


THE
HAPPY
BUSINESS
REVOLUTION

How to make your business
great for you, your team
and your customers



Mike Jones

Growing a small business is often stressful for both owner and employees, but it can and should be a process that makes you and your people happy.

The Happy Business Revolution is an essential toolkit for business owners, packed with simple but powerful strategies that take the strain out of running your business and transform it into something you and your people love.

Read this book and learn how to:

- **Create** excitement and alignment towards a common goal that benefits you and your employees, customers and business
- **Nurture** a rewarding workplace environment that you and your people look forward to being in every day
- **Develop** a cohesive leadership team who enjoy growing your business for you
- **Build** a work-smart culture where better results are achieved with less effort
- **Manage** all of the above while creating a culture that actively supports great levels of physical and mental health, and overall happiness



Mike Jones is the founder of award-winning consultancy Better Happy. Mike's unique insight into health, happiness and high performance are developed from his experiences in the military, living in monasteries and owning businesses. His mission is to enable businesses, owners and employees to thrive – together. **Learn more at www.betterhappybusinessclub.com**

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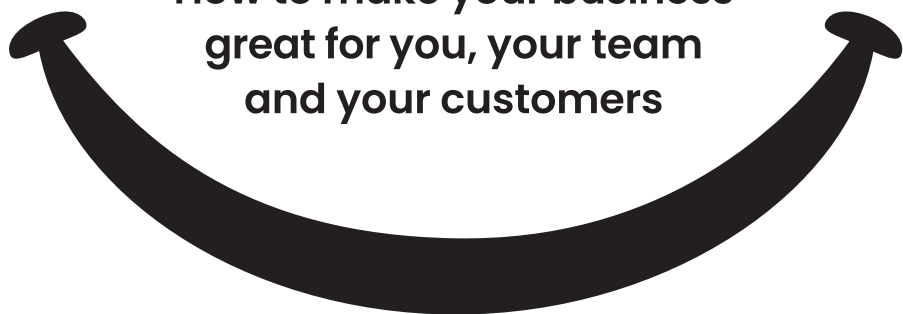


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*This book is dedicated to those exceptional leaders and
business pioneers who prove every day that true success
comes from elevating others while chasing our goals.
Your example lights the path for others to follow.*

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Introduction

Since 2018 I've worked with hundreds of employees, business leaders and business owners across a wide range of industries to improve health, happiness and performance in the workplace. I've supported businesses ranging from five or fewer employees to some of the largest employers in the UK. Although the size and structure of the companies I work with varies widely, I encounter the same issues, caused by the same mistakes, which lead to the same struggles.

What I've learned is that for most people, work is more of a stress than a joy. This includes everyone from owners and CEOs to managers and employees. No business owner starts out with the intention of their business being anything other than incredible. We start our businesses with visions of freedom and

impact for ourselves; growing teams that love working for us; and delivering a service to customers that blows their socks off.

But something happens along the way. At some point, that excitement and enthusiasm gets overtaken by the inevitable stresses of business. Owners end up feeling more stuck than free; leaders and managers struggle with overwhelm; and employees become demotivated or bored. I understand this not just through working with other businesses, but through painful personal experience.

I served for five years in the British military, including two tours of Afghanistan, and then travelled for three years. While I travelled, I engaged in extensive study of spirituality, especially Buddhism, and lived on monasteries in Nepal and Thailand. When I returned to the UK in 2016, I founded my first business. Bright eyed and totally naïve to the world of business, I opened a group training gym. I didn't have a clear plan. I had no experience. But with a bit of cash and a heart full of excitement I completely believed that I would succeed and that it would be an epic journey.

Within two years, I had enough committed clients to warrant leasing my own unit. Over the next three years we grew to a team of five and doubled our revenue every year until we had a healthy, profitable six-figure business. But while the business was doing great, I wasn't.

Somewhere between years two and three, my excitement had been overtaken by stress. I was working six to seven days per week, early in the morning until late in the evening. My partner and I had taken just two holidays in five years. I paid myself next to nothing and pumped everything back into the business. The only time I really saw my partner was when she was training at the gym, and I remember feeling a deep sense of shame when she asked me if I still wanted to be with her. She told me I always seemed happy at the gym but when I was at home I was tired, disinterested or working on the computer and moody. The truth was I was shattered, but I put the effort in to hide it at the gym because I was at work. My staff knew I was stressed, and the visionary energy I started with had disappeared. The business had gone from an exciting adventure to a stressful burden, and that began to rub off on my team.

By the time COVID-19 came around, I was completely burned out and depressed. Before I had my own business, if I was unhappy or dissatisfied at work there was always someone higher up I could attach blame to. Getting burned out as a business owner meant there was only one person I could point the finger at: myself.

After experiencing burnout for myself, I knew that my purpose was to find a solution that prevents work from becoming unhealthy and makes businesses great for leaders, managers and employees. My experience

taught me that to fix the workplace struggle problem, a top-down approach was required. If the business owners/leaders and managers were stressed and on the way to burnout, the experience for the employees would always be poor and the business would never reach its potential.

I founded a company, Better Happy, with the vision of ‘every employee happy, every business thriving.’ I talked about my experience of burnout and built the tools and systems that would prevent it from happening again. I thought business owners would be interested in what I was sharing, and they were, but what surprised me was the interest that came from other people. It turned out that it’s not just business owners who struggle with stress-related overwork but managers and leaders in all sorts of companies. I got opportunities to work with small businesses, medium businesses and some of the largest employers in the UK. With every team I worked with, I obsessed over the same question: what’s getting in the way of a win/win situation for everyone?

Before long, I noticed that the teams and businesses I was supporting made the same mistakes, which led to the same issues. I had similar conversations over and over again. Whether I was working with a business owner or a new manager, there were so many similarities:

- ‘Do you have a plan for where you’re heading?’ ‘No.’
- ‘Do you make time to plan, listen to and develop your team?’ ‘No.’
- ‘Do you prioritise a few goals and track progress towards them?’ ‘No.’
- ‘Do you track numbers that give you a clear indication of the business / team and each person within it?’ ‘No.’
- ‘Do you create a culture of psychological safety where healthy conflict is encouraged?’ ‘No.’
- ‘Do you prioritise yourself and make time for your health?’ ‘No.’

I probed to see if the people I worked with made the mistakes I had made in my first business and retrospectively learned how to address. Turns out, they’re pretty common mistakes. I was soon able to group the issues teams faced into five categories, which led to the creation of the SELPH model:

1. **Strategy:** Is there a simple and clear plan for where you’re aiming to be one to ten years from now?
2. **Engagement:** Have you got systems in place to engage with and develop your people so they love working for you and genuinely want your business to succeed?

3. **Leadership:** Does your leadership team function well and drive collaborative growth across all people in the business?
4. **Performance:** Do you have goal-setting and tracking systems in place that drive growth while preventing overcommitment?
5. **Health:** Are you creating a culture of health and vitality in your business where leadership, managers and employees improve their health alongside work?

Using this model, we now help teams and businesses be growth-minded, enjoyable and great places to work. When you implement the SELPH model in your business, it creates a win/win for you and your people. Your business will stop being dependent on the owner. You'll develop a level of employee leadership and motivation other businesses can't fathom. Growing your business will stop feeling like an owner-driven slog as your team begin to do it for you, with enjoyment and on autopilot.

The cynic in you might say 'to really make my people happy, I just need to pay them more.' That's rarely the case. You absolutely need to pay your people enough – and ideally more than enough – but many people aren't highly motivated by money. You can pay your people the best salaries in the world but if you've got a crappy culture, they'll still look elsewhere or just won't enjoy working for you. When you implement

the SELPH model, paying people more will become a natural byproduct of your success. As your people become more engaged and your leadership more strategic, your revenue, profits and salaries will increase.

You don't make more money to be happy; when you become happier, you make more money. The most successful businesses of the future will be the ones that passionate people enjoy working in. It doesn't matter what industry you're in or how big your business is, you have the ability to make it a great place to work and to outperform your competitors by doing so. While other businesses struggle to cope with rapid change and the problems it creates, your people and business will revel in change. The SELPH model is your step-by-step guide to make that a reality in your business, but first we need to deal with you: the business owner. We'll do this in Part One of the book, before we move on to the SELPH model in Parts Two and Three.

PART ONE

THE PARADIGM SHIFT

The world we live in is evolving rapidly, creating more change and opportunity than ever before. With the right mindset, you and your people can thrive in this exciting era. With the wrong mindset, you're destined to struggle.

Let's get that mindset right.

ONE

Stressed Owner, Stressed Business

Every business owner has their own unique reasons for choosing to step away from social norms and become a business owner. Although everyone's reasons are different, we can safely assume that for most entrepreneurs we will find a combination of the desire to make a difference, to do meaningful work and to live life on their own terms. Done right, with a bit of good timing and luck, a business will provide the owner and their team(s) with all of those things and more.

Spending just a little bit of time on social media or networking can quickly convince you that most people are nailing it in business. They appear to be having the time of their lives growing their businesses and making money by delighting their customers, with

a team that loves working for them. My experience shows me that this isn't true, and the data backs it up.

A 2023 NHS survey of small business owners found that 80% had suffered with poor mental health and 38% with depression.¹ Another study found that 43% of employees feel exhausted.² Gallup's famous 'State of the Global Workplace' report consistently shows the UK to have one of the lowest levels of employee engagement in the world. In their 2023 report, our engagement levels came in at 10%.³ That's a mere 10% of all surveyed employees in the UK that actually enjoy being at work. Of course data can be manipulated to tell the story you want it to, but ask yourself this: how many people do you know, yourself included, who are genuinely happy in their work, who find an enormous sense of satisfaction through their work and for whom work doesn't have a negative impact on their physical or mental health?

In the companies I work with, I encounter the same phenomenon and the same emotional struggles. Most people genuinely care about the company they work for and want to do a good job. They care about the other people in the business and want them to be happy. And from owners and CEOs down to team members, they experience more negative than positive impact on their health and happiness from work.

Those from management level upwards suffer unhealthy levels of stress and an inability to switch

off. They do too much and feel pulled between the needs of the business and the needs of their people. Those from team leader downwards suffer frustration that things don't change and resentment because they don't feel appreciated or listened to. The result is that everyone struggles with their health because when the work you do doesn't energise you, there's not much motivation to look after your own health.

What's clear is that most struggles in work come about not through exploitative people taking advantage of others, but through a joint desire to do things well. The problem isn't with the people but the vehicle. We are hardwired to want to do good work that contributes to society and to want to have fulfilling relationships. This means we have all the raw ingredients to create a win/win happy work culture where growth is an enjoyable team journey, not a lonely uphill battle. Throughout this book, I'm going to show you exactly how to build the vehicle that enables that. But first, we have to get clear on what might get in your way, by working out what kind of business owner you are.

The three types of business owner

Not all business owners are created equal. Although they share a common set of traits, such as being future- and goal-driven, the way in which they think and operate varies. From working with

a variety of business owners, I've recognised that they fall into three broad categories. By knowing generally which category you fall into, you will be able to overcome issues faster or avoid them completely so that you, your team and your business can be better and faster.

The three types of business owner are:

1. **Profit-driven:** Driven by financial success
2. **Purpose-driven:** Driven by the desire to make a difference
3. **People-driven:** Driven by the desire to help people

You might identify strongly with just one or feel like you are a mix of two or more, but you will lead with one. My experience shows me that it's the people- and purpose-driven owners that get stuck for the longest in business. The profit-driven entrepreneurs are super clear on what they want and how they are going to get it. Whether you like them or not, they're efficient and the people who work for them not only get paid well, but know exactly what is expected of them.

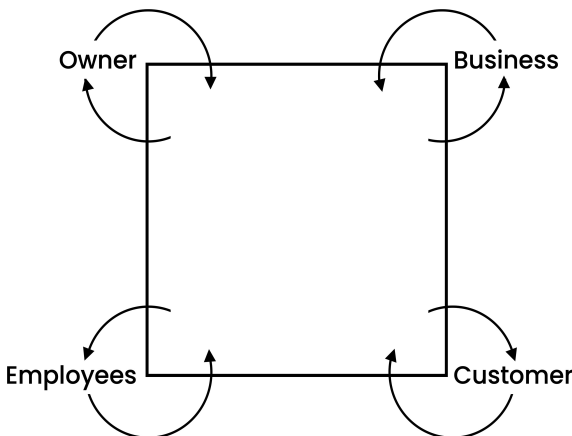
People- and purpose-driven owners can get trapped both through a lack of clarity on what it is they actually want and by trying to keep everyone 'happy'. But with the right tools and mindset, the people- and purpose-driven entrepreneurs have more potential for long-term growth and impact through their

businesses. Considering that you're reading a book with this title, it seems to me that you're most likely a primarily people- or purpose-driven entrepreneur (my apologies to any profit-driven friends who are reading).

Discovering the Core Four will help you ensure your business is a win/win for everyone involved, including yourself, regardless of your owner type.

The Core Four model

My own experience of business ownership and burn-out led to the development of the Core Four model. This simple model changes how people think about and run their businesses, enabling them to create win/win cultures that people – including the owner – love to be a part of.



The wording of the Core Four changes slightly once a company has a board, but the principles remain the same. The model shows what each of the 'core four' components put into a business, and what they take out. Getting to grips with this model will help you keep clear in your mind what your business represents to and how it serves different people before you begin your journey with implementing the SELPH model. For this book, we will use the model of a privately owned business without a board.

The Owner

Puts in: The owner is the heart of the business, even after it is sold. You conceive the idea of the business and create the vision. You put in funds and often work for little or nothing in the early stages. As the business grows, you continue to inspire and motivate the workforce through your leadership.

Takes out: What the business owner wants from the business can change dramatically at the different stages of business evolution (covered in the next section), but generally, a business owner wants a level of freedom, financial gain and satisfaction from their business.

The Employee/Team

Puts in: The employees contribute a combination of labour, innovation and promotion to the business. As

we'll learn shortly, there is a decreasing value placed on labour and increasing value on innovation.

Takes out: In return for their work, the employee expects the basics of fair pay, good working conditions and an acceptable work-life balance. But it's important to note that in line with increasing quality of life, employees now are looking for more than just the basics. They also want purpose, growth, values alignment and meaningful relationships. We'll cover this in more depth later in this chapter and in detail in the engagement chapter of Part Two.

The Customer

Puts in: In simple terms, the customer puts in money and referrals to the business.

Takes out: In return for money, the customer expects value. They receive this through a combination of services or products that solve a problem or feed a desire.

The Business

Note – it might seem strange, but it's extremely useful to think of the business itself as a person.

Puts in: The business provides structure and validity, a legal medium through which the other relationships can be served.

Takes out: A business wants and needs profit. Although a business can survive without it, it won't prosper long term or be an enjoyable place to work if it can't turn a profit.

I want you to look at your business through the lens of the Core Four. Are those relationships harmonious or dysfunctional? You will be able to identify the root cause of most issues in your business by breaking it down like this.

For example, looking back on my first business through this lens I can see that my obsession with pleasing customers damaged the rest of the business. I wanted to provide the best service possible but resisted putting prices up in order to keep customers happy. This meant I had to work crazy hours and my fantastic team wasn't getting paid the salaries they deserved.

Tommy Mello, the owner of A1 Garage Doors in the USA, sums up this common situation well in his book *Elevate*. A1 Garage Doors now has a huge team and turns over \$100m per year, but it wasn't too long ago that it was a small and struggling company. Mello accepted that something had to change when he began stealing toilet rolls from his own facility to get by. The realisation that ultimately transformed his business was that he wasn't charging enough to provide a quality service or pay people well. As he puts it, 'I was screwing my team and business to look after my customers.'⁴

The business owner blinded by their pursuit of profit might screw their team and customers to drive up profits. This works for the owner and the business in the short term but as the team and customers get fed up, issues will follow. It can't be avoided – an enjoyable and successful business has to support all of the Core Four in the ecosystem.

Remember, the owner is 25% of the Core Four. As the owner of the business, its future success and the fulfilment of your employees is heavily dependent upon you – no pressure. Keeping yourself focused and motivated isn't as difficult as you might think; you just have to be as clear on what *you* want from the business as you are on your customers and team. If you're not entirely sure, then understanding the Four Stages of Growth will help.

The Four Stages of Growth

When you have the entrepreneurial spirit, you will only be happy when you're involved in business. But this can also make you feel trapped. A trapped entrepreneur is an unhappy entrepreneur. Getting stuck in this way is what led to me burning out, and working with so many other business owners made it clear to me just how widespread this problem is.

This problem is both avoidable and solvable. I created the Four Stages of Growth map to help you avoid

getting trapped and demotivated in your businesses. It is essential that you avoid this trap because you can't have a happy business without a happy leader.

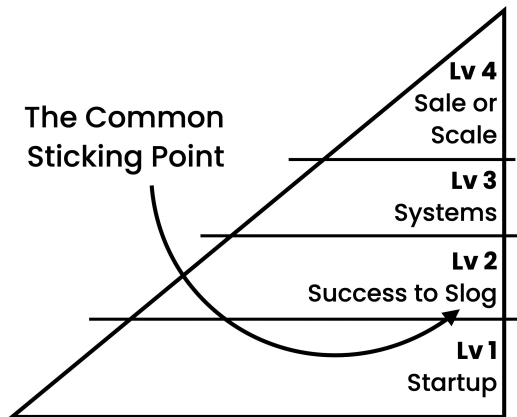
A key principle I teach to the business owners and their teams that work with us is to be sensibly selfish – to prioritise and take good care of yourself so that you can be of most value to others. This is important for everyone in life but especially so for business owners. Your ideas, determination and drive are what you were put on this planet to pursue. When you pursue these things, you create new opportunities that benefit the lives of others.

To be sensibly selfish you have to do a lot of what you love and little of what you dislike. Most business owners love to pursue ideas and bring new things into reality. That's why you can do what most people never could: get a business started. But your business can, and likely will, lead you into a common but predictable trap. When you get stuck there for too long, your ability to be sensibly selfish dissipates. The horrible thing about this trap is that you can't see that you're in it.

You experience the symptoms of being ensnared – you feel stuck, demotivated, your enthusiasm and excitement wanes – but you don't understand why. The trap is of course the business itself. It's the thing that you created, and that's why you can't see it. Because it's what you wanted, you can't understand why you feel this way.

You experience this because what you want and need from the business will change as you and the business grow. These changes occur at a deeper level of consciousness, which is why you experience the symptoms of not feeling fulfilled but don't necessarily understand why. If you have the entrepreneurial spirit, you will only be happy when you pursue growth through business. It's who you are. But feeling stuck in your business will always lead to unhappiness.

The following map will enable you to navigate the journey of growing your business without getting stuck in this trap, enabling you to enjoy the process and be the motivational leader you are meant to be.



There are four levels in the map. Although I provide rudimentary time frames for each level, these serve as just general guidance. The only true way you will know when you are ready to progress to the next level is when you start to feel unfulfilled or less motivated

over an extended period of time (a few weeks or longer). The drop in motivation and lack of fulfilment is your mind's way of telling you it's time to push into new territory – it's acting as a guidance system and warning bell. But if you ignore it for too long, it will actively begin to make you unhealthy and miserable.

Level 1: Startup

The Startup level lasts on average six to twelve months, but can go on longer. In this stage, the owner is:

- Highly motivated by the idea of being their own boss and bringing their vision from concept to reality.
- Willing to sacrifice health and work-life balance in exchange for little more than traction. If you have a product-market fit, your energy levels attract clients and employees.

You know you are at the end of this level when you have achieved a basic level of traction and begin to feel motivated by obtaining a basic level of stability and balance.

Level 2: Success to Slog

The Success to Slog level can last anywhere from two to ten or more years. The tell-tale signs of this stage are:

- A steady base of happy customers and usually a small to medium size team (five to fifty employees).
- People get paid, customers are happy and, initially, so are the owner and team.
- The business and team are heavily reliant on the owner and, although the owner and team enjoy this at the start, as time goes on this can change.

This stage is the sticking point. Eventually, the owner begins to feel constrained by the business and the team constrained by the owner. This should tell all parties involved that it's time to move to the next level.

At the beginning of this stage, everyone has a feeling of winning. Things are working and the work you do makes a difference. Some business owners are genuinely happy at this level for years. You will know that you are reaching the end of this level when success starts to feel like a slog. This happens because business owners usually crave freedom and that's the very reason they start businesses. So, when the business starts to feel 'stagnant' you no longer feel like you are moving towards freedom. You feel like you've created the very thing your business was supposed to help you escape, a job. This is the trap I referred to earlier. Getting stuck here for too long makes you and your team miserable.

Because you have stability at this level, fear will loudly try to talk you out of making any changes. When I work with business owners who face this challenge, the following question always helps put things into context:

‘Where will you be and how will you feel in two years if you don’t change anything?’

If you don’t like the answer you come up with, the only thing you truly have to fear is not changing anything. Moving to the next level is the answer to your problems.

Level 3: Systems

To go from an owner-dependent business to a team-run win/win business you have to move to the level of Systems. They may not excite many business owners, but they benefit all of the Core Four.

Moving to the Systems level will:

- Free the business owner from the repetitive aspects of the business so that you can focus on leadership, ideas and decision making.
- Empower the team to deliver a repeatable service/product as well as make decisions and grow the business.

- Create a more consistent experience for customers and lay the groundwork for a business that can scale.
- Significantly increase the value of the business.

Moving to this level is initially uncomfortable for business owners but it pays off quickly. As the systems start to empower the team and deliver a more consistent service to clients, the owner begins to feel genuinely free. This freedom allows the owner to return to spending more time on what they are good at: ideas, learning, mentorship and leadership.

Level 4: Sale or Scale

Once you have systemised your business, it will naturally open itself up to being sold or scaled. That's a decision that you will have to make at some point, but is worth thinking about now. Knowing yourself, your team and the true motivations behind your business will help you make the right decisions at this level. If you are:

- Mainly purpose-driven, you might want to franchise or licence to reach as many people as possible.
- Mainly people-driven, you might want to explore employee ownership or do something similar to the purpose-driven owner.

- Mainly profit-driven, you'll likely have a clear number you want to sell the business for.

What's important to note is that you can't reactively move through the levels. You can't, for example, after getting fed up with being at the Slog level, skip Systemise and jump to Sale. It's going to take you at least two years to get good systems in place so if you're stuck in Slog, start working on the Systems level stuff now. If you hate systems, work with someone who can help you implement.

SYSTEMS DEEP DIVE: Andrew's story

Andrew is the owner of a tooling business. When I started working with Andrew, his main focus was to give his leadership team the tools and support they needed to get results without burning themselves out. He cared deeply about his team and worried about how much they worked. But as we dug deeper, it became clear that he also wanted to work less himself and enjoy a life without the responsibility of the business. It became evident very quickly that what Andrew and his team needed were systems. A lack of systems based on Andrew's way of doing things meant he was stuck in the business and the team were inefficient due to their reliance on him.

Working together, we built systems for the leadership team that supported goal-setting, budget tracking, decision making, goal prioritisation, personal development and work-life balance. Six months later, both the leadership team and Andrew had transformed.

As these systems replaced much of what Andrew did, he was able to work less and do more of what he loved, such as coaching his leadership team and coming up with new ideas. As all of this happened, business performance increased.

Summary

Your purpose as an entrepreneur is to bring ideas into reality. Your unique combination of vision, drive, hard work and willingness to delay gratification means you achieve things the majority of the population can't fathom. Everybody wins when entrepreneurs are enjoying doing what they are meant to do. You benefit people's lives by creating problems to solutions, you create meaningful employment for people and make a positive contribution to the economy.

The lessons of this chapter will enable you to continue to be a purpose-driven, people-driven or profit-driven entrepreneur without getting stuck and miserable. We have identified the most common sticking points for business owners, why they happen and how to overcome or completely avoid them so that you can be happy doing what you do best.

In the next chapter, we'll find out what the true value your business provides to your current and future employees is, beyond money. By understanding what

your employees really need and what your business can provide, employee motivation and retention will never be a challenge again. You'll see that your business is perfectly positioned to give the modern employee what they desperately crave: happiness.