

**The Ultimate No B.S.,
No Holds Barred,
Kick Butt, Take No
Prisoners, and Make Tons Of Money
BUSINESS Success Book**



by
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PREFACE

Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.
- R. Sherman, from Mary Poppins

Welcome to what I sincerely hope is the most truthful, blunt, straightforward, non-sugarcoated, no pabulum, no holds barred, no-nonsense, no B.S. book that has ever been written on succeeding as an entrepreneur.

I have occasionally been introduced as The Professor of Harsh Reality. This does NOT mean I'm negative. If anything, I'm one of the most optimistic, positive-minded people you'll ever meet. However, I do not believe in confusing positive thinking with fantasy. I've discovered that I'm most successful when I have a firm grip on what is and least successful when caught wrestling with what ought to be.

In this book, I've tried to share, from my 25-plus years of entrepreneurial adventure, what is.

If you are already in business for yourself, this book will help you go forward more astutely, efficiently, productively, and confidently. I think you'll also catch yourself nodding as you go along, saying to yourself, This guy has been where I live. Well, sometimes there is value in just finding out you're not alone!

If you have not yet started in business but intend to, this book might scare you off. If it does, consider it a favor; your too easily spooked to succeed anyway. If it doesn't scare you off, it will help you avoid many pitfalls and problems and cope with those that can't be avoided. It will never cover the basics. There are plenty of very good books out there on the basics (we're not going to cover the same ground all over again. This is not a how-to-start-a-small-business book. This is a go-for-the-jugular success book.

Incidentally, I am not a fuzzy-headed academic, pocket protector and wingtip shoes accountant, or other theorist, although there are plenty of these pretenders writing business books. I'm also not a retired authority who runs a business in my memory. I'm on the firing line every day meeting a payroll, battling the bankers and bureaucrats, struggling to satisfy customers, and solving real business problems. I want you to know this because I think it makes this book more valuable to you.

I'll never forget taking over a company with 43 employees, never having managed more than 2 people in my life. I grabbed every management book I could get my paws on and sucked up all the experts' advice. Then, after a couple of months of getting my brains beat in every day by my employees, I started to look critically at the credentials of those experts. Most of them had never (I repeated, never (managed a workforce. These geniuses spewing out creative management, non-manipulative management, Japanese management, open-door management, and everything-else management wouldn't have survived a week in the real world. I resent those authors to this day. And it's a shame that a lot of college kids get that management theory; that is, fantasy sold to them as reality. So, I chucked all their books, rolled up my sleeves, used my common sense, and started finding out what really works and what doesn't.

Ever since then, I look at every new business books with suspicion. Most won't pass muster because most can't pass the real-experience test.

I also want you to know that there are a lot more things I haven't got a clue about than there are things I understand, and, in this book, I have not dealt with any of the many things I'm in the dark about. Everything in here is based on my own expensive experience. It may not be right. You may not agree with it. But at least you should know that I didn't swipe it out of somebody else's book, give it a jazzy new psycho-babble name, and pass it off as a new miracle tonic.

I also know you can't eat philosophy. So, while there is a lot of my own philosophy in this book, its primary job is showing you how to make more money than you ever imagined possible, faster than you can believe possible. This is a book about getting rich. If that offends you, please put this book back on the shelf or take it back to the store and get a refund. Spend your money on milk and cookies instead (you'll be happier.

NOTE: This book was first published in 1993. It has been up-dated and revised several times since, most recently for this e-book edition. My most current thinking and experiences can be found in my monthly NO B.S. MARKETING LETTER - information at www.dankennedy.com.

1 THE DECISION AND DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED

Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to improve themselves. They therefore remain bound.

- James Allen, As a Man Thinketh

Contrary to a great many textbook assertions, having the best product, the better mousetrap, a whiz-bang new idea, the top location, the best market, the smartest accountant, the neatest bookkeeping system, or ton of capital - or all of them together - does not ensure success. On the other hand, having the worst product, a mediocre mousetrap, a silly idea, a bad location, a weak market, an accountant who can't count, a shoe box and paper bag bookkeeping system, or no money - or all of these things together - does not ensure failure.

I have seen people succeed under the most improbable conditions. I've also seen people who have everything going for them still manage to screw it up. In all of these cases, it's the person making the difference. That's why they're really are no business successes or failures; there are people successes and people failures.

Entrepreneurial success, like most things in life, is mostly a matter of decision. A partnership, friendship, intimate relationship, or marriage that succeeds or fails, a book that gets written or remains a jumble of notes in a drawer, the drawers that gets cleaned out Saturday or put off until next week - these are all the result of decision and determination to make the decision right. Making the right decisions is often a lot less important than determining to make your decisions right.

Dan Kennedy's Eternal Truth #1

Every successful achievement begins with decision. Most unsuccessful lives are conspicuously absent of decision.

Most people go through life making decisions by default, choosing only from narrow options dictated by others or by evolving circumstances. One millionaire friend of mine grew up in a very small town where, as he put it, there were two career options: working at the factory or raising pigs and chickens. With only a few exceptions, everybody he went to school and graduated with chose one of those two options.

Successful people learned to be much more assertive, proactive, and creative in making decisions. If you are to succeed as an entrepreneur, you have to break free of your old reacting and responding mode and switch to the assertive, proactive mode. You have to reject the entire idea of limited choices.

For most people, the decision to pursue the entrepreneurial lifestyle is the by-product of an evolving dislike for their jobs, frustration with their bosses, or a sudden loss of employment. These days, tens of thousands of people, most middle managers, are being squeezed out of

acquired, merged, and down-sized corporations. Accustomed to making \$40,000 to \$70,000 a year, they are being offered half that (if anything at all (and many are turning to business start-ups as there are only reasonable choice.

These people lug a lot of mental and emotional baggage with them. The habits, attitudes, and behaviors that work fine for the employee in the corporate bureaucratic environment, do not necessarily work well at all in the entrepreneurial environment, and must be left behind. The reason why so many new businesses fail is that the owners were unable to leave their old attitudes behind.

WHY TRYING DOESN'T WORK

Some people think and talk in terms of "trying" a business or "trying" out the entrepreneurial experience. Before achieving major success in business myself, I went through considerable agony, corporate and personal bankruptcy, stress, embarrassment, humiliation, and near-starvation. If I'd been just "trying," just taking a test-drive, I'd have quit. And make no mistake about it; my experience is the norm among ultimately successful entrepreneurs.

Rich DeVos plunked down millions to buy the rights to an NBA franchise, The Orlando Magic, apparently to indulge himself. Certainly many envy DeVos as the wealthy, powerful co-founder of Amway Corporation, able to buy a basketball team! But I wonder how many envied him and his partner, Jay Van Andel, when they were barely surviving in business, bottling a liquid cleanser in a decrepit gas station, delivering drums of the gunk cross-country to their a few distributors in their own pickup truck, being laughed at by friends and family.

My occasional client and one of my best friends, Lee Milteer, is universally respected and sometimes envied by her colleagues. Her career as a professional speaker and TV personality is thriving. As a speaker, she routinely commands \$5,000 per speech. But when I met Lee, her speaking career was floundering, she was over \$35,000 in the hole, pawning jewelry to print brochures, and taking more calls from bill collectors than from clients. In the asset column, of her balance sheet, she had little more than a burning desire and determination to succeed in this unusual business.

Although Lee has developed into a very good speaker, I happened to know a number of others, more naturally gifted, more professionally talented, and more skilled than her who failed in their attempts at the business. They "tried" it, couldn't make it work, and went back to work in other jobs. Lee's good-humored determination made all the difference in the world.

MAKING AND KEEPING FAITH WITH YOUR COMMITMENTS

To succeed as an entrepreneur requires decision and determination - total, unwavering commitment. To keep faith with this commitment, you have to develop and embrace attitudes, habits, and behaviors that are markedly different from most of the people you've known. You have to cut down on time spent with people who are not supportive of your entrepreneurial ambitions. Time spent hanging around fearful people, doubtful people, skeptical people can impair your ability to succeed.

You mean I have to change my friends?

Probably. And the books you read. And the television programs you watch. And a whole lot more. We cannot help being and becoming a product of the ideas we associate with most, of the books and magazines we read, the tapes we listen to, the TV we watch, and the people we spend time with.

As thick-skinned as I believe I am and as much of an independent thinker as I pride myself in being, I admit that my performance and determination vary in relationship to what I'm reading, what I'm listening to, and who I'm hanging around with. Earl Nightingale brilliantly summarized all this: "We become what we think about most." If you are going to become an exceptionally successful entrepreneur, that is what you must think about most.

Another way to look at this is in terms of passion. The most successful entrepreneurs I know are passionately involved with entrepreneurship in general and their businesses in particular. They're in love with being entrepreneurs, excited about their products or services, "on fire" with enthusiasm, and that gives them superhuman powers.

You cannot immunize yourself against the influences of the ideas in the people you associate with. There is no vaccination to protect you from negative, anti-business thinking. For this reason, you must immerse yourself in associations that are in harmony with your goals and aspirations.

This doesn't mean that you must socialize only with other entrepreneurs. I have friends who are college professors, corporate executives, actors, athletes, office workers, and so on, but I choose them carefully; they do not have negative attitudes about business people; they do have interesting ambitions within their careers or tied to other's outside interests that are stimulating.

Unfortunately, you are going to discover that the majority of the people, non-entrepreneurs, have a number of set-in-cement biases, and frustrations with you, the entrepreneur. Here are some of the big ones you'll run up against.

YOU'RE A WORKAHOLIC

Most entrepreneurs I know experience great conflicts between their commitment to business and other aspects of their lives: marriage, family, civic activities, and so on. Having one failed marriage plus one almost-failed, narrowly rescued marriage in my background, I'm hypersensitive to this conflict, and I'm always working on ways to handle it more effectively.

It's convenient and easy for others to label the determined, passionate entrepreneur as a workaholic - a diseased, neurotic addict guilty of neglecting non-work responsibilities, of not loving his or her spouse or family, of being a self-absorbed ass. It's convenient and easy, but overly simplistic, unfair, and certainly not very helpful.

In reality, the constantly working entrepreneur may be saner and happier than the critics. Most people detest their jobs, yet they continue going to them day after day, month after month, year after year. They spend the lion's share of their lives doing things they find boring and unfulfilling, but lack the guts to do anything about it. They live for the weekend. By contrast, the entrepreneur manages to stay involved in work that is so enjoyable and fulfilling that he or she no longer thinks of it as work.

The lovers, friends, parents, and others who throw around the workaholic label may secretly resent their own "stuckedness" and try to make themselves feel better by attacking you, by making you feel guilty.

We could dismiss the critics as jealous, resentful, and unreasonable just as easily as they label us as workaholics. However, no one wants to go through life married only to a business. We need mates, family, and close friends. And they won't all be involved in our businesses or even in business. We don't get to choose our families and, besides, diversity in social life is healthy and necessary. So, better understanding of ourselves and others, recognition of the special problem we present to others, and creative efforts at preserving balances are all very important.

The problem also, ironically, reveals the greatest of all secrets to entrepreneurial success. One study done some years back by Venture magazine and Control Data surveyed and analyzed over 700 entrepreneurs, all of whom had operated their own businesses for at least four years and had annual incomes of at least \$90,000. The researchers found that "the lines between work and play are obscured for most successful entrepreneurs." For them, work is play.

Dan Kennedy's Eternal Truth #2

If it's work, it won't make you rich.

The typical entrepreneur is constantly initiating new projects, even new businesses, to justify the long day to keep the game alive. They are not just motivated by desirable end results; they're equally motivated by the enjoyment and thrill they derive from the whole process of business. They love the "action."

If this is workaholism, I'm guilty. But, also, thanks to near-divorce, aging, long conversations with wiser people, and many other factors, I'm developing an appreciation for balancing that passion with other passions, so that one makes the other even better.

Succeeding in business is a real magic trick. Succeeding in business and having a balanced life is an even greater, more challenging, more worthwhile trick. Since anything and everything is possible for the determined person, why not set your sights on the very best?

Some entrepreneurs manage to involve those close to them in their work-absorbed behavior. Tom Monaghan gratefully tells of his wife's patience when he would always choose a pizza joint to check out whenever they were traveling or on vacation. Some fortunate couples share the same entrepreneurial passion and have that work for them.

But what if you're making the big transition from employee to entrepreneur with a spouse who is happy with your old behavior? Or what if you're in love with someone who cannot survive in a relationship dominated by your entrepreneurial passion?

Some of these relationships end. If yours is to survive, you need to be very aware of the strain that your new entrepreneurial personality, passion, and lifestyle is going to create and take proactive, preventive steps to make up for it. You'll find some ideas in chapter 20 of this book.

YOU'RE A WILD-EYED RISK TAKER, A RIVERBOAT GAMBLER. HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?

One of the things that frightens many people and their loved ones about choosing the entrepreneurial lifestyle is the risk. It's interesting that our society chooses the cautious "be careful" as a means of saying goodbye to a friend. We don't say "be successful" or "be happy," we say, "be careful."

I prefer to be adventurous and "fail forward" all the time. Running a business *is* a risk, but it needn't be foolhardy. I rarely make a decision without considering everything from the best case scenario to the worst-case scenario. I try to expect the best and insure against the worst.

Most people see things as black or white: someone is either the meek and mild Clark Kent or the strong and daring Superman. They try to see themselves instantly turning from Kent to Superman and have understandable difficulty conceiving and believing in such a miraculous transition.

Such dramatic overnight makeovers rarely occur. People grow into and with their new roles. You *can* start from where you are and grow to where you want to be. Anxiety about the risks inherent in business is natural. But the real objective of the entrepreneur is to *manage* risk, not to *take* risk.

Everybody manages risk every day. For example, statistics indicate that the risk of having a home fire during a lifetime is very high. Some people sensibly manage this risk by installing smoke and heat detectors, checking the batteries periodically, keeping an escape ladder in the hall closet, devising and rehearsing an escape plan with the kids, having surge protectors for major appliances, and so on. This is thorough risk management.

Other people just install a smoke detector and forget about it. They are managing the risk to a lesser degree. Still others do nothing at all. They *take* the risk.

The successful entrepreneur deals only with carefully calculated, measured risk. He or she demands accurate, complete information from associates and advisers and welcomes input and ideas from credible sources. But he or she also knows when to stop and avoid the paralysis of never-ending analysis.

There's a balance between too little and too much caution. Admittedly, the entrepreneur leans more toward risk than the typical employee. In J. R. R. Tolkien's book *The Hobbit*, the wizard Gandalf offers Bilbo Baggins an opportunity to go on a great adventure with the potential of acquiring great riches at the end. Bilbo responds with his perspective on adventures: "Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner."

Somewhere between the extremes of unbridled risk and Bilbo's total aversion to adventure you will find your balance as an entrepreneur. As you gradually develop that sense of balance as a risk manager and decision maker, you'll find that you can function without extreme stress or anxiety.

THE PRICE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS IS JUST TOO MUCH TO PAY

For some, that's true. There are some people who really will be happier and more productive in non-entrepreneurial roles. But there's also great misunderstanding about the price of success.

Every lifestyle, every choice has its price. The person who follows the old model of staying in a good job with a good company for 40 years pays the price in boredom, frustration, and quiet desperation of unfulfilled, untested potential.

Today, people who try to stay with that model often pay an even higher price: after many years of service, a merger, acquisition, down-sizing, bankruptcy, or even disappearance of an entire industry puts loyal employees out on the street. They must tackle a dynamic, tough job market with outdated skills and face the future without the financial security they believed was guaranteed to them for their loyalty and longevity. Entrusting your success to others in corporate bureaucracies is increasingly risky business.

THE DECISION OF AUTONOMY

When you depend on others, you collect and store up excuses for failure (like Harry does. Harry doesn't like his too-small, in-disrepair house. He doesn't like his five-year-old, mechanically ailing car. He doesn't like the pile of bills in the kitchen drawer. He hates his job. He doesn't respect his boss. But wait, the one thing he does have going for him is a book of excuses. He opens it up and sighs with relief: This sorry state of affairs isn't my fault. My mother liked my brother more and that gave me an inferiority complex. We grew up on the wrong side of the tracks. My family couldn't afford to send me to college.... And on and on and on.

This is called burying yourself in B.S. If you really want to be a success in business, you need to be *emotionally* independent before you can ever become *financially* independent. I feel fortunate to have discovered a lot about this very early in life.

If I ever got an allowance, it stopped when I was still a little kid. I don't remember it. I do remember earning my spending money very early on. I picked strawberries and packaged tomatoes at the greenhouses behind our community, cleaned stalls at a nearby stable, and washed and waxed cars. I soon figured out that selling was easier than manual labor. I spent my teen years selling.

In my early experiences in direct and multi-level sales, I quickly found out that most of my distributors (even though they were 5 to 25 years older and more "mature" than I was) could not be relied on to have the appropriate literature, samples, and other materials with them at presentations! If I wanted prospects handled properly, I had to take steps to make up for the others' lack of organization, discipline, and reliability; I had to have extra supplies on hand. This business taught me the importance of self-reliance.

The sooner you arrive at accepting 100% responsibility for everything, the more successful you'll be. Go take a look in the mirror. There's the man or woman - the only man or woman - who can make you happy, thin, rich, famous, or whatever it is that you aspire to.

The autonomy you develop now will stand you in good stead when your business hits some of the rough roads. One sad truth about business is that you never finish with the same people you start with. Partners, friends, key employees, and others will fall by the wayside for one reason or another as you go along. You will outgrow some. Others will become jealous and resentful of you. I can assure you that, at some point, you will have to make a decision that will be very unpopular with everybody around you. Then you will ultimately decide that the only indispensable person in your business is you.

I had to end a 5-year relationship with a business partner who had been my closest, best friend. Not long ago, an 11-year working relationship with a lawyer who had become a friend and who had gone through many battles with me also had to be ended. I've had to fire long-time employees who I liked personally. And I've had to put my foot down, have a confrontation, and endure temporary anger and tension in the work environment. But, ultimately, business cannot be run by committee or consensus. You're it.

Being *it* is not always fun. But always necessary.

HEY, THAT'S NOT FAIR!

A lot of people respond to their various handicaps, problems, and disappointments with the complaint "It's just not fair." And it sure isn't. For starters, we don't get to pick our parents. There's a flaw in the system right there! Next, most of us aren't movie-star gorgeous. But all this pales in comparison to the biggest injustice and mystery of all (the shocking frequency with which bad things happen to good people.

A young man, Donald R., an honor student, considerate, courteous, and athletically talented, had an accident on the high school trampoline, landed on his back across the frame, and wound up paralyzed in both legs and in both arms for life. He had to make a choice. He could have retreated into isolation, devoted his life to self-pity and bitterness, and lived as a helpless invalid. Instead, Donald R. learned to focus the entire force of his personality through his voice so he could use the telephone, the only tool that lets him travel anywhere in the world while wheelchair bound, to become an enormously successful businessman.

Dialing with a pencil clenched in his teeth, he became one of the most proficient telemarketers in his chosen industry. He supports himself with dignity. He made the money to have a beautiful home custom built with every imaginable convenience and gadget to help him function as if he wasn't handicapped. He became an inspiration to others in his field and to other handicapped people. He is influential in his community, generous to good causes, completely productive, and proud. He enjoys an active social life and a happy marriage.

There is no argument that Donald got dealt a lousy hand. Bad things *do* happen to good people, and sometimes we have little or no control over such things. However, we can control our reactions to the cards we are dealt. After Donald had his accident, he dumped a few cards, drew a few new cards, and changed his hand by choice.

That's why there are always people who pull themselves out of the worst ghettos in America to become successful, prominent businesspeople, top athletes, and good family men and women. Oprah Winfrey is just one example of someone who proves this point. She emerged from the horror of child abuse to become the top female talk show host in America, a talented actress, and a savvy entrepreneur. We choose our reactions. We decide what happens next. Complaining, whining, and proclaiming the unfairness of the situation does nothing to improve it.

I can tell you of any number of times that I've been placed in circumstances that were decidedly unfair. Clients who have reneged on their commitments; associates who took unfair advantage; government rules and regulations that are obviously unjust. I couldn't afford to go to college because my parents couldn't contribute. I also stuttered, severely at one time, and still do occasionally today.

My point is that using these or other inequities as excuses for failure won't make you a success. You may be justified, but you'll still be a failure.

I'm sort of an unjustified success. I'm woefully unqualified for just about everything I do. If you had seen me stuttering and stammering as a kid, you wouldn't have wagered a nickel on my future as a professional speaker. As I recall, I got a C in high school speech class and probably deserved worse. The fact that I earn a large income as a writer would be a heart attack-sized surprise to my English and journalism teachers. I'm responsible for the sale of tens of millions of dollars of merchandise each year through the advertising that I create, but I have no

formal training in that field. Personally, I prefer being an unjustified success rather than a justified failure.

One corner of my office is graced by a huge, stuffed Yogi Bear. He's there to remind me of his favorite saying: "I'm smarter than the average bear." That's me: smarter than the average bear. I'm not necessarily better educated, or better qualified, or better capitalized, or better connected. But "street-smarter." Go-ahead, I say, run your best at me. I'll keep figuring out new ways to win faster than anybody else can manufacture new obstacles! *That* is the attitude of the entrepreneur who makes it big.

Some cynic once said, "There is no justice. Only power." As an entrepreneur, you have tremendous opportunity to acquire the power of control over all aspects of your life. I'm not talking about the kind of power you lord over everybody, bullying power, brute power. I mean the power to arrange your life as you desire it to be. To associate with people you really enjoy and benefit from being with, to earn an income truly commensurate with your contributions, to live where you most want to live, to travel or to stay home. Your finances are not controlled by some corporate bureaucracy or the whim of a boss; you write your own paycheck.

I have, for example, arranged my business affairs so that I can take many mini-vacations, linked to business travel, as well as extended vacations without worry. I can work at home and let my office run itself. I never have to sit in rush-hour traffic. I get to pick and choose clients and projects.

You get power by deciding to have power.