

It's all coming full circle, aye?

Amidst the ever-changing business landscape, suppressed entrepreneurs who are breaking free of their shells face both opportunities and challenges. Knowledge and foresight ensure you're not just reacting, but advancing strategically.

As you're learning, this is about more than just running a business; it's about guiding it through various stages of growth and change. By approaching these milestones with thorough preparation and strategic foresight, you ensure the transitions are not just successful in financial terms, but also align with your broader entrepreneurial vision.

Personal Stories and Case Studies

The entrepreneurial path is lined with tales of courage, resilience, and audacious leaps of faith from (former) suppressed entrepreneurs who have been in your shoes before.

Whitney Wolfe Herd's Empowering Vision. Whitney Wolfe Herd's journey is a powerful example of turning adversity into opportunity. After leaving Tinder, she founded Bumble with a unique vision: a dating app where women make the first move. Her decision to challenge the status quo in the tech industry, particularly in the dating app space, resonated with millions. Bumble's success underlines the impact of creating a business that aligns with one's values and addresses a clear market need.

Arlan Hamilton's Remarkable Rise. Arlan Hamilton's story of going from homelessness to founding Backstage Capital is a testament to sheer willpower and belief in one's vision. As a black, queer woman, she broke barriers in the venture capital world, focusing on funding underrepresented entrepreneurs. Her journey underscores the importance of diversity in investment and the untapped potential in supporting diverse founders.

Julia Hartz's Adaptive Strategies. Julia Hartz, co-founder of Eventbrite, navigated her company through the turbulent times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Her ability to adapt and pivot in the face of an industry-wide crisis, highlights the importance of resilience and agile decision-making in entrepreneurship. Julia's story is a case study in how data-driven strategies can guide a company through unforeseen challenges.

Brian Chesky's Disruptive Hospitality. Brian Chesky, co-founder of Airbnb, transformed the hospitality industry with a simple idea: allowing people to rent out their homes to travelers. His story shows how a novel concept, combined ---

with technology, can disrupt a traditional market. Chesky's journey with Airbnb highlights the importance of user-centered design and the ability to adapt in response to regulatory and market challenges.

Melanie Perkins: From Living Room to Boardroom. Melanie Perkins, the co-founder of Canva, began her entrepreneurial journey in her mother's living room. Her vision to simplify graphic design led to the creation of Canva, now valued at billions. Melanie's story illustrates how a simple idea, aimed at solving a common problem, can grow into a global enterprise.

Payal Kadakia's Iterative Approach. Payal Kadakia, founder of ClassPass, exemplifies the power of feedback loops in refining a business model. Her willingness to continuously adapt ClassPass based on user feedback has been crucial in its success. Payal's journey demonstrates the significance of staying attuned to customer needs and being open to change.

Grant Cardone's Tenacity and Scaling. Grant Cardone's journey in real estate and motivational speaking highlights the importance of tenacity and scaling. Known for his '10X' philosophy, Grant emphasizes the value of setting high targets and relentless pursuit. His approach to business and personal development showcases the power of ambitious goal-setting and strategic scaling.

Ali Kriegsman's E-Commerce Innovation. Ali Kriegsman, co-founder of Bulletin, has carved a niche in the retail and e-commerce industry. Bulletin began as a platform to help female-owned businesses gain visibility and has evolved into-

a wholesale marketplace. Kriegsman's story is a testament to the power of supporting underrepresented entrepreneurs, and the importance of flexibility and evolution in business models. Her journey from running pop-up shops to scaling an online platform highlights how adaptability and a clear vision can drive success in the ever-changing world of e-commerce.

Tristan Walker's Inclusive Beauty Ventures. Tristan Walker, the founder of Walker & Company Brands, has made significant strides in addressing the lack of products for people of color in the beauty and grooming industry. His flagship brand, Bevel, is a grooming line designed specifically for men of color. Walker's entrepreneurial journey underscores the importance of identifying and catering to underserved markets. His success story is an inspiring example of how understanding and serving niche audiences can lead to substantial business opportunities.

IT'S NOT A ONE SIZE FITS ALL

These trailblazers demonstrate that with conviction, grit, and the right resources, escaping the 'rat race' is not just a dream, but a tangible reality. Their stories collectively showcase that entrepreneurship is not a one-size-fits-all journey, but a diverse array of paths, each marked by unique challenges, opportunities, and triumphs.

For the aspiring, the suppressed or **(now!!)** soon-to-be thriving entrepreneur, these varied experiences reinforce the notion that success can come in many forms and from many different starting points.

A'S TO YOUR Q'S

I had a ton of questions when I first started out. Honestly? I wish someone had been there to give me the straight-up answers, even the tough ones. Because let's face it, this entrepreneurial journey is exhilarating, but it's no walk in the park. There are ups, downs, and a whole lot of in-betweens.

So, in the spirit of the raw, real talk I've threaded through this book, here's a no-BS Q&A session. I'm laying it all out – the good, the bad, and the ugly. Because from where I stand now, soaring in the entrepreneurial sky, I can tell you the view's fantastic and there's plenty of space up here for anyone bold enough to take the leap. So, let's dive into your burning questions with some straight-shooting answers.

Q: Is it true that most startups fail? How do you cope with that risk?

A: Yes, the reality is that many startups don't make it past the first few years. The key is to enter entrepreneurship with your eyes open to risks. Have a solid plan, but also be prepared to pivot, or even let go if things aren't working. Embrace failure as a learning opportunity, not a personal defeat.

Q: How do you handle the uncertainty and stress of income fluctuations?

A: It's one of the toughest parts of being an entrepreneur. You need to be financially prudent – save when you can and cut unnecessary expenses. Also, diversifying your revenue streams can help mitigate these fluctuations!

Q: How do you deal with the loneliness of entrepreneurship? How important is networking, really?

A: Entrepreneurship can be isolating, especially in the early stages. Building a support network is crucial. Connect with other entrepreneurs, find mentors, and don't be afraid to seek professional help if you're struggling. Networking opens doors to new opportunities, partnerships, and insights. This is literally why this book's section on network building is so vast. I know how absolutely valid and important it is to succeed.

Q: How important is it to recognize and nurture the entrepreneurial spirit in kids, and how can I use their time before they turn 18 to build something meaningful?

A: It's incredibly important. Kids with entrepreneurial tendencies often show qualities like curiosity, resilience, and creativity from a young age. Nurturing these traits can be immensely beneficial, regardless of whether they eventually become entrepreneurs or choose a different path.

Q: Can you be an introvert and still be a successful entrepreneur?

A: Yes! Being an introvert doesn't mean you can't run a successful business. It's about playing to your strengths, like deep focus and being a good listener, and finding ways to manage more extroverted activities, like networking.

Q: Is taking on debt for business growth always a bad idea?

A: Not always. Strategic debt can be a powerful tool for growth, but it needs to be managed carefully. Never take on more debt than your business can handle, and have a clear plan for how you'll use and repay the money.

CONCLUSION

**I'M STILL
SOARING:
*UP AND
FURTHER***

This journey as a Suppressed Entrepreneur has been a long test of patience, challenges, and desire. If you know you are made to do more and not only have the desire, but also the grit and determination burning inside you, this final chapter is your launching pad. If this book has felt like a bare-knuckle ride through the heart of entrepreneurship, that's because it is. It's the unfiltered, unpolished truth of my journey – scars, struggles, highs, and lows included.

This book has laid bare the unvarnished truth about entrepreneurship – the good, the bad, and everything in between.

I've shared some of my deepest lows – the mental health battles, the doubts, and those moments of profound anxiety. You've seen the patches on my wings, the tears I've stitched up in mid-flight. This isn't just my business journey; it's a chronicle of personal evolution, of transforming suppression into soaring heights.

My entrepreneurial path has never been about smooth sailing. It's been a relentless pursuit of a vision, often in the face of adversity. I've discussed my return to the corporate world, not as a defeat, but as a strategic retreat, a chance to gather strength and launch again. Every setback, every detour, has been a lesson; a stepping stone to something greater.

The ice cold truth? Entrepreneurship is not for everyone. If it was easy, everyone would do it, right? It's a path littered with risks and uncertainties. If you listen to the stories of some of the most successful people in the world, you will learn they did not achieve success on their first try, or even their second; they have experienced multiple obstacles and unsuccessful ventures that became lessons learned before hitting that homerun.

So here's what I've learned: the view from the top, the sense of accomplishment and freedom – it's unparalleled. Every night, I fall asleep grateful for the path I've chosen, and have no regrets.

As Danielle Michel, I'm just one voice in a sea of entrepreneurs who've dared to dream, stumbled, and risen again. And this book is my heart, laid bare for you. It's not a promise of easy success; it's a guide for your journey. As I continue to evolve, grow, and dive into new ventures, my message to you remains constant – you can do this. Your dreams, your aspirations, they're valid and achievable.

As for me, my entrepreneurial journey is actively evolving. I'm diving back into my past successes, updating and adapting them to meet the demands of today's market. My main focus right now, the specialized tax company, is on an upward trajectory as we extend our range of services and welcome new team members to support our growth. In the field of real estate, I'm not just increasing our portfolio, but also expanding from residential to commercial markets, internationally, exploring new opportunities in overseas markets. I'm also growing my voice and presence and sharing my experiences through my podcasts and my new personal branding channel, reaching out to a broader audience. And there's more on the horizon. I'm constantly exploring new ideas and opportunities, some in early stages of development and others still forming. My journey in entrepreneurship is a continuous process of growth, learning, and adaptation.

And I'm not just leaving you with words. On my website, I've laid out a gold mine of templates, resources, and tools – all available for those who are ready to shake off suppression and soar.

These resources can help guide you through next steps and assist you in accountability. This book is your starting point, but the journey doesn't end here. Connect with me. My favorite past-time is learning about others' ideas and business journeys. I am here to answer your questions, to guide, to inspire. I'm committed to responding to every message, to be a part of your journey.

As you stand on the verge of your own entrepreneurial leap, remember this: these wings are real. The freedom, the exhilaration of breaking free – it's all within your grasp. So, as we wrap up this journey together, I leave you not with an ending, but a beginning. A beginning of your incredible entrepreneurial story. May your path shape you; your confidence push you, and your success make you proud of your own da*n self.

Start here, rise anywhere, baby!

It's not just a tagline; it's our code.

Hit me up, let me see what you're working on:

- Website: daniellemichelventures.com (grab those free resources!)
- Email: hello@daniellemichelventures.com
- The 'gram: [@daniellemichelventures](https://www.instagram.com/daniellemichelventures),
[@thesuppressedentrepreneur](https://www.instagram.com/thesuppressedentrepreneur), [@MTRSNOW](https://www.instagram.com/MTRSNOW),
[@theupsidedownside_](https://www.instagram.com/theupsidedownside_), [@coastalcharmproperties](https://www.instagram.com/coastalcharmproperties)

DM me anytime – this ain't just talk, I walk the walk.

Let's soar together.

RESOURCES AND GLOSSARY

The learning doesn't stop here! Scan the QR code to join our online community and tap into a vast database of entrepreneur knowledge. Find templates, real-world advice, and insights on those niche topics we couldn't squeeze into the book.



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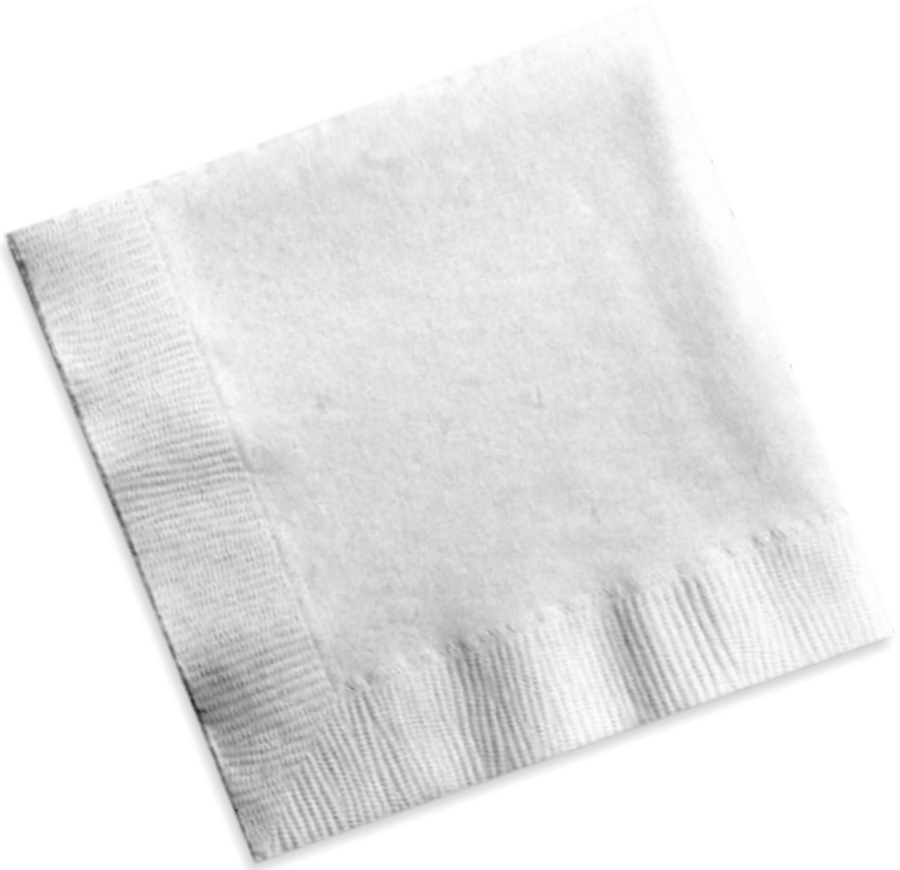
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HEY FORMER SUPPRESSED ENTREPRENEUR!

Guess what? Now it's YOUR turn to grab a pen (hell, use a crayon if that's all you got!) and get that vision down on paper.

Rip this page/napkin out. Scribble, brainstorm, get messy. This is your starting line, and I'm right here cheering you on!



*Ready to see those wings take flight? LETS GO!! Start here
on this here napkin and let's see where you rise!*

With candidness and raw realness, Danielle Michel charts her no-holds-barred rise from the suppressed to the thriving entrepreneur, providing a real-life glimpse of her story from a suppressed dreamer to a fearless founder, illustrating that with tenacity, innovation, and unswerving determination, any barrier can become a stepping stone to success.

With chapters guiding you from the gritty beginnings to a sustainable, thriving business, this book is an actionable guide full of real-world wisdom and actionable strategies. Danielle doesn't just share her story; she brings in insights learned from diverse business trailblazers, enriching the narrative with a variety of entrepreneurial truths, adding depth and diversity to the entrepreneurial conversation.

For dreamers, doers, and everyone in between, the *Suppressed Entrepreneur to Thriving Entrepreneur* is a call to turn a suppressed entrepreneurial gut feeling into a thriving business. It's about making your mark, one bold, unapologetic step at a time.

Start here, rise anywhere isn't just a tagline; it encapsulates the essence of rising with every success, big or small. Encouraging you to spread your wings, this book guides you from the ground up to the top, one solid move at a time. It's your call to venture into the realms of high-reaching success and build a legacy that defies all odds.



DANIELLE MICHEL IS A SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR WITH A DIVERSE PORTFOLIO, WHOSE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT IS JUST BEGINNING TO SOAR. SHE IS THE FOUNDER OF MTRS, A SPECIALIZED FINANCE FIRM DEDICATED TO ENHANCING BUSINESS PROFITABILITY THROUGH INNOVATION AND STRATEGIC TAX CREDITS AND REFUNDS. SHE IS ALSO AN ACTIVE INVESTOR WITH A SIGNIFICANT REAL ESTATE PORTFOLIO, AND IS FOCUSED ON INVESTING IN A VARIETY OF BUSINESSES. HER MULTIFACETED EXPERTISE INCLUDES SALES ACUMEN, WELLNESS KNOWLEDGE, AND A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF GROWTH STRATEGIES. WITH EXPERIENCE IN SCALING BOTH BOOTSTRAPPED AND VENTURE-BACKED BUSINESSES, DANIELLE IS WELL-VERSED IN THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP. IN HER FIRST BOOK, THE ONE YOU'RE HOLDING IN YOUR HANDS, SHE SHARES HER INSIGHTS AND EXPERIENCES, OFFERING GUIDANCE AND EMPOWERMENT TO THOSE TRANSITIONING FROM A SUPPRESSED TO A THRIVING ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET.

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