

Is Your Business On A Journey? Or Are You Stuck On The Treadmill?

The Business Journey. Is it a Lie?

I have read many books by successful entrepreneurs over the years that describe their path to success. Invariably the most common description that they use to describe their route to the top is as a Journey. Whether it has been a 'rewarding journey', an 'epic journey' or a 'challenging journey' (all real examples), there it is, so are the rest of us who are struggling, missing a trick?

The use of 'Journey' as a description is so wide-spread that it is also the most common word used by journalists to describe an entrepreneur's path to success.

It is such a vague term and tells us very little about **HOW** we could be successful in any meaningful detail.



The Gap Between Aspiration and Reality

This unfortunately leaves aspiring entrepreneurs and first-time business owners with the impression that they can follow the same vague path and simply replicate the same steps in order to achieve the same results. This is rarely, if ever, true.

The real everyday challenges that are faced by most businesses make the same results almost impossible to achieve.

Worse still is the idea that you can buy a book by a prominent and successful billionaire, hand it to your employee or unpaid intern and tell them to copy the various steps of the described 'journey' and achieve the same level of success in a very short period of time.

(You may laugh, but I have seen this done with a book that described a 50-year climb to the top. The expectation was to achieve millions within 6 months!)

The Search For Shortcuts

Our appetite for hard work seems to be dulled by the idea that there are shortcuts and a way of achieving riches easily by embarking on a 'journey'. Many businesses spend a lot of time and energy looking for these and finding them to be a myth.

There are no real shortcuts, but there are ways to avoid making the challenge of running a successful business from being even harder. There are also lots of ways to optimise performance and the effectiveness of business activities.

The Treadmill Experience

Even without wasting energy and resources, most new businesses find themselves in a precarious position, where no matter how hard they push forwards, they remain too close to failing. The weight of challenges that work against them are ready to overwhelm them if they stop or slow down for a short period of time.

This is the reality for most businesses. Their 'journey' looks and feels more like being on a never-ending treadmill. The only chance they have is to outpace the factors that constantly work against them.

It is not just new businesses that get stuck on the treadmill. Many experienced business owners and company directors also wonder if the 'journey' is a myth. They find periods of time when things work and times when the business fails to perform to their expectations. They too find themselves on the treadmill, while the idea of a journey of progressive increases that build towards huge and unimaginable rewards starts to look like fanciful stories from the lucky few. Unfortunately, it doesn't take long before many experienced business owners and professional directors simply stop believing that the 'journey' is even possible.

I am not saying these books and success stories are not valuable. Far from it. They are essential reading for business owners as well as those who are responsible for someone else's business. I am saying however that when reading them, they should inspire you to forge your **own** path, knowing that the seemingly impossible can be achieved.

Almost none of these tomes provide detailed step-by-step guides. Why would anyone give away commercial secrets? And which billionaire heads of multinational or global companies still get involved in the nitty-gritty of basic company operations anymore, let alone know them well enough to describe them as part of a synopsis of their lives?

Most of these 'journeys' take decades, during which time many crucial things change, making a lot of the actions and opportunities obsolete.

Richard Branson recently said that there is no secret formula to success, just hard work.

I couldn't agree more.

Success comes as a result of countless small proactive actions that are continuously executed, that are all designed to incrementally move your business closer to achieving its goals.

Simply put, if you consistently do the right things to achieve your results, you should achieve your results.

At the same time you have to avoid errors that can reverse your progress.

This could be described in retrospect as a journey. What is missing is detail and the ever-changing external factors, especially the world outside of the business, that play such a huge role in the success or failure of your enterprise.

Many of these act as a drag on your business, that need to be outpaced in order to avoid them bringing any progress to a halt or even reversing it.

These include (but are not restricted to) rent, rates, taxes, bills, professional fees, compliance, competitors, and changing market trends.

These all work against the business meaning that you have to work harder just to stay ahead of them.

Journey or Treadmill?

The result is that your journey starts to look more like you are running on a fast treadmill that can't be turned off. If you stop for even a short time, you find yourself going backwards at great speed!

One of my contacts recently described running a business as constantly having run faster than the lions that are chasing you. It is a valid analogy of the reality of being in business these days and many of the people that I describe this analogy to do indeed feel this way.

The 'Treadmill' experience results in one of the most common complaints that I hear from business owners, that they are tired, but can't stop because they fear what will happen if they take a break or even take a little time off for themselves.

If you know someone who feels this way, they are almost certainly stuck on the treadmill.

There is hope for anyone who feels that they are stuck on a treadmill and some of the answers can indeed be found in the books that have been written by successful entrepreneurs.

To a **Large Extent** the use of the word 'Journey' gives away some of the clues to the 'secrets' of success. These secrets can be found in almost every book that is written on success in any field, but are clearly advocated in business. If you find yourself on the Treadmill instead of the Journey, these are some of the 'secrets that you may have missed.

Secret No. 1 Have Clear Goals

What is the purpose of a journey without a clear destination? Where do you focus your efforts if you lack something solid to aim for?

When you set out to get somewhere without knowing where you are going, you simply end up getting lost. Many business owners report feeling lost. Does that sound as defined and definite as the kind of journey that successful entrepreneurs describe? No.

Without a destination, you have a treadmill, where the purpose is just to keep running while it continually tries to drag you backwards. A treadmill has no destination, but a journey does.

Are your goals clear?

Are they realistic?

Are they achievable?

Secret No.2 Planning

When a millionaire or billionaire businessman describes the 'journey' that brought them their financial success, the implication is that they started with a plan, however vague, and diligently followed the path. This puts their efforts in a totally different perspective to a business that has no defined plan.

Roles and tasks can be assigned at the planning stage and assessed for their logic and ability to achieve the right results, before the business takes on any significant costs.

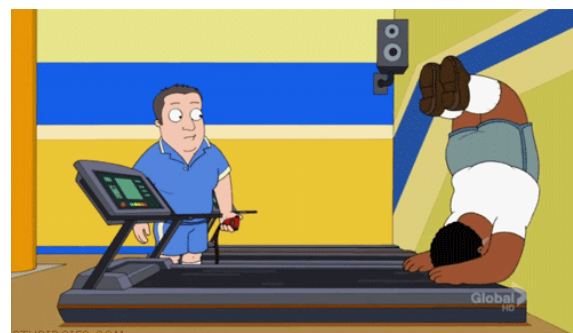
"The first business that you start without a plan, teaches you that your next business needs to start with a plan!"

Failing to plan can be costly. The temptation to simply jump in and start work is just too great for many business owners.

Can you picture what happens when you try to get on a treadmill that is already running at high-speed? (If you struggle to picture the result, then feel free to consult YouTube for a huge volume of examples)

It can be funny to watch when it is happening to someone else, but when it is your business, your livelihood and your pain, would you really do it?

What about your friends and loved ones, you'd want them to think carefully before they try to get on a fast moving treadmill, wouldn't you?



It is little wonder that the absence of a business plan is one of the big reasons that businesses will fail.

Following a well-thought-out plan is a journey. Jumping in and trying to work things out as you go is the treadmill.

Which have you chosen?

Secret No.3 You Don't Have to Make the Journey Alone

Would you deliberately set out on a journey that will take you years to complete, just on your own? You may say no now, but thousands of businesses start this way every year.

Business can be one of the loneliest and hostile environments to operate in and most first-time business owners start on their own. This leaves them trying to catch-up and create all of the relationships that their business needs, while they are actively trading and trying to fulfil all of the new roles that the business requires.

The result is that the business lacks many of the services and skills that it needs in order to be fully capable of dealing with the realities of trading and as a consequence will struggle to come close to fulfilling its commercial potential.

If you were to sit down and make a list all of the people that you need to start a business, including key contacts, potential partners, allies, supporters, suppliers and your first customers, you should have a nice group of 'travelling companions' to accompany you on your **journey**.

The tasks and duties that you identified at the planning stage need to be carried out by experienced and capable people. Your business needs them in order to be successful. You owe it to your sanity to involve these talents from the **start**.

If you started your venture without this list, you are probably feeling a little lonelier that you would like. The business treadmill beckons for anyone that hasn't got their team together.

Most 'self-made' millionaires and billionaires have made use of advisors to help them to achieve their success.

Their team is their most valued business asset.

Many of the most successful entrepreneurs have also benefitted from coaches and mentors that have helped them to achieve the ultimate levels of success.

Secret No.4 You Should Know Your Customers Before They Know You

Are the people who would be interested in your offering, the same people that you want to sell to? Many businesses struggle because they haven't properly identified their target market. They are on the treadmill, often getting lucky when a real customer finds them.

The better you know the people that you are aiming to deliver your products and services to, the more equipped you are to make them your customers.

This takes thought and research. Put yourself in their shoes. What would it take for you to want to be a customer of your business? This is just the start.

You will also benefit from testing and listening to feedback from your target demographic.

You need to prepare your business to attract large enough volumes of high quality customers.

For this to be possible, you have to know your potential customers very well. You may even get to know WHO they are, enabling you to make the first positive move.

Do you know how many potential customers exist for your business? Is the number in the hundreds, thousands or millions? The earlier that you know what they want and how to give it to them effectively, the sooner you can start to make money.

If you stay in tune with what your customers want and can keep delivering what they want and need, your business will carry on making money.

Secret No.5 Win Before You Even Start

If you know exactly what you want to achieve, how you will do it, with a perfect team and a ready-made pool of customers, all you have to do is **perform the plan** to the best of your ability and ensure that it can achieve your goals in practice. You may have to improvise at times in order to stay on course, but this will normally create opportunities to innovate and achieve more than you originally dreamed of.

These 5 elements make your success almost inevitable. It is still hard work, but it is focussed on always moving forward and executing a high-performing plan.

The difference that you get from starting your own 'journey' makes the hard work worthwhile.

You create opportunities, rather than waiting for them.

You rely on research rather than guesswork.

You act, rather than react.

You create dialogue rather than waiting for the phone to ring.

You make the plan work rather than wonder what to do next.

You test your plans and evaluate the scale of your results.

You work towards your vision and goals.

You create income, rather than hoping that it will eventually find you.

You receive feedback from all of the members of your support team and use it to create a stronger business.

You make friends from your customers.

You reach levels of achievement that you never dreamed were possible.

That is your journey. Good luck.

We can help you to make the switch from the business treadmill to the big journey. Take the first step and get in contact today.

SALT Business Growth have many years of in-depth expertise in this area and can help to guide you through the process of creating your own successful business journey.

The high-performance methods that we demonstrate and train are ethical and designed help almost every business to fulfil its ultimate potential.

While we are well-known for helping our customers to make more money, it is our ability to help our clients to shape and successfully execute effective strategies that makes a lot of the big achievements possible.

Learn how to create a comprehensive business plan that comprehensively describes the journey to the success in advance. Learn how a complete business plan can feed every area of the business.

Become proficient in business and strategic planning that ultimately leads to sales and increases your level of new customers, income and profit.

This is all part of our mission at SALT to cut the high rates of SME business failure through directly increasing the ability for companies to become more successful.



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