

A GAD GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS LEADERS IN THIS EARLY
PHASE OF THE CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19) LOCK DOWN.

Love Leadership in the time of Cholera COVID-19

STEVEN WILKINSON



Love Leadership in the time of Cholera COVID-19

Life just got a whole lot more complicated. If you are reading this as the owner and responsible leader for a small or medium sized enterprise, you do not need reminding that there is a microbe on the rampage, that people are apparently at significant risk of life-threatening consequences if the microbe infects them and that, as a consequence, normal life has been shuttered, schools and public institutions closed for the foreseeable future and the workforce told to self-isolate. Whether all this disruption is necessary or not, I cannot tell. I suspect we will be debating that for the next ten years at least, but right now, it is as real as it needs to be and life just got a whole lot more complicated.

I have been talking to business owners like you and those that interact with you every day now for the last two weeks as this story unfolded, markets crashed and media channels worked themselves into the sort of hysteria normally reserved for prima donnas and conspiracy theorists. My thoughts have been with you all the way as I hear from entrepreneurs facing existential crisis, with entire staffs furloughed or laid off, revenue falling off a cliff and the threat of insolvency looming up faster than a brick wall on a racetrack.

Governments across the world are still, for the most part, trying to devise concepts and rescue packages for the economy. Given their traditional lack of understanding of the fragility and sensitivity of almost all small and medium-sized enterprises to even the smallest disruptions to the parameters of business, they will probably end up doing too little, too late.

So given this, what possible advice could I presume to give you that will alleviate the situation and give you the strength and hope to battle through this with your health, your energy, your business and your leadership not only intact but strengthened? This guide is a collection of the best advice I have seen and read over the past two weeks, woven together with my own three decades of experience in markets and business. I hope it helps.

I believe it gives you a blueprint for action and a framework for thinking so that in the words of Rudyard Kipling's IF

“ If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!








”

- Rudyard Kipling

I am very grateful to a large number authors, business experts, investors and entrepreneurs for their insights and writings over the past few weeks as we all try to make sense of this challenge and formulate the correct response to it. It never ceases to surprise and astonish me how much great stuff there is out there in blogs, vlogs, podcasts and tweets as the collective intelligence and thought-power of specialist communities is harnessed and put in service of their respective tribes - to all of you who dare to put your heads over the parapet and articulate your opinions and share your thinking, I salute you. My acknowledgements will be embedded with hyperlinks directly in the following chapters where I have drawn on their material, so that you can consume them straight from the horse's mouth. Otherwise I have acknowledged as many of the sources at the end of this booklet as I could. If I have missed out anyone who feels "sourced", then contact me and I will make amends with an appropriate acknowledgement.

Entrepreneurs are by default creatures of action and not given to spending too much time in philosophical debates, especially with themselves. You are natural do-ers, otherwise you wouldn't be where you are. So this booklet is first and foremost a guide to action and contains stuff you can and should DO every day to make sure you get through this stronger and better than you were before, certainly as a leader and, hopefully, as a business owner.

Having said that, before you can DO, you need to invest a little time in making sure you are BEING the best you can be. This is where we start, so the program is designed like this

-  1 Getting the right mindset and creating the conditions for mental and physical health (Getting Fit for Purpose)
-  2 Communicating and Giving to Get (Doubling Down on Relationships)
-  3 Evaluating your Resources (Financial Health and Support Systems)
-  4 Sharing the Burden (Profit First and Open Books)
-  5 Pivot: Re-valuating your Proposition and Strategy
-  6 Get Support: Mastermind, Coach, Community
-  7 Vision: What does success look like on the other side of this?

“

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1 Getting Fit for Purpose - Mental Health

I am indebted to Mo Bunnell, Founder of Bunnell Idea Group (BIG) and author of “The Snowball System”, one of the best business development books I have ever read, for his recent 4 part short video series [“Powering Through The Pandemic”](#).

Mo suggests taking a leaf out of the Stoic Philosophy handbook (see Ryan Holiday’s excellent “Daily Stoic” on Amazon) and asking the following questions:



1. PERCEPTION

How am I perceiving what is happening? Am I making this about me? Am I focussing on my anger, self-pity, or fear? What can I be grateful for in this situation? How can I make this about others: their needs, their fear, their problems?



2. ACTION

Don’t wallow, don’t overthink, do! Become active and then pro-active. Mo suggests taking on some menial task like cleaning out the garage for a day to get out of lethargy and create positive momentum for change. Most specifically: pick a strategic theme for the next week or two focused specifically on your clients needs and create actions around that theme.



3. WILL

This means primarily and above all examine your willingness to accept what you cannot change and to focus only on the things that you can change by your own actions. This, according to the Stoics, is at the heart of contentment.

Also - difficult as it may be - remember at all times **YOU are NOT Your Business**. Your business may be an integral part of your life and activities, but it is not you. You are much more than your business and your business is separate and distinct from you. This is a great time to understand and practice that distinction. Your business will only thrive if you are capable of leading it and recognising its needs as separate from your own. If you don’t, you will never know whether the decisions you take are for you or for the business. What may be right for you may not be right for the business and vice versa.

Use this time to separate the two: nothing sets the stage for creating real value in a small business than making and living that distinction.

Severely restrict your media intake. The media - mainstream and social - is whipping itself into frenzy over this contraction and its effects on markets, economy and life. Exposing yourself to this is like sitting in a nuclear reactor without protective clothing - it will literally fry your brain. Don't watch or read the news, turn off your social media and restrict your intake to one, maximum two trusted sources that will provide you with information directly relevant to your operations. You do not need to hear horror stories from Italy, China or Iran every minute of the day, nor should the gyrations of the stock market interest you. Check in with trusted sources and relevant partners, clients or suppliers and ask them for relevant news. You won't miss a thing.

Be aware that your brain is being bombarded with negative signals in these times: the signals you are receiving from the external world are firing up your fight or flight responses, injecting adrenalin and other hormones into your system as your mind and body prepare for danger. This leads to exhaustion, bad decision-making and over-emphasis on risks. **Meditation** - sitting down somewhere quiet, breathing deeply in and out and letting go of your thoughts to calm your mind down produces immediate and tangible benefits. Read Rob Dube's wonderful book "Do Nothing" ([or download his resource here](#)) for some of the science behind it and download an App like **Headspace** or **Meditation Studio** for some guidance and recognise the huge advantage in being calm when every else around you is losing it. The Dalai Lama once said that everyone should meditate for 15 minutes every day. If, he went on, you don't have time to meditate for 15 minutes every day, you need to meditate for 45 minutes.

Do your exercise - walk, jog, run, row, whatever you normally do, keep doing it. If you don't normally do it, start. In Billy Joel's immortal words from the song 'James': "Do what's good for you or you're not good for anybody."

Oh and get your **7 to 8 hours of sleep**. It's like exercise, only more so. Don't skimp it. Really.

A scenic landscape photograph showing a dirt road in the foreground, green fields, and distant mountains under a cloudy sky. The image is used as a background for the text.

“

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2 Communicating - Giving to Get

Again, building on [Mo Bunnells's excellent recipe](#) for external action in these days, nothing screams LEADERSHIP like taking specific initiatives to build business and relationships like pro-active communication. You don't know what you should be doing? Ask your clients and customers, how they are getting on, what problems they are facing specifically and how you personally, or the resources of your organisation, can help and support them.

Mo suggests creating a Strategic Theme for your clients and making that the Banner Project for the next period, be that a week, a fortnight or a month, whatever seems appropriate. Mo breaks down his recipe into three steps:

- ❑ **I. WRITE DOWN ALL THE PEOPLE TO WHOM YOU WANT TO REACH OUT.**
Get their names onto a piece of paper and set yourself an objective of talking to 5, 10, 15 of them every day until the list is done. **Check in and make sure they are OK and just talk.**
- ❑ **II. GIVE TO GET (1):** What can you do personally that will help them solve their immediate problems? Put your "Big Brain" at their disposal. Be relentless and ask, ask, ask...What do they need? How are they getting on? What can **you** do to help?
- ❑ **III. GIVE TO GET (2):** Now think what **your organisation and the individuals and resources within it** could do to collectively solve the problems of those you are reaching out to. Leverage your Organisational Expertise. Ask your team to do the same, make their own lists and make those calls. If they are self-isolating at home, so much the better.

Create a **Slack Group** and share the results real time. Mine those conversations for patterns or takeaways that represent real opportunities to help and support.

Create a **Zoom Call** for your employees and team to share those results on a day to day basis. Make a game out of it by creating a virtual scoreboard with the number of calls made and the best ideas for action that come out of it.

Engage, engage, engage...These are the days in which heroes are made.

And then keep checking in...with clients and suppliers and partners: send texts, call up, tweet after important events in your client's and suppliers agendas that they have told you about. Be relentless, double down, invest more than you would ever think of doing.

Take them out for lunch... via Video Call. If you can't travel to meet them, then arrange to take them out to lunch at their desk. Find out where a delivery service or restaurant in the area is still open for business and able to deliver, find out what they would like to eat and have it delivered at a time you arrange and do a video call whilst you eat together. Mo Bunnell quotes research that face-to-face requests are 34x (not 34%) more likely to be accepted than the same request in writing.

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Imagine if for every person you met, you thought of some way to help them, something you could do for them? And you looked at it in a way that entirely benefited them and not you? The cumulative effect of this would have over time would be profound: You'd learn a great deal by solving diverse problems. You'd develop a reputation for being indispensable. You would have countless new relationships. You would have an enormous bank of favours to call upon down the road. That is what [...] strategy is all about - helping yourself by helping others.

TIM FERRIS, TOOLS OF TITANS (P. 338)

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3 Evaluating your Resources (Financial Health and Support Systems)

Entrepreneurs have tremendous resources being made available to them at the moment in order to ensure that businesses stay open and viable during the shut-down. At the same time you need to be ruthless in matching cost-structure to revenue as quickly as possible. These are unprecedented times and the normal rules of engagement have been temporarily suspended. There are two areas of focus:

i . Restructuring: Getting ahead of the collapse in revenues. Every business and every industry is being impacted differently by the Corona shut down. Some have seen revenues fall off the cliff (see the OpenTable year-on-year change table for a dramatic picture of how the restaurant trade has been affected) others have seen business activity explode (online businesses for instance).

So whatever industry and business you are in, you need to get ahead of the revenue trajectory by doing whatever is necessary to bring costs in line with revenue. Having spent two decades in the restructuring world, I can tell you that **speed** is essential here. As is your mind set: You are not your business. Cutting back, restructuring, creatively managing your cost structure is NOT FAILURE, it is LEADERSHIP. **Not** doing it can lead to failure!

Here are some of the actions you should be taking in extraordinary times. Remember, cut costs like removal men move furniture, **big stuff first**, then the small stuff:

- ❑ **FURLOUGH, TEMPORARILY LAY OFF OR RE-ASSIGN STAFF IF NECESSARY** (**WARNING:** check current support programs to make sure you are making the most of them before acting);
- ❑ **SUSPEND INTEREST, MORTGAGE OR FINANCING COSTS** in consultation with your finance partners;

- ❑ **EVALUATE ALL FIXED PAYMENT ITEMS** (rent, utilities, leasing etc)
- ❑ **EVALUATE ALL CURRENT AND OUTSTANDING CREDITORS** - if necessary explore calling a moratorium to preserve cash;
- ❑ **EXAMINE INVENTORY AND STOCKS** and see what can be liquidated quickly to generate cash;
- ❑ **REVIEW ALL CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS WITH SUPPLIERS** and adjust delivery and payment terms;
- ❑ **REVIEW AND EVALUATE ALL DEBITORS** and make an honest assessment of which companies / clients / customers will be in a position to pay (check the New Testament, Matthew 18, 21-35 if you are unsure of how to behave in this situation).

Above all - communicate, communicate, communicate! Talk to everyone implicated in your restructuring proposal, create a task force in the company, assign responsibilities to individuals to contact customers, suppliers, partners etc. Meet and reconvene every 90 minutes to check progress, create a scoreboard of wins and immovable obstacles. Give yourself and the team a week to make substantial progress on this.

ii. Check all Extraordinary help and resources. Depending on which country you are in - US, UK, Ireland, Germany, Japan, Australia - every government everywhere is making plans to provide help and support for the dramatic disruption to business activity: some more, some less, and as always some useful, some less so.

Ensure that you are aware of all and any support programs available to you in your location. List the sources of information:

- ❑ **GOVERNMENT WEBSITES AND TWITTER ACCOUNTS**
- ❑ **SMALL BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS**
- ❑ **LOCAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE**
- ❑ **LOCAL CPAS AND ACCOUNTING FIRMS (AND THE WEBSITES OF THE BIGGER ACCOUNTANCY PRACTICES)**
- ❑ **TRADE ASSOCIATIONS**
- ❑ **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND MAYORAL OFFICES**

- ❑ BUSINESS NETWORKS LIKE EO OR IOD
- ❑ LENDING DEPARTMENTS AT LOCAL BANKS
- ❑ FEDERAL RESERVE

Assign a staff member to research and update a central document making sure you understand and identify the appropriate programs for you. The Irish Government for instance has provided a Micro Loan program for small business with up to €50K in immediate loans as well as making €7,2K available for financial restructuring consultancy work. Germany is using the Bank for Reconstruction and Development to expand its mid-market company loan book as well as suspending critical parts of its insolvency laws. The UK has just announced the largest peace time support plan targeting both payroll measures and income for freelancers. The US has been slower off the mark and is introducing legislation such as the Families First Act (which may or may not) make the situation better especially in respect of employment tax and social security payments and the SBA Loan program is still evolving, so it will be important to see how this changes day-to-day.

Governments are waking up to the massive damage that may potentially be done to the millions of vulnerable small businesses, so expect more quickly and keep tabs on programs that will effect you.

Certain specialist networks such as the [Newport Board Group](#) in the US, which focus on advising SME growth companies, will also be providing high quality advice through their website and offices to their market participants and are worth following.

Also think about what support you would want to have from Government programs. Read Brent Beshore's excellent memo "[Small Business Impact of COVID-19](#)" to give yourself an idea of what might be possible. And think about writing these to your local MP, Congressman, Senator or equivalent.

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Adhere to your
own act, and
congratulate
yourself if you have
done something
strange and
extravagant
and broken the
monotony of a
decorous age.

It was a high
counsel that I once
heard given to a
young person, —
‘Always do what
you are
afraid to do.’

RALPH WALDO
EMERSON

- “HEROISM” IN ESSAYS,
FIRST SERIES (1841)

”



4 Sharing the Burden (Profit First and Open Books)

A time of high challenge is also a great time to create an extraordinary company culture around the shared effort to survive and excel. As [Professor Scott Galloway](#) wrote in his blog

Crisis Management

In my NYU Brand Strategy course, I teach these three pillars of crisis management:

1. TOP GUY/GAL TAKES RESPONSIBILITY
2. ACKNOWLEDGE THE ISSUE
3. OVERCORRECT

and “A decent question: How do each of us want to be remembered, years after this crisis? Near all of us will talk about this in grand terms one day. This is historic. What will be each of our roles in this moment of history?” How you will be remembered is dependent on **how you were** during this existential crisis and how you treated those who depended on you to lead.

And a great way to demonstrate trust, build community and achieve your objectives in the best possible spirit is **to share with your team the essential numbers of the business** and to trust them enough to share the responsibility of working through the challenge together.

This makes sense on a number of levels:

- Sharing the numbers of the business: the balance sheet, the P&L and cash flow creates a common, business-oriented language and map of the territory;
- Compiling the numbers and making them understandable and visible is the best exercise in “acknowledging the issue” and the reality it has created, not least for yourself;
- The old saw “A burden shared is a burden halved” is nowhere more applicable than in a crisis. Once the numbers are on the board, down

on paper, visible for all, then they are no longer just your responsibility, they become the teams;

- Priorities become obvious when the numbers are shared. Just like looking at a map together creates a common understanding of the obstacles and challenges of the territory, so shared numbers become the map with which the team navigates together. Challenges are understood and the creative energy of the group can be focused on solving them rather than guessing or fretting about the context;
- Providing context reduces stress amongst your team members. Studies have shown that it is the lack of control of our destinies that produces the highest levels of stress in us. Not knowing, our minds default to the worst case scenarios, our phantasies run wild and our fear can become debilitating. Sharing the numbers - no matter how bad they might appear - can never be worse than our imagination in a crisis. For the mental health of your employees and team, sharing the numbers creates a sense of control and ensures focus;

I am writing this in the middle of the month on the 22nd March and the end of February numbers already feel like ancient history. The best way to start is to create a common scoreboard based around cash and cash receipts and start forecasting. I am indebted to [Kevin Walter from Tasty Catering, Chicago](#), a hugely experienced Great Game of Business Coach, who taught me the basics of team forecasting some years ago and I reproduce his guidelines here:

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL FORECASTING

- ❑ **1. A SCOREBOARD THAT IS ALWAYS VISIBLE** (if your team is now virtual then use a shared workspace online), otherwise a large dedicated whiteboard;
- ❑ **2. WEEKLY RHYTHM AT A FIXED TIME OF DAY:** although for the moment I would consider a daily, end-of-day huddle;
- ❑ **3. ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY FOR EACH “LINE AND NUMBER”** to a dedicated team member;
- ❑ **4. DERIVE AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE NEXT DAY / PERIOD** designed to impact the key numbers on the board;
- ❑ **5. BE BRUTALLY HONEST WHEN FACING INACCURATE FORECASTS** and operate a strict no-blame no-shame policy (absolutely key to making this work): Instead focus on the STORY behind the number and on trying to answer the question: What is this number (and our inaccuracy) trying to tell us? as a group.
- ❑ **6. FOCUSED MEETING CULTURE. Make it short and sweet** with no more than 20 minutes of huddle time once you are up and running. The goal is always to update the month-end forecast - meeting by meeting - and watch the forecast evolving through the month (or week if you are down to 5 day forecasts in this low visibility environment).
- ❑ **7. CELEBRATE YOUR WINS!!!!** - more important now than ever before.



What I didn't know twenty years ago was the sheer impact that results from tapping the power of team-work and collaboration by trusting, delegating, and ensuring that everyone knows his or her role.... It frees people.

JACK STACK,
CEO SRC HOLDING INC.
"THE GREAT GAME
OF BUSINESS"
(2013 EDITION)



5 Pivot: Re-valuating your Proposition and Strategy

A crisis is always a golden opportunity to break the existing paradigm and look with fresh eyes on your market, your customers real needs and your creative ability as an entrepreneur to solve them. I never tire of saying that every business ever founded was designed to solve a problem for somebody or group of somebodies. A crisis always changes the parameters somehow and begs the question “what has changed?” followed by “how do I have to change to adapt?”.

Answering these 7 questions, for which I have Dr. Kerstin Friedrich in Germany to thank, answered honestly and creatively and documented, will go along way to creating the framework for re-evaluating your current situation and will provide answers of what to do differently today:



1. TAKING STOCK: Describe the current situation: what are the challenges and problems that need solving. Then take stock of all your assets - tangible and intangible? What makes your business special? What do you know, have, understand, have access to that defines who your business is. Think broadly about this and ask the team. Create a list of all the aspects that define your business today.



2. POTENTIAL USES AND AREAS OF APPLICATION: Creatively think about groups of consumers, clients, market participants who might find a use for your assets as listed above. Evaluate what worked particularly well in the past and identify new uses for assets, talents, enthusiasms, networks and skills.



3. DESCRIBE POTENTIAL TARGET AUDIENCES AND CUSTOMER GROUPS IN MORE DETAIL: Whom precisely can you serve (or would you like to serve)? Identify the precise group(s) of users and their defining characteristics. Answer the question: for whom can I put my assets to use? (again, try and free yourself from the limitations of what your priorities and uses are TODAY)



4. IDENTIFY THE MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF A SPECIFIC COMMUNITY (TARGET CLIENT / CUSTOMER GROUPS). Dig deeply into the worlds of our chosen target groups (and ensuring always that target clients are grouped by the fact of **their having the same problem at the same or similar**

level of intensity). Do this by **ASKING** - which is why you need to get on the phone, check in and be part of your customers lives right now. (see chapter 1 of this book and watch Mo Bunnell's videos). They will tell you what they are struggling with.



5. INNOVATE: You only need to start thinking creatively HOW to solve a problem, when you have identified a problem that needs solving. Once you have that then start combining your assets and strengths in creative ways to solve the problem.

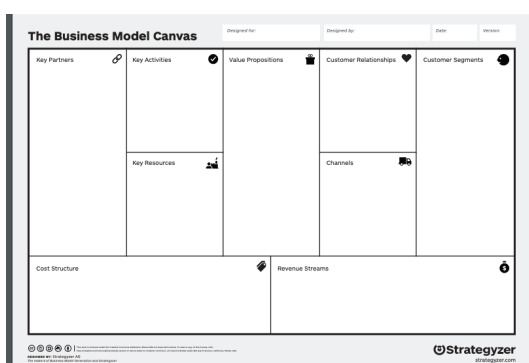


6. CO-OPERATION: Once you “own” the problem, you own the entrepreneurial process of delivery and can to assemble the resources you need to ensure delivery to the client. This makes you extremely attractive to others (suppliers) who now turn to you for leadership and organisation. Co-operation - forging strategic partnerships to create the product or service - is at the heart of your entrepreneurial operation.



7. CONSTANT UNDERLYING (SOCIAL) NEED: This is where you ask questions around the deeper motivations of your clients and customers real requirements. Often the problem is not the real problem and the solution not the permanent answer. You don't need to do this at the beginning, but as you grow into a deeper relationship with your customers, you can start probing those motivations and ensure that you remain “one-step” ahead of them by anticipating their evolution. This also makes sure you don't become wedded to the solution (technology) but stay focused on the problem, ensuring you don't become obsolete.

If you are looking for a framework into which to capture these thoughts, you could do much worse than to download the Business Model Canvas, which to my mind has all the elements you need to think through and brainstorm these questions with your team. A copy of the template is available from the Strategyzer website here



BUSINESS MODEL GENERATOR CANVAS



“

This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one. Being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

G.B. SHAW

”

6 Get Support: Mastermind, Coach, Community

An entrepreneur I know tells the story of his early days in business. He was a competition sports guy who trained hard in his spare time always with a coach. He took this mindset into his business life and hired a coach from the get go to train him in his new business discipline, to set out a training program and keep him accountable. He also joined EO, the Entrepreneurs Organisation founded by Verne Harnish, author of Rockefeller Habits. At his first meeting, at which Verne was speaking, there were about 200 people in the room. Verne opened the day by asking everyone who had a business coach to put their hands up. My friend's hand shot up. He then realised that his hand plus one other were the only ones in the air but it was too late to take it down. Verne had seen him. Verne then proceeded to say: "I cannot believe that you are such idiots." My friend was now bright red. Verne went on "In this whole room there are only two people who get it. How stupid do you have to be to believe that you can attempt a marathon as hard as starting and running a business without any support, coaching or assistance from a dedicated professional. In which other area of high-performance would that even be a thing?"

Entrepreneurs take on one of the most complex and demanding tasks on the planet when they venture into business. Some, a few are such naturals, that they can wing it and thrive without once reading a book, deepening their knowledge or asking for help or assistance. I have never met anyone like that, but I am sure they exist (no I'm not, but I have to CMA just in case). Most of us are not born supremely talented and we learn by trial and error and hope our mistakes are not so egregious that they kill us. The best entrepreneurs I know build support teams for themselves.

They have one or more of these as part of their permanent support infrastructure:

- ❑ **A COACH**, perhaps two for different aspects of their performance;
- ❑ **A BOARD** of advisors or non-executives who assist with governance, strategy, perspective and experience;
- ❑ **A MENTOR** to whom they can turn for advice and guidance;
- ❑ **A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE** and community that keeps them grounded;
- ❑ **A MASTERMIND GROUP** of like-minded entrepreneurs from whom they can learn and share;
- ❑ **A READING HABIT** that opens up new insights and perspectives;
- ❑ **A LISTENING HABIT OF PODCASTS** and talks that broaden their minds and engages them in conversation;
- ❑ **A RELEVANT ORGANISATION** (EO, YPO, Small Giants, even Rotary or Lions) to provide community and a platform for exchange, networks and friendships.

If you have none or few of those things now, then now would be a great time to start establishing them. My advice: begin with a coach, immediately: the best investment an entrepreneur can make and one which pays for itself within months.



To that point,
people have
heard me say
that I think it
quite reckless
and silly for
founders and
other executives
to go through
their life and
business world
(when you can
afford it) without
a trusted mentor,
coach, advisor
or therapist

LEO WIDRICH



7 Vision: What does success look like on the other side of this?

My final piece of advice to navigating this testing time is to create a written Vision of Success describing what your business and life looks like on the other side of this. As Prof. Galloway writes

“Near all of us will talk about this in grand terms one day”

What will the world look like in which you will talk in “grand terms” about this crisis? Write it down and follow the recipe of the man from whom I learned the craft of visioning, one of the most powerful leadership tools in the box. Ari Weinzwieg, co-founder of the extraordinary food business [Zingerman's Community of Businesses in Ann Arbor Michigan](#) and an inspiration to many, has created a superb process for writing a Vision of Success that acts as a lodestar for any business (or individual) when it conforms to certain basic principles, namely, it must be:

- ❑ **1. INSPIRING**
- ❑ **2. STRATEGICALLY SOUND**
- ❑ **3. DOCUMENTED (IE. WRITTEN DOWN)**
- ❑ **4. COMMUNICATED**

His 8-step recipe for creating one follows this process:

- ❑ **1. PICK YOUR TOPIC:** usually your business;
- ❑ **2. PICK YOUR TIME FRAME** (make a specific point in time, say March 21. 2022);
- ❑ **3. PUT TOGETHER A LIST OF “PROUDS”** (positive achievements and wins from your organisation or life - a technique to get you in a positive frame of mind);
- ❑ **4. WRITE DOWN THE FIRST VERSION OF YOUR VISION IN ABOUT 20-30 MINUTES,** write fast, don't edit and let your imagination soar: What does success look and feel like in 2 or three years time? Write it down and don't hold back.
 - Go for something Great
 - Write from the Heart
 - Get in the Future (write in the present tense)
 - Go Quickly
 - Use the “Hot Pen” technique
 - Get Personal
- ❑ **5. RE-VIEW AND REDRAFT - wait a couple of days and revisit the draft.** Type it up, read it out loud to your spouse, significant other or trusted friend, fine tune it. It should make you feel excited and a bit nervous.
- ❑ **6. RINSE AND REPEAT (5) - get input from your team** now and from the people who are going to be involved in creating that future;
- ❑ **7. GET INPUT FROM EXPERTS** in your close circle of advisors, people who know you, your organisation and your market.
- ❑ **8. SHARE IT WITH THE WORLD: Publish, celebrate and communicate.** This is now your commitment to your preferred future.

Ari's essays on Visioning (and much more besides) can be found in his book [“A lapsed Anarchist's Approach to Building A Great Business”](#) published by Zingerman's Press and available from the Zingerman's website. It - and its sister publications from The Lapsed Anarchist series (Volumes 1 -4) are superb reads, beautifully produced and a great edition to any entrepreneurs library.

“

Vision is
the art
of seeing
what
is yet
invisible

JONATHAN SWIFT

”



So that's it: my **Guide to Leadership in the Time of Covid-19**, a collection of action-oriented exercises and practices that you can use to create opportunity and purpose from this crisis. There is no denying that the brown stuff has connected with the ventilation system, but it has covered everybody, some more, some less and small businesses in particular, but it doesn't matter. February's world may as well be a 100 years ago for all the relevance it has to the situation we face today.

But here is the good news: Some of the smartest entrepreneurial minds on the planet are working overtime to provide guidance, intelligence, support and action plans for you. I have only scratched the surface of what is available out there and I have rarely been so impressed and overwhelmed by the quality and output of those thinking with and for you. The few that I have listed and quoted and misappropriated here are just a few of the experts who are putting their knowledge and expertise out there for you. So remember

You are not your business

You are not alone

You can do this

and in the immortal words of Vita Sackville-West's mother

This too shall pass.

Good luck and stay SAFE.



**Steven Wilkinson Founder & Managing Director
Good & Prosper Ltd.
Ireland**

Contact me at steven@goodandprosper.com if you want to discuss any aspect of this or book us for leadership coaching around finance, strategy and self-development, or need information about support partners in your area.

With thanks...

Kudos to all the Bloggers, Tweeters, Authors, Experts and Entrepreneurs who manage to find time to write and share their experiences in such lucid, intelligent and generous ways. A few of them are quoted directly in this compilation, for which I hope I have their blessing:

- [Mo Bunnell](#), Bunnell Ideas Group ad author of The Snowball System, whose excellent little video series inspired me to write this in the first place as I wanted to share his “call to action” with as many people as possible;
- [Rob Dube](#), Author of the Do Nothing Book and podcast, friend and entrepreneurial meditation master;
- [Ari Weinzwieg](#), Zingerman’s Community of Businesses and prolific author
- [Doug Tatum](#), Founder of Newport Board Group and Author of No Mans Land - What to Do when your business is too big to be small and too small to be big”
- [Dr. Kerstin Friedrich](#) - Author of “Specialisation” and High Priestess of the EKS Method, a german strategy process which formed the basis of chapter 5
- The team from the [Business Model Generator](#), whose eponymous book and model for defining strategy has influenced thousands if not millions of businesses and remains one of the best and simplest models for thinking through strategy
- [Dr. Sabrina Starling](#), Founder of Tap The Potential LLC whose Better Business, Better Life Program has changed my thinking around the value of small groups and masterminds, author of How to Hire The Best, an Amazon bestseller;
- [Brent Beshore](#), Founder and CEO of Permanent Equity, a very long term investor in family businesses, Author of The Messy Marketplace and an inspirational thinker around all things SME;
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- [Kevin Walter](#), Great Game of Business Coach from Chicago without whom I would never have implemented Forecasting the way that I now do and would never have reaped the tremendous results that that practice brings. Also to
- [Jack Stack](#), Founder of the Great Game of Business, Chair of the SRC Group and one of the most extraordinary businessmen in the US.
- [Mike Michalowicz](#), author of the Pumpkin Plan, Profit First, Surge, Clockwork and the soon to be published “Fix this Next”, all must read books for all SME owners, who was responsible for the “Coach” story and has been an inspiration in so many ways.

“

If you are willing to regard everything that happens to you on [your] journey as a clue and if you accept everyone you meet along the way as a teacher and if you are prepared, most of all, to face and forgive some very difficult realities about yourself, then the truth will not be withheld from you.

ELIZABETH GILBERT
“EAT, PRAY, LOVE”

”



SDG



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