

# LIFT-OFF

Adam JD. Martin



**1** Business Cards Don't Build Businesses

**2** Start with the End in Mind

**3** Revenue

**4** Supply and Demand

**5** Specialize, at Least at First

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PROBLEMS  
OR  
PROFITS



# INTRODUCTION

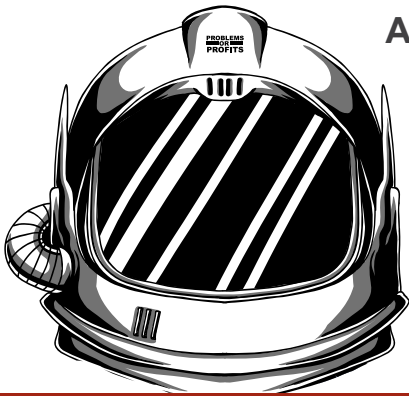
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Trust me, I know the position you're in and I've been there. Getting started is always the hardest part. The uncertainty of the blank canvas can be daunting. It's incredibly difficult to understand at the beginning what needs to be prioritized, where money should be invested, who to hire, what roles to fill, and what to outsource. Even in writing this book there were moments of sheer nothingness in my brain, a symptom of overwhelm and the so called "writer's block" that hits most authors when they're staring at a blank page for too long, captive to the overwhelming amount of information that needs to be shared, and the underwhelming mode at which you have to share it. It's like trying to drink from a firehose.

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# THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK

Adam JD. Martin



[www.instagram.com/adamjdmartin](https://www.instagram.com/adamjdmartin)

As I have found with writing, one of the greatest challenges of getting a new business off the ground, was choosing from a huge well of information and drive that I felt to bring an idea to fruition while faced with the absence of a clear format to follow. Much like a writer struggles to capture his sentiments in the perfect form to convey his intended meaning in a way that makes sense to the reader, entrepreneurs often find themselves overwhelmed by the nature of their ideas and products, but completely unsure of how to get started.

Don't panic if this sounds all too familiar and that analogy has connected with you. Almost every entrepreneur suffers from the same affliction. You're passionate about

your products. You're passionate about your process. You're passionate about your strategy and the value your organization is going to bring to the market. You're confident that if only you could get in front of the right people, the product and service would speak for itself. It's a no brainer, your value proposition is bullet-proof and all you need is more attention, right? Actually, yes, more than likely all of that is true. You probably do have most of the skills necessary, and what you lack in talent or skill, you will make up for in drive and ambition. You just need to focus your energy on what matters. Prioritize your time and get to work on implementing your plan in the right sequence.

# **IT TOOK THREE YEARS OF DAY-IN, DAY-OUT HARD WORK TO GET TO THE POINT WHERE WRITING THIS BOOK MADE SENSE.**

It wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for the team of incredible people working alongside me and the beautiful company culture we've built despite hundreds, if not thousands of mistakes. Getting here was hard. Sacrifices and mistakes were made. Relationships ended; jobs and careers given up. The idea of safety and comfort were forgotten and, most importantly, risks had to be taken. That's what it took to take our company from \$5-10k a month to consistently hitting \$200,000 a month with ease.



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**“It wasn’t easy  
for me, and it  
won’t be  
easy for you.”**

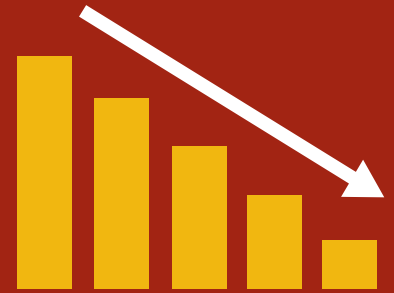
**But that’s what  
it took to get  
LIFT-OFF.”**

# CHAPTER 1:

## BUSINESS CARDS

### DON'T BUILD

## BUSINESSES



I need to start by warning you that this book is about to come in hot. These are words you absolutely need to hear, and I might be the only person with the freedom to put them on paper. If you stick it out until the end, I promise you, you will have a better business because of it. It becomes more technical as it develops, but there are a few things I need to get off my chest immediately, for your own good.

You need to forget everything you learned in business school. Nobody gives a shit about your business card, your website, your “brand”. It is imperative that if you want to get this business off the ground, you forget these preconceived notions immediately, or your business will be dead before the ink even hits the cardstock on the shitty design that you made on that outdated free

template you found on the internet ten minutes ago (along with every other want-to-be business person). Look, I get it. You want to appear professional. You want people to know how they can get ahold of you, that you’re a ‘real business’. Here’s the reality- you’re not. Not yet at least, but that’s what this book is going to help solve. The point of Lift-Off is to inspire entrepreneurs of all ages, shapes, sizes, industries and organizational structures. Whether your organization is going to be tall or flat, the success of your business in the beginning is going to rely on three things only:

- 1. Your WHY**
- 2. People and Partners**
- 3. Generating Revenue.**

# One of the first things you will need to gain clarity on in your business IS YOUR WHY.



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I'm not talking about the classic "make a million dollars so I can be financially free" bullshit either. Yes, the money is paramount, but real money is actually a symptom of someone driving hard, day in, day out with consistent effort to achieve a much deeper emotional goal. You need to mine your soul for this emotional connection, go right off the deep end to figure out what really makes you tick. This process is incredibly important because it is the bedrock of your foundation as you begin the hardest journey of your life in pursuing your entrepreneurial goals. Your WHY is what drives you to continue making the hard calls, cold-calling, door knocking, driving for dollars and tirelessly pursuing leads well after your body and brain have told you it's time to stop.

Once you've got to the bottom of your WHY and discovered your true

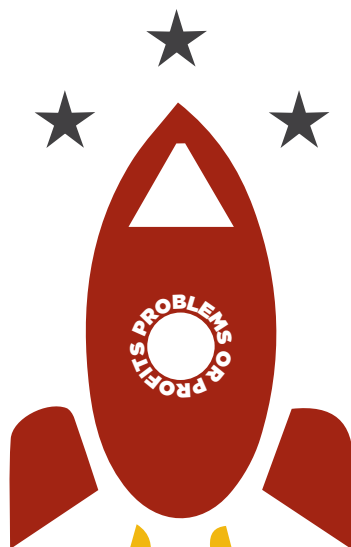
motivation and source of drive, beyond the financial gain, you will need to immediately start thinking about people and partners. Strategic partners are those people in your industry that will provide goods and services to you. These people are going to be some of the most important people in your life for a long time. Choose them wisely, as they will absolutely help or harm your business. When selecting strategic partners, it is wise to qualify multiple options that will be suitable for you today, but also in the future as you grow. The best strategic partners and service providers will act as force multipliers- dynamically adding value to your business, as opposed to simply performing a basic task for you. Some things to consider when selecting your strategic partners would be their level of flexibility, experience in the industry and experience with clients that provide

similar services as your company. Their communication styles and accessibility should match your needs. Their plans for growth and drive for results should reflect yours. For the time being, forget about price. It's just not important. When you find the right partner, be willing to pay premiums. You get what you pay for, and a great strategic partner is worth their weight in gold when you think long term. Now is the time to start thinking long term.

Never take the easy path. When you start thinking long term, you may be looking at entering into expensive and lengthy contracts with your service providers. You may have to commit to a certain level of volume with them, or a minimum number of pieces of the product or service they're providing you with. Do the right thing and enter these contracts to leverage economies of scale and force yourself to focus on what needs to be done in order to fulfill these commitments.

That brings us to sales and revenue. **WITHOUT A STRONG WHY AND THE RIGHT PEOPLE, YOU HAVE NO BUSINESS TO BEGIN WITH.** But without revenue, you will have nothing. Achieving lift off for your business is similar to that of a rocket ship, where 85-90% of its mass is composed of fuel and propellants, and only 10-15% of the mass allocated to the actual rocket that holds the astronauts with their equipment and supplies.

**In The Tyranny of the Rocket Equation,** NASA describes the challenge of getting out of Earth's orbit and gravitational pull. It may be surprising for you to consider then, that despite this massive 'gas tank', the shuttle will expend 50% of its fuel getting to orbit. Roughly the same amount of fuel is what's required to take that same shuttle all the way to Mars.



**The Tyranny of the Rocket Equation is due largely to Earth's gravity.** It simply takes a lot of energy to escape it, and the more fuel you bring to escape the gravity, the heavier your rocket becomes. The heavier your rocket, the more fuel it needs to achieve lift off. You see the tyranny? If it seems like an almost impossible circular problem, it's because it is, but the operative word here is almost. **And that's the good news. It is possible.**



The bad news is, **the Tyranny of the Rocket Equation is perfectly analogous to your business. Substitute gravity for capital requirements, infrastructure, and barriers to entry. Now substitute fuel for sales and you have your tyrannical challenge.** The more sales you make, the more infrastructure you will need to support those sales. The more infrastructure you need, the greater your capital requirements, and the greater your capital requirements, the greater your need is for more sales. Herein lies the tyranny, and all of that assumes that no player was so large and obstructive, such as a government or monopoly power, that you were even allowed to enter the game.

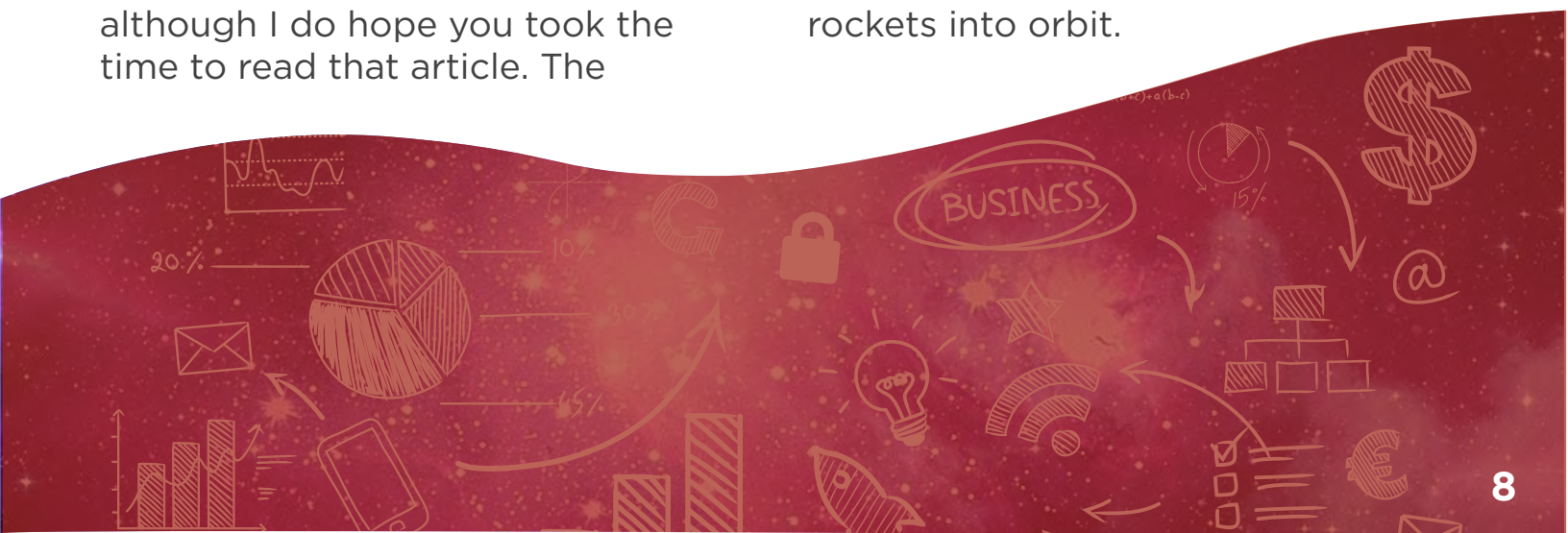
**The gravity of that analogy is of course concerning, and it should be.**

**This book is not meant to assure you that everything will be ok. In fact it probably won't be.**

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Most businesses fail in the first five years, or at least that's a common adage everyone likes to reference. But this is your opportunity to shine. Those that do make it past Earth's orbit are forever remembered. It's not as if anyone had to look up NASA when I referenced their name, although I do hope you took the time to read that article. The

following chapters will address how exactly you can position yourself better to take on the rocket equation, understand your WHY, position people and partners perfectly, and generate revenue. Just remember, business cards don't build businesses, nor do they get rockets into orbit.





# CHAPTER 2:

## START WITH THE END IN MIND



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Having acknowledged that the business cards and website can wait (that is unless your entire business is a website), you can get to work “imagineering” your business of the future. We have to thank Disney for that term, as it’s perfectly suitable for our purpose of thinking long enough into the future to see what our desired outcomes will be. It’s extremely useful to take advantage of this type of thinking from the very start. Some questions to ask yourself about the business are:

**If I had a magic wand, how would I structure the business?**

## Who? What? When? Where? Why?

- *How long do I see myself being the operator of this business?*
- *Am I going to hold this business long term, or is it a short-term engine for revenue?*
- *Is there residual benefit from this business model that can be captured as a royalty or is there a target liquidity event?*
- *How much revenue will be required to break even?*
- *How much revenue will be required to achieve my goals?*
- *Accounting for infrastructure growth, staff, cost of capital, cost of goods sold, operating expenses and time*
- *What do you do and what don’t you do?*

By answering this handful of questions, you will be far better-equipped to engineer the business that will bring you long-term success. One of the biggest mistakes many entrepreneurs suffer from is short-term thinking. They build a business that works, but only for short-term gains. We call this transactional thinking. In contrast to relational thinking,

which is far more long term, these entrepreneurs will make deals and business models that can generate revenue at the beginning, but almost always fail in the long term as they suffer from bad partnerships, a lack of goodwill in the market when times are tough and the ever-present tragedy of the commons.



# One of the simplest ways to tackle these problems is to think of them through the lens of why do we do anything that we do, and why do we do it the way that we do.

This is often referred to as First Principles thinking. Popularized by Elon Musk, this idea is a fundamental strategy to achieving Lift Off in your business, and beginning with the end in mind. In Musk's version of First Principles thinking, he suggests that you should follow these three fundamental thought processes:


- 1 Identify and define your current assumptions**
- 2 Breakdown the problem into its fundamental principles**
- 3 Create new solutions from scratch**



This type of thinking is so important because it can inspire novel solutions to problems that would stump anyone who is rigidly fastened to their limiting beliefs and preconceived notions of how things are “supposed” to work. There have been countless times in our business in which we’ve encountered dogmatic lawyers, realtors, lenders, bankers, insurance agents, buyers and sellers. It’s bound to happen to you too, but the buck stops there. It will be up to you to have the best processes and standard operating procedures to be able to think on your feet and find profits where others find problems.

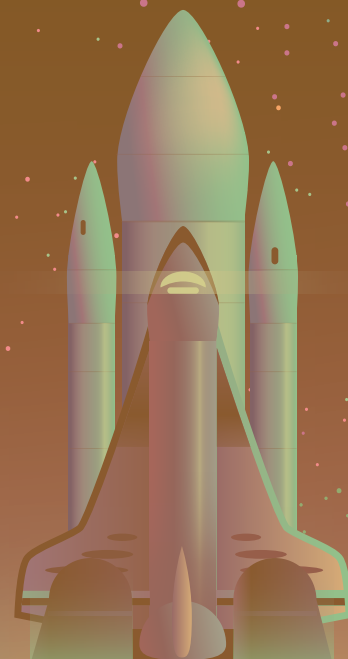
Now that you've been reminded of the First Principles approach and understand its vitality to your business, I want to focus your attention on the fundamentals of the business. You should have, during the exercise above, identified some of the main stakeholders and contributors to your business. By answering the who, what, when, where, and why questions, in addition to the questions about the duration of time you believe you will need to be invested fully in this business, you should have come to

some conclusions about what you need to do to get started. You should be thinking by now about what types of skills you are missing and who you might need to hire to fill those places. You may have thought about all the additional overhead, staff, training, workspaces, suppliers, and revenue streams you require. Some of these things you may be thinking about for the first time, and that's ok. If today is the first time you fully think all this through, it's completely fine.

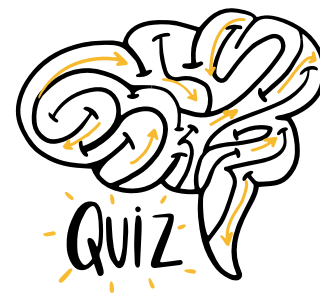


## The journey to Mars starts as nothing more than **AN IDEA.**

If you actually want to get off the ground and achieve Lift Off however, the idea itself won't get you very far. That is why it's so important to understand the end state of our business, or where we want to go. These ideas inform us how we should plan to get there. It takes a very different infrastructure and implementation plan to going to Mars one-way versus doing a round trip. Your business is no different. If you are planning on building out intellectual property or processes that will be sold to external clients, you would certainly build it with different procedural considerations than if you were simply going to use something internally one time. Build the business that will take you to your goals. While it's a lot easier to build something the second time, that should not be your excuse to avoid thinking through your choices today about the future of your business. Things should not be happening to you, they should be happening through you.



# To wrap up this chapter, we're going to play a most unwelcome game.



It may not be fun or easy, but we're going to do it anyway. That is after all what your future is going to look like. You're going to have to do a lot of hard things and face some truths that you won't necessarily enjoy. Here's how you play:

***Go to a quiet place, there can be absolutely no distractions. Imagine the desired end state of your business and answer the following:***

***Who are you?***

***What are you wearing?***

***What kind of car are you driving?***

***What kind of house do you live in?***

***What is your daily routine?***

***What habits do you have?***

***What does "work" look like?***

***How many calls are you taking from the business?***

***What types of roles and responsibilities do you have?***

***What types of meetings are you taking?***

***Where do those meetings take place?***

***When you come home, who is waiting for you?***

***Who do you associate with on a regular basis?***

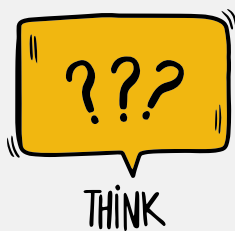
***Who are your suppliers?***

***Who are your customers?***

***Who are your mentors?***

***Now that you have it all, what do you want?***

***After answering all of those questions in depth, look around you. Look at your environment. Look at your friends. Look at your peers. Look at your business plan. Finally, look in the mirror.***



# Chapter 3: Revenue

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*For the foreseeable future you are going to be working on correcting everything you have just seen in your reflection and your surroundings.*

You need to change the people you are currently associating with, find yourself mentors that have been in your position and done something similar to what you are trying to achieve, and start the long journey to achieving your goals. Along the way, there are bound to be setbacks, challenges, obstacles and, most importantly, uncertainties. Most of the people you associate with today will question you, your ideas and then finally your sanity. These are the harbingers of good luck and misfortune. If no one is questioning your actions, you've either played it too safe, or you've successfully taken the actions required to fire your former friends and acquaintances, and you've surrounded yourself with the right people. How do you know they're the right people? You question their actions, their ideas and their sanity; definitely not because you think they're playing it safe.



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**NETWORK****NETWORTH**



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"Most people **overestimate** what they can do in one year and **underestimate** what they can do in ten years."

-Bill Gates

THE CLIQUE



**With the right people around you, YOU WON'T FEEL THE DRAG THAT WAS HOLDING YOU BACK BEFORE. You'll find it's essential to getting your business OFF THE GROUND.**

It's incredibly hard to achieve Lift Off with anchors tying you to the ground. Free of these anchors, you will be able to focus 100% of your energy and focus on what matters:

**GENERATING REVENUE. Revenue and sales are the life force of your business. It's the fuel for your business. It is the only thing that can get you off the ground you're standing on today, and into the stars. Generating revenue needs to be seen as the most important thing you do in a day.** The only things that supersedes revenue generating

activities are those that fundamentally keep you alive. I'm talking about water and oxygen. You can survive weeks without food, so **DON'T BE A LITTLE BITCH** when you have to work through a meal time or need to schedule an important sales call after spending hours at the office or on the road. **Nothing else matters. New movie came out? No. Catch the game this weekend with the guys? No. "Hey man, can you give me a hand moving some things with your truck?" Never.**

I should add that maintaining this state of vigilance towards your goals and revenue generating activities will require a lot of self-discipline and good health. You will need to maintain adequate sleep for your body and fuel yourself with the best foods. This paragraph may seem out of place in a chapter called Revenue, but trust me, it's not. You will need more energy, clarity and focus than your competitors. **You will need to be able to sustain more hours and make more decisions than them. You should be able to make your decisions faster and with greater consequence than them, and when you blunder, you should be able to recover faster than them. You will need to "move fast and break things"** as Facebook so eloquently put it in their early days, on their way to achieving

stable infrastructure and \$744,840,000,000 market cap (USD). No, that's not a typo, that's seven hundred forty-four billion, eight hundred forty million green faces. How do you achieve that level? I'm hoping by the next book I write I'll have that answer for you. What I do know is, if you don't take care of your body, it will fail your mind. If your mind fails because your body can't keep up, the whole system will crash. Take care to sleep as much as you need, eat whole foods and move your body. Start small and move your way up. You can begin by positively reinforcing great habits like going to bed at the same time every night, and allowing your body to rise with the sun. Cut out processed foods and sugar. Start moving your body intentionally.



An illustration on a dark grey background featuring a person in a yellow jacket and black pants standing triumphantly on a large stack of money. The person has one arm raised in a celebratory gesture. Surrounding the person are several large, 3D yellow arrows pointing upwards, and numerous gold coins with the number '1' on them. Small white plus signs and circles are scattered throughout the scene.

# Revenue Growth

If you've already optimized your life in those areas, you should begin working on those revenue generating activities immediately and with a stubborn focus. What are these revenue-generating activities? I thought you would never ask. Revenue-generating activities come in all shapes and sizes, and sometimes they are unbelievably hard to discern. There is a common thread, however, that appears to run through almost all of them. That thread is the connection between two parties exchanging value. Whether you are offering a tangible product, a service, or something intangible like software, it must be true that at some point you are going to exchange value with someone else for those services.

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**Revenue generating activities are most commonly those opportunities that put you, your company or your product/service in front of someone else so that they may make the decision to enjoy the benefits of what you are providing.** Not every interaction with someone outside your company is going to result in revenue, but you should take every opportunity to interact with as many people that could possibly want your product/service as possible. There is a certain network effect to life, and the more business you do, the more business you do. **Simply creating the opportunities for you and your company to get in front of more people can have compounding effects on the top line.**

# CHAPTER 4:

## SUPPLY

# &

## DEMAND

**There are many ways to skin a cat. While you may think you know the best way, you're probably wrong.**

Your proximity to your business, your intimate origin story, and your involvement with the day-to-day operations can often cloud the truth from you. There is only one person who knows how best to skin your cat, and it's your customer. You must not make the mistake of letting your ego and your pride get in the way of making hard decisions. If you come to find out that your idea wasn't the right one, and that your customers actually value something different—do not act out in protest. Be thankful that you misinterpreted the market's needs and landed close enough to

make a course correction. You shot for the stars and you landed on the moon.

Course correcting can be expensive and time consuming, especially if you have to start back from zero. While this is sometimes necessary, the better option is to start with your customer's needs. Your customer's needs should inform your product lines, not the other way around. If you try to do it the other way around, forcing products upon reluctant customers, you'll find yourself in the same shoes as





MySpace, Netscape, Napster, Blockbuster, the GM EV-1, Blackberry, and countless other companies who could have had everything but fell far short of the mark from a lack of engagement with their customers. There is no question that all of these companies had brilliant ideas. **Most of them even made more money than you've ever seen, but none of them will ever know the success of companies like Apple, Tesla, Netflix, Facebook, or Google.** In fact, if you combine all of those company's market capitalizations at their height, they wouldn't even come close to a single one of these giants.

So how do you stay on the right side of history? You start building your processes and standard operating procedures around the needs of your customers. You create the supply that feeds their demand. The benefits of this model can't be understated. It's almost like cheating on a test. If you have the answer key right in front of you, it doesn't matter how hard the test is, it stands to reason you're probably going to do pretty well. One of the most beautiful side effects of giving your customers the products they want to consume, and not the ones that you want to produce, is that they will pay you premiums for them! This is perhaps

the most attractive reason behind asking your customers exactly what they want today. Another reason you should consider driving your company in this direction is that it will give you guidance as to exactly how your business needs to be structured from an operational perspective. If you know what your customers want and you know what they're willing to pay for it, you will have a much better understanding of what needs to happen in order to provide them with exactly that. This can guide your decisions on which strategic partners and suppliers you need to acquire, maintain, hire, or fire, and what talent you are missing.



# If you build it, they will come? **Maybe.**



But asking your ideal customer, who you want to work with, exactly what they want built and how much they're willing to pay for it sounds like a much better plan. The only thing you should be asking next is "does delivery work better for you today or tomorrow"? Perfect, sign here. Winning matters, and this is simply the easiest way to guarantee you will. It's almost unfair to your competition.



**While they're busy building a better mousetrap, you'll be figuring out what to do next with your surplus of cheddar.**

# Chapter 5:

## Specialize, At

## Least at First



Once you've identified who the ideal customer would be, what their interests are and what value they seek, you will be ready to meet their needs and to create the supply for their demand. However, during the process of identifying the ideal customer, you have probably realized that there are several different types of customer you might find ideal, and all of them may want something different. Should you not create the supply to satisfy all of them? The short answer is yes. **The long answer is yes, but... The 'but' I'm preparing you for is 'but not yet'. Going back to our rocket equation, I would challenge you to think about how you would design the perfect rocket that could, at a moment's notice, change its flight plan from going to the moon to going to Mars, then to Jupiter.** It simply wouldn't make sense. You would need to have thought through millions of contingencies

for food, water, fuel, and any other requirements that are specialized to the nature of the various destinations- Jupiter, for example, has considerably more gravity than Mars. **So, while you may want to design a rocket that could go to any of these destinations, it's best not to plan on going to all of them at once, especially in a just in time fashion as described in this thought experiment.** You could, however, design the rocket in such a way that you could make your destination the Moon, engineer and build the rocket, have a successful mission, and transfer the lessons learned and the potential process improvements on to the next mission. **Having been enlightened by your practical experience in actually building and launching one rocket, you will be infinitely more qualified to build another with similar requirements.**



**Specialization, at least until you have Lift-Off, is going to be the key to your success in moving with agility.** You will learn to service a particular niche that your ideal customer is demanding and, over time, you will surpass those in your market that are 'good' at providing value in that area, and you will become great. **Mastery is difficult to achieve, but there is something to be said about doing one thing really, really well.**



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**Bruce Lee is often quoted saying the following “I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times”.**

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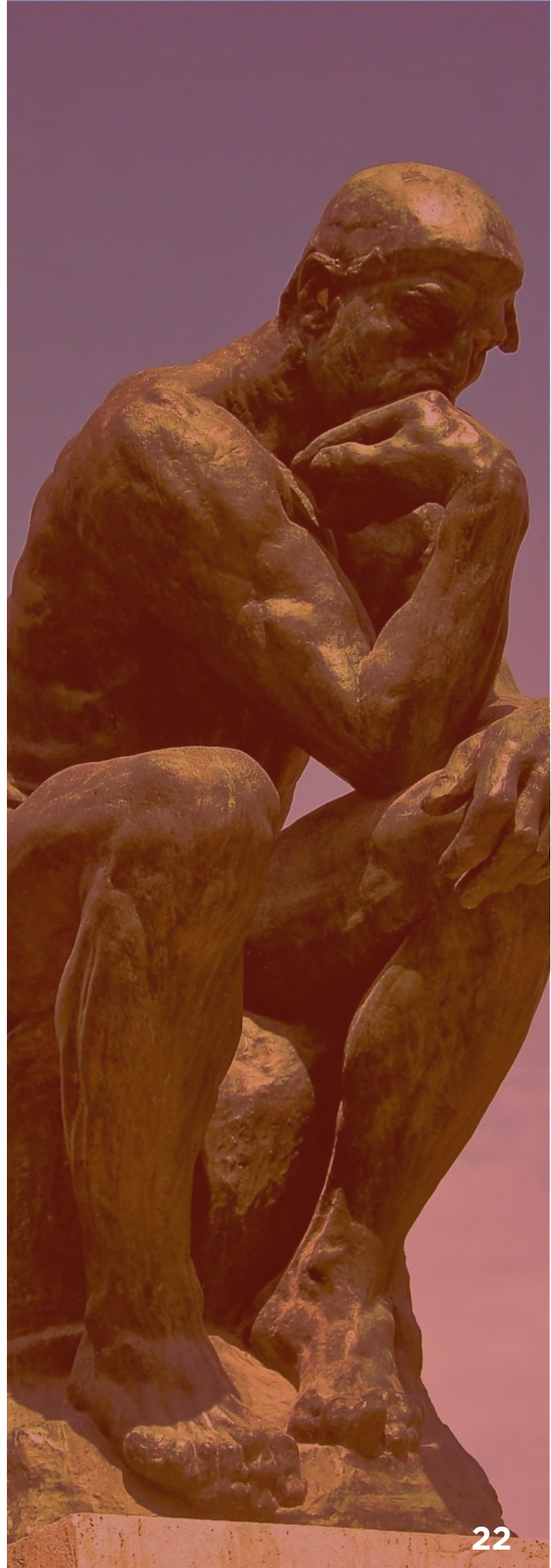
This quote perfectly summarizes what I want to communicate to you in this chapter. The reality is, as a generalist, you will make more mistakes and suffer from greater inefficiency. You will suffer from several forms of waste, best described by the Toyota Production System (TPS) and Lean Production Systems, which detail at great lengths the 8 forms of waste to be aware of in any system:

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>1 Defects</b>        | <b>5 Transportation</b>   |
| <b>2 Overproduction</b> | <b>6 Inventory</b>        |
| <b>3 Waiting</b>        | <b>7 Motion</b>           |
| <b>4 Unused Talent</b>  | <b>8 Extra-Processing</b> |



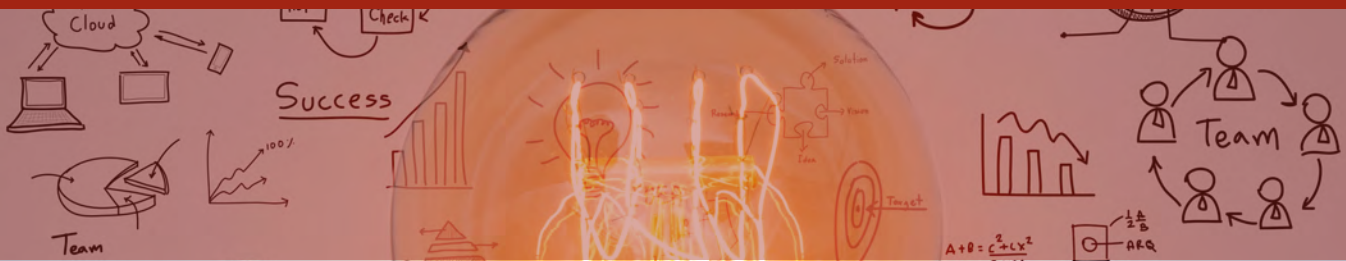
Reflecting on those forms of waste, can you see how, at the beginning, you may have an extremely hard time creating the perfect system that will accommodate all of these considerations across multiple product lines in order to satisfy the demands of several archetypes of Buyers?

Now, you may be asking, **“if not now, then when can I open up my business for different product lines and different types of customers”?** That is going to largely be a subjective process for you, but I would challenge you to first build a sustainable product line that will be able to bring in consistent revenue that exceeds your expenses. In my company, the best decisions have always been made when we didn't need to make a decision at all, but when we chose to. You should approach with great caution the decisions you make hastily out of a scarcity mindset. Your best ideas and innovations will come from a place of abundance, where you realize that you can modify small parts of your existing standard operating procedure or organizational structure in order to get compounding results. **Leave the overhauls for times when you have great abundance. All projects suffer from scope creep, unanticipated delays and/or costs.**



When the time comes to consider modifying your business model to include additional product lines or customers, do not discontinue the activities that got you to this place of abundance. This is one of the most common, and fatal, mistakes that entrepreneurs make. They see someone succeeding in an adjacent business model or using some other business process and they completely jump ship on what brought them their success. Why is this so common? I think the grass always looks greener on the other side. It's part of the human condition. It's altogether too natural for us to want to mess up a good thing. **Don't! Set your business up so that, when**

**there are shiny objects you want to pursue, you will have checks and balances in place and you will stop to think cautiously about what helped you to succeed in the first place.** Sleep on any major decisions, and be sure to think them through to the end. One of the best ways to do this is to walk an order all the way through from the beginning. It's time for our who, what, when, where, why exercise again. Ensure that you have thought everything through from the point of supply to the order process, and all the way to the customer's hands and their experience with the product or service. Seek and destroy any waste outlined in the TPS as above.



One of the best strategies to succeed in releasing new product lines and continuing to drive growth and revenue in your business, was outlined in a book published in 1999, called *The Alchemy of Growth*, in which the authors discussed a framework they dubbed the Three Horizons of Growth. This strategy focuses on driving innovation without sacrificing your existing streams of revenue and product lines. It works by starting to innovate with new products long before your existing product lines fade out of relevance, but not before you have experienced a relatively significant portion of its growth phase. During the growth phase, you will have to have optimized your production capabilities and become more efficient, positioning you to benefit from the actual profitability for the first time since starting your business.

**This is Lift-Off. Once you've successfully managed to escape the gravity of the start-up phase, you can then think of ways to do it better, to increase your streams of revenue, and plan additional missions.**

# Chapter 6:

# Systematize



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**I've mentioned the concept that you will have standard operating procedures (SOPs) several times now in this book. In this chapter we will unpack what that means, and how to arrive at those procedures.**

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To preface these lessons, just know that there is no perfect procedure. The best SOPs leave room for suggestion and input from the various stakeholders involved in the process. They communicate effectively your intentions for what the process should accomplish, and detail the specific best practices that are known at the time for how to run that process. It is on the rarest of occasions however, that an SOP will describe absolutely every single element of a process and give unwavering rigidity to the practitioner. In some cases this may be required, in particular those processes where there are grave consequences to the business or to the stakeholders should the process not be done in a particular way, but those are far less common than the processes that have little consequence if done with fluidity and continuous improvement in mind.

In the spirit of continuous improvement,

you and your staff should always be aware of the exercises we did at the beginning of this book and the lessons learned from First Principles thinking. These are exercises you will likely need to do often. In my company, we seldom go past a quarter without reviewing what it is that we do and what it is that we don't do, then we ask ourselves why we do the things that we do in the way that we do them. The short version of that looks like asking yourself and your staff who regularly interact with a process, "is this the best way we could be doing this task?" Another great question to ask about your business' processes would be "what would this look like if it was easy?" This is potentially one of the most powerful questions you could ask your organization, because it brings an almost childlike approach to the problem, providing you with all the power of imagination. Yes, we're back to Imagineering.



If you do not currently have a process for something that you are about to start doing in your business, and this book has found you in your planning phase, **then it is time to start asking those critical questions immediately.** Once you have determined what it would look like if it was easy, you can then begin identifying those limitations that would hold you back from implementing your plan the easy way. **Typically, you will find your problems lie within the following challenges:**



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## 1 Money    2 Time    3 Skills 4 Technology    5 Legality

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Most of these challenges can actually be overcome by simply having more money. If that's not something that's going to be possible for your organization, then you will have to get to work on creating the opportunities for your organization to work out/ outsource the problem. There are problems and there are profits, but you only get one at the end of the day. The choice is yours. If you can't raise any more money and you've already tapped the credit cards, lines of credit, RSPs, cash, family, friends, and investors, you don't have many

options. It's war. You'll need boots on the ground, and boots cost money. Seek win-win solutions with suppliers and strategic partners. Inside your circle of influence there is someone that will be willing to put the work in today for the benefits you will be able to achieve in the future if the business survives this period of time. These are the people you want in your organization anyway, the ones who are invested in its long-term success, because they have skin in the game. We will dive into this concept further in Chapter 8.



If you've identified the people you need to get the task done and how to incentivize them already, or if you're simply going to tackle the job yourself, the next step in systemization is documenting. You want to predispose yourself, your people, and your company towards taking action at all times. Don't sit around waiting to think about the perfect process and implementation plan and wait for it to appear. Begin by making

small commitments to move forward on anything. If you move forward with a micro decision and find it was the wrong choice, your downside will be limited, but you will have a great potential for upside in knowing how not to proceed. **It's incredibly seldom that the rocket successfully launches into orbit on the first try, yet without an Apollo 1 there can be no Apollo 11. Small steps for man are, after all, what make way for giant leaps for mankind.**



**Once you've found a process that works, move forward with having other people try out your solution.**

# **Fresh eyes and a detached perspective are probably all that your solution needs to go from**

## **GOOD TO GREAT.**

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Once you've dialed in the process with their inputs, make the changes to your documented SOP, and begin the process of standardization. If it works, and it works well, be sure that everyone in your organization is aware of it. Having this documentation and learning will ensure your company doesn't suffer from all the negative consequences of tacit knowledge building up. You want to codify your business so that, at any point in time, a team member could be replaced short term by someone else in the organization. You do not want to build a business that relies on you or any individuals on your team being there 100% of

the time. It simply doesn't work from a succession planning perspective, or a basic operational perspective taking into consideration that shit happens. People will have sick days, family needs, vacations, funerals, and all sorts of other reasons not to be available. Ensure that you build your SOPs to accommodate for this reality, rather than finding yourself in a conflict avoidance spiral where you ignore the facts then lift your head up to find there's no one to man the controls while you're busy steering the ship. Or worse, no one to steer the ship when you need to take a break.

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A great standard to strive for would be ensuring that everyone in the organization should understand the duties and responsibilities of the person above and below them in the organizational chart. This is particularly important for those roles where no one else in the organization performs their particular duties and tasks on a regular basis. The most simple way to expedite this type of transfer, is to tediously document how that person does their job, frontloading the documentation when everything is operating smoothly and efficiently, not waiting for that person to get sick or to become unavailable and then trying to figure out how they go about doing their highly specialized role. You'll know you have done the right level of documentation when the role appears more scientific than magical.

**You should be able to reproduce the same results every time with the same inputs as the person who performs that role every day, or at least roughly the same.** Naturally, the person who does not perform the tasks every day will be slower and less efficient, but they should be able to arrive at the same end result, and that's typically all that matters. Develop your processes to the point at which each and every role appears to be more of an admin task. You should be able to hire anyone off the street with relative success after a brief training period.

You should strive to achieve the highest level of documentation of all of the roles in your organization, even the ones that have inherent redundancy, like your sales staff. You may have several sales people working at once, mitigating the chances of one of them becoming indisposed, leaving your organization vulnerable to halted production. The benefits of documentation and SOPs don't end there. By having robust SOPs, you will also be able to hire more people faster, growing your team with greater velocity than your competitors, who may view this

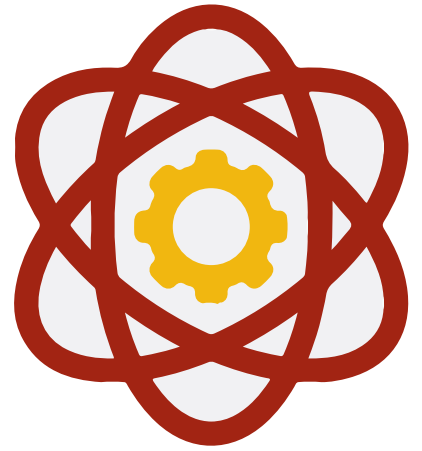
process as a waste of time, or as something that they will eventually get around to doing when they hire an expensive HR manager. Trust me, you will achieve an immediate competitive advantage over all of these people by focusing on these little details. If it's worth having that role, it's worth documenting it and creating a standard operating procedure for how it should be done. If you can't take the time to do at least that, you should be questioning your commitment to that role and your long-term commitment to the company.



# Chapter 7:

## Establish Your

## Core Values



Your standard operating procedures will tell people how to do most of the tasks they will need to perform on a daily basis, and allow them to make the most of their time at your company, achieving results with speed and efficiency when everything is going to plan. But life is complicated. On the long journey to Mars, many complications and surprises are sure to arise. The SOPs will help for most things that can be planned for, and for those things that you have developed contingency plans for already, but what happens when someone on your team or in

your organization is staring down the barrel of a novel problem? Should you, the business owner, sprint to the scene as fast as possible and lead from the front? Maybe. But chances are, probably not. What if there are multiple simultaneous problems? What if you are busy with another equally demanding and time-consuming task? What if you aren't the right person for the job and someone else on the team is far better-equipped to deal with that problem? Can you be in two places at once? If so, this book on achieving Lift-Off seems awkwardly primitive.

**As an entrepreneur  
you should be  
hiring the best  
talent you can get  
your hands on.**





## **Hire capable people that don't panic and shut down in the face of adversity, people that are willing and able to problem solve on the fly.**

When you hire the right people, they will generally understand what needs to be done. It is then your duty, as the entrepreneur and leader, **to establish the underlying values and memes within your organization that will allow your capable employees and strategic partners to think without having to involve you.** If they understand your intention and they understand your mission, they will be able to address novel problems in the most efficient way possible with those outcomes in mind. Often, your

talented people and partners will have a far greater understanding of their role than you. It simply stands to reason that having done their job countless times more than you, they will have become faster and more efficient than you at it, and will understand the upstream and downstream effects of manipulating the process in any way. **It is your job then, to ensure that you empower those individuals to make more decisions, not less.**



**Your core values should be known to all the stakeholders in the company. From your suppliers and service providers, to your staff and all the way to your customers, your core values should not only be known, they should be synonymous with the experience.**

**There should be no dissonance between what you say you will do, and what is actually delivered. If you promise high quality products delivered on time, free of defects, then that is what must be delivered.**

When that isn't the case, you must do everything in your power as an organization to correct the problem. The best businesses won't just replace the defective product. They'll convert this mishap into an opportunity to build a lifelong customer. Make sure that you build this into the culture of your business, as it will pay dividends in the future. **In my company, when one of my salespeople makes a mistake that may inadvertently add cost to our customers, we own it. We take that hit without a question, and use it as a learning opportunity for continuous improvement. What we don't do is put our hands up in their air and say 'too bad, you already agreed to the contract'. That's how you can find yourself in a situation where you lift your head up after a year to find that your foundation was built on sand.**





**Distilling the essence of how your company should think and act into a few words is  
NO EASY TASK.**

It is, however, one of the most important things you can do for your company. These core values are going to outlive you as the entrepreneur and founder, and become the living, breathing expression of your intent. With that in mind, you should set out to develop these core values with great care, and be relentless in their implementation. At their foundation, the core values of your company are how people think, act, and make decisions without supervision.

**They're the guidelines that allow anyone, at any time, in the organization to determine how to "do the right thing".**

**If you're struggling to identify what those exact values are for your company, I would completely understand. To help you, I'll share with you the core values from my company, which set the tone for every interaction and decision that is made by our staff.**

I . M . P . A . C . T

**Improvement** - *Continuously improve, fail forward*

**Movement** - *Be more than a business, change lives*

**Performance** - *Support the mission, winning matters*

**Agility** - *Move fast and break things (thank you Facebook)*

**Clique** - *We are exceptional, no exceptions*

**Truth & Transparency** - *Say and do the hard things, even when it hurts*



I . M . P . A . C . T



Like everything else in your business, these core values are subject to change and improve over time, but the spirit of the company will generally not change that much. *For example, in my company we added the word Truth, after some mishaps occurred where transparency wasn't cutting it. You see, transparency is telling the truth when you're asked, but is subject to omission and allows for maneuverability. But Truth is just that, it's the truth.* Is it unreasonable to expect from our staff that they will always tell the whole truth? It may just be but, like starting with the End in mind, I would much rather increase my odds for success. The reality is, the more data and information that is shared amongst our team members, the better they will be able to make decisions. The content of the data or information matters considerably less than the quality, hence the need for the whole truth.

*The core values my company has implemented are not perfect. Each member of my team could probably name a dozen things that are important to them that are not covered by these six words. Embrace that fact and own it as a team. You will never be perfect as perfection is, of course, subjective. That said, you're best off just to get started with something, anything at all, and then work together building and adding onto it daily. Achieving Lift-Off is an iterative process, and it can take an army working together as one unit to make it happen.*





# CHAPTER 8: HIRING



**We're at the  
SCARY part now.**

If you have made it this far in your business, you've probably spent a great deal of time thinking about your goals, your strategies, your processes, your core values and what it will take to get your company off the ground. Things are starting to get exciting, but they don't seem to be getting easier. You've been in the driver's seat now for a good time and you're starting to feel the heat from the engine. You've likely begun changing your environment and have at least done an audit on who you allow to plant ideas in your head. Some people think you're crazy, but you're pretty sure

you're onto something. The only problem is every time you get closer to your goal, more tasks, challenges and hurdles keep popping up. It's a sadistic kind of whack-a-mole. Your hat hanger is full, and you've run out of excuses for missing meetings due to double-booking yourself and forgetting that you had not in fact, gotten around to that teleportation machine yet. From the outside it's impossible to ascertain whether you're the CEO, CFO, COO, CMO, CSO, or CHRO, but one thing is clear- you're master of none.

**Put simply, it's  
impossible to master  
all of these skills, by  
taking on all of these  
roles and the  
responsibilities that  
come with them.**



In the beginning, you may have found yourself wearing too many hats as a result of lacking revenue. What you need to realize now is, what got you here won't get you where you need to go. Perhaps a physicist was born on the day she first experimented with a bottle of Pepsi and a couple of Mentos, and if not for this dazzling experiment she may have never taken such an interest in Newton's hallowed Laws of Motion. But it is not the fascination of the child who got Apollo 11 to the Moon in 1969, rather a brilliant team of scientists, physicists, astronauts, financiers, countless stakeholders, the American Dream, and The Cold War promoting a 'space race'. **You will need this type of voracity about your intent on getting to Lift-Off if you too want to share in the glory of such monumental feats. Hiring will be the only way.**



The awareness that hiring is essential for the growth of your business will be just enough to stifle the monster in you that is so tightly gripping the reins of control. You will need to work daily to loosen that grip, otherwise that monster will win; at the detriment of your broader goals and your business. There are a couple things that need to be said at this point. They're just truths, so don't shoot the messenger. You'll hire terrible employees. They'll ungratefully waste the opportunities you so graciously put in front of them. They'll burn bridges and sometimes take you back two steps for every one that you manage to pull ahead with. You'll curse their inadequacy and their lack of situational awareness. You'll wonder if they ever listened to a thing any teacher or mentor had ever told them. You'll question their upbringing and how they ever made it this far. Finally, you'll question how you ever let yourself hire them, and how they made it past your interview process. You'll think wow, "I had better have a talk with my CHRO".

➡ **Then you will hire better people.** ⬅

People who will embrace your culture and the opportunities in front of them. People who will commit their time and energy to your business as if it were their own. People that will sacrifice dearly for your mission and the goals of the company. People who will not only see your vision, but will add to it in unique and exciting ways. Their outside perspectives will breathe fresh air and clarity into your operations. Their willingness to do the hard things in ways that you were beginning to think only you knew how to do will surprise you.

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**You will become pleasantly aware that, despite your algebra teacher's protests,  $1+1$  can, in fact, equal 3.**

Who to hire is, perhaps, the better question to ask yourself at this point. To that complex question, I would answer simply: hire for culture fit. Most skills are easy to learn for the right people, and because you've frontloaded the work by developing your standard operating procedures, you've already taken care of the hardest work. Therefore, the logical person to hire is not the person with the best resume, but rather the person that best fits your company's needs at that given time. There are specific traits you may look for in an ideal candidate, such as attention to detail and communication skills, but most of those things you can discern from a simple meeting. When the candidate showed up for your interview, was he/she on time and

well-prepared? Was he/she professional and courteous? How did he/she interact with other people on the way to the interview? Would you take him/her to dinner with your family and friends? Is this someone you would happily have represent you in a public forum? Most importantly, would you like to have a beer with him/her? If you answered yes to all of these for any candidate, hire him/her immediately. If you find out that the candidate was merely putting on a charade for the sake of the interview and he/she is not deemed a good fit for the company, fire him/her immediately. It's as simple as that. Hire fast, fire faster. This approach will almost never let you down and will occasionally bring you diamonds straight out of the rough.

**My company never hires based on someone's resume. They're all embellished anyway. Who hasn't tossed on a couple of bells and whistles to the old resume in order to have all the requirements for the job?** The other challenge with hiring strictly based on past experience is that it doesn't at all guarantee performance in the present. Having experience in something may or not be valuable. It depends on where the candidate's previous experience was, how many bad habits were picked up along the way and how willing the candidate is to learn new tricks. After all, you're not building your business to be the same as your competitor's. **You're going for Lift-Off, and Lift-Off requires thinking outside the box. After all, my previous work experience doesn't include owning and operating 7-Figure businesses or writing books, but here we are (spelling mistakes and all).**

**When hiring, be careful not to fall into the trap of only hiring people that think, look, sound and act like you.** This is one of the biggest mistakes you can make. It will leave you with a significant bias and abundance in the skill sets you were already proficient in, and leave you with an even greater deficit in those that you lack. It is important to understand yourself. Where do you place on the sociability scale? What is your level of detail orientation and how driven are you? Are you the person at the party who is the star of the show, or are you the type to hide in the corner tapping your foot, slowly retreating and planning your escape? Your company will need people on all sides of these spectrums, and it's even more important when you are seeking co-founders and partners that you make sure that you identify the gaps in your skills and hire based on your weaknesses.





# CHAPTER 9:

# ACCOUNTABILITY



One of the most interesting and surprising outcomes of hiring people for your business will be the accountability it brings to your life.

**You will no longer be just an entrepreneur; you will be a leader.**

In the beginning, this is going to add more stress, calamity and general chaos to your life, but that will quickly subside. Once it does, you'll notice that things will have changed. There will be something else to get up for the morning. If you hit that

snooze button, you won't just be letting yourself down, you will be letting yourself and your new hire down. He/she may have mouths to feed. He/she may have goals, ambitions, and dreams. **Winning will now matter more, and the losses will cut a little deeper.** The good news is, this weight will now be carried by two and, as your team grows, the weight will get even lighter. Eventually, you won't even notice the weight at all.





In order to get to that point of weightlessness in your business, where everyone is carrying their share, you will need to first create opportunities to keep everyone accountable to each other. **As you have already read, my company values IMPACT. This means we have all agreed to openly sharing our efforts together to have continuous improvement to be more than a business, to get results, to move with speed, to be exceptional and to maintain truth among the team.** What this looks like from an operational standpoint is daily accountability calls, and weekly one on one mentorship calls with myself, the CEO. These calls are scheduled for 08:00 every weekday, including holidays. The one-on-one calls happen whenever the 08:00 meeting is done. The 08:00 meeting takes as long as necessary to workshop anything that is holding back the company from achieving its missions, not a moment longer or a minute shorter.



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Our company takes a very data driven approach to the results. We focus on the lead measures and things that are directly in our control. We meticulously track the actions of our people that actually move the needle. Things like outbound calls, sales appointments, and number of actual contracts presented to our customers. These activities are what give us the results, and so they are what we hold ourselves accountable to on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

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**The lag measures, the actual results, are celebrated enthusiastically, though they matter much less than the actions taken to get to that point. This may seem counterintuitive, but from an accountability perspective, it is absolutely the way you need to structure your company culture. The results are symptoms of daily consistent efforts and a persistent drive towards your goals.**

# CHAPTER 10:

# Motivation and Incentives →



**In order to achieve Lift Off, you may need to think outside the box and develop various incentive programs for your people, and for yourself.**

Incentives come in all shapes and sizes and are not always monetary. In fact, they are seldom monetary. You should be paying your people well from the start, so their biggest concerns shouldn't be financial but cultural. Whether you like it or not, your people look up to you; they will mimic your behavior, and they will want what you have. A large part of your job as an entrepreneur and leader will be setting up your team in such a way that if they work hard for it, they will eventually have the opportunity to have what you have.

**ALWAYS BE**



**MOTIVATED**

The best way to incentivize your team is to teach them. Provide them with mentorship opportunities and room to grow. If you've hired correctly, your people will be constantly driving for growth opportunities and new projects that are fun, exciting, and rewarding. Be sure to keep your people engaged and learning at all times. Idle hands are the devil's playthings. Often the opportunities for growth will present themselves in the form of a suggestion or a passing comment from one of your team members. They may come to you with a process improvement, a new

product idea, a new market, or a new strategic partner they are looking to pursue. Embrace this energy and empower them to do the preliminary research and present you with a proposal. Keep in mind that any plan they bring you, if even 75% as good as what you could have produced yourself, is worth 10x the value. They will pursue their own agendas and growth opportunities with a vigor that the absolute best of leaders could only dream of inspiring. Run with their plans and offer small adjustments in order to support them, but ultimately, make the project theirs.



Other types of incentives that are rooted in financial gain should have specific and measurable targets. For example, my company rolled out a sales competition that challenged and rewarded our salespeople as they achieved sales targets that scaled up in value and prestige from \$10,000-\$250,000. **This program had most of my team standing in tailored suits wearing matching Tag Heuer watches and holding tasteful Mont Blanc pens at the end of the year. It was quite a sight to see them all beaming in excitement as we threw a private party at a local speakeasy with an open bar tab and a mess of food.**



**Bartender, “A dry martini. 3 measures of Gordon’s, 1 of vodka, half a measure of Jean de Lillet, shake it over ice, then add a thin slice of lemon at the end”.**

*#WINNING*



These incentives, while expensive, were not actual monetary. The money was made by the salespeople as they hit their goals and was theirs to do with what they wished. You see, the incentives you offer to your people should focus on providing them with something that will act as an artifact for your culture. The tailored suits, for example, will likely last for years to come, the watches for years after the suits meet their end and the pens will be carried around by the salespeople everywhere they go on future sales ventures, thereby helping to spread the company culture to new customers.





# CHAPTER 11:

# LIFT OFF

**As we've made our journey together through this book, I have asked you to do a great deal of thinking.**

**You've thought about your WHY, you've thought about your goals and emotional desires.**

You've thought hard about your environment and about the people around you. You've even identified that some of them may be anchors that have been holding you back from everything you want in life. You've built a business and documented the process, creating efficient and effective standard operating procedures which allow you to easily hire new talent and build in redundancy to your business, eliminating the need for you to be the one at the helm at all times. Your business produces revenue and

you've embraced the need to hire people in place of you. You've relinquished control to those great strategic partners that will help your business to grow, and you've held yourself accountable to the success of your business because you know there are people counting on you. You've made yourself available to your people and empowered them to make decisions without you, and you've created daily accountability calls for them so that they can get your assistance when it's needed to stay on course. **You've created engaging and fulfilling projects for your team to work on, which drive your business closer to its goals and to the ultimate mission, and you've given them a reason to stay.**



# Congratulations!

## You have LIFT-OFF!

You've successfully made it off the launch pad and into orbit. You escaped the gravity of all the negativity and doubt, and you even made it passed your negative self-talk and anxiety. The heavy lifting is done for a moment. Enjoy this peacetime as you recover. Catch up on some sleep and enjoy those moments of downtime. You've earned it, and your mind and body undoubtedly need repose by now. Buy the toy that you have been dreaming about, eat at your favorite place, do the thing that you have been itching to do. Then once you've got it all out of your system, get your ass back to work! Remember, you've only just made it off the launch pad and into orbit. While that has

expended half your fuel and has had everyone on the edge of their seat as they recalled your previous failures, you have to remember that your real mission is to get to Mars. Getting into orbit was the first of many great challenges you will face, but you've only just got started on your true mission. The good news is that there's not much gravity on your way forward. Most of the challenges now lie in your self-discipline and your focus on the end mission. You've shed the bad from your life and you now have a company that will produce the fuel and rockets that you need to expand, but you must continue to tend to it and place top talent in it so that it continues to grow in your absence.





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As a visionary you will need to keep yourself engaged so that you may continue inspiring and leading your people. There are many ways to go about this, but it is likely that you will have already begun thinking about new business ventures and supplementary strategies to support your broader mission. Along the journey to Mars, people will step on and off at different times, depending on their own personal goals. My suggestion is to refrain from looking at them with anger or spite for choosing their own path, but rather to keep your focus on what those individuals were able to contribute to the overall mission, and what you were able to achieve together. You made it to the Moon together after all. The fact that YOU must continue to Mars doesn't make you better than them, nor does it mean they are less ambitious or uninspired. You simply have different values than them, and are at a different point along the path. Stay inspired, as there are more partners and more people out there waiting for you to find them.

**Keep your eyes on the stars!**



@adamjdmartin


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## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES AND LEARN MORE


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### Follow me on my Socials!

 Adam J Martin - Chief Executive Officer - Make It So Inc .

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 Adam JD Martin - YouTube Channel




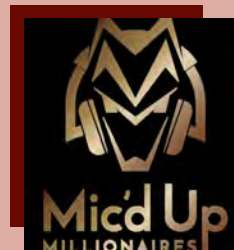
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**I ALSO HIGHLY RECOMMEND YOU CHECK OUT  
THE LINKS BELOW FOR  
MORE AWESOME CONTENT**

### LEARN MORE!

 Matt McKeever - YouTube Channel

 Mic'd Up Millionaires - Apple Podcast



**WANT TO JOIN MY TEAM? CLICK THE LINK BELOW**

[linktr.ee/adamjdmartin](https://linktr.ee/adamjdmartin)

**The Tyranny of the Rocket Equation**

[https://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/station/expeditions/expedition30/tryanny.html](https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/expeditions/expedition30/tryanny.html)

**The 8 Wastes of Lean**

[https://theleanway.net/The-8-Wastes-of-Lean#:~:text=The%20original%20seven%20wastes%20\(Muda,by%20the%20acronym%20'TIMWOOD'](https://theleanway.net/The-8-Wastes-of-Lean#:~:text=The%20original%20seven%20wastes%20(Muda,by%20the%20acronym%20'TIMWOOD')

**A Better Mouse Trap**

<https://www.ipwatchdog.com/2013/12/21/better-mouse-trap-road-to-riches/id=46957/#:~:text=To%20paraphrase%20the%20famous%20quote,only%20it%20were%20that%20easy!>

**The Tragedy of the Commons**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy\\_of\\_the\\_commons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy_of_the_commons)

**Kaizen**

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaizen>

**Lean Manufacturing**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lean\\_manufacturing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lean_manufacturing)

**Facebook Market Cap**

<https://finance.yahoo.com/quote/FB/>

**The Alchemy of Growth**

Mehrdad Baghai, Stephen Coley, and David White, *The Alchemy of Growth*, New York: Perseus Publishing, 1999.

**The Three Horizons Framework**

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/enduring-ideas-the-three-horizons-of-growth#>

**The Apollo 1 Tragedy**

<https://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/apollo1info.html>

**Apollo 11**

<https://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/apollo11info.html>

**Newtons' Laws of Motion**

<https://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/diypodcast/rocket-science-index-diy.html#:~:text=When%20a%20rocket%20is%20in,rocket's%20propulsion%20system%20causes%20thrust.>

**PROBLEMS  
OR  
PROFITS**