

The All-in System for Unstoppable Success

# IT'S GO TIME



Build the Business and Life  
You Really Want

# JILL McABE

# Advance Praise

“Jill McAbe's *It's Go Time* translates cutting-edge ideas about how the mind and brain work into everyday language and pragmatic usable strategies. By using concrete examples & exercises, you will get firsthand insight into how to shape your goals & behaviour to start accomplishing more.”

—**Wil Cunningham**, professor of Psychology, University of Toronto

“If you are looking for a nurturing and practical guide to your growth journey in life and business, read Jill McAbe's *It's Go Time*. Jill's well-grounded insights and advice land with authenticity and conviction for they stem from a lifetime of reflection and personal experience.”

—**Dr. A. R. (Elango) Elangovan**, distinguished professor of Organizational Behaviour,  
Peter B. Gustavson School of Business

“Useful to the extreme. *It's Go Time* is not only a must-read for anyone building an expertise-based business, it's a must-read for anyone who wants to fall in love with their life.”

—**Giovanni Marsico**, CEO/founder of Archangel and executive producer of the  
Emmy-award winning documentary, *Dreamer*

“A must read for anyone who wants to transition from having a job to owning a business. Jill McAbe's timing is prescient. The Corona Virus pandemic has taught us that we need to seize every opportunity to realize our dreams. With *It's Go Time*, Jill charts a course for how to do exactly that with an insight about how my brain works that opened up doors I didn't know were there.”

—**Pam Prior**, bestselling author of *Your First CFO: The Accounting Cure for Small Business Owners* and CFO to 7- and 8-figure entrepreneurs

“*It's Go Time* is one of the most comprehensive books I have ever read on growing my business. Jill McAbe covers everything from finding your purpose to putting money in your bank account. If you want to wake up excited to run a business that you love every day, buy this book!”

—**Shawna McKinley Robins**, CEO of Kaia Health and Wellness, creator of  
Irresistibly Healthy, and bestselling author of *Powerful Sleep*

“After decades of searching for my purpose, I became resigned to the fact I might not find mine. Then, I read Jill McAbe's *It's Go Time*. Jill combines recent neuroscience, business acumen, and a great deal of wisdom into a system that works. I created my dream business in a matter of months following this system. If you are ready for a better business and life, read this book!”

—**Libby Wildman**, speaker, founder of The Woman's Entrepreneur Collective and  
creator of Liminal Escapes

“Do you feel like you are meant for more in life? If so, this book might be the key to helping you achieve your full potential. Jill McAbe expertly delivers some of the most actionable insights on how to build an expertise-based business while making your life work the way you want it to. Apply the system you learn from *It's Go Time*, and you'll be unstoppable!”

—**Chris Winfield**, co-founder and CEO at Super Connector Media

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To my CTO and best friend, Samantha.  
Thank you for making writing this book the most  
natural thing I could have done with my time. (Finally!)

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# Preface

When I first had the idea to write a book, I expected it would be a straightforward process. I planned to write a book about the science of achieving seemingly impossible goals in which I would share little-known techniques for upgrading your business and life.

When I sat down to write that book, however, I had a case of imposter syndrome. Self-doubt washed over me. Who was I to write such a book? I was standing on the shoulders of giants and thought that it was their work people should be reading.

But the more I met and spoke with scientists and discussed their work, the more I saw their delight in my stories about how their fields of knowledge dovetailed with other disciplines and translated into practice. Some of the researchers I spoke with started calling me a ‘science translator,’ which helped me realize the distinctiveness of my ability to integrate theory into practice.

As the years went by, I continued to read inspiring research papers and books, yet I never read one that entirely taught me how to achieve what I wanted: To create a service-based business with a great quality of life. So I continued to formulate my success system like a mad scientist might, a dash of this and a sprinkle of that, until I crafted a recipe that was just right for me.

After a few more years of trial and error, thinking, and tinkering, it was time to admit to myself, I had something distinctive to throw into the ring. And, something that worked.

But timing is everything. I released the e-book version of *It's Go Time* on March 12, 2020, the day the record-breaking COVID-19 stock market crash began, now known as Black Thursday. I shook my head at the irony. As we were all being locked down, I released a book titled, *It's Go Time*.

I've trained myself to turn bad news into good. I used the year that followed to continue building my business and the businesses of my clients. It ended up being a record year for many of us. I also used the time to return to the book and contextualize it for a post-COVID-19 economy, which is now more predominantly online than ever before.

After so many years in the making, I would love to hear what you think of *It's Go Time*. If you have an “aha” moment, a question, or a cool story that results from following this system, I hope you will let me know. As you follow this all-in system, my wish for you is that you'll realize new goals, dreams, and potential you didn't know you had in you.

—Jill McAbe

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# Acknowledgments

When I was ready to write this book, I expected it to be a solo project. I pictured myself tucked away in a snowed-in chalet, writing day and night for weeks on end until I completed my manuscript. It was nothing like that.

After two years of attempting to write this book on my own, I clued into the truth of the matter: Writing a book that you hope will make a difference, like doing anything of substance, is a team effort. That's when I hired my book coach, Dr. Angela Lauria, to help me clarify my ideas and decide which parts of my story I needed to share. Angela also insisted I use case studies throughout, which leads me to the next set of people I need to thank.

I am deeply grateful to all my students, program participants and clients for choosing me to guide them in transformation. Having hands-on experience was pivotal in my being able to translate science into practical, actionable tools. I would especially like to acknowledge Christine Cowern, Laurie Anne King, Shawna McKinley Robins, and Owen Steinberg for allowing me to share their stories so that readers would have relatable role models.

My father was an economist who instilled a curiosity in me about how the world works. I am thankful for all the academics, scientists, and philosophers who spend their lives deepening our understanding of how our world works. I would particularly like to acknowledge Professors Cunningham and Elangovan for taking the time to share their knowledge and guide the research that led to two of my most pivotal discoveries.

To say I am the author of this book is generous. I am dyslexic, and as such, writing and grammar are not my strongest suits! I am indebted to the diverse editing talents of Joel Baum, Trina Brooks, Bethany Davis, Cortney Donelson, Cory Hott, and Lindsay Stuart, who contributed their unique set of skills to bring clarity to the theories and give life to my stories.

I want to make a special note of thanks to Trina Brooks. Trina is a writer who took my Ignite program. I love hiring former program participants because I know they share my values and understand my unique teachings. We all have Trina to thank for cutting out nonsense, insisting on more examples, and weaving in bits of magic.

I must express my heartfelt appreciation for my partner Professor Joel Baum. Beyond providing the lion's share of editing help with this book, he provided tremendous support to me during my Masters in Leadership and has served as an invaluable advisor during the startup phase of my business, BOOM-U.

I am grateful to Morgan James Publishing for believing in my vision and offering my book a fresh set of wings.

Finally, a note to celebrate my mother, Maria Louise O'Brien: As a special-education trainer, my mother has transformed many lives. No matter how 'unteachable' someone believed they were, she always found a way to help them. Her dedication to helping people achieve things they thought were impossible for them inspired me to build my life on the same principles.

I am where I am today because I have these people and many more like them in my front row. It's impossible to capture in words how grateful I am for the belief, generosity, love, and support of everyone who has been a part of my journey.

# Chapter 1: From Uncertain to Unstoppable

Who comes to mind when you think of a successful entrepreneur? Steve Jobs, who began selling computers out of his parents' garage? Lori Greiner, who patented an earring organizer and went on to create over four hundred consumer products? Perhaps you think of Tesla and SpaceX's leader Elon Musk or *Huffington Post*'s founder, Arianna Huffington?

An entrepreneur invents, designs, produces, packages, and sells their products. The more they sell, the greater their success. But what happens when that product is *you*? When what you package and sell is your time, your imagination, your creativity, and your expertise? Where is the entrepreneurial model for building that?

You went into business for yourself because you found something you enjoyed doing and you wanted a certain level of lifestyle freedom. For the longest time, you have worked toward creating your ideal lifestyle and fully believe you would have built it by now. These days, not only have you not achieved the lifestyle goals you set for yourself, you're not sure you're on the right track.

You strive to have a more balanced life, make more consistent money, and solidify your nest egg. The easy part is coming up with ideas. What's been hard is committing enough attention to a course of action. One too many of your past plans didn't pan out as you expected. You have the desire to make a change but are afraid of chasing rainbows again.

Your state of uncertainty is draining. You used to be unstoppable. What you want now is to figure out how to best share your gifts and be confident in your path. Timing-wise, you wanted all this to happen yesterday. Working for yourself was supposed to catapult you ahead, but instead, you feel behind. Is it too late for experimentation? Should you go back to working for someone else? You've thought about it, but even if you found a decent job, there's little chance you'd be paid what you know you're worth.

Besides, you chose to work for yourself because you were committed to living life on your terms. How can you give up now and go to work for someone who doesn't give a fig about you or your future? There's no better option than to get focused, get organized, learn from your mistakes, pick a plan that will pan out, and get busy making it happen.

## The Tricky Business of Talent and Time

An income and way of life that fully meet your needs is not a fairy tale, yet to most self-employed experts, coaches, healers, freelancers, and creatives it eventually starts feeling like one.

The number one reason you've been struggling to get your business running like clockwork is that you've been trying to reach the pinnacle of success based on business advice that will only enable you to reach basecamp. And it's not as if getting to basecamp isn't a solid accomplishment. Take Mount Everest, for example. Its basecamp is at 17,600 feet, but the pinnacle—the summit—is at 29,028 feet, a climb that many people attempt and few ever achieve.

The traditional approach to working for yourself got you as far as basecamp, but it's not enough for the next leg of your journey. Most business growth advice does not apply to your situation, which is why so many expertise-based business owners get stuck at a basecamp level of success. You're beyond seeking incremental improvements. You need a way to get a whole new level—and soon.

What is the pinnacle of success when you sell your talent and time? How about a predictable flow of income doing something you love, enough to meet your financial needs and allow you to live how you choose? If you want to reach this level of success, you're going to need a business-growth system designed expressly for people whose business is selling their expertise. You can think of it as the map you need to climb from basecamp to the summit.

If you have found a vocation you enjoy and would like to lever that into a business you love running, you can join the elite group of expertise-based entrepreneurs at the summit. But to do that, you'll need a system for building your business and becoming incredible with your time—a system designed with people exactly like you in mind.

## **What Kind of Book Is This?**

The main difference between what you will learn in this book and what you will learn in other business and high-performance books—and pay attention, because this is fair warning—is that this system requires you to go deep. There is a master console in your brain where your time and decisions are controlled. If you've tried other popular solutions and they haven't worked, it's because they didn't help you reach your master console. Everything about your success in life and business depends on you getting access to that console.

We are not going to try to fix a power station problem by tinkering with the light switch. We have enough books that give us light-switch solutions. Unfortunately, even the most ingenious of these will disappoint when you have underlying causes that need to be addressed first. When you sell your talent and time, your business and your life are intricately interconnected. You cannot fix one and not the other. We need to treat your business and life as one.

Many people want their work to connect to their life purpose. The desire strengthening with age. The trouble is, if you have a pressing need to make more money to improve your quality of life, you might feel connecting your business to a greater purpose isn't practical. If you have faced this dilemma, I have great news: You don't have to choose. Part of reaching the summit of success requires you to design a business in harmony with your purpose, which is why you'll learn how to discover yours in this book.

When you have confidence in your purpose, you will become clear about what you feel called to create next. It becomes easier to identify which opportunities to act on and which ones to pass on. You'll start building the kind of business that will protect your future while looking after today. You'll enjoy expressing yourself through your work again. You'll smile more.

When you fix problems at the power station rather than the light switch, you fix the problem for good. The system in this book is an all-in system for becoming unstoppable. It is a complete approach to being incredible with your time and transitioning from what you love doing to a business you enjoy running.

## **Choose Your Adventure**

There is a lot in this all-in system (more than my publisher suggested people would want), and that may dissuade some of you from sticking with it. This won't be because it's hard; the steps themselves are easy. What's hard is the inner discovery you'll need to do to take the steps. To make a change in your life, you are going to have to unlearn some of what got you where you are now. Only then will you be free to pursue what you really want.

As you read this book, you will likely encounter ideas that you already know. That may trick you into missing the incredible possibilities awaiting you as you skim for a few new tips.

Read more carefully, pay close attention, and apply what you're learning at each step, and you will discover a whole new world and level of success in your business.

We live in a world of hacks, tips, and tricks. There are top ten lists for everything from losing weight to becoming the perfect spouse. We want our business success advice to come just as easily. If we can't digest it in between all our other activities, we won't do it. As the saying goes, "Ain't nobody got time for that."

The quick-fix mindset holds many people back from ever building their dream businesses. The power in the system I'll teach you is not its parts. You can find most of what's in this book in hundreds of places. The power comes from the combination of ideas, how the ideas are linked, and techniques for applying them that most people don't know.

It is said that to know and not do is not to know. This book does not work like a magic wand or Aladdin's lamp. You will not be able to wave it, rub it, or put it under your pillow and expect your ideal business to appear next month. If you read this book looking for tips and tricks, you will surely find them. But if you roll up your sleeves and follow the system, you can expect so much more than that.

With my system, you can expect to build a business that finally fits your lifestyle within two or three years, and if you're diligent, you could build it in perhaps a year or two. However, the most exciting gains from following the system in this book will be that you'll learn how to start enjoying your work—and life—today.

## **Twenty Years in the Making**

After twenty years working for myself and all the ups and downs that entails, I've created a system that makes it possible for people who sell their expertise to achieve levels of motivation, productivity, and success that they never knew they had in them.

The system in this book doesn't come from just one discipline, which is why you haven't seen it before. Parts of the system draw on recent neuroscience and others from behavioral science, change leadership, and management. You'll also find hints of Eastern philosophies, stoicism, and positive psychology, as well as lessons from my twenty-plus years as an entrepreneur, consultant, and coach.

While the individual lessons in this book are standing on the shoulders of giants, this book's power lies in how I've simplified, connected, and sequenced the ideas into a step-by-step system anyone can follow. Over the past two decades, whenever I found an idea, practice, or approach that seemed promising, I tested it in the field, refined it, and integrated it into my work.

## **Is This Your Go Time?**

If you are willing to invest your time as my clients have, then within months of applying the system in this book, you will not recognize yourself or the progress you've made. You can say goodbye to time wasted on projects that lead you down the wrong road. There will be no more second-guessing your decisions about what your next best move should be.

You'll be waking up with energy and excitement. You'll be working on high-value projects you have confidence are the right ones for you. Your productivity will be off the charts. And, before you know it, you're going to need to learn how to invest because you'll need to manage the steady flow of revenue that's coming in. You will be unstoppable.

If all this sounds incredible, you're right. It is. But you will not get there by reading this book at a distance. You need to be all-in.

# Chapter 2: A Seemingly-Impossible Goal

At forty-eight, am I too late? That's what I wondered a few years back when I realized—for the third time in a decade—that my work wasn't right for me. I wondered if I'd missed my chance to build my dream business and life. Since a terrible car accident at forty, I'd been obsessed with the idea of finding a way of making money that was perfect for me. I wanted to love what I did and who I did it for, and I wanted lots of time to travel. But there I was, reflecting on yet another idea that didn't pan out and wondering if my dream life was more of a delusion.

If quitting was an option at that point, I might have taken it. The only thought that stressed me more than screwing up another business idea was having an executive job, one where I'd know more and make less than a senior manager fifteen years my junior. If it hadn't been for my car accident, I might have ended up there. But I did have the accident, and ever since, I've fixated on the idea that my life needs to mean something. I wanted to go beyond the limits I had always placed on myself. Taking a corporate job would have meant throwing in the towel on everything I'd believed in and worked toward for eight years.

## Entrepreneurship Was in My Blood

I was always destined to work for myself. My parents owned and operated a small private school, and my father's parents had owned a printing shop.

At the age of twenty-nine, I opened my first business with my twin brother: a small bistro in Toronto called JOV. My brother was the chef, and I ran the front of the house. JOV was a sensation right out of the gate. Within months of opening, we achieved international press for our incredible food as well as our leadership in the “trust-the-chef” dining movement. It was a success greater than we could have imagined. Our success fooled me into thinking I knew more about setting up a successful business than I did.

We worked at capacity every day. It pained us to turn away all those reservation requests (often hundreds a day), watching potential revenue go elsewhere. To capitalize on our demand, we came up with the idea of a food shop a few doors up from the bistro. After months of planning, renovating, menu development, and staff training, we opened with high expectations. It was a complete flop. Fast forward another six months, and we had tinkered with the food shop enough to eke out a small profit, but there was no joy in it. We closed the shop.

## My Leadership Lab

With our focus back on the restaurant, we had a conundrum. Our business was too small for us, but we were leery of going after something else. I needed something to occupy myself. That's when I began studying leadership and business in more depth. To avoid repeating my past mistakes, I took courses, read books, and, more importantly, used my restaurant as a “lab” to apply what I was learning.

The more I learned and experimented with operational fine-tuning, the more fascinated I became and the more I yearned to try out my skills and ideas on other projects. After seven successful years running our business, my brother and I agreed the bistro was not enough for us anymore. We still lacked the confidence to add a second business, so we sold the restaurant to explore new opportunities.

## **An Involuntary Life Reset**

After taking some well-deserved time off to travel, I returned to Toronto and hung out my shingle as a hospitality consultant, but that plan was thwarted almost as quickly as it began. Within the year, my life was turned upside down.

In April 2009, a driver on his cell phone ran a red light and T-boned my car. During 2009 and 2010, I learned firsthand how life could be redirected in an instant. I suffered agonizing pain from my spine, neck, and brain injuries caused by the accident. Activities I used to enjoy became unbearable. Everything hurt—sitting, standing, and sleeping. I couldn't cook or go to the gym. I stopped seeing friends and family. I became a recluse.

As I emerged from that year and a half of pain, loneliness, and depression, I vowed to make the most of my life from then on. I was done with “good enough.” Before the accident, I had ticked all the boxes—a swanky condo with a waterfront view, a hip boyfriend, and exotic vacations—but now it all seemed so surface level. They brought me little sense of meaning. I wanted something more. I wanted to make a difference.

I was at a crossroads, and I knew it. I was in the wrong career, the wrong relationship, the wrong life. Although I was ready for a new one, I still felt trapped by the life I was in. The accident caused me to lose everything I had built and put me in considerable medical debt. Despite sensing hospitality consulting was not for me, I got a high-profile contract, and it paid my bills for two years.

The company was terrific, and I adored the owner and the team. It had all the potential for me to go full-time, but something in me just wouldn't let me do it. I had a gnawing feeling that I was living the wrong life. A voice in my head kept whispering, “This is not as it should be.” I couldn't put my finger on what was off, but I trusted the whispers.

## **I Couldn't Settle for Less**

I knew I had to get out of the restaurant industry. I knew I had a purpose and calling that were just for me and that I wasn't on the right path yet. Being a sidekick in someone else's dream wasn't going to work for me. After nearly losing it all, I knew I wanted it all. But I was forty-five years old, a dyslexic who barely graduated high school, a university drop-out, and highly credible in an industry I wanted to leave.

I was going to need new credentials while still working to pay the bills, and I needed a better way to manage my time. Like most people looking for change, I turned to business and self-help books. I read about time management, resilience, goal setting, and so much more. I read the classics and countless new authors, too. Many boiled down to similar advice: Clarify what you want and then work hard to make it happen. Although I did make progress, I couldn't figure out my purpose and calling, so how could I truly clarify what I wanted?

Determined, I pressed on, turning my attention to more academically-minded books and programs. Professionally, I obtained certifications in executive coaching, team coaching, personal assessments, communication, and change leadership. I eventually went back to university and earned my Master of Arts in Leadership.

My plan worked. I broke free of hospitality consulting and started getting engagements with entrepreneurs in a broad range of industries. Applying my training, I had jaw-dropping successes. Burnt-out teams would come to life, taking on projects and succeeding where they'd previously stalled. People who thought they couldn't work together would. Productivity levels thought impossible weren't.

In many ways, it was work I loved, but it wasn't a lifestyle I loved. Long hours, rush hour treks to and from distant industrial parks, always worrying about how and when I'd find my next client. Worst of all, I was helping clients add millions to their top lines, and I was selling my time by the hour. I was supposed to be gaining control over my life; instead, I'd built myself a business with no leverage and a lifestyle that controlled me. I gave my head a shake.

It had been eight years since my accident and my commitment to a dream life, and I still hadn't come close to figuring out my perfect business or life. Here I was, an expert in helping established entrepreneurs grow their businesses to their next level of success with less personal effort ... while being unable to do it for myself.

The irony was sickening. My spirits were flattened. I was forty-eight, my career had started with such promise, and I felt like an utter failure, wondering if I would ever catch up.

## **A Last Ditch Attempt**

At my wit's end, I decided to become my own growth consultant. The challenge I faced was that my training was for organizations, not individuals selling their talent and time. I couldn't find a business model for someone like me. Business education tended to teach how to build product, tech, or large consulting businesses, and self-help didn't cover business matters adequately. I tried several coaching programs, but none solved the problems that troubled me most: What was I meant to do and how could I have a great income *and* quality of life doing it?

It became clear that what I wanted wasn't out there in a book or online program, so it was going to be up to me. I needed to meld the business and personal growth advice I gained over the years into a single, all-in system for people who sold their talent and time. When you are the business and the business is you, you cannot flourish unless both sides are involved.

I decided to pull everything I'd learned into a complete system, adapt it to my needs, and connect the ideas in a logical sequence, each step building on the next. I knew from my consulting experience that correct sequencing was where the power would come from.

My approach was also going to have to be detailed. In my experience, self-directed learning was heavy on what I should do and light on how to do it. That just doesn't work for my dyslexic brain. When I started adapting my organizational tools for myself, I took comfort in detailing clear instructions and best practices for how to do things.

As I became my own client, I still harbored fears that I was going to blow it again. But I forced myself to keep the faith. After all, I had guided remarkable transformations for complex business organizations. Surely I could get some of those benefits for myself?

I started at square one, unwilling to skip a step no matter how difficult or uncomfortable. After years of trying, a new approach led to me figuring out my purpose. Once I understood my purpose, I realized the impact I wanted to make and the business I wanted to build. From there, I used my change leadership knowledge to create a personal achievement tool so that as I moved forward with any goal—no matter how unfamiliar the task or situation—I could navigate to a successful outcome.

## **Third Time's the Charm**

The first success story of the system I developed was me. After clarifying my purpose and vision, I launched BOOM-U, an online business school with a mission to help solo-entrepreneurs grow themselves, their income, and their impact.

BOOM-U is a different kind of online school. Instead of mass-market education where everything is recorded, we offer courses and programs that include personalized attention,

feedback from highly trained coaches, and program design that leads to exceptionally high success rates. At the time of writing, our two signature programs are Ignite: Activate Your Big Idea and Basecamp: Increase Your Impact with a Signature Program.

Ignite is for people who have an idea about working for themselves but are feeling stuck because they aren't entirely clear on the idea or how they could implement it. Basecamp is for solo-entrepreneurs who have years of experience in their field and want to create a proprietary teaching or coaching system based on their work. We also offer programs that help graduates of Ignite and Basecamp set up their sales and marketing systems, financial management systems, and learn how to grow their teams when the times comes.

After all those years, I finally created a business that is perfect for me. With BOOM-U, I get to do what I love, collaborate with experts and industry leaders who energize me, and create a community for people who are making the world a better place! My team and I pour our hearts into serving our clients and program participants, but our evenings and weekends are our own. I enjoy long walks on the beach with my dogs, I travel often and run my business from anywhere.

The changes in my life have been nothing short of revolutionary. I earn more, enjoy my work more, and wake up (almost) every day feeling invigorated by the day ahead. I still have dreams I've yet to realize, but I no longer feel like I'm in the wrong life. I know I'm finally on my right path.

## **Harder Than Necessary**

Getting to this point was much harder than it needed to be. It shouldn't have taken me the better part of a decade to create a business and life that I enjoyed. Looking around, I realized that just about everyone I knew with a service-based business was in the same boat I used to be in—pretending (and hoping) things were going better than they were.

Since I now knew it was possible to have a happy and healthy life when your business involves selling your talent and time, I needed to make sure what worked for me would work for others. Offering my coaching services to other service-based entrepreneurs, I taught them the early version of the system I will teach you in this book.

## **The Right Time**

After iterating my process several times, my system started yielding predictable results. Regardless of their industries, burnt-out business owners unsure of what to do next who followed the system would become clear, confident, and reinvigorated as they finally understood a clear path to getting to their desired results.

That's when I knew I had to get the word out with a book. I wanted everyone with a service-based business to understand how to go from overwhelmed and uncertain to making a great living doing what they love.

When you follow this system, you can do more than build a reliable business. Because of what I teach you about your brain and the science of achievement, bigger goals in all aspects of your life become possible. You will achieve levels of motivation, creativity, and productivity that will change how you live, work, socialize and succeed. This system goes beyond your business; it's an all-in system for unlocking your potential.

No matter where you are on your journey, no matter if things got bleak for you as they did for me, and no matter if you're wondering, as I did, whether it's too late for you to catch up—it's not. If you are committed to doing work you love while also enjoying your life, you can achieve this. One consultant who attended a live seminar of mine booked a million-dollar contract the week

after learning a fraction of what I will teach you here. An intuitive counselor who took Basecamp tripled her sales in her first quarter after graduating.

What you will learn in this book is not about a quick fix. It's an all-in system for people who *are* the product, selling their time, imagination, creativity, and expertise. It's for experts, coaches, healers, creatives, and anyone rethinking their life, exploring their options, and struggling with the question, "How do I make my business work?"

If that's you, this book will help you clarify your direction, reignite your motivation, unpack what you are meant to do, and teach you how to transition from what you love doing to the owner of a business you love running.

Ready to learn what I mean when I say this system is all-in?

# Chapter 3: The All-In System

When Christine, a successful Toronto real estate agent, came to me several years ago, she needed to rethink how she operated. Christine's sales results were impressive but achieving them took a toll on her quality of life. She wanted to transition from being a typical time-strapped real estate agent to running a business that afforded her a desirable quality of life, but she couldn't see what her options were or what she should do next.

Being a real estate agent is inherently inefficient. Much of the work takes place in the evenings and on weekends, in addition to traveling to locations all over the city, meeting deadlines, and, in Toronto, high-pressure time-sensitive bidding wars.

When I first met Christine, she regularly worked all hours of the day and was constantly exhausted. She knew this had to change but couldn't see how to do it. Christine enjoyed real estate, but she was unwilling to give up on her dream of a better quality of life. She was determined to build a business that she loved running. Like most expertise entrepreneurs, she was limited by the idea that there was a fixed set of rules by which real estate agents had to conduct their business and that her clients wouldn't have it any other way.

I asked Christine to set aside, for the moment, all of the constraints she felt the outside world imposed on how things are or should be and invited her to focus solely on what she wanted for her future. Released from these constraints, Christine was able to get clear about the kind of business she wanted to own down the road. She realized she wanted to level up the real estate business by delivering a white-glove service that would blow her clients away. To do that, she needed to reorganize workflow so her team members would also have lives they loved.

Once Christine understood what she wanted for her future, clients, and team, there was no option but to build it. What initially seemed to Christine to be unbreakable rules were, in fact, opportunities to catapult her team into a league of their own. Using the performance equation I'll teach you in this book, Christine systemized her business and claimed back time that was formerly wasted. She then reinvested that time in her three top priorities: providing white-glove service for her clients, developing a high-performing, self-managing team, and systemizing marketing.

In a few short years, the Christine Covern Real Estate Team has disrupted the real estate business in ways I have not heard of before. For example, they created a concierge service that helps clients with any home-related goal or challenge for as long as they own their homes. Her team has grown to seven people, along with several contractors. Her referral rate, which was already impressive, doubled, and she is consistently ranked in the top 2 percent of real estate agents in Toronto—no small feat with over 52,000 agents in the city.

But to my clients and me, success is never about just numbers. It's also about our quality of life. Christine now has that, too. No more working late into the night and on weekends. That time belongs to her husband and their new baby. The Christine Covern Real Estate Team runs like clockwork with one of her first hires, now her managing partner, at the helm. When I called to fact-check the details for this story, Christine was happily packing for a week-long getaway at a Pilates retreat in Nicaragua.

If Christine had followed the original path she was on, she would have burnt out in a matter of years. Instead, in just over three years, Christine created value for her clientele leagues beyond what anyone would expect from their real estate agent, a high-performing, self-managing team, and a healthy work-life balance for herself.

You can do this, too. Like Christine when she started with me, all you need to get going is the commitment to make it happen and a path to follow that makes your goal possible.

## **Four Options for How to Make a Living**

Robert T. Kiyosaki, the best-selling author of *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, is well known for a model he calls the “cash flow quadrant” that he uses to illustrate the four ways you can choose to make money:

1. An employee: working for, and at the mercy of, someone else or a corporation
2. Self-employed: you own a job, and your income disappears if you need to step away
3. A business owner: the owner of a system that can make money with or without you
4. An investor: you get money working for you instead of working for money

In Kiyosaki’s view, being an employee is undesirable because your income depends on the mercy of others. He is even less favorably disposed toward being self-employed because when you work alone, your income disappears if you need to step away from the business. Kiyosaki encourages people toward the last two options: Become a business owner, at minimum, and ideally, become an investor.

Before my car accident, I did not understand the urgency of Kiyosaki’s advice the way I do now. I learned the hard way that we are not always in control of when we will and won’t be able to work. Most of my clients have had situations that have caused them to step back from work, too. Yet if you ask most self-employed people if they’d rather be a business owner or continue their current situation, they will likely tell you that building a business is beyond the level of hassle they want.

That’s how I felt back at forty-eight. Back then, I only knew about traditional business growth models. In my case, as a change consultant, that would have meant building a B2B (business to business) training and consulting company that would be a headache to manage. A complicated business was not my idea of an ideal life. Back then, I couldn’t imagine a business that would be less work and more fun than selling my time by the hour.

If you have felt the same, I have good news for you. The Internet has introduced possibilities that can increase the value you provide while minimizing the effort you need to expend, and many larger businesses have been slow to adapt! This gap creates opportunities for people like you and me. Integrating the Internet’s power into your service delivery will require ingenuity, but with a system that shows you the way, you can figure it out.

## **The All-In System for Becoming Unstoppable**

Indeed, there are several steps to follow to transition from being self-employed to becoming the owner of a business that you feel is perfect for you. But it doesn’t need to be daunting. Work is daunting when you’re not sure what project to choose or how to speed up success. When you have confidence in what projects you’re choosing, and you know how to do more in less time, work can be fun. That’s why I created the all-in system I teach you in this book.

### **Confidence Choosing Projects**

When your time is your product, building a business that will be perfect for you starts with clarifying what matters to you most and how you define a life well-lived. Discovering your purpose, envisioning what you want for your future, and committing to the kind of person you

want to become are three critical puzzles you need to solve. When you don't know these things about yourself, it becomes hard—if not impossible—to build a business that will sustain *you*.

Once you're centered on who you are and the kind of life you want to live, you will be surprised at how much easier it is for you to clarify—and have confidence in—the sort of business you want. With your business vision clarified, you can turn your attention to filling in the gap between where you are now and where you want to be with a series of well-chosen projects.

Using a tool I call the Expertise Business Growth Model (EBGM), you will get new clarity and insight about how to choose the most opportune projects at each stage of your business development. How long it takes you to reach your ultimate destination, your business vision, will depend on how well you execute each project. For example, someone with a Ferrari and someone with a Fiat could share a destination and know the shortest route, but the person with the better tool—in this case, the Ferrari—will arrive sooner.

### **Do More in Less Time**

When it comes to project execution, most people have learned Fiat-level tools. Fiat-level performance tools are sufficient for projects you already know how to crush. The problem is they don't set you up for success when you have to tackle projects in areas where you have little or no experience. Following the EBGM, you can expect to excel at projects in disciplines that are new (or unfamiliar) to you.

There are Ferrari-level approaches to achievement; these are the approaches you need to use when you want your success to be inevitable, or when speed matters. The second part of the all-in system in this book will teach you a Ferrari-level performance equation that makes you a master of crushing projects in record time.

When you are clear on who you want to become and where you want to end up, you will be able to design a business that's right for you. Once you have clarified your business vision, the EBGM will be your guide to choosing the right projects at the right time. And, using a Ferrari-caliber performance equation, you'll crush your projects in record time. You'll be running your ideal business before you know it. This is the all-in system for success.

### **All-In: Choose Better Projects with the EBGM**

Is it possible to have too much of a good thing? It can be when those things are ideas or projects to tackle on the road to success. The dilemma is which project is the logical next best step when all of them show promise. As you are reading this, you are probably agonizing over a dozen different projects. Wouldn't it be nice if you could just wiggle your nose and have your brand strategy, graphic design, systemization, content marketing, social media, funnels, advertising, administration, and public relations all fall into place?

You can indeed build a terrific business one project at a time, but there's an order of operations that will multiply your success. Attempt projects in the wrong order, and you often find yourself set back.

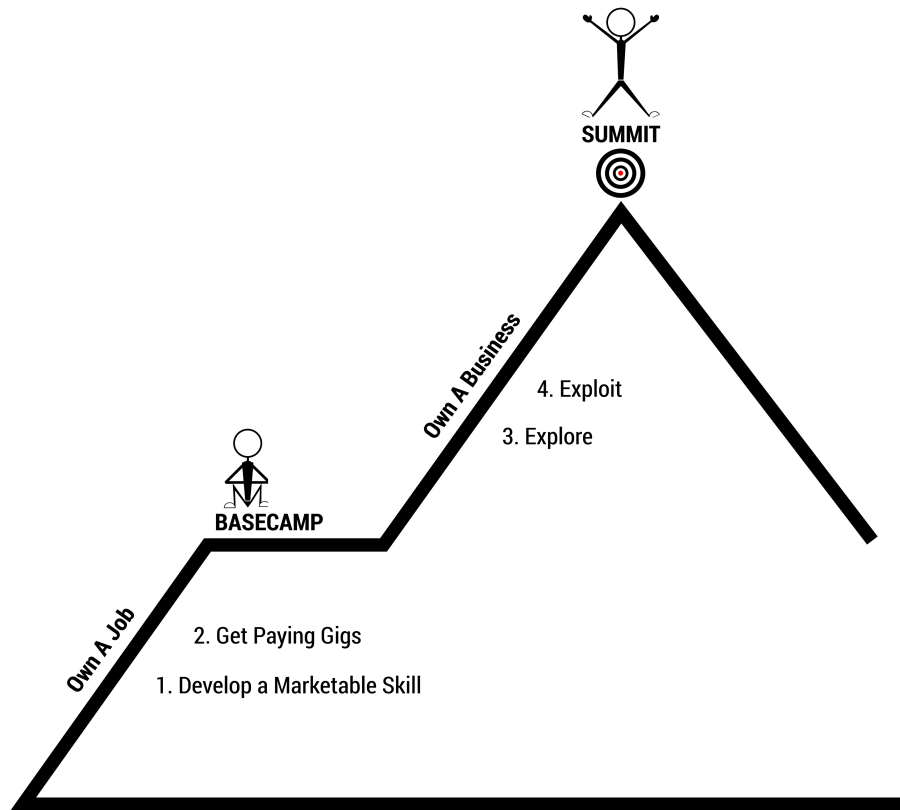
While elements of what you will learn in this book are taught in business schools, few service-based entrepreneurs realize how the path to building a business applies to them too. To fill this gap, I developed the Expertise Business Growth Model (EBGM), an approach people who sell their talent and time can follow to transition from owning a job to owning a business.

I've always likened achieving challenging goals to climbing mountains, which is why I chose the basecamp analogy at the opening of the book. The first climb in the EBGM is from ground zero to basecamp; the second climb is from basecamp to the summit.

## EBGM: From Ground Zero to Basecamp, Owning a Job

Ground zero is where everyone starts. As we grow up, adults ask us what we want to do for a living. Most of us try several things until we find something that we enjoy enough to settle on. With this decision made, we turn our attention to training. We take programs and courses, earn degrees or certifications, and seek to apprentice with the best.

Eventually, we decide to work for ourselves and start taking clients. The first ones tend to come as lucky breaks; then, we build on that. Reaching this level of success is what I call reaching basecamp: you have developed skill-sets and made money sharing your expertise. But, business isn't consistent, so you've started to develop your business know-how by reading blogs and books or taking courses and coaching programs in the hopes it will help you stabilize your results.



### *The Risk of Camping Out at Basecamp*

For the first little while, basecamp feels terrific. You worked hard to get this far, you own your job, you found something you love to do, and you feel like you're in charge of your world. But the longer you remain at basecamp, the more frustrated, time-strapped, and burnt-out you tend to become. One reason for this is that the more skilled you are in your field, the more you will want to raise your rates to match your competence. Indeed, you probably misquoted some of your earlier jobs and ended up working so many evenings and weekends to get the job done that you are working for less than you'd make working at Starbucks.

The trouble is that as you raise your rates, you often move out of competition with other job owners and into competition with business owners. It's hard for self-employed job owners to compete with business owners. Business owners often create offerings and efficiencies, like

Christine Cowern's concierge service, that are impossible for someone working on their own to match. But, if you don't raise your rates, you may start wondering if you would be better off working at Starbucks and at least getting free coffee, tea, and benefits. Keeping your rates low may also lead your clients to question your competence—why, despite your experience, are your fees competitive with people just starting out?

Another risk of staying at basecamp too long is that, whether or not you raise your rates, clients get harder and harder to find. Self-employed job owners often mistakenly blame this on changes in the market. They start making course corrections, tweaking their service offerings, changing the type of clients they serve, or both. In truth, this is more like climbing back down to ground zero. Each time you pivot what you offer and, more critically, for whom you offer it, you confuse your market and make it difficult for your community to know what you're up to.

As Ogilvy advertising legend Rory Sutherland explains in his book *Alchemy: The Dark Art and Curious Science of Creating Magic in Brands, Business, and Life*, you don't need to be the best to win more business; you just need to be less risky than your clients' other options. When you change your business idea or niche, your community doesn't know what to think of you. It makes it risky for your past clients to recommend you and harder for would-be clients to discover you. Each time you pivot, you help your competition become the less risky choice.

### ***How Do You Move Beyond Basecamp?***

It's time to plan your exit from basecamp when you've found something you love doing but your working situation and lifestyle are not what you want them to be. When Christine came to me, she loved real estate but not the hours or stress. By reinventing the norms in her industry, she built a business that affords her a great quality of life. If you have a skill you feel is right for you and a work life that is wrong for you, then it's time to move to the exploration step of the EBGM—figuring out a business idea and niche you can commit to for at least three years.

### **EBGM: From Basecamp to the Summit, Owning a Business**

Before ascending from basecamp to the summit, you need to prepare for the journey. Some people may grab their pack and set off running, confident in their skills and direction. Others prefer to explore the different routes and tools at their disposal, wary of finding themselves halfway up a mountain only to realize the path they chose was a dead end. One way to think about how to go about building a business you'll enjoy running is through the lens of the exploration and exploitation phases of building a business.

In the exploration phase, you create a proprietary or signature solution and test its marketability to ensure its viability for the climb to the summit. Your service (aka product) development, verifying market appetite, and getting sales are among the activities that focus on this phase. Critically, the exploration phase is where you commit to a target market. Viability means you have a proven way of reaching your market, making sales, and being profitable.

Once you have proven the viability of an idea, you can advance to the exploitation phase. Exploitation activities have to do with efficiency and expansion. Since you have locked down your main business idea and niche, you can now focus on creating standard operating procedures (SOPs) to simplify all aspects of your business operations. It makes sense that you will be able to develop standards once what you sell is standardized. Standardizing your processes is a key to becoming the owner of a system that can make money with or without you.

The exploitation phase is also where you pick up a megaphone and tell everyone what you do through activities such as marketing, advertising, and public relations. Until you've locked in on what you will sell and to whom, intensive marketing, advertising, and public relations can

confuse your market and make it harder for you to gain credibility in your chosen market when you are ready. You're better off going through the exploration phase five or ten times than jumping into the exploitation phase too early. Once you have established an idea is viable, you can move to exploit it quickly.

## **Timing Is Everything**

When it comes to being immeasurably better with your time, one of the smartest things you can do is pick the right project for the right time. When you do the right work at the wrong time, you will not get the benefit you anticipated. You will end up spending time and money on things you didn't need and, eventually, find yourself needing to redo the work when the time is right.

When you know what projects you should take on and at what time, goals that might have seemed initially far-fetched go from appearing out of reach to well within your grasp. Once you know what projects to pick, a performance equation will help you speed up success.

Christine achieved success because she understood that to go from working independently to becoming the owner of a business she could step away from, she needed to develop new competencies and tackle different kinds of projects. The performance equation I share in this book helped her to speed up her learning curve.

## **All-In: Achieve More with a Performance Equation**

Have you ever heard the expressions “change is hard” or “you can't teach an old dog new tricks?” If you have, it wasn't from someone in the field of behavioral science or change leadership. The idea that change is next to impossible is about as accurate as saying “making a soufflé is impossible” or “only professional chefs can make soufflés.” While this fluffy baked egg dish is a level of culinary expertise relatively few people are skilled in, it doesn't mean it's an unattainable goal.

Many endeavors are hard or unlikely without the proper technique, recipe, or equation. When it comes to change, there is an equation—a series of steps you can follow—that will make change inevitable in even the most challenging circumstances. No component of this equation is particularly difficult. What's challenging is that few people outside the profession of behavioral science or change leadership are aware of all the steps involved.

During my years working in entrepreneurial organizations, I became used to resistance from directors and VPs from the very start. I didn't let this bother me because I knew that after a few days of working together, they would be asking to work with me again. How did I come to expect this shift in their disposition? Who doesn't love someone who makes it *easier* for them to achieve *more*? In my experience, when you show someone clear steps they can follow to perform at their best, they are happier, and happier people produce more. It's a positive reinforcement cycle.

Although I could predict that it would be a matter of days before management teams looked forward to their time with me, I reflected on how I might reframe our introductions to be more harmonious from the start. I understood that, to somebody untrained, the idea of change seems daunting. I considered whether the word “change” inherently suggested that something was wrong and needed to be corrected.

## **A New Perspective on Change**

We tend to associate the need for change with the idea that things are broken and need to be fixed. As a result, it's not surprising that management teams don't jump up and down shouting,

“Yippee!” when a change leadership consultant struts in promising productivity utopia in the months ahead. If I were in their shoes, I suspect I’d be apprehensive, too.

I began thinking about how we needed to shift the concept of change to one of improvement. Why couldn’t we take a growth-oriented point of view instead? If we did, we’d celebrate where we were and how far we had come, treating every moment as an opportunity to progress from where we are into what we have the potential to become.

With this reframing, I realized my training in change was just an education in how to make seemingly impossible goals happen. It was a scientific approach that had little to do with how most people and teams approach their goals. I redeveloped my change equation into a high-performance tool I call MINDCODE®. The new framing paid off. As I had hoped, leaders and teams were more receptive to the idea that I could help provide better structure to their planning and implementation efforts.

I include MINDCODE® as part of Ignite and Basecamp and used to use it when working with larger organizations. Project managers and high performers adore it because it simplifies and systemizes the critical steps to getting more done on shorter timelines while also demystifying how to approach complex projects. At BOOM-U, we use it to plan and execute all our projects. The performance equation I teach you in this book is based on MINDCODE®.

### **Your All-In Project-Crushing System**

To build a successful business, you need to become adept at navigating unknown territory. Like a journey up Mount Everest, every new elevation requires a level of knowledge beyond the level you needed to get to where you are now. As you move up the EBGM toward building a business you love running, so will other competitors in your space. To gain or maintain competitive advantage, you will need to continually develop your knowledge and abilities to keep pace.

A step-by-step performance equation ensures you accomplish whatever you set your mind to in the shortest possible amount of time.

The power of the performance equation in this book results from two key differences in how most people approach achieving goals. The first is the sequencing of the steps—the equation. The second is the technique. Just as a soufflé will miss the mark without the cream of tartar, ignoring any step in a performance equation can lead to disappointing results, even when you get all the other steps right.

### **The Problem of Missing Pieces**

When I break down past project failures with my clients, we often find they were doing an excellent job at the things they knew to do, and what held them back was that they were missing necessary pieces of the puzzle. The second difference in the performance equation in this book is the focus on technique. One thing that frustrates my dyslexic brain is being told *what* I should do, complete with convincing arguments as to *why* I should do it, with relatively little guidance on *how* I should do it.

Anders Ericsson, one of the foremost researchers on learning faster and the lead author of *Peak: How to Master Anything*, instructs us that those who outperform others in their fields focus on a type of practice he’s termed “deliberate practice,” which stipulates the need for expert technique.

In all disciplines, there are degrees of excellence. Some people are better than others at playing piano, chess, soccer, tennis, riding bicycles, making omelets, designing buildings, knitting, singing, or sewing. What separates these top performers? Ericsson stresses the importance of

starting with proven techniques under the direction of an expert teacher or coach. His ideas have been instrumental in my commitment to developing best-in-class techniques for achieving goals.

## **The Four Phases of Crushing Projects**

Whenever someone tells me how hard they are working on a goal, I know they are not using a science-based performance equation. Hard work does not suggest optimal performance. It indicates a person is expending more energy than required only to achieve results below their potential. When you apply the performance equation in this book to any project you are working on, you will be amazed at how much more you accomplish and how much more natural success feels.

The four phases of the performance equation are:

- Phase I: Coordinates of Your Current Location (Chapters 4 and 5)
- Phase II: Clarification of Your Target Destination (Chapters 6 and 7)
- Phase III: Plans for an Easier Approach (Chapters 8 and 9)
- Phase IV: Practices to Speed up Ascension (Chapters 10 and 11)

### **Phase I: Coordinates of Your Current Location**

Like many people, I used to believe the first step of success was setting a goal. How wrong I was! During my master's program, I realized that the first step of achievement is understanding where you are now and how you arrived at this destination. During the first two weeks of the program, my classmates and I were guided through a series of activities to help us learn these things about ourselves. It was deep, soul-searching work that led many of us to revelations about ourselves we were not anticipating in a leadership program.

No one escaped those two weeks without shedding tears, not even our tougher classmates in the military and police services. We were required to complete these activities because, as we learned, you cannot hope to lead or bring about the best in others if you cannot first lead or bring about the best in yourself. When it comes to leading yourself or others, it makes sense that it is harder to get anywhere new if you don't start by determining your starting position. In Chapters 4 and 5, you will discover your current coordinates from two vantage points.

First, we'll look back to reveal how you've come to get to where you are today, which we'll examine through the lens of neuroscience. In Chapter 4, "Your Brain and Your Current Reality," you'll discover why you've felt blocked in some areas of your life, why you see, say, and do what you do. You'll learn why some goals have eluded you, and you'll be introduced to a part of your brain that you can program to help you automatically work toward any goal of your choosing.

Second, we'll explore what brings you happiness and reveal how you can create a greater sense of meaning and joy in your future. In Chapter 5, "Your Happiness Recipe," you'll discover your purpose and your vision for your life and business. We'll also take a look at value-driven behaviors you can introduce to speed up getting from where you are now to where you want to be.

### **Phase II: Clarification of Your Target Destination**

With an understanding of where you are now and where you'd like to be down the road, it will be time to pick a project that will get you on the shortest route to your destination. In Chapters 6 and 7, I teach you the power-practice of exploring possibilities before you commit, followed by brain-based techniques for goal setting that have the power to make you unstoppable.

There are slower and faster routes to getting anywhere. Like a climber tackling Mount Everest, at each decision point, you have an opportunity to choose a more or less challenging path. I call the project you will identify in Phase II a “leap project” because when you identify the right one, like when you discover a shorter path, you will be amazed how quickly you advance. In Chapter 6, “Where to Next?” we’ll take a closer look at the EBGGM and consider some common scenarios that will empower you to make a wise choice about what your leap project should be.

Most people with even a modicum of ambition know that goal setting is job number one once you’ve identified a project you want to achieve. In my decade of experience helping entrepreneurs build their businesses and teaching thousands of students online, I can confidently say that it is a rare individual who knows how to set a goal so it has power. In Chapter 7, “Who Needs Willpower?” I teach you how to create goals with power. You’ll learn about recent advances in neuroscience and how to set “hot goals” in your subconscious. Why do you need to set goals in your subconscious? Because when your subconscious isn’t aware of your goals, you’ll either work far harder than necessary or won’t achieve your goals at all. When you’ve set a hot goal in your subconscious, you’ll know it because you’ll be working toward your goal without willpower.

### **Phase III: Plans for an Easier Approach**

As Dwight D. Eisenhower famously said, “In preparing for battle, plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.” This is the attitude we will take toward planning in Chapters 8 and 9. Properly done, the value of planning is not about creating a plan itself, but rather the mental preparation that grooms your brain to gain exacting clarity about what you want and see your projects through to completion on shorter timelines.

Our approach will be based in behavioral science. In Chapter 8, “Better Road Maps,” you’ll learn the minimum effective dose for creating better plans. First, you’ll create a back-of-the-napkin “staircase” strategy: a road map of subprojects that gives your subconscious (and you) confidence that your leap project is not only plausible but also inevitable. Then you’ll drill down into a component of your leap project we call your “active assignment” as we create the nitty-gritty detail portion of your plan.

Based on your past experiences, your subconscious can throw up roadblocks when it deems a project overly ambitious. In Chapter 9, “Prepare for Challenging Terrain,” you will learn planning techniques necessary to approach projects where you have little or no prior experience or where you have subconscious blocks to success. You will develop contingency plans and take a microscope to your limiting social environments and beliefs as you learn how to circumvent the elements of your thought patterns and life that are currently limiting you from achieving more.

Your world is perfectly organized for the results you’re currently getting. When you’ve completed Phase III, you’ll understand the science of rearranging your world to get any results you want from now on.

### **Phase IV: Practices to Speed up Ascension**

I am frequently asked for training on time management. You will learn how to be more productive in Chapters 10 and 11 of this book; however, I don’t call what you will learn here “time management.” Here’s why: When you start with the wrong question, you get the wrong answer. Google dictionary defines “management” as “the process of dealing with or controlling things or people.” We cannot control time. Go ahead. Try to turn back time five minutes. I’ll wait.

Time is a resource you can liken to money. It’s something you can invest wisely or not so wisely. To me, investing your time wisely means you can look back on how you spent your week,

month, year, or life and say to yourself, “I feel great about my life and how I lived.” Seriously, what is the point of spending a minute on anything you’ll end up regretting?

In Chapters 10 and 11, you’re going to learn to love your time now. This hour, today. Not next week or month. Not someday. When you approach your time with the practices I will teach you in Phase IV, execution starts to feel more natural. It’s not that you won’t have to work to make your goals happen; it’s that it will feel easier to do the work—even enjoyable.

In Chapter 10, “The Dopamine Drip,” you’ll learn how to reward and motivate yourself with dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter your body produces each time you take action on your top priority goals. This release of dopamine initiates a positive reinforcement cycle, triggering your subconscious to take more actions that produce dopamine. I’ll teach you daily and weekly time practices that release dopamine as you work toward your goals. If you practice what you learn in this chapter, working on things you care about will soon feel like the most natural thing you could be doing with your time.

No performance equation would be all-in without tools and techniques to turn things around when your efforts don’t work out as planned. When it comes to things not working out—or failure, as some people prefer to label it—there is a disconnect between the high-performance wisdom to embrace failure and how the real world responds to it. In Chapter 11, “The Elephant in the Room,” you will learn recovery tools that you can think of as your emergency kit to keep you on track to success. These tools include protocols for overcoming fear, resistance, and significant setbacks. Not only will the protocols you learn in this chapter teach you the steps to turn disappointing situations to your advantage, but they’ll also show you how to convert your setbacks into stories of conquest that become the very reasons for your success.

## **How to Become Unstoppable**

I’m not going to mislead you—some experts suggested I write two books because getting through this material will take dedication and patience that, according to some, most people don’t have. But I decided to write one book. I can’t solve your problems with two books unless you read both of them, and that seemed inefficient to me. Our Basecamp participants handle the material without issue. Far from being overwhelmed, they are relieved when they finally gain clarity on how to build the business they’ve wanted for years. So I know that if you have the problems that I share how to solve in this book, you’d probably rather not go on a wild goose chase, reading two or more books when I had the option to include what you need in one.

We live in a world of targeted, fragmented information and quick tips. I am a fan of targeted expertise, quick fixes, tips, and tricks myself. But tips and tricks only help when you know the basic structure of how to do something. If you wanted to become a mountain climber, would you learn by patching together tips from here and there? I hope not—without proper training, you could meet an untimely end. Once you had learned the mountain climbing foundations, would targeted tips and tricks be of value? Absolutely.

It takes commitment and follow-through to succeed at building an expertise-based business from the ground up, but I know that if you invest your time in applying this all-in system, you will notice the benefits right away. Follow the system in this book, and within one to two years you can transition from owning a job to owning a business that makes the lifestyle you dream of your reality.

## **The Best Way to Read this Book**

I suggest you start by reading the book through from cover to cover to understand the system in its entirety. Then I suggest using this as a handbook starting with Chapter 4, following the steps and activities in each chapter as needed to guide your business development.

Resist the urge to put the book down and jump into action when you get excited about new ideas bubbling to the surface. I've seen people quit partway through and then end up struggling without knowing why or how to correct their course. A proven way to increase your chances of success is to find a success buddy—a friend you think is also ready to build a better business—so you can support each other as you do your climb.

## **The Rabbit Hole**

One of the hardest tasks in the restaurant business is not deciding what goes on a menu; it's deciding what to leave off. I used that same approach here. Everything you will learn in this book works because the system stands on the shoulders of giants. Throughout the book, I refer to the work of some of my most meaningful influences. But this book is not about theories or research. It is about a practical system for action based on their work.

To cover the wide range of topics behind the system, I had to leave a lot out, but I know your curious mind will want to understand at least some of the book's ideas at a deeper level. I've done my best to give you enough background to apply the material successfully at each step of the system. But in case you find your inquiring mind calling out to you, I've created an online resource I call The Rabbit Hole.

The name "The Rabbit Hole" is inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*, and you can find it at [www.jillmcabe.com/itsgotime/rabbit](http://www.jillmcabe.com/itsgotime/rabbit). If you want to go deeper into a given topic or chapter, The Rabbit Hole is where you'll find some of my favorite sources and resources for your further investigation. You will also find downloads that accompany some of the activities I share, links to websites of some of the client case studies I mention, and more.

## **A Decision Only You Can Make**

The number one factor that will determine your success has nothing to do with the breadth or depth of the material I cover in this book. If you work for yourself, you have what it takes to follow this system. The number one thing that determines whether you will succeed or fail with this system is something you can check off your list right now.

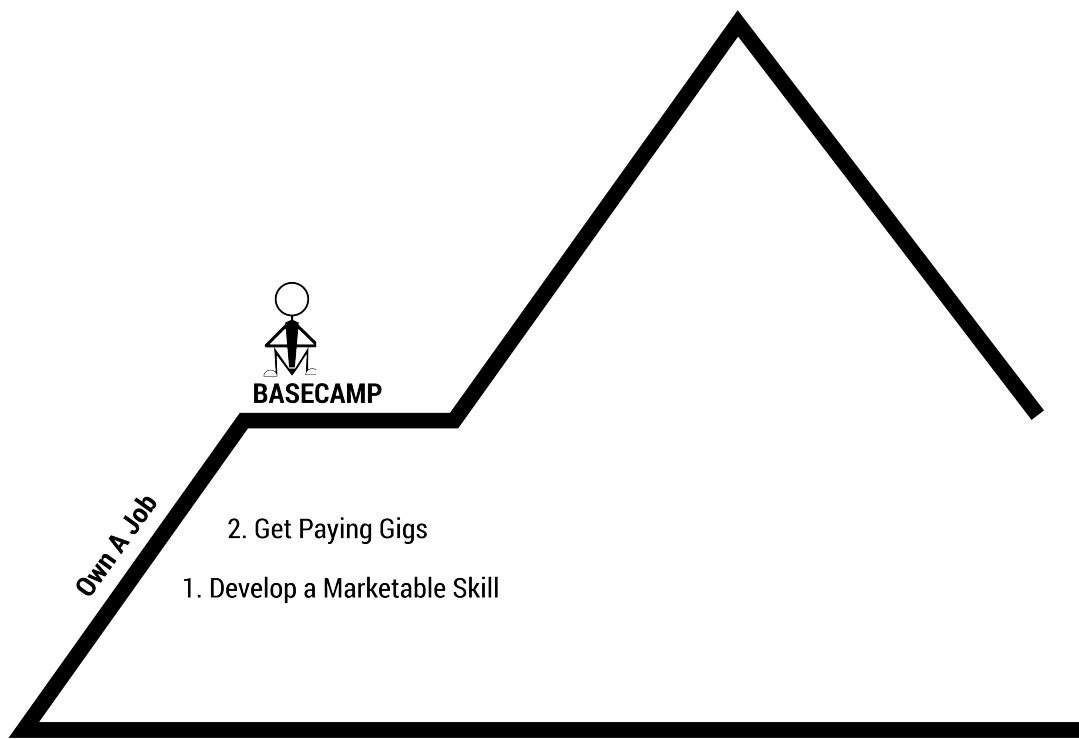
The question for you to answer is this: Will you decide to succeed?

You are smart enough. I will show you how to carve out enough time, so you will be able to build your business while still keeping your current life running. The next steps don't require significant investments and might even suggest you spend less time and money on activities you may be overinvesting in now.

This book offers you a quest: an adventure to win back your motivation, business, and life. All that's left for you to do is decide. Are you game to try the whole system? Or are you going to read this book for tips and tricks? You'll gain a ton of value either way. But the unstoppable success in business and life will be yours only if you commit to being all-in.

The first reveal is big: the neuroscience underpinnings of your success.

# Phase I: Coordinates of Your Current Location



# Chapter 4: Your Brain and Your Current Reality

During my master's, I decided to research the neuroscience behind why goals work. I did this because when I rebuilt my life, I believed everything started with a goal. (I later learned goals should come second.) Self-help is about setting goals; executive coaching is about goals; team performance is about shared goals; and operational efficiency consulting is about streamlining projects—which all started with goals.

What I discovered during my research went way beyond what I anticipated. I learned about a critical mechanism in our brains that explained why I was satisfied in some areas of my life and not others. I discovered that I was unknowingly responsible, the architect of everything—successful and not—in my life. Critically, I finally understood how to take control of my life and succeed at anything I wanted, even in areas where I had previously struggled.

What I teach you in this chapter is the single most important discovery I have made about success. It's a keystone piece of information that holds everything else together, and as luck would have it, I learned it by accident. What you learn about your brain in this chapter goes beyond helping you understand where you are now. It is the key to everything else you will learn in this book and beyond. You will discover how you came to arrive at this moment, having achieved some goals but not others, and how to retrain your brain to start achieving all of them.

I'll walk you through:

- The brain science behind what you have and have not achieved to date
- Two major ways you unknowingly program your brain to keep you from some of your goals and lead you instead to results you don't want
- The single most important success habit discovered by science and a guaranteed way to develop it

## Your Subconscious and Your Success

When I first looked for research on the neuroscientific explanations of why goals work, I came up empty-handed. I later learned this was because the neuroscience of goals was a fledgling area of research. Fortunately, a friend put me in touch with a neuroscientist, Wil Cunningham, who specializes in the area of goal cognition and the brain. He directed me to some of the latest and most exciting research in his field, which answered my questions and more.

Wil started our conversation with the following activity. This activity requires you to close your eyes. To get the best results, take this book and move to a place where you can stand or sit facing a blank wall, a place where you can see nothing in your peripheral vision. Once you're in position, read the next step.

### Activity: Facing a Blank Wall

In a moment, you will close your eyes and think of everything in your current surroundings, behind or around you, that is blue. This might include blue in an object on a table, a rug on the floor, or a piece of furniture. If you are in a room you know well, the blue might be something on a bookshelf,

in a picture on the wall, or outside a window. When you believe you've inventoried all the blue, open your eyes. Please go ahead and close your eyes now and do this activity.

### **Debrief: Proceed After Completing the Steps Above**

Eyes open? How'd you do?

I'm going to guess that you didn't recall all the blue in the room. It's extremely rare for anyone to capture one hundred percent of the blue around them. Many people even laugh a little because sometimes they realize they missed something obvious, such as a blue pen on their desk, something blue in a picture that's been hanging on the wall for years, or even something blue they are wearing.

### **Why Didn't You See All the Blue?**

What Wil explained to me is there is too much information in our surroundings for us to notice it all. There are trillions of photons—elementary particles of light that contain information about our environment—and our conscious brains simply can't process them all. That's where your subconscious brain steps in. There is a region of your subconscious brain whose job it is to be on alert about your surroundings and to show you only those things it decides you need to see.

If you didn't recall all the blue, it's because your subconscious brain didn't think blue was all that important to you. For cognitive economy, "all the blue" didn't make the cut in the pre-filtering of your environment. But determining what you see is just the tip of the iceberg for your subconscious. Neuroscience has demonstrated that this subconscious pre-filtering process affects what you say and do, too. Even though it may feel like we are consciously in control of our lives, it turns out we aren't.

What feels like decisions about what we see, say, and do are pre-determined orders from our subconscious brains. What's more, neuroscientists have found that our subconscious brains are doing this filtering and deciding what we see, say, and do up to ten seconds before our conscious brains even become aware of what's going to happen.

### **Ten Seconds Behind**

Up to a ten-second lag time was my wake-up call. When I learned this, I stopped in my tracks. I had heard of the reticular activating system and was familiar with the idea that my subconscious beliefs determined my behavior and success. Somehow, the idea that all this was happening up to ten seconds before my conscious mind even knew it was shocking.

For the first time, I understood that my subconscious had near-total control of my day-to-day existence, and subsequently, everything I had or hadn't achieved to date. That my conscious mind might be as much as ten seconds behind me in any given moment of my life.

I encourage you to stop reading right now, find a clock or timer with a second hand, and watch as ten seconds pass. Ten seconds. That's a *long* time for the conscious part of your brain to be on a need-to-know basis about what you will see, say, and do in any given situation. Too long to ignore.

The gravity of this insight felt more like an implosion than a light bulb moment. I am a believer in the idea that what you get in your life is a result of your actions. Here I was, struggling to achieve some of my most important goals, and I wasn't in conscious control of my actions: what I was seeing, saying, or doing at any given moment of my life.

### **Your Subconscious Decides What You See**

When I continued digging into the research Wil directed me to, I began thinking about examples from my life. I realized I could identify countless examples of my subconscious brain calling the shots in the actions I took.

For starters, beyond not noticing all the blue, I could easily find examples of when I failed to see obvious things around me. Have you ever been with someone and they point out something interesting right in front of you? Something you didn't notice? Or how about that phenomenon of starting to see things once they become somehow relevant to you—for example, when you get a new car and notice that make of car everywhere? Two years ago, I got a dog. All of a sudden, my neighborhood was full of dogs. Of course, the dog population hadn't suddenly quadrupled; it was that my subconscious brain was tuned in to dogs and started showing them to me.

## **Your Subconscious Decides What You Say and Do**

Then I noticed examples of times where I didn't feel in control of what I was saying. You know those times when you question what you are saying as you're saying it? When you wonder to yourself, "Why am I saying this? This is not going to go over well. I'm going to pay for this." But even as you were speaking the words and thinking that you'd regret them, you couldn't seem to stop yourself and said them anyway. Where did those words come from? Certainly not your conscious brain.

All of us have experienced our subconscious brain in control of what we are doing as we arrive somewhere familiar by car or on foot and realize we have no memory of traveling there. Once again, that's your subconscious loyally running the show for you.

## **Meet My Mom's Pony, Chiefy**

My mom grew up rurally in Connecticut. Her family had an artesian well, a vegetable garden, and chickens. They also had an opinionated pony named Chiefy. In the summers, his job was to pull the cart so the children could distribute fresh eggs, vegetables, and water to nearby customers. He would pull up to each house along the route, stop, wait for the children to unload, then continue to the next house. After a reasonable amount of time at each stop, he would move on, regardless of whether the children were ready. Sometimes, they would have to run to catch up.

One day, after gearing up Chiefy, my mom and her siblings were called away. Hours later, Officer Clancy, a local policeman, arrived at their door with their pony in tow. Even with no one to take him out, Chiefy still followed his route. Fortunately, he liked Officer Clancy, who was able to lead the wayward pony back home.

This is how my mom's family came to call not paying attention to where you were going and ending up on a familiar route the "Chiefy route." It was synonymous with absent-mindedness. As I learned how the subconscious operated, I realized our Chiefy routes aren't absent-minded at all; they are other-minded. Our subconscious works similarly to an opinionated pony.

I contemplated, "If my conscious brain isn't even involved until my subconscious has made a decision, then what criteria is my subconscious using to make these decisions?" I hope you're wondering this, too, because it's a life-altering question, and knowing its answer will enable you to achieve immeasurably more of anything you want from now on.

## **The Misunderstood Amygdala**

For years, your amygdala has been identified as the fear center of your brain. It's the part of your brain that stays on the constant lookout for danger in your environment and responds to any perceived threats by triggering the fight, flight, or freeze response. Your amygdala sometimes gets

a bum rap for this because when it responds to perceived threats in your environment, it releases cortisol and other stress hormones that are not good for your health.

However, it turns out that this is not the full story of your amygdala. Recent neuroscience has found that your amygdala is also the region of your brain that prompts positive actions in response to environmental stimuli.

How does your amygdala decide how you will respond to environmental triggers? Its decisions are based on a type of goal that a team of neuroscientists led by Randall O'Reilly termed "hot goals." Hot goals are the goals your amygdala uses to determine everything you see, say, and do in response to your environment (and, therefore, everything you achieve).

There are two types of hot goals that your amygdala is tuned into: prevention and promotion goals. Prevention goals keep you from harm. Promotion goals make your life better. We are biologically wired to preserve life, so your amygdala pretty much knows what to do as far as prevention goals are concerned.

It's not as straightforward when it comes to your promotion goals. The main biologically-wired promotion goal is procreation. Your amygdala is happy to help you to achieve many other things that would make your life better. It would be glad to help you build an incredible business, make lots of money, be fit and healthy—but your amygdala doesn't come preloaded with those kinds of hot goals.

## **Conscious Goals Versus Subconscious/Hot Goals**

Unfortunately, if you have a goal for yourself in your conscious mind, it doesn't automatically become a hot goal for your amygdala in your subconscious mind. That's because your conscious and your subconscious mind use different forms of language. (We will explore that in a moment.)

You can quickly determine which of your conscious goals are hot goals; they are the goals you automatically make progress on without needing to force yourself or draw on willpower. Wherever you are happy with the results you are getting in your life—such as your relationships, health, or how you spend your free time—your conscious goals are also hot goals.

Conversely, the goals that you've set for yourself time and time again but aren't speeding toward—like those New Year's resolutions you revisit year after year—are not hot goals and are unknown to your amygdala. Wherever you are frustrated or not making progress toward a goal you've consciously established for yourself, it's because what you consciously want your subconscious is unaware of; it is not a hot goal.

A conscious goal I have that is not also a hot goal is to visit Ireland. I've talked about going to Ireland for years but never have. When I learned about hot goals, I applied this information to my long-standing bucket-list trip to connect with a part of my heritage. I started looking at the excuses I make each passing year, and it became apparent to me what my actual hot goals were.

I live in Toronto, which is pretty cold and snowy in the winter. One of my conscious (and hot) goals is to be somewhere warm in the winter when I typically travel for months at a time. Ireland is cold in the winter so it never makes my list at that time of year. I could always visit Ireland in the summer, but I love staying close to home in the summer. I like to sail and spend time in nearby cottage country. I'm not keen on spending my vacation dollars when I'm happy to be at home. Despite my repeated thoughts about going to Ireland, it's just not a hot goal.

To figure out what's hot and what's not, simply take a look at your life. Where you feel your life is going well is where your conscious and subconscious (hot) goals are aligned. Wherever you're frustrated, your subconscious is not aware of what you want. Frustration is a function of

your conscious mind; you can think of your subconscious as satisfied with everything about your life as it is now.

## **Who's in Charge?**

If the bad news is that you don't have active control of your day-to-day actions and your subconscious is happy with the status quo that is your current life, the great news is that your conscious mind is in charge; it programs your amygdala. If there are things you want that you aren't automatically working toward, all you have to do to get going is program your amygdala.

You can think of your conscious mind like a computer programmer and your subconscious like a computer program. Your conscious mind programs your subconscious, but once it does, the program will run as written without judgments. Of course, sometimes computer programmers discover that there is a bug and their program isn't running the way they want it to. They can't just squeeze their eyes shut and hope that the computer program will change. No, the buggy program will continue to run until they sit down, debug, and reprogram it. The same is true for your brain; your subconscious will continue to run your life according to your hot goals whether or not you want them, but you can take charge and reprogram them.

The hitch, as I mentioned above, is that the conscious and subconscious parts of your brain don't speak the same language. Merely thinking about what you want won't get your subconscious aligned. Like a computer programmer needs a programming language to write software, you need to learn the language of your subconscious to rewrite your hot goals.

## **Two Languages**

The language of your conscious brain is words, ideas, and concepts. It's the part of your brain that you use to make meaning of your world. The language of your subconscious brain is your senses—your sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell—and your emotions. It's the part of your brain that you use to navigate and experience your world.

This is why just thinking about a concept or using words to describe a goal you have is not enough to create a hot goal. Your subconscious brain doesn't understand words, ideas, and concepts. To program a hot goal, you need to evoke your senses and emotions because that's what your subconscious will understand. Fear is a strong emotion. If you were bitten by a dog as a child and you see a dog now, your subconscious will access that fear and trigger your body to automatically cross the street or move away. To reprogram such a response, you would have to have real or imagined experiences with dogs that evoke feelings of safety. The more positive the feelings you manage to evoke while having these real or imagined encounters, the faster you would be able to reprogram your hot goal of fearing dogs.

If you're a student of success, I'm guessing the language of your subconscious doesn't surprise you at all. This is not the first time you've heard that you must imagine your success upfront and connect to how you will feel when you succeed. However, this might be the first time you've been made aware that your subconscious does not understand concepts and words.

If you've tried imagining success upfront, and it hasn't resulted in you naturally working toward your goals, the trick is in learning to "speak" to your subconscious in a way that your subconscious "hears" you.

## **Always Programming**

Unlike a computer programmer who sits down, writes the programming, and then it's done, our conscious minds are constantly programming our subconscious minds. Mostly, this happens haphazardly, whether or not we're paying attention.

Every time you evoke your senses or emotions, you are programming hot goals you may or may not want. There are two main ways we haphazardly program our subconscious brains for things that we don't want. The first is when we accept messages from the outside world about ourselves and take those on as truths. The second is when we make a vow after an experience to which we react with emotional intensity.

### **Haphazard Programming Type I: Accepting Outside Messaging**

I mentioned earlier that I am dyslexic. When I was in second grade, I had a teacher who couldn't deal with the differences in how I learned. She'd give class assignments, and I would do them backward. My letters were backward. My words were backward. I'd start at the back of the book and work to the front. Instead of her saying, "Oh, how interesting. You've done the right work, only backward. I wonder what's going on?" she told me I was stupid. She made me sit in the corner to punish me.

Although my mother arranged for me to change schools and get extensive remedial help all through my school career, there was never any consequence if I brought home a bad report card nor any expectation I might bring home a good one. Throughout my school career, feelings of inadequacy would well up in me whenever there was a graded assignment test or a report card issued. It was particularly painful because I was the youngest of four children, and my three siblings were each remarkable in unique ways.

Over the years, repeated messaging that my poor grades were to be expected juxtaposed the encouragement my siblings received to develop their talents. I came to believe I was somehow less than other people. Growing up was painful for me, and I became a recluse, depressed with low prospects for my future. Fortunately, my mom, who was trained in early childhood education and consequently worried about my low self-opinion, primed me with the idea that eventually became a hot goal: people who struggle in school can be great in business and life.

### ***Hot Goals Running in the Background***

Understanding what I now do about hot goals, my hindsight became 20/20. My mother's wise decision to implant the idea that I would be good at business and life had become a hot goal that led to me persistently developing my business knowledge. I believe it is also the hot goal that explains why I relentlessly pursued finding a vocation aligned to my purpose.

When I first started teaching online, I had to face another hot goal from my childhood. Teaching online requires exposure. I would have to put my thoughts, ideas, heart, and soul onto the Internet for all to see. My consulting business allowed me to work with leaders one-on-one or in small, controlled groups. It was a safe environment for my fears and insecurities. Despite having taught groups as large as fifty people for years, I struggled to bring myself to transition to online teaching.

The hot goal that blocked me had to do with my grade two teacher who ridiculed me in front of the classroom when I showed her my workbook. At only seven years old, I had begun programming a hot goal to hide my work.

### ***What Repeated Messages Affected You?***

Wherever you have struggled to make progress on a goal, there is a chance repeated messaging about what you are or are not good at is at the root. It may be a story like mine about you having

a limited capacity in some way or another, or it may just be general stories that you heard about what it's like to work for yourself or run a business.

There is also the phenomenon of collective messaging that leads to the formation of hot goals, ideas that are not necessarily directed at you specifically, but that are so pervasive that you adopt them. Every solo business owner I've ever worked with has struggled with limiting hot goals regarding money. These are goals you've adopted through life that put limits on you or hold you back from achieving past a specific level.

Much of the middle-class mindset is about working hard. Messages that say that the harder we work the luckier we should get become hot goals that hold many people back from reaching their potential. Successful business owners will often tell you that making more money is easier than making less money. If you have a hot goal that running a business should be hard, your subconscious will not allow you to discover easier ways.

### **Haphazard Programming Type II: Making Vows**

I certainly had a limiting hot goal around money. Mine was established in the second way we develop hot goals; I made a vow.

For the longest time, I wondered why I was able to help clients make six-, seven-, and eight-figure gains in their business while my business was stuck in the six-figure range. When I started looking for the hot goals that might be holding me back, I ended up discovering one I had made when I was thirteen years old.

My grandmother was sick; she was in the hospital for a long time, and I would hear my parents talking about how she was being cared for. Then came the day my grandmother died. We were all incredibly sad. My mother and father, stricken with grief, wondered about whether or not my relatives had done enough to get her the best medical care. At the time, my thirteen-year-old brain made the decision that my relatives did not get my grandmother the care they could have and so caused her death. At that point, I believed the only reason they might have done this was that they wanted her inheritance. Let's be clear: these were all only ideas in my childish imagination. My relatives are lovely people. But at thirteen, I made up creative stories and concluded that if you have money, people will kill you for it.

I remember telling myself I never wanted to have so much money that someone would kill me for it. Yikes. Fortunately, as I reflected on the disparate results I was able to create for other business owners and not myself, I figured there must be a hot goal at the root. Sure enough, when I investigated what was going on, I remembered the long-forgotten (consciously—but not to my amygdala) story about my grandmother and the promise I made to myself.

### **Hot Goals Get Hotter with Time**

Richard came to me for help leveling up his business. Despite being a rising star in his twenties and thirties, having made great money, and owning a home in one of the most expensive cities in the world, when I met Richard, he'd lost most of what he had built.

Richard was a software developer. His work was interesting enough, and his client base was meeting his needs. But he wanted to work on something he was more passionate about, so he gave up his client base to pursue a new tech start-up with a friend.

Early on, their new venture seemed to be off to the races. A big-name company agreed to partner with them once they'd built out their solution. The company made a small investment in them, but the lion's share of the money they needed for their development work came from family and friends and a second mortgage on Richard's home.

Richard and his partner spent three years on their venture. They had invested over \$240,000 when their prospective partner was bought out by another company, which they discovered rendered their original agreement null and void. Lawyers advised them not to sue—they could end up spending more on legal fees than the money they'd lost.

Richard lost both his house in Toronto and his nerve. He walked out on his friend, leaving him with what remained of their start-up. He ended up going back to software development contract work. Unfortunately, in his time away, the market was flooded with new talent. As a result, Richard found himself making considerably less than he'd made before.

### **Richard's Limiting Hot Goal**

When I learned Richard's story, I was confident he had hot goals that were limiting him. Hot goals have a way of becoming more evident in people's lives as they age, and Richard was in his late forties, a prime time for insidious hot goals to surface. One thing that stood out to me was that Richard had simply walked away from the business he'd created and helped develop. Surely, I thought, with all the time and effort invested, they could find another company willing to partner with them.

But things don't have to make sense when it comes to hot goals. I had a hunch Richard had a hot goal about exiting difficult situations. When we looked back at Richard's past, he recalled a bully who made life at school hard for him. The bully was a few years older and much larger than Richard. Richard's safety strategy at the time was to avoid encounters with the bully and to escape any encounters he did have as quickly as he could.

As a fourteen-year-old, it's probably a pretty good idea to quickly exit a situation in which you're threatened by a bully. Unfortunately, the subconscious locks in on hot goals for life until they are reprogrammed and does not differentiate between a threat from a bully you faced when you were a fourteen-year-old and a bully corporation you're facing in your forties. To your subconscious, a bully threat is a bully threat. If you have a hot goal about exiting difficult situations when faced with a bully, that's what you'll do—exit quickly.

As Richard and I worked through the activities that you will learn in this book, he was able to reprogram that hot goal that had been holding him back. We also found Richard's purpose, which in turn gave him the confidence he needed to start a new project. By using the system in this book, Richard is approaching his new opportunity more cautiously and keeping his current income coming in until there is clear evidence he can transition to his new business full time. Had Richard not discovered that hot goal, he would have continued to exit situations that felt bigger than him, putting him at risk of leaving any new business before reaching the exploitation phase. Richard is excited about life again and is on his way to building a business that's right for him.

A specific hot goal can work for or against you at any given time. As with Richard, when he was a young boy, it was not a bad course of action for him to quickly exit situations where he was sure to get pummeled. Yet as Richard matured and could defend himself, it was unwise of him to turn his back prematurely on a marketable venture in which he'd invested two years of his life and savings.

### **The Plus Side of Haphazard Programming**

Whether through repeated messaging, cultural conditioning, or a vow you made in your past, your conscious mind is programming subconscious hot goals whenever you happen to trigger the language of senses and emotions that your subconscious understands.

Haphazard programming works in your favor whenever you imagine, sense, or emotionally react to good things happening to you, perhaps recognition you received or a time you did well at something you care about like sports, a hobby, an assignment at school or work, or positive experiences with friends.

Whenever you experience good things happening to you through your senses (such as your sight, hearing, or touch), and feel positive emotions (such as joy, delight, or gratitude), you are programming hot goals that will lead to more good things happening to you.

The hot-goal programming process works equally well when you *imagine* good things happening to you. This is because your subconscious can't tell the difference between things that are real and imagined. You might imagine being recognized for a skill or talent that others appreciate. You might visualize yourself living out your perfect day. You might see yourself laughing, smiling, and enjoying time with special people in your life.

## **Your Subconscious is Always Listening**

Your subconscious is always being programmed when you happen to speak its language of senses and emotions. It doesn't matter whether the topic is past, present, or future. Your subconscious is always listening and forming or fortifying hot goals.

Good or bad, your subconscious does not judge your thoughts and feelings; it accepts your inputs at face value as a computer would. The more times you experience thoughts, images, senses, and emotions as they relate to a topic, the stronger your corresponding beneficial or limiting hot goal will become. Sudden emotional impacts like vows can speed up the process.

If you are worried because you have a lot of fear-based thoughts, hang tight. I'm going to teach you how you can reprogram limiting hot goals. But if you're not already, I encourage you to think of the bright side. All this time, you've been getting what you've been asking for, which is pretty cool if you stop and think about it. It means that if you want to get new things, you just need to learn how to get better at asking for what you want. Neuroplasticity means our brains are adaptable and will respond to new inputs.

Now that you are aware of subconscious hot goals and have a greater understanding of the role your hot goals play in the actions you take and the success you have achieved to date, the question becomes, what kind of relationship do you want to have with this part of your brain?

## **What Kind of Relationship Do You Want?**

When I teach clients about hot goals, there is often an initial worry that their subconscious is trying to sabotage them with negative and limiting thoughts. I've heard people talk about the subconscious like it's a monkey brain or lizard brain that you need to try to control or overpower. I disagree. If you criticize this part of your brain, you're effectively telling a younger-version you (who established your hot goals) that you're wrong. We all know two wrongs don't make a right, and it's no different for you and your brain.

If anything, perhaps be humbled and grateful for a part of your brain that is so loyal that it will hold onto any instruction it's been given for life. And even though it might take some effort to reprogram your subconscious when up against past programming, when you do succeed, your amygdala is going to be equally loyal, automatically having you take actions toward whatever new hot goals you program. You've inadvertently put ideas in your subconscious as situations and experiences unfolded throughout your life. I encourage you to say no to hostility and yes to the beginning of a constructive and empowering new friendship.

I like to think of the conscious part of our brain as our chief executive officer (CEO) and our amygdala as the world's greatest assistant, which I call our chief time officer (CTO). Like in business, while a CEO may make the decisions, it's the rest of the team that needs to execute the CEO's plans; their initiatives won't get far without buy-in and execution from the rest of the team.

This is what it's like for your brain. Once you make a conscious decision, if you succeed at programming that decision as a hot goal, then your CTO will take responsibility for execution. It's pretty cool when you think about it. Your CTO automates you seeing, saying, and doing things that move you in the direction of your (hot) goals. When you understand how to harness the power of your CTO, and take the time to program it for what you want, becoming unstoppable is inevitable.

## **Naming Your CTO**

At the beginning of your new relationship, you and your CTO might be on different pages. Be prepared for your new relationship to start awkwardly. After all, you want certain things, but your CTO may not be working toward those things. Right off the bat, there may be conflict. It will help to remind yourself that it was you who (even if inadvertently) provided instructions for any limiting hot goals in the first place.

To make this relationship work, you need to listen to your CTO, even when you don't like what it's saying. If it tells you, "You're too old for a new business venture," or "No one in your family is financially successful; what makes you think you will be?" you simply thank your CTO, then politely disregard it and do what you need to do. You're going to need to be able to listen to ideas from your CTO but not take them seriously or to try to fight them. Arguing with your CTO will be about as effective as trying to convince someone to switch allegiance from a favorite sports team or lifelong political party. It won't happen. There's a certain amount of respect, but there's also the awareness that you can have different ideas.

Have you ever seen an *Avengers* movie? With superheroes like the Avengers, it's rarely love and cooperation at first sight. *Au contraire*. They start as fighting foes, vying for status and recognition. Along the way, they discover they have the same goals and common enemies and become comrades who are invincible when together. I've overseen the forming of many CEO/CTO relationships, and that's what this journey can look like for you. It's incredible to witness.

One way to jump-start your relationship and speed up your reprogramming efforts is to give your CTO a name. Just calling it "subconscious" or "amygdala" is too impersonal. You want a name that makes your conscious brain comfortable enough to disagree with your CTO without inspiring anger and argument. Since you'll be using this name for the rest of your life, I find it best to have fun with it, as my group program participants do. In the group I taught before writing this book, we had CTOs named Pinky, Lance, Karen, Peewee, and Von Trapp. My CTO is Samantha.

Remember earlier in this book when I offered a fair warning that we'd be working at the power station, not the light switch level anymore, and if you proceeded there would be no turning back? Your CTO represents your power station, and if you decide to name yours, from this day forward, you'll be regularly talking to yourself (not necessarily out loud). It's going to be the two of you taking on the world as a team from now on!

## **Good Relationships Take Time**

What if your CTO doesn't immediately react to your new instructions? You're not only stuck with your CTO, but you share a face, so you can't throw a punch like an Avenger and expect anything good to happen. Your best option is to realize that reprogramming old hot goals takes time.

Practicing a combination self-compassion and perseverance will set you up for success. Keep in mind that when things aren't going your way, a younger version of you (who felt the need to stay safe) programmed your CTO to take the actions that have led to the results you're getting now.

It's not your CTO's fault. Your CTO is your younger self's messenger. No amount of anger at younger you for feeling unsafe or afraid, and no amount of shooting the messenger, will get you anywhere constructive. Instead, anger and frustration on your part will only delay how long it takes you to reprogram your CTO. A loving, compassionate, yet firm approach is the most efficient way to turn such a situation around.

The older you are or the more entrenched an old hot goal is, the more you can anticipate your CTO's sneaky resistance. Sneaky resistance from your CTO will come in the form of convincing thoughts that cite external reasons, such as market conditions or other people's actions, are to blame for falling short of your goals. Your CTO might also trigger self-deprecating thoughts—ideas that you're not good enough, and the problem is you. Either way, while these thoughts may seem valid, they are not. These are automated thoughts triggered by old hot goals.

As you develop your new relationship with your CTO, I encourage you to maintain a constructive attitude and positive expectations for how things will work out. You are where you are. Any situation can be turned around. As William Shakespeare said, "Things are neither good nor bad, but thinking makes it so." Hold faith that you will onboard your CTO and together make the best of your circumstances, and you will.

## **Easing into Your New Relationship**

Here are three relationship-building practices to help you get off on the right foot with your CTO.

### **Practice I: Demonstrate Your Independence**

Despite your subconscious determining most of what you see, say, and do at any given moment in time, you can consciously take control of your actions when needed. You don't want to live your whole life taking conscious control, because it would be exhausting (and impossible), but it's important to know that you are able to take conscious control of your decisions and actions when you put your mind to it.

A practice that will help demonstrate your independence is to walk around as you say, "I'm not walking around." You can do this with anything: Say you're not making dinner while you make dinner, or that you're not petting the dog while you pet it. What this activity does is demonstrate that you can (temporarily) disobey your subconscious, if and when needed.

### **Practice II: Rise Above Disappointments**

Life comes with its share of disappointments. To reach your next level of success will require you to respond differently to disappointing circumstances and events. Many people have hot goals that cause them to exaggerate the magnitude of disappointing events. They would tell you they are realistic, but focusing on negatives is pessimism. A pessimistic outlook is dangerous because it inhibits your ability to see pragmatic solutions and opportunities.

If you are predisposed to thinking pessimistically, do not worry. That is just your CTO's former programming from former events in your life, and it's well within your power to reprogram yourself to make the best of disappointing situations. From now on, whenever you encounter a (or think of a past) disappointing event, ask yourself, "How can I take this situation and turn it into the best thing that could have happened?"

You might read this and think I'm trying to sneak in ideas around optimism. You're right. But a lot of people don't understand what optimism is. Optimism is not about being delusional.

Optimism is about being realistic about what's happening and making the best of your circumstances. Making the best of your circumstances is just a smart thing to do.

### **Practice III: Become a Curious Investigator**

Another practice that will support you when you experience disappointments and setbacks is to avoid judging yourself or others and focus instead on what lesson you can learn or what hot goals might be running in the background.

If you've learned about meditation, have been introduced to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), or have read just about any book on healing emotions, you've been introduced to the idea of no judgment. You'll be gaining tools throughout this book to help you build a positive, no-judgment relationship with your CTO. For now, when thinking of old or current situations that have upset you, do your best to stay neutral and curious about your lessons or underlying hot goals.

Depending on how old you are, there will be more or less to unwind and reprogram. But it's doable. I've discovered and reprogrammed dozens of limiting hot goals; our Ignite and Basecamp participants have, and my nearly eighty-year-old mom has too. It may take longer than you want to discover and reprogram your hot goals, but if you stick with it, your success is a matter of time.

## **What Hot Goals Are Limiting You?**

You may be wondering what unwanted hot goals have been holding you back. Use this activity to discover the origin of unwanted hot goals and how they've been limiting you.

**Investigate:** Looking back on your past, consider repeated negative messages or limiting vows around work. Did you hear things like, "It's hard to be in business for yourself?" Were you told you were lazy or not smart? That it's safer to work for someone else than it is to work for yourself? That people who work hard are good and rich people are bad?

**Make the Connection:** After you've written down limiting ideas that you have heard about success and self-employment, take some time to consider each of them and how each has affected your behavior, decisions, and results to this point in your business and life.

**Express Gratitude:** This may feel counterintuitive, but what you don't know you can't address. Be grateful every time you discover a hot goal that isn't working for you; each one you discover introduces an opportunity to program a new hot goal to achieve whatever you want.

**Decide:** For each hot goal that isn't working for you, put your hand on your heart and say aloud, "This hot goal came from my past. This hot goal doesn't work for me anymore and is not keeping me safe. I will reprogram my CTO, [insert name], for [insert what you want] from now on."

## **Accessing Your Power Station**

Learning my subconscious decides most of my actions up to ten seconds in advance of my conscious awareness has enabled me to take control of important facets of my life. Once I understood the mechanisms through which my brain and body operate, I went from grasping at straws, winning some goals and losing others (and having no idea why), and constantly feeling like a pawn in the universe to understanding the power I had to change anything.

The relationship between my conscious mind and subconscious was consistent with everything I had ever heard before but was more powerful when I understood the science of what was going on. I stopped looking to the law of attraction and the universe to solve my problems and

make my dreams come true. I started focusing on reprogramming my brain to take automatic action (although I never turn down help from the universe either).

Your subconscious is the command and control center for what you see, say, and do—the power station of how you spend your time. It wants to keep you safe and instinctively behaves in ways it thinks it can accomplish that. Your subconscious wants to help you thrive, but it doesn't necessarily know what that means. You have to tell it.

Everything we do from here on out in this book will involve reprogramming your CTO. The techniques I offer you for each step of this system are designed with the idea of translating what you want into a language your CTO can hear.

When you program hot goals, anything you want becomes possible. If you are clear on what you want, then consider yourself fortunate. If, on the other hand, you're like most of our Basecamp clients, then you're probably not crystal clear on the business you want to build. The dilemma is that you must be both passionate and precise about your goals if you're going to program hot goals. Discovering your purpose, clarifying your vision, and selecting new value-based behaviors—a trio of outcomes I call your Happiness Recipe—make it far easier to choose goals you'll be passionate about pursuing.