

CHAPTER 1

"Just Do It"

NUTS AND BOLTS

So you think you're ready to start your own business? Well, you are about take the ride of your life. And that's all it is – just a ride. Know this and you may, just may, survive it.

Business is like travelling to a distant land. You get lost, get conned, spend far more money than you ever expected and the wrong turns often lead to the most rewarding experiences. Ultimately, that's what it's all about – the experience. True entrepreneurs are just weary travellers, wandering a path towards financial freedom, but always living on the cusp of poverty.

Most business books are written by people who have made money. They smirk and they gloat and they preach. They make a fortune writing down their story about how they did it. Sounds plausible, so you may be thinking "crumbs, it's only the third paragraph and already this author has lost the plot," but think about this. If they were so confident in what they were selling, then surely these multi, multi, multi millionaires, who are so clever, would invest in everyone who reads their books? So, why won't they? Because a successful business is not created by a book, or a tape, or a seminar, it is created by you. So you and I, we read their books, we listen to their tapes and watch their videos. Does it help? The statistics clearly say no. You will fail, regardless. So while we're trudging through the trenches using their gospel as our guiding light, these millionaires

sleep like babies knowing full well that there is almost no chance that any of us will actually make it. Meanwhile the rest of us sleep like babies too, waking up every two hours screaming for mommy.

We try-hard entrepreneurs are like four year olds being taught how to swim by a cruel swimming instructor. They give us just enough information and encouragement to keep us afloat in the shallow end, then laugh as we almost drown in the deep end. Then, just as we're about to give up, they encourage us a little more to get us believing in ourselves again and keep us paying for more lessons. We're like Nemo the fish – we just keep swimming, swimming, swimming. Young entrepreneurs are the performing seals of the business world. We put on show after show for our wealthy audience, flapping around in the hope that one of them will throw us a fish. If this sounds familiar, then it's time to let them go. It's time to say "so long, and thanks for all the fish." (Douglas Adams, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy")

Before we begin this journey of business discovery and enlightenment, I'm giving you fair warning right now about something very important. The majority of what you are about to read will almost certainly lead you in exactly the opposite direction to that of everyone else. Please consider this before you continue. I've already made money from you buying this book (although admittedly, not much), so I have nothing to lose by being totally honest. This book is upside down by normal standards. The worst that can happen is that you read it, ignore it and continue down your current path with even more conviction than you had before. I will be happy with that.

Most religions promise that if you dedicate yourself, you will be uplifted to a "higher" state of Nirvana, Heaven or to some

new level of consciousness where all your smiling, dead relatives will be there to irritate you once again. Religions promise that if you study and practice hard enough, then by sheer determination you'll eventually reach this wonderful place. Sounds just like a business book doesn't it? Perhaps that's because business is a religion and vice versa. Either way, you are about to make some serious decisions about your business. Take responsibility for this now. You are the one making the choice.

Now that I've been scratched off the Christmas list of anyone who's ever written a motivational business book, let's put the final nail in the coffin and talk about some of those things that "they" say. "They" say that success breeds success. Honestly? Unless you're born into the Rockefeller family this whole concept is a load of rubbish. My feeling is that the best people to teach you about business are those that are failing dismally at it (like me). Let's face it, if madness is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result then I'm the Mad Hatter reincarnated. Surely business books shouldn't start you doing the right stuff (which is different for every business and every person), but rather stop you doing the wrong stuff (which all of us do)? Here's a practical example. If I had read just one book called "Why You Should Never, Ever do Business With Financial Advisors" it would have been the most valuable, most practical business book I'd ever read. Nobody wrote it, so I had to learn the hard way while "they" laughed on. You think I'm joking? Just wait until you hear some of the stories that follow. There are people out there that will do anything for money.

Next you'll hear "them" talk about how some people have **a natural knack for business**. Again, rubbish. The only thing nature can possibly give you to help you in the

business world is a rich family. You see, next to cousins getting married, business is probably the most unnatural thing on this planet. Like religion and politics, business is a system of complex, man-made processes specifically designed to maintain and manage the population and therefore the economy. It is there to provide unimaginative, fearful people with an income while protecting the wealthy. Yes, business does provide a challenge to the aggressive individualist, but it also prevents truly talented people from getting the attention they deserve. You don't believe me? Pick up the phone and ask an artist, musician or teacher just how easy their life is. The more passionate you are about something innovative or creative, the harder the system makes it for you to make money and therefore survive. Brilliant inventors, determined to make a positive contribution to society are quashed by their monolithic corporate competitors as soon as they pose any threat to the status quo. Wide-eyed entrepreneurs have their greatest ideas snatched by large megalithic corporations with crushing in-house legal teams. So what happens to these amazing people? Their passion turns to frustration, their frustration becomes aggression and their aggression turns them into wankers. Unfortunately, wankers tend to make money and that's where the buck stops – with a business world full of wankers. I don't believe people are born wankers, the system merely makes it okay for them to become wankers, shrouded in a glaringly obvious veil of "no hard feelings mate, this is just business." In fact, the whole business system is like an enormous school for wankers and here we are, eager and willing to pay them a fortune to graduate from it.

Finally "they" will utter those words that bring sheer hatred to the core of my inner being. These are the words that, like the unspeakable name of God, should never be uttered for

fear of being cast into the fiery pit of hell and despair. These are the words that, should you hear them spoken by any human being at any time, turn around and run screaming your prayers for forgiveness. These words are “**positive thinking**”. Be warned! For they can manifest themselves in equally grotesque disguises such as “think positively”, “be positive” and that subtle little demon that rears its ugly head just when you’re at your weakest: “come on, you can do it!”

Let me briefly tell you why positive thinking needs to be flushed down the toilet immediately. Firstly, the word positive implies that there must a negative. Unless we’re talking about magnets, positive and negative have no place in business. There either is, or there is not. “Do or do not, there is no try”(Yoda, “Star Wars”). Secondly, when you’re lying alone in the corner of your room curled up in the foetal position from sheer depression, anxiety and financial stress that nobody on this Earth can possibly imagine and some tosser with a full time job sends a text message to your phone saying “come on, you can do it – think positively!” please make sure there are no sharp objects lying around. It’s a bad, bad business world out there and being positive serves only to blind you to reality. The quicker you can face, accept and experience the fact that you are about to enter hell, the quicker and more readily you will be able to dodge the bullets and stay sane. Luckily for us, the universe is infinite and anything is possible. Everything is perfectly balanced. Upsetting this balance by being “positive” only serves to distance yourself from the “negative”, the understanding of which is critical to any business. Once you’ve accepted evil (and in the business world you’re going to have to), only then can you happily grow out of it and become one of the good guys.

Shivers down your spine yet? Well, I am happy to say that thanks to small and micro enterprises, the business world as we know it is changing for the better. There is a growing community of influential go-getters who are more concerned about the wellbeing of the planet and it's people than they are about protecting their own millions. These people are becoming a force to be reckoned with. As their numbers start to reach critical mass, you will see a new financial and political system begin to break away from the traditional corporate, religious and political structure that has kept us enslaved for so long. Perhaps the word "system" does not do justice to what I'm referring to here. It's more of a place. It is a place where creativity reigns supreme and honesty is no longer just a lonely word^("Honesty", Billy Joel). It is a place that financially rewards those micro business owners who make a positive contribution to our society, not those who are just great at talking bullshit. If you're a fresh faced entrepreneur and you invest in this philosophy now, the returns will be greater than you ever imagined. You don't need a "natural business brain" or always have a "positive attitude" to be successful. I'm glad to say I wasn't naturally good at it – and I'm still not.

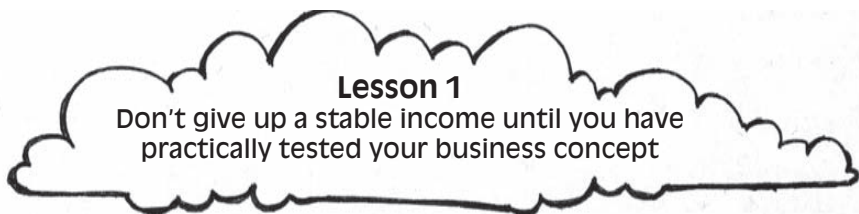
Just last night I caught up with a friend of mine who runs a wonderful business with great potential. He has a website and database of tens of thousands of night clubbers who respond willingly to his every email. He's been running it for years out of sheer passion and determination and last night I saw the look in his face that only another business owner can understand. It's that look that's gone past loneliness, through frustration and into anger. It's that look of someone who's on the edge. One would think it impossible for some wealthy and connected investor not to assist a person like this, yet he is totally alone. Why? It is because the amount of work required to get your own business going is directly

proportional to how badly you want it. If you are a single young person with very few obligations in life then you'll want it now, yet you have all the time in the world. If you have people to support like a spouse, children or an expensive lifestyle that you refuse to give up, then your preparation will need to be carefully planned and calculated before you start. A rocket ship uses most of its fuel just to lift the first few metres off the ground and most of your energy is going to be spent on the groundwork, preparation, research and testing before you see any kind of lift-off.

If you are like most people who spend days, weeks and months researching, testing and preparing for that big day when you will actually get out there and launch your business, then that's fine. Just realise that this preparation will give you less than 5% of what you will ultimately need to make your first business a success. Most of your preparation will be a total waste of time. Just practically test the concept and off you go. Fanning about^(“The Thin BlueLine”) won't make your business successful because it's what you *shouldn't* be doing that matters.

Craig's Lesson

The first lesson in starting your own business is therefore Craig's Lesson:



This is so important because it will quickly help you reach the important conclusion that not only is your business idea shockingly bad, but you won't last five minutes out there on your own. Testing the concept first will stop you quitting your job before it's too late. If you're going to work tomorrow morning, tell the office that you're running late and stay home and make a few cold calls or send a few emails instead. After a few hours you'll quickly realise that you're going to fail faster than you'd ever imagined. Well, at least you had the brains and guts to try it out before forcing your kids to eat two minute noodles for the rest of their primary school lives.

I know only too well that it is just not possible for try-hard entrepreneurs to be patient and it certainly was like that for my friend Craig. Craig worked for one of the wealthiest private banks in the country before the idea hit us like a ton of bricks. I can't remember if it was Craig's idea or not, but the idea was rare and special. The concept was a corporate soccer league, creatively called the Corporate Football League and affectionately known as the CFL. All we needed to do was convince a few companies to part with some cash so their employees could enjoy the beautiful game. The idea was hot, so hot that Craig very quickly left his job to run it full time. His parents frowned, his work colleagues jeered and his girlfriend... we'll let's just say that the relationship didn't last too long after that. None-the-less, Craig put his head down and just did it.

So what should Craig NOT have done? Craig should not have left his day job until he had practically tested the concept. Craig is a very bright guy and he did the required preparation before he resigned - he proved that the concept *could* work. However, this meant absolutely nothing because he didn't test it practically in the real world first. If he had tested the concept, what he would have very quickly discovered was

the amount of *time* it was going to take to make it work. This case is a magnificent example of Lesson One. Even if the business works out, it will take time and time is what you don't have when you can't pay your rent.

After borrowing money from the father of our third partner, we set about printing a whole pile of glossy brochures and launched an advertising campaign in one of the bigger papers consisting of a series of ads on the back page. Craig would come into work and wait for the phone to ring. When calls started coming in, he would take down their contact details and send them a brochure.

Here's how Craig should have tested the business idea practically before he resigned from his job. He should have known:

- i) How many calls we would receive from one execution of the advertisement
- ii) Of those calls, how many companies would be interested enough (or big enough) to want the information brochure
- iii) Of the brochures that were sent out, how long it would take a company to make a decision (and how much chasing up would be required to get them to sign up)
- iv) What proportion would actually manage to a) get management approval and b) get a team together

Within a matter of weeks we knew the answers, but by then it was too late for Craig. The concept was so strong that

we made just enough money in our first league to cover expenses, but Craig took a massive knock in salary and lifestyle. The business had huge potential and if all three of us had stable incomes we could have easily made good money out of it. However, Craig desperately needed revenue so he roped us into a new concept to generate quick bucks. To get started with this "other concept", we had to hire managers to run the league while we were away. Today, the CFL (now under a new name) is worth a couple of million and we don't own a cent of it. Why? Because we were so distracted that those same managers stole our teams and did it for themselves. It was completely and utterly our own fault.

I bet you're dying to know what happened to Craig. Reflecting back on those innocent days, like Pamela Andersen at a lesbian convention two things stand out very clearly. Firstly, Craig is one of the bravest men I've ever known and one can do nothing else but admire him. He looked at this as an adventure and full credit to him. Secondly, IF ONLY we had tested the concept practically, Craig's first business would have been a very rare success story. If only we had just placed one ad in the paper to see how many calls the concept would generate. If only we had calculated how much time it would take a company to get authorisation, without any shadow of a doubt we would be millionaires today. In honour of his bravery, I would like to affectionately call this *Craig's Lesson*. Where is he today? He moved to the coast to join an insurance company. I have no doubt that whatever Craig does he will be successful.

Hopefully this book will have a profound effect on you. So profound, that you'll never pick up another business book again (unless of course it's "How NOT to Start and Run Your Own Business Part II"). I would never doth protest to

reveal to you every possible thing you shouldn't be doing in business, but hopefully I will show you enough of the bad stuff to encourage you to stick to your day job. And, who knows, if just one person reads this and decides to leave the capitalist system altogether and head off to study some great Eastern Philosophy or travel the world, I will consider it a job well done. This world is a challenge, a game, an opportunity to experience the true spectrum of everything life and the universe has to offer. It's a tough ride, a hell of a journey. Some speak of it as a rollercoaster, but it's far worse. There will be times when sweet deceit comes calling^(“Sacrifice”, Elton John) and times when every part of you wants to snap your integrity in half and become just like “them”. It starts with the lowest moments and grows into that amazing feeling of watching your business grow and seeing your staff and customers happy and prosperous... and it all comes out of something you've created! You just can't truly appreciate all this if you had to screw half your local community to get there.

Bruce Springsteen^(“Blood Brothers”) puts it beautifully when he sings:

*Now the hardness of this world slowly grinds your dreams
away, making a fool's joke out of the promises we made.
What once seemed black and white turns to
so many shades of grey, we lose ourselves in
work to do – work to do and bills to pay.
It's a ride, ride, ride and their 'aint much cover.
No one running by your side, my blood brother.*

QUESTION TIME

Why is business like travelling?

Business and backpacking are remarkably similar. Before you start you're faced with many different choices of where to go. You listen to people who've never been there, the travel agent pushes you to take the deal that makes her the most commission and you usually just head in the direction of someone you know. When you arrive, you immediately forget about where you are and start frolicking with fellow travellers you've met along the way. You mingle a bit with the local culture and experience their belief systems (usually to the detriment of your wallet) and come away with a few worthless trinkets and the odd t-shirt. Every now and again you bump into people taking other tours and chat to them about their experiences, but you always seem to end up hanging around, getting drunk and shagging the same people from your own group.

Here is a quick list of the different tours you can take when starting out in your own business.

PACKAGE TOURS

These are for business people who think they can pay a once-off fee, then sit back, relax and have everything run smoothly from then on. Rather than starting a business and blindly diving headlong into the greatest adventure of their lives, these conservative types prefer to pay good money for "courses" (yawn) on the basic foundation of business (it's that 5% I talked about earlier). They learn all kinds of useless stuff about business planning, forecast modelling and cash flow management. Then they spend a fortune on

plush offices with great views, the best IT infrastructure, stunning corporate identities and expensive tax consultants. Finally, when all their certificates are hung neatly on the wall in mahogany frames next to pictures of mountains and rivers with words like “perseverance” and “determination” written underneath them, they finally learn their greatest lesson all – that they should never have paid good money to some unsuccessful git to teach them nothing that really matters.

CULTURE TOURS

At some stage in your life you must have been to one of those cultural villages. You know, those tourist stops in Asia or Africa that are supposed to be authentic, traditional villages of that country. Although there really is an authentic, traditional village just 15 minutes away, unsuspecting travellers still prefer to see the soap opera version. Now, the business equivalent of a cultural village is known as a franchise. Like a cultural village, a franchise comes with a whole entourage of people dancing around you, all pretending to be real. There are lots and lots and lots of nice photos taken, glossy brochures handed out and bone fide chopsticks are purchased from the gift shop. You come away happy, smiling and truly believing you’ve just experienced something deep and meaningful. In reality, however, what you’ve just experienced was about as real and genuine as Microsoft’s marketing department.

ADVENTURE TOURS

Remember those people at school who were always designing and building and creating things? They were the ones eager and ready to pioneer a new and better future for us all. They were practical creators, gifted innovators

and, like most pioneers, as soon as they took their first few steps onto new terrain they ended up with a quiver of arrows in their back. To top it off nicely, that real prick from school that everyone hated ends up making a bloody fortune by age 27. You bump into him in a bar with his super-hot girlfriend and sheepishly say hello as you want to rip his heart out.

People that go on adventure tours start off on the right track. They are fearless, out to experience and create. However, they soon realise that making a difference in this world assumes that the world itself actually wants to be made different. After being hit with wave after wave of conservatism from every angle, our intrepid adventurer becomes despondent and decides instead to live the quiet life, preferably in a beach shack with a nice vegetable patch. Nothing wrong.

I invented the first truly customisable Internet portal in South Africa. It was called WebWatch. Ever heard of it? My point exactly.

CARRIBEAN TOURS

Picture it. Floral shirts, Pina Coladas in sunburned hands and that up-beat plunk-plunk music that we all hate. Now this is the dream life of cocktails and moonlit nights^(The Beach Boys, "Cocomo").

People on Caribbean tours are business owners who seem to spend all their time in bars or meeting in coffee shops. They are positive thinkers (grrrr) who don't stop talking about how great their business is doing or their brand new Ace Ventura fishing gear. They talk and talk and talk and drink and drink and drink and one wonders how on earth

they actually make any money because they never seem to be doing any work. Usually it's because they aren't. These are people who are either heavily in debt, sell insurance or work with multi-level marketing groups. Everything is "just awesome", "absolutely great" or "simply fantastic" and when introduced you are immediately welcomed into their open arms as the new best mate. They genuinely can't wait for you to meet their family of equally happy people. When it comes to business however, positive people should be avoided at all costs. The best advice I can give you is to quickly tap into their extremely wide network of "acquaintances". Once you've got what you need from them, cancel your policy and avoid their calls.

ECO TOURS

Watch how many people justify their reason for shafting you with some profound reason about looking after the planet or the environment or some kind of deep religious cause. They always come up with some uplifting motive like saving the Persian Rain Beetle or how they are desperately protecting some unpronounceable Incan village from an imminent earthquake. By telling you this, somehow it then becomes okay to charge you three times the normal price for whatever it is they're selling. Oh yes, and by the time you buy from them, the Persian Rain Beetle has become extinct and they've moved onto the Bottle Blue Rainbow Moonfish.

CONTIKI TOURS

This is the entrepreneur who has just left school or university. He can (and will) change the world. Usually males in their early twenties, they are convinced that by having their own business, this will entice every woman on the road to sleep

with them. Every cent they earn is spent on boozing and pizza and they live from hand to mouth. Amazingly, these guys will often deliver a great product and a good price, but nobody really trusts them because of their inexperience. Usually all they ask for in return is a case of beers and to use your spare room for a week or two if their landlord kicks them out. They are fresh faced, bright and have not yet been corrupted by the business world. Please throw them a bone from time to time – you'll be doing the business world a service by helping these guys out. Heck, I should know, I was one of them. (Come to think of it, I still am).

NO TOUR

Ever caught up with an old friend who has started a design business, but has never designed anything before in their life? Or met someone who claims that it was divine intervention that caused her to buy 500 revolving button magnets from a magazine to sell to family and friends? Now and again you will come across someone in business who has absolutely no idea what they are doing, but because they did a three day course on it and have a certificate they are now industry specialists. They have no business acumen what so ever and the only thing they really can do is make you feel better about just how little you know. Usually you find these people flogging corporate gifts like gold clock pens, golf balls that whistle when you clap and memory sticks in the shape of fire engines.

What kind of person starts their own business?

Conventional psychology would probably categorise these people as risk takers. However, the reality is that most people start their own business because they get so sick and

tired of being told what to do by their prick of a boss named Dave that anything is better than corporate hell. People like us hate having jobs and that's all there is to it. What many new business owners don't realise is that Dave will soon end up being up there with Sister Mary compared to the integrity and moral standing of the people they are about to meet. However, we shall never become corporate monkeys fighting for peanuts thrown to us by big businesses! So we get clever and start a business of our own. And what happens? We end up fighting for peanuts thrown to us by big businesses.

Is it risky to start a business?

Again, conventional wisdom (including the Oxford Dictionary) defines entrepreneurs as risk takers. That is actually not true, or if it is, then you most certainly do not want to be an entrepreneur. The most consistently successful business people are the ones that minimise their risk almost to the point of eliminating it altogether. I'll go into this in more detail later. The point is that if you want to be an entrepreneur you should not consider yourself a risk taker. Rather think of yourself as a mop, about to be plunged into something dirty and murky then used by everyone to shine their expensive floors. Study these floors very carefully because they're going to be the foundation of your future success.

So what actually is an entrepreneur?

The word "entrepreneur" is a clever term used to make certain people feel special and different about themselves. By falling into this category you are no longer part of "them" and are now part of us. In reality, entrepreneurs are

financially successful business owners. As I sit here I am not an entrepreneur. Richard Branson is an entrepreneur because he is rich. Joe Smith who has just started selling candlesticks to homeless people is not an entrepreneur. Now Luigi Digemalltopolis who owns the corner café while running a sandwich delivery service for large office parks most certainly is an entrepreneur. He may be all ruff and rugged to look at, but that's not because he's poor, it's because he has six kids back home aged between three and five.

I should mention here that some people / books / idiots out there will list patience as an important trait for an entrepreneur. Let's just say that a patient entrepreneur is about as common as a humble Frenchman. Well, I suppose true entrepreneurs with millions in their back pocket can afford to be as patient as they like, but you get my drift.

What do I need to know before I go out and start my business?

There are only three critical skills you need to run a business:

- i) You need to be good at relationships
- ii) You need to know how to use Microsoft Excel (the only decent piece of software those thugs ever made)
- iii) You need to know how to type

If you're not good with people, here's how you learn. Put the kids to bed, tuck in your spouse and stick on a pair of cool pants with a hot top. Drive to the other side of town where nobody knows you and start conversing with at least five members of the opposite sex. Come home and shiver with

disbelief until you fall asleep. Do this every night for two weeks. Apart from getting every piece of confidence you'll ever need for the business world, you'll quickly realise that your spouse isn't such a bad person after all.

If you're not good with Microsoft Excel, just mess around with it until you are. Draw up a few monthly projections together with some anticipated turnover figures. You'll get it totally wrong, but that's okay because it will help you dream and dreaming is what keeps you sane in this game.

Typing is one of the best skills I ever learned. If you can't do it, don't waste your money on a course. Get one of those keyboard colour charts and stick it on the wall above your PC, right underneath those pictures of the mountain and the river. Don't look at your fingers (look at the chart) and type the following sentence: "the quick brown fox jumps over a lazy dog." Keep doing this over and over and over again. Either you'll quickly learn to type or you'll go mad. Both are equally necessary to run a business.

Oh yes, if you don't have a computer, then get one.

How do I decide what type of company I should form?

Honestly, nobody will give a flat chested Whinney what kind of company you have, so just go with the cheapest option. Spending a fortune on a Pty Ltd. to enhance credibility, importance and stability is about as pointless as Roseanne Barr's exercise bike. All you need is a bank account and the rest is incidental. Trust me, when you're finally making enough money for the type of company to make a difference, you'll be able to pay someone to sort it out for you.

My cousin wants to come on board with me in my new business. How should we structure our agreement?

This could turn out to be a complex, detailed and intricate piece of legal negotiation that needs to be carefully constructed into a delicate web of contractual agreements. Luckily it isn't. Just tell them to sod off. Just because they didn't have the balls to leave their job and go out on their own until you decided to do it doesn't mean every lumberjack and his fat plumbing sister-in-law has to come along with you. This is your adventure and besides, you'll meet plenty of people to share your trip with later.

I know you will have a strong urge to share your idea with a mate and go in it together. The technical term for why you do this is Risk Aversion (which is fancy Latin for "shit scared"). What this really means is that you want someone to hold hands with when you end up in jail. Of course "they" will tell you that partnerships are wonderful because of things like "synergies" and how "one and one make eleven." Get yourself a calculator and do the maths. You'll quickly work out that one and one do NOT make eleven. Now plug into your calculator the fact that your future partner knows just as much as you do, like this: $2 \times 0 = ?$. If you still don't get it, I'll make it really simple: $2 \times \text{idiot} = \text{two idiots}$.

I once started a great business with a partner. It was my idea and he thought it was equally brilliant. We both had full time jobs and he did nothing while I did all the work. I told the lazy bastard to get stuffed and he swore at me. If I hadn't got out when I did, I would have 50% less of my company than I currently do. Considering that I now have only 65%, I would have lost control. This is why you

need to be very wary about forming business partnerships. Starting out with only half your company is like having sex with half a woman. Some would argue that it's better than nothing, but I disagree.

What about a husband and wife team?

The divorce rate is well over 50%. Need I say more?

So how do I leave my husband / wife out of it?

Rather get divorced now before they take half the company with them. A mate of mine has his own business. His wife refused to work with him (she didn't even work at all) and he built it all himself. Now he's having trouble with his marriage. I casually mentioned to him that if he gets divorced, he will effectively lose control of his business. So he is still married (unhappily) today. Rather live in the freedom of hell than in a heaven you have to share with the devil!

Before I get the chicks all up in arms about this, I understand that in many cases the woman will support the man in other ways like looking after the kids and so on. Therefore, of course she deserves her 50% of the business when you ultimately get divorced. This is precisely why you shouldn't get married in the first place.

And as for your wife wanting get into business and following her dreams, always encourage her. Women tend to be better small business owners than men for some reason and that way you can be on the receiving end when the divorce

procedures eventually start. It is vital that all partnerships are a win-win situation for everyone.

Have there ever been any successful husband and wife teams?

Absolutely, I have seen crackerjack couples working together. When they're not ripping each other's throats out then one and one can even make a hundred and eleven. The key phrase here is "playing to each other's strengths." The best couples I've witnessed create a synergy whereby sales and relationships are coupled with really good fulfilment and business thinking. One keeps the customers happy while the other makes the business work. Is it worth giving up 50% of your company? I'll leave that for you to decide.

I have a great name for my company. How do I find out if it's taken?

If you've spent any time at all thinking about a name for your company, then call your old boss Dave and beg him like a cheap date to take you back. If you worry about trivial things like a company name, then having your own business just isn't for you. Choosing a name for your company is quick and easy. If your name is Martin Squinkelderm, then call your company Squinkelderm Consulting. When you eventually make enough money, the name change process will be a great PR tool, not to mention a nifty excuse to invite your business colleagues to a name change party where you can get them drunk and convince them to take an extra thousand designer stationary pads.

If you really do insist on selecting the perfect name (and you probably will), the names you want won't be available

anyway. Alas, all you'll end up with is number eight from your list of eight. Looking back, some of my favourite company names were last on that list – Blue Heeler was one example. Hey, did you know that Blue Heelers are Australian cattle dogs??? Well, nobody knew (or cared) back then either. Now do you see my point?

They say that most businesses fail in the first few years. Is this true?

Understand that your first business WILL go noddy. Say that only one out of 10 businesses makes it over a three year period. Now that lonely one either succeeds because it has family backing or the owner is extremely well connected (or both). Those even fewer success stories that are left after the rich, connected folk have taken their share are reserved for entrepreneurs like me who have failed at least 10 times before.

Sorry, but your first business will be a dud.

How do I go about designing a cool logo for my business cards?

You just don't get it, do you? Nobody cares that the shape of your "T" in Travis' Travel is actually the ancient Chinese symbol of purity and light. When you're out there in the big bad business world, the only thing people will care about is how they can make money out of you. For months my most successful business didn't even have a name, never mind a logo or business cards. We were just too busy selling to worry about that stuff. Remember, success isn't about your window dressing, it's about YOU.

If you still insist on a logo (and you will) then get a pro to do it. People always think their logo looks really cool, when it is actually an embarrassment to all that is beautiful and artistic in the world. Follow these two simple rules of logo design. 1) NEVER design a logo yourself and 2) NEVER let a family member or distant relative do it for you. Otherwise you will never get the truth about how bad it really is. I remember when a mate of mine came to me asking for help on his CI (which is fancy Latin for “Corporate Identity”). He showed me this abomination with arrows and gold bars and stuff. In cases like this, it is better to put these poor sods out of their misery and just shoot them.

What is a strap line?

A strap line is that one all encompassing line that tells people what your company stands for, like Nike – “Just Do It”. It is the essence of your business. It is that one captivating pearl of wisdom that summarises your concept and vision into a single strand of finite simplicity. Does a small business need one? Not at all. However, I would venture to say that a good strap line is more useful than a fancy logo, especially if you have a business that is regularly exposed to the public. For example, painting your moving van or putting up a big sign outside your shop can really generate interest. Few things in life are more refreshing than a truck for a pet cemetery embracing the words: “A fitting end for your dead best friend.”

Again, my recommendation is that unless you’re extremely clever (and you’re not), don’t try coming up with a strap line yourself. Strap lines are usually terrible. There are some great ones though, like Debonaires Pizza – “We Deliver Smartly” (they deliver in natty bow ties), Standard bank

– “Simpler Better Faster” and my favourite rip-off of Spur Steakhouses: Sperm – “A Taste for Life!”

Offices. I need offices. How do I choose the location, furniture, etc.?

Your office is wherever you want it to be. I’ve met people with offices in penthouses, Manhattan style high rises and beautiful loft apartments. For some reason though, they all insisted on coming to me, so they were probably lying through their teeth. With mobile technology at your fingertips your office is always with you. Otherwise just pick the cheapest, dustiest corner you can find, make sure it’s far enough away from your bedroom and stick in a desk and a phone. Wherever I lay my laptop, that’s my office.

Some of the most successful offices have been run out of holes in the ground. The costs are low and the taxman won’t dare come near because of the smell. I remember visiting some shocking offices owned by an optometrist group. Trust me, these guys had cash, but their offices were terrible. Their desks were piled high with files, paper and rubbish. I could swear that they paid some kind of interior de-decorator to make it look like that deliberately. I must say, when it comes to being compliant with medical law I don’t blame them for doing anything to avoid attention. Medical law is not dissimilar to the layer of filth found in your toenails after tramping barefoot through a sewer after a torrential rainstorm following a series of deaths caused by diseased rats.

Can I run a successful business from home?

Running a business from home is the best thing I ever did. That was until my girlfriend living with me at the time ran off with a used car salesman. It's a touch and go trade off between balancing traditional family values with your deep inner desire to succeed where all others have failed. Hmm, no doubt about it. Work from home... alone.

So is there anything that I MUST do to get my business started?

Those sweatshop supporting bastards at Nike stole the greatest line in the world – Just Do It. This one line epitomises everything I'm trying to say in this book. Just do it - get out there and start bringing in revenue. Fall on your arse, get taken for a ride and get hammered from every direction, it's the only way you'll ever fail your way to success. Reading books like this may help reduce your risk a little and give you inspiration, but at the end of the day this is your ride. Remember, business is like travelling and we intrepid adventurers don't want our experience to be all nicely organised and mapped out for us before we leave. Do we?

I'll be more specific. You can spend weeks doing all the fun stuff like design your logo, think up a really nice name and get cool offices. This is all dreaming which is healthy in moderate doses, but this kind of spending of both time and money will be detrimental to your business. Some wise fellow once said that "life is what happens while you're busy making other plans"^(John Lennon). If you're spending your time window dressing, you are neglecting the most important part of your business – the business. Business / sales /

customers / contracts / clients are all interchangeable terms for what is essentially the same thing – money in the bank. Without money coming in, you have no business. Make sense? Good. Now stop your mental debate about whether you should call your company “Edwards Eggbeaters” or “Ed’s Eggs” and go out there and SELL THE DAMN EGGS!

SUMMARY - THE DON'TS

- **Don't go into business to succeed financially.** Before you lock me up and carry me away to a place with barred windows and lobotomy experiments (and no, I'm not talking about the Institute of Financial Advisers), think about this logically. The chance of you making money on your first venture is practically zero, of this I've already provided irrefutable proof. Therefore, rather go into your first business appreciating, no, EMBRACING this fact. Go into it like a child going into a swimming pool for the first time. You're too bewildered by the experience to realise that you're drowning, but someone always fishes you out before it's too late. If you do this for the experience, then you can't lose!
- **Don't take too much notice of what “they” say.** “They” will tell you all kinds of things, motivating you to go against your natural will. If you head off and do your own thing you will lose money, that's a given so you may as well do it your way. Some people you speak to will uplift you and some will bring you down, including your family and friends. You will fail in many ways, but rather make your own mistakes than follow someone else and make theirs for them. You will learn faster this way.

- **Don't make excuses.** You'll hear them from other people and you'll be hearing from your own mouth. Excuses coming from others are irritating. Excuses coming from you are unacceptable.
- **Don't waste your money on business books and tapes and stuff.** I use the word "tapes" instead of "CD's" here to make a point. They're really just old fashioned door to door sales talk. Yes, you will learn some interesting stuff every now and again, but it's less about the things you should be doing and more about the things you *shouldn't* be doing. For a person just starting out on their own business, most of what you hear won't make any sense anyway. The motivation will keep you going for another day or two, but that's about it.
- **Don't defend yourself to people who don't believe in you.** People who give you a hard time have good reason to – it's because they are absolutely right. Instead of defending yourself, rather just agree with them so you won't feel so sheepish when you eventually come crawling back. The old saying is "don't burn your bridges" and I agree. Like Craig, who worked successfully at a bank and left his job to run a football league, it was one of the boldest moves I've ever seen anyone do. Of course his work colleagues ragged him for it. It didn't work out and he probably can't face those same people today. The best thing you can do is laugh along with them. Tell them you'll be back in six months and could they please let you work for them when you return.
- **Don't expect your friends and colleagues to understand you.** The only reason people don't go

out and do their own thing is out of fear. Fear of the failure rate, their fear for you if you fail, fear of how they will feel if you succeed. They'll tell you that you're crazy to give up your security on some crazy quest to find that mysterious paradise. Paradise is a lie. It's a fantasy we create about people and places as we'd like them to be ("I've never been to me", Charlene). A better alternative is to discuss your dreams and ambitions only with your plants, your pet or some inanimate object you have a strong bond with.

- **Don't spend money starting out.** Business is about money so don't spend any unless there's a guaranteed ROI (that's fancy Latin for "Return on Investment"). There is a bizarre quotation that goes like this: "you have to spend money to make money." As any true entrepreneur will tell you, those words are spoken by salesmen, not businessmen. Try not to spend money on anything until you are absolutely certain you will get a financial return. Everything you need to learn will come from:
 - i) The Internet
 - ii) The school of hard knocks
 - iii) The hearts and minds of others you'll meet on your journey

- **Don't bother with window dressing.** Business cards, office space, logos and cool names mean very little. Rather invest money in the most important asset you have – yourself. If it's a statistical certainty that your first business will fail, then it's an even bigger statistical certainty that you will get into a cash flow crisis. When you can't pay your overheads at the end of the month, you are going to regret

the day you spent that small fortune to ensure your entire office is Feng Shui compliant.

- **Don't be normal.** If you go out there to fit into the crowd and be like everyone else, then it's fair to say that you'll probably end up being just like everyone else – a financial failure. Because everyone else has or will fail, following the herd simply means you're the first to be eaten from behind. If you follow people who have been in business for some time, remember that they already have a head start on you. Something in your approach, offering or personality must be different or you'll sink very quickly. If you're going to hang around with anyone, hang around with people who are failing dismally, but have compatible businesses which you can leverage together. Support each other, it's the only support you're going to get.
- **Don't share your business with anyone.** Giving away equity means there is another person you have to constantly negotiate with and another person to share the spoils of your hard labour. Fight to keep the maximum shares in your business. You must be the one to take the risk and you must be the one to reap the rewards. As things pick up, you are going to get offers left, right and centre. Be careful of these "offers" though – they could lead you right back to Dave.
- **Don't read business papers.** Business reports and newspapers are for people who think they know about business. Firstly, what goes on in business and what gets published are two very different things. Secondly, only the bigger businesses get written about and the way a big business is run compared

with the way your business will be run are as different as Sonny and Cher.

- **Don't get caught up in someone else's dream.** Professionals like doctors, accountants and other white collar yuppies have a much greater chance of being successful. This is because they are backed by powerful associations who regulate the industry extremely closely. Unless you're willing to study for a decade, agree to play ball for the rest of your life and live on their terms, rather get your own ball and make your own rules. The same goes for any business where you become instrumental in making other people's dreams come true. It's fine to buy into someone's ambition temporarily for learning purposes, but make sure that you have your own, preferably complimentary agenda. Be open about it and work to grow yourself and the other party together.
- **Don't for a moment think you can't do it.** Even if it's your 17th attempt, anybody can start and run a successful business. I know, I've seen it. You'd be amazed at how many great businesses out there are run by complete idiots. If they can do it, you can do it. Just do it.