



BUSINESS *in* BLUE JEANS

*ifesto on How to Have a Successful Business
on Your Own Terms, in Your Own Style*

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Brain Junk.

What is “brain junk?” It’s mental baggage. Cerebral clutter. And just like the junk in your trash can, brain junk is all the stuff that you need to take out. Brain junk is the refuse left behind by all the negative moments that you’ve experienced in your lifetime. It’s the echoes of ugly things people have said to you (and things you’ve said to yourself), the visceral memories of feelings you’ve experienced following traumatic incidents and failures. Brain junk is, in essence, the gross crud that life has left behind in your mind.

Why do we start here? We start here because brain junk is the most important determinant of your success. You can have it all: the right product, the right brand, the right marketing, the right everything. But if you have brain junk, either you’ll never get off the ground or you’ll sabotage your own success, happiness, and peace. So before I teach you how to have a successful business, let’s take out the trash and start with a clean space that’s unfettered by the clutter of the past.

“Grasshopper Mode”

There’s a story in the Bible about the children of Israel entering the Promised Land and seeing other people already living there. When I read that story, the verse that stood out to me was, “And there we saw the giants and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (Num. 13:33 KJV).

At one time or another, we've all experienced "grasshopper mode." It's the moment where you feel small and insignificant in comparison to the people who you perceive to be more successful than you are at that moment. But even the most successful people, who most people see as "giants," feel like grasshoppers from time to time.

The thing is, comparing yourself to other people is always a losing game, because there'll always be someone who's more successful than you are. There'll always be someone who does something better than you do. Where you stand relative to other people isn't nearly as important as where you stand relative to where you could be standing if you realized your full potential.

Which Wolf Are You Feeding?

There's a Native American tale about an old man who was telling his grandson a story about two wolves. The old man said, "There's a fight between two wolves. One is an evil wolf, filled with anger, resentment, greed, sadness, rage, envy, pride, ego, vanity, and superiority. The other is a good wolf, filled with peace, light, kindness, generosity, love, compassion, humility, benevolence, grace, hope, compassion, and faith."

"Which of the wolves will win the fight, grandfather?" asked the boy.

The old man paused, considering the boy, then said, "Whichever one you feed."

If you focus your attention on negative things like comparing yourself to others, wondering why you don't have the success you think you deserve, and envying the success of others, then you're feeding the evil wolf and that wolf will win the fight. If, however, you focus your attention on positive things like helping others, bringing value to others through your business, making the world a better place, improving your productivity so you can do more, expanding your expertise so you can make a bigger difference, and taking care of yourself and the ones you love, then you're feeding the good wolf, and that wolf will win.

Feed the good wolf.

“Comparing yourself to other people is always a losing game ... Where you stand relative to other people isn't nearly as important as where you stand relative to where you could be standing if you realized your full potential.”

Exercises to Resolve Brain Junk

Exercise 1. The List of 100 | It's critical that you open your mind and heart to all the possibilities and all the things that you want to make possible. The first step is to make a list of one hundred things that you want in life. It can be anything you want—let your mind soar and be limitless in terms of what you put on the list. It can be as exciting, crazy, and big as you want.

Exercise 2. Positive Equivalents | This exercise will tell all the negative voices in your head to be quiet, once and for all. For a couple of days, carry a notepad and pen around with you. Write down every negative thought that comes up.

At the end of the two days, examine the list you've made for patterns and common themes. Write each of the patterns in a list on the left side of a piece of paper. Then on the right side of the paper, write the positive equivalent for each negative thought pattern. For example, if your negative thought pattern is, "I'll never be successful," write, "I will persist until I succeed."

Once your list is complete, transfer your list of negative thoughts and positive equivalents to a 3x5 card and carry it around in your pocket. When one of your negative thought patterns comes up, check your card for its positive equivalent and meditate on that thought for a minute or so. Over time, if you repeat this process again and again for no less than 30 days, the original thought pattern will be replaced by the positive equivalent.

Other Miscellaneous “You” Things

Taking Care of Yourself | Your success is a product of what you are able to accomplish. You can expand what you’re able to accomplish by taking care of yourself, inside and out. That means getting enough sleep, proper nutrition, exercising regularly, managing stress, and improving your productivity.

Persistence | Are you willing to do whatever it takes to succeed? It’s not enough to just want success badly. You must be willing to persist and do whatever it takes. Don’t accept less from yourself.

The Fire | Have you ever wondered why there are so many books about how to get motivated? It’s because many people are missing a key ingredient: the fire. The fire is the thing that kick-starts everything. It’s the excitement, the drive, the thing that fuels everything in your business. The fire has two components: the heart and the glow.

The heart of a fire is the part that’s at the core of the flame. And in business, the heart is what’s at the core of your being. It’s what your business makes possible—in your life, in the world, for your family. For me, the heart *is* family. My business makes it possible for me to spend plenty of relaxed, quality time with my husband, Leo and my family nearby, and for us to travel throughout Europe and South America regularly to spend time with Leo’s family.

What is it that you want your business to make possible? Find what matters most to you in life and you'll have the heart.

While the heart of the fire is what your business makes possible, the glow is what your business is all about. My business is about showing aspiring, budding, and growing entrepreneurs that the American Dream is alive and achievable. It's about guiding small business owners to incorporate business fundamentals that have stood the test of time into their businesses and to fuse them with new ways to thinking that breed unparalleled success.

For me, the glow comes from a deep belief in this philosophy and in loving what I do more than anything else I've ever done or than anything else I can imagine doing. Writing, speaking, and training come naturally to me and are things that make me happy. I wake up every day excited that I actually get paid to have this much fun!

Find the heart and the glow of your fire and you'll be unstoppable.

Expertise | The fire isn't enough to make a successful business, however. In fact, fire alone makes for a hobby that you really enjoy. To create a real business you need fire and expertise. Expertise means mastery over something. When you find whatever lies at the "sweet spot" where the fire and your expertise overlap, that's where you'll find your greatest potential for success.

I've heard people say, "Yeah, but I'm not an expert at much of anything." Well, that's nonsense. Everybody is good at something. I've literally never met someone who isn't good at anything, but I've sure met a lot of people who thought they weren't good at anything. You might not be the best at something. You might not have truly mastered something, but I'll bet you're good at something.

Expertise matters because you have to be able to back up your claims, otherwise you'll notice that your clients and customers don't come back to you... and eventually word will get around that you don't know what you're doing or your products aren't very good, and your business will fail. Remember that you don't have to be a full-fledged expert, promising your clients and customers the world. I've seen personal trainers build successful careers helping clients who just want to lose a few pounds and add exercise to their daily routines, rather than promising to help clients lose a hundred pounds. What's most important is that you offer what you know you can reliably, consistently deliver with excellence.

A Work in Progress | You should plan to be a work in progress... for the rest of your life. We're all constantly learning and growing, or at least we should be. So keep studying, keep reading, keep learning, so that you grow your expertise and become even better able to bring value to your customers and clients.

Packaging. The first thing you need to know about packaging your “sweet spot” into a viable business model and into a winning brand is that there’s an interplay between the two—none of this part is particularly easy to adapt to linear step-by-step instructions. So you’ll go back and forth between steps in the process and sometimes you’ll be working on a mission statement and realize you need more clarity about your target market. Or you’ll work on creating products and services and have to backtrack to get clearer on your business model. That’s how it’s supposed to work.

The second thing you need to know is that this just might be the most frustrating part. When you’re transforming that sweet spot between the fire and the expertise into a business, it has the power to turn your dreams into reality. That can be a lot of pressure. Plus, it’s this step that requires the most creativity.

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My best advice during this phase is to pay attention to whenever you start to feel frustrated and overwhelmed, and when that happens, walk away. Take a break and go do something else. Let your subconscious mind work on the problem for awhile and let your conscious mind take a little break.

Packaging the Sweet Spot Into a Business

The process of packaging the sweet spot between the fire and the expertise into a business starts with knowing your dreams and lifestyle goals. If you know that you want to work from home, for example, that informs your business model. If you know you want to make a certain amount of money, that should inform your business model, too—you'll need a business model that actually has the potential to generate that kind of income (or you'll need to create multiple streams of income).

Your Target Market | Your target market is who you want to work with and who you're going to market to. It's defined by certain demographic, geographic, psychographic, and even technographic characteristics.

It's generally best to start with one basic target market. Once you've reached that group and met their needs, then you can expand out to other markets.

Choosing a target market is scary for many business owners. You might be concerned that if you narrow your market down too much, you won't have enough business, or you'll miss somebody who wants to do business with you.

But, in fact, trying to do business without a clearly-defined target market is like trying to play darts without a dartboard. If you don't have a dartboard, then you pretty much throw darts at anything, hoping you hit something interesting. In business, this is basically trying all kinds of marketing and advertising strategies, but not getting results.

Now imagine what it would be like if you knew exactly where to throw the darts and could hit that target in the middle of the dartboard every single time? That's what it means to define and know your target market. If you know exactly who you want to serve, where to find those people, and what they want, then you know exactly how to market effectively so that you can deliver products and services to the people you want to serve.

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You do have to get very specific with your target market. It's not enough to just choose, for example, "women" as a target market. You need to be a lot more specific and detailed than that.

Once you know who your target market is, you'll want to go deep so you can understand your target market. What are their wants and needs? What are their problems? What keeps them awake at night? And what are their attitudes toward their problems as well as toward the solutions to those problems (including what you offer)?

You can't make this stuff up. You'll need to actually get the data via survey or via market research.

Analyzing Your Peers | I refer to the competition as "peers." In big business—we're talking Coke, Pepsi, Apple, Google, Microsoft—the "big boys" of industry are aggressive and ruthless about winning the competition. In small business, however, there's no need to be so competitive. There might be similarities in what two different companies do, but your brand and how it's implemented is what makes the difference and sets you apart from others in your industry.

Certainly, you'll want to analyze your peers and learn everything you can about them and to know your industry inside out. But once you've done that, you can distill all of that information down into the most important pieces of information that you need to run your business and forget about the rest. At the end of the day, competition is about you competing against your personal best.

Products and Service Offerings | The most important thing I can tell you about choosing (or, if you're already in business, evaluating) your products and services is that you have to decide if what you're offering is of value to your clientele. It's not about what you think your clients or customers need, but rather what they want to buy.

It's okay to create something that expresses your higher purpose or vision, but you'll either have to match a target market that wants that product already, or you'll want to put it together in a way that also delivers what your existing target market wants.

Your Business Model | A business model is the way in which you deliver the value (which comes from that "sweet spot") to your target market. There are many different kinds of business models, for example "bricks and mortar," in which one has an actual storefront, "bricks and clicks," in which one sells from both a retail location as well as online, or fee-based models, in which you charge a fee for services rendered. What's most important in terms of choosing a business model is that you choose one that's right for you and for your target market.

Remember, everything starts with the target market, so go back and look at what you've learned about them. Where will you find them most readily? Where do they do most of their research and shopping for products and services like yours? How do they prefer to receive their goods and services? And, how are other businesses like yours delivering to their customers and clients?

Packaging the Sweet Spot Into a Brand

Once you've started to figure out your business model, you'll want to package your sweet spot into a brand.

What Is Branding? | Branding is the creation of an identity for your business that, when it's experienced by your target market, creates a full, comprehensive experience for them. Branding creates an experience in the mind of your consumer, such that they either identify with the brand (as in, "That's me!") or they identify the brand consumer as someone they want to become. Branding creates recognizability.

Why Is Branding Important? | Branding matters because it's the thing that tells your target market that you exist, you know and understand their needs, and you're better able to help solve the problem that keeps them up at night than anyone else. It's what draws them in, gets them in the door, and keeps them there.

Branding is critically important to small businesses because believe it or not, you're competing with all of the "big boys." That's right, these days, consumers see your brand right next to brands like Target, Tony Robbins, and Nike. So even small businesses have to aspire to be just as solid, just as polished as the big boys are. Problem is, not only do small businesses have fewer resources

to commit to branding (hey, the big boys easily spend millions on new brands), but you also have a lot less leeway when it comes to making mistakes. A branding misstep can cost you everything.

(Re)Creating Your Brand Identity | Along the way to branding (or re-branding—this applies to existing businesses, too), you'll have many questions. Do you want a personal brand or a corporate brand? Do you have clarity around what you want your brand to represent to people? These are the kinds of questions you need to answer as you go about creating a brand and, if you have a business already, determining if you need to re-brand.

Styling the Brand | Your brand identity has a style that includes the name of your business, the visual elements of the brand (including logo, web site, marketing collateral, etc.), and even you.

How do you even go about naming your business? The simplest way to name a business is to write down all the words that you want representing your brand, as well as industry-relevant words, on 3x5 cards, then mix and match the cards until the words start to lose meaning or you find a combination that works. You'll need to secure a domain name, too, and check to see if the name you come up with is trademarked, and then you'll want to get feedback from people in your target market. Of course, you'll get frustrated, and when you do, it's okay to walk away for awhile. Sometimes, that's when the best ideas come.

Once you have the name of your business and you know the words that you want to represent your brand, then you can move forward with the logo, then the web site and marketing collateral. Your brand should be integrated across everything that you do in your business, even you.

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Leaning Into Your Marketing

Have you ever been in a conversation where you became so engaged and so interested that you physically leaned closer to the person? That's the gist of leaning into your marketing. You're leaning into your clients and customers and going a step beyond engagement.

Common Marketing Mistakes | Marketing is far more important than most people realize. Creating a marketing plan is a smart idea, if only because it gives structure to your ideas about how to grow your business. Some people need a written plan to follow, while others do just fine with scribbles on a cocktail napkin or a plan in their heads. Do what works best for you. Just try to avoid choosing so many marketing channels that you become overwhelmed.

The Philosophy of Leaning In | The philosophy of leaning into your marketing is about engaging with your customers in your marketing efforts and delivering an incredible experience. It's about making your research about your target market and your desire to understand them continuous and ongoing and engaging in every step of the process with them to ensure that they have an amazing experience.

This engagement takes place in every aspect of your business, and the method entails you going to them and going a step beyond. Your marketing is where the conversation begins. The leaning in is the part where the engagement goes that extra step beyond.

As you lean in, focus your marketing efforts to only the places where your target market will already be. Form relationships with your customers and build on those relationships—continuously and consistently. Create extraordinary customer experiences with engaged, empowered employees that make your clients and customers want to shout about you from the rooftops.

The Village. They say it takes a village to raise a child. Well, it also takes a village to grow a business. Each entrepreneur needs to create his or her own village to support the business so that it can grow with the right guidance, support, encouragement, and resources. Otherwise, you're likely to end up overworked, stressed out, and unsure of what to do next.

Who You Need in Your Village

Every good entrepreneurial village needs four kinds of people: masterminds, networks, administrators, and advisors.

Masterminds | Masterminds, in the tradition defined in Napoleon Hill's book, *Think and Grow Rich*, are a great way to connect with others who aspire to similar goals and are willing to help support and encourage you. Your mastermind members can be a good source of wisdom and experience as well.

Networks | Networking is key to the success of your business, if you do it right. Focus on the value that you bring to the other people you're connecting with and avoid the temptation to sell, sell, sell when you're in a networking situation. Build the relationship with the other human being and that relationship just might naturally and organically lead to business.

Administrators | Every business needs others who provide goods and services that help your business run better. These are people like your web developer, graphic designer, sales team, assistants, and other staff members. Finding the right team members can be challenging, but once you get your team in place, the potential for scaling your business up can be unlimited.

Advisors | Included in your advisory group are your legal team, accounting team, and mentoring team. Your legal team will help you protect yourself and your ideas and keep you out of trouble. Your accounting team will help you avoid costly mistakes, stay within the tax guidelines, and they can even save you money. Your mentoring team can be made up of many different people—mine certainly is—but there should be one official “cook in the kitchen” who keeps you moving forward and holds you accountable. I have a paid mentor who is a business coach and marketing consultant rolled into one person, plus a bunch of informal mentors I seek very specific advice and wisdom from, from time to time.

It's important to choose the right mentor to keep your business growing. Beware of anyone who makes huge promises or tells you your business will grow very fast with their help. Remember there is no get rich quick, and anyone who tells you that there is probably has something expensive to sell you.

*“They say it takes a village to raise a child.
Well, it also takes a village to grow a business.”*

Final Words. There's so much more to running a business than this manifesto can encompass, but this is a good start.

Stay focused on the goal, be persistent, throw out your brain junk, build your village, and make amazing things happen. 📌

Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Susan Baroncini-Moe is a business and marketing strategist who consults with companies to help them gain visibility, improve the way their businesses are run, and train their staff to implement key marketing strategies. She regularly speaks to audiences of all sizes, and she and her businesses have been featured in *Inc.com*, *Fast Company*, *Redbook Magazine*, *USA Today*, *MSN Living*, American Express Open Forum, Social Media Examiner, *Investor's Business Daily*, Chicago Tribune, and Yahoo Finance, as well as many other online and offline publications.

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